

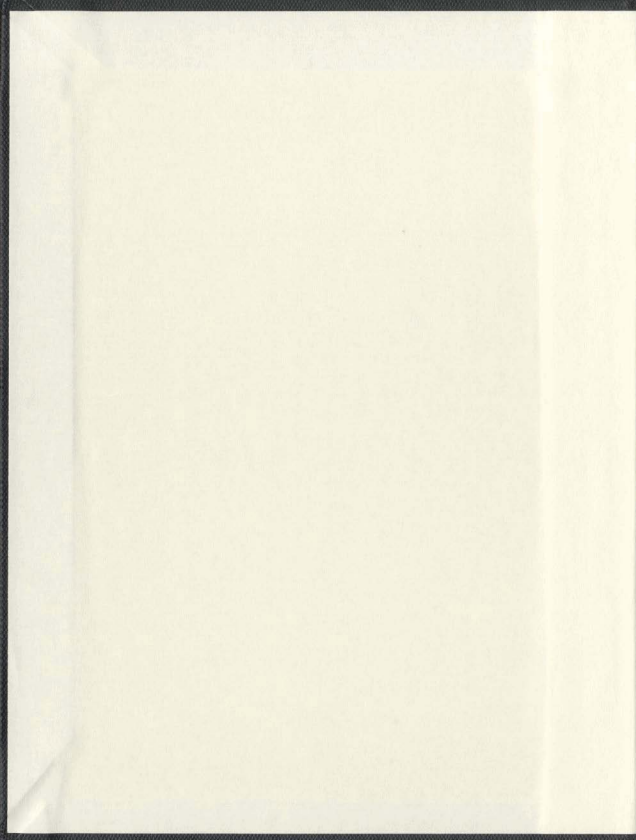
BUREAUCRACY, CLASS, AND IDEOLOGY:
THE VANCOUVER TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL, 1889-1909

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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MARK LEIER, B.A., M.A.



BUREAUCRACY, CLASS, AND IDEOLOGY:
THE VANCOUVER TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL, 1889-1909

BY

© Mark Leier, B.A., M.A.

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History
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To
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an examination of bureaucracy, class, and ideology in the labour movement. It seeks to understand what is meant by the term labour bureaucracy and to determine the degree to which bureaucracy shaped ideology in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council from 1889 to 1909.

The first section is an analysis of the theoretical literature and historiography of the labour bureaucracy. As well as providing an overview of the topic, the thesis tries to formulate a different definition of the labour bureaucracy, one that focuses on the power of the bureaucrats, rather than their ideology. The second section is a study of the officials and leaders that made up the VTLC from its beginning in 1889 to the founding of the B.C. Federation of Labour twenty years later. In this section, the ideology of the council is examined to evaluate the impact of bureaucracy on the labour movement. The policies and structure of the council are studied in detail to show how the separation of the leaders from the led developed over time and to demonstrate why bureaucratic solutions -- the hiring of experts, reliance on government intervention, the routinization of procedures, and the creation of labour institutions -- were taken and to outline the effect they had. The conflict between labourists and socialists is examined closely to suggest first that bureaucracy is not limited to labour leaders of any single ideology, and second, that the needs of

the labour movement and the demands of bureaucracy itself tended to soften ideological battles. Even with the ascension of socialists to the council in 1907-1909, continuity remained the hallmark of the labour council, in part because socialists had no particular commitment to rank-and-file control of the labour movement. Finally, the lives and class positions of the labour leaders are illustrated to try to shed some light on the ways in which bureaucracy, class, and ideology become intertwined.

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Sean Cadigan of Memorial University provided friendship and suggestions during the course of this project. His delight with arcane points of Marxist philosophy and his warm humour are both deeply appreciated. Mark Warrior's experience as a shop-floor unionist and as an officer of the United Fishermen and Allied Worker's Union was particularly valuable as a healthy antidote to the cynicism that dominates much left-wing thought on the labour movement. The late Sam Dolgoff made many useful comments on early drafts of the passages dealing with Marx, Bakunin, and Machajski.

The research and writing of this study were supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Irene Whitfield translated my illegible handwriting, sloppy typewriting, and last-minute changes into copy that could be read. Her patience, skill, and good humour in the face of unreasonable demands are keenly appreciated.

Gregory S. Kealey supervised the thesis, and I drew often on his fount of knowledge and moral support. Linda Kealey and Andy den Otter acted as the other members of the supervisory committee and offered much valuable advice, often from a point of view very different from my own. The suggestions and arguments of these three scholars contributed greatly to the study.

My parents, Jim and Margaret, and my brother, Ben, have been especially supportive during this project. So too have Heather Way, Bill and Pam Bennett, Ray and Gale DeFaveri, Drew DeFaveri, Sheena Collins, and Donna and Nolan Kelly.

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Introduction

Why is there no socialism in North America? This question has continued to underscore the writing of labour history since it was first posed by Werner Sombart in 1906. Though it has been approached in many different ways, no single answer has been generally accepted. Some, such as Michael Kazin, have insisted that the question is irrelevant, that there is no reason why a socialist consciousness should have evolved. Other historians, particularly those of the left, have not accepted this answer, and have challenged it with a variety of responses. Following Sombart himself, some maintain that socialism foundered on the shoals of prosperity in the new world; others, that state repression smashed the socialism that did flourish. Historians such as Paul Buhle, David Montgomery, and Herbert Gutman suggest that we must re-define socialism. Granting that a strong, formal, political socialism has not taken root, they have found resistance to capitalism among immigrant ethnic groups, in shop-floor struggles for control over the work process, and in working-class communities. Much of the labour history written in the 1970s and 1980s similarly argued that class consciousness, if not an intellectualized socialist ideology, could be found in the informal culture of workers. Patterns of behaviour, mores, even recreational activities, separated workers from their employers and provided a rough unity for protest and

confrontation organized along lines of class.¹

Still other historians reject all or parts of these explanations. Instead, writers such as Mike Davis, Michael Goldfield, and Bryan Palmer argue that a militant and radical working class has always existed and has regularly risen up to attack the capitalist order. This resistance, however, was just as regularly defeated, sometimes by the state, but more often by the betrayal of the working class by its leaders. In this scenario, it is union leaders who are responsible for the failure of socialism; it is the role of the labour bureaucracy that answers the question, why no socialism in North America.²

This explanation has a certain appeal to it. Bureaucracy in all its forms is a universal target of anger and distrust, and any explanation that depends on it is guaran-

¹Michael Kazin, "Struggling with Class Struggle: Marxism and the Search for a Synthesis of U.S. Labor History." Labor History, 28, 4 (Fall 1987); Paul Buhle, Marxism in the USA From 1870 to the Present Day. London: Verso 1987; David Montgomery, Workers Control in America. London: Cambridge University Press, 1979, and The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America. New York: Vintage, 1977. Gutman, Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class. Ira Berlin, ed. New York: Pantheon, 1987.

²Mike Davis, Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class. London: Verso, 1986; Mike Goldfield, The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Bryan Palmer, Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987.

teed a favourable first hearing. It is, for the left in general, a relatively hopeful answer, for it implies that the historical failure of socialism need not be repeated in the future. If the working class is ever-ready to rise up, what is to be done is to replace the labour bureaucrats with a revolutionary cadre.

But however tempting such explanations may be, it is not so clear that the labour bureaucracy is the principal reason for the failure of socialism. If the labour bureaucrats are cast in the role of King Canute ordering back the sea of working-class revolt, it must still be asked why the working class has usually gone along so easily. The labour bureaucracy theory also poses a philosophical question for historians, perhaps especially so for Marxists and other materialists. If the working class is perennially ready for revolution but is thwarted by the actions of a few leaders, other, structural explanations for the failure of socialism are unnecessary, even irrelevant. The failure of socialism is then simply a failure of nerve. But this in turn implies that history is largely an issue of free will and completely free choice. As a result, the only lesson history holds is that the working class is not very good at choosing its leaders. As a general principle for historical understanding or political action, this is not particularly useful.

More detailed analyses of the role of the labour bureaucracy have refined the debate considerably. Indeed,

recent work has so refined the issue that some historians argue that there is no split between the leaders and the led, that the very concept of bureaucracy is a non sequitur.³ The choice, apparently, is between a labour bureaucracy that is responsible for everything and a labour bureaucracy that is responsible for nothing.

This dissertation is an attempt to find a middle ground. It uses one labour organization, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, as a case study to examine the interplay between bureaucracy, class, and ideology. To do so, three different tasks have been undertaken. The first is to examine the theoretical debates on the labour bureaucracy. The second is to investigate the early history of the VTLC to show how and why bureaucratic structures evolved over time. The third is to examine the ideology and personnel of the labour council to try to understand the complex relationship between bureaucrats and their ideology.

The VTLC has been chosen as the object of study for several reasons. The militant history of British Columbia labour makes the debate over the role of the bureaucracy particularly invigorating. More practically, the records of the council, unlike those of most early labour organizations in the province, have largely survived. Gaps in the record may be filled by using the daily press, which gave the council considerably more coverage than it did to individual

³See Chapters 1 and 2.

unions, even publishing the minutes nearly verbatim. No other labour organization received such continuous and complete newspaper coverage, and as a result, no individual union can be examined in such detail. The council also published its own newspapers: the Independent, from 1900 to 1904, the B.C. Trades Unionist and Labor Bulletin from 1907 to 1909, and the Western Wage Earner from 1909 to 1911. These newspapers, endorsed, funded, and controlled by the council, were official organs, and are extremely valuable sources that are not available for other unions. They provide information on council policy, debates, members, and activities, and they give some insight into the world view of the council's leaders. Thus the VTLC is much more accessible than individual unions.

It may, however, be argued that a labour council is not the best place to look for a study of union bureaucracy. The council was not a rank-and-file organization with a leadership cadre; it was instead a forum exclusively for bureaucrats. Serving as a delegate to the VTLC meant that one was part of the labour bureaucracy, with the power to decide and influence the direction and policies of the labour movement of the city. By definition, a study of the VTLC eliminates the rank and file and thus cannot examine the conflict between the leadership and the rank and file. While this is accurate, it is not relevant. The first two chapters of this study suggest that it is not useful to analyze bureaucracy

and bureaucrats primarily as being ideologically at odds with the membership. Indeed, most theorists argue that it is difficult to differentiate between leaders and led. After tracing the development of this theoretical impasse, I do argue that it is possible to draw a clear line between the bureaucracy and the rank and file. This line, however, is that of power, not ideology. The bureaucrats may be identified by their ability to control and influence the labour organization, and this means that to understand bureaucracy, we must understand the people who made it up. The labour council is a more useful body than an individual union for this purpose. As a loose federation, it was made up of delegates from most of the city's unions, and thus represents a cross-section of activists and leaders. Delegates were often officials in their own unions, and an examination of the VTLC includes many of the officers who would be counted in a study of any individual or group of labor organizations. It may also be argued that the labour council, operating without the direct input of the labour rank and file, is a "purer" form of bureaucracy that helps to make the general principles more visible.

Furthermore, the labour council was created to put forward the political and social concerns of the union movement as a whole. It was the council, not individual unions, that created and directed labour's official position on matters ranging from industrial relations to park space.

Insofar as ideology is a crucial part of bureaucracy, the VTLC is more representative and more authoritative than any other union body, and is the most useful object of study.

Other important consequences for a study of bureaucracy follow from the theoretical debates. First, if bureaucrats are defined by their power over the movement, it is necessary to understand how and why the bureaucracy created the policies, institutions, and regulations that separated it from the rank and file. Few bureaucracies start from a golden age of participatory democracy, but most refine and develop over time. Studying the evolution of paid positions, tighter control over finance, rotation of leaders, and the like shows how the relationship between the leadership and the rank and file changed over time. Chapters 3 and 4 outline these structural changes in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council.

Second, if there is no permanent and inevitable ideological split between leaders and led, we can no longer attribute the bureaucrats' ideology solely to their positions in the labour movement. Though becoming a leader does have an impact on one's world-view, it does not necessarily force one to be a labourist or a socialist; nor does it necessarily place one in ideological opposition to the rank and file. This means that other explanations for the particular ideology of the leaders must be found. It also suggests that the chief difference in the leadership's ideology will be in

its own definition of its relationship to the membership. That is, it is possible that the bureaucracy may be in substantial agreement with the rank and file on questions of wages, militancy, state ownership, arbitration, and the like. It may, however, differ greatly on issues such as the allocation of union dues, the subsidizing of a labour press, and the role of dissidents. For these reasons, examining the ideology of the bureaucrats and suggesting the reasons why it was adopted assumes a new importance. If one defines ideology rather broadly to mean something more like world-view, it is necessary to look closely at the bureaucrats' attitudes towards gender and race as well. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine these issues.

Since the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council was, at different times, dominated by labourists and socialists, it is necessary to understand why different leaders held such variant, and on occasion antagonistic views. Chapters 8 and 9 use theoretical and empirical arguments to locate the different wings of the bureaucracy and to provide some explanations for the differences. They also suggest the similarities between the two, both at the level of ideology and at the level of the bureaucratic impulse, for if ideology divided the bureaucrats, their positions helped unite them.

Finally, the argument that bureaucrats are not necessarily in ideological opposition to the rank and file means that the study of rank-and-file insurgency is much less

useful. If the rank and file does, on occasion, fight against its leadership, more often it does not. Focusing on the sharp, short moments of rank-and-file insurgency distorts our understanding of the relationship between leaders and led for it ignores the more prevalent patterns of agreement, acquiescence, or apathy. Furthermore, most studies of union dissidents focus on either fights between competing elites or on wild-cat strikes. But struggles between two factions of leaders, even if one is conservative and one radical, are not the same as rank-and-file insurgency. Nor is the examination of wild-cat strikes a clear and positive way to understand the ideology of the rank and file. Far from being a protest against the bureaucracy, most wild-cat strikes are engineered and encouraged by the leadership itself. It is true that spontaneous walk-outs do occur, and it is also true that the union leaders are legally required to tell workers to go back to work under the terms of the collective agreement. Nonetheless, the great majority of wild-cat strikes are called by the leadership to enforce the company's compliance with the terms of the contract, to hasten the processing of grievances, or to spur on negotiations.

Some examples reinforce this view. Bryan Palmer's study of the Solidarity opposition in B.C. in 1982-4, for example, does not demonstrate that the rank and file was more radical

than its leadership;⁴ it only demonstrates that some leaders were more radical than others. Two examples from my own experience may also be illustrative. As a shop steward and member of the negotiating committee in a plant of 125 men and women, I was encouraged by the business agent and president of the union to engineer a wild-cat strike, in the belief that such a move during the early phases of contract negotiations would strengthen our position at the bargaining table. On another occasion, the business agent was concerned with the reluctance of another employer to sign the contract, even though similar agreements had already been signed with the other unions on the site. I was asked to help picket the employer's construction site, and when the picket signs went up, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, structural metal workers, glaziers, and labourers walked off the job. The tactic worked: the contract was signed the following morning. But such incidents suggest that the wild-cat strike is not a useful indication of rank-and-file discontent with the leadership. Similarly, John Kelly has shown that the leadership, not the rank and file, is more likely to advocate industrial stoppages and is more likely to dislike "going through procedures and playing by the rules of grievance and arbitration resolution."⁵ As a result, this thesis tries to

⁴Bryan D. Palmer, Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987.

⁵John Kelly, Trade Unions and Socialist Politics. London: Verso, 1988, 178.

examine the bureaucrats and their institutions without reference to an idealized rank and file.

This study differs significantly from the study of union leadership done by Warren R. Van Tine in his book The Making of the Labor Bureaucrat. His work begins in 1870; that is, nearly twenty years before the labour movement begins in Vancouver. His comparisons with the two groups of labour leaders are between the old unions, exemplified by the Knights of Labor, and the new business unions of Samuel Gompers, in the United States.⁶ In Vancouver, such a fight had nearly been won by 1889, when the labour council was formed. More illustrative is the later battle between labourists and socialists.

Van Tine's work also looks at national labour leaders, those with the public persona large enough to warrant inclusion in sources such as American Labor's Who's Who, and the Dictionary of American Biography, or who were the subject of biographies, autobiographies, and the like. I believe, however, that it is at the local, community level where clues to the bureaucrats' creation and behaviour are most useful. No one would deny that the federal government is, to some degree, a bureaucracy; and considering the scope and size of that government, administration without bureaucracy is difficult to conceive. Municipal governments by contrast,

⁶Warren Van Tine, The Making of the Labor Bureaucrat. Union Leadership in the United States, 1870-1920. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973.

are not usually assumed to be inherently bureaucratic. But bureaucracy is perhaps most insidious when it is closest, for it is hardest to see there. For this reason, the leaders at the city level, rather than the provincial or federal level, have been chosen.

The time period of this study, 1889 to 1909, is not arbitrary. The early years of the council are important to understand, for this is the period when the leadership first decided upon its priorities and procedures. Though many argue that collective bargaining, formal contracts, and the intervention of the state are the key to the development of bureaucracy, it is my belief that the roots of the problem are earlier. Indeed, they may be traced to the first meetings of the labour council. These early leaders did not create the present-day labour bureaucracy, but they set the movement on its course, and it is the earliest period that suggests how and why they did so, even if the bureaucracy they created is a pale thing compared to those of today.

The study ends in 1909 for one important reason. In the following year, labour leaders created the B.C. Federation of Labour, a province-wide organization. At this time, the BCFL replaced the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council as the most important and representative labour body. Many VTLC activists then devoted their energies to the new organization, and the council declined in importance. Continuing the examination of the VTLC past 1909 produces diminishing

returns, while expanding the work to include the BCFL requires another volume. Finally, the council's minutes for the war years are incomplete, with the years from 1916 to 1919 missing. Such a gap in this crucial time makes it difficult to understand the council, while the years 1889 to 1909 do provide a clearly defined, reasonably complete, and relatively discrete periodization.

The thesis provides few answers to the issue of bureaucracy in the labour movement, save to stress that it is a complex phenomenon that is not easily summed up in a few generalizations. Still I hope that viewing the Vancouver labour council through the lens of bureaucracy will afford some new insights into the nature of class and ideology in this period. In focusing on one division in the working class, I do not mean to assert that this was the only division, or even necessarily the most important one. Nor is it my wish to insist that the working class has always been fragmented and divided against itself. But on many occasions, it has been so fractured, and one fault line that opened was between those who were and those who were not members of the bureaucracy. I hope to illuminate this aspect and in doing so, to provide another small piece to our picture of workers and unions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER ONE

Bureaucracy and the Labour Movement:

The History of a Debate

On 5 November 1916, 260 members of the Industrial Workers of the World left Seattle, Washington, aboard the ferry Verona. They were bound for Everett, a small logging town, to take part in a free-speech fight that had begun in August. As the ferry docked, they were met by a crowd of deputies and vigilantes determined to stop the landing. Sheriff McRae shouted out to the Wobblies crowding the gangway, "Who is your leader?" To a man, they answered, "We are all leaders." As they pushed towards the shore, they were met with rifle fire from the sheriff's gang. At least five were killed; many more were wounded.¹

The 1986 convention of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters was held in the glittering rooms of Caesar's Palace and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The highlight of the proceedings was the entrance of then Teamster president Jackie Presser on opening night. Presser, reputed to weigh over 300 pounds, was brought to the convention floor in a chariot pulled by four burly Teamsters dressed as Roman soldiers. During the convention, delegates overwhelmingly supported Presser and his staff, even though he had been

¹Charles Ashleigh, "The Voyage of the Verona," reprinted in Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology, ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh. 1964. Reprint. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972, 107-112.

indicted earlier in the week on charges of embezzlement and racketeering. The delegates, many appointed by Presser, defeated virtually every motion put forward by the opposition group Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). The defeated proposals included a motion to lower the president's salary from \$550,000 to \$125,000, and another that would have allowed local union members to elect freely convention delegates. The TDU candidate for the presidency, C. Sam Theodus, was forced to endure a public roll call vote that lasted for three hours after he conceded the election. One thousand seven hundred and twenty nine delegates loudly announced their support for Presser; only 24 voted for Theodus. The convention ended on a macabre note as delegates paid fealty to former Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa by upholding a constitutional amendment that made him "general president emeritus for life," just in case he showed up again.²

The Teamsters illustrate vividly what union democracy is not.³ What then is the labour bureaucracy? Its historio-

²New York Times, 21, 22 May 1986. Recent events have revealed that Presser was also an active FBI plant before and after the convention.

³But because of its links to organized crime, the Teamsters' union hampers our understanding of the labour bureaucracy, for corruption and bureaucracy are not at all the same thing. It is important to see union bureaucracy and corruption as two separate issues. The two may be related in the sense that control of the union by a small group may be a necessary condition for corruption. Such control, however, is not a sufficient condition. Efforts to equate bureaucracy and corruption obscure the nature of both. As an example of the analytical mistake of arguing that corruption and bureaucracy are the same thing, see Sylvester Petro, Power

graphy is part of several debates among historians, industrial relations experts, sociologists and labour activists, and is wrapped up in definitions of democracy and socialism, the relation of socialism to democracy, the nature of the working class, and the role of leadership. Opinions range from those of Robert Michels, who holds that bureaucracy and oligarchy follow inevitably from organization, to those of Jonathan Zeitlin, who suggests that it may be impossible to define the labour bureaucracy or labour bureaucrats.⁴ Debate on the significance and role of the labour bureaucracy similarly swings between the position of Selig Perlman, who views it as one of the signs of a mature labour movement, to that of Gregory Zinoviev, who maintains

Unlimited: The Corruption of Union Leadership, New York: Ronald Press, 1959. Petro, once a CIO activist, goes further, to suggest that the closed shop and the secondary picket are examples of union dictatorship and corruption that have as their end the destruction of American society. Indeed, union activity that secures wages higher than those the market establishes is seen in the same light. A more balanced assessment of union corruption and the links of corruption to bureaucracy is given in Autocracy and Insurgency in Organized Labor, ed. Burton Hall, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1972. Unfortunately, its authors' preoccupation with specific cases and crimes such as the murder of United Mine Workers of America dissident Jock Yablonski by the agents of union president Tony Boyle prevents their formulating a theoretical framework beyond suggesting that labour leaders have formed an alliance with the state to suppress dissidents.

⁴Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy. Trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (1915), Reprint, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1948. Jonathan Zeitlin, "Trade Unions and Job Control: A Critique of 'Rank and Filism'," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 46 (Spring 1983), 6-8.

that labour bureaucrats are "the emissaries of bourgeois society in the camp of the proletariat."⁵ These two chapters will trace the development of the theory of the labour bureaucracy and will outline practical ways to apply such theory to historical research on the labour bureaucracy in Canada.

Defining the word "bureaucracy" is a delicate task, in part because the term has a tainted flavour to it. People are unlikely to give their job description as "bureaucrat," and even if they jokingly refer to it as such, still tend to take offence if they are called bureaucrats by others. The word came into the English language with both a neutral, descriptive meaning and a negative one. It is derived from the French "bureau," originally the felt covering on a writing desk. Later, by extension, it came to mean first the desk itself and then an office. By 1720 it was used in English to denote an office for the transaction of public business. "Bureaucracy" was coined by adding the suffix "cracy," meaning "rule" or "power." Thus the Oxford English Dictionary describes it as "government by bureaux, usually officialism"; it may be rendered as "rule by office-holders." The OED attributes the first use of the word "bureaucracy" to

⁵Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement (1928), Reprint, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970. Gregory Zinoviev, "The Social Roots of Opportunism," in Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International: Documents, 1907-1916, the Preparatory Years, ed. John Riddell, New York: Monad Press, 1984, 486.

Lady Morgan, who in 1818 wrote of "Mr. Commisioner [sic] ... represented the Bureaucratie, or office tyranny, by which Ireland has been so long governed." A reference from 1834 holds that "the trade-ocracy and bureau-ocracy must now... prepare themselves." John Stuart Mill used the word in 1837, writing about "that vast network of administrative tyranny ... that system of bureaucracy, which leaves no free agent in all France, except the man at Paris who pulls the wires." R.R. Madden wrote in 1843 concerning "this 'bureau-cracy' [which] was an inveterate evil of Ireland, in the early part of Earl Grey's administration." Later Mill, in Political Economy, refers to "the inexpediency of concentrating in a dominant bureaucracy ... all the power of organized action in the community." Carlyle, in 1850, mentions the "Continental nuisance called Bureaucracy," while Mill uses the word again in 1860. His remark defines the term with some precision: "The work of government has been in the hands of governors by profession; which is the essence and meaning of bureaucracy." The word is used to denote a particular form of government, one that is not democratic and in which positions are held by career officials. The negative sense of the word is plain in most of these usages, and bureaucracy is not considered a technique fit for Englishmen, who were thought to embody strong notions of local control, popular sovereignty, and a distaste for the professional government agent.

The word bureaucracy is usually applied to public

administration and not private enterprise. Raymond Williams points out that those in business prefer less canted descriptions of their systems of hierarchy and control such as "office organization" or even more neutrally, "business methods."⁶ The systematic sociology of 'bureaucracy' begins with Max Weber, denizen of the mother of modern state bureaucracies, Prussia. His ideal-type of modern bureaucratic structure was made up of several concepts. These include fixed and official jurisdictional areas, generally ordered by rules and administrative decisions; a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination; management based on written documents; full-time commitment to the job; and a system of general rules for the management of the office. The modern bureaucrats held office as a vocation and career; they were not amateurs helping out or civic-minded citizens taking on a shift in the government. Because the occupation required a relatively high degree of education and specific training, it conferred upon the bureaucrat a "distinct social esteem as compared with the governed." The "pure" form of bureaucrat was appointed, not elected, and the position was held for life. These procedures were to make the bureaucrat independent of pressure from interest groups or superiors and to

⁶Raymond Williams supplies the etymology of bureaucracy in Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Glasgow: Fontana, 1976, 40-41.

ensure that decisions were correct rather than expedient.⁷

The labour bureaucracy differs in some important ways from Max Weber's "ideal-type" of bureaucracy.⁸ For example, unlike Weber's state model, most union officials are elected, either by the rank and file or by delegates. An important section of union officials is not paid. This section may range from shop stewards to presidents. Their positions may not require formal training, though usually some instruction is given, and increasingly in the latter half of the twentieth century, some officials, such as business agents, are university-educated. While many of the positions are full-time careers, some are not. Unlike Weber's bureaucrats, union officers may be the highest authority in the organization and usually can make as well as implement policy. Finally, labour leaders usually have limited resources with which to enforce their decisions; they are relatively more accountable to those they administer than government officials. But Weber's ideal-type was an attempt to describe characteristics of the German state bureaucracy; it was not a

⁷From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, 196-204.

⁸For evaluations of Marx's contribution to the theory of bureaucracy, see Eva Etzioni-Halevy, Bureaucracy and Democracy: A Political Dilemma. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, 9-13, 23-26, 74-84; and András Hegedus, "Bureaucracy," in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, ed. Tom Bottomore, et al., Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, 57-59. For a brief discussion of Weber's notion of the "ideal-type," see Frank Parkin, Max Weber, Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1982, 28-39.

definition of all types of bureaucrat. These differences reflect the different objectives and causes of the state and labour, and while they should be noted, they do not render the concept of a labour bureaucracy inappropriate.⁹

In discussing the labour bureaucrat, I shall examine the definitions of others and attempt to provide my own. In this study 'bureaucracy' and its congeners are used, in Van Tine's phrase, "for their functional rather than the pejorative connotations," though it is difficult to separate the two.

In Weber's view, bureaucracies were created to rationalize administrative decisions: rule by experts was faster, more precise, and allowed for greater predictability, as decisions would be made objectively, in accordance with the regulations and criteria established by those employing the bureaucracy. The "special virtue" of bureaucracy was its ability to eliminate "from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation." As modern society and business

⁹Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," reprinted in Critical Studies in Organization and Bureaucracy, eds. Frank Fischer and Carmen Sirianni, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984, 24-39. Warren Van Tine, The Making of the Labor Bureaucrat, x. It may be suggested that instead of bureaucracy, this discussion is really about leadership, and to a limited extent, I agree. Indeed, the terms are used interchangeably in this study. It should be made clear that when I refer to union leaders, I do not mean individuals who are put forward on an ad hoc, informal basis to speak for their fellow workers. I am speaking of those who hold official positions in the union and who help create and implement official policy. To return to the origins of the word, union bureaucrats are office holders who are empowered to make decisions that are binding on others.

became more complicated and specialized, the need for bureaucracy became greater and greater. Bureaucracy streamlined decision making and allowed the tight control of vast enterprises. In government and business, the "bureaucratic structure goes hand in hand with the concentration of the material means of management in the hands of the master."¹⁰

Weber was not much interested in the political implications of bureaucracy. While he was concerned that elected leaders should maintain control over their bureaucrats, he held that the management of society by small groups was "a basic fact of life." Democracy and bureaucracy were not opposites, for "democratic rule basically consisted in the formally free election of leaders." As Weber put it, "any idea of abolishing the domination of man over man by any socialist social system whatsoever or by any sophisticated form of 'democracy' whatsoever is utopian." He concluded that the increasing bureaucratization of the German labour movement and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was "primarily a positive development," for it meant that the SPD's revolutionary ideology would evolve into a "constructive reformist policy which would bring about...real improvements to the lot of the working class."¹¹

¹⁰Weber, "Bureaucracy," 24-33.

¹¹Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Max Weber and Roberto Michels: An Asymmetrical Partnership," European Journal of Sociology, 22, 1 (1981), 110. Weber is cited on 108. The quote on Weber and the SPD is on 107. See also Fischer and Sirianni, 6-10, and Parkin, 104-108. See Etzioni-Halevy, 27-40, for

Robert Michels, a contemporary and friend of Weber's, was acutely aware of the power of bureaucracy and its basic opposition to democracy and socialism. Unlike Weber, Michels believed that the desirability of the socialist revolution was self-evident. Active in the SPD, he was bitterly disillusioned by the 1906 party congress in Mannheim. There the executive decisively turned the party from revolution to reformism and parliamentary struggle. The congress also demonstrated the strength of the trade union bureaucrats who favoured the reform strategy. Union officials used their power and control of the party machinery to push through resolutions for reform, and created mechanisms that ensured the party executive would be controlled by bureaucrats, not party delegates. This was a clear move away from democracy, defined by Michels as

the self-government of the masses in conformity with the decisions of popular assemblies.... [T]he chief is merely the servant of the masses. The officials, executive organs of the general will, play merely a subordinate part, are always dependent upon the collectivity, and can be deprived of their office at any moment. The mass of the party is omnipotent.

Where Weber saw Mannheim as a positive step towards realism and reform, Michels saw it as a betrayal of socialism and democracy. His subsequent analysis of bureaucracy in the labour movement, still the starting point in the debate, tried to answer the question, "why do socialist parties

Weber's ambivalence towards bureaucracy.

degenerate into oligarchy and reformism?" If bureaucracy could commandeer even parties pledged to eliminate it, his examination would have powerful consequences for the rest of society.¹²

According to Michels, bureaucracy came to dominate the left for many of the same reasons that Weber gave for its growth in the state and private capital. The labour movement and its party was a "fighting party"; in order to succeed, it had to obey the laws of tactics, the first of which is "facility of mobilization." In order to move as a coordinated body, policies and campaigns had to be formulated from the top and imposed on the membership. The very success of the labour movement and the SPD implied a need for bureaucracy, for as they increased in size, complete participation in decision making became more difficult, and some form of delegation and representation was necessary to carry on business efficiently. The organizations were forced to confront issues of greater complexity, and decisions carried greater consequences; a mistake in tactics could cost an election or important reforms, even the security of the organization itself. Therefore, the officials' duties became more complicated; some individual ability

¹²Mommsen, 105-106. For the Mannheim Congress, see Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism, (1955), Reprint, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, 49-53. Michels's definition of democracy is in Michels, 28, 31-32. The quote is adapted from David Beetham, "Michels and his Critics," European Journal of Sociology, 22, 1 (1981), 85.

becomes essential, a certain oratorical gift, and a considerable amount of objective knowledge. It thus becomes impossible to trust to blind chance, to the fortune of alphabetical succession, or to the order of priority, in a choice of a delegation whose members must possess certain peculiar aptitudes if they are to discharge their mission to the general advantage.... [A]ll the labour organizations will [tend to] be forced to abandon proletarian exclusiveness, and in the choice of their officials to give the preference to persons of an education that is superior alike in economic, legal, technical, and commercial respects.¹³

But this special education and selection process created an elite, and a "continuous enlargement of the gulf which divides the leaders from the masses." The division of labour based on technical specialization and a monopoly of knowledge became rule by a handful of experts. Not by conscious conspiracy, but through an evolution of rational decisions designed to further the ends of the party and labour, "the leaders, who were at first no more than the executive organs of the collective will, soon emancipate themselves from the mass and become independent of its control." Since the leaders would be experts and best suited to rule, it would be their self-perceived "duty as well as their right to put themselves at the head and to lead, not merely as representatives of the party, but as individuals proudly conscious of their own personal value."¹⁴ Size, complexity, efficiency, and action of officials themselves meant that even labour parties would become bureaucratic; as Michels put it,

¹³Michels, 30-47.

¹⁴Michels, 47, 96, 33-36.

"organization implies the tendency to oligarchy."¹⁵

Michels argued that the tendency towards oligarchy would also be a tendency towards reformism. Regardless of their intentions, people put in positions of power would become more conservative. As their tasks became more complicated and numerous, they would lose sight of principles as they concentrated on practical tasks. As paid party or union bureaucrats, workers would be in a different position from the masses they were supposed to represent. Guaranteed a job, a healthy wage, freed from the exploitation of the workplace, assured of a certain status, they leave the proletariat and join the petit bourgeoisie. The material and class interests of the bureaucrats change, and so too does their view of revolution: "What interest for them now the dogma of the social revolution? Their own social revolution has already been effected." As the bureaucrat meets and works with his counterparts in the state and private enterprise, the rough edges of his proletarian origins are polished. Taught from birth to respect and envy those with money, power, and bourgeois culture, he is only too eager to emulate his erstwhile opponents. If he counsels patience and negotiation, the bureaucrat wins their approval, while if he advocates revolution, he can expect only censure and repression. All of these different forces -- social, political, economic, and psychological -- virtually guaranteed that the

¹⁵Michels, 37.

labour and SPD leadership would be conservative.¹⁶

Michels had no hope that bureaucracy could be successfully opposed. Any elite that tried to make the bureaucracy accountable to the mass would soon fall victim to the same forces that corrupted the original leaders. With time, even the creation of challenging elites would be difficult, as the entrenched bureaucratic positions would attract those who aspired to be bureaucrats, and reformist politics would attract reformists. Ultimately, even appeals to union democracy would be little more than cynical ploys of careerists to remain in or to obtain power.

Neither could the masses hope to end their domination by elites. The "law of inertia" would tend to maintain the status quo, as would the force of tradition. The continued success of the organization would require stability and continuity, while the need for expertise in leaders would limit the number of candidates from the ranks. Those who did seek positions and change, especially those with skill and ability, would soon desert the masses. They would either be co-opted into the leadership cadre or would actively strive for it as a better avenue for their talents than the shop floor. The leaders themselves, grown accustomed to their privileged positions, and, equally important, convinced of

¹⁶Beetham, 85-89, addresses this argument succinctly and makes many of the same points; a substantial part of the following discussion is based on his outline. Michels, 199, 291, 319-321, 364.

their value as leaders, would fight any challenges from the shop floor with all the weapons at their disposal: prestige, knowledge, gratitude for past service, control of procedures, committees, and funding, and patronage. Most importantly, the masses would be unable to fight on their own behalf. In Michels's view, the masses were incompetent and cowardly. At best, the masses acting without leaders would be "comparable to a savage and shapeless negro army, which is unable to withstand a single well-disciplined and well-drilled battalion of European soldiers." The masses were largely uninterested in the problems outside their personal lives, and would in any case be unable to understand them. Save for the few leaders who rose to power from a Darwinian natural selection, the working class had "an immense need for direction and guidance." This need, combined with the masses' "profound need to prostrate themselves, not simply before great ideals but also before the individuals who in their eyes incorporate such ideals," meant that the masses would be utterly unable to free themselves from bureaucracy. Indeed, Michels comes close to arguing that they would prefer bureaucracy to freedom.¹⁷

¹⁷It is at this point that Michels's critique separates from the syndicalist analysis, a concept that will be taken up in the last section of this chapter. As Beetham notes, Michels combines left- and right-wing arguments to bolster his claim that oligarchy is inevitable. His disdain of the masses was an important cause of his pessimism, and was no doubt part of the reason he embraced Mussolini's fascism in the 1920s. See Beetham, 84-85. For Michels's conversion to fascism, see Mommsen, 114-116. Michels, 47, 56-57, 73.

Socialism could not solve the dilemma either. While it might be possible to create a mechanism for distributing wealth more equitably, socialism was much more than that. It was also an ideology of democracy. Any socialist government would soon face the same paradox that haunted the SPD. In order to function effectively, the government would have to organize into a hierarchy. The hierarchy would by definition be distinct from the rank and file; it would therefore have its own interests to defend, and these interests would not be the same as the interests of the masses. Conflict between the rulers and the ruled would be inevitable, and again the people would be unable to counter the power of the bureaucracy.

Nor could the rank and file be educated or trained to take responsibility and fight bureaucracy. The masses were victims of an "objective immaturity" that was part of their very nature:

Man is by nature predestined to be guided, and to be guided all the more in proportion as the functions of life undergo division and subdivision. To an enormously greater degree is guidance necessary for the social group.¹⁸

Since he could see no way to avoid rule by bureaucracy, Michels cast his observations as a sociological law, the so-called "iron law of oligarchy": "It is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over

¹⁸Michels, 402-409, 420-422. The quote is from 422.

the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy."¹⁹

Michels's work contains most of the elements of the debate over the labour bureaucracy. Much of the historiography is, explicitly or implicitly, an argument with specific parts of his analysis. The necessity of working-class revolution; the domination of elites; the tendency of leaders to bureaucracy and conservatism; the relationship, both real and ideal, of the masses and the leadership; the autonomy and awareness of the masses: each of these parts of Michels's work is contested. The discussion that follows will outline the response to Michels as a convenient way into the debate. It should be noted that he is more than a straw man: in Political Parties, Michels delivered to his critics a pre-emptive strike of considerable proportion.

The debate on the labour bureaucracy can be roughly divided into Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives.²⁰ Within the non-Marxist camp, two inter-related lines of attack are used. The first takes issue with the role of socialism and the working class, while the other focuses on the definition of democracy.

Selig Perlman, in A Theory of the Labor Movement, argues that Michels's critique is irrelevant. Expanding on John

¹⁹Michels, 418.

²⁰Because much of what follows explicitly engages Michels, I will avoid my own criticisms of his method and his conclusions until the end. See Beetham for an outline of the debates and criticisms of Michels.

Commons, Perlman held that radicalism was not a natural response of labour to capitalism; it was instead an alien ideology foisted on the working class by intellectuals. There was a "natural divergence" between revolution and the "mentality" of trade unions; left to their own devices, workers would evolve their own ideology that was neither revolutionary nor Marxist. The Mannheim congress that delighted Weber and disillusioned Michels was, to Perlman, a positive sign that "the trade unions had emancipated themselves from the hegemony of the intellectual revolutionists...." Having cast off the agitators, the German workers' movement could look after its own interests and move to establish its own economic reforms.²¹

Central to Perlman's view was his belief that capitalism was not at bottom an exploitive economic class relation, but merely a social organization "presided over by a class with an 'effective will to power'." The interests of capital and labour were not opposed; in fact, they had to work together to increase productivity and the well-being of all. In order to support his notion that capital and labour were in a symbiotic, not a parasitic, relationship, Perlman put forward a psychological distinction between the capitalist and the labourer:

In an economic community, there is a separation between those who prefer a secure, though modest return, -- that is to say, a mere livelihood,--

²¹Selig Perlman, ix.

and those who play for big stakes and are willing to assume risk in proportion. The first compose the great bulk of manual workers...while the latter are, of course, the entrepreneurs and the big business men.... The typical manualist is aware of his lack of native capacity for availing himself of economic opportunities as they lie amidst the complex and ever shifting situation of modern business. He knows himself neither for a born taker of risks nor for the possessor of a sufficiently agile mind to feel at home in the midst of the uncertain game of competitive business.²²

Since the inequities of capitalism were rooted in human nature and not in social organization, revolution was irrelevant and harmful. There was no fundamental conflict between the classes that required a struggle to the death. While the labour movement was a "campaign against the absolute rights of private property," its natural goal was not the abolition of private property but the implementation of workplace rules that would reduce its sting. Workers were concerned with equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination; they were not interested in managing industry or society. In Perlman's view,

So long as he may have the freedom founded on the recognition of his right to the job under conditions fixed by collective bargaining, the working-man is content to let the private employer own the capital of industry and continue taking the business risks for the sake of the profits.

Given that labour and capital were both necessary to modern industry, the proper, advanced trade-union philosophy was not "a dogmatic anti-capitalist philosophy, but more and more...a pragmatic faith in industrial government through a co-

²²Perlman, 239.

operation of equally indispensable 'functional' classes."²³ Good labour leaders, therefore, were ones who realized that reformism and corporatism were the proper lessons to be drawn out from the struggles of the working class. Michels argued that the business unionism of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor was proof that they had betrayed the working class. Perlman countered that business unionism succeeded because it had grasped the essential nature of the working class.²⁴

Democracy in the union was not an issue for Perlman. Implicit in his view is a belief that some people have more ability to rule than others, and though they should rule benevolently and without corruption, their power does not violate democracy. To challenge Michels, Perlman constructs a syllogism: democracy must be representative, not participatory; capitalism is not a system of exploitation; therefore, the question "why do revolutionary parties degenerate into bureaucracy and conservatism?" is irrelevant. Oligarchy and conservatism are integral parts of modern society and must be accepted. This liberalism, which foreshadowed structural-functionalism, is rather like the teacher in Candide who asserts that this is the best of all possible worlds, the proof being that noses are obviously and perfectly designed for the wearing of pince-nez, and God has

²³Perlman, 4, 156, 290, 304-318.

²⁴Michels, 326; Perlman, 154-214.

provided us with pince-nez. Unfortunately, the larger issue of myopia is ignored.

More seriously, this analysis can be attacked on several grounds. Most importantly, Perlman's assertion that capitalism is not an exploitive social relationship is false, and it is based more on wishful thinking than on objective study. This is not the place to provide a Readers' Digest version of Capital, but it must be pointed out that the wealth and power of the capitalist did not spring from his psychological ability and simple "will to power." The ownership of the means of production was not granted, even by default, by workers who realized that they were not high rollers or financial schemers. Producers were separated from the means of production violently; in Marx's graphic phrase, capitalist relations came into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."²⁵ Ownership of the means of production confers great power on its owner, not the least of which is the "right" to appropriate the surplus value produced by workers. Profit is wealth created by workers that is taken from them; this is the basis of capitalism. Exploitation is the very foundation of capitalism. Furthermore, even if Perlman's psychological explanation is accepted, we need to ask if the capitalist environment itself creates such differences in abilities and

²⁵Karl Marx, Capital, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983, I, 712.

character.

Perlman's reading of the working class is also debatable. He is in agreement with most Marxists on one point, that is, that the struggles of workers must be read and interpreted by outside observers. But it is by no means clear that Perlman's reading is more objective or clearer than a left-wing one. A strike for higher wages may indicate a simple economism that views labour's role as a struggle for "more"; it may also indicate a powerful belief in the need for a radical re-distribution of wealth. Much depends on the eye of the beholder. Perlman is on stronger grounds when he argues that socialism must be injected into the working class by intellectuals, a position he shares with Lenin. But the lack of an explicit socialist ideology in the working class may be explained in a number of ways. It may show the existence of a home-made worker ideology of reform, as Perlman argues. But it may show the power of a conservative union bureaucracy, or the ability of the ruling class to shape and mould public opinion. Perlman's generalized reading of the working class, made without specific reference to particular issues and actions, is hardly as self-evident as he suggests. Furthermore, his history is highly selective. Perlman was writing in the 1920s, a period of relative labour quiescence. But the late 1910s saw a very different labour movement, one in which socialism and syndicalism were on the agenda. The decade following his work was also one in

which radicalism was part of the working class's program. The successes of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Socialist Party of America, and the Communist Party suggest that reformism is only a part of working-class ideology, and it too may require an injection from outside labour's ranks.

The kind of struggles Perlman observed also coloured his analysis. His brand of institutional history was progressive in its day, but more recent work has outlined working-class action at different levels and for different issues. Struggles for control and decision-making power were not part of Perlman's institutional history, but they suggest a different kind of consciousness than he was willing to ascribe to the labour movement. Challenges to the state, in the form of mass strikes, political action, even armed resistance, and challenges to capital, ranging from occupations of factories and sabotage, indicate that a more militant and radical ideology existed in the working class.²⁶ This is not to say that the American working class was in fact a class-conscious force that actively fought for socialism. It is to say that at different times and in

²⁶For an overview of the competing and conflicting consciousness of the working class in America, see David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labour: The Workplace, the State and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. See also Sidney M. Peck, The Rank-and-File Leader. New Haven: College and University Press Services, 1963, for a dated but interesting study of working-class consciousness in America in the 1950s. The study indicates a much higher level of consciousness than many commentators have assumed.

different places, different strategies and visions evolved. Perlman's generalizations are simply inadequate and unconvincing.

Seymour Martin Lipset represents a second anti-Marxist position in the labour bureaucracy debate. He explicitly challenges Michels's view that the development of bureaucracy is inevitable by providing a counter-example of a democratic union. In Union Democracy, a structural-functionalist project written in the 1950s, Lipset maintains that the International Typographical Union (ITU) "does not fit the pattern" of elite control outlined by Michels.²⁷

But Lipset can only make this claim by changing the terms of the debate. First, in best Cold War fashion, he argues that oligarchy is the same as one-party rule. Second, he suggests that the conflict for power is between incumbent officials and an organized opposition that seeks to take their place. Michels, however, held that the essential contradiction was between officials and the masses. Arguing that the conflict is between incumbents and would-be leaders, Lipset defines democracy as a choice of leaders. Combining this with the definition of oligarchy as one-party rule,

²⁷Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow, James S. Coleman, Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956, 3. Obviously, a huge literature along the lines of Perlman & Lipset exists. Talcott Parsons and Daniel Bell are two of the more prominent observers who have put forward the liberal position. Perlman remains the most insightful and interesting of these defenders of the status quo.

Lipset suggests that the two-party system of the American government is the democratic model that would satisfy Michels. He then finds a union with a two-party structure-- the ITU -- and argues that it has successfully avoided bureaucracy.²⁸

In fact, Lipset has only provided a model of rotating elites. Nowhere does he demonstrate that the ITU membership has real control over its leaders beyond a formal choice between competing bureaucracies. His assumption that the American two-party system is the best model of democracy is little more than Cold War sleight of hand. He does not show that the two-party system is democratic, or more democratic than a one-party, multi-party, or a no-party system; this position is only asserted. We are left with a circular argument: the two-party system is democratic because democracy is a two-party system. The tautology tells more about the hidden assumptions of structural-functionalism than about union bureaucracy.

Lipset's work does offer some insight into the labour bureaucracy, if only through the back door. In constructing a two-party model, he suggests that there is a tension between leaders and led, that there may be a substantial

²⁸Lipset, 3-16, 80. It should be noted that Lipset's methodology is open to question. Despite its alleged objectivity, the questions given to unionists allowed only a narrow range of responses. No margin is left for the impact of the questioners--all professionals--on the respondents, or for the cultural milieu of McCarthyism, which may have evoked tamer responses.

difference between the interests of those in power and those outside. In addition, the period in which he was writing saw Communist unionists being purged from bureaucratic positions in the labour movement. Lipset concluded that there was a connection between bureaucracy and radicalism.²⁹ The tendency of leaders to move to conservatism was not inevitable; indeed, radicals could best maintain their position if they controlled the bureaucracy:

The radical changes that accompany social revolution, or on a smaller scale the transformation of a trade union into a political weapon, put severe strains on group loyalties and create a potential for strong membership hostility toward the leadership. A high level of controlled and manipulated rank-and-file participation is perhaps the only way, given the leadership's purpose, of draining off or redirecting the discontent created by violent changes in traditional patterns and relationship.³⁰

The important point in this passage is not Lipset's belief that radicals had to force their views onto a resisting working class, a notion he shares with Perlman. Rather, it is the observation that radicals could seize power and maintain it through the control of the bureaucracy. Conservatism was not an inevitable part of leadership, as Michels asserted. This suggests that in studying the bureaucracy, it is helpful to separate ideology from process; it suggests

²⁹This is a somewhat different position from Perlman's intellectuals, who were seen as being completely outside the labour movement. The CP bureaucrats were not outsiders in the same sense.

³⁰Lipset, 79.

that there is no necessary causal connection between the two. In short, conservatism and radicalism are opposites, as are democracy and bureaucracy. Combinations of these two sets are possible: a bureaucracy may be radical or conservative, as might a democracy; a radical might be democratic or bureaucratic, as might a conservative.

The non-Marxist analysis of the labour bureaucracy has tried to resolve the problems presented by Michels from a very different starting point. Using an a priori assumption, it is denied that radicalism is a legitimate concern of the working class. Reformism is the proper course to take. In order to win reforms, leaders must be able to compromise and negotiate; this means they must have the power to act as they see fit in a given circumstance. Since most people cannot look after their own interests, in Perlman's view, or the demands of efficiency require a limited representative form of administration, in Lipset's view, real democracy is impossible. It is therefore meaningless to talk about a separation of interests between leaders and led based on power, as no other system is possible. Democracy must be defined as some sort of rule by elites combined with certain guarantees of elections; the exercise of power over the masses does not constitute bureaucracy.³¹ But this attack does not refute

³¹See Beetham, 89, for this argument. Several other liberal works fit this model, among them the Webbs' The History of Trade Unions, and William M. Leiserson, American Trade Union Democracy. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. Both hold that union democracy must be representative

Michels, for in changing the definition so radically the liberals have destroyed democracy in order to save it as a useful category.

Marxists have approached the problem of bureaucracy in a different way. Lenin and other Bolsheviks have argued that bureaucrats are defined not by their power, but by their ideology. A distinction is made between leaders who serve the interests of the working class and those who betray it by abandoning socialism: the former are legitimate and their power does not constitute bureaucracy, for they act in the name of the working class; the latter are bureaucrats who abuse their power. Thus, while agreeing that the privileged position of the bureaucrats could lead to conservatism, Lenin argued that the working-class organizations should be controlled by the leaders of the revolutionary party to safeguard against conservatism and bureaucracy. Like Perlman, Lenin believed that socialism was not a natural outgrowth of working-class experience. The working class has to be led and pushed onto the proper road. In What is to be Done?, Lenin outlined his view of the working class and the necessity of a vanguard party. Examining the riots and machine smashing in Russia in the 1860s and 1870s, Lenin held

for unions to play their proper role as agents of reform within capitalism. See also Larry James, Power in a Trade Union: The Role of the District Committee in the AUEW. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, for a discussion of "Polyarchy," or a system of checks and balances. This view holds the same problems as other liberal views.

that this

"spontaneous element," in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form....[T]he workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began, I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance....But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of struggle.

The strikes of the 1890s, with their concrete demands and better orchestration, "represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo."³² His observations led him to his oft-quoted dictum that revolutionary consciousness would have to be brought to the working class from without it, for despite its embryonic groping, the working class "is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass this or that necessary labour law, etc."³³ Since the ideology of the ruling class was largely in place, with deep roots and powerful means of dissemination, the "spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads precisely to its subordination to bourgeois ideology...."³⁴ This meant that revolutionary intellectuals, usually of bourgeois origin,

³²V.I. Lenin, What is to be Done? Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1978, 37-38. Lenin wrote many things about trade unions, the party, and workers. I have used these passages because they accurately sum up Bolshevik theory and practice.

³³Lenin, 38.

³⁴Lenin, 50-52.

would have to take socialism to the working class. The party, a smaller organization restricted to those with the proper consciousness, would act as the legitimate leaders of the working class. Bukharin outlined the relationship of the party to the working class:

A class is a group of persons connected by reason of their common situation in production...in other words, by common interests (class interests). But it would be absurd to suppose that every class is a thoroughly unified whole, all parts being of equal importance, with Tom, Dick, and Harry all on the same level. In the modern working class, for instance, there is no doubt much inequality in brain-power and ability....The proletariat is unequal in its consciousness as it is unequal in its position....This inequality of the class is the reason for the existence of the party....As a matter of actual fact, the struggle of the working class is inevitable; this struggle must be guided; this guidance is the more necessary, since the opponent is powerful and cunning, and fighting him is a serious matter. We naturally expect to find the entire class led by that section of it that is most advanced, best schooled, most united: the party.

The party is not the class; in fact, it may be but a small part of the class, as the head is but a small part of the body....The party is simply the thing that best expresses the interests of the class.³⁵

Oligarchy or bureaucracy as such did not figure, and socialism and democracy were not the same thing. Control of the masses by a small elite was vital to ensure that the working class learned and adhered to the proper revolutionary path.

³⁵Nikolai Bukharin, Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology, (1921), Reprint, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969, 304-307. This book was long considered a Marxist and Bolshevik classic. The corporatist metaphor that sees the working class as the body and the party as the head is illustrative.

Democracy would come later, when the "incompetence of the masses will disappear" as the result of training and education.³⁶

What was to be made then of the leaders of the SPD and the German labour movement, of the British trade unionists, or the American business unionists? By defining bureaucracy by ideology, not power over the rank and file, the Bolsheviks could denounce these leaders as bureaucrats because they did not take up a revolutionary line. A materialist explanation was given for their treason. Karl Radek noted in 1916 that the "top layer" of the German and British working class was relatively well-paid and secure. This "labour aristocracy" was represented and protected by the labour bureaucracy at the expense of the rest of the working class and exploited workers in other nations. As the result of their relative wealth and security,

socialism became a far-off ideal or simply an empty slogan. Their daily work was limited to a struggle for minor gains. They judge politics on how it affects this struggle. They resist every attempt at constructing a mass movement that would enable the broad masses of the working class to secure political rights and improvements in living conditions. They protest against such "revolutionary romanticism," claiming that such actions are impossible.... For this reason the entire labor bureaucracy supported the revisionist policy of rapprochement with the bourgeoisie.³⁷

Similarly, Lenin argued that British imperialism, through "1)

³⁶Bukharin, 310-311.

³⁷Karl Radek, "The SPD: Unity or Split?," in Lenin's Struggle, 462-463.

vast colonies and 2) monopoly profits (due to her monopoly position in the world market)" was responsible for "the (temporary) victory of opportunism in the English labour movement." The superprofits of imperialism allowed the capitalists to "devote a part (and not a small one, at that!) of these superprofits to bribe their own workers to create something like an alliance...between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists against the other countries."³⁸

Conservatism and bureaucracy then had their roots in the material condition of the period and not in the power and privilege of the bureaucratic positions themselves, as Michels argued. It was their position as a wealthier "caste" that determined the consciousness of bureaucrats, and this consciousness determined their label of bureaucrat.³⁹

This materialist explanation of bureaucracy as ideology ignores the criterion of power as the defining characteristic of bureaucracy. The Bolshevik analysis, like the liberal one, argues that some elite is inevitable; it just changes the definition of what a "good" elite should do. It leads to a moral justification of Bolshevik control of the labour

³⁸Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," Collected Works, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981, Volume 23, 112, 114.

³⁹Gregory Zinoviev, "The Social Roots of Opportunism," in Lenin's Struggle, 484. See 486-496 for an appraisal similar to Radek's. For a Trotskyist version that is virtually identical, see Tom Kerry, Workers, Bosses, and Bureaucrats: A Socialist View of Labor Struggles Since the 1930s. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980.

movement that is best appreciated for its sophistry, not its clarity. It also offers a not very convincing rebuttal to Michels's argument that oligarchy is inevitable. Since the positions of the labour aristocrats and their "blood brothers," the labour bureaucrats, were based on the temporary high profits of capitalism, the expected decline of the system meant they could not expect to remain in power forever.⁴⁰ In attributing power solely to economics, the Bolsheviks could also try to deflect criticism of their party as a bureaucracy that controlled the working class. Since power came from ownership of the means of production, and the state was a tool of these owners, Bukharin could argue that a classless society was possible, for a ruling stratum or elite could not develop in a socialist society:

[C]ommunist society is a society with highly developed, increased productive forces. Consequently, it can have no economic basis for the creation of its peculiar ruling class. For -- even assuming the power of the administrators to be stable, as does Michels -- this power will be the power of the specialist over machines, not over men. How could they, in fact, realize this power with regard to men? Michels neglects the fundamental decisive fact that each administratively dominant position has hitherto been an envelope for economic exploitation.

In short, "the society of the future will not involve private property, or the formation of such private property, and it is precisely this private property that constitutes this

⁴⁰Radek, 465, 467. Zinoviev's remark about "blood brothers" is found in Zinoviev, 492.

basis of the class."⁴¹ It is clear that Bukharin's vision of the socialist society does not do away with managers; in his words,

We know that the classes themselves have risen organically...from the division of labor, from the organizational functions that had become technically necessary for the further evolution of society. Obviously, in the society of the future, such organizational work will also be necessary.⁴²

But because these organizers do not own the means of production and do not personally profit from them, they do not form a class and thus do not rule. But this is really a case of special pleading. For the central issue is not the formal, ritual ownership of the factories or of land. It is the issue of control over production and expropriation of surplus value. Marxists are quite willing to grant the truth of this when applied to capitalists, but deny it when applied to themselves. Managers of corporations in capitalist societies may not own the means of production either; indeed, they are often productive workers who sell their labour power. But their control of the administration of capital and labour surely puts them in the capitalist class. The administration of large capital, even if managed in the name of the people, gives the administrator power.⁴³ The administrators may not

⁴¹Bukharin, 309-311.

⁴²Bukharin, 309.

⁴³Michels, 399. A great deal has been written on the precise role of the manager and other white collar workers. Two collections are helpful: The New Working Class? White-Collar Workers and Their Organizations. eds. Richard Hyman

form part of a new class -- Marxists are not agreed on the name for this phenomenon -- but they do stand in a position of power and authority over the workers in the factory. These managers must govern, and it is by no means certain that their notions of efficiency and proper production coincide with the interests of the masses. Still less can the party assume that it acts in the interests of the working class in a way different from the bureaucracy of the labour movement.⁴⁴ Power over others, stemming from alleged authority as expert or interpreter of the working class and presumed laws of history, or from control of the state, or from physical force, or from control over the means of production, is still antithetical to democracy. When this power is held by officials who are not responsible to the masses, it is called bureaucracy. The Bolshevik analysis of

and Robert Price. London: Macmillan Press, 1983; Between Labor and Capital. ed. Pat Walker. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1978. For an interesting discussion of the convergence of Marxism with radical elite theory, see Frank Parkin, "Social stratification," in A History of Sociological Analysis. Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet, eds. New York: Basic Books, 1978, 599-632. Unlike the structural-functionalist argument, or the "authority" argument of Ralf Dahrendorf, some elite theory starts with the concept of class and sees it as fundamental. The debate is in some ways similar to the one on the autonomy of the state, and has similar consequences for Marxism, in that both suggest fundamental cleavages in society apart from that of class. See Parkin, Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique. London: Tavistock, 1979. For the need to bring together Weberian and Marxist insights to fully understand bureaucracy, see David Beetham, Bureaucracy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

⁴⁴Michels, 405-406.

the labour bureaucracy refuses to recognize this, and tries to avoid it by insisting on an economistic interpretation of power and the identification of bureaucracy with ideology rather than process.⁴⁵ Rather than throw out Marx, however, succeeding generations have refined the left-wing critique of bureaucracy, giving it new life. More subtle and explanatory, these new arguments have set out new terms for the debate.

⁴⁵Clearly there is some self-interest in their argument. But we can be as charitable to the Bolsheviks as Zinoviev was to the SPD, and assume that they too labour under the self-deception that the party's interests are the same as the working class's. They may likewise believe that they are sacrificing themselves for the common good in taking up the reins of power. This is not, however, the same as democracy.

There has been no mention of the anti-democratic practices in "actually existing socialism," but there is no shortage of evidence to indicate that the Bolsheviks were consistent with their theory. Two examples are indicative: in 1918, before the exigencies of the civil war, Lenin called for workers to learn "iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader." Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," Collected Works, Volume 27, 237-277. See also Trotsky's praise of one-man management in Terrorism and Communism. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970. On page 170, he notes approvingly that "no organization except the army has ever controlled man with such severe compulsion as does the [Soviet] state organization of the working class." Trotsky did of course denounce the Soviet bureaucracy after he was dumped from its ranks. But his earlier writings, and, more importantly, his actions while in power, show his later polemics to be little more than sour grapes. Trotsky's about-face is perhaps best explained by the observation of Max Nomad, who suggested that "a fallen dictator's abhorrence of tyranny is as permanent as a sick tiger's aversion to meat." Max Nomad, A Skeptic's Political Dictionary and Handbook for the Disenchanted, New York: Bookman Associates, 1953, 121.

CHAPTER TWO

A New Direction for the Debate

Disillusioned with the Soviet experiment, western historians and sociologists begin to rethink the tenets of Marxism. More recently, Marxist sociologists and historians have put forward more complex and subtle analyses of the nature of the labour bureaucracy. Dissatisfied with the simple equation of higher wages + security = reformism and/or bureaucracy, these writers have paid more attention to the problems of trade unionism and power in a capitalist society.

In the late 1940s, C. Wright Mills noted a dilemma that faced the labour movement. Trade unions, whether the leader knew it or not, "and often he seems not to know," were fundamentally at odds with capital. The fight for the closed shop was a fight against freedom of contract; fights for improvements in conditions and control encroached upon the alleged rights of management; fights for higher wages attacked the "uncontrolled sway of property." But instead of acting as a force that was opposed to capital, union leaders were, sometimes tacitly, sometimes openly, seeking to cooperate with it. In return for some reforms -- union recognition, dues check-offs, grievance procedures, explicit work rules, stability and higher wages -- unions were conceding too much ground to employers. Signing the collective agreement meant that workplace protests could no longer be made by the workers themselves. Slow-downs, deputations,

wild-cats, study sessions, in fact any work stoppage or disruption, was now illegal during the life of a collective agreement. Protest could only be made through the grievance procedure, and arbitration was interpreted by lawyers and industrial relations experts who were committed to the status quo of capitalism and capitalist law. While the union's rights and obligations were clearly defined, every contract, whether it contained a "management's rights" clause or not, gave the employer all residual and non-specified rights. This meant that only actions that actually violated a specific clause of the contract could be grieved. If workers protested against actions that were not clear violations of the agreement, or if they protested in ways other than the grievance procedure, the union was held legally responsible. To avoid law suits, fines, and even jail, union leaders had to act as policemen, making sure that the workers obeyed the letter and spirit of the contract. Now the union, not management, had to prevent and end work stoppages. The very processes and procedures that unions had fought for now meant that their struggle was severely limited and that the leaders and members could be pitted against each other. In short, the leaders, in seeking to protect their members and the union, had embarked on a course that was contrary to the best interests of the membership. Some leaders had openly sought such a course; others had drifted into it. In any case, these "new men of power" had to move to the left and democra-

tize the union, industry, and society. Only in this way could the interests of the working class be fulfilled.¹

By the 1960s and 1970s, it was clear to a new generation of activists and radicals that the "new men of power" had not lived up to the responsibility Mills had charged them with. Identifying the bureaucracy as the top level of old-time union leaders, writers focused on the violations of union constitutions, the subversion of the electoral process, and the corruption symbolized by Jimmy Hoffa. The accounts were largely journalistic; the early literature set out little analysis beyond painting wealthy union leaders as sell-outs and crooks.² Later work offered more complex analyses that took Mills as a starting point, and looked for structural, rather than personal, reasons for the bureaucratic union leadership.

Stan Weir's work is typical of this school. Weir argued that the unions of the CIO were led into what he called "institutionalized bargaining" by naive or corrupt union officials. Institutional bargaining came about when all the corporations in a given industry agreed together to recognize the union and begin collective bargaining. Until all agreed to recognize the union, individual companies were not forced

¹C. Wright Mills, The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948, 7-9, 224-229, 239-265.

²See Burton Hall, ed., Autocracy and Insurgency in Organized Labor, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1972, for a collection of essays on this theme.

to bargain in good faith, and could try to fight the unions. But a militant and radical rank and file created chaos: wildcat strikes, sit-downs, and slow-downs plagued industry. At that point, employers recognized that the refusal to meet with the unions was costing too much; at the same time, their prolonged and often violent rejection of organization meant that the corporations had lost their recognized authority to control and discipline the work force. They needed a substitute authority, and believed they could use the union leadership to maintain order on the shop floor. Now eager to accept unions, the companies agreed to sit down and bargain, confident that they could institutionalize the union leadership and the members. Once the contract was signed, the union leadership had to be concerned with the employers' well-being. This meant backing off during negotiations, working towards industry-wide agreements to ensure equal advantage to individual companies, and, most importantly, making sure the militant work force went along with the new conservatism. This put the leadership in direct conflict with the rank and file, and meant it would have to assume bureaucratic control if it were to remain in power.³

³Stan Weir, "The Conflict in American Unions and the Resistance to Alternative Ideas from the Rank and File," in Workers' Struggles, Past and Present: A "Radical America" Reader, ed. James Green, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983, 251-268. Radical America has advanced a number of variations of this theme in its pages. Staughton Lynd has made similar arguments, most recently in "Trade Unionism in the USA," New Left Review 184 (November/December 1990), 76-87.

Weir's argument is somewhat overstated. Borrowing heavily from the work of Gabriel Kolko and James Weinstein, it sees every reform and advance as the result of a conscious scheme on the part of corporate leadership working with governments and unions to create stability and growth that all agree is desirable. Reforms and advances are seen not as the result of class conflict, but as the result of the collaboration of elites.⁴ Certainly capital is often very flexible, and it has shown a remarkable ability to adapt pressures for change to forms that are less dangerous to it. But this flexibility is not the same as cunning or conspiracy; it is more a bowing to the inevitable. It is clear that the industries organized by the CIO in the 1930s and 1940s did not have a united vision of institutionalizing the unions. The Ford company, for example, resisted unionization for three years after the other manufacturers had capitulated; likewise, "Little Steel" fought the Steelworkers to a standstill even though "Big Steel" settled. Furthermore, the far-sightedness attributed to capital is questionable. The inability of the companies to unite in the face of the union onslaught suggests that they do not always have the foresight or interest to develop joint plans that include the sophisti-

⁴Gabriel Kolko, The Triumph of Conservatism, New York: The Free Press, 1963. James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, Boston: Beacon Press, 1968. For a Canadian analysis along similar lines, see Alvin Finkel, Business and Social Reform in the Thirties, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1979.

cated notion of corporatism. And it is by no means self-evident that corporate leaders, government officials, and labour leaders were in substantial agreement over the desirability of tripartism as earlier and later periods of repression suggest. Most of the "solutions" to labour conflict were in fact put in place by the liberal state, not capital. Indeed, capital has fought, and continues to fight, the Rand formula, social welfare legislation, and the state's guarantees of union rights. Moreover, the "post-war consensus" and the reforms of the 1940s and 1950s have been under attack in the 1980s and 1990s.

The portrayal of the union is similarly too rigid. Weir identifies bureaucracy as an upper stratum of leadership that differs from the rank and file by class interest and ideology. As in the Bolshevik analysis, this definition does not take into account the concept of power. Bureaucrats are defined by their policy, not their relationship to democratic control. Good leaders are those who assume the working class is radical; bureaucrats are bad leaders who assume the working class is, or ought to be, conservative. Weir's underlying assumption, in the manner of other Trotskyists, is that the rank and file is always more militant than the leadership. But this is a dubious assertion. One critic has noted that while there are many cases where leaders restrained a militant membership, there are an equal number of cases where militant leaders had to drag along reluctant,

more conservative rank and file members. John Bodnar has collected a volume of oral testimony that shows persuasively that many CIO rank and filers were not interested in revolution. They favoured a pragmatic bread and butter unionism, and supported Communist organizers and leaders because they were better tacticians. The rank and file did not support those who talked about revolution. In the 1940s and 1950s, a "white" cadre was able to muster considerable rank-and-file support to oust the "red" leadership of the IWA, the Boilermakers, and the UAW in Canada and the United States. Whatever the merits of either faction, and even allowing for a great deal of skulduggery by the "whites," the purges are a clear example of a less radical membership repudiating a left leadership. Where the "reds" held on, as in the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers' Union and the United Electrical Workers, it was their skills as unionists, not their political views, that kept them in power. Canadian Communist Jack Scott made this clear, declaring to mineworkers who questioned his beliefs, "My politics are none of your business, unless my politics affect my union activities."⁵

⁵Jonathan Zeitlin, "Trade Unions and Job Control: A critique of rank and filism," Society for the Study of Labour History, 46 (Spring 1983) 7; John Bodnar, Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Most histories of the Communist Party make similar claims. Bryan D. Palmer, ed., Jack Scott: A Communist Life. St. John's, Newfoundland: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988, 101.

In attributing the label bureaucracy to a top level of union leaders who actively oppose the real interests of the working class, Weir does not go far beyond an analysis that views the bureaucrats as simple traitors or "sell-outs." The other side of this argument is that the rank and file is powerless to fight against measures it clearly recognizes as being against its best interests. This may be true in some cases, especially when a corrupt leadership has no qualms about the use of thugs to maintain its control. But in many instance, it is not obvious that workers either acquiesce or see their interests as opposed to the policy of the leadership.

James Hinton and Richard Price have put forward similar arguments for the British union movement. Unlike Weir, they see the move to bureaucracy occurring in the late nineteenth century, as the push for de-skilling led rank-and-filers to find new ways to fight for job control. But they were hampered in their struggle by the union leadership, which sought refuge in centralized conciliation boards, larger bargaining units, national agreements, and centralized unions. The rank and file, they argue, fought the bureaucratizing efforts of union leaders as they fought for job control.⁶ But recent work has contradicted important

⁶James Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973; Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1867-1974, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983; Richard Price, Masters, Unions, and Men: Work Control in

elements of their theory. In his examination of British railway unions, Tony Adams has found that there is no evidence to "suggest that the 'rank and file' or indeed union activists on the railways opposed centralized conciliation schemes," while the executive of the National Union of Railwaymen was pressured into centralized bargaining by the District Councils. And it was left-wing activists outside the union bureaucracy who pushed for centralized bargaining, for it would give the union greater clout and weaken sectional interests in favour of industrial and class consciousness. Far from union leaders, the state, and business being in agreement over the virtues of institutionalized bargaining, Adams argues that the rail companies opposed it, and were forced into nation-wide bargaining by the unions and the state. Similarly, Jonathan Zeitlin has argued that in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, centralization was promoted by a "socialist-led 'rank and file' campaign," while local autonomy was defended by levels of the official hierarchy and by "formal representative bodies within the union itself, rather than by 'informal' groups on the shop floor." Their research has led both Adams and Zeitlin to suggest that it is impossible to "draw a clear line of demarcation between trade

union officials and the rank and file."⁷

Richard Hyman has tried to accommodate some of these objections while still maintaining that union leaders tend to act as policemen and tend to incorporate unions into capitalist society. In order to present a united front and coordinate effective action, he suggests, unions must formalize some control over the membership. In order to achieve their collective ends, the members must be able to apply some pressure to reluctant fellow workers; at the very least, the union must be able to decide and act on policies established for the good of all. Hyman calls for a re-formulation of Michels: "who says organization says, firstly discipline, secondly routinisation." From the union's beginning, then, there is a tension between leaders and led, between the use of "power for the members" and "power over the members." Outside of a revolutionary situation, unions must, by the very nature of the bargaining process, come to some kind of accommodation with capital. In addition, the work process itself creates conflicts on the shop floor that cannot be resolved by the grievance procedure or sophisticated managerial techniques. The day-to-day alienation and exploitation of the workers means they will periodically strike back

⁷Tony Adams, "Leadership and Oligarchy: British Rail Unions, 1914-1922," Studies in History and Politics, 5 (1986), 23-45; Zeitlin, "Trade Unions." See also Zeitlin, "Shop floor bargaining and the state: a contradictory relationship," Shop Floor Bargaining and the State: Historical and Comparative Perspectives, eds. Steve Tolliday and Jonathan Zeitlin, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

spontaneously, sometimes united and organized with specific grievances, sometimes not. The union, however, must intervene to quell the illegal action and uphold the contract. This may mean repressing militants; it may mean coercing conservatives. Other pressures, more subtle than a desire to sell-out, come to bear on union leaders. They have a responsibility to make sure the union survives, and this may encourage conservatism. It is especially liable to "induce resistance to objectives or forms of action which unduly antagonize employers or the state and thus risk violent confrontation." Since union officers must come to terms with employers at the bargaining table and during grievance procedures, they have an ongoing relationship with their counterparts across the table. It is often useful to encourage a certain stability in the relationship, and thus there is a built-in tendency to go along with the "rules of the game." Finally, leadership positions were, at least in part, created to put experts at the head of the union, for the best interests of the collectivity. In order to expand and maintain their positions, leaders come to define trade union activity in ways that emphasize expertise and hierarchy: they tend to stress "professional competence" rather than mass action to resolve problems and advance the union cause. This has been reinforced by the state's use of complex legislation, government labour boards, and legal arbitration, all of which require specialists and experts.

These forces may intensify and reinforce each other; together, they pressure leaders to move towards reformism and bureaucratic control over the membership. In this view, the problems attributed to the labour bureaucracy are often problems inherent to trade unionism in capitalist society. Hyman goes so far as to suggest, in language similar to that of incorporation thesis critics, that

there is an important sense in which the problem of "bureaucracy" denotes not so much a distinct stratum of personnel as a relationship which permeates the whole practice of trade unionism. "Bureaucracy" is in large measure a question of the differential distribution of expertise and activism: of the dependence of the mass of union membership on the initiative and strategic experience of a relatively small cadre of leadership -- both "official" and "unofficial." Such dependence may be deliberately fostered by an officialdom which strives to maintain a monopoly of information, experience, and negotiating opportunities, and to minimise and control the collective contacts among the membership. But...[this] constitutes a problem even in the case of a cadre of militant lay activists sensitive to the need to encourage the autonomy and initiative of the membership. Hence the predicament of [even] the stewards [who are]..."torn between the forces of representation and bureaucratization."⁸

Hyman's reformulation is nearly identical to that of

⁸Richard Hyman, Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction, London: Macmillan, 1975, 64-93; Hyman, "The Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism: Recent Tendencies and Some Problems for Theory," Capital and Class, 8 (Summer 1979), 54-67. The block quote may be found on 61. Zeitlin, "Trade Unions," 7. See also Hyman, "Officialdom and opposition: Leadership and rank and file in Trade Unions," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History 46 (Spring 1983), 7. For an excellent summary of much of the debate, see John Kelly, Trade Unions and Socialist Politics, London: Verso, 1988, especially Chapter 7, and the "Suggestions and Debates" in International Review of Social History, Volume 34, Number 1 (1989), 42-102.

Zeitlin, who writes "Externally, trade unions are torn between the demands of opposition and accommodation; internally, between those of centralisation and mobilisation." The net effect of this refined statement of the incorporation thesis has been, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm, to destroy the theory of the labour bureaucracy as a "conflict between a theoretically militant rank and file and the theoretically conservative union leadership."⁹ It has also made an important distinction between rank-and-file activity and the (usually) left-wing opposition of factions acting in the name of the rank and file. The model of competing elites is a more accurate description of this factional opposition than the dichotomy of leaders versus members. But in refining the incorporation argument, its supporters have done away with much of its explanatory power. If bureaucracy is a only "tendency" or a "tension" that ebbs and flows, how are we to define bureaucrats? Since leaders cannot simply assert their authority, but, in the words of Zeitlin, must continually "re-establish their claim on the active loyalty of the members," is there any conflict between officials and rank and file? The debate appears to have been refined out of existence, and Zeitlin has argued that the notion of a fundamental split between rank and file and leadership is "fundamentally unsatisfactory and should be abandoned

⁹Cited in "Discussion," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 46 (Spring 1983), 7.

outright."¹⁰ However, it may be that reports of the death of the labour bureaucrat have been somewhat exaggerated.

The debate on the labour bureaucracy has recently concluded that it is not useful, or even possible, to think in terms of a fundamental split between leaders and led. Nonetheless, I would argue that though there may not be an ideological or political difference between the two there is a very real distinction to be made using power, the ability to make others do what they would not have done otherwise, to draw the line between bureaucrats and the rank and file.

This argument draws upon the anarchist critique of power, especially that of Michael Bakunin. It does so not to abandon historical materialism as liberals often do, but to extend it. Alvin Gouldner and John Clark have argued that Bakunin was the first critical, in fact the first post-Marxist, while Anthony D'Agostino has shown that the doctrines of Marxism and anarchism have never been "hermetically sealed compartments."¹¹ If, however, the distinction between

¹⁰Zeitlin, "Trade Unions," 7.

¹¹Gouldner, Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, especially chapters 6 and 7. Gouldner argues that "Bakuninism and Marxism cannot be understood as two adversaries," 187. John Clark, "Marx, Bakunin, and the Problem of Social Transformation," Telos, 42 (Winter 1979-80), suggests that libertarian Marxists "whether they call the result Marxism or not...reach a position that seems in many ways more in the spirit of Bakunin than Marx," 97. Anthony D'Agostino, Marxism and the Russian Anarchists, San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977, chapter 1. Since many writers have erroneously believed that Bakunin held to a doctrine of pure free will and disliked historical material-

the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats is to be made, some points must first be clarified.

First, the contention that the leadership is democratic because it must continually seek support and loyalty is false. Obtaining consent from the ruled is not the same as democracy. Even dictatorships must get some consent from the masses, a rather different scenario from actual control by the collectivity. Furthermore, examples of local leaders fighting centralization are not really comments on democracy and bureaucracy; they are more akin to the struggles of feudal barons against the king. Zeitlin's argument that leaders must woo their voters is essentially a return to the liberal vision of formal elections and responsible leadership.¹²

Second, the labour bureaucracy cannot be identified by ideology or certain policies of reform or conservatism. Leaders may be left or right, as may members. Nor can militancy be the defining characteristic. Hyman has argued persuasively that a tendency towards less militant action does affect the leadership, but it is not inevitable, and may not be contrary to the wishes of the rank and file, though it

ism, it is necessary to point out that Bakunin himself criticized Marx for being "too metaphysical" and for abandoning materialism when he talked of dialectics. Bakunin saw himself as following in Marx's footsteps, and acknowledged his intellectual debt to him.

¹²Zeitlin, "Trade Unions," 7.

may be contrary to the wishes of a political faction.¹³

Third, the bureaucracy cannot be defined solely by its relationship to incorporation. While unions are usually agents only for reform, this is an issue separate from bureaucracy. Some leaders have moved quickly and openly to reach an accommodation with capital; others have done so reluctantly, or in the absence of a militant rank and file, by default. Hyman has argued rightly that this is a problem inherent in trade unionism, and it cannot be pinned squarely on the bureaucracy. The rank and file has not always acted as the implacable foe of incorporation, and its conservatism -- a tendency as marked as its radicalism -- has sometimes pushed leaders to see the contract as the only means of guaranteeing rights and union protection.

If the bureaucracy does have a consistent ideology and program, it is more profound and subtle than most incorporation theorists have argued. It is in the bureaucrats' belief that the working class must be managed, that the masses cannot determine their own struggles. This deep-rooted position is common in the work of every theorist of the labour bureaucracy, from Adams to Hyman to Michels to Zeitlin. Liberals are quick to argue that hierarchy is necessary, but Marxist writers are in a quandary that weakens their position. They cannot denounce the principle of

¹³Hyman, "Officialdom and Opposition"; Hyman, Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction, passim.

leadership, for they are committed to a specific political agenda that can only be realized by a working class united in a carefully defined direction. Therefore, they must argue for a certain kind of leadership, moving towards a specific objective. Since this direction is not always the same one the masses are heading in, these writers face a constant dilemma. They must argue for working-class autonomy when the class supports their program, and against it when it does not. The leadership is similarly "good" or "bad" according to how closely it conforms to what is considered the proper political agenda. But the bureaucracy can only be defined by its relationship to the rank and file. The distinguishing characteristic of the labour bureaucrats is their power over the membership. It is this power, however obtained -- by force, manipulation, expertise, or consent -- and institutionalized in formal offices, that defines the labour bureaucrat, no matter what ends the power is used for. The power may be overt, complete with the right to suspend and purge opposition, or it may be limited to the right to decide and implement policy. But insofar as leaders are able not only to suggest courses of action but to determine them, they have power over the membership. If their offices are protected from immediate and effective control by the membership, they have an entrenched position of power and may be said to be bureaucrats.

Is it realistic to argue that labour leaders exercise

power? Compared to politicians or bosses, the labour bureaucrat is a weak creature. The union official exercises power only over a fragment of a worker's life, and may only call upon union members to do a small range of things. The labour leader has no great fortune or police force to enforce compliance, and the sanctions available to apply to those who disobey are strictly limited. Furthermore, most union leaders are elected under rules more democratic than those used in government elections, and of course, no corporate enterprise even pretends to be democratic. When we speak of the power of the labour leader, then, we do well to remember that it is a weak thing compared to that of capital and the state. This is especially true of the early days of the labour movement that this study examines. Nevertheless the labour leader has always had more than the simple ability to act or the right to act on the instruction of another; the bureaucrat has had some power over others. We may define power as the ability to make decisions that are binding on another, the ability to implement decisions and policy that affect others without their express consent, or the ability to compel others, by coercion or persuasion, to do that which they may not have done otherwise. In this sense, the labour bureaucrat may be said to have power over others, though it may be a limited and relatively weak power.

The sources of the labour leader's power usually differ from those of the politician or boss. Most often it does not

stem from the barrel of a gun, though on occasion it has. Nor does it result from the ownership of property and control of wealth. Typically it comes from two closely connected sources, authority and the control of information. Authority may be defined as the followers' recognition of the right of the leader to command or issue instructions that are to be obeyed. This authority, the so-called right to rule, may itself come from a number of sources. It may be granted freely and actively by the membership at large who have come together democratically to limit their individual freedom in order to protect the freedom of the collectivity. But such a stewardship of rights and freedoms is rarely granted consciously and freely in a benevolent "social contract." Often workers join unions because doing so is a condition of employment, and the union leader's authority is seen to rest on coercion and collaboration with the employer. Members may be faced with a fait accompli, in that union structures and officials are in place with entrenched powers before they join the union. The union leadership may be seen as having a relative autonomy from the membership, or may be viewed as a clique that represents a faction in a union. The leader's authority may be based on tradition and habit; it may be a recognition of past service and sacrifice; it may be the result of personal charisma, if someone appears to embody the spirit, will and dreams of the membership. Authority may result from apathy if workers believe the leaders are

handling affairs in such a way that it is not worth the trouble to try to replace them; it may be based on procedures and positions enshrined in a constitution created by unionists long dead. Authority may also be derived from expertise, for workers may decide to give power to those believed best qualified to handle union affairs. Regardless of the ways in which it is obtained, it is authority -- the recognition of their right to rule -- that supplies part of the power of the labour bureaucrats.

We may ask if this authority, however granted or grasped, is in fact legitimate. Max Weber held that authority was legitimate by definition, for people would obey only those whose right to rule they recognized and would not obey those whom they believed did not have such a right. The test for such recognition was coercion: if it has to be used to enforce decisions then clearly people did not recognize the authority of the ruler. This definition bolsters Zeitlin's argument, for it implies that people consent to be ruled. It also implies that some benefit is derived from surrendering one's autonomy to the leader, and that this benefit confers some legitimacy. If there is some truth in these claims, they obscure more vital considerations. First, we may dispense with the notion that derived benefits in fact represent either consent or legitimacy. Slaves may be said to derive some benefit from being slaves: they are supplied with food, shelter, and clothing, and are freed from the

burden of having to secure these items. No one, however, would claim that this legitimizes the power of the slave owner. Similarly, the receipt of social benefits, a wage, or a collective agreement does not legitimize the power of the state, capital, or the union leader. Nor does it imply consent, for in none of these situations does the individual enter the relationship as an equal with other realistic options.

Next, we may ask how much and what kind of dissent are required before authority is declared illegitimate? Do the actions of a minority opposing the leadership serve to remove its right to rule? A simple majority? An overwhelming majority? What sorts of opposition count as registering a lack of consent? Petitions? Absenteeism? Motions from the floor? Storming of the union office? We may also want to consider what coercion consists of. Must it always be physical force? Surely any unpleasant consequences, or the threat of such consequences, ranging from abuse or ridicule at a union meeting to expulsion from the union, may be considered coercion. Similarly, how are we to decide what counts as consent? The mere absence of revolt is not precise enough, for it is well-nigh impossible to determine if the lack of opposition is the result of coercion or not. The lack of revolt or dissent may in fact be acquiescence to power, not the acknowledgment of a right to rule. Not all of us are able to be an Emma Goldman or a Joe Hill, always ready

to hurl defiance at our oppressors. But a lack of bravery, a sense of discretion, a pragmatic weighing of costs and benefits, or a sense of futility, are not the same as consent. Whenever there exist any unpleasant consequences, or the threat of such consequences, whether these be overt or implied, material or psychological, it is impossible to distinguish between consent and coercion. Union leaders customarily have some formal means of coercion at their disposal, ranging from banning from meetings to fines and purging from the union. They also have informal means, such as refined debating techniques that may embarrass the rank-and-file member, or the ability to determine which grievances and demands will be acted upon by the union. Indeed, such forms of coercion are often deemed necessary, in order to enforce the discipline that is believed to be a vital part of collective action. Often the labour leader may be able to dispense favours and rewards, such as personal service, praise, expedited handling of a grievance, even a staff job. These rewards are simply the other side of the coin of coercion, and are part of the bureaucrat's power. Insofar as union leaders have any means to coerce members, it is impossible to determine where consent begins and ends. If consent cannot be delineated, we must stand Weber on his head and argue that all authority is illegitimate. Such a conclusion was reached by Michael Bakunin, when he wrote,

We accept all natural authorities and all influences of fact, but none of right; for every

authority or every influence of right, officially imposed as such, becoming directly an oppression and a falsehood, would inevitably impose upon us ... slavery and absurdity.

In a word, we reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage, convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiter against the immense majority in subjection to them

The principle of authority ... becomes a monstrosity, a flagrant denial of humanity, a source of slavery and intellectual and moral depravity The only grand and omnipotent authority, at once natural and rational, the only one which we may respect, will be that of the collective and public spirit of a society founded on equality and solidarity and the mutual human respect of all its members.¹⁴

We must also consider how consent, or what passes for it, is achieved. Bertrand Russell has pointed out that consent, or to use his word, opinion, is in some sense the source from which other forms of power are derived, but this ignores the question of how such consent is formed:

Armies are useless unless the soldiers believe in the cause for which they are fighting, or in the case of mercenaries, have confidence in the ability of their commander to lead them to victory. Law is impotent unless it is generally respected. Economic institutions depend upon respect for the law; consider, for example, what would happen to banking if the average citizen had no objection to forgery. Religious opinion has often proved itself more powerful than the State. If, in any country, a large majority were in favour of Socialism, Capitalism would become unworkable. On such grounds it might be said that opinion is the ultimate power in social affairs. But this would only be a half-truth, since it ignores the forces

¹⁴Michael Bakunin, God and the State, New York: Dover, 1970, 35, 41-42.

which cause opinion.¹⁵

Consent may be manipulated in any number of ways. Leaders may say one thing and then do another. Appeals to cherished, abstract ideals may be persuasive, and yet not accurately reflect the real policies and aims of the union bureaucrat. It is not possible for all people to investigate all the claims of those in office, and often union affairs play a secondary role in people's lives. In order to question and dissent, people must have the tools of reason, security, time, and information, and all of these may be disrupted by those in power. In particular, the bureaucrat often controls information and knowledge, and this control both props up authority and confers power in itself. Again, Bakunin's work, more sensitive to the question of power than that of Marx, is useful. He warns explicitly that knowledge forms a kind of capital that can be used to exploit others:

Is it not evident that out of two persons endowed with a nearly equal natural intelligence, the one who knows more, whose mind has been broadened to a greater extent by science and who, having a better understanding of the interlinking system of natural and social facts ... will grasp more readily and in a broader light the character of the environment in which he finds himself? And is it not evident also that that person will feel more free, and that in practice he will prove the cleverer and stronger of the two? It stands to reason that the one who knows more will dominate the one who knows less, and if there were, to begin with, only this difference in upbringing and education between two classes, it would in itself produce in a comparatively short time all the other differences and

¹⁵Bertrand Russell, Power: A New Social Analysis, (1938), Reprint, London: Unwin, 1985, 93.

human society would relapse into its present state; that is, it would split up again into a mass of slaves and a small number of masters, the first working for the latter as they do now in existing society.¹⁶

The kinds of knowledge and information used by labour officials to do their jobs vary considerably, but they represent a source of power that is not generally and easily available to the rest of the membership. Even the shop stewards are privy to a wide variety of information. They must quickly learn the contents of the collective agreement, the structure and constitution of the union, the channels of authority in the company. The stewards learn to file grievances, to interpret the contract, to determine which demands of the membership should be acted upon, and how. They must develop a talent for "reading" the boss and the union business agent; they have to be able to assess the shop workers as individuals and as a collectivity. They must be adept at gauging the militancy and solidarity of those they represent as well as the intransigence of those they fight. Their knowledge of union members is used by stewards in their own work, and is passed up to union officials who must coordinate the activities of other shops and locals. Stewards also receive information from employers and union executives and interpret and pass it on to the membership. In order to become better at their job, conscientious

¹⁶G.P. Maximoff, The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism, New York: Free Press, 1964, 328.

stewards seek out more information. They take courses in collective bargaining, labour law, labour history; they read up on public speaking, leadership, contract interpretation, unemployment insurance, safety, and workers' compensation. At the very least they will listen to other union officials and try to learn from their experience.

By virtue of their knowledge and their willingness to take on a job that requires some dedication and work, stewards, in some sense, are removed from the culture of their co-workers. If all workers are equal, shop stewards are a little more equal. They make decisions, and they interpret and administer the decisions of others. Workers go to the shop stewards to ask for advice and representation. If there is a problem on the shop floor, employers and workers alike turn to the stewards. They are no longer ordinary workers speaking for themselves; now they must speak for the collectivity. This imposes on them an outlook different from that of the rank and file. They must consider not only the good of the individual or the shop, but also the good of the union as a whole. They must examine the long-term consequences of the actions of the local membership, and must try to balance the demands from the shop floor with the strictures of the contract, the strength of the employer, and the strategy of the rest of the union. Stewards are required to think critically, to judge ideas, facts, complaints, opinions, and the like with criteria different from that of

the members who put them forward. They must assume a kind of "objectivity," that is, they must remove themselves from the individual, subjective, relatively short-sighted point of view of the rank-and-file member and consider a host of other factors when they decide when, if, and how to proceed with a grievance.

The information and culture of the stewards, who are caught between the demands of the membership and those of the union hierarchy, may be valuable, even necessary, if they are to be effective. But the price is the relative isolation or separation of the stewards from the rank and file. They become authorities; they are seen not as superior, perhaps, but as special or different. Their role may open up opportunities that do not exist for other members. Companies often look to shop stewards when they need new lead hands or supervisors, for they have proven that they can work with and control other workers, that they can interpret the collective agreement, and that they have an ability to look beyond the immediacies of the shop floor. Jobs and privileges within the union may also become available. Of course, most shop stewards do not go on to become supervisors or union executives. But even those who do not receive a certain status, some small privilege, some easing of the daily workplace toil. They alone among the shop workers may meet with company and union executives as equals. Often they take time off from work to do union business, to present grievances, to

negotiate contracts. The work of shop stewards can be more interesting than that on the shop floor, for it requires creative thinking and analysis of a different sort. It allows stewards to work on problems of strategy and tactics, and it may infuse them with senses of responsibility and of doing the right thing for themselves and others. But all of this has two sides. On the one hand, it advances the cause of working people; on the other, it encourages stewards to think of themselves as different from rank-and-file workers. It tends to reinforce the dependence of the workers on a special agent who is assumed to be above personal interest of any sort, yet like all of us, cannot be.

Thus the shop steward may accurately be portrayed as part of the union bureaucracy. Their interests and concerns may be very different from those of higher union officials, but they are also somewhat different from those of the workers they are chosen to represent. If this is true of this first level of the labour bureaucracy, how much truer it is of the other levels that are almost completely removed from the day to day contact with the workplace. Thus did Bakunin point out,

We of course are all sincere Socialists and revolutionists, and still were we endowed with power, even for a short duration of a few months, we would not be what we are now. As Socialists we are convinced, you and I, that social environment, social position, and conditions of existence are more powerful than the intelligence and will of the strongest and most powerful individual, and it is precisely for this reason that we demand not natural but social equality of individuals as the

condition for justice and the foundation of morality. And that is why we detest power, all power, just as the people detest it.¹⁷

His observation on the "workers' state" is equally applicable to the labour bureaucracy:

If the proletariat is to be the ruling class, one may ask whom will it govern? There must be yet another proletariat that will be subjected to this new domination, this new state What does it mean, the proletariat elevated to a ruling class? Is the whole proletariat going to direct the administration?... And so, from whatever angle you look at this question you come to the same sad conclusion: government of the vast majority of the masses by a privileged minority. But this minority, the Marxists say, will consist of workers. Yes, of former workers, perhaps, who as soon as they become rulers or representatives of the people will cease to be workers and will start viewing the laborers' world from the heights of the state; they will no longer represent the people, only themselves and their pretensions to rule the people.¹⁸

Hyman, therefore, like Michels before him, is quite correct to assert that bureaucracy is a "relationship which permeates the whole practice of trade unionism." Now, the bureaucracy of the 1890s is very different from that of the 1990s. Most union executive positions were not comfortable sinecures, and the possibility of physical danger was a grim reality. Nonetheless, bureaucracy was not a crafty invention of the CIO or the TLC and CCL in the 1940s. It has always been a tendency in the labour movement, sometimes the result of pure self-interest, but more often the result of what

¹⁷Maximoff, 249.

¹⁸Bakunin, Statism and Anarchy, cited in Marshall S. Shatz, ed., The Essential Works of Anarchism, New York: Quadrangle, 1972, 162-3.

seemed at the time to be good, practical, legitimate concerns. When the state uses lawyers to draft labour laws it is negligent for unions not to hire and train their own experts to cope. Obviously, it is good for shop stewards to know more, not less, about a wide variety of matters. When under attack, or pressing home an advantage, it is useful to have experienced, practical, and tested leaders at the helm. If members, or potential members, are apathetic or cowed, the union's survival may depend on a cadre of class conscious, highly motivated officials who have been removed from the day-to-day shop floor struggle and can devote their time, energy, and knowledge to the cause. But it must always be kept in mind that in creating a split between members and leaders a bureaucratic elite is formed. Bureaucracy stems from many sources, some more legitimate than others: a genuine need for efficiency; a need to delegate tasks; the personal motives of those who seek power, wealth, prestige, or pleasant work; the desire of individuals to put their ideas into practice; the belief that it is appropriate for one to speak and interpret for others. It may be that bureaucracy is not an aberration but a common, though hardly inevitable, outcome of organization partly because it allows some to abandon responsibility, or to be reluctant to get involved. Whenever bureaucracy is not recognized as a possible danger and is not attacked by an active, conscious, and alert opposition, it is likely to flourish. As Bakunin

suggested, "the absence of opposition and control and of continuous vigilance inevitably becomes a source of depravity for all individuals vested with social power."¹⁹ Insofar as this is not recognized and acted upon by the rank and file, unions become more bureaucratized over time. Leaders tend to hold on to their positions, and policy that encourages hierarchy and rule by experts becomes the norm. To understand the labour bureaucracy of today it is necessary to understand the bureaucracy, of the beginning of the labour movement. We look for those things that tended to separate union leaders from the rank and file. We may examine privileges granted by the union, such as dues refunds, salaries, offices, and the like. We may look for the development of expertise and calls for officials to be selected on the basis of such expertise. The control of information, elevated status, authority over members, control of union policy and structures, all the things that tend to remove unionists from the shop floor and the workers they represent, offer clues to the development of union bureaucracy. We may also examine the people who actually filled union positions to look for factors that helped propel or maintain them in power and explain their particular ideology. Education, income, gender, ethnicity -- things that contribute to a world view -- may all play a role. This study will ask the following questions in particular. Is bureau-

¹⁹Dolgoff, 245.

cracy in itself a sufficient answer to the question of the ideology of labour leaders? Are there bureaucratic principles that are common to left and to right unionists? Is political ideology a guarantee of rank-and-file control? How and why are bureaucratic structures created? Does becoming a labour bureaucrat take a worker out of the working class? How are political ideologies reconciled with the concerns of bureaucrats? By using these questions to study the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, it may be possible to learn more about the creation and impact of the labour bureaucracy.

CHAPTER THREE

The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council: Early Structure and the Beginning of Bureaucracy

As Bakunin wrote about the state, "abstractions do not exist in themselves or for themselves, since they have neither feet with which to walk, hands to create, nor stomachs to digest." Therefore, studying bureaucracy means studying the structures that were created and the context in which they arose.¹ Starting with a handful of unionists in 1889, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council soon developed the trappings of bureaucracy. With time, centralization, the exclusion of the rank and file, red tape, and regulation came to characterize the council. Few of these measures were brought in to create a labour bureaucracy; most were adopted under the guise of necessity, for good reasons that would strengthen the labour movement. Many of the measures and policies were debated, and for the sake of unity, council delegates moved cautiously. But by 1900, the VTLC was largely autonomous from the labour movement and the rank and file. It had its own life, controlled by a small clique of activists.

These unionists reflected the larger city and the economy they worked in. The nature of the city dictated the kinds of workers who would come to it, and by extension, the

¹Maximoff, The Political Philosophy of Michael Bakunin, 207.

unions they would form. Vancouver was from its very beginning shaped and dominated by the interests of monopoly capitalism and government. The city owed its existence to the desire of the Canadian Pacific Railway for a deep-water port that could service the expected traffic of its All-Red Route. This was a vision of a grand transportation network that would use steam ships and trains under the British flag to carry silk and tea from the Orient to Montreal and thence to Europe, and would carry mail in both directions. The original mainland terminus of the transcontinental railway had been fixed by federal statute, and was to be Port Moody, at the head of Burrard Inlet. Although the company did nothing to discourage the boosterism and land speculation in the town, it had decided by 1882 to extend the mainline twelve miles west to the townsite of Granville, or Gastown. Port Moody was deemed to have insufficient land available for the expansion of the railway yards and facilities, and the waterway through the Second Narrows posed hazards to shipping that would be eliminated if the docks were moved to Coal Harbour and the adjoining waterfront. Though it planned to make the move to Granville for its own motives, the railway played hard to get and convinced local and provincial politicians that it would not abandon Port Moody without lucrative incentives. A reasonable offer, the company suggested, would be a grant of 11,000 acres from a provincial land reserve. The province, headed by Premier William

Smithe, was quick to give land to aid development, but agreed to surrender only 6,458 acres -- a little more than ten square miles that included all the waterfront from First to Second Narrows and virtually all the land that is now downtown Vancouver and Shaughnessy. Local developers, keenly aware that the railway would greatly increase the value of their land, agreed to donate a third of their holdings to entice the company to extend the tracks. In 1886, the CPR signed an agreement with the province to take possession of the land and push the railway through to what would soon become the chartered city of Vancouver. In a move typical of the era, the company had in essence been granted land at the public expense to do what it had planned to do in any case.

The company sent out L.A. Hamilton to survey its lands, and the road system that defined the city to this day was planned and named by the CPR. The selection of docks, rail facilities, residential and business sections, even the dividing line of east and west that still separates the working class and the middle class, were the creation of the railway. By choosing Vancouver as its Pacific port, the CPR also helped determine the fate of Victoria, New Westminster, and Port Moody, for without the railway, none of these cities could hope to become the dominant regional capital.

More than geography and urbanization was shaped by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The selection by the company of certain areas for development broke some entrepreneurs and

enriched others. Men such as John Robson, Israel Powell, and David and Isaac Oppenheimer, all of whom later had streets or parks named after them, prospered from their early investments in the Granville area. John Morton, Samuel Brighthouse, and William Hailstone similarly profited. The "Three Greenhorns," as they were known, were rather more astute than their nickname suggested. Each shed other investments to concentrate on speculating in Granville lots. They may even have had some inside information, for in 1882 they registered a plan for developing the area that closely resembled that published later by the CPR.

If the business community was incestuous, politics and business were equally interwoven. The city's first mayor, M.A. Mclean, was a realtor; the CPR's surveyor, Hamilton, was an alderman on the first city council; the Oppenheimers were each aldermen, and David went on to become mayor and a partner in the first streetcar company in Vancouver. During the first fourteen years of the city, eight CPR officials acted as aldermen.²

²Norbert MacDonald, Distant Neighbors: A Comparative History of Seattle and Vancouver, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987, 9-31; MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900," in W.P. Ward and R.A.J. McDonald, eds., British Columbia: Historical Readings, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981, 396-425; Margaret Ormsby, B.C.: A History (1958), Reprint, Toronto: Macmillan, 1976, 295-297; Alan Morley, Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis, Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961, 60-70; Eric Nicol Vancouver, Toronto: Doubleday, 1970, 44-51; Robert Chodos, The CPR: A Century of Corporate Welfare, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1973, 53-56; Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933, Toronto:

In this, the city resembled the province, for in both arenas the line separating the state from business was blurred; indeed, often both roles were taken up by the same person. As Norbert MacDonald has noted, "virtually every public figure in British Columbia from the 1860s to 1910 acquired large holdings in Crown land."³ Margaret Ormsby observed that the "legislature was now composed of acquisitive merchants, lawyers, industrialists, and landed proprietors."⁴ The very notion of conflict of interest no doubt seemed strange to the men who moved into politics to enhance their investments and used their wealth to grease their way to political office. This combination of political and economic power meant that the government, supposedly neutral in a liberal society, was in fact an instrument of the business elite. Such an arrangement seemed logical, even moral, to the people involved, for it would be ungracious to have political power and not use it for the benefit of one's friends. Ormsby sums up the relationship between government and business aptly, writing that

In a small community like British Columbia, where business men and large property-holders sat in the House and where every prominent business man was known to the legislators, it was difficult for a premier, who himself had extensive investments, to refuse requests made by

McClelland and Stewart, 1970, 57-62.

³MacDonald, Distant Neighbors, 11.

⁴Ormsby, 296.

his friends and political associates.⁵

Standing over the smaller speculators, merchants, industrialists, and politicians, like a king watching over squabbling barons, stood the CPR. The largest landowner and largest employer in Vancouver, the railway continued to influence development directly and indirectly. By refusing to sell off its lands quickly, the railway set the pace for business. According to R.A.J. McDonald, the railway "did not stimulate significant expansion of the province's resource base."⁶ This meant that for a number of years, Victoria was still the regional centre for coastal transportation, distribution, and finance, especially for the dominant industries of salmon canning, coal mining, and lumber production. Business tended to look to the city itself, rather than the regional economy, for investment and profit. If the CPR brought a vision of industrialization and progress to Vancouver, old-fashioned real estate speculation, boosterism, and mercantile activity continued to fuel and shape employment patterns and economics. As a result, unionists tended to be clustered in the building trades and printing industries servicing the local economy and in the machine shops, stations, and round-houses of the CPR. Later, this

⁵Ormsby, 304.

⁶R.A.J. McDonald, "Victoria, Vancouver, and the Economic Development of British Columbia, 1886-1914," in Ward and McDonald, Historical Readings, 396.

was expanded to take in service workers, such as retail clerks and streetcar railwaymen. Because of this particular economy, only a minority of workers and unionists resembled an industrial proletariat forced to work in dark, Satanic mills.⁷

By 1892, Vancouver had a labour force of approximately 5,000. Of these, between 500 and 600 worked for the CPR in various jobs, ranging from the running trades to labourers. Nine hundred worked in retail and wholesale firms; 800 were employed in bakeries, confectioneries, or machine shops; 700 were in the building trades; 500 worked as waitresses, cooks, or janitors; 300 were employed in transportation, with the streetcar company or drayage firms. About 150 were in real estate and finance, while the city had about 70 professionals. Businesses tended to be small: the typical dairy, bakery, or hotel had fewer than six employees, and only a few of the foundries and machine shops had as many as 25 workers. About 70 per cent of the work force was employed in "locally oriented service industries," and manufacturing occupied about 25 per cent. Only 5 per cent were engaged in primary industry such as mining, logging, fishing, and farming. Because of its development in the latter part of the nine-

⁷McDonald, "City-Building in the Canadian West: A Case Study of Economic Growth in Early Vancouver, 1886-1893," B.C. Studies 43 (Autumn 1979), 3-28. Norbert MacDonald, Distant Neighbors, 30-35, and "The CPR and Vancouver's Development"; and R.A.J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia." B.C. Studies, 69/70 (Spring/Summer 1986), 33-69.

teenth century, Vancouver did not undergo the same transition from a pre-capitalist, pre-industrial stage that eastern cities did; rather, it "had sprung to life with all the trappings of the industrial-capitalist system."⁸

Vancouver was incorporated in April 1886, and workers created unions soon after. The Knights of Labor organized two mixed locals, Shaftesbury Assembly 5506 and Local Assembly 8608, and became active in the two areas that would continue to challenge the city's unionists for some time: municipal politics and Chinese exclusion. Though the Knights' commitment to civic affairs and their anti-immigration policy were largely shared by Vancouver union members, the Knights as an industrial organization was already being eclipsed by craft unions. Both local and international trade unions were being formed in the city. The printers, with a history of organization and protest that in England and France dated back to the sixteenth century, were the first workers to organize as a craft in Vancouver. The International Typographical Union issued a charter to local printers in 1888. Stevedores first joined in the Knights, then like the longshoremen, formed a local union that later affiliated to the AFL. In the building trades, plasterers, bricklayers, and masons created their own organizations, and later were granted charters by the internationals. Carpenters first

⁸N. MacDonald, "The CPR," 404-405; Distant Neighbours, 37; Ormsby, 300.

signed up with the British Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, but in May 1890 a number split off to create Local 617 of the American United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.⁹

Class conflict was also quick to appear. In 1887, a building boom fueled by the fire that had levelled the city the year before saw most construction workers putting in an eleven-hour day. Though the last hour was considered overtime, a pay scale of only 17-20 cents an hour made it clear who was going to profit from the frenzied construction. As the rapidly expanding city tapped into the Capilano Canyon watershed across the First Narrows, struggles between labour and capital were literally spread via the water pipelines. In May 1888, Italian muckers demanded a pay increase. When their request was turned down by the contractors, the fifty men refused to dig the trenches for the pipes. After two days, the men returned to work at the same rate, but were determined to reduce their daily output so it would more closely reflect the pay rate. Instead of slowing down or working to rule, each of the men cut off a portion of his

⁹George Bartley, "Twenty-five Years of the Labor Movement in Vancouver," B.C. Federationist, 27 December 1912 (hereafter, Bartley, "Twenty-five"). Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C., Vancouver: Boag Foundation, 1967, 12-18. Gary Marks, Unions in Politics: Britain, Germany, and the United States in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, 120.

shovel blade so that less earth was moved each day.¹⁰

In order to improve their conditions, carpenters in 1889 organized into two unions, and started a campaign for a general, legislated nine-hour day. To this end, they called upon other unions to confederate into a trades council that would advance the general interests of unionized labour by taking an active role in organizing and in municipal affairs. On 21 November 1889, delegates from the carpenters' unions, the Plasterers, Painters, Typographers, and the Knights of Labor met at Sullivan's Hall at Cordova Street to lay the groundwork for a Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. The delegates discussed fielding labour candidates in the upcoming civic election, but finally shied away from direct political action. Citing the rapidly increasing population as a constituency too difficult to influence by election day, the delegates refused to run their own candidates or to endorse others. Instead, a more cautious resolution moved by George Bartley of the Typos was carried unanimously. The resolution read:

Whereas -- The representatives of the different labor societies, in meeting now assembled, believe it to be in the best interest of all classes of labor that nine hours should constitute the working day, and are of the opinion that the best means to accomplish the same would be to organize thoroughly during the coming winter.

Resolved: That all labor societies of this city be requested to elect delegates to a meeting to be held on December 5th, 1889, to form a trades and

¹⁰Bartley, "Twenty-five."

labor council for the city of Vancouver.¹¹

On 5 December, delegates met again at Sullivan's Hall and voted to constitute themselves as the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. The council was dominated by the construction and printers' unions, and the first executive reflected this. Joseph Dixon of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters was elected president; George Irvine of the Plasterers was vice-president. David Jamieson, already secretary of the Typos, was made secretary of the council. Duncan Macrae of the Carpenters was treasurer, and J.H. Clarke of the Painters was made doorkeeper. A financial committee to oversee funds and expenditures was appointed, and Bartley, F. Prosser of the Amalgamated Carpenters, and F.W. Adamswaithe served on it.¹²

The domination of these trades and of Anglo-Saxon males, would continue for nearly two decades. Vancouver was surprisingly homogeneous for a port, and the labour council reflected the city's ethnic make-up. In 1892, approximately 60 per cent of the population was Canadian born; about 20 per cent was immigrants from the United Kingdom and Ireland. Americans made up about 6 per cent of the city, Europeans about 3 per cent, and Asians, predominantly Chinese and Japanese, about 8 per cent. At least 85 per cent of the

¹¹Daily News-Advertiser, 22 November 1889; Vancouver Trades and Labor Council Minutes (hereafter VCTLM), 21 November 1889.

¹²VTLCM, 6, 27 December 1889

inhabitants spoke English, and Protestantism was the dominant religious affiliation: over 25 per cent of the population was Anglican; another 25 per cent was Presbyterian; 16 per cent was Methodist. The Catholic population was small: at just over 11 per cent, its adherents were out-numbered by those who either had no religious affiliation or belonged to religious groups outside of the mainstream.¹³

Though much has been made of the alleged influence of British trade unionists and socialists in the B.C. labour movement,¹⁴ their role in the VTLC was no more prominent, political, or radical than that of the Canadians. For example, of the presidents whose nationalities could be determined, eight were English, Scottish, or Irish; seven were Canadian, and one was American. Presidents often held office for more than one term, and out of the forty terms between 1889 and 1909, fifteen were held by Canadians and

¹³Population and language figures are from MacDonald, Distant Neighbours, 38-9; the figures on religious affiliation are from Patricia E. Roy, Vancouver: An Illustrated History, Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1980, 170.

¹⁴See, for example, Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979, 19; Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991, 207; Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917, Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1979, 14; Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continen-talism before the First World War, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, 55, 115, 165-6; George Woodcock, British Columbia: A History of the Province, Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1990, 175.

fourteen by Americans.¹⁵ British and Canadian unionists shared other council duties as well. The first secretary of the VTLC, David Jameson of the ITU, had learned his trade in Ontario. Duncan McRae, first treasurer of the council, and founding member of the Brotherhood of Carpenters local, had come to Vancouver from Nova Scotia, as had Painters' delegate F.P. Bishop, who served as vice-president in 1890, then as secretary for five terms between 1892 and 1895. George Bartley, who would fill many executive positions on the council and would edit its newspaper from 1900 to 1904, was born in Mount Brydges, Ontario. Working as a migrant printer, he set type for papers in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, New Orleans, Seattle, and Bellingham, before settling in Vancouver in time to help found the labour council at the age of 22.¹⁶ Here he worked closely with fellow Ontarian Harry Cowan, another member of the International Typographical Union. The two would become close friends. Cowan was born in Ottawa, and had come to Vancouver by 1889, when he and Bartley first show up on the rolls of the ITU local.¹⁷

By 1891, Cowan was also active in the VTLC, serving as an ITU delegate and serving on its organizing and municipal

¹⁵See Appendix I for discussion of prosopographic method.

¹⁶Province, 4 January 1943; Sun, 2, 5 January 1943.

¹⁷ITU roll book, Vancouver City Archives, Add. Mss. 381, Volume 15, file 3, 1889.

committees. In 1892, Bartley became the president of the council and Cowan its statistician, and the two worked together on the Labour Day celebrations for that year.¹⁸ Bartley remained in the city, but by 1897, Cowan was in Winnipeg, where he helped to found the Voice, perhaps the most influential labour paper of the period.¹⁹ When the paper fell into financial trouble a year later, Cowan returned to Vancouver, where Bartley was president of the VTLC.

Their collaboration on the council continued, as Cowan became VTLC president in 1899 and Bartley headed the parliamentary committee. In 1900, the two set up and ran the VTLC's newspaper, the Independent. Bartley edited the paper, and Cowan assumed the duties of business manager. The two shared more than business responsibilities and trade union politics: Cowan roomed in Bartley's home, and the two were staunch members of the city's lacrosse club. Two years later, they would become related, as Cowan married Bartley's sister, Connie. Bartley dropped out of the VTLC after his work on the Independent, but Cowan stayed on for a time, serving as secretary in 1908 and 1909, before starting his

¹⁸Bartley, "Twenty-five."

¹⁹Ron Verzuh, Radical Rag: A Pioneer Labour Press in Canada, Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1988, 103.

own printing business.²⁰ Together, these two Canadians played a formative role in the first twenty years of the labour council.

If historians have tended to minimize the contribution of Canadians to the local labour movement, they may also have over-estimated the British contribution. Certainly the British trade unionists helped to shape the VTLC, but it is difficult to know how influential they were. In some cases, it may be difficult even to assess how "British" their culture and traditions were. Joseph Dixon, for example, was born in Cumberland County, England, to a farming family. Sent to school and then apprenticed to the carpentry trade, he left England in 1880, at the age of 20, and moved to Winnipeg. After three years in the prairie city, he moved first to Victoria, then finally to Vancouver in 1886. Employed steadily in the aftermath of the fire that levelled the city, Dixon was active in the local carpenters' union, and served as its president in the 1889 fight for the nine-hour day. Working with Duncan McRae, he helped sign the local unionists up with the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners the following year. Surprisingly, his

²⁰The two Canadians, who played such important roles in the life of the council, were united even in death: Cowan, his wife, and Bartley were buried in the Cowan plots in the Mountain View Cemetery. Bartley, "Twenty-five." City directories give the same address for the two, with Bartley as the owner, Cowan as boarder, 1901. For the marriage of Harry Cowan and Connie Bartley, see Independent, 5 April 1902. Mastheads of the paper indicate that Bartley was editor and Cowan, business manager.

English upbringing did not lead him to join the British carpenters union, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, though a branch of that union was chartered in Vancouver in the same year.

Dixon did well in the city. In 1890, he began to work not just as a carpenter but also as a contractor, presumably with men working under him. This was not seen as reason to bar him from the union or the VTLC, and he continued to sit as president of the council through the first half of 1890 and again in the first half of 1892. He married in 1892, and was less prominent in the affairs of the council until 1899, when he took up the vice-presidency. In 1900, he became president, and along with Francis Williams, ran as an Independent Labor candidate in the provincial election.

Though Dixon was a successful unionist and businessman, it is not clear how his early years in England shaped his politics and commitment to the labour movement. Indeed, by 1890, when he became prominent in the city's union circles, he had been in Canada for ten years, gaining most of his craft experience in the new world, not the old. Born in England, brought up in the Anglican church, his career in the labour movement and its politics differed little from that of a Bartley or Cowan.

Emigrating later in life was no guarantee that British labour traditions and socialist culture would remain the dominate strains in a unionist's life. Once in Canada, other

imperatives would take over. In the case of Joseph Henry Watson, ambition and political expediency soon took precedence over any socialism he might have learned in the British union movement.

Watson was born in England in 1854, and was a boiler-maker by trade. He was a Vancouver pioneer, moving there in 1887 to take up his trade in the machine shops of the CPR. After working in the city for a time, Watson was transferred first to Kamloops and then to Revelstoke, the railway's mountain divisional centre. There he took an active role in union work, joining Eugene Debs' American Railway Union and becoming president of the local in 1894. Started in Chicago 1893, the ARU was an industrial union that organized skilled and unskilled railway workers alike. It sought to break with the craft divisions of the past and especially the labour aristocracy of the running trades. Despite this radical slant, however, the ARU delegates to the VTLC were not pitted against the labourists. Men such as Watson represented skilled trades, not navvies or sectionmen, and they reinterpreted and softened Debs' message.

In 1895, Watson returned to Vancouver and was seated as an ARU delegate to the labour council. Fellow ARU delegate Charles Boardman was elected president of the council in the second half of 1895, and both men worked for the short-lived single-tax, reformist Nationalist party as VTLC representa-

tives.²¹

Watson's political views were in flux in this period. A member of the left-leaning ARU, he nonetheless strengthened his ties to the Nationalist party. In April 1896, he urged the council to work closer with the party and its federal candidate, Liberal-Labour George R. Maxwell; a month later, he pushed to council to invite Eugene Debs to speak in the city.²² With the decline of the ARU, after the Pullman strike of 1894, Watson moved increasingly to the right, strengthening his ties to both the Liberal party and to the trade union movement at virtually every level. In 1898, with the ARU in collapse, Watson helped found a boilermakers' local in Vancouver, serving as its first secretary and as its delegate to the VTLC. Like Dixon, he chose to join the American, not the British union with jurisdiction over his trade.²³ He started his climb in the labour council, becoming its doorkeeper in 1896, head of its organizing committee in 1898, and finally its president in July 1898.²⁴ He also became a volunteer organizer for both the Dominion

²¹Province, 23 August 1902 contains a brief biography of Watson's early years. Bartley, "Twenty-five," describes details of Watson's work with the VTLC, the Nationalist party, and the ARU.

²²VTLCM, 16 April, 22 May 1896.

²³Independent, 3 May 1902.

²⁴Bartley, "Twenty-five."

Trades and Labour Congress (DTLC) and the AFL.²⁵ In 1899, having relinquished the presidency of the council, he called upon the VTLC to create a new position, that of Financial Secretary, and in January 1899, became the first to hold the post.²⁶

But Watson's connection to the Liberal party was to provide him with both his chief rewards and later, his downfall as a labour activist. In 1899, in return for his support for the Liberal party, Watson was given a patronage job in the customs department.²⁷ His party loyalties soon caused the only major rift in the labour council's first twenty years, in the dispute over Deadman's Island, as Watson sided with MP George R. Maxwell and against the bulk of the council on the issue of logging the island. Though he managed to weather the storm, even becoming VTLC vice-president in 1900, Watson's patronage job continued to make it difficult for him to serve two masters. No longer working as a boilermaker, he still served as the union's delegate to the council, and as the council's chief organizer. His work

²⁵Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982, 492. Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Contingentalism before the First War, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, 41.

²⁶World, 21 January 1899.

²⁷Though the records do not shed light on this, it is likely that Watson's short term as president was because he had taken up the new job and thus was ineligible to hold the office.

as organizer was strong: he organized 27 different unions throughout the province, chartering some to internationals and some directly to the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress. His forthright activity may be explained in part by the way in which he was remunerated by the AFL and DTLC. Instead of a salary, Watson was paid piece-rate for every new charter he sent in. But in 1901, his balancing act started to wobble. In April of that year, he asked Samuel Gompers for a job as a salaried AFL organizer. Gompers, while acknowledging Watson's work in B.C., replied that he could not "see my way clear" to putting him on the payroll. A little later, Watson asked again, and this time was turned down by Gompers's secretary.²⁸ With this rebuff, Watson started to side with nationalists in the Canadian labour movement and against the AFL. In a letter to the Independent, he wrote of the need for one "central body" and "one supreme head" that could coordinate labour's political program. Defending his practice of chartering locals directly to the DTLC rather than to the international that had jurisdiction over the craft, Watson's letter was almost identical to one sent by the labour congress's secretary, P.M. Draper, who was himself

²⁸See Bartley, "Twenty-five," for Watson's contributions as organizer. Babcock, 48, 237, n. 34. Samuel Gompers Letterbooks, Gompers to Watson, 23 April, 29 May 1901. Gompers Papers, microfilm.

increasingly concerned with Canadian autonomy.²⁹ At the same time, Liberal MP and DTLC president, Ralph Smith, whom Watson supported, launched his own campaign for Canadian independence, most likely at the behest of the Laurier government.³⁰ Watson supported Smith, but events soon out-paced them both. The Nanaimo miners who had originally sent Smith to Ottawa now denounced his pandering to the federal Liberals, while Vancouver labourists were convinced that their future lay in independent political action. Watson, however, continued to back the Liberal party.

In 1903, the conflict came to a head. The VTLC voted 41-20 to support the Independent Liberal Chris Foley in a federal by-election, while Watson plumped for the machine candidate, Robert Macpherson.³¹ Despite the council's decision, Watson remained true to his political masters. At meetings and in letters to the editor he railed against the council for its decision, insisting that the endorsement of Foley had been "railroaded through,"³² and that Foley was no more than a "liberal-tory." If the labour council wanted politics, Watson maintained, it "must have a machine, too,"

²⁹Independent, 2 November 1901; see 9 November 1901 for Draper's letter. For Draper and the AFL, see Babcock, passim, but especially Chapter 6.

³⁰Babcock, 74-6.

³¹VTLCM, 15 January, 19 January 1903.

³²Province, 26 January 1903; World, 26 January 1903.

and he continued to fight for Macpherson.³³ Exasperated at his dogged loyalty to the shopworn Liberals, the VTLC moved to purge Watson.

By the middle of 1903, Watson was no longer part of the labour council. The socialist paper correctly noted that the cause of his downfall was the attempt to keep on "riding two horses," that is, the Liberal party machine and the labour movement.³⁴ But Watson's career of nearly ten years as a labour bureaucrat had paid him some rewards, though not in the labour movement itself. He continued in his patronage job in the customs service, becoming the head of its post office parcel branch. When he died of a stroke at the age of 54 on 22 May 1908, the city newspapers gave his death and funeral service considerable coverage, referring to him as a "wheel-horse" in the Liberal party and as "an illustration, in his official capacity, of what a Civil Servant should be."³⁵ His tumultuous career in the labour movement was perhaps most important as an example of overriding ambition, as his politics reflected the expressed needs not of the labour council but of the Liberal party. Determined to hold on to his politically appointed job, Watson tried to bend the labour movement to the shape his benefactors required, until even his supporters could take no more. Clearly, ethnicity

³³Independent, 14 February 1903.

³⁴Western Socialist, 31 January 1903.

³⁵World, 22 May 1908; Daily News-Advertiser, 23 May 1908.

was no particular guarantee of militancy or radicalism, and the influence of British labour activists was sometimes a mixed blessing.

The ethnic mix in the council continued throughout its first twenty years and no easy distinctions of ethnicity and ideology can be made for any period. The VTLC of 1902-1903, often portrayed by B.C. labour historians as a left-leaning council, was headed by W.J. Lamrick, an Ontarian who lived in the U.S. for some time before moving to Vancouver in 1896. Lamrick was a member of the Retail Clerks International Protective Association, and served as its delegate to the labour council, becoming vice-president in 1901, then holding the presidency for four consecutive terms. The treasurer in 1903 was an American, A.N. Harrington, vice-president of the Waitresses and Waiters Union, local 28. From 1906 to 1909, the council was dominated by Canadians. Men such as James McVety, Parmeter Pettipiece, Harry Cowan, and A.R. Burns served as secretary, president, financial secretary, statistician, vice-president, and trustee between them, often rotating among themselves. While Britons continued to be important members of the labour union, their politics and trade union activity were virtually indistinguishable from that of the Canadians. Socialists and labourists were not divided by ethnicity, and Canadians were active participants in the creation of the council's ideology, culture, and structure.

The VTLC was created to be a "fighting organization," as Michels wrote of unions in general, and was organized along traditional, hierarchical lines with a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and the like. Special committees were struck to deal with municipal affairs, political action, the "Chinese question," and the council's structure and constitution. Surprisingly, no efforts were made to limit membership on the basis of occupation or class. When asked if a contractor could sit on the council, President George Bartley replied that "there was nothing in the Constitution to prevent him doing so providing that the Union to which he belonged thought fit to send him to the council." Though one delegate opined that "it was not right to allow contractors a seat in the Council as they might divulge the secrets to the Bosses' Association," no action was taken to restrict the council to wage workers. This reflects both the nature of the building trades, where today's employee might well be tomorrow's employer, and the ability of the labour aristocrats to move into the petit-bourgeoisie without losing contact with the working class.³⁶ The debate over who would be entitled to be a delegate did not end there. Less than a year later, Bartley reversed his opinion and objected to the seating of G.F. Leaper on the grounds that he was an employer. Though Leaper was a compositor by trade, he was on the council as a representative of a mixed assembly of the

³⁶VTLCM 17 June 1892.

Knights of Labor. In February 1893, he began to edit the short-lived People's Journal, a progressive labour paper. Bartley cited a clause in the constitution that forbade employers to sit on the council, but other delegates objected and gave notice of their intention to move to strike the clause.³⁷ A committee consisting of Bartley, Pollay of the Knights, and Gagen of the Brotherhood of Carpenters was empowered to find a way out of the problem, and recommended that:

after striking out the words "but no person who is an employer of labor shall be admitted as a delegate," to insert the following: "But no person shall be admitted as a delegate to represent a mixed assembly or labor organization if a union or assembly of his particular trade or calling is in existence and working order."

The wording of this new clause had nothing to do with keeping out employers, and it appears to be aimed instead at Leaper and other Knights who were competing with AFL-chartered craft unions. Fights over jurisdiction and the right to represent

³⁷None of the early constitutions of the VTLC have survived. Thus it is impossible to tell if the constitution had been amended to disallow employers some time after Bartley's assertion that nothing in the constitution forbade contractors from being seated as delegates until the issue was revived some years later, as described below. It is possible that the council made a distinction between contractors and employers, for it could be argued that strictly speaking contractors did not employ people but were only a sort of middle man between the workers and the company or individual for whom the job was being done. In any case, it is clear from what followed that the council was not averse to having employers sit on the council and that the move to unseat Leaper had more to do with the "dual unionism" of the Knights than his class position.

workers were nothing new to these labour bodies, and the ITU and the Knights had already clashed in eastern Canada. Furthermore, in this period mixed assemblies of Knights tended to operate not as trade unions but as political clubs, and this was often objected to by the craft unionists who preferred to deal with more immediate issues that arose from the shop floor. In any event, the resolution of the council indicates that class was not as important as union affiliation when choosing delegates. The discussion over Leaper's credentials soon became academic, as the paper folded in June, while his mixed Shaftesbury Assembly 5506 ceased to exist in October.³⁸

Bartley himself was soon to stave off an attempt to bar him from the council. In September 1894, the VTLC voted to ask the typographical union to "withdraw George Bartley as the council understand that he has become a government official and do not think he should occupy a seat in the council while in the government employ." Bartley's defenders failed to have the motion quashed, but did manage to amend it so that he was summoned to the council to explain himself before further action was taken. He apparently defended his position adequately for the request to have him replaced was

³⁸VTLCM, 19 May, 16 June, 23 June 1893. For clashes between the Knights and the ITU in Ontario, see G.S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1890-1900, Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1987, 156, 158, 164, 262, 370. VTLCM, 27 October 1893.

withdrawn and he was allowed to remain as a delegate.³⁹

If Bartley's government job was not a clear-cut class issue, the next occasion certainly was. In 1896, Delegate Hawson of the American Railway Union announced to the council that "he had lately become an employer of labor in a small extent, and wished to know if there would be any objection to his continuing as a representative" of the ARU. Bartley, now serving as the VTLC's statistician, voiced no objection to the seating of an employer; other delegates remained silent, and Hawson remained a delegate.⁴⁰ This further suggests that Bartley's opposition to Leaper was politically motivated; more important, perhaps, it shows that the council was not

³⁹VTLCM 14 September, 28 September, 12 October 1894. It has not been possible to determine what Bartley's job was.

⁴⁰VTLCM 14 February 1896. It is surprising that the VTLC did not object to the ARU joining the council, for the union was sharply critical of both labourism and craft unionism. But the VTLC was not threatened by the railway union for a number of reasons. The council had no fear of dual unionism, for the international unions that could claim jurisdiction over the unorganized CPR employees--notably the International Association of Machinists, the Boilermakers, and the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, and not yet formed locals in Vancouver. In the western United States, the socialism of the ARU was heavily influenced by Populism, and in Washington state, several ARU officers served in the government and the Washington State Federation of Labor. This suggested that the ARU was not a revolutionary body, and that much of its ideology was quite palatable to the labourists of the VTLC. Since the CPR was the largest employer and the largest land-owner in the city, any attempt to organize its workers would probably have been met with delight by the labour council. Finally, one of the ARU delegates to the council was J.H. Watson, who would soon make clear his ties to the Liberal party and to craft unionism and labourism. Another delegate, Charles Boardman, would become president of the VTLC in 1895, and would serve on the executive of the Nationalist Party in 1896.

prepared to see class as the most important line to be drawn.

The practice of letting each affiliated union decide for itself whether its delegate was a fit representative illustrates the federal nature of the labour council. The craft unions were careful to avoid treading on each other's toes and preferred to forge a relatively narrow alliance based on trade union matters and political issues that stemmed directly from trade union concerns, while avoiding larger issues that could have turned the unions against one another. This careful, limited solidarity was the key to the council's stance towards centralization. Numerous writers have held that centralization of the union structure is a key factor in the development of both oligarchy and conservatism. Tony Adams, on the other hand, has suggested that centralization is often a project of the left. In his article on the British railway unions, Adams demonstrates that it was the socialist wing that fought for nation-wide bargaining and industry-wide unions. At least at the level of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, this perception is the more accurate one.⁴¹

Though the call for a central labour body seems to imply a degree of centralization, such was not the case in Vancouver. The unions were called upon to fight together for

⁴¹See, for example, James Hinton, Labour and Socialism and The First Shop Stewards' Movement, Richard Price, Masters, Unions, and Men, Adams, "Leadership and Oligarchy" and the discussion in Chapter 1.

specific ends such as the nine-hour day, and "other matters pertaining to workingmen," as the initial resolution put it, but there was little attempt to combine the unions or to make them come together under a single leadership cadre. In this, the VTLC resembled the American Federation of Labor and the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress. Affiliated unions maintained their own leaders and independence when they joined. Ironically, the federal principle was an attempt to build a greater unity than that of the Knights of Labor with its all-embracing policy of organizing all workers in one union. Though in theory and on paper the Knights' structure united all workers, in practice the union was troubled by the competition of sectional interests. Knights in Toronto were irked with the high dues they were forced to pay to help their union brothers who struck the city's streetcar system. Hamilton shoemakers organized in the Knights complained of the levies exacted upon them to aid Montreal shoemakers, even though they realized that the Quebec struggle was part of their own battle with employers.⁴²

The Knights' aim of organizing all workers papered over another division in the working class, that between the so-called skilled and unskilled. The Knights held that the interests of the working class were ultimately the same regardless of job or skill level and organized workers by industry, not trade. While in theory this provided great

⁴²Kealey and Palmer, 128-131; 54.

solidarity, in practice it was a source of friction. The craft unions made this friction into a principle as they based their strategy on competition between workers and on excluding people from the trades to limit the supply of labour. If this was an effective way to keep up the salaries of the unionized workers in some sectors, it meant abandoning the bulk of the working class to the predations of the boss. Since organizing the unskilled and the factory workers was difficult, diverting money and people from the day-to-day affairs of the unions was hard to justify. Furthermore, immigrants from outside the Anglo-Saxon countries tended to work in the unskilled jobs, and the terms "unskilled" and "foreigner" became practically synonymous.⁴³ Union leaders often expressed their demands as rights that they were entitled to by virtue of their status as Canadians or British subjects and as whites, as well as their skill, and sought to forge links with the larger society based on a common ethnicity. Unskilled workers threatened this strategy by attacking the belief that skill and ethnicity should be rewarded. Thus Vancouver bricklayers squabbled with the hod-carriers, or helpers, in 1891 even though, or more accurately, because, they were in the same union. The fight broke out when the hod-carriers demanded \$2.50 a day, a sum thought

⁴³See Allen Seager, "Workers, Class, and Industrial Conflict in New Westminster, 1900-1930," in Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, eds., Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988, 119.

by the bricklayers to be too high. When the hod-carriers stuck to their demand and were supported by the VTLC, the bricklayers resigned from the labour council. Their action was based on the belief that the wages demanded could not be gained without a strike, and the bricklayers did not want to jeopardize their strike fund to support the hod-carriers.⁴⁴ In order to minimize inter- and intra-union disputes the VTLC asked for a more limited kind of solidarity and referred most calls for united action back to the individual unions.

This cautious solidarity extended to political issues as well as straight-forward union matters. Again, the experience of the Knights illustrated that combining political action with bread and butter unionism could lead to disputes and factionalism. Kealey and Palmer have noted that "the Knights of Labors' eclectic reform orientation...was both the source of great strength and the partial cause of failure," for workers in Local Assemblies often balked when their dues were diverted from local struggles to aid political campaigns.⁴⁵ The Home Club affair of 1886 highlighted the differences between Knights who insisted on concentrating on unionism and those who favoured political action. The Home Club was a faction of Knights who followed the platform and ideas of the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle. Chief among his ideas was the "iron law of wages," which held that

⁴⁴VTLCM 27 March, 3 April, 10 April 1891.

⁴⁵Kealey and Palmer, 202, 130, 125-6.

no matter how workers fought or were organized the average wage could not rise much above the subsistence level, partly because employers could simply raise their prices to maintain profit levels and partly because workers would, in Malthusian fashion, take the opportunity of higher wages to produce more children. If the theory were correct, it meant that the struggles of the union movement could never achieve much. This in turn implied that other forms of action, such as co-operatives and involvement in politics, were more important. From this it followed that the actions of the workers were less important than those of the Knights who were politicians and that the middle-class intelligentsia was the proper group to head the organization. A seemingly abstract debate over a point of economics camouflaged a fight over who should lead the Knights and in what direction. The matter was further complicated when Home Club Knights in New York organized the Progressive Cigar-Makers Union and undercut the wage schedule of the AFL's Cigar-Makers International Union. The incident spilled over into Canada, though with little apparent justification, and the episode tended to exaggerate the differences between political reformers and unionists, and between the Knights and the AFL. To George Bartley, the history of the Knights indicated clearly that trade union autonomy and non-interference from the central bodies were important for the labour movement as a whole. Craft unions, he believed, could fight against the boss more effectively

while principled political battles were divisive and tended to replace traditional working-class leaders with political reformers. Bartley, who knew and worked with Vancouver Knights, wrote that by 1889 and the founding of the VTLC,

the days of the noble Knights were numbered and the old movement of industrial unions, namely that all workers belong to one body, was being broken up by the American Federation of Labor. It was now Powderley versus Gompers and it need not be stated that the craft organizations soon came from under the wing of the K of L and joined the AF of L....[T]he once powerful industrial organization of over 1,250,000 started a new movement but it was too late. It was that the ironworkers and all its branches should elect its own executive body, and manage its own affairs. Other crafts were expected to do likewise, such as the woodworkers, tobacco workers, printing trades, etc....[T]his once noble order held that the rights of labour could only be obtained through political action, and that meant that all public bodies must be controlled by "true" Knights. This gave rise to factions in the local assembly which ultimately broke them up.⁴⁶

It appeared to Vancouver labour leaders that far from guaranteeing solidarity, centralization could actually undermine it, while craft unionism remained the most effec-

⁴⁶Foner, History of the American Labor Movement, Volume 2, From the Founding of the AF of L to the Emergence of American Imperialism, 78-9, 132-4; Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America; Richard Jules Oestreicher, Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, 187-214. New York: Hill and Wang, 1898. 168-173; Kealey and Palmer, 159-165; Bartley, "Twenty-five." As Kealey and Palmer have argued, the split between the middle-class and working-class elements in the Knights may well have been exaggerated, and none of the above is intended to argue that factionalism was the only element in the decline of the Knights. It does suggest that the VTLC may have had some good reasons for the federalist scheme of organization besides protecting the positions of the union leaders.

tive way to maintain and improve the wages and conditions of the skilled worker. Though direct evidence is lacking, it may also be that union leaders, while receiving little in the way of salary, may have enjoyed a degree of prestige that would end if their positions as heads of unions were subsumed in one over-arching organization.

Craft autonomy within the shell of the VTLC was protected in several ways. First, executive positions were generally spread out among the different unions to avoid any single power bloc. Second, appeals for solidarity were referred back to the individual unions rather than granted from the council's own funds. In this way aid to fellow workers could be given without compulsion and without alienating union members who might not be filled with empathy for other workers. In May 1890, the VTLC called a general meeting of delegates and unionists to consider aiding strikers in Portland, Oregon, rather than enforcing a levy en masse. In November, the question of supporting Vancouver Island miners was sent back to each union to decide, while a request from the beleaguered steel workers at Homestead in 1892 was "referred to the different unions for their consideration." The strikes of British machinists in 1897 and New York printers in 1899 brought forth a number of requests for aid, and again, the council's response was to refer the appeals to the affiliated unions. Though the procedures were sometimes successful in raising funds, they held no guaran-

tees: while the Portland meeting raised \$165.50, two weeks of soliciting funds turned up only a single dollar for the Homestead strikers.⁴⁷ This did not mean that the council was opposed to solidarity. It did mean that its first priority was maintaining the structural integrity of the Vancouver labour movement by avoiding controversy and a top-down enforcement of political morality that could alienate unions that had a more parochial view of the class struggle. If the Knights taught men and women to dream of what might be, the VTLC preferred to take them as they were and refused to push them much further. The council did support other workers, but in ways that would create little stir. Though the Wellington miners received little direct aid, the Labor Day celebration of 1890 included a tug of war with a prize of ten dollars. The Longshoremen won the event and were awarded the money "with the understanding that they should forward to the Wellington Miners Association." On the whole, however, the council acted on the belief that solidarity and charity began at home and if its policy prevented sectarian squabbling it did little for the larger cause of labour.⁴⁸

Political matters were handled in a similar fashion. Parliamentary committees were struck to draw up platforms, and those selected to serve on it represented a number of

⁴⁷VTLCM 20 May, 20 June, 21 August, 14 November 1890; 9 September, 23 September 1892; 3 December 1897. World 2 September 1899.

⁴⁸Vancouver World, 13 September 1890.

unions. The final platforms were then presented to the council as a whole, debated and amended, then sent back to the individual unions for their approval. If such a procedure was complicated and time-consuming -- it was undoubtedly a factor in the failure of the council to take effective political action in its early years -- it minimized political squabbling and dissension.⁴⁹

The policy was an effective one. In the first twenty years of the council, political debates took place, but rarely did they result in overt fractures in the council itself. Though socialists and labourists feuded in the papers, at conventions, and at the polls, the council itself avoided serious in-fighting. Indeed, the only issue that did split the council in this period was the fight over Deadman's Island, an early environmental battle that split political parties and businessmen as well as the labour movement.

Deadman's Island, today the site of the HMCS Discovery Naval Reserve Training Section, is a small islet in Coal Harbour, a few hundred feet off Stanley Park. The island had been used in the 1860s as a rendering station for whalers; before that, coastal Indians had used it as a burial ground. The island and the 1,000 acres that were to become Stanley Park were originally part of a colonial government land reserve and came under Dominion jurisdiction when B.C. joined

⁴⁹VTLCM 11 December 1891; 21 October 1892; 2 December 1892; 24 March 1893.

Canada in 1871. Though the lands were thus held out of the speculation boom, real estate broker A.W. Ross believed they could still help him turn a profit, if indirectly. Reasoning that a large park would attract tourists and settlers and thus drive up the price of his own nearby lots, Ross lobbied the civic council to ask the federal government to transfer the land to the city. In 1887 the Privy Council agreed to the city's request, and Stanley Park was created. Deadman's Island was used largely as a quarantine center for suspected cases of smallpox.⁵⁰

The island was commonly believed to have been included in the Stanley Park grant, but the Canadian government did not agree. In 1899 the issue was put to the test when the federal government decided to lease Deadman's Island to a businessman, representing Chicago money, Theodore Ludgate. Ludgate soon announced his plans to build a saw mill and log the island. The population of the city quickly became aroused as different factions sprang up to argue the respective merits of park space and industrialization. City council split on the contest, as the Conservative mayor, James Garden, used the police and the Riot Act to halt logging. The business community also divided. Leaders such

⁵⁰Nicol, 40, 108. W.C. McKee, "The Vancouver Park System, 1886-1929: A Product of Local Businessmen," Urban History Review, 3, 1978, 33-49. See 36-40 for his contention that profit and not a sense of the "city beautiful" lay behind the parks. His argument, if not conclusive, is strongly suggested by circumstantial evidence and is in keeping with the general climate and activities of the time.

as Henry Bell-Irving opposed the logging scheme, while others, such as Charles Woodward, supported it. Politicians fought amongst themselves and with their party members; even in the inchoate, non-party politics that typified B.C. in this period, division was acute and hostile. Ludgate's lease was fought in every level of court, and was eventually decided in his favour by the British Privy Council in 1911. By then, most of the trees had already been felled, and the decision was moot.⁵¹ The differences in the business community may be partly explained by the ways in which each made money. Bell-Irving, the head of ABC Packers, would not profit from increased population, while as a dry-goods merchant, Woodward stood to gain from industry and job creation.

Thus Deadman's Island touched a nerve in the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. President Harry Cowan informed the council that Ludgate had received permission to log the island and run a sawmill for the nominal sum of \$500 a year. The VTLC then voted unanimously to go on record as "condemning the action of the Dominion government in granting [the] lease of Deadman's Island for commercial purposes." Delegates then decided to send Cowan to Ottawa as part of a deputation of business and community leaders opposed to the industrialization of the island.⁵²

⁵¹Nicol, 114-115; McKee, 42-43.

⁵²Bartley, "Twenty-five." World, 4 March 1899.

But the labour council's united front soon proved illusory. At the next meeting, with Cowan on his way to the capital, J.H. Watson, recording secretary of the Boilermakers and Iron Ship Builders, read a long letter praising industry and the leasing of the island to Ludgate. Delegates Harrison and Tyson then moved to reconsider the council's decision to oppose the saw mill scheme. Bartley, John Pearey, and Francis Williams worked to get the matter referred back to the constituent unions for discussion, a parliamentary move that would have delayed any vote indefinitely; it would amount to having the matter tabled and would let the original resolution stand. Though the council agreed, Watson and W.R. Lawson, who had earlier served as president and vice-president respectively, out-maneuvered Bartley and the others. Watson simply moved that the VTLC, "after more mature consideration, does heartily approve the leasing of Deadman's Island or any other foreshore around the city, for manufacturing and commercial purposes, as being in the best interests of the working classes." Ironically, Watson earlier had been in the vanguard of the labour council's park movement. In 1895, he had joined with Bartley to have the council petition the city to improve swimming facilities at English Bay. Watson led the opposition to the selling of the city's foreshore rights, and had clamoured for the clearing of land

for a public park at English Bay.⁵³ In what the newspapers called "one of the most animated" meetings on record, the council voted 12-9 in favour of the motion, and was then officially in favour of logging the small island. Cowan was notified of the abrupt about-face and returned to Vancouver.⁵⁴

The matter did not die there. Supporters of the original resolution and the park did not take the actions of the industrializing faction lightly. President Cowan, Secretary J.H. Browne, Treasurer Joseph Dixon, and Parliamentary Committee Secretary and Auditor Bartley turned in their resignations when Cowan returned. More than the Deadman's Island dispute was at work. Bartley was accused of being a front man for the politicians organizing against the saw mill, a charge he hotly denied. Indeed, Bartley and his allies counter-attacked by alleging that the anti-park faction was an "attempt to turn the Trades and Labor council into a political machine. They aver that a number of members of the council have received government positions and are amenable to government influence. This in their view is most undesirable, and hence their action." The shot was aimed at J.H. Watson, a Liberal supporter at least since 1897, and a close associate of the Liberal-Labour MLA and MP Ralph Smith.

⁵³World, 3 August, 31 August 1895; Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 6 December 1895, 8 May 1896, 17 July, 31 July 1896.

⁵⁴World, 4 March 1899, Bartley, "Twenty-five."

His party loyalty had been rewarded with a job in the customs service in 1899, and in this episode he appears to have come to the aid of Liberal MP George R. Maxwell. The Reverend Maxwell had been elected to the House of Commons as an Independent candidate friendly to labour, but he came out unabashedly on the side of the Laurier government and Ludgate. Setting the tone for Watson's speeches and resolutions, Maxwell had declared that Deadman's Island was a class issue, but of a rather peculiar sort. He maintained that it was only in the interests of the rich who resided in the west end to oppose industrialization, for those "who wore kid gloves" preferred scenic views to jobs for the working class. Such a class analysis was not supported by all. A sardonic letter to the editor wondered when Maxwell had last done manual work, and suggested that

anyone can easily see when a man is talking to the gallery. When will the laboring classes give over being gulled this way? The most hopeless sight in the world is that of the working man led, captured at will, by [obscured -- "unscrupulous?"] demagogues who simulate an undying interest in them while they (the workingmen) fondly dream that they are governing themselves.⁵⁵

But the dissension in the VTLC cannot be easily typified as a battle between political factions, or as a battle between those who favoured linking labour to a particular party and those who preferred a voluntarist, Gompersesque

⁵⁵World, 1 April, 4 March 1899; Province, 1 April 1899; World, 28 February 1899. See Phillips, 34, for Watson's ties to the Liberal party.

policy of rewarding labour's friends and hurting its enemies. Though Bartley denounced Watson's partisanship, he was himself on a ward committee for Mayor Garden, and was elected to the parks board as part of his slate early in 1900. Later that year, Garden was elected as an MLA and ran federally for the Conservatives but lost to Maxwell. Charges of political machinations and partisanship appear to be justified in both cases, though the Deadman's Island dispute crossed party lines: the World, nominally a Liberal paper and a supporter of Joseph Martin in 1900, was opposed to industrialization and called for voters to elect Garden for mayor. L.D. Taylor, who would later become the publisher of the World and Liberal mayor of Vancouver, was the secretary of the Deadman's Island Committee, the citizens' group that lobbied for the saw mill. The VTLC was as divided as the rest of the city, and each side was quick to ally with politicians and businessmen to press its point.

Nor was the contest simply between industrialists and pastoralists. Bartley, in his run for the parks board, maintained that "A man might as well say that he would be opposed to three square meals a day, as that he was opposed to industries." Bartley and the pro-park faction were solidly in favour of industry and development, but believed that other concerns were also important. While he admitted to being something of "a crank on parks," Bartley was at pains to make the city livable and to provide something for

the youth apart from gambling and vice."⁵⁶

Early in 1900, the true colours of the pro-logging faction were shown. The Deadman's Island Citizens' Committee, which supported Ludgate, re-organized itself into the Vancouver Industrial and Manufacturers Association. The organization contained a number of Liberal supporters, and under its new guise seemed to hold little promise for labour. Two weeks later, the VTLC announced that the unanimous opinion of its members was "in favour of taking independent political action in municipal, Provincial, and Dominion elections."⁵⁷

The controversy over Deadman's Island offers a number of insights into working-class politics in this period. It supports Robert McDonald's insistence that class was important in "shaping perceptions of, and social competition for, recreational space in early twentieth century Canada." It also suggests that McKee is right to argue that "parks and beaches may evolve in response to the wishes of a select few rather than the relatively impotent populace." These two arguments are not in opposition to each other: to argue that working people fought for parks does not mean that they could win.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Daily News-Advertiser, 6 January 1900.

⁵⁷Daily News-Advertiser, 3 February 1900; World, 17 February 1900.

⁵⁸McDonald, 153; McKee, 33.

The fighting in the council illustrates that labour was still sorting out its political program. Watson toed the Liberal line, but the VTLC was about to launch its own independent labour campaign. In maneuvering the council to support industrialization and the Liberal policy, Watson ran afoul of a bloc that was beginning to agitate for political action outside the traditional parties. Bartley had recently offered to run as an Independent but failed to secure the VTLC's support, while in May 1900, the VTLC nominated president Joseph Dixon and treasurer Francis Williams of the Tailors' Union as provincial candidates on an Independent Labour ticket.⁵⁹ And in supporting industrialization, Watson came into conflict with Bartley and his parks board campaign.

The split between the two factions may be partly explained by the different levels of the labour and political machinery their spokesmen represented. Watson was well on his way to becoming a professional bureaucrat with no real ties to a trade or community. He owed his allegiance to the politicians who were to provide his sinecure in the customs department and to the labour leaders of the AFL and TLC who would keep him as an organizer. Bartley, on the other hand, was first a tradesman who would live out his days in Vancouver. He saw himself as a labour aristocrat and a vigorous spokesman for local issues; he was thus freed of the political entanglements that could persuade him to support a

⁵⁹Independent, 19 May 1900.

measure that would make the city less livable.

It is not clear how union affiliations affected the delegates' responses, partly because the voting on the resolutions was not published. Of the votes that can be accounted for, Watson, representing the Boilermakers, and T. Tyson, probably Thomas Tyson of the Iron Moulders, may have been eager to secure the mill project in the hope that it would create work for their members. Presumably the Stonecutters' delegate Lawson defended the industrialization for the same reason. But Dixon of the Carpenters resigned over the issue, attacking the mill scheme even though the union would probably gain some work from it; it may be that Dixon's antagonism to Watson and his political ties outweighed his considerations for jobs at any cost. The Typographical Union, represented by Cowan, Bartley, and Browne, was united in its opposition to the logging of Deadman's Island. As printers, they would gain nothing from the plan, and would lose a recreational site. The craft bonds may have helped Bartley whip up support for his position, as well. The Streetcar Railwaymen, represented by Harrison and by John Pearey, split on the final vote, and it is hard to see any connection between their work and their decisions. What the voting does suggest is the difficulty facing the craft unions when they moved away from the "pure and simple" issues of wages and conditions and towards the political field. The different trades could be expected to have different posi-

tions on issues such as parks depending on how each would profit or lose. It should not be surprising then that forming a united political party to represent labour was such a difficult task, and the Island controversy helps illustrate the fragmented and unwieldy nature of craft unionism.

Though the wrangling over the park divided the VTLC as no other issue had, the rift was soon closed. What appears to be a compromise resolution was hammered out in late April as the VTLC called for a city board to obtain the rights and control of the foreshore and False Creek area. This board, which was to include members of the VTLC, would be "managed and controlled...for public purposes, the promotion of industry, and the elevation of labour." In September 1899, Peary and Dixon were elected president and vice-president, while Harrison was made secretary. This meant that both sides were represented on the council executive. A few months later, Bartley and Harrison were appointed as delegates to a provincial labour conference. In January 1900, Dixon became president and Watson was made vice-president, Bartley gave up his council duties to become editor of the labour council's new paper, and was unanimously voted to be the labour candidate for parks board. By 1902, no trace of the old animosity was evident as Bartley and Watson served as delegates to the Provincial Progressive Party founding in Kamloops. The two former enemies had joined forces to take

on the common enemy of the rising socialist movement.⁶⁰

Other matters were sent back to the unions and reinforced their autonomy. When the building trades set up an arbitration committee in the VTLC, members debated how the panel should be selected. Some wanted the council to appoint the committee, but after "considerable discussion," it was agreed to let the unions select their own representatives. When the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and the Knights' Stevedores Union spoke on the desirability of a co-operative store for union members, many delegates were in agreement. When a plan for such a co-op was put directly to the council, however, it was decided that the VTLC itself "could not take an active part in the formation of a co-operative association but that members individually would be willing to take shares in same."⁶¹ When the council first conceived of publishing a labour paper, a committee was struck to see how much support could be garnered. The council, in now typical fashion, moved to start the paper as soon as possible, pending the decisions of the affiliated unions and their success in raising the needed number of subscriptions. Given the limited resources of the council such a policy was wise, but the effect was again to reaffirm the independence of the

⁶⁰World, 29 April, 16 September, 9 December 1899; Daily News-Advertiser, 7 January 1900; World, 9 January 1900; Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, 77-78; Phillips, 33. 42; Loosmore, 156-172.

⁶¹VTLCM 14 August 1891; 21 December 1894; 5 June 1896.

unions that made up the central labour body.⁶²

Unions asserted their reluctance to assimilate under one leadership in other ways. Fear of centralization was on occasion, a strong enough reason for a union to be chary about joining in the first place. When the American Railway Union considered joining the VTLC it expressed great reluctance because of a clause in the council's constitution that placed the control of strikes "solely in the power of the [council's] strike committee." The council responded by changing the clause so it would "apply only to strikes which are confined to the city of Vancouver and shall not affect Labour Unions or Brotherhoods who are controlled and in the case of a strike by officers living in other cities."⁶³ Apathy was an informal yet efficient technique used to prevent intrusion and complaints over poor attendance of the delegates was common. "Brother Cosgrove" was one of many who "referred in strong terms to the laxity of some delegates sent by the various unions of the city to represent them in attending the meetings of the council." Throughout its history the council found it necessary to pass resolutions to enforce attendance. Even this resolution illustrated the weakness of the central council, for it did not fine delinquent delegates or dismiss them; instead, it returned the

⁶²VTLCM 23 September 1892; 7 October 1892; 18 November 1892.

⁶³VTLCM 9 October, 6 November 1896.

matter to the individual unions by stating that "any delegate missing more than 2 consecutive meetings will have his union asked to appoint another in his stead."⁶⁴

More effective was the withholding of information and money from the VTLC. Primarily concerned with wages and conditions of work, the labour council needed to garner statistics and figures on rates of pay, unemployment, union membership, and the like. One of its first tasks therefore was to elect Thomas Hallam of the Knights of Labor to the post of Statistician. Hallam was energetic and drew up report sheets for the affiliates to fill out. But judging from the slow response of the unions to his repeated requests for information, the needs of the new bureaucracy were not treated with a great deal of sympathy. Despite previous resolutions to the same effect, delegates resolved in March 1892 to have "the various unions bring in a monthly report of the state of trade, number of men employed, rate of wages, and as near as possible the number of Union and Non-union men in the city."

The reluctance to provide statistics may have had its root in economics as well as in a desire to control information, for union membership was used to calculate each union's contribution to the council. Unions were often in arrears and the per capita levy could be a significant factor in a

⁶⁴VTLCM 27 September 1895, 26 February 1892.

union's decision to remain with the council.⁶⁵ In 1893 the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters tendered their resignation from the council, giving "the chief reason for doing so" as "their inability to collect the 10 cents per capita tax from their members." After some pleading from other delegates, the Society resolved to stick with the council, but a year later the Building Laborers and the Mainland Shippers' Association announced that they had to withdraw because of financial difficulties. This time, the VTLC asked them to continue to seat their delegates "with the understanding that they be exempt from per capita tax until such time that they may be able to contribute to the funds of the council."⁶⁶

Despite the difficulty of raising funds and the opposition to anything more than a limited degree of centralization, the VTLC did begin to assert itself as a distinct organization. The council's executive was elected by the delegates for a term of six months, but re-election for a subsequent term was usually assured, making the effective term one year. The post of secretary was generally given to a member of the printers' union, a token acknowledgement of

⁶⁵VTLCM 14 February, 25 February 1890 for Hallam's appointment. See his complaints on the tardiness of union reporting, VTLCM 25 February 1890; 27 February 1891; 25 March 1892; 13 August 1892. See VTLCM 11 December 1891 for a request for the secretary to bring in a detailed report of unions in arrears, and 11 March 1892 for the request for statistics. VTLCM 15 January 1892 notes that the Tanners were in arrears.

⁶⁶VTLCM 10 November, 24 November, 22 December 1893; VTLCM 1 March 1895.

the facility with words assumed to be held by practitioners of the "art preservative." At first, delegates were not elected by the members of the unions they represented. Instead, they were either union officers who were seconded to the labour council as part of their duties, or they were appointed by the VTLC itself. Attendance at the meetings was open until May 1891, when the council closed its sessions to the rank and file, having "deemed it advisable that only such members as were delegated to attend to the business of the council should be present and participate in its meetings." A subsequent motion to allow former delegates to attend and speak, but not vote, was tabled, and several months later, the council voted in favour of "special meetings or secret meetings...to discuss all private business." These efforts to separate further the membership from the council were mitigated somewhat when, after "considerable discussion" the VTLC agreed that delegates would no longer be appointed to the organization, but would be elected by the unions on the basis of one for each twenty members. But the general tendency of the council was away from control and influence by the rank and file it represented.⁶⁷

On some issues, the council was inclined to hold general meetings, but these relatively few occasions were still restrictive. The selection of a delegate to the Dominion

⁶⁷VTLCM 31 January 1890; 124 February 1890; 8 May 1891; 11 September 1891; 26 February 1892; 25 September 1891.

Trades and Labour Congress of 1890 was one such affair. Though a mass meeting was called to elect the delegate, discussion was limited to five speakers, two of whom were the candidates. Voting was technically open, but "everybody in the hall would have the privilege of voting, on condition that all who voted should contribute to the expenses" of the delegate, despite a prior council decision to fund the trip with a per capita levy. After his successful election, George Bartley made it clear that he held to a parliamentary, not a participatory, notion of democracy as he asked for "resolutions and suggestions" that would "guide" him but not "bind" him at the conference.⁶⁸

In addition to limiting attendance at its meetings, the labour council worked to restrict the publication of its business. Allowing newspapers, and thus employers and politicians, to be privy to the debates, divisions, decisions and politics of the council could be harmful, especially in a period when trade unions and unionists had little legal protection or security. Early in 1892 the delegates met to "discuss the advisability of allowing reporters into this council," and decided instead to furnish the press with the edited accounts of their doings. In May the Amalgamated Carpenters urged the VTLC to be "more conservative with regard to publication of business transacted," and delegates resolved to endorse this suggestion fully. In July, the

⁶⁸VTLCM 21 August 1890.

carpenters went further and called for an outright ban on the publication of the council's activities. This motion was tabled, but a subsequent one was passed to make the secretary "the only authorized person to report minutes of proceedings to newspapers." Such a policy made sure that the press could not be used by dissenting delegates to air grievances and that the council's plans could not be leaked or distorted. On the other hand, the restriction of information together with the banning of the rank and file from meetings meant that workers could be made aware of the council's activity only through the official, edited channels of the press and the reports of delegates. Certainly opening the meetings to reporters would not guarantee the dissemination of accurate information, but by keeping close control over their meetings, even with the best of motives, labour leaders separated themselves from the membership they were to represent and aid.⁶⁹

The council's reluctance to collect money for other unions did not extend to its own affairs, and it proved ready to assess the constituent unions for its own purposes. To fund a delegate to the Nanaimo Labor Congress in 1890, the council was quick to charge each union member ten cents. Other taxes were assessed without the deliberation of the individual unions. In September 1890, each delegate was

⁶⁹VTLCM 15 January 1892; 20 May 1892; 2 July, 15 July 1892.

required to pay the council five dollars for his seat. January 1891 saw a special assessment of ten cents per union member; the quarterly per capita charge was doubled to ten cents in March; a one-time levy of twenty-five cents per member was passed to provide money for May Day celebrations in 1892. Despite these fees and the regular per capita tax, the council instructed the financial committee to bring in a report "with a view to ascertaining the amount per capita that will be needed to remove the indebtedness of the council." The committee recommended a levy of thirty cents per head to remove the debts and put the council on a healthy footing.⁷⁰

The need for funds and the difficulty in extracting money from the individual unions prompted the VTLC to adopt stricter accounting procedures and eventually to hire their first paid staff member. In 1890, delegates were told that "as no books had been kept by previous secretaries, it was a difficult matter to find out the standing of the unions." They were therefore directed to have the "bodies in arrears of per capita tax forward the amount to the secretary of the council." Later, the secretary was "directed to have some blank forms printed so the quarterly returns" could be submitted and accounted for more easily. With the decision to keep better records came a motion to pay the secretary.

⁷⁰VTLCM 6 November, 5 September 1890; 9 January 1891; 13 February, 27 March 1891; 6 May 1892; 2 December 8 December 1893.

An early attempt to give him a salary had failed, but in January 1891, it was resolved to pay him fifty cents a meeting. Six months later, the rate was increased to five dollars per month and "extra pay for extra work." Part of his duties now included entering receipts and expenditures in the minutes of each meeting.⁷¹

A subsequent event showed the need for both strict accounting and accountability. The 1895 Labour Day celebrations were considered a success for the council and the labour movement in general, but the aftermath was painful. The secretary, F.P. Bishop of the Painters, resigned from the council as he was moving to Seattle. However, he failed to turn over the books, the union hall keys, and cash receipts of about \$19 before he left town. Without the books, the financial committee was unable to report on the finances and could not settle accounts or figure out the costs and receipts of the Labour Day festivities. J.H. Watson was sent around to Bishop's house to collect the council's books and property, but discovered that the former secretary had already left for Washington. His wife was able to hand over the books, but the keys and the money had travelled with Bishop. A cursory examination of the accounts revealed the financial impropriety, and "discussion upon our late secretary then followed in which several members condemned the

⁷¹VTLCM, 12 December 1890; 23 January, 1891; 31 January 1890; 23 January 1891; 31 July 1891; 20 May 1892.

conduct of our late secretary." The Stevedores and the Steamshipmen's Union, a local of the National Seamen's Union of America, hinted darkly that they would take action as soon as the books were thoroughly audited, while ARU delegates promised to write to the Western Central Labor Union to inform it of Bishop's actions. It is possible that Bishop did not deliberately abscond with the funds, for he had been a member of the VTLC since its founding and had turned over a much larger sum to the council before heading to Seattle. But the theft of union funds was quite common in this period, and it is probable that Bishop was leaving Vancouver to improve his lot. In this context, theft may be the most likely explanation. Ultimately, the episode cost the council nothing, for the city band, to whom the money was owed, made their services a gift. The significance of the matter lies in the council's perception that tighter procedures were needed for its own protection, and in its resolution "that in future the treasurer of the Labor Day celebration committee be placed under Bonds."⁷²

Political disputes within the council could also lead to the adoption of tighter control of finances. Eventually, even tighter measures were adopted. In addition to the

⁷²VTLCM, 27 September, 11 October, 25 October 1895; 14 February, 22 May 1896. Bishop did return to Vancouver and started his own business as a master painter. He advertised regularly in the VTLC newspaper and was on its list of fair employers. This suggests he made restitution or had not stolen the money.

financial committee and treasurer that had been part of the council's structure from the beginning, in 1899 a new by-law was passed, creating a board of trustees

1) to see that all moneys over the sum of thirty dollars in the possession of the treasurer shall be deposited in such bank or savings institution as the Trades and Labor Council shall direct, and no money shall be drawn out unless the draft is signed by a majority of the Board of Trustees and countersigned by the president, financial secretary, and treasurer. 2) No money shall be drawn from the bank without the consent of a majority of the members present in regular meetings. 3) The Board of Trustees shall hold office for the term of twelve months and make a report of the financial standing of the council on the second regular meeting in July and January.⁷³

This resolution came during the Deadman's Island dispute, just as delegates were resigning and protesting each other's actions. The cumbersome arrangements were probably intended to forestall either faction from controlling the purse strings, and the one year term -- double that of the elected officials -- made it less likely that trustees would be embroiled in the day-to-day political manoeuvring.

The council also adopted informal ways to consolidate control. Though the constitution called for the executive to be elected for six months at a time, it was common for officers to be re-elected for a second term, in effect doubling the length of their tenure. This practice was especially prevalent with the positions of secretary and treasurer, and even longer sinecures were not unusual.

⁷³VTCM 29 April 1899.

Keeping the same people in these jobs ensured that finances and record-keeping would not be affected by ideological swings or transiency, and gave the council some stability and continuity. It would also, however, create a semi-permanent, though accountable, cadre of leaders based upon their expertise. In this way the council protected itself from challenges to the status quo as well as the uncertainties of the society and the vagaries of its members. Thus the position of secretary was held for three consecutive terms by John Fulton of the ITU from 1890 to 1891; George Gagen of the Carpenters, 1892-1893; F.P. Bishop of the Painters for four terms, 1894-1895, and one term in 1892. Walter Hepburn of the Carpenters served for three terms from 1896 to 1897; J.C. Marshall of the ITU, 1900-1901; T.H. Cross of the Postal Employees, 1901-1902; Francis Williams of the Tailors, 1904-1905; and Harry Cowan of the ITU, 1908-1909. Treasurers had similar extended tenures. Charles Kaine of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters served five consecutive terms from 1894 to 1896, and two additional terms from 1897 to 1898; A.W. Harrington of the Cooks and Waiters and Waitresses held the job for three terms, 1903-1904. When the position of Financial Secretary was created in 1899 the first office holder, J.H. Watson, was caught up in the Deadman's Island dispute, but the second, Francis Williams, then held down the job for two terms, as did his successor, W.J. Beer of the Machinists. In 1902, J.T. Lilley of the Freighthandlers,

took up the task for five terms, until the end of 1904. When the office was combined with that of Treasurer, creating the new position of Secretary-Treasurer late in 1905, it soon fell under the guidance of A.R. Burns of the ITU, who stayed in office from 1907 to 1909.

The executive was further limited by the tendency of officers to rotate through the executive positions. As a result, the tenure of one official in one particular office might be rather limited, but by moving to a different position, the same few people continued to dominate the council. Joseph Dixon, for example, served as president in 1889 and 1891; as treasurer, 1898-1899, when he resigned over the Deadman's Island dispute; vice-president, 1899; and president again, 1900-1901, when he ran as the VTLC-endorsed provincial candidate. Similarly, George Bartley served as president in 1892, statistician for seven terms, 1893-1897, president for three terms, 1897-1898, and editor of the council's newspaper from 1900 to 1904. William Fleming served but a single term as treasurer, in 1891; however, his influence continued during his tenure as president for the second half of 1891 and as the statistician in 1892. Harry Cowan had a varied career, starting as the statistician in 1892, then playing a less active role until 1899, when he was elected president. Resigning in protest over Deadman's Island, Cowan became the Independent's business manager in 1900. The paper folded in 1904, but Cowan returned as

general-secretary for three terms, from 1908 to 1909. J.H. McVety of the Machinists served five terms as president from 1906 to 1909, and added one term as vice-president in 1905.

Further continuity may be found at the levels of delegate and trustee. Often people would end their term as officer but would continue to operate as delegates, even serving on the committees that were struck. Thus J. Rumble of the Stonecutters served as doorkeeper, or sergeant at arms (the two terms were used interchangeably) in 1894, but remained a delegate as late as 1905. John Crow of the Cigarmakers served a term as president in 1901, and was still active as a delegate in 1904; similarly, G.F. Lenfesty of the Streetcar Railwaymen stood one term as doorkeeper in 1901, but was on the rollcall as a delegate in 1908. Council stalwarts such as Dixon, Bartley, Watson, and others could often be found working on committees even if they were not presently serving as officers. The three trustee positions, together with the doorkeeper, were the least powerful positions of the council's executive, but they served both as a financial watchdog and as a kind of staging area for officers. McVety, for example, served first as a trustee in 1902, before later ascending to the presidency. F.J. Russell of the Freighthandlers did one stint as trustee in 1901, then became vice-president for two years in 1902. W. George of the Civic Employees, C.N. Lee of the Laundry Workers, A.R. Burns of the ITU, and W.W. Sayer of the Bricklayers, each

moved from a trusteeship to positions such as president, vice-president, or secretary-treasurer. In this way, new delegates could be tried out and groomed for more responsible positions. At the same time, it ensured that dissidents could either be frozen out of the executive or brought along slowly, promoted once they had learned to go along with the council as a whole. They would, in essence, learn to contain their enthusiasm through stints of committee work and apprenticeships at the lower levels. By the time they moved up to more powerful positions, most would have learned important, bureaucratic lessons about politics being the "art of the possible."

This informal system, based upon the need for bureaucrats to win elections, also meant that leaders tended to change slowly. Five years after the founding of the labour council, four of the six executive officers were men who had attended meetings in the council's first year. At virtually every period of the VTLC's history, new officers sat with others who had some experience, and committees were staffed with newcomers and veterans. This arrangement meant that marked departures from previous policies were unlikely as new slates rarely dominated the council. Consensus was necessary, and required compromise and diplomacy; as a result, the council rarely took extreme positions or voiced sentiments that were much more than progressive or reformist. Rarely was the dominant slate replaced; more often, the officers

simply changed positions, as presidents would become the head of the parliamentary committee, treasurers would become presidents, committee members would become executives. New delegates would start at the bottom as trustees or sergeants at arms and slowly work their way up to more influential positions. This meant that officers would have some experience before they would staff the important council seats, but it also meant that an effective clique dominated the VTLC for its first ten years. This system also weeded out the more transient workers and ensured that the council would be headed by older, more established unionists. The common solution for the unsuccessful worker was simply to move on to greener pastures, and the structure of the VTLC meant that delegates who were not relatively well-off and able to stay in the city would not have much say in the labour movement. On the other hand, the structure reinforced those unionists who were successful and who could hold out in times of depression and unemployment. Older, more satisfied, and wealthier unionists then tended to carry the day in the labour movement, while those whose existence was more precarious and thus might be more inclined to push harder for aggressive, radical action were not around long enough to attain the leadership positions that would let them change the council's direction. William MacClain, for example, had little chance to influence the council with his socialist ideology, for his tenure as statistician -- one of the first

rungs of the bureaucratic ladder -- was cut short when he left town. The control of the old guard helped ensure that "young Turks" would not carry much weight until they had become established in the council and in the community, and it ensured that the politics of the union movement had a great deal of continuity. In this period, it meant that the VTLC would remain reformist and cautious.

Unity and moderation were also maintained by the practice of electing officers from different unions. The council's first executive brought together Dixon of the Carpenters, Irvine of the Plasterers, Jameson of the ITU, and Hallam of the Knights of Labor, and other executives were similarly balanced. Never in the twenty years between 1889 and 1909 were the presidency and vice-presidency held by delegates from the same union; rarely was the secretary from the same union as either the president or vice-president. When George Bartley became the first ITU delegate to preside over the council in 1892, F.P. Bishop of the Painters was elected secretary -- the first time the post had gone to a delegate who was not a member of the typographical union. In 1903, W.J. Lamerick of the Retail Clerks held the presidency; George Dobbin of the Carpenters sat in the vice-presidency; and F.J. Russell of the Freighthandlers occupied the secretary position. When Dobbin was elected president in 1904, W.George of the Civic Employees took over the vice-presidency and C.T. Hilton of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters the

secretary slot. This pattern held throughout the council's first twenty years, and presumably was one of design rather than chance. The result was that no union, regardless of the number of its delegates, could hope to control the council. Ideologues of any stripe could direct the council's politics only by winning support from a wide range of delegates, and thus coups d'etat were made unlikely.⁷⁴

From its earliest years, the VTLC worked steadily to separate itself from the rank and file it represented. By controlling the selection of officers, rotating established leaders, tightening rules and regulations, and limiting the access of press and rank and filers, the council slowly increased its autonomy. At the same time, the need for unity tended to act as a brake on militancy and radicalism of any kind, and a policy of progress and compromise began to evolve. With time, and with the need for more concerted action by the labour movement, the council would create institutions and call for measures that would take it even further away from the rank and file.

⁷⁴This data has been compiled from VTLC minutes. When such minutes were not extant, newspaper reports were used.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Development of Institutions and Formal Bureaucracy

The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council soon found it necessary to call for and to create a number of institutions that they believed would help labour in its struggle against capital and government. These ranged from government offices such as fair wage commissioners and factory inspectors to a union hall and newspaper. Each of these was advocated to benefit labour and to make it easier to win and to protect its gains. Yet many of these measures divided workers as much as they aided them. The call for compulsory testing for boiler operators, for example, hurt less educated workers who had learned the trade on the job; the creation of a labour press also created paid editors and business managers who equated support for the labour movement with support for their newspaper. To the degree that the council operated without the direct instruction and supervision of those workers it represented, virtually every new institution could help unify labour at one level while dividing it at another.

One of these institutions was the council's first paid union position, that of the walking delegate. Ironically, this position was created to foster unionism and militancy, not impede it. In November 1890, the VTLC began a uniform working-card system for the construction unions. The system was an intermediary step between the traditional, informal job control exercised by craft workers and the development of

formal, negotiated contracts. Unions would announce the hours of work and the pay scale they believed just and would down tools if the schedules were not met. To prevent other workers from under-bidding them, unionized workers would refuse to work with non-union employees, and the working-card made it easy to determine who was in the union and who was not. It was an attempt to enforce a closed shop without recourse to contracts or the hiring hall. The council defended the system by maintaining that the employer would benefit, for

he may from time to time rest satisfied in making contracts that no increase in wages or reduction of hours will be asked without due and ample notice being given, thus permitting him to tender with safety. He will also be able to employ at any time the best and most reliable workmen.

For the employee, the system would give him the

satisfaction of knowing that he does not need to compete with underpaid workmen, and that his fellow employees must assist in securing the amelioration of the laboring classes, for which the union men of this city have risked and sacrificed a good deal in the past.

The system reflected both class collaboration and class conflict, for it traded some freedom of action for a measure of stability, and yet reminded workers and bosses that their interests were not identical. A wary peaceful co-existence typified the union leaders' sentiment, and they were careful to explain how the principles of good unionism, combined with good and fair management, would serve employers and society

as well as the narrower interests of the working class.¹

To enforce the working-card system, the craft unions created a staff position to make sure that all workers on the job sites had union cards and were receiving the set pay and working the agreed-upon hours. These walking delegates, or business agents, have been described by Michael Kazin as "the human glue connecting individual workers and their locals with the hierarchy." Though American east coast business agents were infamous for their corruption, and were often characterized as "petty grafters and despots," on the west coast they "acted more like labor policemen, helping to create an ethic of unionism."²

The first walking delegate hired by the VTLC was its former president and vice-president George Irvine of the Plasterers Union. Moral suasion was his primary weapon, and he noted optimistically that "in every case where men were shown that they were acting contrary to union principles, they immediately quit work." But the position was a costly one for the council. A special per capita fee of 30 cents was exacted upon the building trades to cover the costs, but the expenses incurred by Irvine were still the largest single

¹VTLCM, 14 November 1890.

²Michael Kazin, Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, 102. Sidney Lens has argued that the walking delegates were the precursors of the professional business agent. See The Crisis of American Labor, New York: Perpetua, 1961, 46-50.

outlay in the VTLC's budget. The quarterly statement for April 1891 revealed that from total receipts of \$204.35, over three-quarters -- \$156 -- had gone to the walking delegate, even though the months covered were traditionally a slow period in the construction industry and presumably the job was not overly difficult or involved at that time. Probably as a result of this financial report, the usefulness of the business agent was questioned, and the next meeting of the VTLC saw a motion to abolish the job. The vote on the motion was to take place two weeks hence, and between the meetings events proved the worth of a walking delegate. Stonecutters working on the new post office building announced their new pay and hours schedule, but contractors ignored their demands and found workers willing to work at the old rate. The stonecutters put down their tools and refused to work with the non-union crews. Though it is not known how the dispute was resolved, the need for strong organization was made obvious, and the motion to be rid of the card system and Irvine was soundly defeated.³

His survival was temporary, for Irvine would soon face the greater challenge of the employers and the courts. In August he was charged by a contractor, George Mesher, with besetting the new Bank of British Columbia. The section of the criminal code under which Irvine was prosecuted pro-

³VTLCM, 13 February 1891; 19 June 1891; 24 April 1891; 8 May 1891. The dispute with the stonecutters is in the World, 16 May 1891. The vote to keep Irvine is from VTLCM 22 May 1891.

claimed

Everyone who wrongfully and without lawful authority with a view to compel any other person to abstain from doing anything which he has a lawful right to do, or to do anything from which he has a lawful right to abstain, besets or watches the house or other place where such other person resides, or works, or carries on business or happens to be, shall on summary conviction before two Justices of the Peace or on indictment be liable to a fine not exceeding \$300 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months.

The contractor alleged that Irvine's attempts to make everyone on the job join a union was little more than extortion based on the threat to shut down the work site. Mesher paid the union fees for several of the men in his employ out of his own pocket, but then refused to agree to Irvine's demand that he pay arrears owed to the union by his foreman. The legal action threatened the ability of the building trades to enforce the closed shop, and the VTLC undertook to pay for Irvine's defence. The legal fees came to \$215, and sorely pressed the council's limited funds. Another per capita tax was assessed, and money pledged to Labour Day celebrations was tapped. Not surprisingly, the council looked for ways to reduce its legal expenses, and a committee was struck to investigate the pros and cons of keeping an attorney on retainer. Irvine himself moved that "a regular counsel be appointed," and together with George Bartley reported that his attorney in the dispute with Mesher "would like to handle all the law business that this council or any of the unions might have to do at a much lower charge"

than on a piecemeal approach. The council was also prompted to take steps to amend the legislation under which Irvine had been charged "so that trade unions will have more liberty of motion."⁴ From its beginning the Vancouver labour movement was forced to deal with the state's legal machinery and to hire legal expertise to protect itself.

The employer's attack worked well enough, for Irvine soon resigned from his position and the walking delegate system was not reinstated, though a slump in the economy may have been a more important reason for the collapse.⁵ Nevertheless the episode shows how the structure and demands of craft unionism exerted a subtle pressure towards bureaucracy. To maintain their wage rates and conditions of work, trade unions had to enforce the closed shop, and the simplest way to do this was to delegate authority to a professional business agent. The records do not indicate why this solution was taken up, but presumably the efforts of the workers themselves were not sufficient. They may have lacked motivation; likely the employers were able to intimidate them, using the threat of firing to squash dissidents. A walking delegate hired by the labour council was not vul-

⁴World, 18, 19, 20 August 1891; Daily News-Advertiser, 19, 20 August 1891. VTLCM, 14 August 1891; 25 September 1891; 9 October 1891; 18 December 1891; 8 January 1892; 12 February 1892; 26 February 1892 for the details of fundraising and the issue of retaining an attorney. The quote on changing the law to aid the union movement is from VTLCM 20 November 1891.

⁵Phillips, 22.

nerable to this kind of pressure, and could confront the boss without fear of losing his job or income. Indeed, he was paid to confront employers, and this independence could foster a kind of militancy as the delegate upheld the rules and traditions of the labour movement without regard to circumstances and without waffling. Accountable not to the workers he organized but to the leadership of the VTLC, the business agent could push aside individual concerns and cavils in the greater interest of solidarity. But as an employee of the labour movement, the delegate was also one step removed from the workers on the job. He was in effect parachuted in, and this could harden relations between the union and the less militant or the less committed. Though the newspaper account of Irvine's actions is clearly one-sided and prejudiced, it appears that he was primarily concerned with applying the strict letter of the union law without regard to the wishes of the workers or to building a stronger and reasoned solidarity. Irvine was content to go behind the workers and have the contractor pay their dues and sign their names, even though some had indicated that they preferred not to join the union. It did not matter if the union appeared to have cut a deal with the contractor at the workers' expense, or that the union appeared to be operating independently of the people it purported to represent. What did matter was that each worker had a paid-up card, for this could be enforced and regulated; feelings and sentiments

could not. But it appears to have done little to build a sense of unionism: some of the crew agreed to join up "just for the time that this work was going on," on the condition that "it was not to cost them anything either for membership or subscriptions."⁶

It is not necessary to argue that Irvine and the labour council could have or should have done otherwise. It is to be noted, however, that acting in accordance with the principles of good trade unionism as defined by the leadership required the hiring of a professional staff member with no necessary ties to the rank and file. It also required the use of outside experts in the form of an attorney, and the move to political action to try to forestall similar kinds of judicial harassment. To enforce the rules of the crafts, it was also deemed necessary to work with the employer to go against the wishes of some of the workers. Together with the hiring of a secretary, stricter accounting procedures, and the gradual freezing out of the membership from the meetings and affairs of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, it is apparent that bureaucracy was an integral part of the organization of the early labour movement.

Other standard trade union practices and objectives impelled the labour council to take a variety of bureaucratic measures. The enumeration of voters, for example, was an

⁶World, 18, 19; 20 August 1891; Daily News-Advertiser, 19, 20 August 1891.

important issue for Vancouver unionists, for control over who voted could mean control over the outcome of the vote. This fit into the general labourist ideology that held that the system itself was not wrong but had been usurped by powerful minorities, and thus it was logical and reasonable for delegates to move that the VTLC "be urged to appoint a responsible person to ascertain that the names of all qualified persons connected with the unions and affiliated herewith are duly registered on the voters' list and that the delegates to this body be authorised to vote for payments to such a person of a reasonable remuneration."⁷ Control over hiring practices was another matter of deep concern, and council members moved that the VTLC "warn working men against so-called Labour Bureaus and that steps be taken to establish a Bureau of Labor in connection with this council." Several months later another resolution called for a VTLC-sponsored hiring bureau to replace other agencies, and after the troubles with the walking delegate, council hoped to be able to create its own labour bureau to make sure that union workers could find jobs without recourse to the job sharks. Though the proposed office was not created, the discussion indicates that new, official creations were deemed necessary

⁷VTLCM 6 May 1892. No further mention can be found of this scheme, but the motion indicates that the hiring of officials to carry out policy was not in itself a hindrance to some kinds of militancy and class-conscious action.

to protect the interests of union members.⁸

The need for accurate information had been an early concern, and in 1893 the council moved to

take action with reference to the gathering of information concerning the state of trade, wages, number of union men, growth or decrease of same during the different months of the year, etc., in view of having an accurate report published for the information of the labour world abroad.⁹

This was not a point of academic interest, but would help the council attract workers in boom times and more importantly, warn them away in bad times. When it became apparent that the efforts of the unions themselves were not up to the task of collecting the necessary information, the council began to pressure the different levels of government to take up the chore. Often this meant lobbying the governments to enforce already existing legislation. The council noted that the province had indeed passed a bill calling for a bureau of labour statistics, but "nothing had been done in the way of appointing commissioners or arbitrators."¹⁰ In Ottawa, similar bills had been passed by the Macdonald government, but again, enforcement then became the issue. Five years after Macdonald's death, the VTLC announced that it "would urge that its local as well as the Federal Government create Bureaus of Labor Statistics. We would then be in a position

⁸VTLCM, 4 December 1891; 3 June 1892; 2 July 1892.

⁹VTLCM, 19 May 1893.

¹⁰VTLCM, 4 August 1893.

to obtain a correct knowledge of the financial, educational, and moral condition of our working people."¹¹

But the call for government bureaucracy was not one of unbridled enthusiasm. Labour leaders were aware that the interests of the government and the union movement were not identical. When the provincial government provided unions with special forms for the collection of information, officials preferred to leave some lines blank, for answering the questions "would be detrimental to the interests of the labor organizations."¹² To make sure that the labour bureau worked for the working class and not business or the state, the VTLC maintained that

the best and most satisfactory mode to proceed with appointment or selection of a fit and proper person to fill the office of collector of statistics etc. in connection with the Bureau of Labor Statistics [and] Councils of Conciliation and Arbitration is by vote of the majority of Delegates representing the different organizations here affiliated.¹³

Without control by the council, the government agency was treated with suspicion and wariness. When delegates were sent to meet with the head of the labour bureau, staunch Tory Colonel James Baker, they were instructed to provide Baker with the requested information only "if in their opinion it is advisable to do so." Commenting later on the bureau, the VTLC observed that it "never was popular as it seemed to have

¹¹VTLCM, 3 December 1897.

¹²VTLCM, 13 October 1893.

¹³VTLCM, 27 October 1893.

been enacted entirely for the benefit of the employing class."¹⁴

Though it was aware of the dangers of government bureaucracy, the council was not hesitant to pressure other agencies for action that would help working people. In the rough and tumble, boom and bust economy of Vancouver, real estate speculators, contractors, and factory owners could not be trusted to put safety ahead of profits. Independent union action was neither sanctioned by law nor sufficient to ensure that adequate safety standards were set and met, and the council pushed for legislation and the appointment of government experts. Government officials, it was believed, would have the power and training to maintain professional standards based on science rather than tradition and the profit margin; furthermore, they would have a measure of independence from the business community. In 1891, the council called for the appointment of a factory inspector; a few years later, it petitioned the city "to appoint a duly qualified architect to examine the Market Hall as to its safety and stability." This was followed by demands to "appoint a practical mechanic as building inspector whose duty it shall be to see the buildings constructed to original plans," an attempt to forestall contractors and builders from making changes that had not been examined and approved. By 1899, the council was calling for city inspectors to make

¹⁴VTLCM, 10 November 1893; 3 December 1897.

sure all new buildings conformed with the by-laws and for the city to appoint building instructors to ensure that all would know how to build according to the established standards. Finally, the VTLC endorsed the idea of a technical school for the city.¹⁵

Just as catastrophes were often the spur for new forms of civic government and the use of experts, as in the famous case of the 1900 Galveston hurricane and the Halifax explosion in 1917, so too were they the impetus for demands from the union movement. In November 1897, a boiler exploded at the Royal City Planing Mills, killing two men. The tragedy prompted a heated discussion at the labour council in which "the want of a Stationary Boiler inspector for the province [was] condemned." To prevent further disasters, the council passed a resolution moved by the delegates of the Machinists and the Amalgamated Engineers calling for legislation "making it compulsory for any man in charge of steam power to have a certificate of efficiency."¹⁶ Such legislation was finally provided in 1901 with the passage of the Steam Boilers Inspection Act. But what seemed to be little more than common sense -- who could argue against licensing requirements when lives were at stake? -- had another, less benevolent side. The act was an important step in the

¹⁵Bartley, "Twenty-five"; VTLCM, 30 July 1897; World, 1 April, 27 May, 24 June, 5 August 1899.

¹⁶VTLCM, 5, 19 November 1897.

professionalizing of the engineers and it made running steam equipment dependent on the operator being able to pass tests and receive a certificate. If this was desirable for those who had the schooling, it also deprived those who had received training on the job. A letter to socialist MLA James Hawthornthwaite, who had been partly responsible for the act, from Hugh Dixon in 1910, illustrates how professionalism could work against some workers while it rewarded others. The original spelling has been preserved to highlight the contrast:

I came to the cost 7 years ago thinking that in my old age I would go back to engineering but that law the Engineers Association got you to pass blocked me thair....Your d--m law has blocked me at all points, but I sopes you feel all right you done what the Engineering Association told you to do. You had not much opasation -- it was one calss of workers against another and you took the wining side the association. Them and the boiler inspection has got it all their own way thanks to you and [Socialist MLA Parker] Williams. So I may sterve as far as you caire, or go to school and lern to figar. When the 4 Class Certificate comes I will through it [in the] fire as it is no good to me as I would have to go firing are helping a snot that don't know nothing. So I have you and Williams to thank for getting sterved to death, well, well.¹⁷

If the call for expertise hurt workers such as Hugh Dixon, it helped others break the old boys' network of political patronage and favouritism. B.C. politics were rooted in these practices, and one needed only to read the

¹⁷James Hawthornthwaite Papers, Don Stewart Collection. Dixon was probably especially hampered by the 1906 amendment to the act that changed the wording "engineer" to "a certified engineer" throughout.

newspapers to see how members of parliament, premiers, mayors, aldermen, and the like rewarded their supporters and were in turn rewarded for their aid to schemers and power-brokers. No doubt the informal practices in the construction industry further illustrated how jobs could be awarded on the basis of connections rather than merit. In this atmosphere, the fight for hiring procedures based on demonstrated competence and adherence to more or less objective standards was an assault on the powerful and a defence of the honest toiler. When the city Marker-Clerk responsible for the sale and weighing of coal for domestic use resigned, the council was quick to investigate, fearful that the man might have been forced out by unscrupulous coal merchants who could exert improper pressure on the civic employee. When the clerk explained the reasons for his resignation, the matter was dropped, but the episode illustrates the watchful eye of the labour leaders and their efforts to oppose patronage and shady dealings between government and business. Similarly, when the Vancouver Post Office was re-organized, the VTLC moved that

Whereas...the appointments for Post Master and staff are to be made on the recommendation of the member for this constituency, and whereas this council believes that if this course is pursued it will result (as it usually does) in the rejection of some competent and the appointing of some incompetent persons and that it will be a detriment rather than an improvement in the present poorly managed service, therefore, be it resolved that in the opinion of this council it would be in the interests of the service and the Public to have such appointments made on the recommendation of the

Post Office inspector for British Columbia, knowing that only he knows the requirements of the office and [the] ability of those to be appointed and that he will be able to do justice to all concerned.¹⁸

Since the labourists believed strongly in the maintenance of their society, so long as working people were given equal access to the wealth and to positions of influence, the appointment of labour leaders to white-collar positions in the government and their co-operation with bosses and politicians was not regarded as a betrayal. Indeed, such appointments were viewed as proof that the leaders and the movement were finally realizing their proper place in the scheme of things. Though others would interpret it as a reward for faithful service to his political masters, the Independent applauded the appointment of Daniel O'Donoghue to the position of federal wage commissioner in 1900. The paper believed that making the Ontario labour leader a

special government official will be heartily approved by all Canadian workmen. Mr. O'Donoghue's duty will be to enforce the current wage clause on all government contracts. This marks an important event in labor's history in Canada, for it is the most radical step the Ottawa government has ever taken. It means the recognition of the principle of a living wage, or the minimum wage clause.¹⁹

Similarly, labour leaders were pleased to note that "as time advances, trades unionism becomes an important factor in the

¹⁸VTLCM, 28 September 1894.

¹⁹Independent, 21 April 1900.

administration of our law-making institutions.²⁰ This was not regarded as incorporation but as a sign that labour was finally getting its deserved recognition.

But stability and pragmatism tended to blunt the edge of labour reform. In a letter to the Independent, ITU delegate and former VTLC secretary J.H. Brown revealed how pragmatism and paid union functionaries could be linked to score points against those who would take labour into the treacherous waters of politics. Brown called upon the VTLC to establish

a "bureau of information." This could be accomplished by the payment of a man, whose duty it would be to keep an accurate list of all unemployed mechanics and labourers in the city. Union men desiring employment could register their name and address with the clerk of the bureau, and contractors and others wishing men could apply to said clerk for whatever help they may require.

This bureau should be stationed in a central location (say the present labor hall)....A small assessment of about 5 per cent. per month would maintain this office....The establishment of such office as the above and other kindred improvements in the advancement of the cause of labor should be the aim of the Trades and Labor council. Everything should be done to enhance the cause we are all fighting for, and it is the duty of the council to see that the betterment of its membership is first and foremost in the battle of life and not the boosting of politicians (be they of whatever party or clique)...."Politics be d-----" is an old saying and I might add for the benefit of some of the members of the most humane institution we have in Vancouver -- the Trades and Labor council-- "Politicians be d-----." Our representatives in the council should look to the advancement of the men whose cause they should espouse and not to political tricksters.²¹

²⁰Independent, 31 March 1900.

²¹Independent, 14 April 1900.

The labour bureau was also seen as a way to bring science to the chaotic world of the trade union movement. The purpose of such a bureau would expand from the gathering of statistics and matching the supply of labour with the demand to

study society and explain the laws that underlie and govern social movements. It assumes that these are subject to general laws, and therefore, when understood, a solution of all questions affecting the general welfare is possible by scientific processes.²²

If the movement were to have science it would need scientists, and the Independent was not afraid to call for them:

The establishment of a college or institution for the purpose of educating and training the leaders of labor organization by equipping them with the knowledge of the history and principles of economics and government is a great step -- indeed the most encouraging step that has yet been attempted in this direction, says Gunton's Magazine. If this proposition shall be carried out and as proposed, lectures and instructions be given by the most competent specialists in the various departments, it will not be long before the trade union secretary and president and walking delegate will be selected on the merit system and will be quite as capable of scientifically discussing the economic questions involved in labor controversies as the most experienced corporation manager. The trades unions would gradually become the training clubs for economic and social discussion, and by the force of intelligent information they would become more intelligent and forceful in their claims and many more times more successful in their undertakings.²³

Such a call for experts and the selection of union

²²Independent, 30 June 1900.

²³Independent, 14 July 1900.

officials by their book learning rather than by their abilities to organize, to agitate, or even to administer efficiently was more than a wish to put labour on an equal intellectual plane with capital. It implied that the tension between the classes was not fundamental, that the application of knowledge would be enough to bring about important social change. Incorporating a naive but widespread view of the objectivity of science, the wish for leaders trained in the manner outlined in the Independent was a kind of structural-functionalism that saw class conflict as unnecessary and costly rather than as the essence of capitalist society.

The particular class consciousness of the first leaders of the VTLC meant that they saw no necessary division between employer and employee. This in turn suggested to them that class conflict, when not between the people and the trusts, was not inevitable. The problems between the boss and the workers, they believed, could usually be worked out. If agreement was not possible, this signified not a clash of fundamental interests but unreasonableness and the failure to understand properly long-term gain. No less than modern employers, these leaders believed that stability was important, and that trust and a spirit of compromise should mark relations between union and boss and workers. As a result, arbitration and mediation were looked upon as a way to chasten employers who refused to be reasonable. Far from being a betrayal of class-conscious principles, the call for

compulsory arbitration was the pinnacle of labourism, especially as the first generation of labour leaders reached the end of their union activism.²⁴

Though the council created an arbitration committee as early as 1890, it was not until the creation of the Independent in 1900 that arbitration was actively discussed as a tenet of the union movement. The dual nature of labourism, that is, its class consciousness and its belief in the capitalist system, were both argued for in one article that characterized unionism as "the broadest Christianity and the essence of loving -- kindness among the children of men" Thanks to unions, "the days of Neroism are over. So are those of capitalistic extortion ... for unionism has stepped [sic] in and cried 'Hands off' But in the same breath, the writer declaimed that

Capital has its undoubted rights, and Unionism respects them -- there is no body that ever was originated more ready to make reasonable concessions and to meet those with whom it has disagreements half-way, and to even concede a point or two.²⁵

Commenting on a proposed federal bill for the prevention and settlement of trade disputes, the VTLC organ editorial-

²⁴In this, the Vancouver council resembled the DTLC. See Paul Craven, "An Impartial Umpire": Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980, chapters 5 and 6. See also Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Contingentalism before the First World War, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, 82-8; 92-4.

²⁵Independent, 19 May 1900.

ized that such legislation

is a move in the right direction and cannot fail to be effective of much good if worked in the truest and best interests of labor as well as capital. There is opportunity here to harmonize dividing factions and to bring about peace with honor. The labor cause is fast taking its rightful place throughout the Dominion, as the strongest of its bulwarks and the hope of the country.²⁶

Other writers similarly called for state intervention to settle disputes between workers and employers. Compulsory arbitration, one maintained, would end the "friction and consequent unrest" that was caused by "a jarring in the machinery" of industrial relations. Such legal measures would "remove that article that has brought about the friction," and would "let the machinery ... again work in perfect harmony."²⁷ Strikes and lockouts, then, were viewed not as the product of the capitalist system but as deviations that could easily be corrected.

The aversion to strikes was, to some degree, an inducement to political action. "Labor's two weapons are the strike and the ballot," the Independent observed. "Of the two the ballot is the more forceable, and at the same time, the more peaceable." Furthermore, the paper noted, "where labor unions are the thickest there are the fewest strikes ... when labor is well organized it puts a premium on

²⁶Independent, 30 June 1900.

²⁷Independent, 9 March 1901.

strikes."²⁸ The aim of organization, it appeared, was not to intensify class conflict but to eliminate it while maintaining the system. The regular columnist "Southern Cross" went even further in 1901, denouncing strikes as "One of the most deplorable sights to be seen in any country" Too often, the writer insisted, men struck "when they had no just ground for doing so" The "want of education" produced strikes, and if such actions hurt employers, they brought a "far greater wrong" to the strikers and their families. To prevent such hardships, "Southern Cross" advocated "arbitration in every instance before a strike is declared," and looked forward to the day when education would mean "the need of 'striking' will pass away"²⁹

At times, the hope for industrial peace echoed the sentiments of business boosters. "Were British Columbia today like New Zealand," the paper suggested, "a land where there are no strikes, we would not lack capital to develop the mining industry."³⁰ But the call for arbitration was not naive or strictly collaborationist. A strike on the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1901 showed, at least to the labourist mind, the necessity of using the power of the state to rein in capital. Rallying to the causes of the CPR trackmen and arbitration, the Independent insisted that

²⁸Independent, 19 October 1901.

²⁹Independent, 15 June 1901.

³⁰Independent, 29 June 1901.

The general good of Canada, which is more than the general good of shareholders, demands that legislation shall be enacted as soon as possible, which shall deal with these differences that cause strikes and which will compel clashing interests to submit to a tribunal, appointed by the people, for maintaining at all times the general good of all the people of Canada.³¹

But arbitration at any cost was not labour's answer. The VTLC was well aware that governments friendly to business were unlikely to favour labour in any dispute. The council expressed its distrust eloquently:

We believe in the principle of compulsory arbitration. One great drawback to carrying it out successfully in British Columbia is that the government is not in sympathy with the working class; that if an act were passed it would be so worded as to allow loop holes for capitalists or employers to go scot free, whereas labor would be compelled to submit to the arbitrary rulings of a judge.³²

When the province considered a conciliation and arbitration act in 1903, the council denounced it, arguing that it would "rob our labor unions of their potency to favorably adjust the rates of wages and hours of work to meet the ever-changing conditions of industrial life." The proposed legislation would have severely limited the right to strike, and provided for penalties and fines to be levied against those who struck. Equally dangerous was the tribunal, which was to be composed of one labour representative, one business representative, and a third appointed by the first two. If

³¹Independent, 17 August 1901.

³²Independent, 27 July 1901.

the two could not agree on the third member, he would be appointed by a supreme court judge. This, the council pointed out, meant "putting the interests of labor in the hands of one individual" When the "corrupting power of capital" was figured in, the act set out on "too slim a foundation upon which to rest the rightful claims of a body of wage earners."³³

Nonetheless, the appointment of E.P. Bremner as a federal labour commissioner in 1901 was greeted with enthusiasm. According to the Independent, Bremner had "certainly earned his salary and has accomplished a large amount of good, being instrumental in settling more than one dispute between employer and employee." Bremner, working under the federal Conciliation Act of 1900, settled strikes among fishermen, longshoremen, and miners, to the delight of the VTLC. His dismissal in September 1901 shook the faith of the labourist council in Laurier's Liberal government, if not in the arbitration process itself, and helped turn the council away from Lib-Labism and towards independent political action.³⁴

The Bremner affair illustrated the dilemma of the VTLC's early faith in arbitration. On the one hand, strikes were harmful: they hurt workers, fractured solidarity, and were

³³VTLCM, 7 May 1903.

³⁴Independent, 20 July, 2 November 1901; Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1971, 53-6.

signs of misalignment and friction in the society itself. On the other hand, compulsory arbitration schemes created by a non-labour government steamrolled over the interests of workers.

If arbitration tribunals were not a total success as working-class institutions, neither were the VTLC labour hall and press. Both were important objectives of the leadership of the council, and both contributed to solidarity and fragmentation. The union hall offered several practical benefits to the movement. It gave workers a place to meet at their convenience; it assured that assemblies could not be denied a venue by nervous owners or hostile authorities; and it put an end to the running sore of rent, replacing it with a tangible asset. The labour press made it possible for unionists to get news and ideas that the daily papers deemed of little interest to their mass audiences, and it provided a forum for workingmen to discuss politics, social events, and community affairs from their perspective. The hall and the newspaper provided psychological benefits as well. Each gave the labour movement a physical presence in the city, and demonstrated that the unions were stable, mature, and responsible. Both the hall and the paper became sources of real pride to the council and its members.

But the labour temple and the Independent had drawbacks for the city's unionists as well. In some instances they became sources not of solidarity but of fragmentation. If

both institutions were formally owned by the VTLC and its affiliates, in practice they were controlled by the council executive and the small cadre of the hall committee, the newspaper editor, and the business manager. Simply keeping the hall and the paper going required a great deal of work. Stories had to be written, type set, rooms rented; equipment had to be purchased, money raised, maintenance carried out. These ancillary tasks often came to be regarded as the end and measure of the council's efforts, rather than as the means to certain goals and objectives. To the perennial question "what have you done for me lately?" the leadership could point to the hall or the paper and justify their continued existence by virtue of the institutions they had created and maintained. Furthermore, maintaining the hall, and more particularly the newspaper, required the hiring of staff. This allowed some unionists to make a living not from their trade but from the union movement itself, and created a kind of class system in labour's own ranks. To the degree that these union employees had a vested interest in keeping their positions they had to avoid running afoul of the council leadership; no matter what loyalties they may have had to the rank and file, they now owed some allegiance to the union executive as well. More subtly, these employees spent some time justifying their positions and the structures that made them possible. Stability and centralization became important to them. Hall managers called for dues increases

to maintain the property while the newspaper tended to support orthodoxy and loyalty to the leadership. For all of these reasons, the creation of the labour temple and the newspaper also led to the creation of a cadre of unionists who were distinct from the rank and file and had significantly different interests.

The VTLC first took up the issue of the union hall in 1890. A committee was struck to secure a building that "would be a comfortable place for members to meet and where newspapers' could be perused without let or hindrance."³⁵ Little progress was made until 1896, when the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners announced that it could no longer afford to keep its own hall, and offered the building and its furniture to the council free of charge save for the right to hold its own meetings there without rental fees. The council quickly agreed to the offer, and in March 1896 became the owner of the lease and the accounts receivable.³⁶ But the VTLC soon outgrew the building, and in 1899 it appointed a committee to "consider the proper step to take for the erection of a suitable building."³⁷ The proposed structure was estimated to cost \$10,000, and the committee recommended that all members of affiliated unions be assessed one day's pay to raise the smaller sum needed to purchase the

³⁵VTLCM, 24 October 1890.

³⁶VTLCM, 13 March, 27 March 1896.

³⁷World, 15 April, 13 May 1899.

lot. The bulk of the money would then be borrowed at 6 per cent interest, and would allow the council to construct a two-story building made of brick.³⁸

This plan, however, had to be scuttled. The affiliated unions and their members rejected the suggested assessment of a day's pay, the first sign that the labour hall was the dream of the council leadership rather than the union movement as a whole.³⁹ Forced to scale down its plan, the VTLC negotiated to purchase the Methodist church on Homer Street, and devised a voluntary share purchase scheme. Instead of the compulsory assessment, unionists were now solicited to buy two-dollar shares in the building.⁴⁰ By September 1899, the council had obtained a mortgage and moved into the former church. A management committee was appointed to run the hall, and the committee was made up of VTLC officers and longtime members. Financial secretary J.H. Watson, Secretary D.C. Harrison, Trustee and Statistician J.T. Bruce, Trustee W.R. Lawson, and former Vice President Francis Williams, soon to be a labour candidate for the legislature, made up the first labour hall committee. These appointments ensured that the hall would be controlled by seasoned unionists who would reflect and represent the more

³⁸World, 10 June 1899.

³⁹Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁴⁰World, 5 August 1899.

conservative element.⁴¹

Once the building had been purchased, renovations became the next item, and the committee made extensive changes in the lay-out and structure, including "splendid plumbing arrangements," no small matter in these early years of the city. The improvements meant that the council had "ample accommodation for many years to come and also for public meetings whenever necessary," and the Independent boasted that the VTLC "has become possessed of a property which will be of immense utility to all the working men of the city and indeed of the province."⁴² But not all of the working men of the city seemed equally impressed. The share scheme was not very successful, and the council was forced to campaign and plead constantly for financial support from the rank and file. Making the scheduled payments on the mortgage was a close-run thing, despite the small contributions that were sought from each unionist. One appeal outlined the resistance of the membership, as it plaintively suggested that

If the members of the unions would each lay aside 10 cents every week, the 1,600 would have contributed \$650 a month towards paying the \$5,000 on the hall by April 24th. Can't this be done? Can't even half this sum be forthcoming?⁴³

⁴¹World, 2 September 1899.

⁴²Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁴³Independent, 31 March 1900. It may be that workers' own financial troubles prevented them from taking up shares; \$2.00 was nearly a half-day's pay for a unionized worker. But this too suggests that the council was out of step with the rank and file.

Civic and union pride were played upon as the Independent pointed out that

There are some 75 cities in the United States planning the erection of labor buildings. Vancouver cannot be behind in owning their own hall. Every workingman should interest himself in raising the \$5,000 by the 24th of April. Buy a \$2 share, or chip in two bits with someone else towards purchasing one.⁴⁴

Still the funds were not forthcoming. Building committee secretary Francis Williams went on at length to chivvy reluctant unionists to contribute to the hall, using economic arguments and shame to convince them to pitch in. "That the new Union hall is of immense benefit to the labor element of the city cannot be disputed," he began. The central union building provided better accommodations for the participating unions at a lower cost than renting or owning separate halls, and it produced a profit of \$400 a year due to the "good management" of the executive committee. Nonetheless, still it was

almost impossible to enlist the practical sympathies of many of our members. In view of the issues involved, many of them have manifested an apathy which might with perfect justice be designated as abominable.... In considering these facts are we not justified in concluding that with union men, as with churchmen, two half dollar pieces (or less) held close to the eyes, will shut out the whole landscape; will quench out the light of the noonday sun. Brother men get out of such selfishness or like the cankerworm, it will spoil the best fruit in the orchard.

Warning of the need to raise \$3,000 in the next three months,

⁴⁴Independent, 31 March 1900.

Williams noted that some members "have done more than justice demanded of them." Others, however, were letting the side down, and he deplored the

ignoble and unmanly spirit which grasps all benefit within reach and is not willing to render good services in return. In speaking these things, we are not talking of abstract speculations; we are dealing out truths that cannot be disputed or even called in question. We all know them, though we do not all act up to them.⁴⁵

Despite the impassioned plea, the hall was still in financial difficulty six months later. Part of the problem lay in the difference between those who benefited directly from the hall and those who were asked to foot the bills. The council had decided that it was necessary to move out of the "cramped ill-ventilated quarters we endured so long" with little consultation with the rank and file and in the face of its refusal to pledge a day's pay to the cause. Williams himself provided a clue to the general apathy when he remarked that owning the hall meant that labour had acquired "a home for ourselves -- or to change the figure, to establish a headquarters for Labor's executive from whence to carry on with more vigor and effectiveness the Campaign for the rights of the people...."⁴⁶ The executive had unilaterally decided that a new hall was a pressing need, and later lambasted the rank and file for refusing to support a project

⁴⁵Independent, 21 April 1900.

⁴⁶Independent, 21 April, 13 October 1900. Emphasis added.

that was foisted upon it. The VTLC had to make the first payment out of general revenue because the membership declined to contribute to the fund, and the subsequent renovations were paid for in the same manner. Less than half of the city's union members purchased the \$2 shares, and of these, several cashed them in within a few months. Rather than conclude that it had been operating in a vacuum, the council started to insist that unionism and the union hall were one and the same. Good unionists were now those who supported the hall, and bad unionists were those who did not. Apathy was seen as a symptom not of dissatisfaction but of treason:

There are many of our members who have not lifted a finger to aid this enterprise as yet, but they share the advantage equally with the rest. Is it manly or just to take all and give nothing? This is what every unionist is doing who has not bought at least one share. It is a disgrace to the cause of unionism that in such a progressive city as Vancouver that these things should have to be said.... A citizen who refuses to defend his country in time of peril is no patriot, and a unionist who refuses to help in a case of this kind is a mockery and a sham.⁴⁷

But the appeals had small effect. Despite the oft-repeated assertion that the central hall reduced the charges that individual unions paid, several began to complain or to be tardy with their rent. By 1902, the Painters' were in arrears, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers protested that their rent was too high, and the Building Trades Council, a

⁴⁷Independent, 13 October 1900.

short-lived federation of construction unions, asked for a rent reduction.⁴⁸ To compound the problem, the caretaker's salary was under review, and some delegates believed that it should be raised to \$50 a month. Desperate for funds, the VTLC struck a special committee to "interview the different unions to induce them to take shares in the building sufficient to write off the mortgage."⁴⁹ The committee had little success, and early in 1903 the Stevedores gave notice that they would vacate the hall, while the Railway Carmen made it clear that they were not interested in purchasing any shares. Subsequent attempts to sell shares and raise the mortgage had similar disappointing results.⁵⁰ When revenue could not be gleaned from the rank and file, the council looked for other ways to raise money and to cut costs. The caretaker's raise was turned down, and it was suggested that the council could build a small house beside the hall and give free room and board instead of a salary increase. Again tight money made this impossible, and rather than free lodgings, the council voted only to repair the caretaker's existing quarters in the building. By 1904, the VTLC tried to become a landlord by building a "good boarding house at the rear of the hall to rent as a probable good invest-

⁴⁸VTLCM, 21 August, 17 July, 4 September 1902.

⁴⁹VTLCM, 6 November 1902.

⁵⁰VTLCM, 1 January, 7 May, 21 May 1903.

ment."⁵¹

These first years of the labour hall were marked with financial insecurity and apathy on the part of the general membership. Far from being a means to unite the leadership and the rank and file, the hall tended to separate the executive, who were determined to maintain a headquarters for themselves, from the individuals and unions who could not or would not contribute to maintain it. The point is not that the council should not have had such a hall, but rather that something as apparently straightforward as a union temple illustrated the different priorities and agendas of the leaders and the led. By deciding on its own that the hall was necessary the VTLC executive exercised a degree of independence that was not widely supported. Instead of recognizing this, the union leaders used the gap between its own objectives and those of the people they represented as a reason to attack the membership for its apathy. In making support for the hall tantamount to support for the cause of unionism, the labour bureaucrats first drove a wedge in the movement and then moved to consolidate their control by taking further expenditures and plans on their own initiative.

A similar process centred around the VTLC official newspaper, the Independent. The paper first appeared on 31 March 1900, with long-time ITU and VTLC officer George

⁵¹VTLCM, 21 May, 4 June 1903; 7 April 1904.

Bartley as editor. The business manager was Harry Cowan, former owner and manager of the Winnipeg Voice, and a past president of the VTLC. As with the hall, control of the paper would be vested in the hands of men with a long history and close connections to the labour council.

From the beginning, reasonably enough, the paper urged workers to subscribe and support the venture. It noted with approval the "professional press" of the German labour movement and enviously eyed its annual subsidy of \$15,000 paid from compulsory union dues.⁵² With no possibility of such a subvention in Vancouver, the paper was forced to rely on moral imperatives, and it was quick to identify its own interests with those of the labour movement as a whole. One appeal read,

A union paper is a real necessity in a community composed of wage-earners such as this one is, but in order to keep one alive it must be fed. The union men are the people who undoubtedly should see that it is properly taken care of. It is for their interests that it should be healthy and prosperous and possessed of sufficient vigor to make a square fight when necessary. Not that we are looking for a new fight or expect one, but such a thing cannot long be foretold and the unexpected is often the thing that happens. Therefore it is well to be prepared with all the ordinances and paraphernalia of war, and be in such a position as not to be caught in ambush. Remember, union men, the Independent is working for you. Don't you think you ought to do a little work for it? Send in your names and your subscriptions and be placed on the honor roll. The editor and the devil [ie, helper] can't stand the wind much longer.⁵³

⁵² Independent, 13 October 1900.

⁵³ Independent, 24 August 1901.

Editorials and articles reprinted from other labour journals sounded a similar theme. Several bemoaned the fate of the faithful labour editor who fought on alone while those who criticised his selfless efforts "never give a cent to support the paper"⁵⁴ Again the line was drawn between those members who actively supported the paper without question and those who, through poverty, apathy, or protest, did not.

The exigencies of newspaper publishing gave the pleas for money and support some urgency. Without regular subscriptions the paper could not survive and its life was constantly threatened. One effect of this was to push the editor and business manager to seek support from the merchant class of the city. The paper actively solicited advertising from local merchants and printed regular reminders to its readers to patronize those establishments that placed ads and to make sure they mentioned they had seen the ads in the Independent. More significantly, the editor maintained that such businesses and labour had interests in common and that one of these interests was the labour paper itself. "Men of business," Bartley importuned, "are beginning to realize the necessity there exists of cooperating with the labor class in helping their paper." He welcomed the support of businessmen, for "if labor papers were patronized as they ought to be by business communities and workmen, it would not be so very

⁵⁴Independent, 28 September 1901.

long before there would be hundreds of daily labor papers."⁵⁵ Practical business considerations, then, helped to blur class lines in the minds of the proprietors, and both reinforced and was reinforced by their populist ideology and their own class position as artisans and labour aristocrats.

The paper was also a medium used quite consciously by the labour leadership and the editor to put forward the views and policies of the bureaucracy. From the first, the editor announced that the paper would espouse the cause of reformism, even if it meant "being vilified and dubbed a traitor to the cause by pessimists and extremists." The Independent-- a name chosen to demonstrate the refusal to be controlled by any political party -- was meant to "be a reflex of the sentiments expressed by the Trades and Labor Council."⁵⁶ This control was rarely exercised through overt censorship, as the paper often printed dissenting arguments in its letters page and printed articles from every labour and left perspective, ranging from Tolstoyan anarchism to Gompersism to DeLeonite socialism. Despite this open policy, however, the relative conservatism of Bartley and the VTLC leadership shone through. Sometimes their point of view was put forward explicitly, in articles that praised the council or supported particular policies or candidates. At other times, the political message put out by Bartley and Cowan was less

⁵⁵Independent, 24 August 1901.

⁵⁶Independent, 31 March 1900.

partisan, if no less overt. Warnings against radicalism, for example, were a regular feature of the Independent, often in the form of a "better safe than sorry" parable. In one such warning, a former editor of a "really radical paper" told the Independent how the journal increasingly alienated readers with its radicalism. Soon the readership "dwindled down to the extremists" But even the loyal cadre was driven off, some by the editor's reference to social democracy as "feudal oppression," and the rest when he attacked "atheism on the score of its superstitious tendencies." Finally, the editor himself stopped taking the paper, for he found its radicalism "too unsettling." The moral of the story was plain: politics and religion were a source of division in the labour movement, and those who opposed moderation endangered both the cause and the paper.⁵⁷ This message was repeated constantly in different forms as the Independent drove home its assault on dissenters and radicals. "The man who breeds dissension in a union," one article maintained,

is the greatest foe union labor has to contend against. He usually employs the cowardly weapon of slander and falsehood against someone who has incurred his displeasure, because he did not go the way the discord-breeder wanted him to go, and because he dared to think different on certain subjects foreign to the malcontent's reasoning. Harmony is the greatest force necessary to make the labor movement a success, and the man who for selfish purposes and without good reason tries to make life a burden to other members should be

⁵⁷Independent, 16 November 1901.

promptly sat on and squelched.⁵⁸

Other attacks were launched against those who are

the first to criticize the officers, the first to demand the benefits of the union, and the first to kick and swear that the union is no good He breeds more discontent and creates more strikes in his sneaking way than would a thousand good members If he is in your branch, "fire" him out, but don't kill him, as he would lose his last breath calling for the funeral benefits.⁵⁹

The labour newspaper applauded the yeoman virtues of common sense and pragmatism as part of its campaign against dissidents and apathetic nay-sayers. Encouraging members to support the status quo, the Independent insisted that "Labour does not want 'wild men' to represent it anywhere." Instead, it wanted "the representation of sensible, clear-headed men who can state a case without exaggeration or undue heat."⁶⁰ However correct such an assessment may have been of the will of the membership or the best tactical approach to take (and this is hardly clear), such appeals to "sensible" action were a warning to those who might want to challenge the leadership. Other articles made the message plain:

Discipline is indispensable to success All other things being equal, the army that is best disciplined is the one that is surest of success. As with other organizations, so with institutions, so with organizations of wage workers. Where wise rules are adopted and readily enforced, and where discipline has been maintained, the greatest possible achievements are the natural results

⁵⁸Independent, 29 September 1900.

⁵⁹Independent, 5 October 1901.

⁶⁰Independent, 26 October 1901.

Trade unions, being voluntary organizations, are incapable of enforcing the rigid discipline that law and necessity enforces [sic] but a great deal of it is necessary.

The piece concluded by enjoining workers to "remember their obligations," to "live up to their promises," and to "adhere to the laws" of the union.⁶¹ Another article reminded readers that "trade unions are practical organizations ... advocating the practical desires and wants of workmen by practical methods." Unlike the socialists, unions did not "dash headlong into wild theories, and hence are slow moving, conservative organizations." To those who might argue that this was a fair description of what needed to be changed, the paper maintained that in fact, "this is where their [the unions'] strength lies. This is why they have not been destroyed long ago." Radicals, the article went on, had their place, for "they are pulling us out of the 'rut,' which, without them, we would be inclined to rest in," but moderation was the proper road. The interplay between radicals and conservatives explained why the trade unions were "slow, but at the same time progressive." Ignoring the braking effect of the labour leaders themselves, the paper concluded that it was important that the radicals did not get too far ahead of the masses, and that more education was needed before the entire movement was as progressive as the

⁶¹Independent, 12 October 1901.

radical element.⁶²

But neither overtures to the business community nor aiming at the widest common denominator provided the paper with a sufficient income. Popular support among the city's unionists was not forthcoming, as the constant requests for subscriptions and money made clear. Less than one third of the 1500-2000 union members subscribed to the paper. Such lack of interest had been demonstrated several years before, when the VTLC first broached the subject of a labour newspaper. At that time, weeks of soliciting had brought in only 130 promises to subscribe. Eight years later, when the Independent was launched in 1900, the magic number of 500 still could not be reached, though the city's population had doubled.⁶³ By October 1903, the lack of financial support forced the paper to cut back its publication from once a week to once a month. Determined to keep the paper alive, the council formed a special committee to help maintain it as a weekly, and with the renewed effort, the Independent continued in that format until its demise early in 1904.⁶⁴ But the reluctance of the rank and file to support the newspaper

⁶²Independent, 17 August 1901.

⁶³The estimate of 1/3 is based on projections given in 1892 and again in 1904 that the paper could survive if 400-500 subscriptions could be guaranteed. Presumably the failure of the Independent means that such a number of subscribers was not forthcoming. VTLCM, 23 September, 7 October, 18 November 1892; 19 May 1904. The estimate of 1600 VTLC affiliated members is in the Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁶⁴VTLCM, 5 November 1903.

suggests that it, no less than the hall, was the creation and icon not of the union movement but of its leaders and paid staff.

The paid positions were themselves a sore spot in the VTLC. In January 1903, Bartley and Cowan came under attack for being employers. Ironically, Bartley had tried to purge the Knights of Labor editor G.F. Leaper on the same grounds a decade before.⁶⁵ The first move came when some delegates questioned Bartley and Cowan's eligibility to sit on the council. The matter was referred to the by-law committee for a ruling, but before it could report, a motion was made to have the ITU replace the two as delegates. They were, the motion asserted, "considered employers of labor," by virtue of their positions on the council newspaper, and thus prohibited by the constitution from sitting. The council voted overwhelmingly to quash the motion, and Bartley and Cowan remained on the paper and in the council.⁶⁶ Though political in-fighting rather than any principled objection to employers seems to be behind the affair, the paid posts and the need to hire workers did put the labour council in a difficult position.⁶⁷

⁶⁵See Chapter 3, 105-7.

⁶⁶VTLCM, 15 January, 5 February 1903.

⁶⁷The politics of the dispute are not clear. Several council delegates were working to remove J.H. Watson, and this was the opening shot in their battle, described elsewhere. It may be that the same members wanted to displace Cowan and Bartley, seeing in them allies of Watson, but

Despite this success, the editor came under fire again nine months later. Though the council had voted to "view with suspicion any labor man who espouses the cause of either of the old political parties," the Independent had plumped for a Conservative candidate in a by-election. Angry VTLC delegates moved to withdraw the council's endorsement of the paper as its official organ, but withdrew the motion when it was apparent that it would fail. A subsequent motion to have the issue resolved by a referendum of the affiliated unions was defeated in a fairly close vote of 16-12, but a compromise created a press committee to supervise "all copy pertaining to political matters" that was considered for publication.⁶⁸ The issue, however, would soon become moot, as the general lack of interest in the paper meant that it had only a few more months to live.

The history of the union hall and paper demonstrate the profound differences between the leadership of the VTLC and the rank and file in Vancouver even when such differences did not lead to open conflict. Priorities and objectives were set by the leaders, who then expected members to follow uncritically. When such support was not forthcoming, bureaucrats tended to blame the rank and file, rather than

dropped the issue in the face of their strong support in the council. It is not apparent that this was primarily a fight of socialists against labourists, for the attack on Watson crossed several political lines.

⁶⁸VTLCM, 19 November 1903.

try to understand apathy as a sign that they were not addressing the concerns of those they represented. In the face of this apathy, the council tended to see itself in opposition to the membership, and often acted accordingly.

The separation of the council from the rest of the labour movement created a vicious circle. Believing that they spoke for the whole movement, leaders created policies and institutions that reflected their own needs and perceptions. When workers disagreed or remained indifferent to the efforts made on their behalf, the leadership reacted by attacking the rank and file. This in turn separated the leaders from the led even more, for it allowed the bureaucracy to think that, in the face of an apathetic and even traitorous rank and file, it had the right, indeed the obligation, to press on without popular support.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Ideology of Labourism and the Labour Aristocracy

Along with a structure of organization and control, the labour council developed its political ideology. Contrary to many assumptions about labour bureaucracies, the council did not become more conservative over time. Instead, it started from its earliest days as a proponent of labourism; only by the early 1900s did it begin to consider the question of socialism. Thus, an examination of the council's ideology suggests that conservatism is not primarily a function of bureaucracy, for the first years of the council were less bureaucratic, had fewer paid positions, and were staffed by active trade unionists rather than experts or professionals. Where ideology and bureaucracy did merge was in the bureaucrats' ability to create and impose their own political agenda on the rest of the labour movement. This chapter will outline the council's political stance from 1889 to 1900, and try to suggest causes other than bureaucracy for it.

Their ideology was class-conscious and subscribed to a labour theory of value, but these were not Marxist categories or analyses. Less defined criteria were used. The difference between classes was not held to be their relationship to the means of production, that is, between those who owned land, factories, or workshops and those who did not; the primary distinction was not that between employer and employee. Instead, class was defined by one's relation to

what was conceived to be real work, or socially necessary production. Farmers, artisans, small manufacturers, small proprietors, even merchants and perhaps some professionals--those who performed useful work that benefited society--were on one side. On the other were those who did not actually produce but who still reaped huge rewards: the great monopolists who accumulated outlandish sums by destroying small competitors and restricting the market; financiers who made gains by juggling paper; speculators who bought low and sold high without improving the land with their own efforts; and those who lived by clipping the coupons from their bonds. These people, labourists asserted, did very little to justify their existence and yet they sucked up the labour of millions. Thus the council's newspaper, the Independent asked,

What would happen if all who work should suddenly cease to work? It might occur to some that labor is as important as the class that absorbs its product. Presidents, judges, heads of departments, etc., occasionally take vacations and are not greatly missed. Suppose cooks, engineers, firemen, etc should take vacations, would they be missed?

Another article reasserted the nobility of toil, for "Labor is the life of life. Ease is the way to disease. The highest life of an organ lies in the fullest discharge of its function."¹

In this picture of society divided into parasites and producers, capitalism was not itself viewed as bad. Un-

¹Independent, 14 July, 14 April 1900.

restricted capitalism, monopoly, unfair practices, and the centralization of wealth and power were the chief evils. From this it followed that the appropriate goal of political action was not the revolution but gradual reforms that would put an end to abuses of the system and restore its harmony. On one front, this meant fair wage laws, lien laws, protection of the rights of unions, the dismantling of monopolies, and public ownership of the so-called natural monopolies such as transit, power, and water. Labourists in Vancouver often denounced the trusts, the organized cartels that had tight control over prices. John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil Company were favourite targets as writers deplored his income of \$72 million dollars for 1900 alone and noted with alarm that

this gigantic fortune, and other great estates wrung from the American people by the extortion of monopoly, are growing rapidly. Are they not a menace to the welfare of the masses? Are they not a danger to our representative system of government? Shall they be permitted to grow still more gigantic through favor of law and protection of hardened politicians?²

In May 1900, the Independent printed a short critique that neatly sums up the reformist thrust of labourism:

The farmer, miner, carpenter, laborer, sells his labor to the capitalist. The capitalist, through the trust, sells him back the product of his labor and for his trouble in buying and selling, keeps just one-half of the fruits of toil. The time is ripening when the artisan will sell his labor to no man, when he will harness the trust and use it, not to accumulate gold but to distribute the good

²Independent, 12 May 1900.

things of this world. In order that the day will come and come quickly, we must make "public ownership:" our battle-cry. We must first own the railroads, telegraphs, telephones, electric lighting, etc. and in due time the great trusts. Then fellow-workers and not until then, will there be an equitable distribution of the products of labor.³

As a consequence, in 1893, the VTLC called for the government ownership of telegraph lines, and in 1894 it unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the city to take over and run the Vancouver Electric and Tramway Company. In September of that year, delegates moved that

Whereas: it is a principle of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council that the city should own and operate all its public utilities -- Therefore be it resolved that this council endorses the steps taken by the City Council towards undertaking the lighting of the City. Further, be it resolved that this council emphatically condemn the arguments used by the opponents of the undertaking as being attempts to perpetuate unprincipled monopoly and speculation. Further be it resolved that the members of this council pledge themselves to use their utmost influence to have the by-laws authorizing the undertaking passed by the rate-payers.⁴

Later, the council opposed the 25 year lease given to the streetcar company, countering "the city should secure the right to purchase the Railway and equipment," and put itself "on record as favoring municipal control of water, light, and tramways." By the end of 1895, the call was expanded to include municipal ownership of gas, electric, telephone, and

³Independent, 5 May 1900.

⁴VTLCM, 2 December 1893; 30 March 1894; 28 September 1894.

water utilities as well as ferry and street railway lines.⁵ The Independent used examples from around the world to buttress its claim that public ownership was possible and, more importantly, would lower the money paid out by working people for necessities. The paper pointed out to its readers that

You can talk a whole year over all the long-distance telephone lines in Switzerland, which cover over 6,000 miles, for \$16, but it costs \$10 for a five minutes' talk over the telephone line between New York and Little Rock. The reason is: Switzerland owns and controls her own telephone lines, and private corporations operate the Atlantic lines.⁶

Using the United States as an example, the paper observed that, on average, the cost of power was 30 per cent lower in states and cities where utilities were taken out of private hands and turned over to the public. Locally, the high cost of heating coal in the winter of 1895 was blamed on "the monopoly held by coal dealers in Vancouver," and the council wrote to MPP Ralph Smith to obtain the price of coal at the minehead so it could calculate the mark-up of the "trust."⁷

The labour leaders were careful advocates of keeping down the costs of government as well. Government expenditures were watched closely, and the council was quick to protest monies given to large corporations or wasted on

⁵VTLCM, 6 December 1895.

⁶Independent, 7 April 1900.

⁷Independent, 7 April 1900; VTLCM, 8 November 1895.

extravagances of little import to working men. In 1891, it applauded the city's offer of a bonus to the company constructing a new dry-dock if the work was completed quickly, though it may be noted that such a proviso could result in a speed-up for the workers on the job. Two years later, the VTLC opposed the city's plan to guarantee a new issue of street railway bonds to the tune of \$50,000 and condemned its proposal to exempt the new CPR depot from taxation. This reflected the council's belief that no corporation should be supported, either directly or indirectly, by the taxpayers.⁸ The mayor and aldermen were blasted for placing an ad in the *World's Fair Guide* that cost \$1,000 on the grounds that "the City would derive little if any real advantage from such a scheme."⁹ City works were carefully scrutinized, and on numerous occasions the council complained to the Works Department, for example, of "bad material" being used by a sewer contractor, or work on a new hospital being performed in a "very unsatisfactory way."¹⁰ Such attention to the spending of the city suggests that the labour council delegates viewed themselves as consumers and citizens no less than as workers.

Federal and provincial governments were also barked at

⁸World, 19 January 1891; VTLCM, 7 April, 1 September 1893.

⁹VTLCM, 10 March 1893.

¹⁰VTLCM, 24 March 1893, 22 June 1894.

by the VTLC watchdog. The council protested "the reckless handling of the people's money with respect to 'Indian affairs,'" damned the British Pacific Railway land grant and subsidy, and labelled the proposed new parliament buildings in Victoria a "reckless and extravagant waste of the people's money."¹¹ Careful attention to the direct financial considerations helped the council work out its position on free trade in 1895:

Whereas: the Dominion Customs Tariff is founded upon the principles of protection and not upon public requirements; and whereas the existing tariff based upon an unsound principle has developed monopolies, trusts, and other combinations; and whereas it has burdened the promotion of agricultural pursuits; it has oppressed the masses to the enrichment of the few; it has retarded unassisted and desirable immigrants who would attain the full stature of citizenship; it has failed to exclude from our shores Chinese and other undesirable classes who would never become citizens, to the detriment of franchised working men. It has caused great loss to our population and has impeded commerce Therefore, be it resolved that the tariff should be reduced to the needs of honest, economical, and efficient government.¹²

The concern with efficient government was linked with union principles, unlike the simple desire to keep costs down that was put forward by various classes in Canadian society. The VTLC sought to replace contract labour, that is, workers whose wages were largely determined by contractors who had tendered the lowest bid, with day labour, or work that was guaranteed a decent, standard wage. The call for day labour

¹¹VTLCM, 19 May 1893.

¹²VTLCM, 15 February 1895.

was aimed at elevating wages, reducing competition among working people, protecting unions, excluding Asians, and ensuring that the highest standards of quality work were met.¹³ Accepting the lowest bid for public works did not guarantee that citizens received the best deal. The Independent asked,

Do our city fathers imagine that contractors are in the business for the good of their health? If the contractor offers to do a job for \$100, he figures that \$20 of that goes into his own pocket. And to earn that \$20 what does he do? Absolutely nothing. This \$20 will always be paid -- to make his money, the contractor would not hesitate to substitute inferior material and labour; the lowest contractor bid is still inflated by the \$20 of profit.¹⁴

It was better economy, the delegates maintained, to have the city hire day labour and thus eliminate the \$20 profit paid to contractors. Their newspaper quoted with approval the mayor of Haverhill, Massachusetts, who advocated day labour, claiming that under it "all the evils of the contract system have thus been eliminated. Labor has been well paid, and the amounts of public work done under these improved conditions has been much larger, with the same appropriation, than in previous years."¹⁵ Union principles, then, could be put forward as measures that would benefit the society as a whole.

On the political front, the union leaders sought to

¹³VTLCM, 14 February 1896, 18 June 1897.

¹⁴Independent, 28 April 1900.

¹⁵Independent, 31 March 1900.

expand the franchise so the producers could exert their proper and deserved influence over the state and through it the trusts. This political call was not designed so much to alter the system as to ensure that politicians became accountable to the people and not the "interests." The VTLC declared that workers had to unite, not to tear down the state but to send "the fittest and the best men" to fight for "such legislation as will mostly benefit the wage-earners of the Dominion"¹⁶ The resolution suggests the faith that this generation of labour leaders had in the system. The problems of the working classes were not structural, were not an inherent battle between labour and capital, but were personal and would be eliminated when good men were sent by an aware working class to represent labour. Thus the first political platform adopted by the council was in the main devoted to increasing the participation of working people-- that is to say, white, Anglo-Saxon, skilled males -- in the political process. The platform called for manhood suffrage in municipal elections; abolition of the property qualification for those seeking municipal office; a legal half-day holiday for voting; a stronger Sunday observance act; the provincial franchise for all males receiving an income over \$300 per year; temperance legislation; and an elected Governor-General.¹⁷ Save for temperance and Sunday legisla-

¹⁶VTLCM, 14 February 1890.

¹⁷Loosmore, 45.

tion, each of these measures was aimed at giving working men better access to the political machinery.

Such demands continued to be a major part of the council's political agenda. In 1892, its parliamentary committee recommended asking the city to petition the province to amend the civic charter so the property qualification for municipal voters could be reduced from \$500 to \$200. Later that year, the committee called for the payment of salaries to aldermen, and the demand was eventually won.¹⁸ This became a perennial concern, and in 1894, the VTLC called for a raise in pay to \$400 per year. When the city threatened to eliminate the salaries in 1896, George Bartley opposed the measure fiercely, insisting that it was imperative to maintain "the present system of remuneration in order that the position of alderman may be open for workingmen representatives." In 1899, the battle was waged again. This time, the council invoked the labourist principle of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work to buttress its claim:

In every station of life, whether public or private, the laborer is worthy of his hire, and ... if carried, this by-law would practically debar workingmen from sitting in the council as aldermen. Therefore, be it resolved that this Labor Council is strongly opposed to such legislation, and believes that not only should the city aldermen be paid but that the salary should be increased to the

¹⁸VTLCM, 7 October, 2 December 1892. It has not been possible to determine when aldermanic salaries were first paid. City council minutes indices make no mention of the issue, and only an in-depth examination of the minutes would turn up the dates.

sum of \$400 per year.¹⁹

If such salaries were necessary to ensure working-class participation in civic politics, they could also make politics a possible career for labour leaders. The part-time salary of \$400 was a healthy incentive as it was approximately half a year's pay for a skilled worker.

Other measures were advocated to increase the participation of working men in the political life of the community. By 1895, these included the right of any voter to run for municipal office; direct legislation, in the form of initiatives and referenda; the abolition of the ward system; and the annual publication of the assessor's list and the city budget.²⁰ The council disapproved of a provincial bill that would "take away the franchise of the people" by allowing the government to appoint its commissioners, and it formally requested two seats on the Citizens Relief Committee, an early civil defence organization.²¹ Together with the reforms in trade union law, trust-busting, and the belief in "producerism," this political program made up the essential elements of the VTLC's labourist ideology.

The intellectual roots of labourism may be found in several places. Loosmore believed that the reform measures,

¹⁹VTLCM, 7 December 1894; 31 January 1896; 11 November 1899.

²⁰VTLCM, 6 December 1895.

²¹VTLCM, 4 January, 2 February 1894.

as distinct from the pure and simple trade union issues, stemmed from French and American republicanism and were imported to B.C. by the Knights of Labor. Craig Heron has instead stressed the British parliamentary struggles and nineteenth-century Radicalism as a source, and both are agreed on the influence of American populism.²² Undoubtedly both are correct to look so far afield for some elements of the ideology. But Canadian conditions and experiences also played an important role in defining labourism. Kealey and Palmer have demonstrated in Dreaming of What Might Be that the Canadian Knights could develop their own "brain-workers" and ideologues who could speak to the politics and issues north of the forty-ninth parallel.²³ The B.C. labourists drew heavily upon the Knights, though they rejected much of its eclectic radicalism, for local Knights were involved in the VTLC's early parliamentary committees.

The B.C. leaders also adopted ideas from the Canadian populist movement. Indeed, the populist Patrons of Industry put forward a platform in 1893 that strongly resembled that of the Vancouver labour movement. In London, Ontario, the Patrons called for rigid economy in every department of the public service; simplification of the laws and a reduction in the machinery of politics; a tariff for revenue only; free

²²Loosmore, ii, 37, 40, 45; Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 51, 54, 74.

²³Kealey and Palmer, 301-11.

trade; an end to railway bonuses; anti-trust legislation; and more equitable electoral measures.²⁴ Even the language of the two organizations was similar. The shared idea of the primacy of the producer led the Farmers' Sun, newspaper of the Patrons of Industry, to argue that

One of the greatest evils society has had to contend with has been a faulty and unequal system of distribution, by which the actual producer, whether of the city or country, has been despoiled to enrich the non-producing class -- capitalists, traders, professional men, and middlemen.²⁵

Farmers and labour together created all wealth, and the following could have appeared as easily in the Independent as in the Farmers' Sun:

On every field that bears a tempting harvest on its breast, on every brick in every building that was ever reared, on every book of value that was ever written, on every thought that burns to light the world, in every workshop, mine, mill, and factory -- wherever labour sweats -- are written the credentials of nobility.²⁶

In many ways, the early ideology of the VTLC had more in common with traditional rural protest than it did with Marxist socialism. This should not be surprising, for the

²⁴Louis Aubrey Wood, A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada: The Origins and Development of Agrarian Protest, 1872-1924 (1924), Reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975, 114-115.

²⁵Cited in S.E.D. Shortt, "Social Change and Political Crisis in Rural Ontario: The Patrons of Industry, 1889-1896," in Donald Swainson, ed., Oliver Mowatt's Ontario, Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1972, 216.

²⁶Cited in Russell Hann, Farmers Confront Industrialism: Some Historical Perspectives on Ontario Agrarian Movements, Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1975, 12.

first generation of labour leaders was itself making the transition from the countryside to the developing urban industrial society and it was natural for them to build their analysis of the new world on the heritage of rural, populist criticism. They borrowed from the farmer the producer ethic, the emphasis on controlling consumer prices, the idea of fair wages and prices, and the ideals of community and a community of interests. On the other hand, the easy acceptance of small employers as workers, a suspicion of immigrants, the belief in the family and the position of women in the home and work economy, and the refusal to see all capitalist relations as essentially exploitative, were also rooted in the rural experience.²⁷

Behind both the populist and the labourist ideologies stood the ideal of the yeoman. Independence was the touchstone of the concept of yeomanry, and farmers and unionists alike continued to strive for a life and a society that would allow them to control their own destinies, to avoid masters, and to stand equal to any man. The myth of the yeoman was a powerful one. H. Clare Pentland has noted "the satisfaction which the mass of the small farmers derived from the ownership of their homestead," and points out that "for the sake of his homestead, and the independence which it permitted,

²⁷For the experience of women on the farm, see Cohen, Women's Work, and Pauline Rankin, "The Politicization of Ontario Farm Women," in Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989, 309-32.

the small farmer would accept a smaller income, if necessary, than he could win in the market."²⁸ Similarly, Gavin Wright has outlined the strength of the American farmer's dream of autonomy, writing that

The willingness of small farmers to incur large debts, carry their families over long distances to remote and forbidding locations, and work long hours under conditions that were not uniformly pleasant, is powerful testimony to the desire of members of this class to succeed as family farmers.

They retained control over the detailed allocation of their own work time, supervisory authority over family labor, and a residual claim on the earnings of the enterprise after other legal claims were satisfied. Though they may not have used the term, they were at pains to avoid proletarianization²⁹

Paradoxically, the leaders of the VTLC, though staunch unionists, were also at pains to avoid becoming proletarians. For though they were workers, they were not industrial, or factory, workers. Early labour leaders such as Joseph Dixon and George Bartley had not emigrated to Vancouver to flee the sweatshops and mills of England and Ontario. Both men had left the family farm to take up a trade, precisely to avoid the fate of proletarianization. Becoming a tradesman was, in their experience, a way to avoid the worst abuses that faced the working class; it was a way to maintain and extend their

²⁸H. Clare Pentland, Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1850, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1981, 58-59.

²⁹Gavin Wright, "American Agriculture and the Labor Market: What Happened to Proletarianization?" Agricultural History, 62, 3 (Summer 1988), 192.

control and independence.³⁰ Wright argues that in the United States, the migration from the farms was not a movement from the petit-bourgeois occupation of farmer to the industrial working class and the factory. Instead, he suggests, "the general picture is a remarkably wide variety of occupations, professions, and businesses, from lawyers, bankers, and bookkeepers to well-paid skilled labor jobs like carpentry." Populism and labourism were better suited to the experience of these people than revolutionary socialism. Immigrants from other countries were much more likely to be factory hands, and this no doubt reinforced the populist and labourist view of the degeneration of both ethnic purity and craft integrity, making it easy to blend together racism and nativism with craft exclusivity.³¹ In Canada, Gordon Darroch has suggested that the rise of industrialization did not destroy the petit-bourgeois property owner and force farmers into the dark satanic mills of the city. Like farmers, artisans in the 1860s and 1870s tended to own property; their protest was not the protest of the exploited factory hand or sweated machine tender. Instead, Darroch suggests,

the political voices of Ontario's artisans were so articulate in this era partly because proletarianization was a real and visible threat not only to the independence of their craft communities and sense of traditional rights, but also to their

³⁰For information on Bartley, see Province, 4 January, 1943; Sun, 21 November 1939; Dixon was the son of a Cumberland County, England, farmer.

³¹Wright, 201.

considerable opportunities to gain small property holdings, which materially underwrote that independence.

The resistance to industrialization and wage work did not always turn into socialist protest; instead, this resistance "often took the form of redoubled efforts to gain or maintain the promised independence of smallholding, as well as more recognizable forms." He concludes that "petty property and its associated life-ways were by no means simply swamped or absorbed by the familiar institutional forms of late twentieth-century capitalism."³²

This transition from the land to the city and the ability of certain craft unions to preserve elements of the artisans' world helps explain the ready acceptance of populism and the rejection of a more articulate socialism by the leaders of the VTLC. Their lives still had strong elements of the artisan. In printing and the building trades, union workers had a great deal of autonomy in the work place. Their wage rates gave them some independence, even allowed them to buy property in Vancouver, while their occupations as builders and printers meant that they could reasonably aspire to becoming small contractors or jobbers or editors. Their rejection of socialism, then, was less the

³²Gordon Darroch, "Class in nineteenth-century, central Ontario: a reassessment of the crisis and demise of small producers during early industrialization, 1861-1871," in Class, Gender, and Region: Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology, G.S. Kealey, ed., St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988, 64, 68.

result of their positions as bureaucrats than their ability to transplant their artisanal status and its accompanying pre-industrial ideology to the city and to transform it to fit their particular niche in the industrial economy. Only when their trades were threatened or their ability to remain differentiated from the industrial proletariat was lost would they turn to socialism. Even then, successful bureaucrats could use their positions in the labour movement and their connections to the city's elite to elevate themselves, and as a result, they tended to remain mired in the mythology of yeomanry and independent commodity production. Yet even in this they resembled the successful farmer. Allan Kulikoff suggests that the yeomen of the late nineteenth century, "slowly, imperceptibly, even unconsciously ... became petty capitalists while continuing to espouse ideals of independence long after such ideals had ceased to have economic meaning for them."³³ In a similar way, Vancouver's first labour leaders held on to their labourist, populist views even after the economy and their own class position changed.

In the east, the similarities between populism and labour led the two groups to work together for a time. In 1886, the Trades and Labor Congress (TLC) sought an alliance with the Grange, a precursor of the Patrons, while in the 1890s, the Patrons and the TLC created a joint committee to

³³Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, 46, 1, (January 1989), 141.

explore avenues of cooperation. The organizations sent delegates to each others' conventions, and the Patrons were, for a time, given reciprocal membership rights in the TLC. Though the alliance was short-lived, it suggests the general outlines of the ideologies had much in common.³⁴

Labour and farmers even shared the same intellectuals, those writers and speakers who formally articulated their ideologies. George Wrigley, for example, edited the Knights' paper, the Canadian Labour Courier, in Ontario, then in 1892 founded the Canada Farmers' Sun. From the populist movement, Wrigley moved to the Canadian Socialist League and edited its paper, Citizen and Country. In 1902, he moved the paper to Vancouver, where he joined with Parmeter Pettipiece to create the paper that would soon become the Western Clarion, the voice of the socialist Party of Canada. Pettipiece himself left the family farm in Ontario to become a journalist, and his first paper, the Lardeau Eagle, was "essentially nothing other than a 'booster' paper," better fitted under the populist than the socialist rubric. Phillips Thompson,

³⁴Shortt, 226-229; Ramsay Cook, "Tillers and Toilers: The Rise of Populism in Canada in the 1890s." Historical Papers, (1984), 5-8. See Kealey and Palmer, 387-391, for connections between the Knights and the Patrons of Industry. Similarities also existed between the U.S. populist and labour movements, see, for example, Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, especially chapter 4. Norman Pollack, in The Populist Response to Industrial America, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, goes so far as to suggest that the farmers' protest was the most important resistance to capitalism, overshadowing the efforts of the labour movement.

perhaps the pre-eminent Knights' ideologue, moved through the Patrons before taking up the cause of socialism.³⁵ These spokesmen found a ready audience among the labour leaders of Vancouver, and the labour movement continued to draw upon the populist movement for information and analysis. In March 1893, the VTLC ordered a subscription to the Canada Farmers' Sun, and in 1894 and 1895, it worked with farmers in the Nationalist Party, a short-lived pro-labour party that favoured the single tax and sent the Lib-Lab George R. Maxwell to the House of Commons. Part of the council's political platform in 1894 was aimed at helping farmers, as it called for

local government loaning money to Farmers for a time of ten to twenty years on approved security at as low a rate of interest as possible and so enable the Farmer to make improvements on his land, as the council considers it would be to the best interests of the province.³⁶

Though the attempt at forging an alliance was unsuccessful, it does suggest that the class analysis of the early Vancouver labour leaders was closer to populism than to Marxism or socialism.

³⁵See Hann, 21; Cook, 19-20, for Wrigley, et al.; the assessment of the Eagle is from Jeremy Mouat, "The Context of Conflict: The Western Federation of Miners in British Columbia, 1895-1903." Unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, 1986, 44. In late 1900, the paper supported the Independent Labor/Liberal candidate Chris Foley, Independent, 10 November 1900.

³⁶VTLCM, 24 March 1893; 12 October 1894. Reference to co-operation with farmers in the Nationalist Party may be found in VTLCM, 7 December 1894.

But the important question of the bureaucrats' ideology is not whence it came. Rather it is, "why did these labour leaders continue to hold the ideology they did?" It is one thing to demonstrate that an ideology exists, and quite another to try to explain why it was appropriate for the group that held it. This is especially interesting in B.C. labour history, given the attention paid to its alleged radicalism. While this picture is changing -- it seems that the reds in the province were not so red and the whites in other provinces not so white -- the question of why was there no socialism in the first ten years of the VTLC is still relevant, if only as a back-handed way of examining the ideology that did evolve.

Such an examination suggests that many of the common explanations for the conservatism of the labour bureaucracy do not hold in this case. Labourism cannot be explained as a class collaborationist ideology of salaried union professionals who identify their interests with a white-collared middle class, for only one officer in the VTLC, the secretary, was paid in the early years. The secretary generally exerted little formal influence on decisions, and his position in this period was at best a part-time job, that paid five dollars a month.³⁷ Bureaucracy as such neither propelled these workers into the middle class nor changed their material status significantly.

³⁷VTLCM, 31 July 1891.

Neither can contract negotiations and settlement be an explanation for conservatism. Few unions in the first years of the VTLC negotiated contracts, as they were not considered necessary. Instead, unions decided upon a reasonable wage and announced their decisions to employers who would accept or fight them. The negotiation process described in the labour bureaucracy literature and so deplored by writers such as Stan Weir did not take place, yet the council was still, in relative terms, conservative.³⁸ It may be that the process of determining a wage rate in the union represented a form of negotiation and forced workers to be "reasonable." But this is a different argument from that of the incorporation theorists who describe the process of offer and counter-offer as one that fostered compromise and conservatism. Nor did union bureaucrats act as "policemen" to force employees back to work. If contracts tended to institutionalize a state of mind and behaviour that did not challenge the fundamentals of capitalism, it is unlikely that they alone created a consensus among workers. Finally, the independence of the VTLC and its loose affiliation to the TLC and the AFL suggests that pressure from the central labour bodies was not the determining factor. The VTLC leaders had few qualms about rejecting TLC policies, and in fact, the areas in which they worked seldom overlapped. While the Vancouver council was in broad agreement with the general policies of the TLC,

³⁸Weir, "The Conflict in American Unions."

it would simply ignore anything that they disagreed with or that seemed irrelevant.

If the early VTLC leaders were not forced into their political stance of labourism by virtue of ascendancy into white-collar, middle class union jobs, the negotiating process, or pressure from central labour organizations, it must be concluded that their ideology, for good or ill, reflected their interests as they perceived them. Craig Heron has noted that labourism reflected the needs and aspirations of the skilled, unionized workers who made up the VTLC in its early years:

Labourism was the political expression of skilled men and women who worked with their hands and thus made "honest toil" the touchstone of their value system; it was also the politics of people who cherished the personal freedoms which the struggles for popular democracy in the British system had brought....[It] was not an intellectualized doctrine, but more like an inclination and a set of political impulses which proceeded from some common ground....It was a vision of a decentralized society of small-scale production, where social and political power were widely diffused, where citizens were not far separated in social status, were treated equally under the law, and enjoyed equal opportunities, and where self-reliance, voluntary association, and mutual assistance would be more important than state coercion.³⁹

Robert McDonald has offered an explanation of why labourism suited the first generation of workers and leaders of the Vancouver labour movement. Briefly, he argues that the city itself acted as conservative influence. Unlike the frontier boom towns, the city offered relatively steady jobs,

³⁹Heron, 74, 50, 73.

higher pay in organized industries such as construction and printing, the chance to own a home and establish a stable life, and perhaps the opportunity to become a small contractor or businessman. All of these influences worked to make urban unionists conservative, or at least more conservative than the miners of the company towns of the hinterlands.⁴⁰ Though this reverse side of the frontier thesis makes several valid observations, it alone does not account for the labourist ideology of the VTLC.

The chief difficulty lies in the assertion that the environment of the city channeled workers into more conservative political action. When the VTLC was created in 1889, the population of the city, itself barely three years old, was approximately 14,000.⁴¹ By 1901, the population had doubled and had become more urbanized. But it is precisely at this time that the socialist influence becomes organized in the city, as William MacClain joined the labour council and ran for political office as an avowed socialist. It is in this period that the VTLC old guard of Bartley and Watson began their Philippics against socialist influences in the labour movement. Contrary to the implications of McDonald's thesis, conservatism is not directly related to urbanism and the pushing back of the frontier; indeed, in the first decade

⁴⁰R.A.J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia," B.C. Studies, 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986), 33-69.

⁴¹MacDonald, Distant Neighbors, 38.

of the VTLC, it is inversely related as the council, formed with the explicit ideology of labourism, encountered socialist thought after ten years of urbanization.

At the same time, other areas of the province that had substantial claims to the title of urban areas did create some version of radical thought. By 1897, for example the city of Rossland had a population of 8,000. Contrary to McDonald's argument, this urban area was a strong centre for socialism. Allen Seager has demonstrated that it was the miners and their allies in large towns, not those in company towns and camps, who supported the SPC.⁴² A.A. den Otter has similarly noted that while the city of Lethbridge was a commercial centre for the region, this urbanization did not result in labour peace and quiescence.⁴³ And the city of Chicago, undeniably an urban area, was from 1870 to 1900 home to the most radical left-wing movement, that is, anarchism. Far from hindering radicalism, the urban environment there encouraged it and allowed it to flourish.⁴⁴

A similar observation may be made about the city of Vancouver. Though the SPC had its electoral successes in

⁴²Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21." Labour/Le Travail, 16 (Fall 1985), 23-59. See 52 for this observation.

⁴³A.A. den Otter, Civilizing the West: The Galts and the Development of Western Canada. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982, 185-191, 266-304.

⁴⁴See Bruce C. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988.

areas such as Nanaimo and the interior mining districts, this does not mean that these areas represented the most radical elements of the party. Indeed, in electing MLAs such as James Hawthornthwaite and Parker Williams, the miners were electing men whose actions pledged them to reformism, not revolution. In his study of the SPC, R.A. Johnson has ruefully acknowledged that "the exigencies of [SPC] Real-politik meant that the failure to introduce and vote for legislation that would improve the miners' lot meant losing one's seat in the next election." In his study of coal mining in western Canada, Seager also concludes that the practice of the SPC was in marked contrast to its radical rhetoric. The socialism of the mining districts was little different in content than the reformist efforts of a Joe Dixon or a J.H. Watson. Electoral support for the SPC in these regions did not signify support for revolution but rather the reluctance of miners to vote for the parties of their employers and the desire to see reforms enacted.⁴⁵ In contrast, the seat of radical socialism was in the city of Vancouver. Here lived most of the members of the SPC's executive council; here were the offices of the party paper

⁴⁵R.A. Johnson, "No Compromise -- No Political Trading': The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia." Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1975, 207. Seager, 35. For a more involved discussion of the reformist tendency in the SPC, see my Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990, especially chapters three and four.

the Western Clarion. It was in the city that the party intellectuals and ideologues developed the doctrine of impossibilism; the fiery ideology of E.T. Kingsley was developed in the heart of the downtown urban core, not the periphery of the resource economy. Any theory of "urbanism," therefore, must be able to explain the side-by-side existence of radicalism and reformism, for the city supported both.

Nor was the prosperity of the city shared equally among the unionized and conservative workers. While construction workers, streetrailway carmen, and printers may have, in general, done well enough, tailors and cigarmakers in the city watched their incomes and status decline steadily over time. Such misfortunes, however, did not always push these workers into radicalism; more commonly economic disaster forced them to retrench, to advocate the old measures more fervently, and to call for Asian exclusion. This economic hardship was due, in part, to the city's ability to act as a market for national and international manufacturers who could supply some goods more cheaply than local firms. This means that "urbanism" arguments that see the city as a source of bounty tell only half the story. Furthermore, the suggestion that wealth creates conservatism strongly implies that deprivation creates radicalism. This corollary, however, is not borne out.

McDonald's strong empirical work, however, does point towards another explanation for the conservatism of the early

VTLC. What he does demonstrate convincingly is a labour aristocracy made up of unionized workers in a few industries. He argues persuasively that the trade union workers in stable sectors that were not de-skilled or undercut by imported goods from manufacturing centres occupied a significantly different class position from the rest of the working class. These workers could maintain a standard of living that was relatively privileged, and they could exact some control over the job itself. What allowed them to do this was not primarily the political economy of the urban landscape itself but the unique niche provided by their particular craft at this period and their ability to organize effectively. These factors are rooted in history and economics, rather than urbanization and geography.

The locus classicus for the debate on the labour aristocracy is the work of Marx and Engels. In 1858 Engels wrote,

The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie.⁴⁶

Marx, in his inaugural address to the International Workingmen's Association in 1864, pointed to the tendency of modern

⁴⁶Engels's comments to Marx were in reference to the actions of the British labour leader Ernest Jones, who was working to unite the remnants of the Chartist movement with moderate reformers. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975. Engels to Marx, 7 October 1858, 102-3.

capitalism to split the working class into castes:

In all of [the industrial countries of Europe] there has taken place, since 1848, an unheard-of development of industry and an undreamed-of expansion of imports and exports. In all of them the "augmentation of wealth and power entirely confined to classes of property" was truly "intoxicating." In all of them, as in England, a minority of the working classes got their real wages somewhat advanced; while in most cases the monetary rise of wages denoted no more a real access of comforts than the inmate of the metropolitan poorhouse or orphan asylum Everywhere the great mass of the working classes were sinking down to a lower depth, at the same rate, at least, that those above them were rising in the social scale.⁴⁷

The willingness of the industrialists to grant some concessions to a section of working class to win support for its domination largely benefited

the Great Trades' Unions. They are the organisations of those trades in which the labour of grown-up men predominates, or is alone applicable. Here the competition neither of women and children nor of machinery has so far weakened their organised strength. The engineers, the carpenters and joiners, the bricklayers, are each of them a power, to that extent that, as in the case of the bricklayers and bricklayers' labourers, they can even successfully resist the introduction of machinery. That their condition has remarkably improved since 1848 there can be no doubt, and the best proof of this is in the fact that for more than fifteen years not only have their employers been with them, but they with their employers, upon exceedingly good terms. They form an aristocracy among the working class, they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position, and they accept it as final.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Marx, "Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International Association," Marx and Engels, Selected Works. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976. Volume 2, 14-5.

⁴⁸Engels, "Preface to The Condition of the Working Class in England," Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Volume 3, 446-8.

These quotations outline the labour aristocracy argument. A minority of workers, in trade unions, the very workers Engels referred to as "the advanced guard of the working class," were, as the result of both their ability to fight and their particular, historical place in the economy, able to win concessions and higher wages for themselves. But with the achievement of these improvements, they became less and less interested in radical change; indeed, many were never convinced of the necessity for it in the first place.⁴⁹

More recently, the historian Eric Hobsbawm has used the concept of the labour aristocracy as an analytical tool. He set out six factors to define the aristocracy:

First, the level and regularity of a worker's earnings; second, his prospects of social security; third, his conditions of work, including the way he was treated by foremen and masters; fourth, his relations with the social strata above and below him; fifth, his general conditions of living; lastly his prospects of future advancement and those of his children.

Most important of these was the wage level, for

the man who earned a good regular wage was also the man who put enough by to avoid the Poor Law, to live outside the worst slum areas, to be treated with some respect and dignity by employers and to have some freedom of choice in his job, to give his children a chance of a better education, and so on.⁵⁰

The relatively well-paid worker, that is, the unionized

⁴⁹Engels, "Trades Unions," in Marx and Engels, Articles on Britain. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, 378.

⁵⁰Eric Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain," in Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour. New York: Doubleday Books, 1964, 322.

worker who was not threatened by mechanization or cheaper labour, was, according to Hobsbawm, able to merge with the lower middle class. This class included small shopkeepers, independent masters, foremen, managers, and even some white-collar workers such as clerks.⁵¹ This upward mobility separated the labour aristocrat from other workers, for "the artisan creed with regard to the labourers is that the latter are an inferior class and that they should be made to know and keep in their place."⁵² Craig Heron has similarly observed that in Canada, skilled workers, or, more accurately, unionized workers, held a like attitude towards the unskilled and non-unionized.⁵³

This analysis has been challenged by several writers on several different grounds. One of the most popular criticisms has been the assumption that the theory implies that the labour aristocrats had to have been more conservative than other workers. Michael Fiva, for example, has argued that the "main weakness" of Hobsbawm's contention is that he has failed "to produce any evidence that the mass of workers

⁵¹Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy," 322-3.

⁵²Thomas Wright, Our New Masters, 1873, cited in Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy," 324.

⁵³Heron, "Labourism and the Working Class," 61-2, and "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century." Labour/Le Travailleur 6 (Autumn 1980), 17-49. See pages 42-44 especially. See also Ian McKay, "Capital and Labour in the Halifax Baking and Confectionery Industry During the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century," Labour/Le Travail 3 (1978), 63-108.

were in fact more radical than the aristocracy." More recently, Michael Kazin has insisted that "the concept of a 'labor aristocracy' is rather useless" when applied to San Francisco building trades, "because it implies that 'nonaristocrats' thought and acted in more class-conscious ways than the skilled minority." It is a relatively simple matter for these critics to point to numerous examples when craft workers were more militant and radical than non-unionized and so-called unskilled workers to prove their contention. But the concept of the labour aristocracy does not hinge on the notion that the workers who made it up were more conservative than others. Hobsbawm himself has rejected the suggestion that the analysis pits a conservative elite against radical masses. It is instead an attempt to understand the precise ideology and material position of the skilled, unionized worker. As Hobsbawm concludes, "there really is no denying that the labour aristocrats, so long as their privileged position lasted, were not aiming at the overthrow of capitalism" This is all that the theory need prove, and most work on the subject, even that of writers such as Kazin, has shown this to be true.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Michael Piva, "The Aristocracy of the English Working Class: Help for an Historical Debate in Difficulties." Histoire Sociale, Volume 7, Number 14 (1974), 276. Kazin, Barons of Labor, 281. Hobsbawm, "Debating the Labour Aristocracy," in Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984, 222-3. In "The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered," in the same volume, he states that though the aristocrats were a bulwark against revolution, "this does not mean that some

Other critics have attempted to define the labour aristocracy in terms other than income. The most interesting of these attempts is that by Robert Gray, who defined the aristocracy by "the articulation of a cultural identity, a more or less self-conscious exclusiveness, by an upper stratum of skilled workers." But this definition itself is predicated on the "upper stratum," that is, better-paid, workers. Most of the trappings of culture as defined by Gray were in fact available only to those workers who had higher incomes. Living in better housing and better parts of town, refined leisure activities, the ownership of a piano, having a parlour room: each of these is ultimately dependent on the worker having a higher income. But far from removing the economic base, Gray has reinforced it.⁵⁵ Culture, attitudes, and life-styles, control over one's own work, and the lack of direct supervision were certainly some of the factors that created the labour aristocrat. But as Hobsbawm concludes, "the growing interest in working-class culture, life-styles and the nature of the actual work on the job, should not lead

other section of the working class was politically more advanced or revolutionary," 244. Henry Pelling makes the same criticism regarding the need for a revolutionary "underclass" in "The Concept of the Labour Aristocracy," in Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain. London: Macmillan, 1968, 56.

⁵⁵R.Q. Gray, "Styles of Life, The 'Labour Aristocracy,' and Class Relations in Later Nineteenth Century Edinburgh." International Review of Social History, Volume 18 (1973), 428-9. The counter-argument is advanced in Hobsbawm, "Debating the Labour Aristocracy," 220-1, and "The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered," 238-9.

us to underestimate the actual level and predictability of the labour aristocrat's income, which was originally used as the main criterion of its membership."⁵⁶

More telling is Piva's criticism of the suggestion that income alone "merged" the labour aristocracy with the middle class. He suggests further that "there is no evidence to indicate that the labour aristocracy saw itself as part of the middle class or that the middle class accepted the aristocracy as a bona fide member of that class."⁵⁷ This argument may, however, be attacked on two grounds. Hobsbawm has admitted that despite the similarities in income, strong differences remained between the labour aristocrats and the middle class.⁵⁸ Unlike the middle class, the aristocrats often held to cultural and moral values that emphasized class

⁵⁶Hobsbawm, 238. I have not discussed the argument of John Foster, who prefers to define the labour aristocracy by its "authority in industry." That is to say that labour aristocrats were those workers who were "pacemakers and taskmasters"; these people, and sub-contractors, not the "highly paid, autonomous craft elite" are, in his argument, the real aristocrats. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974, 223, 228-229. Bryan Palmer makes a similar argument in A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979, 239-241. For a critique of this view, see Gareth Stedman Jones, "Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution," in Languages of Class: Studies In English Working Class History, 1832-1982. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 25-75. Hobsbawm, in "Debating the Labour Aristocracy," 216, also rejects Foster's formulation.

⁵⁷Piva, 279.

⁵⁸See Chapter 6, "Culture and Community."

and even class struggle, though in limited fashion. Despite the blurring of income lines, the aristocrat often maintained a strong sense of occupational and class identification. This was no less true of those aristocrats who formed the professional and amateur cadres of the labour movement. If their allegiances did not change, often their perspective did. Second, in Vancouver at least, labour aristocrats were often able to associate with members of the city's middle and upper classes in work, leisure, and politics. This suggests that if they did not share all the values of these classes and maintained their own, they held at least some in common. The issue of whether their position as aristocrats created these shared values or was the result of them need not be settled here.

Three other points about the labour aristocracy need to be made. First, though all members of it were trade unionists, not every trade unionist can be considered an aristocrat. Only those trades that could defend their wages and traditional rights could maintain this status. As a result, the membership of the labour aristocracy was not fixed. It varied with changes in industry, technology, the economy, and militancy.

Second, though skill was often an important secondary factor, it was not the defining characteristic. The ability to organize and fight effectively was. Sometimes skill was a determining element of the ability to fight, as unskilled

workers could not always be brought in to replace strikers. The effectiveness of printers, for example, was based in part on the fact that the job required some training, though hardly the four years required by apprenticeships. But printers had several other advantages that had nothing to do with skill, and each of these may have been of equal strategic importance. The printing industry, apart from the daily newspapers, in the nineteenth century was not as heavily capitalized as many industries, or as centralized. This meant that the employer and the employee were not so far apart as the navy and the railway baron or the miner and the coal magnate. They often had similar experiences, for owners tended to come up through the ranks of the craft, while journeymen could reasonably aspire to becoming proprietors themselves. Despite class antagonisms, then, craft bonds could create some common ground.

Printing was also an old trade. It had been organized on capitalist principles by the sixteenth century, and printers' chapels, or guilds, were as old. Printers largely avoided the fierce battles for union recognition that took such a high toll on the unions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the new industries such as mining and manufacturing, and had long established bargaining and negotiating procedures. As Marx pointed out, wages have never been allocated simply by the mechanism of supply and demand. Habits and customs have also determined wages and

work relations. With 300 years of tradition, organization, and mutually agreed-upon rights, printers found it easier than many other workers to preserve their privileges in the work place. Nor did the craft change much from the 1500s to the 1890s. Mechanization and de-skilling did not displace the craftsman and his ability to control the job in this period. When technology did threaten printers, with the invention of the Linotype in 1886, the union's virtual control over training, work rules, and apprenticeships allowed the organized printer to regulate the use of the new machine.

Even the economics of the industry benefited the printer in this period. The nineteenth century saw the demand for newspapers, books, and advertising expand greatly. Therefore, profits could easily be increased by expanding production, and there was no great necessity to reduce wages. Also, expanding production meant hiring more printers, and even firms that used Linotypes might still need more compositors than before. Printing was a fairly localized industry, as it was inefficient to send business printing out of town and newspapers served the local market. As a result, competition was between the firms in the small area, and publishers and job printeries could not drive down wages by importing their product from regions where costs and wages were lower. As long as all firms in the locality were unionized, employers faced no disadvantage from signing

contracts. At the same time, competition between newspapers for readership and advertising was fierce. But news has a short life, and papers in this period were becoming less vehicles for a particular party than mass organs that were more alike than dissimilar. Thus any paper that tried to lower wages unilaterally could be hit with a work stoppage that would force readers to go elsewhere and to establish different reading habits. In most cases, the small benefits offered by possible wage reductions were outweighed by the potential loss in short and long-term revenue.⁵⁹ Similar conditions enabled carpenters and some other construction workers to win and keep relatively high wages and favourable working conditions. Unionization, though a necessary condition for the labour aristocrat, was not a sufficient condition, as only the combination of several factors allowed some workers to live a relatively privileged existence.

Finally, nothing in the argument for the labour aristocracy suggests that any class or section of a class has a monopoly on revolutionary potential or reactionary leanings.

⁵⁹Gary Marks, Unions in Politics: Britain, Germany, and the United States in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. See especially Chapter 4. Greg Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. See Chapter 6, "Printers and Mechanization." Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour process, and Nineteenth Century Canadian Printers," in Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., On the Job: Confronting the Work Process in Canada. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986, 75-101. Hobsbawm, "Debating the Labour Aristocracy," 210-211.

Skilled workers formed the core of the Knights of Labor and its eclectic radicalism; when the labour aristocrats found their positions threatened after the First World War, they turned towards socialism. But in the early years of the VTLC, from 1890 to 1909, the leadership of the craft unions in Vancouver was not much interested in making revolution its byword.

It is precisely this conservative-leaning labour aristocracy that McDonald identifies in his article. It intersects with the labour bureaucracy in that most of the leaders of the movement and most of the delegates and officers of the VTLC came from this stratum of the working class. Regardless of whether these leaders held down more radical workers or represented their comrades accurately, they did not work to abolish capitalism or foment revolution. Because these men set the formal agenda for the labour movement, the political demands of organized labour reflected their position and their view of the world.

From the beginning, the income and hours of work of the artisan out-stripped those of the labourer and unorganized. By 1890, carpenters in the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters were agitating for the nine-hour day and a daily wage of three dollars. Plasterers such as George Irvine earned five dollars for an eight-hour day, the higher scale reflecting the specialized nature of their work and the short amount of time they could expect to work on a job. Lathers were paid

\$2.25 per 1,000 feet of lathe. Printers were paid \$3.50 a day for job work such as a business cards, stationery, announcements, forms and the like. Newspaper typesetting was essentially piecework, as compositors were paid on a sliding scale, from 45 to 50 cents per 1,000 ems, a variable measuring unit based on the size of the capital letter "M" in the font being set. This worked out to about 40 cents per hour, though individuals would differ in speed. Longshoremen were organized early in the city's history, and were relatively well-paid at the rate of 35 cents per hour, with a 5 cent differential paid for night work. In contrast to these workers, non-unionized labourers were paid \$2.00 for a ten-hour day. Labourers working for the CPR fared poorly against the corporate giant, receiving only \$1.70 for ten hours work, roughly half the wage of a carpenter or printer.⁶⁰

This pattern continued throughout the history of the VTLC. By 1908, ITU printers worked a 7¼-hour day and earned about \$100 per month. Carpenters could make about \$75 per month, or 50 cents per hour. Streetcar railwaymen working on the B.C. Electric Railway made less per hour -- about 35 cents -- but their steady employment meant that their yearly earnings were nearly the same as the average carpenter, who would spend some time each year unemployed. Other building trades did a little better: bricklayers, masons, and

⁶⁰Bartley, "Twenty-five"; VTLCM, 25 February, 28 March 1890.

stonecutters averaged about \$80 per month; plumbers and gas fitters received a rate somewhere between that of carpenters and bricklayers. Labourers, on the other hand, would do well to earn \$55 per month.⁶¹

Racism and sexism also defined the labour aristocracy and income. Asian and female workers were effectively "ghettoized" in relatively unskilled, non-union jobs in the service and consumer goods manufacturing sectors and could expect to earn about half the wage of their white male counterpart in any setting. Women in the garment making industry, for example, earned about \$11.50 per week in 1918, men nearly double at \$18.50. Domestic service, where about 40 per cent of the working women of the province were employed, was paid at an average rate of \$70 per month, though this figure lumps together men and women and probably includes a cash equivalent for room and board.⁶²

Finally, the class position and chances for mobility of

⁶¹For the rates of printers in 1908, see B.C. Trades Unionist, March 1908. The rates of other workers have been taken from McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 38. His figures are taken from the Census of Canada figures for 1911.

⁶²For the rates of women in the garment industry and the calculation that most women earned about half the wage of their male counterparts, see James Conley, "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919," Ph.D. thesis, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1986, Chapter 9, especially 420; the rate for domestic service in 1911 is from McDonald, 38. See also Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915." B.C. Studies 41 (Spring 1979), 41, 46. McDonald, 41-2, also examines the wage rates of Asian and women workers to conclude that they were paid 40 to 50 per cent less than white males.

the labour aristocracy was very different from other workers. Most were artisans rather than factory hands or resource extraction workers, and as such were somewhat removed from the worst abuses of the factory and boss. Many stalwarts of the labour movement were even further removed, as they had gone into business for themselves. Ironically, they had come to resemble many of the socialists in their class position; no longer selling their labour for wages, they now comprised a stratum of the petit bourgeoisie. Unlike the socialists, however, they had been a part of the working class and still maintained connections with their former comrades and the culture they had shared. The success of these artisans stood as examples of the myth of producerism and suggested that there was always the possibility of making it within the capitalist society. Such successes were applauded by the labour bureaucracy, and far from being seen as exceptions to the rule, they suggested that the labourist values of hard, productive work and gradualism paid off. The craft skills and the mentality they engendered helped these workers leave the working class by working within the system, and the labour bureaucrats regarded this neither as treason nor as an aberration. Thus the Independent proudly announced in 1900 that former VTLC president and walking delegate George Irvine was now self-employed, making outdoor vases in Portland cement, while Dan Stewart, a former delegate from the

Tailors' union, was the owner of his own shop.⁶³ George Wilks of the Iron Moulders, another VTLC delegate, left the city in 1901 to move to Grand Forks and set up his own moulding business. The Independent sent him off with good wishes, and the "hope his best expectations will be more than realized at his new location."⁶⁴

The union connections of contractors could even be used as advertising features. When former council secretary F.P. Bishop returned to Vancouver and set up his own painting company, the Independent put him on its list of fair contractors and told prospective clients that he and the others were "reliable contractors of buildings employing union men only and who are on friendly terms with their employees. No danger of strikes or defective construction of buildings in charge of these contractors." The promotion of workers to contractors, then, was seen as a way to reduce class conflict. Who better than a fellow worker and unionist to understand the needs of the employees?⁶⁵

Other early VTLC leaders had left the working class to become contractors and small businessmen. William Fleming, council president in 1891, established his construction business a few years later.⁶⁶ Walter Hepburn, who replaced

⁶³Independent, 31 March, 7 April 1900.

⁶⁴Independent, 25 May 1901.

⁶⁵Independent, 7 November 1903.

⁶⁶Sun, 1 April 1952.

Bishop as VTLC secretary and served three terms in 1896 and 1897, became a building contractor by 1903. A native Quebecer, Hepburn was a prominent member of the Liberal party, and in later years ran successfully as an alderman and was chief movie censor of the province.⁶⁷ George Bartley and Harry Cowan left the composing rooms of the daily newspapers to publish the Independent; later, Bartley would publish other papers and Cowan would own his own printing shop. Joe Dixon started working as a contractor in the 1890s. He took the first step towards establishing what would become a successful furniture business when he opened a carpentry-joiner shop in 1902, and the Independent took the occasion to wish the VTLC founder "every success in his new enterprise."⁶⁸

Even those unionists who were not tradesmen had some hope of becoming small businessmen. W.J. Orr, recording secretary of the Retail Clerks' Association, resigned his office in May 1901, having purchased a boot and shoe store. Described as an "energetic man of business" by the Independent, the paper went on to wish him "every prosperity in his new venture."⁶⁹ Another clerk, J.R. Jackson, also resigned from the union to start his own business, while council

⁶⁷Sun, 22 August 1940. City directories list him as a contractor in 1904.

⁶⁸City directories trace their careers. See Independent, 22 February 1902 for Dixon.

⁶⁹Independent, 11 May 1901.

president W.J. Lamrick eventually ran a hardware store in the city. C.N. Lee of the Laundry Workers resigned the presidency of the council in 1904, and soon after opened the Pier Tea and Refreshment parlour. Business opportunities in the city allowed a significant number of labour bureaucrats to move into the petit-bourgeoisie with relative ease and gave these leaders a substantial stake in the existing society.⁷⁰

Thus factors other than bureaucracy may explain the attraction of labourism to the early VTLC leaders. Income, occupation, ethnicity, gender and status all contributed to shaping their world view. Given the ability of the bureaucrats to control access to the council, such a world view was a pre-requisite, not a consequence, of holding an executive office in the VTLC.

⁷⁰Independent, 31 August 1901. Lamrick's career is described in Province, 2 March 1926. Lee's business is outlined in the city directories starting in 1908. See also McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 66-7, for the "upward social mobility" of the union leadership.

CHAPTER SIX

Culture and Community

Much recent work has focussed on working-class culture as a force that bound workers together in the face of other divisions. In addition to creating the structure of the labour movement, the labour leaders helped create such a culture of union ethics and morality. As Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, even in the fight for a sectional, conservative unionism, the leadership

established not merely a series of devices and institutions which have become the property of the movement since -- Trades Council, the Trades Union Congress, the efficient way of running business, the strategy of militancy. The labour aristocrat might wear a top-hat and think on business matters exactly like his employer, but when the pickets were out against the boss, he knew what to doThe secretary of the spinners' or glassblowers' union might become mill manager or entrepreneur; but while he was a union man, he behaved like a union man.¹

Like their conscious ideology, this culture was a mixture of class conflict and collaboration; it borrowed elements from the culture of the larger society, created some of its own, and sought to incorporate working class traditions into day-to-day life. Much of this culture was the work of the leaders of the labour movement, rather than the rank and file, as union officials and delegates to the VTLC set down rules for conduct, organized events, and planned the

¹Eric Hobsbawm, "Trends in the British Labour Movement," in Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour, New York: Anchor Books 1967, p.379.

campaigns to instill workers with the proper attitude towards the union label, politics, and recreation. What they sought was not so much a spontaneous working-class culture but an official, controlled union culture that helped workers come together as a class for specific ends. Such a top-down relationship, however, could itself divide workers as well as unite them.

The most important cultural event in the union calendar was Labour Day. From the beginning, it was celebrated by Vancouver workers in September, not May Day, the favoured date of socialists and European workers.² The day was filled with activities, and the parade, games, eating, music and dances brought together workers from all unions and trades.

The first Labour Day, held in 1890, was a credit to the organizing abilities of the fledgling VTLC. The parade procession was three-quarters of a mile long, and wound its way for two and a half miles from the city core at Cambie and Hastings to a ferry that took everyone to Brockton Point in Stanley Park. Banners proclaimed the unions that marched, bands played, and the parade was led by the VTLC president Joseph Dixon, who, "on a gallant bay, assigned the various bodies to their proper place with great tact." The planning of the parade, as well as the decorum and composure of its

²The preference of the VTLC leaders for the September celebration is in itself some small evidence of their attempts to unite workers as a class but to make sure that the union movement had nothing to do with revolution.

marchers, surprised many observers and reinforced the labour movement's insistence that its demands were fair, just, and non-threatening to the community. A reporter for the Vancouver World observed that "those who pictured to themselves that labor organizations were composed chiefly of rash and irresponsible young men, were surprised at the thoughtful hearing, orderly conduct, and intelligent faces of the processionists. A large number of middle aged and elderly faces were noticed in the line."³ The chief speaker at the festival spoke to applause when he put forward the progressive but gradualist position:

Who was it...produced the wealth of the world? Why, the worker. Who enjoys the greater part of the blessings given by that wealth? Not the producer, but those who were enabled by the unjust laws to take advantage of him. To remedy this, the law must be changed. It is for the laborers to solve that problem, which is the greatest of modern times, the distribution of wealth....The question is how to distribute it so as to give to all his [sic] just share. Such a question appeals to the intellect, to higher motives than those of selfThey had nothing unkind to say of the opulent, they had merely taken the advantages offered them to take from those who do the work and produce the wealth of world. Let us help on the time...when the laborer shall become the intellectual peer of any class. The working man has been termed the brute laborer, but the time of that was passed. Through education they were reaching a higher plane. In the name of justice who should be recognized as the best subject but he who produces the wealth. The labor organizations were working to bring about the time when each man shall enjoy the just rewards of his labor, when, as the Good Book says, if a man labors not, neither shall he

³World, 8 September 1890.

eat.⁴

Subsequent Labour Days followed a similar pattern. Athletic events proved popular, and in 1893 the games included bicycle races, running races, a sack race, a three-legged race, and a one-hundred yard fat man's race. Joseph Waldrop, a Populist from Portland, Oregon, spoke to the crowd, and local Indians were featured in the parade. The council arranged for cheap ferry rides to take people to the events and funded the celebration with a per capita levy of twenty-five cents, with the stipulation that unions would contribute further assessments if a deficit were incurred. Such precautions were unnecessary that year, for the council was left with a balance of nearly fifty dollars, but the willingness to risk a debt illustrates how important the ceremonies of Labour Day were to the fiscally conservative leadership.⁵ The following year saw a downturn in the economy, and the reduced labour movement cancelled the procession of the trades. Other celebrations continued to be held as the city band marched and then headed to North Vancouver to play during the picnic organized by the VTLC. Workers and their families played games and listened to speeches from MPs and MLAs who were friendly to labour. The afternoon was filled with dancing and a baby show, and the evening saw a "grand concert" in the Market Hall. J.C.

⁴World, 8 September 1890.

⁵VTLCM, 21 July, 29 September 1893; Bartley, "Twenty-five."

Brown, future finance minister in Joe Martin's provincial government of 1900, was brought in from New Westminster to give an address on "the Labor question."⁶

Over time, however, Labor Day did less and less to bring workers together and remind them of their common aspirations. The ceremonies and activities began to lose their labour trappings and the day became hard to distinguish from other holidays. From the first, local politicians and businessmen, not all of whom could be considered genuine friends of labour, were invited to take part in the activities. Businessmen were also counted on to help fund the events. As early as 1894, the labour council noted that only "through the liberality of the Businessmen in the city" was it "able to present an attractive program."⁷ With the contributions of money came parade floats bearing the banners of local factories and businesses. By 1898, Labour Day had changed substantially. The games were there, as people played and watched lacrosse, tugs-of-war, and sack races; a successful smoker was held in the city hall. But the customary march through the streets was no longer called the "procession of trades"; now it was the "Industrial Parade." Unions and workers contributed banners and marchers, but they were outnumbered by floats hawking the wares of the Royal City

⁶VTLCM, 20 July, 3 August, 31 August 1894; Bartley, "Twenty-five."

⁷VTLCM 31 August 1894.

Planing Mill, local soap manufacturers, hardware merchants, an advertising agency, and the Sons of the British Empire. No longer was the parade led by a proud unionist on a prancing steed, but by the militia band, followed by the police and the fire department. Fourth in line came the VTLC contingent. Many attended the concert and the smoker, but there were no speeches on "the labour question" to remind workers why they had marched together. Instead of cheering the speeches of fiery orators, spectators cheered those who competed in athletic events for prizes put up by local businesses.⁸

The following year's Labour Day was another illustration of class collaboration and the integration of labour into the larger society. The day was again largely funded by corporate sponsors, including the Province newspaper, the Imperial Bank, the Bell-Irving Company, and the B.C. Electric Tramway Company. Business floats were again the most prominent. Prizes were given to the best float in three categories: merchants, manufacturers, and unions. Significantly, the first two categories were awarded a prize of forty dollars each; the best union float on Labour Day had to content itself with a first prize of only twenty dollars. The traditional smoker featured songs, boxing matches, military drills, banjo and cornet solos, sketches, and dances, but no speakers were brought in to rally workers and

⁸World, 3 September, 6 September 1898.

make them aware of their own traditions and their cause. If Labour Day had any political purpose, it was to reassure business and the state that the union movement was not a threat to them. In 1897 an editorial in the World made a similar observation. The paper noted that in Germany and France, and even in "Conservative England," Labour Day had some socialist colouring and evoked the traditions of rebellion in Anglo-Saxon cultures that were symbolized by myths of Robin Hood and the like. But "even this," the writer maintained, "when examined carefully will not be found to be cause for alarm for the principle of true democracy." To those who still feared the spectre of workers marching in the street, the World soothed that "Labor Day in Canada has no meaning or significance if it fails to offer all classes of fellow-citizens a message of peace and good will."⁹

The skills acquired by the labour leaders in organizing events such as Labour Day, as well as their role as spokesmen for an important segment of the city, could help them gain admission to other circles in Vancouver. As early as 1890 George Bartley met with many of Vancouver's politicians and business men to plan the celebration of Dominion Day. The 23 year old printer worked with such notables as R.G. Tatlow, real estate speculator, staunch Tory supporter, and later, finance minister in Richard McBride's first cabinet; Dr. Bell-Irving of the fish cannery magnates; World editor J.M.

⁹World, 2 September 1899, 4 September 1897.

O'Brien; newspaper owner and maverick politician F. Carter-Cotton; Bank of Montreal manager C. Sweeney; city coroner Dr. McGuigan; store owner Charles E. Tisdall, another Conservative who later would become mayor of the city, an MLA, and Premier Bowser's minister of public works in 1915; and Mayor David Oppenheimer, dry-goods merchant, real estate speculator, and head of the Westminster and Vancouver Tramway Company. Bartley was made secretary of this committee in 1893, and continued as a member for several years. One of his duties as secretary was to write a thank-you letter on behalf of the committee to the CPR, the long-time foe of populists and labourists alike, expressing gratitude for the special round-trip fare the company laid on for the celebration. Paid fifty dollars -- the better part of a month's pay -- for his role, Bartley also issued appeals for money to the city's inhabitants. He was aware that such appeals had to go beyond class lines, and the wording suggests that to the degree that Bartley saw himself as a spokesman for the city, he placed less emphasis on class conflict. Community, not class, was the key element in his press release:

The money requested is not in aid of any private or corporate object, but it is for the purpose of celebrating the confederation of the Dominion, and keeping our national holiday in a manner becoming a progressive and up to date city like Vancouver. It is consequently a fund to which every citizen having Vancouver's best interests at heart should

contribute¹⁰

His 1900 appeal to workers to support Dominion Day was even more placating. Bartley called upon unionists to put aside class differences for the good of the community. "Whatever the politics of the individual may be," he urged, "we are learning more and more as the years roll by the lesson of toleration"¹¹ Similarly, S.J. Gothard, ITU delegate and secretary, and vice secretary and editor in later years, moved freely between the labour camp and the civic offices, serving as the Grand Marshal of the Labour Day parade in 1900 and the Dominion Day secretary the following year.¹²

In 1897, Bartley helped plan the city's celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. When he again became involved in the Labour Day committee in 1899, it no doubt seemed natural and correct to change the focus of the day from being a celebration of workers to a more general holiday open to all and with little political content. Similarly, the decisions to make the 1898 Labour Day more of an exercise in class collaboration partly reflected the ability of its

¹⁰Dominion Day Celebration Committee, Vancouver City Archives, Additional Manuscripts 47, Volume 1, File 2, Minute Books. Bartley's own long service with the committee is indicated by the fact that he donated the minute books and records to the archives. His identification with the community rather than the labour movement is suggested by the absence of any other archival deposits in his name; it appears that at the end of his life, Bartley held this connection to be most important.

¹¹Independent, 30 June 1900.

¹²Independent, 8 September 1900, 8 June 1901.

chief architect, J.H. Watson, to fit in with both the union movement and the political club of the Liberal party.¹³ It could be argued that such relations between labour leaders and the city's upper class could give labour a stronger voice and perhaps a better hearing. But it is equally arguable that the ability of these leaders to mingle with politicians and business men showed them that class lines were not fixed, that working men could work with and benefit from collaborating with elements of the bourgeoisie. That this upward mobility was severely limited to a handful of privileged workers and depended on a labour leader playing down class conflict in the first place may not have occurred to them; if it did, it could be rationalized away on the grounds that it was better to have labour represented at the highest levels than to remain outside the formal and informal corridors of power. Socialist critiques of such action could easily be dismissed as the jealous whining of those who were denied access to the inner circle. It is difficult to argue with the assessment of Robert Michels, who wrote that

There already exists in the proletariat an extensive stratum consisting of the directors of cooperative societies, the secretaries of trade unions, the trusted leaders of various organizations, whose psychology is entirely modeled upon that of the bourgeois classes with whom they associate.

The new environment exercises a potent influence upon the ex-manual worker. His manners become gentler and more refined. In his daily

¹³VTLCLM, 7 June 1895; Independent, 7 July 1900; VTLCLM 8 May 1897; Bartley, "Twenty-five."

association with persons of the highest birth he learns the usages of good society and endeavors to assimilate them What interest for them has now the dogma of the social revolution? Their own social revolution has already been effected.¹⁴

Though Michels was writing about union leaders who had permanent paid positions in the movement or who served as politicians, his observation surely applies to the leadership of the VTLC in this period. The absence of a movement strong enough to provide full-time positions does not mean that these leaders did not work with other classes in much the same way. Nor can it simply be coincidence that the labour council became more conservative at the same time its leaders were better integrated into the larger community.

Such unity with the civic officials was not complete or without criticism of the middle-class. When the duke and duchess of Cornwall and York (later George V and Queen Mary) visited Vancouver in 1901, the labour paper strenuously objected to the "fuss and flummery" of the city elite. Proclaiming its loyalty to Britain and the monarchy, the newspaper maintained that "the plain people are quite good enough to receive and entertain royalty in a plain and hospitable fashion" It opposed the "epidemic of snobbery" that had infected the city, and denounced the "so-called 'upper set' of British Columbia."¹⁵ One reader, signed "Gander," put the sentiment in a verse entitled "The

¹⁴Political Parties, 283-4.

¹⁵Independent, 31 August 1901.

Duke":

The Dook an' his old bloomin' family is comin';
 'Ark to ther geese comin' over ther plains;
 Cacklin' an' squackin' an' scrapin'
 an' cacklin' and squackin' an' lowin' agen.

'Ark to ther geese thet we 'ave in our city
 Each one pickin' the other one's down.
 Tryin' ter prove thet 'e isn't ther fittest
 'Ter welcome ther bigger geese into ther town.

Feathers an' frills an' some gold-painted plumage
 What are they all when you've added the sum?
 Back to yer work. Don't be standin' an' gapin'
 Keep to yer slavin' an' let ther geese come.

Ye are the workers an' they are the shirkers.
 Ye feed an' clothe every goose in the flock.
 Ye live by work an' the geese live by lyin'.
 Don't yet be trying the geese fer to mock.¹⁶

Thus the culture of this generation of labour leaders cannot simply be understood as embourgeoisement. Though much of it did represent alliances and similarities with the middle class, the culture -- the experience -- was filtered through their own lives as working people. Their responses to political and social events were not identical with those of the middle class; by the same token, they were not identical with those of the rank and file or of the factory hand.

Other manifestations of culture sent out dual messages of conflict and collaboration. The trade union delegates made sure that the deaths of their fellow workers and supporters were properly mourned and that their services and sacrifices for the movement were known. When a founder of the VTLC died in 1894, the council read into the minutes a

¹⁶Independent, 7 September 1901.

stirring tribute:

Whereas the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council has been called upon to mourn the demise of an ex-delegate and friend in the person of Duncan McRae who was one of its first members, having filled the office of Treasurer and served on committees with credit to himself and honor to the council, was always on the watch to oppose any legislation that in his opinion was not in the best interests of the working men, in committee work was exact and painstaking and at the meetings seldom allowed any matter of importance to pass without expressing his opinions;

Whereas the said Duncan McRae was a civic official and discharged the duties of his office in a satisfactory manner and in private life was always of an optimistic disposition, reflecting in his conduct the qualities of Faith, Hope and Charity, and was in every respect a good and desirable citizen:

Therefore be it resolved that this council desires to express its sympathy with the bereaved family in their great sorrow; and further be resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the members thereof and recorded in the minutes of this proceeding.¹⁷

In April 1900, the council mourned the death of Mrs. Catherine Maxwell, mother of Lib/Lab MP George Robert Maxwell, who was a "favored son" of the VTLC. The delegates

¹⁷VTLCM 16 February 1894. The wording of the eulogy itself suggests the values considered significant by labour leaders. Concern for one's fellow workers was essential, but this did not necessarily conflict with being "a good and desirable citizen." The New Testament virtues of faith, hope and charity could peacefully co-exist with the best interests of workers, and the tone of the passage does not hint at the kind of sentiments expressed by Engels at the burial of Marx: "For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society....Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity, and a success such as few could rival." This is not to suggest that McRae "ought to" have been a communist intellectual, but rather to indicate that the language used to commemorate him reflected rather accurately the ideology of the labour leadership.

observed that the "entire community sympathizes with our honoured member and shares his Bereavement."¹⁸ In this fashion the labour council looked after its own and buried its dead, extending the world of the union movement to take in not just politics and wages but life and death. Such cultural ties were not always removed from financial concerns, however. When United Brotherhood of Railway Employees organizer Frank Rogers was murdered by CPR police in 1903, the VTLC was quick to organize memorial services, pay for a wreath and a funeral band and to call all union men to attend the funeral. This solidarity was somewhat marred, however, by the subsequent haggling over who would pay for the funeral itself. Nearly a year after Rogers's death, the council refused to pay the funeral directors' bill of \$97, arguing that "it would be a dangerous precedent for the council to assume this or any other unpaid account of the UBRE as in that case we might be saddled with them all."¹⁹ Mourning ceremonies were also used to reinforce labour's identification with other classes and the nation. A resolution of condolence was passed when John A. Macdonald died in 1891 and delegates spoke of his accomplishments. If the passing of the Old Chieftain was a momentous occasion that transcended

¹⁸Independent, 14 April 1900.

¹⁹VTLCM, 16 April 1903, 18 February 1904, 18 August 1904. On this last date, the bill remained unpaid and was referred to the executive. It is not clear if it was ever paid. The looseleaf it'll itself remains slipped in the pages of the minutes.

class, surely such could not be said of the death of John Thompson in 1894. Despite his lacklustre tenure as prime minister for a little more than two years, the council was impelled to express "its sorrow [over] the death of Canada's eminent statesman the Right Honorable Sir John S.W. [sic] Thompson." It extended to "Lady Thompson and family the council's earnest sympathy in their sad bereavement," and ordered a letter containing these sentiments sent to the widow.²⁰ Odder still was the eulogy for the Republican president William McKinley. McKinley had defeated the liberal, populist William Jennings Bryan and had taken the United States into the Spanish-American war, but still the Independent gushed that

No man ever held high office who provoked fewer enmities or had such a multitude of friends. His personal integrity and the purity of his political and private life made his political career one typical of the best of American public men.²¹

These actions indicate that the labour leaders did not see themselves in opposition to capital and the government, but rather sought to insert labour into a more prominent place in the workings of the nation. The death of a Tory politician or an imperialist president required the intervention of the labour council fully as much as the death of one of its own members, and in this way the labour leaders helped channel

²⁰VTLCM 21 December 1894.

²¹Independent, 21 September 1901. McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist and the Independent went to great lengths to dissociate itself from the act.

the culture and ideology of the union movement.

At the same time, the council did work to create and instill a culture of militancy in the union movement, and it laid down rules and an ethic for workers. From the beginning, the VTLC held that the ballot was crucial for working men, and it urged them to get on the voters' list and make use of the franchise. At one of its first meetings the council resolved that it was necessary to canvass workers and to show them "that only by having their names on the several voters' lists can they ever hope to secure...the elevation of the working classes, mentally, morally, and physically."²² Careful attention to the workers' business was part of the moral code, and early in 1892 the council passed a resolution that would allow it to seek the removal of delegates who missed more than two consecutive meetings.²³ The cause of labour was shown to be more than a simple case of self-interest; it was deemed to be the salvation of society:

At this time the trades union movement is engaged in the noble effort to secure the eight-hour workday for the overburdened toilers, and create the opportunity for work for the unemployed; to rescue the children from the factory and the workshops, and to place them into the school-room and into the playground; to secure a better and higher life for every man, woman, and child; to mentally improve themselves and to educate the educated ignorants that self-interest is best advanced "when each man sees in another's good, the establishment of man's brotherhood."

All that is good and true in our very lives

²²VTLCM 14 February 1890.

²³VTLCM 26 February 1892.

appeals to all the wage-earners to throw off their lethargy, their carelessness and indifference, to have a care for our brothers of labor, and thus for ourselves. Success to labor cannot come on any field without organization. The slightest demand or right of the wage-earner cannot and will not be secured without organization. The sooner all are enrolled in the unions of labor, the earlier will come the day for improvement in home and life, and the dawn of the brighter day for which the whole world has struggled. The entire history of the past, the struggles of the future, all convey a command to the toilers of our country to organize, and to organize soon, in the unions of their trade. Thus, by organization, federation, and true fraternity of interests, judgement, and sentiment, we may all work for that better day.²⁴

The paying of dues was another moral imperative, and if this seemed a little self-serving, it was also part of the culture of solidarity. Francis Williams, a tailor, council officer, and VTLC provincial candidate in 1900, stressed the need for unionists to keep up their dues, even when they were unemployed. Dues equalled solidarity, and the failure to provide them constituted a failure of manhood. Even worse than those who neglected their union commitments were those who voluntarily left the organization

to get "more work at a lower price" These men have no proper respect for themselves. They do not care for their fellows. They injure their craft for the basest motive. They plunge into a depth of moral degradation themselves, and worse still they "carry others" with them....When will working men learn to have the same eye to their present and future welfare as the physician, the lawyer, and the capitalist. To this last we might add the preacher. All these men know the value of union and cooperation. By this means they have obtained and retain special immunities and privileges. But the worker, who ultimately considered is the brain,

²⁴Independent, 31 March 1900.

nerve, and muscle of the nation, is, as far as organization is concerned, only a rope of sand. But the signs of the times point out better things for the future. For the emancipation of the workers is most surely being accomplished by the operation of a divine, and therefore unalterable, law which evolves the higher out of the lower.²⁵

The article, moving from the profane payment of dues to divine law, illustrates the power the labour movement had to inspire, as the culture and moral code the leadership sought to inculcate was presented as being in tune with the workings of the universe. That these dues would be used, in part, to pay for the candidacy of Williams and others need not diminish the sentiment.

Solidarity also meant rewarding labour's friends and depriving its foes of support. This could be done effectively, and at little cost to the unionists, with the boycott and the union label. These tactics were important symbols of union ethics and political awareness, and the Independent put the case firmly:

The wage-earner who will spend even a single cent over the counter of a merchant who he knows to be unfriendly to the welfare of the toilers is playing deliberately into the hands of his enemies....There is no reason why the workers should invest or spend one cent to support their enemies. There are enough merchants friendly to the cause of labor to do all the trading of the laboring class, and what is more they are honestly entitled to the tradeEven an idiot would laugh at the idea of the British soldiers putting rifles in the hands of the Boers to use against themselves, but it is not one whit more foolish than to put money into the pocket of the merchant who would like to down you....[I]f you have an ounce of common sense in your make-up

²⁵Independent, 12 May 1900.

you should know enough to stand by your friends,
and when you do so you will be making friends to
stand by you.²⁶

Printers made similar claims, and won the support of the central labour council for a resolution condemning "businessmen, storekeepers, and societies that had their printing done elsewhere," as "this is detrimental to the master printers, the entire printing business, and the city's best interests." This was followed up by a call for the city council to have its by-laws printed locally. Since the printers of the city were highly unionized, this was in effect a call for the union label on these products.²⁷

The union label was one of the touchstones of labour culture, for it provided a simple way to determine allies and signify one's own support for the cause. Thus in 1892 the VTLC voted to have its affiliates fine their members who patronized non-union shops. A good unionist would carry out the principles in every facet of his life:

Do you believe in trades unionism? Are you a union man? If so, see to it that you purchase, whenever possible, union-made articles. The cigars you smoke should bear a blue label, the clothes you wear should carry the label of the Tailors' Union, the bread you eat should carry the label of the Bakers' Union, and the stationery you use and the printing you order should both bear the impression of the Typographical union, and last, but not least, have your superfluous hirsute appendages removed by a member of the Barbers' union.

The virtues of the union shave were further lauded in verse:

²⁶Independent, 28 April 1900.

²⁷VTLCM, 1 February, 31 August 1895.

They found him in the gutter
 In a most appalling state;
 His face was cut and bleeding,
 His sufferings were great.
 Said one: "Some foul assassin
 Tried to send him to his grave";
 But between his groans he muttered,
 "'Twas a ten-cent shave."

A crowd began to gather,
 And then two policemen came;
 They tried for many minutes
 To ascertain his name.
 An ambulance was sent for
 He continued still to rave,
 And the only words he uttered
 Were "A ten-cent shave."

It proved, sad to relate,
 To be his final ride;
 For when he reached the hospital
 'Twas found that he had died.
 The coroner held an inquest
 And the verdict that he gave
 Was "This man has been the victim
 Of a ten-cent shave."²⁸

But the call for unionists to buy union goods could do more than enforce and enhance solidarity. As noted elsewhere, often the label campaign was little more than an attempt to exclude Asian workers, and the Independent was quick to remind its readers that "the presence of the blue label of the International Cigarmakers' Union on any box of cigars is a guarantee that it isn't made by Chinamen or in sweatshops. Remember the golden rule." Vancouver workers were also warned that a Victoria brewer "employed Chinamen to a large extent," and that they should buy their beer from a local branch that "paid out \$1200 per month in wages chiefly

²⁸Independent, 31 March 1900.

to white men."²⁹ The desire to buy union goods also trapped workers between their positions as producers and consumers, for the high cost of union-made products could put them out of reach. The retail clerks union foundered largely because other unionists failed to ask for the clerks' union card when shopping, while the union of waiters and waitresses complained that too many workers preferred to eat in non-union restaurants and hotels.³⁰ In Toronto, "There is said to be a hitch in the matter. Many men cannot afford the luxury of union-made, ordered suits, and there is no ready-made clothing in Toronto which so complies with organized labor as to be union-labelled."³¹ On occasion, looking for the union label could reach almost ridiculous heights. In 1902 the VTLC passed a resolution that all delegates were to wear at least one article of clothing with the union label. A special committee was struck to inspect the delegates' clothes every three months. This quickly prompted the question, who shall guard the guards themselves? After "some discussion" it was resolved that the president of the council would be responsible for examining the members of the label committee to see if they themselves had the requisite union

²⁹Independent, 7 April 1900; VTLCM, 25 September 1896.

³⁰VTLCM, 21 July 1904, 3 April 1902.

³¹Independent, 30 June 1900.

label.³²

But the most dangerous aspect of the buy-union campaign was its use as a way to minimize class consciousness. George Bartley, editor of the Independent, commended both the label campaign and the justification of it in an article written by an AFL organizer and reprinted in the paper. The article maintained that the union label "supersedes the strike, the lock-out, and the destructive boycott. It is the outward manifestation of harmony between employer and workmen, binding both parties to maintain their friendly relations and the continued approval and patronage of a discriminating public."³³ The call for the union label, then, could be used simultaneously to increase class awareness and reinforce racism and class collaboration.

Labour bureaucrats often expressed their concern for their community through politics. But entering the political arena also carried some consequences for the ideology of the labour leaders. Organized labour did not make up the majority of the city's population; indeed, unionists did not even make up a majority of the work force. Robert McDonald has estimated Vancouver's unionized sector to be about 15 per cent of the work force, a figure that corresponds roughly to the rate of unionization for the province. Since the craft

³²VTLCM, 3 April, 15 May 1902. See Conley, 435-7, for some of the difficulties with the label campaigns.

³³Independent, 12 May 1900.

unions depended on the exclusion of the unskilled, women, and Asians, and many unions faced powerful challenges from employers and the state, this figure is not surprising.³⁴ In 1891, the city's work force totalled about 5,000, roughly 40 per cent of the population of 13,000. By 1911, the total work force was a little over half of the city's 100,000 residents, but wage earners were a minority of about 33,000. Unionized workers, almost exclusively men, were a sub-set of this figure. This ratio was hardly unique to Vancouver or to North America, and it carried some implications for political action. Simple arithmetic demonstrated that organized workers could not expect to control the electoral process at the municipal, provincial, or federal levels. When the question of "a working man's candidate or a platform suitable for working men" was first taken up by the VTLC in 1890, delegates realized that political action depended on forging alliances with other groups and classes. George Irvine noted that at best "working men had the balance of power" rather than a clear majority, and president Joe Dixon argued that if the council were to take part in elections, "the best way was to cooperate with the business men."³⁵ In 1894, when labour took part in the short-lived Nationalist Party, it tried

³⁴McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 45; Paul Phillips, No Power Greater, 169, estimates the province's unionization rate at 12 per cent in 1911. The strength of construction and streetcar railway unions probably accounts for the higher rate in the city.

³⁵VTLCM, 14 March 1890.

unsuccessfully to work in conjunction with the province's farmers.³⁶ The provincial election of 1900 saw the VTLC put forward two candidates, Joe Dixon and Francis Williams of the Tailors. In the aftermath of their loss at the polls, Williams argued that if labour wanted to triumph it would have to drop its appeal to class consciousness and reach out to other groups. It was necessary, he wrote, to win over those outside the labour movement. The craft unions had to approach "unorganized labour," "for these are our brothers in heart and mind and the right hand of fellowship belongs to them." But it was also vital for the labour movement to seek those

who do not belong to the "horny-handed sons of toil," yet who are workers in the true sense of the word. Merchants and office men, who realizing that a prosperous working class always means a prosperous mercantile class, were with us in word and act.

Williams evoked the rhetoric of populism to call for labour to help form a "Reform league, or a People's league," to elect a "government by and for the people, instead of as heretofore by and for the classes."³⁷ Thus if political action pushed labour leaders to consider working with the unorganized, it also reinforced the reformism of populism and pushed labour leaders to seek alliances with the middle

³⁶VTLCM, 7 December 1894. From the information available, it appears that farmers were unable to organize effectively and as a result, the alliance came to very little.

³⁷Independent, 23 June 1900.

class.

Similarly, in 1901, the VTLC's parliamentary committee reported that

if the true cause of reform is to make steady, substantial progress, it must be instituted and carried out on broad, liberal, lines, care being taken that all sections of those interested in reform be duly represented from its very inceptionWe believe in labor going into politics in support of its principles and friends; but we are opposed to a movement of this kind of any class claiming a monopoly to rule, not only over itself, but over all other classes. A real labor movement should include all men engaged in productive industry, whether employees or employers, and whether members of trades-unions or not, so long as they are in sympathy with the cause....We, therefore, favor political action on a more broad and progressive basis, whereby all who hold similar views and ideas can join together in a common cause³⁸

The commitment to community that participation in municipal politics implied carried with it a commitment to compromise on the issue of class. This weakening of class-conscious political action both reflected and reinforced the council's own commitment to a progressive, yet reformist and cautious ideology, and those labour leaders who sought political office were themselves rewarded for their ability to compromise. Though the aldermanic salaries themselves may not have turned these men into conservatives, they may well have attracted those who were already inclined to play down class and class conflict, while the labour council's own criteria for candidates would ensure that only those who held to its

³⁸Independent, 23 November 1901.

policies would be rewarded.

The labour council could also be used as a platform to launch political careers and to bring union leaders into the elite circles of the city. Men such as George Bartley and Joseph Watson could work together with mayors and businessmen, acting as labour's representatives on committees for events such as Dominion Day. In pressing for reforms and policies that would reflect the needs of the city's workmen, council delegates and officers became involved in municipal politics, using the support of the VTLC as a power base. J.L. Franklin of the Carpenters union served as a delegate to the VTLC in 1891, becoming a member of its Labour Day committee and treasurer of the council. In 1892, Franklin worked on the council's parliamentary committee, and from there, launched a successful aldermanic campaign, running with the endorsement of the VTLC.³⁹ Bartley ran successfully for the parks board in 1900, again under the banner of the VTLC, while the following year saw John Morton, former council vice-president, and J.H. Watson make unsuccessful attempts to win election as alderman and school trustee, respectively.⁴⁰ Morton was more successful in 1903, when he became an alderman for Ward 5 and held the job until 1906. Similarly, Francis Williams, VTLC financial secretary in 1900, then secretary from 1904 to 1905, sat as alderman for

³⁹Bartley, "Twenty-five."

⁴⁰Bartley, "Twenty-five."

Ward 6 in 1904-1906.⁴¹ Labour bureaucrats also actively sought positions as city license commissioners, who were responsible for the granting of liquor licenses. Robert Todd, ITU delegate and VTLC trustee, received the council's endorsement for the position in 1901, while Samuel Gothard, active in the ITU since 1895, and a perennial delegate to the labour council from 1900, similarly ran as a labour candidate in 1902 and 1903.⁴² Some, such as Frank Russell, could move from being a delegate from the Freight Handlers' Union to the Vice-presidency and secretaryship of the labour council, and from there to appointed government positions. When Russell was appointed by Premier McBride to help enforce the immigration act, this was widely regarded as a victory for labour; it also gave considerable power and status to Russell.⁴³ In this way, unpaid careers in the labour movement could be parlayed into political careers. Though parks and license commissioners served without salary, aldermen were paid, and the issue of their salaries was an important one for labour leaders. Arguing that their wages as workmen made it difficult to volunteer their services as aldermen, the council advocated aldermanic salaries of \$400 a year in 1894, about half a year's wages for a skilled workman who could

⁴¹McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 62.

⁴²Independent, 21 December 1901, 4 January 1902, 1 January 1903.

⁴³Independent, 20 June 1903.

find steady employment. In the following year, the labour council denounced the city's suggestion of eliminating the salaries, arguing that it was important to continue "the present system of remuneration in order that the position of alderman may be open for workingmen representatives" Though workers were hardly in a position to give up evenings and other time to carry out the city's business, the salaries did open up the possibility to improve both labour's position and the position of the successful labour politician.⁴⁴

Political action could integrate labour leaders into the larger community and improve their material condition. Recreation was a cultural arena for the labour movement that shaded into politics. When steel baron Andrew Carnegie offered the city of Vancouver an endowment to establish a new library, the Independent heatedly informed its readers that "Mr. Carnegie's money, morally speaking, belongs to the poor, down-trodden people who work for him in Pennsylvania." Though it stopped short of rejecting the money, the paper reminded workers that far from philanthropy, the \$50,000 was "an unwilling gift from the ironworkers of that state."⁴⁵ Unfair treatment by civic officials in allocating park space and time could easily be turned into a conflict of classes, as it was in 1900. The labour paper lashed out at those who trod on the right of the workers to park space, in terms

⁴⁴VTLCM, 7 December 1894, 31 January 1896.

⁴⁵Independent, 16 March 1901.

reminiscent of earlier battles to defend the commons:

There has been talk of dissatisfaction at the way in which the Vancouver Cricket club monopolized the cricket grounds at Brockton Point, to the exclusion of every one else. Our informant tells us, and it was so stated in the Province [newspaper] that no one who is not a member of the club could play at all, and we all know who is likely to be elected a member. Now that there are so many banks in the city and enough bank clerks to go around, there is little chance for the man who works for a living ever getting a chance for a game. In England, the home of cricket, it is essentially democratic, all meeting on a common ground on the cricket ground; here it takes on more of the aspect of an afternoon affair, and in reporting a game more space is given to the ladies' gowns and "dear Charlie's waistcoat, just too sweet for anything," than to the play. Let the people, though, take a greater interest in the park, and the remedy is in their own hands.⁴⁶

Sports and unionism met at another point: the shorter work week. The Independent noted approvingly that "the lacrosse boys are a fine lot of fellows, whose sympathies are with the Saturday half-holiday movement. They know that if their patrons can get off on Saturday afternoons they will be sure to take in the matches."⁴⁷ But at the same time, sports could bring men together, despite lines of class and occupation, in the classless, male atmosphere of the locker room and the club house. The Independent's belief that patrons and employees would both gain if Saturday afternoons were given over to lacrosse suggests that there was no essential contradiction between employers and employed and that class conflict could and should be forgotten once all were in their

⁴⁶Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁴⁷Independent, 7 April 1900.

team uniforms. Such a description appears to fit George Bartley, who as president of the Vancouver Lacrosse Club worked and played with men from different classes without hostility. Bartley served as toastmaster at a going-away party held at the Merchants' Exchange for one of the club's members, A.E. "Bones" Suckling, who was about to leave the city to take up "a lucrative position as traveller for Brenner Bros., the well-known tobacco and cigar manufacturers of London, Ontario." Bartley led the club in toasts to the queen, the army, and the navy, and supported the speech of the secretary who suggested that

our business men should, when vacancies occur, assist some of our best people by giving them employment, if the players were capable to fulfill the duties required of them. This would go a long way in fostering healthy lacrosse in this Province. The Lacrosse Club was averse to paying the players, as it savored too much of the professional.⁴⁸

If it is dangerous to make much out of such a speech, it surely suggests that Bartley was at least forced to adopt a schizophrenic attitude towards his union activities, calling for militancy on some occasions and fostering good will between the classes on others. It is, however, difficult to see how close relations with employers and middle-class salesmen could work to increase class consciousness and militancy. Recreation and sports could be used to unite

⁴⁸Independent, 7 April 1900. See Alan Metcalfe, Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987, especially Chapter 6, for discussion of professional lacrosse and working-class attitudes.

working-class opposition to elitism on the one hand and to pull labour leaders into the circles of the city's elite on the other.

The issue of park use is another example. Robert McDonald has documented the VTLC's concern over the use and control of Stanley Park from 1910 to 1913, but the council's interest in recreation and green space dates from the Deadman's Island dispute and before. As early as 1891 the VTLC called for public beaches. In August 1895, the council moved that the city be asked to

have the troublesome rocks at the bathing beach removed and dumped out further out to English Bay and that suitable buoys or ropes be placed marking the depths for the safety of the bathers and learners and that a life-boat be stationed at the bath house.⁴⁹

Later in the month, the council protested the "monopoly" that the Brockton Point Athletic Association exercised over a section of Stanley Park. Labour delegates were especially incensed over a \$10,000 loan the association had received from the city to clear and maintain its site. Since the association made non-members pay for the use of its section of the park, the VTLC charged that working people were effectively "debarred from entering such grounds without being taxed practically twice." To provide equal access to recreational grounds for all, the council resolved that a "portion of [the] English Bay side of Stanley Park be

⁴⁹World, 3 August 1895.

cleared, levelled, and sowed with grass, the same to be known as the Vancouver Public Park."⁵⁰ The debate continued for over a year as the labour council fought to prevent the selling of foreshore rights and to create a public park.⁵¹ In 1898, the council passed a resolution calling for municipal voters to support a referendum that would enable the city to buy lots that would be turned into parks to provide "breathing spaces" for the residents. Voters were urged to band together to stop "some of the larger tax-payers in this city [who] intend to kill the [proposed] by-law."⁵² Despite the activity of the VTLC, the city did not build parks for working people. Instead, local groups, "usually dominated by those in business," pressured the municipal government to create parks in the wealthier areas. City council, then as now, listened more carefully to the rich and powerful. As a result, neighbourhoods such as Kitsilano and Grandview had parks early on; working-class districts had virtually no park space until well into the twentieth century.

But the dispute over Deadman's Island also demonstrates the privileged position of the labour leaders of the VTLC as well as their commitment to working-class culture. Cowan was

⁵⁰World, 31 August 1895.

⁵¹Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 6 December 1895, 8 May 1896, 17 July, 31 July 1896.

⁵²Robert A.J. McDonald "'Holy Retreat' or 'Practical Breathing Spot'?: Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910-1913." Canadian Historical Review, 65, 2 (June 1984), 127-53. McKee, 44-5. World, 15 October 1898.

sent to Ottawa as part of a high-powered delegation that included some of the city's elite; Bartley was made a part of the civic political machine; Watson consolidated his links with the federal Liberals. These labour bureaucrats were active participants in local struggles and were accorded an amount of prestige and access to power. If they were not the equals of the important businessmen and politicians, they could on occasion forge alliances with them and could work on these ties for reforms. At the same time, this co-operation, necessary given labor's relative weakness, worked against class conflict, for it engendered a notion of compromise and deal-cutting. At a different, more subtle level difficult to evaluate, such cross-class alliances may have reinforced the producer ideology that rejected Marxist analysis in favour of a more general populist, anti-trust sentiment. They may also have reinforced the labour bureaucrat's sense of belonging to an elite group as well as to the working class. It may be impossible to calculate the effect that working with Bell-Irving to oppose Deadman's Island had on these labour leaders, but it is hard to argue that such common goals and action increased class hostility.

To the degree that the VTLC leaders saw themselves as members of the community, rather than as members of a class, their culture, even their political culture, became more conservative and compromising. As the men most responsible for shaping formal working-class culture, their sense of com-

munity put a conservative stamp on the whole union movement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Relations of Race and Gender

The ideology of the VTLC leaders went beyond political action and trade unionism. If class was one important element of their world view, so too were race and gender. The bureaucratic control of the union structure, institutions, and policies by a handful of white, Anglo-Saxon males had important consequences for those who did not fall into the same categories. Women and other races were often ignored or attacked by the labour council throughout its first twenty years. Ironically, in calling for measures that most today would find abhorrent, the labour leaders were acting in accordance with the sentiments of those they represented. Far from being the preserve of a more conservative bureaucracy, racism and sexism were in the mainstream of the labour movement, and the make-up and structure of the labour council ensured that changing these ideas would be a slow process.

The nature and extent of racism in the white working class of British Columbia has often been debated by historians. W. Peter Ward has gone so far as to argue the "the major cleavages in British Columbia" were those of race, not class. In a much discussed essay, Ward holds that "white British Columbia clung tightly to a series of convictions about Asians" that "emphasized the perpetual inferiority of Asians and Indians and encouraged the differential, dis-

criminator treatment they received at the hands of successive generations of whites." Though Ward makes no specific comments about racist ideas and actions in the working class, his argument strongly implies that racism was spread throughout the white population regardless of class, and that whites overlooked class to form alliances based on colour. It further suggests that the working class primarily, almost exclusively, defined itself in terms of race, and that racism had the same causes regardless of class.¹

His analysis is open to a number of criticisms. Ward insists on defining class in ways that trivialize and misshape it. Class, he argues, is either an objective category imposed on a society by its observers that has no correspondence to consciousness and has little explanatory power, or it is a subjective belief that is proved to exist only when strictly and narrowly defined political action is found. Having set up this most anaemic of straw men, Ward then plants dynamite under it.

If workers in B.C. were, on the whole, class-conscious, the evidence -- the only evidence acceptable to Ward -- would be high levels of unionization and large numbers of votes for socialist and labourist candidates in civic, provincial, and federal elections. Since these do not exist, then class cannot be considered to be a vital part of the consciousness

¹W. Peter Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939," B.C. Studies 45 (Spring 1980), 17-35. The quotes are from 28 and 29.

of the working population. Thus Ward shows the labour movement organized only about 10 per cent of the non-agricultural work force before 1918. On the political front, labourist and socialist candidates averaged about 11 per cent of the popular vote in provincial elections and somewhat less in federal contests. But drawing conclusions about class consciousness and the experience of class from this material is dangerous. First, as Ward points out but dismisses, factors other than an "insufficient" class awareness can just as easily explain the low rate of participation in unions and elections. Even today joining and being active in a union can be risky. In the B.C. of the period under consideration, when unions had little legal protection or recognition, being a union activist often meant chancing beatings, imprisonment, blacklisting, firing, even murder. Furthermore, craft unions, the predominant form of unionism in B.C. until the Second World War, tended to focus only on skilled urban workers; by their very nature, these unions tended to exclude the bulk of working people. But deciding out of fear not to join a union, or the lack of an aggressive union ready to sign one up, tells us nothing about how workers may have experienced and reflected upon class.

Nor is political action necessarily a useful guide to consciousness. B.C.'s boom and bust economy, the seasonal nature of much of the work, and low wages paid to non-union workers meant that many workers would not meet the property

and residency requirements for the franchise. Furthermore, federal voting lists were compiled either by borrowing the provincial list or by enumerators appointed by the federal government. Both methods allowed for discrimination and tended to favour the party in power. Thus the Industrial Workers of the World once noted that though it had five thousand members in the province in 1909, only seventy-five were entitled to vote.² Workers must often be very pragmatic and short-sighted if they are to survive, and in a system that works against third parties a vote for a struggling party or candidate could easily be seen as a wasted vote. Voting for the lesser of two evils when a realistic third alternative does not exist may well disguise class consciousness. Finally, there is no clear, direct reason why a belief in class as a vital cleavage should be translated into a vote for any socialist party. A long tradition of hostility to electoral politics suggests that "no matter who you vote for, the government always gets in," and a listless voter turnout or a cynical vote for a mainstream party may just as easily be evidence for class consciousness as against it. Without solid evidence, all speculations are equal, and there is no reason to prefer Ward's assumptions. The low rate of unionization and the small successes of third party politics do not tell us anything about how workers themselves defined their ideas and politics.

²Industrial Worker (hereafter IW), 8 July 1909.

Ward's positive arguments for the primacy of race hinge on a more subtle definition of race than he extends to class. Ward writes that unlike class, "race ... was a daily experience, a living reality in a way that class among whites seldom was." In effect, he argues that race was an experienced phenomenon while class was an idealistic, intellectual one. But it is difficult to imagine a cannery worker, a coal miner, a store clerk, a carpenter, a railway navvy, or a fisher not bumping up against the living reality of class every day. A class-conscious, socialist critique of the type preferred by Ward may not have followed from their daily lives, but surely workers could not have missed the observation that they were employees and because of that lived lives very different from those of the Bell-Irvings, the Dunsmuir, the Woodward, or the Hays. Pointing out, quite correctly, that Asians were often denied membership in white clubs, groups, and institutions, Ward neglects to add that working people were not eligible to join the Chamber of Commerce and were unlikely to be found in the ranks of the Freemasons in this period. Ward's evidence that inter-marriage between racial groups was rare prompts the question, how many workers married into the bourgeoisie? Taken together, Ward's arguments depend on special pleading, unrealistic yardsticks for measuring consciousness, and a calculated refusal to consider culture as an element of class. His assertion that class was less significant than race remains unproven.

Despite the problems with his methodology, Ward does make an important contribution to the study of racism in the labour bureaucracy. Earlier historians played down the explicit racism of the union leadership and dismissed it as a fairly straightforward, though unfortunate, spillover from capitalism. Phillips, for example, explains the anti-Chinese sentiments of Vancouver Island coalminers as the result of the Asians' "inability to read or understand English," for they could not follow posted or verbal safety instructions and thus endangered others. Thomas Loosmore has concluded that "the main cause of the anti-Chinese bias in the British Columbia labor movement" was "their acceptance of low wages and long hours."³

Gillian Creese has sketched out a less mechanistic model that still uses class conflict as the primary cause of racism. Borrowing the theory of labour market segmentation, Creese has provided a more nuanced description of the interplay between capital and labour that argues that "capitalist social relations form the context of state policies and class relations into which immigrants are socially organized." Though Creese brings some valuable insights to the discussion, and tries to move beyond the simple cause and effect explanation of Phillips and Loosmore, her analysis is flawed. First, the segmented market schema-

³Phillips, 8, 10; Thomas R. Loosmore, "The British Columbia Labor Movement and Political Action, 1879-1900," M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1954, 19.

tic, first used to examine black American workers in the post-World War Two years, is more descriptive than analytical. If it provides an accurate picture, it does not provide a novel one. As description, it does not move beyond the early work. Second, insofar as the theory is used to explain events, it closely resembles the observations of Phillips and Loosmore. Thus Creese concludes that racism was "part of the conflict over wages and working conditions in the province." Racism was "not the outcome of the 'social psychology of race relations,'" as Ward would have it, but was the "product of developing, but not yet mature, working-class consciousness confronting explicitly racist capitalist relations."⁴ This notion of "developing class consciousness" is essentially a Whiggish one, for it holds that consciousness is evolutionary. Furthermore, it assumes that historical figures should have had a consciousness different from that which they did have. These assumptions blur our understanding of how and why racism was expressed. Stripped of its extraneous theory, Creese's essay is really little more than a newer version of the simplistic class struggle model offered by Phillips and

⁴Gillian Creese, "Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict: The Case of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1880-1923," Rennie Warburton and David Coburn, eds. in Workers, Capital, and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988, 55-87. The quotations may be found on 58, 59, 73, 80. Creese takes the concept of segmented labour markets from David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Loosmore that fails to take into account the culture, class position, beliefs, ideology, and self-identification of the labour leadership. Creese's theoretical framework skirts around the reality of racism, for in assuming a capitalist-directed relationship it ignores the peculiar way in which labour leaders blended class consciousness and racial solidarity for their own ends. Finally, in trying to argue that racism was purely economic in origin, Creese plays down the nativist and racist arguments that the labour bureaucrats themselves believed to be important. Whatever the "ultimately determining" role of production in history may be, other elements are vital, and Creese's formulation makes them less, not more, accessible.⁵

⁵As Engels noted in an oft-quoted passage, According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms the proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic structure is basis but the various elements of the superstructure -- ... constitutions, political, philosophical, juristic theories, religious views ... also exercise the influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

Frederick Engels, Letter to J. Bloch, 21 September 1890, in Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Moscow: Progress Publishers, Volume 3, 1977, 487. There is of course, a huge literature on historical materialism and the precise role that the productive forces play in determining ideas. Marxists themselves are divided, and do not even agree on what Marx believed to be the appropriate relationship. I do

It is clear from the historical record that a highly developed racial consciousness co-existed with the class consciousness of the labour bureaucracy. Indeed, the two often seem to be completely intertwined, and sorting out the relationship is a complex task. It is hard to hold to a strict economic theory that sees racism as a response to competition for jobs and wages, for neither the bureaucrats of the VTLC nor the union members they first represented were actually threatened by Asian labour. As Creese points out, Asians were restricted to work in mining, the lumber industry, salmon canning, market-gardening, domestic service, laundering, tailoring, and fishing. Even in these sectors, whites and Asians were often separated by geography, as Chinese workers were often employed in and by the Chinese community itself and tended to settle in specific areas of the city and the province. None of the unions affiliated to the VTLC in its early days represented workers in these occupations, and none of the unions was interested in organizing in these areas. There was no competition for wages or jobs between whites and Asians in Vancouver, and no reasonable fear that Asian labour would in any way affect the economic interests of the union movement or its leaders.

not pretend to be able to solve the debate, for my own ideas are at least as contradictory as Marx's. But in examining the labour leadership in B.C., it is clear that the leaders themselves put a great deal of stock in their opposition to Asians and that their opinions are not explained by a simple economic equation.

When whites did try to organize in industries, such as fishing, where other races were employed, they quickly learned that success meant organizing all races. The economic explanation for racism, then, must be more subtle than that put forward by Phillips, Loosmore or Creese. Though each is correct to observe that ideas do not form in a vacuum and that any system that gives power, wealth, and privilege to a few will create other divisions, the racism of the labour bureaucracy must be understood as a more complicated issue.

American historians have often been more sensitive to the issue of race and class than Canadians. Alexander Saxton's The Indispensable Enemy is the standard work on Asian exclusion and the labour movement, and though dated, is still of great value. Saxton points out that white workers were "both exploited and exploiters" as they were forced to compete with the cheaper labour of non-whites and benefited from the low wages paid to Chinese. Acknowledging that workers were structured into racism and that the labour market was indeed segmented by occupation and colour, he insists that the "cheap labour" argument is inadequate. White workers did not respond in the same way to the threat of cheap Irish and Slavic labour, and trades that had no fear of competition were often in the forefront of the anti-Asian agitation. Hostility towards the Chinese and Japanese was "composed of a rational economic argument mingled with and

disguising an older complex of ideas and emotions," including a pioneer ethic, nativism, pride of craft, and xenophobia.⁶

In his study of the San Francisco building trades, Michael Kazin has similarly argued that the craft union movement was "not merely a device to press the economic demands of its members but a bulwark against the incursion of a hostile race." Kazin maintains that belief in class solidarity and racism "did not pose an agonizing contradiction ... for white labor leaders" On the contrary, both were vital for their self-defence as they defined it.⁷ In Vancouver, as in San Francisco, racism was complex and enmeshed in labour ideology and politics. Certainly, in a land of complete freedom and equality, where no one need fear unemployment or loss of autonomy, racism would lose its function, and in this over-arching sense, the economics and social relations of capitalism has strong explanatory power. But it alone does not account for the depths of the hostility expressed by the delegates of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, and it does not easily account for their strong sense of ethnicity.

Racism, or more accurately, Asian exclusion, was an urgent matter for the VTLC from its start. One of the first committees drawn up by the council was a joint standing

⁶Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, 2, 6, 14-16, 154.

⁷Kazin, Barons of Labor, 146, 145-176.

committee on lien laws and alien labour. Two issues-- ensuring that workers were paid for their toil and barring Asians -- were thus placed high on the council's agenda. The committee was also a powerful one, as it was made up of Joseph Dixon, president of the Carpenters and of the council itself; Duncan McCrae, treasurer of the VTLC; and George Bartley, perennial ITU executive, founding member of the trades and labour council, and future president.

On 14 February 1890 -- the fourth meeting of the council -- delegates voted unanimously to support a recent deal worked out between the city and B.T. Rogers. An American businessman supported by the CPR, Rogers wanted concessions from the municipal government to set up a sugar refinery in Vancouver. The city council agreed to give Rogers and his B.C. Sugar Refining Company a \$30,000 grant, a fifteen-year tax waiver, and free water to run for ten years. William Fleming, spokesman for the VTLC, informed the city that labour was in favour of progress and industry, but would vigorously oppose the granting of concessions if Rogers were to employ Chinese workers. Once Rogers indicated that he would not hire Chinese, the VTLC voted to support the deal. A year later, the full extent of the labour council's opposition to Asian labour was tested. A Glasgow firm that used Chinese workers began to import sugar to Vancouver and sell it for less than Rogers Sugar was charging. Rogers, playing a neat double game, insisted that it was up to the

labour council to take action, for it was the council that had kept him from using Asians and thus from providing sugar at the lowest possible price. Fleming and the VTLC quickly organized a boycott of grocers who sold the so-called "Chinese sugar," and went so far as to enlist the support of the Victoria Trades and Labor Council. Though the VTLC leadership believed that it was important to keep out cheap labour, two observations suggest that racial hostility played an equally important role. First, the VTLC had neither unions nor members employed at Rogers Sugar, which was the only refinery in the city. No economic hardship would result to organized labour from Chinese sugar workers in either Vancouver or Glasgow; indeed, the importation of cheap sugar would end Rogers' monopoly and reduce prices. Second, if cheap labour were the only concern of the VTLC, vigorous organization would seem to be the appropriate solution. William Fleming himself suggested that racism was the real cause of the council's actions. Commenting on the concessions and the response of labour, Fleming wrote, "I do not know that another shipment [of "Chinese" sugar] ever came, but labour felt it had won the first round anyway This was a whiteman's country."⁸

Other examples reinforce the argument that race hostility fueled the VTLC's reaction to Chinese immigration

⁸VTLCM, 14 February, 25 February 1890; Vancouver City Archives (hereafter VCA), Additional Manuscripts 132, William Fleming Collection, typescript, 21.

quite as much as economics did. In 1892, the council voted to endorse the lawsuit of the Laborers' Union against a Chinese worker who had fallen on and injured one of its members. Twenty-five years before B.C. passed Workers' Compensation legislation, civil suits were the only form of redress for work injuries. Normally, however, they were directed at the employer and not other employees. Since a Chinese labourer would be unlikely to be able to pay substantial damages, the decisions to launch and to support the lawsuit appear to be inspired more by a desire to punish the Chinese than a desire to compensate an injured worker.⁹

In March 1893, the council struck another committee to investigate the "Chinese problem." Reporting for the committee a few weeks later, George Bartley stated that it had "procured considerable evidence in the shape of cuttings from the Chinese press of the deplorable ignorance, superstition, and vice of the Chinese and their unfitness to associate or assimilate with the white population of this country." Claims of this sort pictured the Chinese as less than human, or at best, several notches below whites on the social scale, and the stories percolate through the minutes of the council. In September 1899, the VTLC heard a lurid tale of child molestation that struck at the very hearts of the delegates. One member told horrified unionists that white children were being "lured to out-of-the-way places not

⁹VTLCM, 16 December 1892.

only by white men but by Japs and Chinamen" in the alleys and corners near Powell and Alexander Streets. The World newspaper reported that the delegate had declared that "one Chinaman had been seen with a child almost in his clutches, but on help arriving he fled, and unfortunately could not be caught. According to the [his] statement, this was not by any means an isolated case but a common occurrence." This spectre of evil but cowardly Chinese preying upon white children smacks more of urban legend than fact, and there is no evidence to suggest that the episode did take place. Nor is there evidence to believe that kidnapping or worse was a "common occurrence." That the tale was told and repeated does illustrate the fear and hatred the white trade unionists felt towards Asians, and it reinforced the belief that the Chinese were fundamentally different and inassimilable. After hearing the story, the council suggested that "if the facts were as stated, a little lynch law would not be out of place." The mob violence that characterized labour's response to Asian labour a decade earlier, when Knights of Labor attacked a camp of Chinese workers, had been channelled into political action, but had not been entirely forgotten.¹⁰

¹⁰World, 16 September 1899. The story was mentioned in other papers, but always as an item brought forward at the VTLC meeting. It was not covered as an actual story, which suggests that it was apocryphal. Phillips, No Power Greater, 14. See also Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991, Chapter 5, for the racist sexual fears of whites in this period.

With the creation of the VTLC newspaper, the Independent, in 1900, anti-Asian propaganda became more articulate. In its first issue, the paper announced that "one person in four is a Mongol" in British Columbia. The author proved the contention by arguing that the population of the province was roughly 125,000, of whom 25,000 were Indians and could thus be discounted. Of the remainder, nearly one-half were women not in the workforce. Subtracting children and "persons decrepit or otherwise incapacitated" left a total of 40,000 workers. The number of Chinese in the province was approximately 10,000, and another 2,000 were Japanese. Thus 25 per cent of the male work force was made up of "Mongols." Buttressing its nativist sentiments with an "objective" economic argument, the author held that such a large proportion of Asians would discourage "desirable immigrants" and "would have the tendency to stop capital Capital will not invest ... without confidence and it is impossible to have confidence in a British colony peopled by Japanese and Chinese." The "solution to this vexed question" was the "total exclusion of Oriental cheap labor."¹¹

Other stories took up a similar theme. The newspaper criticized a recent arbitration that disallowed the rule that required underground coal miners to be able to read in English. Though the rule was ostensibly in place to make sure all could read and understand safety regulations, the

¹¹Independent, 31 March 1900.

absence of the requirement meant that "the mines of Vancouver Island will be more and more flooded by cheap Oriental labor to the exclusion of white workers." Yet another article deplored the entry of Japanese workers who were "rapidly ousting the white worker from many of our leading industries, fishing, lumbering, and coal mining and railroad construction work They accomplish this by selling their labor for a mere song." A month later, the paper insisted that those who distinguished between Chinese and Japanese immigrants did so at their own risk. "It may be argued," one columnist wrote,

that the Jap is a notch above the Chinaman. That may be so; he may be a mile above him in the social scale. But it is a fact, and one that is too apparent to be ignored, that absolutely no white man can work for the wages he does, for the very simple reason that the remuneration would be altogether inadequate to existence.

Again the alleged fundamental and unchangeable differences between whites and Asians were affirmed. The economic issue addressed in these pieces is clouded by the absence of a call to organize the Asians to end competition and the insistence that exclusion was the only answer.¹²

The labour council believed that the federal government's immigration policy was at worst collusion with the CPR and at best based on ignorance. The Independent noted with satisfaction that "some of the British Columbian Chinese seem to be making East, in which movement many here will wish them good speed, as the sooner that Eastern Canada learns some-

¹²Independent, 31 March 1900, 28 April 1900.

thing practically about the Chinese problem the better." The assumption was that once politicians and labour leaders met Chinese workers they too would quickly come to appreciate the need for Asian exclusion.¹³

Proving that it was not immune to other forms of racism, the Independent ran an account of a

negro and a native of Alabama who entertains the public by giving exhibitions of forcing different articles inside his mouth which would seem to be an impossibility. One of his feats is to completely envelop a saucer six and a half inches in diameter It is not to be questioned that he may before his old age be able to eat a watermelon grape-fashion.

The stereotypes of the Irishman and the Jew were regular themes, often presented in the form of dialect jokes. One Irish joke managed to present its subjects as dirty, criminal, and favouring drink all at once:

"De water-cure is somet'ing dat's got to be stopped," exclaimed Meandering Mike. "It's too crool and unusual to be stood." "Do you know it is?" asked Plodding Pete. "Course. I've been froo it. I hadn't been in jail fifteen minutes before dey made me take a bath."¹⁴

The miserly Jew was similarly treated. "That plackguard's [sic] hookin' it with von of my coats on. Fire at hith trousers, Ikey," one snippet went.¹⁵ But if these stock characters were little more than a figure of fun, the "Asian menace" was seldom joked about, for the Chinese and Japanese

¹³Independent, 7 April 1900.

¹⁴Independent, 24 May 1902.

¹⁵Independent, 5 April 1902.

were viewed as a real and immediate threat. The murder of Police Chief A.D. Main in the neighbouring village of Steveston by "Chinamen" was, to the VTLC, proof of this. The murder of "one of our most highly respected citizens" was further evidence that federal legislation was needed to "stop the enormous increase of the migration of Chinese and other Asiatics."¹⁶ The careful noting that a "citizen" had been murdered by outsiders may be interpreted as another way in which the council members distinguished between themselves and the Asian workers. Their fear is indicated by the allegation that "Chinamen" in the plural had killed the officer; in fact, only one was responsible, but the vivid suggestion of a mob attacking a lone upholder of the right was irresistible.

The spectre of disease added to the hysteria. A letter signed "Physician" warned that Chinese grocers used urine to blanch celery stalks and put green bananas in their beds so "the heat of his filthy body effectually ripens the fruit in a few nights and gives it that rich foreign flavor so much desired by those who prefer a filthy Chinaman to a clean Anglo-Saxon."¹⁷ A report on alleged health violations by keepers of boardinghouses that catered to Japanese harped on a similar theme. According to the story, the Vancouver city health inspector issued several summonses to the proprietors,

¹⁶Independent, 21 April 1900.

¹⁷Independent, 9 March 1901.

who slept the men ten to a bed. The fault was not attributed to the owners who created and maintained the conditions, but to the Japanese themselves, who were presumed not to care. Disease and filth were assumed to be a necessary condition of Asian labour, rather than the result of poverty, unscrupulous hoteliers, or profit-maximizing shipping lines. The causes were not attacked, only the victims and "carriers." The concern for health and safety, natural enough in a port city, became tied to racial exclusion. Thus the Independent wrote:

There cannot be too much care exercised by our municipal health authorities in inspecting the hordes of Japanese immigrants now arriving. The scourge of smallpox now visiting Winnipeg came via Japan, Japanese coolies brought the plague to Hawaii, and it is known that the native steamships which bring the laborers to Victoria are in the steerage quarters, foul almost beyond conception The more legitimate restrictions are imposed on the hordes of Oriental laborers for whom there is no scope without gusting our own people from work, the better¹⁸

Like their counterparts in San Francisco, the VTLC linked class-consciousness to racism. It even extended a fraternal hand across the ocean, though the rhetoric made clear that non-whites should stay home and fight the class war against their own bosses. Commenting on the famine in India, one article pointed out that "the prime curse of India is not caste but the explosion of native labour and the vampires of usury." The writer called for relief efforts, but noted that real relief could come only when the govern-

¹⁸Independent, 14 April, 21 April, 28 April 1900.

ment "and the class they represent cease to make financial profit" out of war, pestilence, and famine.¹⁹

The labour council's desire to prohibit Asians helped propel it towards political action. As Loosmore has chronicled, anti-Chinese planks were an integral part of labour's political platform from its beginnings. In May 1892, the VTLC passed a motion of non-confidence in the provincial government, complaining that it had not passed legislation to aid workers, had endorsed a deep-sea fishing project that would create jobs for immigrants, and had failed to take effective action on the "Chinese question." The council then petitioned the federal government to end Chinese immigration and employment, and lobbied the national TLC to call for an increase on the entry tax and for an annual tax on Chinese residents. In the federal election of 1896, the VTLC threw its support behind the Reverend George Maxwell, an Independent who nonetheless supported the Laurier Liberals, and who pledged to work for anti-Chinese legislation. The council constantly supported the provincial government's efforts to block Chinese immigration, and was outraged when the federal government regularly disallowed the restrictive legislation.

¹⁹Independent, 7 April 1900. See Kazin, 168-170, for a similar attitude among the San Francisco building trades council. Kazin argues that this "hands across the ocean" stance was based on the need of labour leaders "to explain their actions as derived from economic and political principles which were unselfish," 168. American workers also put together a "nationalist version of workers' rights," 196, that closely resembled the VTLC's concept of a British Canada.

When overt measures foundered on the rocks of federal disallowance or political manoeuvring, the council was quick to find other ways to press its attack. In addition to prompting local health authorities to harass Asians, the VTLC supported the city's amendment to its charter that disenfranchised Japanese and Indians in addition to Chinese. The VTLC then called for provincial laws to limit the granting of public contracts and public lands to British subjects. As the population of the city and the province grew, the labour council called for new measures to make sure the restrictions were not flouted. In 1899, its parliamentary committee resolved that the Alien Naturalization Act should be amended to compel aliens seeking citizenship to appear before a Supreme Court judge, in order that the official could verify that the naturalization requirements had indeed been met. These new, formalized, bureaucratic procedures were necessary, for "in cities of large dimensions and thousands of inhabitants," it was impossible for the community to know everyone and informally ensure that the appropriate steps had been taken, unlike the "small villages where everybody is known." In this instance, federal bureaucracy, in the form of red tape and rules on policy, were encouraged by the labour leaders as a defensive mechanism. If informal community control were no longer effective, institutionalized codes and official authority would take its

place.²⁰

Racism was a defensive response of craft unionists and their leaders. As skilled tradesmen, they prospered by controlling access to the labour market and through restrictions such as jurisdictions, hiring halls, apprenticeships, and walking card delegates. These unions were organized by trade and craft, and their ability to control the labour supply allowed them to win higher wages. It also allowed them to base their demands on the basis of skill, rather than simple need or a larger argument about the necessity of all labour. Indeed, it was their ability to organize that defined their work as skilled, since there is no objective measure of skill that applies to most work. Printers could lay claim to the nobility of their trade and insist on a four-year apprenticeship, but this represented the strength of the union more than any one arcane skill or mysterious technique that could not be learned by anyone in much less time than the apprenticeship required. Seeking to restrict workers by race was thus a logical extension of their traditional practices. Refusing to organize the unorganized or the Chinese was not simply a measure of their conservatism or flawed class consciousness; it flowed naturally from their pragmatic approach to craft unionism.

Indeed, extensive organizing outside the trade could

²⁰VTLCM, 6 May, 20 May, 3 June 1892. Loosmore, 62-63, 80-82. World, 4 February, 15 April, 10 June, 27 May 1899.

weaken their position, as it would dilute the craft. Trades that could easily restrict the flow of labour, notably those that worked in areas such as construction and printing that were not susceptible to national and international competition, were more successful in protecting their members than trades such as tailoring and cigarmaking. These trades could be flooded with goods imported from other provinces and countries, and attempts to keep up wages were often stymied. This in turn meant that employers continually sought to lower wages and replace highly paid workers with cheaper ones, and the trades and their unions won few battles in this period. Despite efforts by the VTLC and the Tailors and Cigarmakers unions to enforce the union label and to boycott shops that employed Chinese or sold goods made by Chinese labour, these organizations were soon to lose their effectiveness in Vancouver. The nature of these trades also played a role in their ability to organize and fight. Cigarmaking and tailoring required little capital investment; much of the work could be contracted out or done in a sweatshop with little machinery. If employers were to make money by reducing expenses, they could only cut costs by cutting wages.

Furthermore, both cigarmaking and tailoring produced for the consumer, and both produced luxury items. The building trades worked on business projects that could pass on the cost of labour to the buyers, or on houses that were a

necessary purchase. Printers worked on job printing, most of which was done for businesses, or on newspapers that relied on advertising for revenue. The cigarmakers and tailors who supplied workers with their products were caught in a bind, as many working people, including union members, preferred to buy less expensive items from non-union shops. Building and printing did not face the same problem. Thus union label campaigns to promote organized cigar and tailor shops were constantly launched by the VTLC and constantly failed.²¹ The Waiters and Waitresses Union had similar problems. J.H. Perkins, secretary of the union, complained to the VTLC that "there were many Union men patronizing Japanese and Chinese restaurants" and thus hurting those establishments that hired white union labour.²² If labour leaders reflected the racism of the times, they still had difficulty enforcing the actions of the rank and file who put consumerism ahead of race.

Racism was also a useful tool in the ideological battle with employers. Relying on the language and assumptions of a

²¹See Saxton for a discussion of the national and local industries and the ability to withstand wage battles. Gwendolyn Mink, Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development: Union, Party and State, 1875-1920, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, 71-80, makes similar arguments. For the struggles of the cigar-makers and tailors in Vancouver, see VTCLM, passim; World, 6 August 1898; World, 5 August 1899. See World, 5 August 1899, for notice of a resolution to prohibit union members from smoking non-union cigars, and 10 June, 24 June 1899 for the union label as a device to prevent Chinese labour. See World, 15 April 1899 for VTLC support of the tailors' strike.

²²VTCLM, 3 April 1902.

common British heritage, labour leaders could invoke images of an independent yeomanry, the nobility of toil, and the virtue of the producer to justify wages and access to politics. By stressing the lines of a shared ethnicity, these labour leaders sought to make an alliance with politicians and employers to prevent harsh treatment. The "Chinese threat" was not a direct threat to their wages; it was a threat to the dream of a white society in which all could be equal. Devalued labour struck at their claims about the nobility of toil, which was in part a claim about political rights and control. If the Asians, described by most Anglo-Saxons as inferior, were considered part of the working class, the white workers of B.C. could not make the same arguments about deserving high wages and a voice in politics. Such reasoning was used against so-called unskilled workers of all races and ethnicity in the labour council's struggle to keep out cheaper labour and to reject attempts to justify wage reductions on the grounds that the producing classes were not the moral and racial equals of the ruling elites. Thus the VTLC paper denounced "the influx of Japs, Chinks, and the scum of Europe" in a single breath. All unskilled workers combined to form a "terrible vampire, whose morbid appetite will never be appeased until ruin and desolation stalk through the land."²³ The fact that Asians were highly visible and were placed near the bottom of Anglo racial

²³Independent, 2 June 1900.

hierarchies gave racism a particular virulence and fervour that supports, to some degree, Ward's position on a "psychology of race."

Hostility towards the Asians who were synonymous with unskilled, non-union labour reflected the specific class position of the labour leaders. If the delegates of the VTLC were something of an aristocracy of labour because of their ability to organize and fight, their positions as leaders and spokesmen gave them another kind of status and power. As successful workers (and later, often contractors, publishers, and the like), these men had made it in the pioneer society of Vancouver. The system had given them a measure of success, and thus it seemed to be a system that worked. The labour leaders could meet with, and perhaps to a degree, identify with, the local elites. Asians, brought in by monopolies such as Dunsmuir and the CPR, had little in common with these men. Not surprisingly, the VTLC supported those who seemed more like themselves -- local politicians, shopkeepers, small businessmen, professionals -- against the outsiders who appeared able to wrest control away. In this way, the "Asian menace" was linked to the populist ideology of the day, for it appeared to be the final arm of the triad of state, monopoly, and foreigners that challenged the way of life and the day-to-day control these people exerted. Racism was the ugly side to the populist critique, but it was seen as essential and relevant to the members of the VTLC; like

the critique of big government and big business, it was a fight over who would control the politics, wealth, and culture of the city. To ally themselves with Chinese workers would mean that the frontier myth and the producer ideology were finished; it would mean that society was absolutely divided by class, that movement between classes was not easy and fluid, and that working people could not expect or proclaim any rights that flowed from their position as creators of wealth equal to businessmen and merchants and farmers.

In the fishing industry of the 1890s unionists came to grips with Japanese workers and sought to organize them, but in the building and printing trades, and in other unions which made up the VTLC, attitudes on race would not change until circumstances changed the perceptions of the leaders, or more often, the leaders themselves. Such was the case with the fishermens' union. Started by VTLC organizer J.H. Watson, the union grew when two socialists, Frank Rogers and Will MacClain, began working for it. This industrial union broke from the mould of the craft organizations and had to adapt to different conditions if it were to survive. Unable to restrict access to the fishery, the fishermen's union had to organize all the workers for its success, and the union could not be racist in the same fashion. The Independent commented on the "necessity" of organizing "Japs" into the union, and called upon whites to "fall in line" with the

Japanese organizing in Steveston. Such necessity did not affect Watson, however. In letters to the newspaper, he continued to insist that it was "better to starve the Mongol out than to starve our white worker out of an occupation." No economic or practical consideration could have much of an impact on his views on race. Until structural changes in the population and the economy affected other unions, racism continued to serve the VTLC's interests more effectively than inclusive appeals to class.²⁴

Understanding the labour bureaucrats' position on what was labelled "the woman question" is difficult, largely because discussions of women rarely figured in the council's activities between 1889 and 1902. This silence is in itself significant, but apart from illustrating that men largely ignored women's issues it offers little insight or room for analysis. Some evidence of their attitudes towards women is available. The core of the labour leaders' ideology in regard to women was the belief in the two separate spheres of women's work and men's work. Men worked in and produced for the market, while women worked in and produced for the home and family. Men were assumed to have certain skills that would be rewarded with wage labour, while women were assumed to be nurturers and care-givers who would use their very different skills to run and maintain the household and to raise children. They were also expected to provide support

²⁴Independent, 23 June 1900, 16 February 1901.

for the wage-earning male. Thus one writer suggested in the Independent that "The girl that polishes up the cook stove until it shines like 'dad's dinner pail' will make a good wife for any man."²⁵ Another reflected on the contemporary craze for bicycling to ask in verse,

Where is the wheel she rode last year;
Her bloomers, where are they?
Why is she never seen upon
The bicycle paths today?
The lover whom she rode with then
Did not lay down his life
Upon the field of battle but
He took that maid to wife.
Her tyres now are all flattened out
Her bloomers hung away --
Beside a baby's crib she sings
Sweet lullabies all day.²⁶

The corollary of putting away the things of youth for women was to marry and raise a family.

The labour leaders assumed that women were to act as the moral influence in the family, and the official paper was quick to reprimand women who stepped out of this role, usually by printing jokes and anecdotes to make the point. One story had a mother asking her young daughter where good girls went when they died. The child answered that they went to heaven. The mother then asked where bad girls went, and the daughter replied that they went to the train depot, "to see the travelling men come in," a not so subtle reference to

²⁵Independent, 15 September 1900.

²⁶Independent, 15 September 1900.

the hoary jokes about travelling salesmen and prostitution.²⁷
 In another aimed at women's alleged vanity and artifice, Tommy, aged five, asked,

"What's a fictitious character, Aunt Em?"
 Aunt Em -- "One that is made up."
 Tommy -- "Oh, then you're a fictitious character, ain't you, Aunt Em?"²⁸

There was little suggestion that the two spheres of work attributed to the sexes were separate but equal. For a time, the Independent ran a women's section that paid little attention to political or economic affairs. Instead of trade union information or discussions of women's rights, the paper carried recipes, grooming tips, and hints on stain removal, smart consumerism, and the like.²⁹ Women's responsibilities were often the subject of jokes based on the motif of exaggerating a characteristic believed to be part of women's different nature. For example, thrift was considered a valuable trait for working-class wives, but was often parodied as overwhelming consumerism. In one anecdote, several castaways were adrift in an open boat on the high sea. They were near death when a male sailor spotted a ship in the distance. "A sail! A sail!" he shouted. A woman passenger, half dead from thirst, reached for her purse and

²⁷Independent, 29 September 1900.

²⁸Independent, 8 June 1901.

²⁹See, for example, the Independent, 3 May 1902.

shrieked "What, a bargain [on] salt?"³⁰ Women were often portrayed as cunning manipulators who would turn into tyrants once they had ensnared a man in marriage. One writer even compared women to

the big trusts. The instant she acquires a controlling interest in you she becomes a regular ring master. She will make you jump through, lie down, roll over, walk lame, and play dead. And don't think for a moment that you won't do it, either.³¹

Though men were often chided for not fulfilling their part of the marriage agreement, the jokes seem less pointed and more accepting of the follies of the male. In one short item in the paper's miscellany column it was dryly observed that "Many a man protests that he would lay down his life for a woman, who after marriage he won't lay down a carpet for."³² In another, a woman at a party freely admitted that women were vain, but that men were not afflicted with that particular vice. As the men nodded wisely in agreement, she added that "By the way, the necktie of the handsomest man in the room is up under his ear." Her real point was made when "every man present put his hand up to his neck."³³ Women might have wisdom, but power was denied them; men could be tricked into admitting their vanity, but could not be

³⁰Independent, 28 September 1900.

³¹Independent, 15 September 1900.

³²Independent, 22 September 1900.

³³Independent, 28 September 1901.

confronted with it. Though it is easy to make too much of these anecdotes, they do suggest that relations between the sexes were fundamentally uneven. Marriage was a trap for men, a fulfillment for women. Women were fierce perhaps in their attempts to make men obedient, but ultimately could not prevail upon husbands even to lay a carpet.

The power of men in the household was, however, restrained by a moral code. The labour newspaper ran several articles that outlined the proper conduct for men. This meant more than just bringing home wages, and included a standard for behaviour in the family. In one item, for example, it was observed that

The true measure of a man is ... at his own fireside If his children dread his home coming and his wife swallows her heart every time she asks him for anything, he is a fraud of the first water, even though he prays until he is black in the face and howls hallelujah until he shakes the hills.³⁴

When the Vancouver World accused VTLC candidate Chris Foley of being "henpecked," the Independent lashed back, insisting that "the man who would assume the role of dictator in his own home or interfere with his wife's affairs is a pretty low and contemptible being."³⁵ A parable entitled "The Two Men" was reprinted several times, and its message was clear: money was not the only contribution men were expected to make:

³⁴Independent, 29 September 1900.

³⁵Independent, 21 January 1903.

"I would like to, but I haven't the time." The door of one of our most splendid mansions closed and a man hurried to his office A wife and family were his, but he no longer had time for family associations Elsewhere a man with a dinner pail kissed his little boy good-bye and the door of one of our smallest homes closed as the bread winner hurried away. All through the dust and grim [sic] and toil he thinks of his wife and boy and they think of him and at night the lad runs out to meet him. At night he holds the little youngster close to his heart and reads the paper on the door-step. He has time.³⁶

But in spite of the sentimental imagery of the article, it was fairly clear that work in the day to day maintenance of the home was not the man's responsibility.

The concept of the two spheres was a reflection both of the larger society and of the particular class location of the labour bureaucrat. Able to command a relatively healthy wage, or at least able to see such a wage as his due, the successful labourist could avoid the necessity of having two wage earners in the family. But the insistence that men should be the sole wage-earner in the family often put women in double-bind. Deprived of an independent income, yet responsible for maintaining themselves and the family, they had to request and receive money from the husband. The resulting tug-of-war, with women in the subordinate position, was a source of jests and jibes among the men of the labour elite. Women were pictured as avaricious and scheming, as one wife was portrayed in an anecdote:

Wife -- I've mended the hole in your trousers

³⁶Independent, 6 July 1901.

pocket last night after you had gone to bed, John dear. Now, am I not a thoughtful wife? Husband (dubiously) -- Well -- er -- y-e-s; you are thoughtful enough, my dear; but how the mischief did you discover that there was a hole in my pocket?³⁷

If financial dependence required women to plan for a possible future in which they might be widows, this too could be interpreted as greed. The Independent complained that "six men out of ten who leave behind liberal life insurance have no monument. In a majority of cases the widow uses the life insurance to attract another husband."³⁸

To preserve the integrity of the sexual division of labour, the VTLC leadership argued that their wages and jobs should be protected from the unfair competition of both immigrants and women. The idea of the "family wage" was used to support their position, and many articles in the Independent argued for wage levels that would allow men to support wives and families on a single, male income. One such item set out the position strongly, and ended up blaming working women for contributing to the prostitution of their sisters:

The women who take the places of men in our stores, offices, and factories are largely girls who get part of their living elsewhere ... [that is they] live at home or have brothers or relatives who assist them, and they can afford to work for from \$1 to \$3 per week The husbands' and fathers' ability to keep the woman in the home where she belongs is diminished by woman's taking his place in the shop at less wages, thereby cutting his wages and reducing his chance for a job, the women

³⁷Independent, 5 April 1902.

³⁸Independent, 27 December 1902.

themselves making wages by that means drive the weaker natures to sell their persons for a better existence and he who blames them is both cruel and unjust.³⁹

Similarly, the editor of the Independent commented with alarm on a magazine for a simplified system of accounting that was so straightforward "that a girl at \$4 a week can take care of records and accounts that, with books, demand an expensive man." This de-skilling, lamented the editor, explained why young men "find it harder than their fathers did to find employment at wages that will enable them to support a home decently."⁴⁰ Such a home was crucial to the labourist world view. When the "federal bureau of labour," announced that nearly 90 per cent of workmen in twenty-two Canadian cities were unmarried, the VTLC newspaper was alarmed. "These figures," the writer complained, "indicate that there is something radically wrong with the environment of the workers."⁴¹

Good trade unionism meant, to these leaders, keeping the traditional structure of the family intact by organizing to defeat the inroads of capitalism. "If trade unionism prevailed," one contributor wrote,

every little girl and boy would be running up and down school steps, women would be taken from the factories where they sew and stitch their lives away, and every parent would receive sufficient

³⁹Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁴⁰Independent, 27 April 1901.

⁴¹Independent, 29 June 1901.

wages to provide for his care, so that he would not be obliged to rob childhood of its sunshine and joy.⁴²

The council took action along these lines in 1904 when it formally called for legislation to appoint a factory inspector and to limit the hours of work for women and children. Though these measures were advocated to change conditions "inimical to the physical and moral well-being of females and young persons," it is more accurate to see them not as progressive measures but as attempts to restore the vision of separate spheres with women in the home.⁴³

The concept of "manliness" was an important part of the culture and world view of the labour bureaucrats. The "Recipe for a Union Man" called for

... an ounce of gumption
Just a grain of sand.
A little independence,
Some manly spirit, and
Mix them well together
With patience -- if you can.
Add to it unselfishness --
And you have a union man.⁴⁴

Unionists who did not do their part were accused of having an "ignoble and unmanly spirit." When attacked by political opponents, J.H. Watson decried the "want of manhood" in his

⁴²Independent, 19 October 1901.

⁴³B.C. did not pass a Factory Act until 1908. VTLCM, 15 December 1904; Mary Lynn Stewart, Women and the French State: Labour Protection and Social Patriarchy, 1879-1912, Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989; Paul Phillips and Erin Phillips, Women and Work: Inequality in the Labour Market, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983, 18-21.

⁴⁴Independent, 8 August 1903.

foes, and enjoined them to "be men above all things."⁴⁵ The "trade union principle" itself was portrayed as a traditional, male figure, standing as the "mighty protector against all forms of wrong and injustice" The union instilled "courage, manhood, independence, fraternity; the love for the good and the true; it lives in the hearts and minds of the toilers, and must live; it will not die."⁴⁶ In contrast, women were often portrayed as a wedge that forced men apart. For example, when the Independent's business manager Harry Cowan married editor Bartley's sister Connie, the wedding notice appeared under the headline "Cowan a Benedict." If such jokes were meant only in fun, they still suggest that a solidarity based on the mythology of masculinity and "manly virtue" left little room to include women.⁴⁷

However, there were important exceptions to this general attitude. In 1900, "J.H.B.," probably J.H. Brown of the International Typographers Union, wrote to the Vancouver World to defend the pragmatic reformism of the AFL against the socialist movement. He argued that among the "general objects" of unionism were shorter hours, better pay, and "the

⁴⁵Independent, 21 April 1900, 14 February 1903.

⁴⁶Independent, 26 April 1902. For a fascinating look at the notion of masculinity and the iconography of the male as unionist, see Elizabeth Faue, Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991, especially chapters 2-3.

⁴⁷Independent, 5 April 1902.

equalization of the wages of both sexes for similar work"⁴⁸ A month later, the Independent pointed out that Seattle had already signed up 65 women into a waitresses union, and urged the regional AFL and VTLC organizer to "move in this direction in Vancouver."⁴⁹ The newspaper called for a waitresses union to address the "great need" for better wages and hours, and was pleased to note that both men and women helped to found the Cooks' and Waitresses' Union in August.⁵⁰ Most of the VTLC leadership applauded these efforts, and President Dixon, Financial Secretary Francis Williams, organizer Watson, and Independent editor Bartley and business manager Harry Cowan all addressed the new union's members to give their support.⁵¹ The newspaper also noted with approval that the retail clerks' association had resolved unanimously to invite "lady clerks" to join, and the association soon elected women as vice-president, assistant secretary, and "guide."⁵²

Solidarity was also extended to women in other occupations. The Independent noted with sorrow and respect the death of a city hospital nurse, "an administering angel in caring for the sick" who died from blood poisoning "during

⁴⁸World, 17 February 1900.

⁴⁹Independent, 31 March 1900.

⁵⁰Independent, 7 April, 11 August 1900.

⁵¹Independent, 22 September 1900.

⁵²Independent, 23 June 1900.

the discharge of her duties."⁵³ Joseph Watson deplored the conditions that women in domestic service faced, and called for reduced hours, a six day work week, and a systematic training, schooling, and certification process. This would raise the benefits and status of domestic work and make it more attractive as a career for young women.⁵⁴ When telephone operators, virtually all of whom were women, struck in 1902, the VTLC was quick to vote its support and to organize rallies, fundraisers, and boycotts.⁵⁵ From these examples it may be concluded that the opposition of the VTLC leaders to women in the workplace and the union movement was not absolute. But their support was limited to women who worked in areas that were an extension of women's work in the home, or capitalized on traditional ideas of women as care-givers, or were already dominated by women.

Though the labour bureaucrats stamped the labour movement with their own ideas of women's roles, it is not clear that their positions as bureaucrats were the key determinant of these ideas. In language similar to that of the early incorporation and corporate liberalism theories, Marie Campbell has argued that male trade unionists joined with government and industry to end "the threat women posed

⁵³Independent, 17 August 1900.

⁵⁴Independent, 17 August 1901.

⁵⁵VTLC, 4 December 1902; Elaine Bernard, The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982, 26.

to men's jobs, as well as providing a pool of cheap labour to aid capitalist growth."⁵⁶ Yet the labour leaders who opposed women organizing were in those trades least affected by the hiring of women. Women were not becoming bricklayers or painters or printers; they were teachers, clerks, and garment workers. Men in these industries were in fact more likely to encourage women to unionize, though they were rarely responsive to the real needs of women. This suggests that more than a straightforward economic calculation based on the exploitation of working women was at the bottom of their analysis. Instead, women working outside the home threatened them in a less direct, though equally as powerful, fashion. The "spectre" of women in the workforce challenged the traditional way of life these men sought, and it challenged their picture of a stable world in which men and women had clearly defined roles. Working-class women also attacked the producer ideology, for it had always seen the production of value for the market as a part of men's work.⁵⁷ This view stemmed from a sexist society that was not the creation of labour bureaucrats. Furthermore, for the first generation of

⁵⁶Marie Campbell, "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920," in In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C., Victoria: Camosun College, 1981, 183.

⁵⁷Marjorie Griffin Cohen has argued that even in the farm economy, "non-market-oriented activity ... was more central to women's economic activity than was their market-oriented activity." Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988, 41.

Vancouver labour leaders, both industrial capitalism and women working outside the home were a new and relatively rare experience. Just as most of the labour leaders did not work in factories, most did not encounter women in the work place. Two years after the VTLC was founded, women made up little more than 4 per cent of the Vancouver work force; during the Independent's run from 1901 to 1904, women were barely 6 per cent of the labour force. Indeed, in the province as a whole, women comprised between a quarter and a third of the entire population from 1891 to 1901.⁵⁸ The difficulty that labour leaders had in understanding and developing strategies for working women were caused in part by the very newness of the situation.

In addition to their small numbers, women tended to work in areas that were low-paid or under attack in this period. This work also tended to be very difficult to organize. Domestic service, teaching, clerking, and tailoring provided the vast majority of jobs for women: in 1891, 68 per cent of working women were employed in domestic service and the professions, primarily teaching. By 1911, when women made up nearly 14 per cent of the labour force, over 40 per cent were employed as domestics; about 8 per cent were saleswomen; 9 per cent were stenographers or typists; close to 6 per cent

⁵⁸Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915," B.C. Studies 41 (Spring 1979), 40-1; Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991, Table 11, 369, for provincial figures.

were teachers.⁵⁹ Most women, then, worked in sectors that were unproductive, that is, in which the employees did not actually produce surplus value for the employer. As a result, winning concessions or even union recognition was usually very difficult. In occupations where employers made money directly from the work of their employees, such as construction, wages represented profit. The wages of a domestic, a clerk, or a public school teacher, however, no matter how important or necessary the work was, represented a direct cost to the employer. This tended to heighten employers' intransigence in the face of wage demands. Sectors of productive labour, such as tailoring, were faced with other difficulties, as the B.C. industry was in competition with eastern Canada and the United States, where factory production, technology, and economies of scale provided significant advantages. Men and women both faced enormous difficulties when they tried to organize in these industries. The tailors' union vanished during the depression of 1893-1895; when it was resurrected in 1898, it had little success in protecting wage and piece rates.⁶⁰ The Retail Clerks fared little better: despite electing its president and international organizer to the head of the VTLC in 1902, the union was forced to disband in 1904.⁶¹

⁵⁹Rosenthal, 41.

⁶⁰Rosenthal, 44.

⁶¹VTLCM, 4 January 1902; 21 July 1904.

None of this, of course, excuses the labour bureaucrats for their inability to understand and press for women's issues and to include Asians in the labour movement. It does suggest that it was not primarily their position as bureaucrats that shaped their sexist and racist ideology. Rather, it was their status and income as unionized artisans, as men in a sexist society, and as progressives who were adapting to the spasms of industrialization by building on their own experience and their utopian notion of the artisan and yeoman. But it was their position as bureaucrats, with control over the political agenda, the money, and the press, that ensured that their voices, and not those of women and Asians, would be heard.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Clash with Socialism: Intellectuals versus Artisans?

By 1900, the old ideology of producerism was no longer the most radical position in the labour movement. Instead, it was the last refuge of the entrenched labour leader who had established links in the economic, political, and social circles of the city, the province, and in some cases, the nation. If the evolution over ten years of a system of officials, experts, and leaders with ties to the community had taken place under the guise of expediency and ad hoc responses to immediate conditions, now it appeared to be a system of entrenched bureaucrats who were being challenged by a new faction bearing the banner of socialism.

The early socialist movement of the city was an odd agglomeration of Marxism, Christian socialism, and reformism. The strongest Marxist line was taken by the local chapter of Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labor Party (SLP) and its "economic arm," the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance (STLA). Both groups upheld De Leon's assertion that trade unions were largely futile and their leaders reactionary. During the 1900 provincial election, for example, the STLA's Vancouver local, the Pioneer Mixed Alliance, openly attacked the Lib-Lab Ralph Smith and the labour council's candidates Joe Dixon and Francis Williams. The STLA denounced Smith as a "traitor to the working class," and condemned Dixon and Williams for

their "weak-kneed attitude towards the capitalist parties." The labour council's reform platform was labelled a "compromise with cockroach business interests," and the STLA called upon unionists to "repudiate their fakir leaders, convicted as they are of incapacity and unfaithfulness to the interests of our class." Instead, the paper urged, workers should "rally to the standard of the Socialist Labor Party ... avoiding middle class socialism and the would-be labor champions who pose at election time as 'friends of labor'." Not surprising, the STLA request to affiliate with the labour council was rejected out of hand.¹

The mutual rejection of the De Leonists and the VTLC posed a problem for those socialists who wanted to work within the labour movement. Men such as William MacClain, Frank Rogers, and Allan Boag tried to adopt a middle course of advocating socialism without needlessly alienating the labourists. In 1900 they and others broke away from the SLP to form the United Socialist Labor Party (USLP) and ran MacClain as a socialist candidate loosely connected with the VTLC. The SLP attacked the new party in print, calling MacClain a "so-called socialist candidate" and a "fakir," and denying that Rogers had ever been a representative of the

¹For the SLP and STLA's sectarianism, see McCormack, 20-1, and Schwantes, 81-4. The attacks on the labourists are from the Independent, 23 June 1900. Independent, 21 April 1900.

SLP.² The new party fared little better than the De Leonists, but it did point the way towards a less rhetorical, more pragmatic socialism. The moderate socialism of MacClain and the USLP called for direct legislation and government ownership of key sectors of the economy, moderate demands that were not far removed from the labourist platform of the VTLC.

At the same time, the influence of Christian socialism was spreading. The Canadian Socialist League (CSL) was founded in eastern Canada in 1899, and was led by George Weston Wrigley and his newspaper, Citizen and Country. Wrigley maintained that Christ had been the first socialist, and that socialism was a movement for reform, not revolution. Seeing the way of the future in government ownership of the post office, the Intercolonial Railway, schools, and libraries, Wrigley was a kind of Fabian. He combined many of the populist planks, such as the initiative and the referendum, with the call for public ownership and direct democracy to cobble together a moderate left-leaning program.³ A blend of Methodist reform and middle-class socialism, the CSL was a pink alternative to the SLP. With its emphasis on education and popular reform, the CSL was more akin to the USLP, and in 1900, the two groups met together in convention to join

²Independent, 9 June 1900.

³Robin, Radical Politics, 32-35; McCormack, 20-23; Schwantes, 97-102.

together in a provincial federation. Though the new organization had little success, it provided the direction and the base for a revived party in 1901 -- the Socialist Party of British Columbia (SPBC). Headed by Ernest Burns, the SPBC combined the platform of the Socialist Party of America, the national demands of the CSL, and a list of reforms of particular importance to B.C.⁴

The new party quickly became the centre of socialist activity in the province and the city of Vancouver. Its dominance was assured in 1902, when the former De Leonist, E.T. Kingsley brought the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Canada into the fold. Kingsley represented, in the words of A.R. McCormack, the socialism of the "pre-1900 Socialist Labor Party."⁵ He and his supporters, based in the coal-mining district of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, rejected trade unionism and political reformism out of hand. Instead, Kingsley called for class warfare, his chosen battleground the provincial legislature and the exclusive reliance on the ballot box. Thus his group and the CSL both shared a distaste for unionists, though from different perspectives. Kingsley viewed the union movement as reactionary, for it strove only to ameliorate the conditions of workers without trying to remove the causes of exploitation. The Christian socialists, on the other hand, had no great interest in the

⁴McCormack, 25-31.

⁵McCormack, 26.

working class; their program represented a concern with improving the position of a stratum of the middle class who sought a better voice in parliament and an end to the unfair competition of the trusts. Both of these socialist tendencies had some platforms and ideas that they shared with the labourists, but neither represented the world and the world-view of the artisans and master craftsmen who dominated the VTLC. Though uneasy alliances could, and would be forged, the different factions eyed each other suspiciously as each sought to lead the working class.

The old guard of labourists did not give in easily. It fought to preserve its control over the labour movement by moving, grudgingly, to the left, and by launching frontal assaults on the upstarts. As early as 1898, George Bartley fired a warning shot. Speaking on the occasion of his re-election as president of the VTLC, Bartley observed that

there had been many ups and downs in the industrial barometer, but the organization had kept up most successfully....The policy pursued by the Trades and Labour Council had always been neutral in party politics, and the unions were not, he thought, ready for a change....

The economy was on the upswing, he noted, and this bode well for labour. If the union leaders

were to be up-to-date in the truest sense they must be opposed most emphatically to the spirit of restriction, narrowness, and monopoly, which have so much retarded the progress of the labor movement, and at the same time organized labor has learned from hard experience that it must keep at arms' length self-opinionated, hot-headed, and would-be czars, the source of disruption in nearly every organization. Whenever they could not deal

with these worthies in reason, more forcible and effective methods must of necessity be resorted to.⁶

J.H. Watson took a slightly different tack, posing first as a socialist supporter whose disagreement was over tactics, not ends. As a member of the boilermakers and the IAM, Watson faced some competition from others in the unions representing CPR workers. Chief among these were William MacClain and Frank Rogers. MacClain was, like Watson, an emigrant from England and employed in the CPR's machine shops. Unlike Watson he was a newcomer to Vancouver, having jumped ship in Seattle shortly before coming to the city and joining the labour movement in 1899. Also unlike Watson, MacClain was an ardent socialist. At first a member of the Socialist Labor Party and its union arm, the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance, he soon became disenchanted with its doctrinaire and sectarian politics, especially its attacks on the labour movement. When the VTLC refused to accept STLA representatives as delegates in 1900, MacClain, now president of the IAM local, delegate, and statistician of the VTLC, was forced to choose between the party and the union movement. He broke with the STLA, and helped form the United Socialist Labor Party. This allowed him to continue to agitate as a

⁶World, 15 January 1898. VTLC minutes for this period are missing, and it is not possible to tell from newspaper accounts who Bartley is referring to. In any case, his Philippic against hot-heads is the standard response of the challenged official. His enjoinder against those who favoured "monopoly" may plausibly be interpreted as an attack on industrial unionism.

socialist and to work within the "house of labour." MacClain ran as a socialist candidate in the 1900 provincial election, and though not part of the VTLC's Independent Labor slate of Dixon and Williams, received some support from the council. MacClain then joined with fellow socialist Frank Rogers and with Watson to organize the fishermen of the Fraser River. Fired from the CPR because of his militancy, he devoted all his considerable energy to the fishermen's union and was responsible for much of its success.⁷

That MacClain and Watson were both active in the machinists' union and with organizing the fishermen did not mean that the old Liberal supporter had embraced socialism. The IAM itself was split on the issue of left-wing politics, and events in Vancouver were an echo of the battle taking place at the national level in Canada and the United States. In part a fight between industrial and craft unionists, David Montgomery has also characterized it as a conflict between socialists and those who supported the National Civic Federation and its policy of conciliation and collaboration. In general, conservatives favoured craft unionism, while socialists fought for industrial unionism. The NCF supporters could count Samuel Gompers as an ally, and Watson, with his ties to the craft unions and to the Lib/Lab Ralph

⁷Phillips, 31-7; McCormack, 21-2; Robin, Radical Politics, 51-2; Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1979, 97-100.

Smith, was decidedly on the side of the conservatives.⁸

The struggle between the factions was evident in the fishermen's union, as Watson concentrated on organizing whites in New Westminster and the socialists organized Asians and whites together in other areas. While fishermen with Watson debated admitting the Japanese, Vancouver, "with a spirit of freedom and liberality, and, fully realizing the necessity of such a course, opened its doors freely to Japs and Indians and to those of every other nationality."⁹ Though Watson was also pushed by necessity finally to endorse signing up Asians, he continued to press for Oriental exclusion and restriction, and complained bitterly over the large number of "Japs and Chinamen" working as bartenders' assistants in Vancouver. Allowing Asians to work alongside whites allowed the "Japs" to "watch every move you make" and soon become skilled enough to replace the better-paid white

⁸For the splits in the IAM, see Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 48-90; Mark Perlman, The Machinists: A New Study In American Trade Unionism, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961, 17-23; Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1914," Labour/Le Travail, 6 (Autumn 1980), 49-72; and John H.M. Laslett, Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement, 1881-1924, New York: Basic Books, 1970, Chapter 5, "Populism, Socialism, and the International Association of Machinists." The de-skilling of the craft throughout North America is given as one explanation for the number of socialists in the IAM.

⁹Independent, 23 June 1900. More on the fishermen's union may be found in J.K. Ralston, "The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen," Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1965.

worker, just as they had, he warned, "busted nearly all the white cooks and bartenders in the city."¹⁰ Watson was also pressured to make gestures towards the left, and similarly snapped back to his original position. In a series of articles for the labour paper, he outlined a labour theory of value, challenging the notion that the capitalist paid the workman. Instead, he showed, "it is not the capitalist who gives bread to the workingman, but the working man who gives himself a dry crust and sumptuously stocks the table of the capitalist."¹¹ In the next issue, Watson went on at great length on this theme:

The wages these workers receive represent wealth that they themselves produced, the profits the capitalist pockets represents wealth that the wage workers produced and the capitalist does what? Let us call things by their proper names and tell the capitalist that he steals from the men who earned the money he received, and is therefore a robber....Wages are that part of labor's own product that the working class is allowed to keep; profits are the present and running stealings perpetrated by the capitalist upon the working man from day to day, from week to week, month to month, and year to year; capital is the accumulated past stealings of the capitalist cornerstoned upon his original accumulations The pregnant point that underlies these facts is that, between the working class and the capitalist class there is an irrepressible conflict, a class conflict for life. It crops up in all sorts of ways and manner of ways. It is a struggle that will not down and must be ended only by either the total subjugation of the working class or the abolition of the capitalist class.¹²

¹⁰Independent, 26 May 1900.

¹¹Independent, 31 March 1900.

¹²Independent, 7 April 1900.

However expedient such left-wing posturing might have been, it was temporary at best. Nor did a belief in the labour theory of value imply a commitment to socialism. Watson soon returned to the labourist themes of craft unionism, avoidance of "politics" in the union, and moderation. If these had a progressive ring to them in 1890, by 1900 they were the last refuge of the labour bureaucrat under attack. Cloaking himself with the mantle of science to appear to be in the vanguard of modern thinking, Watson wrote,

The trend towards specialization of functions is one of the most universal of all the laws governing evolution of the social organism. Thus in a primitive social state a man is his own tailor, shoemaker, baker, lawyer, and policeman. As society becomes more complex, not only are the trades and professions differentiated, but these divisions themselves are sub-divided, so that a craftsman will make possibly the hundredth part of a shoe, the lawyer deal entirely with one class of cases, the physician becomes a specialist of one class of disease, and so on.

This "law of specialization" was put forward as a rationale for the continued existence of the craft union. Having established the historical necessity of the trade union, Watson went on to deplore politics in the union hall, holding that

the fullest concert of action in craft affairs...- can only be accomplished by rigidly respecting individual liberty of opinion in all matters. It thus holds as a cardinal principle that a man's religion is his own business, his politics is his own business, his personal relations outside of his sphere as a craftsman are his own business.

Carefully avoiding any reference to his own close ties to and

his work for the Liberals, Watson denounced

those would divert the trade union from its proper work; who would apply political tests to trade union members; ... and who rail at trade unionists as being content in seeking to achieve what they superciliously denominate as palliatives and make-shifts.

Craft unions, he argued, had won the evolutionary battle to represent the working class. The "craft organization,"

by its record of achievement, has demonstrated its right to govern craft affairs. It says Hands off! to those who attempt to tamper with the economic integrity of the craft organizations. It has no use for those peculiar advocates of so-called radicalism who carry in one hand a banner emblazoned with the lofty sentiments of "brotherhood and fraternity," while on the other they bear the dagger of the assassin which they strive to plunge into the vitals of trade unions. Trade unionists have all respect for the sincere socialist, but the organizer of dual trade societies, the "rat" and the "scab," is no less contemptible because he seeks to shelter himself in the folds of the red flag and proclaims himself the apostle of a new and grander dispensation. As the organization which has held the actual fighting line on the industrial battlefield for generations, it refuses to concede the right of doctrinaires or theorists to order it from the trenches or to insult the flag of trade unionism which has waved over many a hard-won victory and been sanctified by the sacrifice of so many thousands of devoted followers.¹³

This diatribe was probably intended more for the followers of the STLA and its leader, Daniel DeLeon, than the more pragmatic and flexible socialists such as MacClain and Rogers. The STLA was widely attacked as a "dual union," and the remark about "dispensations" and "apostles" was likely a swipe at DeLeon, who was often characterized as the "red

¹³Independent, 5 May 1900

pope." But the jab was followed up with an attack on all those who wanted to push the union movement to the left.

Watson wrote,

There is possibly no phrase in the English tongue which has been worked overtime so much as "Class conscious". Reduced to common sense terms and with its proper application, it does represent a great economic truth. The trade union movement itself would be non-existent if wage earners refuse to recognize that they have certain distinctively class interests.

But it was the role of the trade unions, he insisted, to help the workers understand these class interests and to

shape their awakened desires and aspirations into cohesive and rational endeavours....But here again the trade union does not find it incumbent upon itself to accept the definition of ultra-zealots. It does not find it necessary to set the craftsman, outside of his craft functions on the one side as a social Ishmaelite, against whom are raised the hand of every other man, and upon whom it is essential to wage war in every institution of the existing social order. Neither can the "class consciousness" of the trade unionists accept the pleasing fiction that overalls and jumpers cover all the virtue on this terrestrial sphere, or that removal from the absolute necessity of daily labor for wages turns a man into a horned monster who goes about raving for the blood of labour.

From this suggestion that workers might indeed have some common interest with the employer, and striking first at critics who might well reproach him for leaving the ranks of the working class to take up a white-collar government job, Watson moved on to defend the "pragmatic" unionism he had championed in the city. "All great movements," he contended, "in a degree compromise between the cold, hard facts of environment and the ever unsatisfied longing of humanity for

the ideal." Furthermore, the socialists were indebted to the reformers such as himself, for the "shortening of the hours of labor [gave] them an opportunity to study the science of socialism." The conservative battles for better conditions gave "men an opportunity to read and think." Trade unions also created "a greater spirit of independence against the exactions of the shop tyrant," and infused workers with a "spirit of solidity," [sic] thus bringing out "the better side of human nature and thereby building up the better citizen and the better man." No matter how the left might rail, these accomplishments put the labourists firmly on the side of progress. They differed from the socialists chiefly because they refused to speculate on what the ideal society should be. That, he maintained, would be left "to those who make up the membership of the pool of infallibles." Believing that "when the minute hand goes round, the hour hand must progress also," Watson concluded that unlike the radicals,

The trade union does not disdain the day of small things, knowing right well that all of civilization, nay, of life itself, is but the aggregate of minute details. The trade union represents the principle of opportunism in social reform. It does not refuse the small gain, but neither does it waste its ammunition in shooting arrows at the sun. It recognizes the limitation of human nature, but it helps to modify those qualities of human nature which have kept men dependent and in bondage.¹⁴

Other labour stalwarts took up a similar theme. Dividing the reform movement up into spheres of influence,

¹⁴Independent, 12 May 1900.

one writer asked,

Why should there be a dissenting rivalry between trades unionism and socialism? Neither, in truth, should trespass on the rights of the other. Instead of opponents, they are by their [obscured--very?] natures allies.

A trade union is an industrial institution. It has for its mission the improvement of the conditions of working people under existing forms of government, be that government monarchical, republican...or semi-social...A trade union has to do with hours of labor, wages paid, and rules of employment.. It is the purpose of trade unions to unify men of all religions and political affiliations. The Christian, the Jew, and the Mohammedan, irrespective of religious teachings, may rally under the banners of trade unions for the advancement of the interests of labor. The Tory, the Liberal, the Republican, the Democrat, the Populist, the Socialist, men of all political beliefs meet on common ground. Trade unions have not to do with political propaganda, but should have workingmen vote, irrespective of party, for men and measures that in their judgment will improve the conditions of workingmen.

The plea for tolerance was followed by an assault on the class origins of socialists that implied that their interests could be different from those of workers. Together with the argument for keeping "politics" out of the union, the article was not so much a plea for "pure and simple unionism" as a fight over who should lead the working class:

Socialism is a political institution. It seeks to reform governments by levelling down and levelling up the social inequalities. Socialism bears the same relation to the student and philosopher that it does to the workingman. In fact teachers of socialism have not usually come from the working class.¹⁵

If this attack had some truth to it -- indeed, it

¹⁵Independent, 7 April 1900.

outwardly resembled later arguments made by the IWW against middle-class socialists and intellectuals -- it artfully dodged the question of the present class position of the old-line labour leaders. Few of those who deplored the rise of socialism were still workers in the same way they had been ten years earlier. The radical element of their populist, labourist ideology had been subtly altered over the years to blunt its edge, and the principles that had allowed them to build a union movement and press for demands were now used to justify moderation and cooperation.

Nonetheless, the labour bureaucrats' charge that the socialists were not members of the working class had some merit. In principle and in fact, the party made no attempt to limit membership to wage-earners. The famous socialist Phillips Thompson, writing in the Vancouver-based Canadian Socialist, admitted that many prominent socialist theorists were "extensive capitalists," but argued that they were "none the less trusted on that account No socialist ever dreamed of reading such men out of the party."¹⁶ Local socialists supported this view by insisting that ideas, not class, were the most important criteria for party membership. "This is not the time for dilly-dallying with non-socialists," the paper asserted. "We either want socialism or we do not. If we do, let's work and vote for it and it only. If others do not, let them remain outside our ranks until

¹⁶Canadian Socialist, 23 August 1902.

they make a study of the question Quality is more essential at this stage than quantity."¹⁷ Party secretary Alex Lang made a "Plea for Intolerance" in the Western Socialist, calling for a "class-conscious party" that would abandon the "broad road" of letting in "sentimentalists."¹⁸ E.T. Kingsley, the party's chief theorist from 1903 on, put the argument across most forcefully:

The Socialist Party cannot depend on the support of members of trade unions unless they are to go back on union principles. The principles of unionism and socialism are antagonistic. To support one is to deny the other, no man can serve two masters¹⁹

And though he would later change his mind, in 1903 Parm Pettipiece would argue that the party should "stand firm; keep our organization iron-clad, aye, 'narrow'"²⁰

The insistence on party purity may have been essential to a new, struggling organization. But in making ideas rather than class the most important criterion for membership, the party attracted many supporters who were not from the working class, thus giving some credence to the labour leaders' complaint that non-workers were trying to set the

¹⁷Western Socialist, 20 September 1902.

¹⁸Western Socialist, 31 January 1903.

¹⁹Western Clarion, 26 December 1903. Cited in R.A. Johnson, "No Compromise -- No Political Trading: The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia." Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1975, 172. Kingsley's anti-union stance is also documented in McCormack, 31, 56.

²⁰Western Clarion, 15 October 1903. Cited in Johnson, 170.

agenda for the union movement. Though certainly membership in the working class was no guarantee that one's policies and ideas would be correct, the labour bureaucrats were able to point to their own class experience and score points off the socialists. Each side used its own strengths in its attempt to become the legitimate leader for the working class: labour bureaucrats spoke of the necessity of experience and ties to the working class; socialists of the need for correct ideas that transcended class experience.

The socialist party had to insist on the primacy of ideas, for many of its leaders were not from the working class. Ernest Burns, party secretary and treasurer, had worked for a time as a fisherman, and served as the president of the fisherman's union. But by September 1900, he had already given up fishing to run a second-hand and junk store in Vancouver, and "as a result his activity in trade union circles has ceased."²¹ Party organizer John Cameron, who worked in his father's planing mill in Ontario, came to Vancouver late in 1902 and started a tobacco shop and newsstand.²² Thomas Mathews combined a real estate office with a brokerage firm, offering in the pages of the Canadian Socialist "Special Bargains in Real Estate" and the "latest

²¹Western Socialist, 14 February 1902.

²²Western Socialist, 14 February 1903.

quotations" on mining stock.²³ James Boulton ran a newsstand for a time, then became a real estate agent himself.²⁴ Fred Ogle, party candidate in 1903, left the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to come to Canada and take up work as a salesman and then as a party organizer, paid \$2.00 a day for his services.²⁵

Though Parm Pettipiece was later to forge a career in the labour movement and would work as a compositor for Vancouver's daily press, his early years were spent as a publisher of newspapers. After two or three years of knocking about in jobs as a farm labourer, cattle hand, and labourer, Pettipiece went to work on the Calgary Daily Herald sometime between 1890 and 1892, when he went to the Edmonton Bulletin. In 1894, he purchased the Edmonton Times and started the South Edmonton News. Three years later, he bought the Edmonton Herald and began publishing the Revelstoke Herald in British Columbia. The year 1900 saw Pettipiece start up yet another paper, the Lardeau Eagle, which he continued until 1902, when he joined with another struggling publisher, Ontario socialist George Wrigley, to help put out the Canadian Socialist, formerly known as Citizen and Country. Later that year, Wrigley went back to Ontario to

²³Canadian Socialist, 9 August 1902; city directories, 1899-1904.

²⁴City directories, 1901-1902.

²⁵Western Clarion, 17 June 1903.

start another paper, and Pettipiece became the sole owner of the B.C. organ, re-titled the Western Socialist. The difficulties of maintaining the party press forced Pettipiece to reorganize the company, and a joint stock company, the Western Socialist Publishing Company, was created in 1903. Capitalized at \$10,000, in the form of 1,000 \$10 shares, the company's first directors included Pettipiece, Kingsley, and Burns. Pettipiece continued as business manager, and George Dales, formerly with the Winnipeg Voice, was brought in as editor. Calling upon readers to purchase shares, the paper made it clear that it was not an investment in the usual sense of the word, for "no dividends [are] to be paid; all profits go to spread socialism." But eight months later, Pettipiece found that "as his personal funds are now exhausted, he must seek a master from whom he can secure a subsistence wage." But whatever his success rate may have been, it is clear that Pettipiece was not a printer who became a publisher, as Bartley did. Rather, he was an entrepreneur publisher who was later forced to learn a trade. Even then, he continued to work as an editor and business manager for the labour and socialist press, and as a paid union officer. When he helped to launch attacks on the labour bureaucracy in 1902-3, however, he did so not as a rank and file worker but as a committed socialist from the

petit-bourgeoisie.²⁶

James Hawthornthwaite, socialist MLA from 1901 to 1912, was another important party theorist who had no direct ties to the working class. A university graduate, real estate agent, mining promoter, and U.S. consular officer, he was perhaps the party's most successful politician, but like many others in the party, could hardly be said to be a producer in the sense the labourists meant the word. Similarly, Wallis Lefeaux was trained as a bookkeeper, then ran a clothing store and sold real estate before becoming a lawyer.²⁷

To be sure, many socialists were workers and members of trade unions, though some, such as Allan Boag, augmented their wages with real estate development. Boag in fact was able to make some income from the socialist movement by

²⁶Details of Pettipiece's early career may be found in the Western Clarion, 5 November 1903. See Western Socialist, 20 September 1902, for his purchase of the paper from Wrigley, and 17 January 1903 for the creation of the Western Socialist Publishing Company. Its "no dividend" share offer appears in Western Socialist, 21 February 1903. Pettipiece's need to find employment was printed in Western Clarion, (the name for the merger of the Western Socialist and the Nanaimo Clarion). E.T. Kingsley headed the new socialist paper. Una Larsen, Pettipiece's daughter, has recalled that her father did not become a printer until the family moved to Vancouver in 1902, and believes that he sought work in the trade as an apprentice at the age of 27, for his newspaper adventures could not support the family. Una Larsen, interview with author, Vancouver, February 1989.

²⁷For Hawthornthwaite, see Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 41; McCormack, 69; for Lefeaux, see Daisy Webster, Growth of the NDP in B.C., 1900-1970, np., nd., 50-1.

renting one of his halls to the party for its meetings.²⁸ But the opposition to trade unions and trade unionists often came from those party members who were not active in the labour movement and were not employed as wage earners. Whatever the merits of their arguments, labour bureaucrats could, and did, point to these socialists to suggest that their theories did not reflect working-class experience and needs, and their accusations had some basis in fact.

Such divisions between labour leaders and socialist theorists were hardly unique to Vancouver's labour movement. Similar battles were fought throughout North America in this period, and had been fought even earlier in Europe. Indeed, the struggle between artisans and intellectuals may be traced back to 1846 and Marx's purging of Wilhelm Weitling from the Communist League.²⁹

Certainly VTLC leaders maintained that a wide gulf separated them from the early socialists. These leaders already had a firm belief in the difference between productive and unproductive labour, and had no qualms in labelling unproductive workers as parasites. Indeed, such a distinction formed a core element of labourism. Furthermore, intellectuals of the left and the right alike were regarded with great suspicion. They were "unmanly" somehow, unconnected with the important matters of life, more likely to

²⁸Western Socialist, 7 March 1903.

²⁹See Appendix B for a sketch of this fight.

create trouble for working men than to help them. Worse, intellectuals could contribute nothing tangible to the economy; their existence meant that another layer of society skimmed the cream from the honest toilers. Intellectuals, never well-defined, were the subject of jokes and pointed jibes in the Independent; often these were counter-posed with remarks that reinforced the belief that practical men were of more value to society than those who sought "pure" knowledge in any field. Not surprisingly, Thomas Edison was a favourite, and the labour paper reprinted an article by the inventor that summed up the labourist position well enough:

I tell you I'd rather know nothing about a thing in science, nine times out of ten, than what the books would tell me; for practical purposes, for applied science, the best science, the only science, I'd rather take the thing up and go through with it myself. I'd find out more about it than anyone could tell me, and I'd be sure of what I know. That's the thing. Professor this or that will controvert you out of the books that it can't be so, though you have it right in the hollow of your hand all the time, and could break his spectacles with it.³⁰

Anecdotes in the paper often took swipes at experts and professionals. "'I tell you sir,'" said the clergyman in one story, "'the trouble lies in the fact that there are too many lawyers.' 'There is where you are away off,' replied the judge. 'The real trouble is due to the fact that there aren't half enough clients.'"³¹ In another

³⁰Independent, 15 September 1900.

³¹Independent, 14 September 1901.

A mining expert recently described a lode as traversing "a metamorphic matrix of a somewhat argilloarenaceous composition." This means literally "a changed mass of a somewhat clayey-sandy composition." This in turn may be translated into plain English as m-u-d.³²

The class nature of universities was another sore spot. Though the labourists believed that "objective" science would aid their cause, universities were seen as parasites that fed off the producers and then bit the hand that fed them. As a result, the product of the university system was generally opposed to labour. "When the universities and colleges are dependent upon the continued exploitation of labor," the VTLC newspaper stormed, "it is foolish to expect students to be taught impartial investigation into social problems."³³ A lengthy resolution passed by the labour council summed up the labourist position well:

Whereas -- Readers of the daily press are aware of the fact that an active agitation has prevailed through the province for the granting of a large tract of the public domain for the endowment of a university largely on the ancient plan; and
Whereas -- While protesting strongly against the granting of the public moneys or the lands of this province for such an object, we desire it to be distinctly understood that we are not opposed to education in any form; on the contrary, the council holds that education should be encouraged. But it must be evident that a university, established and conducted as similar institutions are in eastern parts of Canada and in European countries is, and of necessity must be, under present conditions, a purely class institution. Therefore be it
Resolved -- That the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council records itself as being opposed to the

³²Independent, 3 May 1902.

³³Independent, 20 July 1901.

granting of the public funds or the alienation of the public lands for the purpose of founding, building, or the endowment of a university in the Province of British Columbia.³⁴

Instead, the council maintained, money should be spent on technical schools and on free high school textbooks.³⁵

The labourist critique of socialism borrowed from this traditional distrust of intellectuals and unproductive labour. One letter to the Independent, signed "Reformer," attacked those "self-styled socialist leaders" who "neither toil nor spin for their living, yet they would have you think that they were being robbed." Pointing to an alleged inconsistency in the socialist position, the writer suggested that

The doctrine of these so-called socialists is that if a man won't work neither shall he eat. Yet they decline to work but nevertheless eat and live high. I suppose they manage to exist by private subscription.³⁶

The professional agitator who challenged the labour bureaucrat for the right to lead the working class was looked upon with suspicion. The Independent deplored the soap-box orator who complained that his efforts were "never decently paid and never half appreciated." The paper retorted,

From our experience of these gentry, they don't deserve any more than they get. In most cases they are on a par with the common bum, so far as work goes, intolerant, spiteful, incompetent, and

³⁴Independent, 22 August 1904.

³⁵Independent, 22 August 1904.

³⁶Independent, 13 October 1900.

afflicted with the "green eye." Knocking union men is their long suit.³⁷

When the socialist newspaper the Liberator denounced left-wing speakers who set out on lengthy speaking tours and were paid well for their efforts, the VTLC paper quoted it gleefully:

It is a trifle inconsistent for us to go on before the wage slaves of America with a propaganda that upholds the "iron law of wages," a "class conscious" program, expounded by ex-pulpiteers and other equally horny-handed sons of toil at \$25 or \$15 per diem.

The Liberator went on to call for socialist speakers to take only "an existence wage" for their work, reminding them that

On every coin that goes into the socialist movement there are drops of proletarian blood. The man who seeks to fatten his purse in the socialist movement is a human buzzard, no matter what his intellectual and oratorical accomplishments might be.

Commenting on the article, the Independent sniffed,

Time works wondrous changes. Socialists used to be "Johnny on the Spot" with the reminder that a labor organizer or any other unionist who took pay for his work was a "grafter" and a "fakir." It now appears that labor unionists are not the only "fakirs" in the movement.³⁸

The ideological concerns of the socialists were also viewed with suspicion, and were part of the larger distrust of intellectuals. "A would-be socialist with a little learning is a dangerous individual in the community," the

³⁷Independent, 30 May 1903.

³⁸Independent, 25 July 1903.

Independent warned.³⁹ A parable cautioned those workers who might be taken in by the rhetoric of the left:

A parrot and a dog were left in a room together. The parrot, out for mischief, said to the dog, "Sic him." The dog, seeing nothing else, went for the parrot and tore out about half his tail feathers before he escaped to his perch. The parrot, after reflecting a little, said, "Polly, you talk too damned much." There are many people, young and old, who would do well to remember this story.⁴⁰

Others suggested that "some of our local champions of socialism talk too much. Socialism in their hands is just about as safe as a loaded gun in the hands of a lunatic."⁴¹ Yet another remarked that he could "smell a socialist." "Yes," the editor responded, "You can almost smell brimstone on some of them."⁴² Other contributors argued that "a stomach full of bread is of more practical benefit to a man on strike than a brain full of theories," or that "Socialism accomplished might prevent strikes, but preaching socialism will not settle a strike in progress."⁴³ The net effect of this position was to paint socialists as impractical dreamers cut-off from the reality of working life, and as parasites who fed off of the real toilers.

Intellectualizing and zealotry were equally frightening

³⁹Independent, 23 May 1903.

⁴⁰Independent, 20 June 1903.

⁴¹Independent, 13 June 1903.

⁴²Independent, 30 May 1903.

⁴³Independent, 24 August 1901.

for the labourists, for both threatened their position in the labour movement and the larger society. If correct ideology were the most important quality in a leader, they had little ability to compete with the sharp-tongued socialist upstarts. Nor could they match the zeal of the newcomers, for the labour bureaucrats had aged; they had settled down in the community; they had businesses to run and important ties to the larger society that they wanted to maintain. Still progressive in their outlook, gradualism reflected their own class position and their long, steady work to build the city and their lives.

In a fashion reminiscent of Engels's reflections on the ideology of earlier artisans, the labourists tended to see their campaigns as moral crusades devoid of self-interest. Such charity was rarely extended to the socialists. The Independent printed with approval the sermons of a local social gospeller, who talked of the unity of Christianity and socialism but insisted that "social changes can never be wrought by loud-mouthed and materialized agitators. Their shallow ignorance and tainted characters discredit the cause of reform." These secular radicals "rebel against poverty and work. They crave idleness and ease like their masters Give them money and they become worse men." Instead, the cause would succeed only when led by those who brought "high moral ideas into the agitation for change."⁴⁴

⁴⁴Independent, 7 December 1902.

Yet these labour leaders could steadfastly ignore their own status as business owners, politicians, and labour functionaries. Both sides could point to the inconsistencies of their opponents, but in fact socialists and labourists alike put forward programs and policies that spoke to their own class backgrounds and aspirations. The issue of accurately representing the working class of the city became moot as the factions fought over who should lead the struggle. Neither side was willing to put the rank and file in charge, for both had too much to lose.

CHAPTER NINE

Continuity and Resolution

The rhetorical battles that flared in the pages of the Independent reflected deep ideological and class divisions between the labourists and the socialists. But examining the VTLC through the lens of bureaucracy suggests that the real impact of the socialist movement was much less than many historians have believed. The old patterns of officer selection, political compromise, and limited reformism dominated the council even in this period of socialist agitation. The structures and traditions of the early bureaucrats ensured that continuity, not change, would remain the dominant features of the council. Change certainly occurred, but it was shaped and channelled by the bureaucracy.

If the socialist influence on the council were strong, one would expect to find this reflected in the VTLC itself. Presumably socialists would play important roles on the executive and committees. Resolutions favouring left-wing policies would be another indicator, as would support for socialist politicians. Indeed, without such evidence in the historical record, it is difficult to know what difference a socialist presence would mean, or how it would differ from the labourist domination of the council's first ten years. But closer examination of the council suggests that despite the growth of the socialist party between 1900 and 1904, it

had little effect on the VTLC.

One striking absence from the council is a significant number of socialists in positions of power or influence. Will McClain of the IAM did serve one term as statistician in 1900, but his politics represented a relatively mild version of socialism. By April 1900, he had already led a faction out of the Socialist Labor Party to form the more moderate United Socialist Labor Party.¹ Even so, his less strident political stance proved unpalatable to others in the labour council. When he denounced the Lib-Lab Ralph Smith in October 1900, the Streetcar Railwaymen's union unanimously insisted that the VTLC call for McClain's resignation. If he were not removed, the union warned, it would withdraw its delegates from the council. The VTLC referred the issue back to the IAM, on the grounds that the selection of delegates was a matter for each union to decide for itself. But the IAM did not back McClain either: in November, the union withdrew him as its delegate, and the following month, he was removed from his office as IAM local president.²

Ernest Burns was another socialist who took part in the VTLC in this period. Like McClain, however, his influence was moderate and limited. A member of the council's parliamentary committee in 1902, his presence had no discernible

¹McCormack, 21-2.

²Independent, 20 October, 17 November 1900. The union directory published in the paper lists McClain as IAM president in November, but he is not so listed in December.

socialist impact on the committee's recommendations, which held up the traditional labourist demands of an end to assisted immigration and prison labour, attacked the government's railway policy, and added the local concerns with the city hospital and ownership of the tide flats.³

Burns, an Englishman who had lived in the Pacific Northwest since 1890, was no impossibilist or radical. His socialist vision was coloured by his work with the Knights of Labor and the Populist Party in Washington state, and he urged reformism and gradualism, even while secretary of the Socialist Party of British Columbia.⁴ In a letter to a Seattle paper, Burns announced that

My socialism is of a more elastic quality than that of some ultra-orthodox comrades who have reduced socialism from a philosophy to a creed, and regard the slightest questioning of their tenets and dogmas as heresy of the most outrageous type [We] have to grow into socialism ... clearing away the rubbish of obsolete socialism on the one hand and laying the foundations for the temple of industrial democracy wherever we can find chance to work Constructive practical work is of far more service than revolutionary air fanning or unintelligent repetition of stock phrases of revolutionary jargon.⁵

Later, Burns would move even further to the right, splitting from the SPC to form the moderate Social Democratic Party in 1906. But his commitment to a reformist socialism was still at odds with the VTLC of 1902. As president of the

³Bartley, "Twenty-five."

⁴Schwantes, 109.

⁵Reprinted in Independent, 1 February 1902.

Fishermen's union, Burns sat as a council delegate, and was elected trustee in January 1902. But he failed in his bid for the vice-presidency the following term, and was not even re-elected as trustee. Leaving the union to go into business with his father, Burns no longer played an active role in the council or the labour movement after his single term as trustee.⁶

Few other socialists served on the council in the period of alleged radicalism between 1900 and 1904. James McVety served a term as trustee in 1902 and continued as a delegate until 1905 when he became vice-president, and John Mortimer of the Tailors was active in committee work and at meetings. Neither man, however, carried much weight in the council, and neither was elected to any significant office in this period.

Instead, the council continued to select its officials much as it had in the past. Indeed, the council of 1900-1901 resembled that of the previous ten years. Joseph Dixon served as president for three terms starting in January 1900. His vice-presidents included J.H. Watson, John Morton, and John Crow. None was a socialist. Watson was a careerist Liberal, while Morton and Crow were staunch labourists. Morton, born in Scotland in 1867, was a member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and had arrived in Vancouver around 1892. In 1900, he became secretary of the VTLC's parliamentary committee and secretary of the labourist

⁶Independent, 4 January, 1902; VTLCM, 19 June 1902.

Independent Labor Party created by the council. Running as a labour candidate for municipal office, he was defeated in 1900 and 1902, but in 1903 served the first of six terms as alderman for the predominantly working class Ward Five.⁷

Crow, an American, was a member of the Cigarmakers union, and had arrived in Vancouver before the fire of 1886. Elected trustee of the VTLC in 1900, he then became vice-president and in 1901 succeeded Dixon as president. Like Morton, an aldermanic candidate in 1903, Crow ran on the labour ticket alongside perennial labourist politician Robert Macpherson, and was on the executive committee of the Independent Labour convention in 1900.⁸

Nor did other officers come from the socialist tradition. C.R. Monck, who served in different positions in the 1890s, including three terms as president from July 1892 to 1893, re-surfaced as treasurer in 1900 and announced his candidacy as a Liberal in 1903.⁹ John Pearey, a delegate from the Streetcar Railwaymen -- the same union that had objected to McClain sitting on the council -- took over the job in the latter part of 1900. Pearey, a Scots immigrant, had already done stints as vice-president and president of

⁷Independent, 28 April, 12, 26 May, 28 July, 11 August, 22 December 1900; Bartley, "Twenty-five"; Independent, 11 January 1902.

⁸Independent, 21 July 1900; Bartley, "Twenty-five"; Independent, 19 May 1900, 3 January 1903.

⁹Independent, 26 September 1903.

the council in 1899, and in 1901 became treasurer of the Independent Labor Party as well as the VTLC.¹⁰ Little is known of the first two men who served as secretary in 1900 and 1901. D.C. Harrison was elected secretary in the aftermath of the Deadman's Island dispute in 1899, and was re-elected later that year. Harrison, a member of the Streetcar Railwaymen, was elected again in 1900, but resigned part way into his term, giving "personal reasons" as the explanation. He was replaced by J.C. Marshall, who in turn resigned after 2½ terms. No information on their political ideology has been found, but their repeated election to council posts during the reign of the labourist bureaucrats suggests they were not socialists, and neither was mentioned in the socialist press.

Thus in 1900 and 1901, the labour council resembled that of 1890; even many of the faces were the same. The two men credited with founding the council, Joseph Dixon and George Bartley, were still prominent, as Dixon led the council and Bartley controlled its newspaper. New blood had been brought in, and the Streetcar Railwaymen now challenged the old crafts for positions on the council, but its politics were little different and the union took to labourism as eagerly as the carpenters, printers, and other trades had.

In 1902, however, the VTLC did undergo some significant

¹⁰Independent, 26 January 1901 lists Pearey as financial secretary of the ILP. Sun, 17 March 1925 gives biographical information.

changes. The elections of that year saw the end of the dominance of the old craft unions in the council executive. W.J. Lamrick of the Retail Clerks union succeeded Dixon and Crow as president; F.J. Russell of the Freighthandlers moved from the trustee position he had occupied in 1901 to the vice-presidency; T.H. Cross of the Postal Employees union took over the secretary's job in late 1901 and continued in the position throughout 1902. This influx of workers from outside the traditional craft unions has been seen as part of swing to socialism in B.C.; historians such as Ross McCormack have suggested that "dilution" of the old craft unions opened the way to more radical action, while the relatively unskilled workers who now came to the fore were more inclined to consider radical measures.¹¹

There is, on the face of it, some evidence for this view. In July 1902, the council voted to allow the Canadian Socialist newspaper to report its proceedings, but refused a request to endorse the paper.¹² In the ensuing years, the council upheld the principle of unionism, broke with the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress (DTLC), and purged Watson. It even endorsed the American Labor Union, a radical industrial union that would soon form the nucleus of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World.¹³ As a result

¹¹McCormack, 48.

¹²VTLCM, 17 July 1902.

¹³McCormack, 48.

of this activity, most historians have concluded that the year 1903 represented a surge of radicalism in the council's history. According to Paul Phillips, labour reached a "peak of radical activity" in that year; Ross McCormack suggests that the VTLC was "radicalized" in 1903. John Saywell has commented that "the year 1903 marks the end of an era and the beginning of another in British Columbia [for] socialism reached a peak in that year among the trade unions."¹⁴ Despite these optimistic appraisals, however, further examination of the council's personnel and policies tend to confirm the strength of the bureaucracy to blunt the edge of radicalism and to maintain its established course.

Though McCormack has credited president W.J. Lamrick with moving the VTLC to the left, it is not apparent that he was a socialist or as politically involved as some of the earlier labourists. Born in Ontario in 1856, he moved to Vancouver around 1896 and was first elected to the vice-presidency of the council in 1901.¹⁵ A member of the Retail Clerks local that had formed in 1899, Lamrick was appointed B.C. organizer for the international two years later.¹⁶ In 1902, Lamrick was re-elected president of the VTLC, and was

¹⁴Phillips, No Power Greater, 43; McCormack, 48; John T. Saywell, "Labour and Socialism in British Columbia: A Survey of Historical Development before 1903," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 15, 3 and 4 (July-October 1951), 148.

¹⁵Province, 2 March 1926.

¹⁶Independent, 9 November 1901.

selected by the council to represent it on the city's Tourist Association, hardly a post likely to interest a socialist. In 1903, Lamrick was on the executive of the Vancouver Labor party, an organization of Liberals such as Chris Foley, Francis Williams, and the like that contested the provincial election, running against socialist candidates in the city.¹⁷ In his political outlook, then, Lamrick was no radical; nor did he represent much of a break with the council's labourist tradition. His politics reflected the successful merchant he would soon become rather than those of an unskilled proletarian.¹⁸

Many council executives also tended to represent continuity rather than a break with past, despite their occupations. T.H. Cross served as secretary under Lamrick for three terms, and one term as trustee, and represented the Postal Employees union. Cross emigrated from England in 1879. A veteran of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, he moved to Vancouver in 1896. Little is known of his politics. One key indicator, however, is his vote in January 1903 when he sided with Liberal supporters such as J.H. Watson, C.R. Monck, and Francis Williams in their campaign to have the council endorse the machine candidate Macpherson over independent Liberal Chris Foley. It is likely that Cross's career in the post office was, like Watson's in the customs office, a

¹⁷Independent, 18, 25 July 1903.

¹⁸Province, 2 March 1926.

patronage appointment, and insofar as his political views are known, he supported the mainstream Liberal party in the council.¹⁹

Other council executives fail to fit McCormack's description as well. A.N. Harrington of the Waiters union appears to be a less skilled worker, and by McCormack's interpretation, one more likely to push for socialism. However, closer investigation suggests otherwise. Harrington served as council treasurer for three terms, from January 1903 to July 1904, always as a delegate of the Waiters. But the city directories from 1901 to 1904 list him as being part of the Harrington Brothers Union Dye Works.²⁰ When secretary Eugene Harpur of the Barbers union resigned part-way through his term in 1903, his place was taken by C.T. Hilton of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters. Hilton was re-elected in 1904, but had to withdraw, as he took up a government position. Hilton was another Liberal supporter: in 1906, he became financial secretary for the Liberal party, and was able to put down the tools of his trade for the rest of his life when he was rewarded with a position in the customs office in 1909.²¹

¹⁹VTLCM, 19 January 1903.

²⁰There is little doubt that it is the same A.N. Harrington. The obituary in the Province, 18 March 1918 lists him as a "longstanding member of the VTLC," while his full name -- Adoniran Nehemiah -- is listed in the directory.

²¹Province, 8 January 1946; city directories give his jobs with the Liberal party and the customs office.

Liberals and labourists continued to fill positions on the council in 1903. George Bartley sat on the label committee; A.E. Soper of the Team Drivers was Sergeant at Arms and member of the municipal committee, as well as secretary of the Vancouver Labor Party; John Crow served on the municipal committee; William George of the Civic Employees Union, who sat as a trustee in 1903 and then as vice-president in 1904, had been active in the VLP in 1900. F.J. Russell was a member of a "new" union, the Freighthandlers, that would become part of the militant UBRE in 1903. Elected a trustee of the council in 1901, he followed the typical pattern of promotion, becoming vice-president in 1902 and finally secretary in 1903. Though little is known of his political views, they did not deter newly elected Tory premier Richard McBride from appointing Russell to a government position to enforce the province's immigration act in the summer of 1903. The Independent lauded the appointment, and Russell left the council without seeking re-election.²² And the vice-president of the VTLC throughout 1903, George Dobbin, was the former president of the Carpenters local.

Only two men who can be positively identified with the socialist movement appear in the so-called radical council of 1903. John Mortimer, a Scottish tailor and former president of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council, joined the Socialist Party in 1903 and was a member of the VTLC's parliamen-

²²Independent, 20 June 1903.

tary committee that same year. Ben Bates was another. A clerk in the city engineer's office, Bates was the chairman of the B.C. Socialist Party in 1902, and in 1903 sat on the auditing committee of the VTLC.²³

If generalizations about the radicalism of the new organizations affiliated to the VTLC are misleading, so are generalizations about their ability to "dilute" the craft unionism and reformism of the council. Though McCormack includes building labourers and longshoremen in this group of "new" unions, both of these had long been members of the labour council. R. Cosgrove had served as a delegate from the building labourers and later its international union of hodcarriers since 1891, and held the council position of doorkeeper in 1891 and 1893, while Liberal and independent labourist Chris Foley was one of the union's delegates in 1903. Similarly the longshoremen had organized as early as 1888. The Stevedores union that evolved out of the Knights of Labor sent Colin McDonald to represent it and to serve as VTLC treasurer and vice-president from 1893 to 1897. Even if these delegates are counted and assumed to be radical, socialist, or left-wing, they formed only a minority of the council. At a roll call vote in January 1903 to select the

²³Independent, 26 May 1900, 25 July 1903, and Province, 23 November 1900 list members and officers of the Vancouver Labor Party and the Independent Labor Party. Details on John Mortimer are in the Independent, 12 April 1902 and B.C. Trades Unionist, January 1909. Bates's chairing of the BCSP is in the Western Socialist, 29 November 1902.

council's candidate in an upcoming provincial election, the craft unions could put forward 53 delegates, the new unions only 22. In a Labour Day edition of the same year, the Independent recorded that 68 delegates came from old unions, 28 from new. When unions such as the Building Labourers with their 5 delegates are counted as "old" unions, and known labourists in others are subtracted, the ability of the new unions to shape the council is very limited indeed.²⁴ Whatever radicalism may have swept the province and the city in 1903, it was clearly not reflected in the personnel of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council.

Nor do the policies and politics of the council suggest that it was greatly influenced by the upsurge in socialism. In 1903, the council's principal political activity was the provincial by-election in the fall. Choosing the candidate to be endorsed by the council was a rancorous battle, second only to the Deadman's Island dispute of 1899 in its ability to divide the council. Once again, J.H. Watson was at the centre of the storm. But the conflict was not between socialists and labourists. On the contrary, it was a battle between Liberals such as Watson who plumped for the mainstream, Lib-Lab machine candidate Robert MacPherson and those labourists who insisted that labour needed an independent Liberal candidate, Chris Foley. At regular and special meetings called to discuss the endorsement, the council split

²⁴VTLCM, 19 January 1903; Independent, 5 September 1903.

into factions. Watson, aware that the mood of the council was against him, first sought to prevent the council from endorsing anyone. A motion that the council not endorse any candidate was made, and a roll call vote insisted upon, probably the first in the council's history.²⁵ The voting pattern is illustrative. The "nay" vote, that is, the vote to endorse a candidate, defeated the "aye" vote by a margin of 2 to 1: 44 votes to 22. The following vote to endorse Foley was passed by a vote of 41 to 20. The only known socialist present, John Mortimer, cast his vote with Watson's faction, probably in the belief that if the council were not going to support the socialist party it should not put its resources behind either labourist candidate. From Mortimer's vote and the two tallies, it is apparent that most voters preferred to field a candidate and that they wanted Foley to be that candidate.

Those unions that voted to endorse a candidate and presumably voted for Foley, included most of the new unions. The Retail Clerks, led by council president Lamrick, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, with council secretary F.J. Russell and financial secretary J.T. Lilley in their ranks, and the Building Laborers, all voted alongside labourist stalwarts from the Carpenters, Iron Moulders,

²⁵I have been unable to find a previous roll call vote, but minutes for 1898-1901 are missing and though newspaper accounts make no mention of a roll call vote, this is not conclusive.

Barbers, Cigarmakers, Amalgamated Carpenters, Streetcar Railwaymen and the like to put forward Foley as a candidate. Of the "new" unions only the Postal Employees sided with Watson and Mortimer. Since an "aye" vote could be interpreted as either a vote for the mainstream Liberals or for the socialist position, it may be that some of those votes were indeed votes for the left. But the Boilermakers, led by Watson and the Stonecutters, led by C.R. Monck, were undoubtedly votes for the Liberal party. Even the most generous interpretation of this episode illustrates clearly that the socialist influence on the VTLC was limited and weak. Politics continued in the labourist vein; the important issue in 1903 was not whether labourism should be replaced with socialism but how best to carry the labourist message to the legislature.

Even the purge of Watson, considered by McCormack as a sign of socialist strength, reflected the disillusionment with the old Liberal party and Lib-Labism rather than any new radicalism. After the vote to endorse Foley, Watson refused to abide by the council's decision. At public meetings and in the press, Watson declared that the endorsement had been "railroaded through," for of the 46 unions in the city, 18 had voted for Foley, 9 against; 4 had abstained, and 15 were not represented at the meeting. Instead, Watson argued, a poll of all the members of all the unions in the city should

have been taken.²⁶ Watson's connections with the Liberal party and his patronage job in the customs office, were well-known and were seen as the real reason for his new-found concern for democracy. At one meeting, as Watson headed to the platform to speak, someone shouted out, "Look out for your job, Joe!" Watson responded, "That's all right, if I get bounced I can easily get another job."²⁷ Rejecting pleas in the Independent for harmony and unity in the upcoming election, Watson continued to fight hard for MacPherson and the mainstream Liberals led by Ralph Smith. Claiming that Foley was a "liberal-tory-labor" candidate, Watson accused the independent labourists of selling out to the local Conservative party for support and induced his union, the Boilermakers, to withdraw from the VTLC.²⁸

Now he had gone too far. Delegates introduced a motion in the council to change the section of the constitution that outlined the qualifications for membership. The proposed amendment insisted that "All delegates must be wage earners, and either actively employed at the trade or calling they are representing or acting as paid agents putting in their full

²⁶Province, 26 January 1903. Watson's count of the unions appears to include those that were not affiliated with the VTLC at the time.

²⁷World, 26 January 1903.

²⁸Independent, 7 February 1903 called for unity; Watson's angry reply is in Independent, 14 February 1903. VTLCM, 5 February 1903 notes the withdrawal of the Boilermakers from the council.

time in the service of the respective unions." This measure, which incidentally provided for the professionalization of delegates, was aimed squarely at Watson who had long ceased to be an active tradesman but continued to represent the Boilermakers in the council.²⁹ Still Watson pressed his attack. Federal Union Number 23, organized by Watson and chartered directly to the DTLC, refused to send delegates to the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, and condemned it for forcing Watson out and for "allowing politics in the council." A letter to the Independent, signed "Fakir" and probably written by Watson or one of his supporters, objected to the new qualifications for delegates, asking

What is a labor representative? Many middle-class and professional men are more sincere than many of those who have felt the pinch of hunger. Are we to exclude middle-class and professional men from labor representation? Personally, I think it would be a narrow-minded and ill-advised policy.³⁰

He was answered indirectly by the VTLC. The Iron Moulders union supported the purge of Watson, and suggested that "in the future no Government Official be allowed to hold office." On 19 March, the council adopted the amendment tightening up delegates' qualifications, and adopted a report by the parliamentary committee that outlined the charges against Watson. He was, the report maintained, a government official, not a worker. Contrary to the DTLC decision taken

²⁹VTLCM, 5 February 1903.

³⁰VTLCM, 19 February 1903; Independent, 21 February 1903.

at the Montreal Congress in 1899, he was a representative of one of the "old parties"; he was a "disrupter" who granted DTLC charters to workers who came under the jurisdiction of the AFL's international unions; he made "invidious comparisons between Canadian and American labor bodies" and induced the Boilermakers to bolt the VTLC. Finally, he was attacked for his active and partisan participation in the by-election.³¹

The charges suggest that Watson was forced out of the council for reasons that any labourist or member of an international union could support. Willfully creating disunity, fostering dual unionism, and refusing to comply with democratic decisions made Watson undesirable to all but his most ardent supporters. Further allegations that he had supplied the CPR with scabs carrying Federal Union cards during the UBRE's fight with the railway added fuel to the fire, but again, no socialist content in the charges can be found.³² Watson was quick to blame socialists, especially

³¹VTLCM, 19 March 1903; Independent, 21 March 1903. The parliamentary committee was composed of representatives from several unions, and included craft unionists such as G.F. Pound of the Printing Pressmen, E. Harpur of the Cigarmakers, and Francis Williams, the Tailors delegate who had run with Joseph Dixon as an independent labour candidate in 1900. It does not appear to be a particularly radical committee, though John Mortimer did serve on it.

³²VTLCM, 16 April 1903 contains the letter from the UBRE secretary alleging that Watson brought scabs to Revelstoke. Watson denied the charges in the Independent, 25 April 1903, and then launched into an attack on the UBRE. I have not been able to find conclusive proof for the allegations, though they seem plausible enough. But Watson would have

Mortimore, for his defeat in the council, claiming that the American Labor Union, which was supported by Mortimer, was the real disrupter in the union movement. Watson charged the socialists with placing their political creed before the interests of their union, an ironic and hypocritical complaint given his own political scheming. Finally, Watson attacked the socialists for their atheism, and called for "Christian principle" in the labour movement. But his red-baiting clouds the very real issues that led to his ouster, issues that cannot be categorized or dismissed as a sign of socialist strength.³³

The endorsement of the ALU by some local unions does suggest some radical influence in the labour council. Socialists such as Mortimer and Ben Bates actively proselytized for the union, and in March 1903 the Wholesale Clerks sought a charter from the ALU. But the Clerks maintained that they sought admission to the industrial union largely because no AFL union would take them in. Watson's suggestion that they affiliate directly to the DTLC was unlikely to be taken up, given the feuding that had just taken place over just that issue.³⁴

In his defence of the ALU, Mortimer made it clear that socialists, even more than old-line unionists such as Watson,
been purged in any case for his other actions.

³³Independent, 18 April 1903; 6 June 1903.

³⁴Independent, 21 March 1903; 4 April 1903.

supported centralization and professionalism. Mortimer denounced the DTLC, for it could not enforce its mandates on subordinate unions, had no strike fund, and had no permanent executive. The ALU, on the other hand, could order its members out on a general strike. It had a significant strike fund, permanent headquarters, and a salaried executive "devoting their whole time to the work of supervision and organization." In short, Mortimer advocated the ALU because it functioned like a hierarchical business union, rather than as a loose federation that secured local autonomy.³⁵ In this instance at least, the socialists on the council were even less interested in rank and file control than the labourists.

If the labour council was relatively immune to the imprecations of the socialist movement, why then did the Independent spend so much time attacking the left? Clearly the labourists feared the growing support for socialism that was manifested not in the labour council but in the political arena. The socialist party was becoming increasingly powerful and was improving its electoral success. In 1902, the labourists had met with socialists to create a new party, the Provincial Progressive Party. Though the labourists, led by VTLC delegates such as Bartley and Watson, controlled the new party and fended off the socialists, the PPP stalled soon after. Instead, the socialist party proved that it was able to win votes and mobilize workers in the battle for the

³⁵Independent, 11 April 1903.

ballot.³⁶

The defeat of Foley and the impotence of the PPP showed that the labourists were unable to accomplish much on the federal or provincial levels. The socialist party moved in to fill the vacuum, and labour bureaucrats feared that its political success would enable it to out-flank the labour council and become the de facto leader of the working class. In the provincial elections of 1903, the socialists gave proof that they could indeed threaten the dominance of the labourists. The Socialist Party of British Columbia (SPBC) elected three members to the legislature, and its ten candidates polled 9 per cent of the vote. In Vancouver, the three labourist candidates lost, but even worse for the bureaucrats, two were out-pollled by John Mortimer of the SPBC. A.E. Soper of the Labor party concluded that the working class had divided its vote between the Conservatives and the Socialists; the labourists simply dropped through the middle.³⁷

In the Independent, labourists announced their frustration and fear that workers would be gulled by the left. Deploing the disruption that helped defeat Foley and exposed the weakness of the labourists, one writer hoped that

the alleged "mossbacks" in our various unions will
get together again and talk over affairs and see

³⁶McCormack, 28-30; Robin, Radical Politics, 57-60; Phillips, No Power Greater, 38-42.

³⁷McCormack, 32; Independent, 3 October 1903.

what is the best thing to do in Vancouver under the circumstances.

We say for the workingman: beware of demagoguery, to which we have been so subjected during the past year

The writer went on to warn unionists against "adventurers" who used

the inexperienced as stepping stones to vault would-be leaders into place. We say, cast off these interlopers and with the faith that is in honest men in the ultimate triumph of the cause, let them join together to elevate and purify public life.

Since the increased intervention of the state was inevitable, the author reasoned,

The world will give ear even to socialism if properly presented. But demagogues and zealots can't accomplish anything. They only antagonize and disrupt [T]he great work must now be started by rational men of long years of experience in the labor movement of this province.

We say again that we hope that some of the old guard will come to the rescue and see what can be done by the workingmen towards going into politics in the coming campaign.

Another writer in the same issue put it more succinctly: "What between oppressive employers and luny[sic] socialists, the unions here are between the devil and the deep sea."³⁸

The cry for experienced leaders reflected one concern of the labour bureaucrats: age. Labourists tended to be significantly older than socialists. Though figures are difficult to come by and samples are incomplete, a definite pattern does emerge. In 1903, the average age of the labourists was 43; of the socialists, 36. Averages, of

³⁸Independent, 30 May 1903.

course, are misleading, and direct comparisons may be more useful. George Bartley and Harry Cowan of the Independent were 36 and 34, respectively. Their counterparts on the socialist newspaper, Parm Pettipiece and George Wrigley, were both 28. When J.H. Watson came under attack by John Mortimer in the VTLC, he was 48; his foe was 32. When Mortimer ran against Francis Williams in the provincial election, the labourist gave away more than a worn-out ideology: he was 15 years older than the socialist. Joseph Dixon, at 43, was the average age of the labourists, and was 13 years older than Frank Rogers, the socialist organizer who was murdered by gun thugs during the UBRE strike against the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1903.³⁹ Some socialists were older; Allan Boag was born in 1858. George Dale, another editor of the socialist paper, was born in 1847, and perhaps as a result, was considered by Bartley to be, unlike most socialists, "a square man."⁴⁰

Age is not of course a key determinant of ideology, but

³⁹The figures were collected from obituaries and newspaper stories in the daily and labour press and records at the Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver. The twelve labourists and their dates of birth are John Pearey, 1839; T.H. Cross, 1847; J.H. Watson, 1855; W.J. Lamrick and Francis Williams, both 1856; Joseph Dixon, 1860; C.T. Hilton, 1863; George Bartley and John Morton, both 1867; Harry Cowan, 1869; A.N. Harrington and J.H. Browne, ITU member and VTLC statistician in 1902, both 1870. The socialists were George Dales, 1847; Allan Boag, 1858; John Mortimer, 1871; Frank Rogers, 1873; Parm Pettipiece and George Wrigley, both 1875; A.R. Stebbing, SPBC candidate with Mortimer in 1903, 1869; John Cameron, SPBC organizer, 1866.

⁴⁰Independent, 4 July 1903.

it may help explain why labourists were unwilling to put much trust in the socialists. Older, more accustomed to compromise, with stronger connections in the community, it is not surprising that they would disagree with the more militant rhetoric and means of the socialists. Such at least was the opinion expressed in the Independent, through an article reprinted from the liberal British journal Nineteenth Century:

Arrived at middle age, it is very possible that most of us will have been called to renounce a good deal. We started, probably, with the conviction that our heads would strike the stars and we have become strangely reconciled to the fact that they do not reach the ceiling. But it was no doubt better to start with the loftier idea; a man should allow a good margin for shrinkage in his visions of the future. And it is curious, it is pathetic, to see with what ease we may accomplish the gradual descent to the lower level, on which we find ourselves at last going along, if in somewhat less heroic fashion than we anticipated, yet on the whole comfortably and happily. We have accepted a good deal, we have learned how to carry our burden in the way that is easiest. We are no longer storm-tossed; we know pretty much, arrived at this stage, what we are going to do, those of us who considered they were going to do anything. The fact of taking life on a lower level of expectations makes it all the more likely that those expectations will be fulfilled. We have, with some easing of conscience, accepted certain characteristics and manifestations on our own part as inevitable, secretly and involuntarily cherishing a hope that where these do not fit in with those of our surroundings, it may yet be possible that other people should alter theirs.⁴¹

The labourists were also more established in the city, and this may have been, in part, a function of age. Many had

⁴¹Independent, 14 April 1900.

arrived ten years or more before the socialists. Dixon, Bartley, Watson, Williams, Browne, and others had all been in Vancouver for some years by 1903. In contrast, Pettipiece, Wrigley, and Mortimer arrived in 1902; George Dales, in 1903. Fred Ogle, who ran for the SPBC in 1903, had arrived so recently that he had to withdraw from the election as he did not meet the residency requirement.⁴² Thus socialism was indicative not only of class differences. It was also the weapon of a younger generation, used to try to lever out older, more established unionists.

Labourists feared the overt grasping of political power that socialists called for, seeing in the demand a similarity between others who promised to legislate on behalf of the working class. "The socialist party is a political party formed for the sole object of capturing the reins of government power," the Independent warned. "Just the same as the conservatives or liberals."⁴³

And indeed, the socialist movement did threaten the position of these labour bureaucrats. Their appeal to reason, moderation, and gradualism reflected their own success in the city, their acceptance into the larger society. In their eyes, they had, by dint of hard work, helped to make both the city and their own lives into

⁴²For Mortimer, see Independent, 12 April 1902; for Dales, Western Socialist, 21 February 1903; for Ogle's aborted election attempt, see Western Clarion, 17 June 1903.

⁴³Independent, 23 May 1903.

something of which they could be proud. The socialists, in contrast, appeared as interlopers and upstarts, as young men with no ties to the community who could put ideological purity ahead of the lives and families of working people. Whether this is accurate is, of course, beside the point; but it does help explain the near-hysteria shown by many of the labourists.

The study of the labour bureaucracy and the people who made it up suggests that the fight between labourists and socialists was more than a debate over ideology. The two groups were separated by age, occupation, their different ties to the community, even by their aspirations. The chief separation, however, was an intra-class and cultural one. For both sides fitted better into the *petit bourgeoisie* than the working class; yet they represented antagonistic subsets of the class. The labour bureaucrats of the VTLC had left the working class to become small businessmen, but they were usually still rooted in their craft; their businesses were the next logical progression of the journeyman to master. Many of the socialists, however, were, like Pettipiece, Wrigley, and Kingsley, intellectuals who started newspapers primarily to propagate ideas. Others, such as Ernest Burns and John Cameron, were small merchants. Neither group had an integral connection to the working class or its traditions; their vision of socialism was at odds with the vision of the labour leaders who had emerged through strug-

gles and compromise with the employer on the job site and who had, by 1903, put such struggles safely behind them. Their relatively new status in the middle class helped quell the fire of revolution, and made them view the militants of the socialist party as a threat to all they had accomplished and stood for. Not surprisingly, the entrenched bureaucrats in the VTLC managed to ride out the storms of 1903 and managed to keep the labour council firmly on the path of labourism and progressivism. Continuity, not change, marked the VTLC in 1903, despite the upsurge in militancy and radicalism throughout the province.

In 1904, the same patterns of bureaucracy continued. With the collapse of the Retail Clerks union, W.J. Lamrick left the council to take up work in the co-operative store it had established some years before.⁴⁴ George Dobbin moved up to become president, reasserting the dominance of the craft unions. C.T. Hilton, another carpenter though a member of the Amalgamated Society, was made secretary.

But some things had changed. The failure of the labourist political campaigns in 1903 led most of the old guard to resign from politics. The Independent reluctantly admitted in its editorial column that it might well be time to give the socialists a "free hand to see what they can do" in the next election. The independent labourists had spent

⁴⁴VTLCM, 6 April 1905; for the collapse of the union see Independent, 21 June 1904.

"too much time and money" with little to "show for their services except abuse, to want to thwart any new movement gotten up in the interests of labor." On the critical issue of whether the VTLC paper would endorse socialists, Bartley wrote, "That would depend entirely on who the candidates are."⁴⁵ Some, such as Francis Williams, would stay with the VTLC, using his base there to pursue a political career on the city council. Others, such as Dixon, would devote their time to their businesses.

The socialists learned from their experience as well. Though the Socialist Party of Canada, the successor to the SPBC, still had an impossibilist, anti-union thread woven through its ideology, many of its members took a more moderate view. Pettipiece began to forge links with the labour movement, partly because his failure as a publisher forced him to learn the printing trade. Where previously he had called for the socialists to keep their party "iron-clad, aye 'narrow'," he now held up trade unions as essential organizations worthy of support.⁴⁶ James McVety returned to the VTLC's executive in 1905, and quickly became adept at the rules of bureaucracy. Together, the two men would slowly bring the council to the left, though not to the revolutionary socialism of men such as Kingsley. For one lesson of

⁴⁵Independent, 20 June 1903.

⁴⁶Western Clarion, 15 October 1903. See McCormack, 56-7, for his subsequent stand.

1903 may have been that while the bureaucracy would fight rapid changes, it could nonetheless be nudged to new positions. Bartley had hinted as much to his successors in 1903, when the Independent suggested that

There are large numbers of working men who are in accord with the socialistic theory, but who advocate caution and an evolutionary movement, and it is towards these that the blatant-mouthed socialist is most intolerant. Because these men do not get out and turn the whole scheme of civilization topsy-turvy the panting revolutionary socialists are always ready to jump on their necks with hobnailed shoes and hoot them to a finish. If the basic principle of socialism is brotherly love the intolerance of socialism will defer the advent of the new time.⁴⁷

Socialists such as McVety and Pettipiece took the counsel of patience. Pettipiece joined the VTLC's parliamentary committee, alongside old-timers such as C. Boardman and Bartley.⁴⁸ From there he began a steady climb through the bureaucracy. The council took a more active role in socialist causes, reflecting the impact of the SPC. In 1907, for example the VTLC voted 18-11 to send money to the defence fund of Moyer, Pettibone, and Haywood, the Western Federation of Miners' officers who were on trial for murder in Colorado. The sum sent -- \$20 -- was a token gesture, but one that previous councils had been loathe to make in similar causes. The old patterns still showed through, however, in the close vote and in the subsequent failure to make the motion

⁴⁷Independent, 27 June 1903.

⁴⁸VTLCM, 18 August 1904.

unanimous. Nor did the council reverse its earlier decision to join with the IWW, the SPC, and the SLP in a committee to protest the prosecution of the three men.⁴⁹

Other steps were taken to make the council more overtly political. In 1905, a motion was made to change the constitution to allow political discussions to take place during the meetings. An amendment to limit such discussions to 20 minutes was made, and another sought to limit them "only to Labor matters." All three failed, however, and the matter was laid to rest for nearly three years, when Pettipiece moved again to devote one hour of the last meeting of each month to be devoted to "general matters pertaining to labour." This time the motion passed.⁵⁰

The socialist influence was also felt in the realm of culture, albeit negatively. In 1908, the annual discussion about Labour Day was taken up. The old craft unions, especially the Carpenters, Bricklayers, Lathers, and Cigar-makers, all voted to hold a parade. The socialists, however, insisted that "election day [w]as the proper day to demonstrate the workers' strength," and led by Pettipiece, moved that the council take no action on a parade. With the motion supported by the IAM and the Building Laborers, the VTLC agreed to hold a picnic instead.⁵¹ The following year the

⁴⁹VTLCM, 7 February 1907; 5 April 1906.

⁵⁰VTLCM, 3 August 1905, 19 March 1908.

⁵¹VTLCM, 16 April, 7 May, 18 June 1908.

left took an even stronger stand against the traditional procession, denouncing it as a "hollow sham so long considered a display of strength." In contrast to the old generation typified by Dixon and others,

The younger generation of trade unionists ... recognize the futility of parades ... and prefer to celebrate more quietly by holding picnics and the usual accompanying amusements, concluding the day's sport by listening to speakers, picked because of their ability to deliver the true message to the working class.

Again the socialists insisted that it was better to display "the forces of labor on election day."⁵² The old craft union consciousness, exemplified for a time in the procession of the trades, even with its tendency towards accommodation with the larger society, had at least the benefit of stressing the contribution of the worker as a worker. But this core of labourism was diminished by the socialists; in its place was now the pale culture of electoral politics.

If the socialists broke with the craft traditions of the earlier council, they did not break with a more unseemly tradition, that of racism. The pre-eminence of the socialists in the labour council from 1907 onwards did little to change the attitude of organized labour or the actions of the council. In March 1907, the council endorsed the petition of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers that called for a \$500 head tax to keep out would-be Chinese immigrants. The petition repeated the council's oft-stated

⁵²Western Wage Earner, September 1909.

belief that "The Chinaman brings nothing to a white man's country that benefits it ... [and] is a menace to the morals, the health, and the prosperity of that community."⁵³ Later that year, the council, on the motion of socialist Parmeter Pettipiece, voted to allow the Asiatic Exclusion League to meet in the union hall. The League also attracted council officers: vice-president A.W. Von Rhein of the Bartenders' union, trustee J. Commerford of the Building Laborers, and Samuel Gothard, former council secretary and publisher of the VTLC paper the B.C. Trades Unionist, were all active in it. Von Rhein served as president for the League, and Gothard was one of its most virulent members.⁵⁴

Socialists on the council were caught up in the anti-Asian fervour. Addressing the delegates, Pettipiece opined that "the Japs were armed to the teeth" in Vancouver, and that "the time had come when the white population [must] look to protect themselves." Nearly all the delegates present agreed that whites should "look into this important question."⁵⁵ Though Pettipiece would sometimes echo the socialist analysis that "the importation of these Asiatics is but an incident to capitalist production," on other occasions his

⁵³VTLCM, 21 March 1907.

⁵⁴VTLCM, 1, 15 August 1907. For the activities of Gothard and Von Rhein in the League, see Patricia E. Roy, A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989, Chapter 8, passim.

⁵⁵VTLCM, 2 January 1908.

writings would resemble those of any labourist. For example, in March 1908 Pettipiece wrote

In the fast-growing Oriental section of the city every conceivable sort of the rankest kind of "sweat shops" exist; or perhaps thrive would be the better term. And as a sort of refuge for the social garbage as a result of such economic conditions, the Chinese have provided the town with plenty of opium joints, where over 100 white women, social outcasts who have fallen to the last depths of degradation, are the imprisoned victims of these monstrous dens of iniquity.⁵⁶

The editorial page of the council paper, which was overseen by a committee of Pettipiece, Von Rhein, and W.W. Sayer of the Bricklayers, kept up the old line, announcing that "there are no classes of people in the world that are more revoltingly dirty than an Oriental." Deploing the number of Chinese employed in the restaurant business in the city, the paper complained of the inconsistency of those whose "stomachs will revolt at the conditions in Chinatown" yet would still "patiently swallow the food prepared by the very class that in their native lairs horrifies us."⁵⁷ When the VTLC voted to oppose the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway with Chinese labour, the entire council, including socialist James McVety, supported the motion. Clearly socialism was no vaccine against racism.⁵⁸

Though the SPC had a better appreciation of the "women's

⁵⁶B.C. Trades Unionist, February 1908, March 1908.

⁵⁷B.C. Trades Unionist, March 1908.

⁵⁸Western Wage Earner, October 1909.

question" than many of the labourists, such concern was not well-reflected in the labour council. Though Bertha Burns, the wife of Ernest Burns, wrote a regular column for the Western Clarion under the name of Dorothy Drew, women in general remained unorganized and under-represented on the VTLC.⁵⁹ In 1905, Mrs. Smith of the Laundry Workers' Union was seated as a delegate, and in 1907 three other women represented their unions on the council: Mrs. Powell of the Laundry Workers, and Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Walker from the United Garment Workers. Little is known of these delegates; they made no motions, served on no committees, and do not appear in the minutes apart from the notice of their initiations. Nor was their attendance exemplary: in 1909, the Garment Workers' delegates attended 9 of 48 meetings. Without evidence, it is difficult to know, but it is not unlikely that the women did not take an active role because they were continually out-voted and intimidated by men. Such was indeed the pattern in unions that organized women, such as the Waitresses and the Ladies' Auxiliary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which functioned

⁵⁹For more on the activity of Bertha Burns, see Linda Kealey, "Women in the Canadian Socialist Movement, 1904-1914," in Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds., 172, 176, 186. Dorothy G. Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada, Vancouver: Boag Foundation, 1977, 28.

as a local of the IBEW and organized telephone operators.⁶⁰ Clearly the socialist council did little to correct the problem in this period.

If the left council represented the old racism and sexism still; the election of a significant socialist clique to the key positions of the VTLC from 1906 to 1909 did little to alleviate the distinction between leaders and led. Compulsory arbitration, for example, was not a tool of the labourists alone. Socialists in the council, such as James McVety, were equally quick to call for compulsory arbitration and to ignore the rank and file when quick settlements were deemed necessary. When McVety's fellow Machinists and other trades struck the CPR in 1908 to resist wage cuts and to create a federation of railway trades for centralized bargaining, McVety was part of the delegation that hammered out an agreement in private sessions with the company. When rank and file unionists complained about the secret negotiations, McVety responded with words that might easily have come from labourists such as Joe Dixon or J.H. Watson. McVety defended the behind-the-doors settlement forcefully, arguing that despite outward appearances, the strikers were weakening, their financial resources stretched thin and

⁶⁰VTLCM, 21 December 1905; 20 June 1907; 14 December 1907. The figures on attendance are from the Western Wage Earner, February and August, 1909. For sexism and intimidation in other unions, see Marie Campbell, "Sexism in B.C. Trade Unions," 168-71 especially for the women in the IBEW, see Elaine Bernard, The Long Distance Feeling, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983.

solidarity beginning to unravel. The committee had to act quickly and without consulting with the rank and file, he insisted, to salvage whatever it could. Therefore, he wrote

every offer of mediation was accepted gratefully, and when the last offer was presented we considered it very carefully from every standpoint Many times the question has been asked, "Why did you not submit the proposition to the membership? [The committee] decided it would be better to accept the terms offered and get the men back to their work [I]t would have been a cowardly action to risk the employment of the men merely to save our own reputations, and bitter as the denunciations have been, I personally would act in the same way again if the circumstances were the same, in the belief that a good general should know when he is defeated and prepare to save as many of the rank and file as possible.⁶¹

McVety then came out in favour of compulsory arbitration, maintaining that the Lemieux Act, or the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, that provided for compulsory investigation by the government but not compulsory arbitration, did not go nearly far enough. McVety argued that it was necessary to extend it to cover all industries, to make the government's awards and rulings compulsory, to extend the board members' tenure, and to allow adequate remuneration for witnesses. This would allow the act to become "legislation of real importance," he wrote.⁶² Clearly the pressures of negotiations and the responsibility of keeping unionists on the job affected bureaucrats of every stripe. And when up against a corporate juggernaut like the CPR, calling on the state for

⁶¹B.C. Trades Unionist, December 1908.

⁶²B.C. Trades Unionist, January 1909.

help was a reasonable, if overly-optimistic, tactic. Nonetheless, excluding the rank and file from the negotiating process drove a wedge between the leaders and the led, and socialists no less than labourists were inclined to act independently when a settlement was in sight.

Nor was socialism any guarantee of enthusiasm for meetings and council activities. In August 1907 the council adopted a motion to enforce attendance. Officers or standing committee members who missed three meetings "without good and sufficient reasons," which were "sickness or absence from town," would have their position declared vacant.⁶³ Six months later, however, the statistician complained that even with the passage of the strict attendance policy, less than 50 per cent of the delegates attended meetings and that he had been forced to send out 28 notices of delinquency. Subsequent reports had similar dismal statistics to report. The statistician concluded in July 1908 that "delegates were not taking the interest in the Trades and Labor council that they should," and he set about compiling an accurate tabulation of attendance. In the meantime, the council newspaper suggested that strengthening the VTLC by giving it the right to assess its affiliated members might help the attendance problem, for it would compel "the rank and file to interest themselves in the central lodge's work -- probably because

⁶³VTLCM, 15 August 1907.

they have to pay for it."⁶⁴ When the report was published in February 1909, it revealed that no union had managed to have all its delegates present at every meeting; some unions had barely been represented at all. The figures were based on the past twelve meetings; each unions' possible attendance was calculated by multiplying the number of its delegates by the number of meetings held. Thus, the bricklayers had five delegates, making a total of sixty possible attendances. They managed only thirty. Still, their record was better than that of the bartenders, who attended only eleven out of sixty. The Cooks managed twenty-two of sixty, the printing pressmen two of twelve. Others did better: carpenters scored forty-four out of sixty, streetrailwaymen forty out of sixty. Still, by August 1909, the council still could not, on average, get even half its delegates to attend a meeting.⁶⁵

The reasons for the apathy of delegates were not much considered, though the statistician's reports suggest that the summer months were a particularly bad time for attendance. But one reason may have been the constant flow of criticism levelled by the activists at those who were critical of the leadership. The editorial page of the B.C. Trades Unionist blazed away at the rank and file who protes-

⁶⁴B.C. Trades Unionist, December 1908.

⁶⁵B.C. Trades Unionist, February 1908; VTLCM, 2 July 1908; Western Wage Earner, February 1909, August 1909.

ted against paying officials for their union work, arguing that "There can be no objection to paying men for their services, providing they deliver the services. In fact, this is the least the rank and file can do, since they are unwilling or unfitted to do the job for themselves."⁶⁶ An article reprinted from the Miners Magazine gave sarcastic tips on how to destroy the union movement, and took aim at those who were critical of the leadership. Those who wanted to hurt organized labour, it suggested, should

Always hint or insinuate that those who do the work for the union are seeking an office or some glory. Be sure never to say anything good of labor agitators who work for the union when you are at the theatre, the saloon, or in bed.⁶⁷

Other articles in the labour press continued in a similar vein, defended professional and volunteer union bureaucrats against the sniping of the rank and file. One article, reprinted from the Machinists's Journal -- the journal of the council president James McVety's union -- was a glowing tribute to salaried union officials:

What a much-abused person he is, the hardest worked and the poorest paid of men. The employer hates him and the fool workingman does not love him! He must know the trade of his craft and also be a philosopher. He must be a businessman and also a student of history and economics. He must be honest and yet be a diplomat.

He must be a fighter and yet be a strategist. He must be an organizer and an orator

To be a business agent one must be ready to make all sacrifices, to undergo all hardships and

⁶⁶B.C. Trades Unionist, June 1908.

⁶⁷B.C. Trades Unionist, June 1908.

undertake the cause of humanity, to lead men to a better way of living. He is the last to vote for a strike, the first to enter its fight. The first to give up his best energies to its success, the last to surrender. If the strike is won he gets no credit. If the strike is lost he is deposed, and yet some men are born to be business agents.

Every man that ever raised his voice against the oppression of his class was a business agent. Moses was a business agent and so was Jesus.⁶⁸

Though the militancy of the union leader was heralded in the article, another essay in the labour press painted a different picture of the role of the union leader, especially the business agent. Unpaid negotiating committees were unsatisfactory, it argued, for three reasons. First, fear of the employer meant the committee could not press as hard as an independent business agent. Second, experience was useful, and elected committees would not have the necessary background and practice that the professional would. Third, employers "disliked to meet with new men on each occasion, preferring to meet with those familiar with the details of the last conference." Continuity and experience were held to be more important than rank-and-file control. It was even, the article suggested, more important than militancy, for "the good business agent" should be "polite, diplomatic, and tactful in his dealings with the employer"⁶⁹ Thus the paper run by McVety maintained that co-operation was as important as confrontation for the labour movement, and that

⁶⁸B.C. Trades Unionist, September 1908.

⁶⁹Western Wage Earner, March 1909.

leaders should act independently of the rank and file.

Accompanying this defence of leaders were attacks on union dissidents and "knockers," defined as "the man who has a good word for nobody or anything," and who insisted that "No matter who takes a prominent part in any movement, that person ... is actuated by ulterior motives"⁷⁰ The paper deplored the "peculiar perversity possessing many union people that makes them knock the men they have elected to office." Comparing the knockers to Indian men who abused their "squaws," the paper argued that complaining unionists piled "all the work of the organizations on the shoulders of the officer and a heap of abuse on his head."⁷¹ In a full-page article by local Carpenter president P.W. Dowler, the paper printed the solution to the problem of dissidents. Since organized labor was on "the firing line," it was necessary to gather "the stragglers into the organization" More importantly, it was vital for members to "Uphold and assist your local and general officers in the management of the affairs of the organization" These officers were, the article maintained, "the nucleus upon which we repose our hopes for industrial freedom."⁷²

These articles and others like them appeared in a labour press that was controlled directly by socialists such as Farm

⁷⁰Western Wage Earner, March 1909.

⁷¹Western Wage Earner, April 1909.

⁷²Western Wage Earner, April 1909.

Pettipiece and James McVety, and indirectly by a labour council that had socialists elected to important executive positions. They suggest that whatever their political ideology was, socialists had no principled objections to the professionalization of the union leadership or to the divisions between leaders and led. Such objections would have been hypocritical, for in this period the council moved more forthrightly to professionalize its own leadership cadre. Under the leadership of the socialist fraction, the council made it possible for its officers to become career union officers.

The first step was taken in 1906, when Pettipiece "in a few spirited remarks" urged that the council reaffiliate to the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress. This paved the way for his appointment to the position of DTLC organizer six months later.⁷³ Pettipiece then called on the council to recommend to the DTLC and the AFL that local men should be appointed as organizers. Subsequently, the council's executive board, headed by President McVety, nominated Pettipiece for both jobs and that suggested that "funds be placed at his disposal for carrying on the work." Both recommendations were approved by the council as a whole.⁷⁴ Thus by February 1908, Pettipiece had managed to become the

⁷³VTLCM, 5 September 1906, 21 March 1907.

⁷⁴VTLCM, 20 June 1907; VTLC Executive Board Minutes, 2 July 1907; VTLCM, 4 July 1907.

successor to the now discredited J.H. Watson as the B.C. representative of the Canadian and American trade union centrals. The chief difference was that while Watson had had to depend on his patronage job for an income, Pettipiece could depend on the labour movement itself.

Other measures were taken to professionalize the bureaucracy of the VTLC. On Pettipiece's motion, the salary of the secretary was doubled to \$10 per month, the first raise ever given to the job. No doubt long overdue, still the labourist council had resisted the move. In 1907, the council considered appointing a permanent secretary so he could "devote his whole time to the work of the council." When the permanent position was created, Pettipiece was appointed to the job.⁷⁵

The paid positions seemed to forge unlikely alliances in the council. In 1908, Parm Pettipiece argued successfully to have the election for secretary postponed, in order that his fellow ITU member Harry Cowan could run for the job. The fact that Cowan had always been a strong Liberal and labourist seemed unimportant. Later that year, Cowan was also appointed as business agent for the council to help sign up unions that were unaffiliated to the VTLC. Pettipiece's support for an apparent political foe is puzzling, but it may be that political differences were often overcome in the interests of the labour movement, craft solidarity, and the

⁷⁵VTLCM, 16 May 1907; McCormack, 62.

stability of the bureaucracy.⁷⁶

The VTLC institutions of the labour hall and the newspaper continued to reinforce the separation between union leaders and the rank and file after the influence of the first generation of labourists waned. In 1905, the council took steps to tighten control over the hall, voting to create a board of trustees to administer it separately "from the legislative affairs of the Trades and Labor Council." The trustees then could operate with greater autonomy from the council delegates: once elected, they could make decisions without reference to the general membership. At the same time, the positions of secretary and treasurer were combined. The new job was given responsibility for overseeing the money received from the sale of stock in the hall, rents, per capita taxes, and other revenue. Finally, a committee was struck to investigate the possibility of finding new accommodations.⁷⁷

Two years later, the secretary/treasurer position was combined with that of hall caretaker. The new job was paid \$60 per month, and the council voted to give it permanently to delegate A.R. Burns. A member of the ITU, born in Ontario and in Vancouver since 1903, Burns was in his early fifties

⁷⁶VTLCM, 16 January 1908, 5 March 1908; VTLC Executive Board Minutes, 4 March 1908. Though there is no record of a salary for the business agent being paid, the title itself strongly suggests that it was a salaried position.

⁷⁷VTLCM, 18 May 1905.

when he was given the job, and he held it for two years.⁷⁸

Moving and re-organizing the hall became an important concern of the council in the middle of 1909. The executive spent several meetings drawing up new financial schemes to pay for the move, and created separate books for the labour temple to keep its accounting apart from that of the VTLC.⁷⁹ In September, McVety, who now held positions as business manager for the council paper and as a member of the labour hall committee, received unanimous assent to form a joint stock company to control the new building. The new hall was justified to the membership on the grounds that the union movement had outgrown the old one, and that the recent real estate boom had increased both the old hall's value and its taxes. No reason for the creation of a company separate from the council was given, though members were reassured that the unions, "through their delegates" would control it. The fact that these delegates, already one step removed from the rank and file, would control the company only indirectly, through the selection of board members, was not stressed. But the new company, instead of being directly accountable to the delegates at council meetings, could now operate like any other joint stock company, with shareholders able to exert

⁷⁸VTLCM, 21 February 1907; Province, 5, 7 May 1929. It is possible that Burns was given the job as a compensation for illness or injury, though there is no record of this.

⁷⁹VTLC Executive Board Minutes, 26 August, 1, 9, 15 September 1909.

little control over its day-to-day affairs.⁸⁰

The new company was organized under the Joint Stock Companies Act, instead of the Benevolent Societies Act as the previous hall had been. Capitalized at \$100,000 in \$1 shares, half of the shares were given to the VTLC for purchase of the old hall by the new company. The remainder were for sale to the public. Shares in the old hall could be redeemed at the rate of one old share for two new ones. While this seemed a generous offer, it was in fact a way to avoid paying interest on the old shares. The shares in the old hall were, strictly speaking, not shares but interest-bearing debentures. If they were cashed in, the council had to pay the accrued interest on them. Exchanging them for new shares cost the council nothing and limited the amount that might be paid out to investors in the future, for the new shares paid no interest. Instead, stockholders would be paid only when the company decided to declare a dividend.⁸¹ Thus the socialists proved adept at mastering the intricacies of corporate capitalism.

The new corporate structure also allowed James McVety to give up his job as a machinist. Though he remained a member of the IAM, he gave up his trade to become the paid manager of the labour hall at the age of 28. Some years later, he became a civil servant, working in federal and provincial

⁸⁰Western Wage Earner, October 1909.

⁸¹Western Wage Earner, November 1909.

employment service positions.⁸²

McVety also used the council's newspaper to polevault out of the working class. With the demise of the Independent in 1904, the council had no official organ. Instead, a privately owned paper, the B.C. Trades Unionist and Labor Bulletin, was put out by Samuel J. Gothard. A Vancouver resident and ITU member since 1895, Gothard served as ITU secretary from 1901 to 1903, and as vice-president in 1903 and 1905. He had helped raise subscriptions for the Independent for a time, and gave support to the UBRE strikers in 1903. Along with Pettipiece, Gothard moved that ITU local 226 "heartily endorse" the railway union in its fight with the CPR. When the ITU considered its own strike action to enforce its demands later that year, Gothard tried to press for more militant action. When a motion was made to consult with the international on the possibility of striking, Gothard tried to have it amended. Instead of slowly grinding through the rules of the international, Gothard proposed that the local simply declare that it would automatically go on strike if its demands were not met by 1 May. Though his amendment was defeated, Gothard had established himself as a firebrand.⁸³

Though the paper was independent of the council, the

⁸²Province, 5, 6 January 1943.

⁸³ITU Minutes, VCA, Add. Mss. 381, Volume 8, 25 February 1900; Volume 9, 15 March 1903, 27 April 1903. The ITU rolls list Gothard from 1895 on.

VTLC did endorse it in 1905. In 1906, when Gothard became secretary of the council, the paper took on a quasi-official status. The council created a press committee, consisting of Pettipiece and Burns, to oversee the newspaper's contents. The relationship caused some friction, however, In October the paper printed an article that the press committee found objectionable, and Pettipiece moved that the VTLC's endorsement be removed.⁸⁴ But in 1907, the council turned again to Gothard and his paper. This time, Gothard was to surrender all editorial control to the press committee; he would, however, continue as business manager and would handle all the revenues and expenditures.⁸⁵

Now an official publication of the VTLC under the editorial guidance of Parm Pettipiece, the paper called upon Vancouver workers to support it, and lambasted those who did not. To those who complained that the newspaper was not worthy of support, the editors retorted that "If the Trades Unionist is not what it should be it's the fault of no one but Vancouver Union men themselves. Like begets like." Workers who disagreed with the paper should purchase it in any case, for "They are not compelled to think as the paper thinks; but they can be taught by reading the paper that unionism is a real live issue." It was also, workers were

⁸⁴VTLCM, 21 December 1905, 16 August 1906; 18 October, 1 November 1906.

⁸⁵VTLCM, 6 June 1907; B.C. Trades Unionist, December 1908; VTLC Executive Board Minutes, 7 June 1907.

reminded, an important part of union culture and solidarity. Quoting one John M. O'Neal, the Trades Unionist pointed out that "To be a worthy member of a working-class movement requires something more than wearing a red tie"; it also meant sacrifice and support for the movement's institutions.⁸⁶ In a bold-face article, the newspaper announced its view of the role of workers in supporting the union press:

Union men -- Try, for your own sake, to realize that you are the most benighted people, even with your progress in existence [sic].

What we want you to do --

We want you, first of all, to subscribe to the paper. That is the first requisite. The Trades and Labor Council needs a paper. THIS is the paper. Therefore it is up to you to patronize it.⁸⁷

But apathy was not the only problem the newspaper faced. Gothard continued to create trouble, launching several unauthorized and slightly shady money-raising schemes and calling for boycotts that opened the council to libel suits.⁸⁸ By January 1909, the council had had enough. Delegates voted to end the arrangement with Gothard and to start a new paper that would be under the complete control of the council. James McVety was appointed business manager of the new VTLC organ, and Harry Cowan was given the post of editor, even though both held executive positions on the

⁸⁶B.C. Trades Unionist, January 1908.

⁸⁷B.C. Trades Unionist, February 1908.

⁸⁸B.C. Trades Unionists, January 1909, Western Wage Earner, February 1909.

council: McVety was president and Cowan secretary. The Tailors union protested the two editing and publishing the paper while sitting on the executive board, and threatened to withhold its per capita payments until the situation was corrected. In venerable bureaucratic fashion, the rest of the council voted to file the tailors' letter and thus ensured that the paper would reflect the wishes of the executive board. Though Cowan would resign from the executive a month later, McVety stayed on, and his comrade Pettipiece would take over the secretary position.⁸⁹

The council organized the Western Wage Earner on a different basis from the old Independent. Both Bartley and Cowan had made a living from the labourist newspaper, but their income was generated from the printing jobs done by the Independent Printing Company. Putting out the paper was part of their work, but their salaries were not guaranteed by the council. When McVety became business manager of the new paper, however, the council voted to pay him directly a salary of \$100 per month. The money was good by working class standards: carpenters averaged around \$90, labourers about \$65. Machinists such as McVety would do well to earn his new salary, despite the skill of their trade.⁹⁰ Unlike

⁸⁹Western Wage Earner, February, March, April 1909.

⁹⁰For McVety's salary, see Western Wage Earner, February 1909. For wage rates of other workers, see R.A.J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver," 38. It has proved difficult to calculate the wages of machinists. As A CPR employee, he would have been paid less than those who worked in other

Bartley, McVety was not responsible for actually composing or printing the paper; production was contracted out to the socialist E.T. Kingsley and his non-union shop.⁹¹

For the first time in the council's history, it was possible for some of its officials to hold down permanent, full-time, and well-paid jobs as functionaries. That this took place under the auspices of a socialist-led council strongly suggests that professionalism in the labour bureaucracy is no easy guide to ideology. It also suggests that workers who come to the bureaucracy from unions that do not allow for easy advancement into small businesses may be more inclined to use the labour movement to escape the working class. Men such as Bartley and Dixon could move with little trouble into the petit-bourgeois world of publishing and contracting. Men such as Watson and McVety had, as CPR employees, no such opportunity; for them, the labour and socialist movements offered their best chance to get off the shop floor. The ascension of socialists who were not craft

shops, and in 1907 his rate would have been between 42¢ and 45 cents per hour. Based on a nine-hour day and a six day work week, this would give a top monthly rate of about \$97. See H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning, Toronto: MacMillan, 1948, 146, for the CPR rates. James Conley blames the "size and power" of the CPR for the lower rates of its machinists, but does not supply the figures in "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919," Ph.D. dissertation, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1986, 325-6.

⁹¹YTLC Executive Board Minutes, 19 May 1909. No record of Kingsley appears on the membership rolls of the ITU local.

workers helped push the labour council towards a paid bureaucracy and hierarchy that the old labourists could scarcely imagine.

The bitter squabbling of 1903 had resulted in some changes over time. Six years later, socialists controlled the labour council and its important institutions. Yet the rank and file was no closer to the structure of command, and it was now possible to use the VTLC as a way to leave the working class. Changes in political action were slow in coming; racism was much the same, and women fared little better in the council.⁹² The old pressures of compromise for the sake of unity, middle class aspirations, and resolving union disputes worked to soften the impact of the socialists on the rest of the labour movement. The left did call for new organizations, and in 1910 the B.C. Federation of Labour was formed. While the new organization appeared to resemble the dream of the One Big Union, in fact it was a way to centralize authority and command. With no provision for rank-and-file control, the creation of another layer of bureaucrats made it even more difficult for the voice of the worker to be heard. Stalwarts such as McVety and Pettipiece staffed the new labour body, and the VTLC, still under their domain, became less important as the players moved to the

⁹²See Marie Campbell, "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions," and Linda Kealey, "Women in the Canadian Socialist Movement, 1904-1914," in Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989, 189-90.

provincial arena. The socialists themselves would soon come under attack by radicals who upheld shop-floor democracy and direct action as the ideology of syndicalism and the Industrial Workers of the World began to be heard in the province. In 1907, Parm Pettipiece, who had led the assault on the labourists only four years earlier, was denounced by the IWW organizer Joe Ettor as a "counterfeit wearing the buttons of the SP and the AF of L on his coat collar," and clashes between the VTLC and the SPC on the one side and the IWW on the other became common.⁹³ Though the labourists had been displaced and the rhetoric was different, the issue of bureaucracy in the union movement did not go away; it simply donned a pink cloak.

⁹³See my Where the Fraser River Flows, especially chapters 3 and 4. The quote from Ettor may be found in the IWW newspaper, the Industrial Union Bulletin, 17 August 1907.

CONCLUSION

To a large extent, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council reflected Michels's maxim, "who says organization says bureaucracy." Never directly accountable to the rank and file of the labour movement, the council steadily increased its autonomy over time. From its shaky start in 1889, when it was loathe to support political action for fear of alienating the affiliated unions, the council had by 1909 established itself as an independent body that purported to speak for the entire labour movement. By the end of its second decade, the VTLC was dominated by a small cadre of professional labour leaders who could largely determine the direction of the city's unions, at least in the public sphere of political action and propaganda.

This dominance was accompanied, and accomplished, by putting in place many of the mechanisms described by Weber and his "ideal-type" bureaucracy. Though their avowed intent was to make the labour movement more efficient and effective, these measures also separated the leadership from the rank and file. Thus the council established strict rules for the handling of finances, centralized the decision-making process, set up codes of behaviour for officers and unionists, staffed positions with experts, established specific areas of authority for its officers, and created paid staff positions. Each of these measures made action by the labour movement more streamlined, but each also was another building block in the wall of bureaucracy.

Both the right and the left were responsible for the creation of the labour bureaucracy. Though labourists started the VTLC, the socialists were quick to make use of the early bureaucracy and to strengthen it. Indeed, one of the most important facets of bureaucracy, the payment of officials, was most pronounced under the socialist tenure. Nor were socialists opposed to centralization, as they consolidated the labour hall and newspaper into a few hands, using legal stratagems to remove them from the control of the council at large. In this sense, bureaucracy may be seen as being rather removed from ideology, for conservatives and radicals alike worked to preserve and extend the labour bureaucracy.

This similarity between left and right labour leaders makes it difficult to distinguish between them in many regards. For this reason, using ideology to define the labour bureaucrat is not particularly useful. More useful is defining the bureaucrats by the power they exert over those they administer. The power of the labour bureaucrat is limited, but still it exists. Men such as Joe Dixon, George Bartley, James McVety, and Parm Pettipiece could make decisions that affected scores of unionists. These decisions ranged from dues assessments to political programs to the content of the labour press, even to the establishment of the press itself. With time and the development of rules and procedures, these leaders were further removed from the

control of the rank and file and their delegates to the council itself. As spokesmen -- the masculine term is appropriate and illustrative -- these leaders also ensured that their voices alone were heard, and this too carried important consequences for the labour movement. It meant the exclusion of the unskilled, of Asians, and of women from the mainstream of the labour council; it meant that those who best understood and played by the rules the bureaucracy had itself created would present labour's message as filtered through their own experience. Whether the particular bureaucrats were of the left or the right, this power to make decisions and to speak on behalf of all workers separated them from the rank and file.

It may be asked why the rank and file allows the bureaucracy to take and to hold such power. First, the bureaucracy is, at its worst, a mixed curse. It does provide some services to those it supplants. In Vancouver, the VTLC helped to focus the demands of the city's unionists; it put forward demands, candidates, and funds to aid labour's cause. In doing so, it simultaneously gave a voice to workers while limiting their access to the council itself, but in making labour more visible and powerful, it may well have done more good than harm. If the labour hall had the long-term effect of dividing workers and establishing a paid cadre, it had the valuable short-term effect of giving workers a place to meet, to rally, and even to complain about the management of the

hall. If the labour newspaper called for the support of the bureaucracy, it also informed Vancouver's working class and provided it with a forum to complain about the way the council was run.

The labour bureaucracy also allowed workers to get on with their lives while others fought their battles on their behalf. The anarchist Giovanni Baldelli has suggested that "very few people find the meaning of life in surrender to an absolute. People do not want to fight in order to live, or live in order to fight; they simply want to draw from life some sensual or other pleasure and to achieve some measure of fulfillment in love, companionship, service, and creative work."¹ To the extent that Baldelli is correct, it is reasonable to choose to let those who do prefer the struggle to fight on our behalf. Whether they should then be free from criticism is another matter altogether, and the extent of their accountability an important issue.

But it is not clear that apathy or enlightened self-interest explain the bureaucracy altogether. As the examination of the VTLC suggests, bureaucrats themselves move to take power even as they are having it thrust upon them. To the degree that they pursue their self-interest rather than the universal interest of those they represent, the bureaucrats may come under criticism. But their effective control

¹Giovanni Baldelli, Social Anarchism, Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1971, 9.

of the reins of power can mute protests. Furthermore, the evolution of bureaucracy is often slow and defended by plausible rationalizations. Obviously a labour paper is a good thing; if we are to have one, it needs to be edited and run on business-like principles; clearly it should be run by people with experience; the best way to get these people is to pay them; and if we don't pay them, perhaps you would like to take on the work as a volunteer. Such an argument makes a great deal of sense; only later may the problems become evident. In the case of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, it took twenty years before the labour paper could be established and run by a paid official. If this represented a marked division between leaders and led, it evolved over a considerable period of time. Many of the council's founders had moved on, left the union movement, even died; new unionists who took their place were held in check by the surviving old guard, council policy, and the weight of precedent. And those who may have opposed the paper or any other policy were faced with a difficult choice. Would it be better to have no paper, or hall, or union, rather than the existing one, however bureaucratic? Few people faced with such a choice could unequivocally answer yes, while labour bureaucrats were quick to frame the issue in just these terms. If the rank and file deserves some blame for the bureaucracy, necessity and the actions of the bureaucrats themselves must also shoulder some.

The examination of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council from its beginning in 1889 until the heyday of the socialists by 1909 provides other suggestions for the debate on the labour bureaucracy. First, it suggests that the ideology of the bureaucrats is not determined primarily by their positions in the bureaucracy itself. Other causes--class, occupation, mobility, race, gender, even age -- are more direct and influential, and more likely to shape the political outlook of the labour leader. Thus the council had two generations of leaders. The first was firmly rooted in the craft traditions of labourism, the second in the political traditions of the socialist movement. Both generations forged their ideologies outside the VTLC, yet managed to push the council in the direction they favoured, with some different consequences for the labour movement. In this respect, the bureaucracy reflected the politics of the leaders; it did not create them.

At the same time, the bureaucracy did create its own political demands. The need for organization, for self-defence, for consolidating the demands and gains of the labour movement, forced unionists to create structures of control and authority. These in turn drove a wedge between the leaders and the led, as the council moved to limit dissent, create paid positions, and set up rules and regulations to conduct its business. Leaders were quick to defend their actions and to see those who challenged them as

disrupters and as bad unionists. This distinction was sometimes based on ideology, as labourists and socialists quarrelled. But both generations held similar opinions about the rank and file, regardless of ideology. The pressure of bureaucracy, of the very difference between leaders and led, affected left and right and became a subtle ideology of its own.

The very nature of unionism in this period also carried some implications for ideology and bureaucracy. For both generations of leaders, the success of the movement depended on some semblance of unity. But the significant differences between the various unions and the personnel of the council meant that agreement on any issue was difficult. In order to preserve its fragile consensus, labourists and socialists alike had to learn to compromise. The labour council was the place for such compromise, and as a result, changes in structure and policy were often slow in coming. It took the socialists four years to replace the labourists; starting in 1903, they were not successful until 1906, when James McVety ascended to the presidency. But once in power -- indeed, to take power -- the left had to work for consensus and moderation. Other delegates might be cajoled into supporting particular issues, but they could rarely be coerced, and thus concessions had to be made. The responsibility for the jobs and even the lives of other men also had to be considered once one had taken power, and this weighed on the left and

the right. If socialists often talked more radical lines, in practice they too had to come to an agreement with the employer. James McVety was no slower in cutting a deal with the CPR than any of his predecessors on the council, and the pressure of deciding what was best for others contributed to this.

Thus it may be that the answer to the question to "why there is no socialism?" cannot be laid directly on the door of the labour bureaucracy, at least in the traditional sense that bureaucrats are automatically reactionary. Many of the bureaucrats of the council -- often those who were the professional bureaucrats of the socialist movement -- held progressive ideas in advance of the rank and file. But as Marx remarked, men may make their own history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing. In the absence of revolutionary situations, even socialists could do little. In the face of apathy and repression, they could not press on blindly; they had to consider the consequences of their actions. At the same time, it should be noted that by the time they had ascended to the ranks of the bureaucracy, their own revolution, as Michels put it, had been accomplished. Labourists and socialists alike profited from their positions in the labour movement. Labourists consolidated ties with the city's elite, in part because their class position as artisans and the accompanying ideology carried no sharp distinctions between journeyman and master; the producer

mentality allowed them to forge links across class lines. On the other hand, socialists often came from the petit bourgeoisie and learned to use the labour movement to their advantage, securing white-collar work as editors, business managers, and the like. Though the two generations tangled on many issues, both had few qualms about profiting from their experience on the labour council, though in different ways.

The use of bureaucracy as an analytical tool with which to approach the labour movement may also be able to shed some new light on earlier generalizations. By assuming that the leadership of the labour movement does form a discrete body worthy of investigation in its own right, we learn, for example, that the alleged radical upsurge of 1903 made barely a ripple in the VTLC. The particular nuances of class are made more apparent by an investigation of the men who filled the positions in the council, and clues about ideology, militancy, and radicalism may be gleaned. In this way, the debate over the labour bureaucracy may serve a similar function as the labour aristocracy discussions of the 1950s did: as a "profitable" way to start digging into other questions about working-class life.²

We may ask if it is appropriate to call the labour bureaucrat a class traitor. Certainly the syndicalists who

²Eric Hobsbawm, "Debating the Labour Aristocracy," Worlds of Labour, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984, 226.

created the Industrial Workers of the World were quick to regard Samuel Gompers and his ilk as such, and the label is a staple of many left-wing analyses. But it tends to confuse more than it explains, and suggests a very simple cause for the problem of bureaucracy. In one sense, the word "traitor" implies that the labour bureaucrats believe that one policy or direction is in the real interests of the working class, or the workers they represent, but they still choose to pursue another policy for personal motives. Undoubtedly examples of this conscious betrayal do exist, but such a scenario is too crude to explain most labour bureaucrats. It is more likely that most sincerely believe that the course of action they embark upon is in the best interests of the workers. The problem, of course, is that most human beings have a vast capacity for self-deception and rationalization, and most of us are quick to believe that what is desirable for ourselves is objectively desirable for others. For the labour leader, other pressures encourage such a state of mind. The bureaucrat is empowered to speak and decide for others, and thus is encouraged to rely upon personal experience and wisdom, and to have faith in them. At the same time, the nature of contract negotiations, grievances, and other parts of the bureaucrat's duties is an exercise in the art of the possible. At the bottom of the tasks assigned to the leader is the need for resolution and agreement. The procedures and outcomes of negotiating tend to encourage

conciliatory behaviour: at the end of the day, the contract must be signed, the grievance resolved. Even the most radical and militant union, in the absence of a revolutionary situation, must eventually come to terms. These three factors -- an ability to generalize from one's own position, a belief in one's ability to decide for others, and the need for resolution, are sufficient in themselves to convince most labour bureaucrats that they understand the "real" requirements of those they represent. They cannot, therefore, be said to be traitors in the common usage of the word. They may honestly believe that the course they advocate is in fact the correct one, quite apart from any personal rewards such a course might bring to them.

There is another sense in which we may consider the term "traitor" to be inaccurate. Insofar as labour leaders stand apart from the rest of the working class, by virtue of power, knowledge, culture, or wealth, they may be said to have interests that are not identical with the rest of the working class. It would make perfect sense for the labour leaders, as an elite or an estranged element, to defend their own interest while acting in the name of the working class. Their interests may best be served by a range of policies, ranging from the conservative to the ultra-left, depending on circumstance, but the leaders cannot be said to betray the working class, anymore than the capitalist betrays the working class by pursuing his own interests. If it is

granted that labour bureaucrats have interests that are different from those of the other workers, it is naive to call them traitors. It is not sufficient to argue that they promise to look after the working class and are entrusted to do so. We do not call politicians traitors when they promise to look after us and then act in accordance with their interests, not ours. We may curse ourselves for being too trusting, but generally we do not consider these liars and schemers to be traitors.

To hold that labour bureaucrats are traitors who actively betray the working class, it is necessary to argue that there are policies and programs that objectively benefit the working class. It must further be argued that these policies and programs are known and perceived as such by the leadership. If it does not adopt such policies, for reasons of cowardice or self-interest or the like, it may be said to be acting against the interests of the working class, and may be labelled as traitorous. Such an argument is often advanced by Marxist critics of trade unions, who then go on to add that they represent the real, objective interests of workers. All too often, however, the left-wing positions are not put forward by the rank and file. This puts the critics in the position of having to argue that there are objective positions that benefit the working class, whether it realizes it or not, and that the genuine leader or revolutionary is the one who upholds these true interests, regardless of rank

and file sentiment. The problem with this argument is that it is arbitrary, presumptuous, and elitist. It is hardly the exclusive property of the left, but since the left is more often out of power than in, it tends to advance the argument more often. Regardless of the political stripe of those who advance it, the notion that workers have real interests of which they are not aware is a dangerous one, and an inherently conservative one. The most powerful and radical ideology is one that truly allows workers to express themselves and to control their own lives. Such an ideology may well frighten the liberal, the conservative, or the Marxist, for it attacks the shared belief that there is a specific correct policy and position that the working class should take. Without a version of the correct policy, leaders lose their alleged right to lead and lose all the privilege that goes with it. All attempts to impose a correct line -- even those which carry obvious benefit -- counter the more fundamental issue of workers' autonomy. The truly revolutionary position is to hold that, in the words of Noam Chomsky, that "freedom is the precondition for acquiring the maturity for freedom, not a gift to be granted when such maturity is achieved."³ In this spirit, labour bureaucrats of all sorts may be said to be acting against the interests of the working class, and the issue of their "betrayal" is irrelevant.

³Noam Chomsky, introduction to Daniel Guerin, Anarchism. From theory to Practice, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970, xi.

If labour leaders have interests that differ from those of other workers, we may reasonably ask if these are class interests. Since their positions of power depend on their ability to monopolize and use knowledge, it can be argued that labour bureaucrats are intellectuals. Thousands of pages have been written on the class position of intellectuals. Numerous theories have been advanced: some claim intellectuals are part of the working class, or part of the petit bourgeoisie, or part of many classes; it has been argued that they have no class interests, or that they occupy contradictory class locations; some have insisted that they are a new class. The debate is confused and far from over, with no consensus in sight. Indeed, participants do not even agree on definitions of class or intellectuals. Is wage labour the only necessary criterion? Or is dominance the real issue? Is ownership of the means of production a defining characteristic, or is control sufficient? Are intellectuals productive or unproductive workers? Is this distinction necessary or useful? This debate will not be resolved in these pages. For the purposes of this investigation, it is sufficient to argue that labour bureaucrats have interests that are somewhat distinct from those of other workers and that they act to further these interests. The question of whether these interests are indeed class inter-

ests awaits others.⁴

Bureaucracy is not a question of this or that tactical manoeuvre, this or that position. It is a fundamental belief in the inability of the masses to rule themselves. In the more subtle sense of perpetuating this belief, the bureaucracy may be said to perform its function of incorporation into private and state capitalism. In the age of monopoly capitalism, efficiency and boundless production have become the rationale for capitalism, and this ideology has been extended to and taken in by the labour movement. The reformism of the union bureaucracy lies precisely in its efforts to convince the working class, by example, ideology, and on occasion repression, that some such form of leadership is inevitable and in the best interests of the working class.⁵ Therefore, while the leadership may oppose specific abuses and turns of capitalism, and may or may not represent the articulated wishes of the rank and file, it is by its very nature committed to the rule by an elite in labour, industry, and society. If bureaucracy is to be eliminated, it will be up to the rank and file to create new spontaneous forms of organization and to watch them carefully.

Close studies of bureaucracy in turn make other assump-

⁴For some interesting, if inconclusive studies in these questions, see The Debate on Classes, Erik Olin Wright, ed., London: Verso Books, 1989.

⁵For a more involved analysis along these lines, see Cornelius Castoriadis, Political and Social Writings, 2 volumes, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988.

tions about militancy and radicalism questionable. If members, for any reason, do not take an active part in the union, the survival of leaders may depend on a strategy of least alienation, that is, a strategy that will provoke the fewest number of union members. This means that the union leader should not get too far ahead of or behind the rank and file in policy and actions. Often the best strategy for leaders who wish to stay in power is to pursue a moderate course, for this will result in the smallest number challenging their authority. It will also mean that in peaks of militancy and radicalism their positions will be in jeopardy, but over the long term the leader who best avoids alienating a sizeable bloc will tend to stay in power the longest. In this sense, the reformism and moderation of union leaders may be said to stem from the rank and file, rather than be imposed upon them. Since challenges from the right wing will be helped by bosses and the state, leaders may fear threats from the left less. If the rank and file cannot be assumed to have a single, fixed ideological position, let alone an unwavering left position, the leadership must always look to the right to avoid an effective challenge. Left critiques will not be supported by capital, and therefore tend to pose less of a menace. It should come as no surprise that right-wing insurgents in a union usually find themselves outflanked by the leadership while left-wingers find themselves attacked head-on. There is something of an incentive for

labour bureaucrats to move to the right, and again, this in part stems from the rank and file.

What does remain constant for labour bureaucrats is the desire to promote and protect their own self-interest. For it is this different self-interest that separates them from the rank and file, not any particular left or right position. As leaders the labour bureaucrats have interests that are significantly different from those of the membership, for they wish to maintain their positions. The saga of Cincinnatus is as rare in the history of bureaucracy as it is in the history of Rome. What we should expect from labour bureaucrats as a group is not a consistent platform of incorporation or radicalism, for this will change according to how they perceive their interests. What may be found is a consistent ideology that presents the particular interests of this group as the universal interests of the working class.

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APPENDIX A

Tracing the members of the VTLC proved to be a difficult task. While some individuals do turn up in the historical record, many do not. Even determining simple facts, such as nationality, was impossible in a great number of cases: for example, it was not possible to unearth the nationality of nearly one-third of the council presidents. For this reason, it is impossible to provide scientific statistics on the council, as the number of unknowns dominates the accounting. Much of the analysis must remain impressionistic, rather than definitive, until further research completes the data pool.

Names of everyone who served as an officer in the labour council from 1889 to 1909 were compiled from council minutes and newspaper reports. This list of nearly 140 names was tracked through several sources. First, the B.C. Legislative Library Index, the only index of British Columbian papers, was searched. This index is not particularly thorough, and generally revealed citations on those labour leaders who sought public office, were prominent in the labour movement, or who attained some notoriety or fame in other circles. Next, the indices and catalogues of the Vancouver City Archives were searched. Much of the material on the early part of the city was collected by Vancouver's first archivist, Major J.S. Matthews. The collection is rather eccentric, and is not noted for its attention to labour history. Understandably, it reflects the concerns of Major

Matthews, not this researcher. One example that indicates the major's bent is his file on Parmeter Pettipiece. Pettipiece was extremely active as a publisher, labour agitator, and later, city alderman. The Matthews collection on him, however, consists largely of invitations sent to Pettipiece by the major, requesting his presence at social functions. As a result, few names on the VTLC list were found, though often what information that was collected was fascinating, not least for where it was found. William Fleming's memoirs, for example, are found under his name, cross-indexed to the Vancouver Horticultural Society; George Bartley's material is found under the Dominion Day celebrations heading.

The next step was to trace the names through the obituary columns of the daily newspapers. Unfortunately, no index to obituaries exists. Instead, I examined cemetery records to find a date of death for each of the council members. Predictably, many were not found, as people often left the city and died elsewhere. In addition, it was difficult to determine which, if any, of the names in the cemetery records was the correct one. Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver contains 76 John Smiths; this does not include those John Smiths who have another initial to help identify them. Furthermore, some of the council delegates were listed only by their first initial. Nonetheless, many names were found in the records. But while the records contained places

to list information such as date of death, date of burial, place of birth, marital status, and religion, this was not always filled in. Nor was it possible to determine which of the "John Smiths" was the correct one. To determine this, I examined the daily and labour papers for the time period indicated by the death date recorded at the cemetery, looking at obituary columns and the body of the newspapers for items and stories about the deceased. It was necessary to examine the days immediately following the date of death and often the days preceding it, for in a number of cases, the cemetery records were incorrect. Also, many newspaper stories referred not to the death, but to the funeral or memorial service that took place sometimes as much as a week after. These records, however, were not infallible. In the case of W.R. Lawson, for example, the cemetery records indicate that he was born in Ontario; the World newspaper that he was born in York, England. Thus his nationality must be counted as "unknown" for the purposes of this research. Nor was it always possible to link the obituaries and stories to council members. Seldom were delegates' labour activities outlined in the papers; in many cases, even the deceased's occupation was not indicated, and nationality was not consistently recorded. When the last address of the deceased was noted, it was sometimes possible to trace them through the city directories from the time of their service on the council until their death, but this was not a reliable method. If

the directories, for example, listed one John Smith as a carpenter in 1890, one might assume that this was the John Smith who served on the labour council (though in fact such assumptions were not made in this study; corroborative evidence was required) and note the address. But by 1900, the directories might contain several John Smiths who were carpenters, none of whom lived at the original address. By 1940, when the obituary for a John Smith who had been a "pioneer contractor in the city" might appear, it was not possible to conclude that this was the same John Smith who had been a council officer in 1890. Worst of all, it took more time to find out that nothing could be learned about John Smith than it did to find a wealth of material on a Joseph Dixon or a George Bartley. Some searches had to be abandoned because there was absolutely no information to be found; others because there was too little information to search effectively, as in the case of the hypothetical John Smith.

I must thank R.A.J. McDonald for his help in this. Professor McDonald provided insights and data on several union officials.

APPENDIX B

VTLC OFFICERS, 1889-1909

Name - Union: Each calendar year has two terms and they are shown as (first half)/(second half), (year).

P = President

V = Vice-President

S = Secretary

T = Treasurer

St = Statistician

F = Financial Secretary

Tr = Trustee

D = Doorkeeper/Sergeant at Arms

Aicken, J.A. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /V, 1908.

Amos, C.: D/, 1892.

Bartley, George - ITU: /V, 1891; P/, 1892; /St, 1893; St/St, 1894; St/St, 1895; St/St, 1896; P/P, 1897; P/, 1898.

Barton, J.C.: /Tr, 1901.

Beach, Mark A. - Streetcar Railwaymen: P/, 1907.

Beer, W.J. - IAM: F/F, 1901.

Benford, E.L. - IAM: St/, 1904.

Birch, James: /F, 1906; Tr/, 1907.

Bishop, F.P. - Painters: /V, 1890; S/, 1892; S/S, 1894; S/S, 1895.

Boardman, Charles - ARU, IAM: /P, 1895; P/P, 1896.

Brand, William - ITU: St/St, 1897.

Brooks, H.L. - Stevedores: /St, 1891; V/, 1892.

Brown, John - Bricklayers: /St, 1894.

Browne, J.H. - ITU: /S, 1898; S/, 1899; St/, 1902.

Bruce, J.G. - Carpenters: St-Tr/, 1899; Tr/Tr, 1900.

Burns, A.R. - ITU: /St, 1906; F/F, 1907, F/F, 1908.

Burns, Ernest R. - Fishermen: Tr/, 1902.

Caldwell, Charles: /V, 1895; V/, 1896.

Campbell, James - Carpenters: /F, 1909.

Chaplin, Urban - Carpenters: /St, 1904.

Clark, George - Barbers: Tr/, 1905.

Clarke, James Alan - ITU: D/, 1894.

Commerford, J. - Builders' Labourers: /Tr, 1907; Tr/, 1908.

Corcoran, J.J. - Building Trades Alliance - /Tr, 1908.

Cosgrove, J. - Builders' Labourers: /Tr, 1904.

Cosgrove, Robert - Hodcarriers: D/, 1891; /D, 1893.

Cowan, Harry - ITU: St/, 1892; P/, 1899; S/S, 1908; S/,
1909.

Cowling, George - IBEW: Tr/, 1903.

Croll, C.B. - Carpenters: Tr/, 1905.

Cross, Thomas H. - Postal Employees: /S, 1901; S/S, 1902;
Tr/, 1903.

Crow, John - Cigarmakers: V/P, 1901.

Crowder, C. - Cigarmakers: /T, 1901; T/, 1902.

Curnock, G.W. - Bartenders: Tr/, 1909.

Davis, W. - Painters: D/St, 1900.

DeWolfe, L.C. - Carpenters: /Tr, 1904.

Dickie, G.A. - Streetcar Railwaymen: V/, 1905.

Dixon, Joseph - Carpenters: P/, 1889; P/, 1891; /T, 1898;
T/V, 1899; P/P, 1900; P/, 1901.

Dobbin, George - Carpenters: /D, 1902; V/V, 1903; P/, 1904.

Dodd, J.: /D, 1900.

Dowler, P.W. - Carpenters: /Tr, 1908.

Duff, A.: Tr/, 1901.

Dutton, A.H. - Builders' Labourers: V/, 1907.

Fenton, A. - IAM: D/, 1909.

Fisher, F. - IAM: /St, 1905; F/Tr, 1906.

Fowler, R.J.: F/F, 1905.

Franklin, J.L. - Carpenters: /T, 1891; T/, 1892.

Fulton, J.A. - ITU: /S, 1890; S/S, 1891.

Gagen, George - Carpenters: F/S, 1892; S/, 1893.

George, William - Civic Employees: /Tr, 1903; V/Tr, 1904;
P/, 1905.

Gothard, Alex - Painters: /St, 1903.

Gothard, Samuel James - ITU: S/S, 1906.

Graham, Thomas - Carpenters: P/, 1895.

Grant, A.: /Tr, 1905.

Green, W.T. - Stevedores: /V, 1896; D/, 1898.

Hallam, Thomas - Knights of Labor: St/, 1889; /St, 1890;
St/, 1891.

Harpur, Eugene - Barbers: /S, 1903.

Harrington, Adoniran N. - Waiters: T/T, 1903; T/, 1904.

Harrison, D.C. - Streetcar Railwaymen: S-St/S, 1899; S/,
1900.

Hepburn, Walter - ASC: /S, 1895; S/S, 1896; S/, 1897; St/,
1898.

Higgins, W.H. - Carpenters: /P, 1905.

Hilton, Charles Thomas - ASC: S/, 1904.

Holmes, J.: /T, 1896.

Hoover, F.A. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /Tr, 1909.

Hughes, W.B. - ITU: /D, 1890.

Irvine, George - Plasterers: V/, 1889; /P, 1890; V/, 1891.

Jameson, David - ITU: S/, 1889.

Jeffrey, James - Bricklayers: V-P/, 1899.

Johnson, D.P.: /Tr, 1906.

Kaine, Charles H. - ASC: T/T, 1894; T/T, 1895; T/, 1896; /T, 1897; T/, 1898.

Kernighan, S. - Carpenters: /D, 1908; Tr/, 1909.

Ker(r), James - Carpenters: /V, 1894; D/, 1895; S/, 1898; D/, 1903;

Kilpatrick, G.A. -Civic Employees: /D, 1906; D/D, 1907; D/, 1908.

King, W.H. - ITU: T/, 1905.

Knight, E.C. - IBEW: F/, 1909.

Lamrick, W.J. - Retail Clerks: /V, 1901; P/P, 1902; P/P, 1903.

Lang, Alex - Foundry Employees: Tr/, 1905.

Larney, T.C. - Stonecutters: T/, 1905.

Lawson, W.R. - Stonecutters: V/, 1894; V/V, 1898; Tr/, 1899.

Leaper, George - Knights of Labor: St/, 1893.

Lee, C.N. - Laundry Workers: Tr/P, 1904.

Lenfesty, George F. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /D, 1901.

Letroadec, A.: /Tr, 1909.

Ley, J.H. - Tailors: /Tr, 1909.

Lilley, J.T. - Freighthandlers: F/F, 1902; F/F, 1903; F/,
1904.

Lloyd, J. - ARU: T/, 1897.

Lothian, - Carpenters: /D, 1909.

McCawley, : /Tr, 1905.

McClain, William - IAM: St/, 1900.

McClaren, John - Carpenters: Tr/, 1904.

Macdonald, A. : Tr/, 1899.

Macdonald, Colin - Knights of Labor, Stevedores: T/T, 1893;
V/, 1895; /V, 1896; V/, 1897; Tr/Tr, 1900.

McGillivray, Neil - ASC: /F, 1904.

McKee, Hugh - Knights of Labor: D/D, 1893.

McKenzie, W. - Carpenters: D/, 1899.

McKissock, W. : /St, 1901.

McLaren, J. Carpenters:

McLennan, J. - Bartenders: /Tr, 1906; St/, 1907.

McPherson, R. - Carpenters: /Tr, 1902.

McRae, Duncan - Carpenters: /T, 1890.

McVety, James - IAM: /Tr, 1902; /V, 1905; P/P, 1906; Tr/P,
1907; P/, 1908; P/, 1909.

Marshall, J.C. - ITU: S/S, 1900; S/, 1901.

Matteson, C. - IAM: /St, 1909.

Miller, G.J. : Tr/Tr, 1900.

Monck, C.R. - Stonecutters: /P, 1892; P/P, 1893; /V, 1897;
/St, 1898; T/, 1899; T/, 1900.

Morton, John - ASC: /V, 1900.

- Noonan, George - Seamens': /S, 1895.
- O'Dwyer, Daniel M. - Painters: /V, 1892; /P, 1894.
- O'Grady, John : D/, 1906.
- Parker, Ed - Seamens': /D, 1895.
- Patterson, Thomas : /D, 1891.
- Pavier, W. - Painters: St/, 1906.
- Pearey, John - Streetcar Railwaymen: V/P, 1899; /T, 1900;
T/Tr, 1901.
- Perkins, J.M. - Waiters: St/, 1903.
- Perry, A.G. - Streetcar Railwaymen: V/V, 1906; S/S, 1907.
- Pettipiece, R.P. - ITU: /Tr, 1907; V/P, 1908; /S, 1909.
- Pleming, William - ASC: T/P, 1891; /St, 1892.
- Pollay, George - Knights of Labor: /T, 1892.
- Pound, George F. - Printing Pressmen: Tr/Tr, 1903.
- Reilly, W. : /Tr, 1905.
- Ross, A.S. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /D, 1897; /D, 1898.
- Ross, Donald - Stonecutters: /S, 1897.
- Rumble, John - Stonecutters: /D, 1892; /D, 1894.
- Russell, F.J. - Freighthandlers, UBRE: Tr/, 1901; V/V, 1902;
S/, 1903.
- Ryan, C.T. - Bartenders: /Tr, 1907; Tr/, 1908.
- Salter, C.J. - Bakers: D/, 1901; D/, 1902.
- Sayer, W.W. - Bricklayers: /Tr, 1908; V/, 1909.
- Sellars, H.J. - Builders' Laborers: D/V, 1904; /St, 1907;
St/St, 1908; St/P, 1909.
- Sinclair, J.H. - Carpenters: Tr/T, 1902.

Smith, Andrew - Bricklayers: Tr/, 1908.

Soper, A.E. - Teamsters: /D, 1903.

Stewart, P. : /T, 1904.

Sully, John - Builders' Laborers: /Tr, 1903; Tr/D, 1904; D/,
1905.

Sykes, Arthur - ASC: /D, 1896; D/, 1897.

Thompson, S.T. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /V, 1909.

Tidy, G. : V/, 1893.

Todd, Robert - ITU: /Tr, 1901; Tr/, 1902.

Towler, William - Bricklayers: P/, 1894.

Von Rhein, A.W. - Bartenders: /V, 1907.

Walken, George : /V, 1893.

Ward, H.P. : /D, 1905.

Watkins, J. - IAM: St/, 1905.

Watson, J.H. - Boilermakers: D/, 1896; /P, 1898; F/, 1899;
V/, 1900; Tr/, 1901; /Tr, 1902.

White, George - Painters: St/, 1901.

Williams, Francis - Tailors: F/F, 1900; /S, 1904; S/S, 1905;
Tr/, 1909.

Wilson, A.J. - Streetcar Railwaymen: /St, 1902.

Wilson, Hugh - Carpenters: /V, 1894.

Wilson, William M. - ITU: /V, 1893.

Wright, J. - Lathers: S/, 1889.

Young, E.G. - Carpenters: Tr/, 1907.

Union Abbreviations:

ITU - International Typographical Union

ARU - American Railway Union

IAM - International Association of Machinists

ASC - Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners

IBEW - International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

UBRE - United Brotherhood of Railway Employees

Seamens' - Mainland Steamshipmen's Association, Local of the
National Seamen's Union of America

Notes: There is no record of elections for 1889, Term 2, or 1890, Term 1. Some offices were held by more than one person in a term, due to mid-term resignations. The Deadman's Island dispute of 1899 saw several resignations and some officials held more than one office during that year. 1899 was also the year the positions of Trustee and Financial Secretary were permanently created. It is not clear who held positions for the second term of 1899, as VTLC Minutes are missing while newspapers and Bartley's history of the council do not agree. In 1905, the position of Treasurer was eliminated, and the position of Financial Secretary became that of Secretary Treasurer while the position of Secretary became General Secretary.

