

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF IN THE UNION OF
NORTHERN WORKERS FROM 1967 TO 1996

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**LEADERSHIP AND STAFF IN THE UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS
FROM 1967 TO 1996**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

The Union of Northern Workers, known as the Northwest Territories Public Service Association prior to 1987, is the largest labour union in the Northwest Territories. Northern labour is a little explored field in Canadian history, and as such, this work surveys new ground. Trade unionism in the North's private sector began at the close of the Second World War. The UNW, however, like most public sector unions in Canada, had its roots in the 1960s. This study examines issues pertaining to the union's leadership and staff from 1967, when correctional workers in Yellowknife first organized, until the 1996 convention, when the union took steps to divide into two separate unions in anticipation of the creation of Nunavut in 1999.

From its start, the union's geographic jurisdiction distinguished the UNW as unique among Canada's public service unions. It and its predecessor, the NWTPSA represented workers in Canada's most northern reaches. The challenges of life in the North were as real for the union as they were for its members. A relatively small membership spread across such a huge land mass presented obstacles with regards to leadership and service. Also, cultural factors differentiated the organization from others. With an increasing native membership, mostly Inuit, Inuktitut became the union's second language. Distinguishing the union institutionally was its component status within the

Public Service Alliance of Canada.¹ The quality of the relationship between these two bodies regularly fluctuated between excellent and belligerent. Similarly, the union's relationship with the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour degenerated from founding member to pariah status, in spite of the UNW comprising the overwhelming majority of the Federation's membership.

As the union grew from a “fly-by-night, seat-of-the-pants” organization of less than 100 members at its inception, to over 5,000 when it divided, leadership and staffing gained increasing importance. To meet the challenges of representing northern workers, the union increasingly attempted to professionalize its leadership cadre. The effect of this was an increasing distance between members and leaders which ultimately resulted in the secession of the Nunavut membership.

¹Technically speaking, the PSAC is not a union itself as much as it is a confederation of 15 smaller component unions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My interest in the Union of Northern Workers dates to the period 1994-1996 when I was a member and officer of Local 6. Very much a partisan in that local's fight with the executive in Yellowknife, it was only years later, after the research for this project began, that I became aware of the larger, historical patterns at play in the UNW, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour. Although my work has been guided by these personal experiences, I have been diligent in separating them from the historical evidence.

Many people have assisted in the preparation of this thesis. I would like to thank my co-supervisors: Dr. Andy den Otter and Dr. Greg Kealey of Memorial University of Newfoundland. Without their reading and re-reading of numerous chapter drafts and persistently asking the tough questions, the presentation of this final product would not have been possible. Michelle McBride, also of Memorial, read through the early drafts of each chapter and gave much editorial advice. Her help and encouragement are greatly appreciated.

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Needless to say, any errors or omissions are entirely my responsibility.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIB	Anti-inflation Board
CALM	Canadian Association of Labour Media
CASAW	Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CCL	Confederation of Canadian Labour
CCU	Confederation of Canadian Unions
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLASS	CASAW Ladies' Auxilliary for Strike Support
CLRB	Canada Labour Relations Board
CSA	Civil Service Association of Canada
CSF	Civil Service Association of Canada
CSR	Civil Service Review
FE	Full Executive
FEM	Full Executive Meeting
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
IHA	Inuvik Housing Authority
IUMMSW	International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers
NABET	National Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians

NDP	New Democratic Party
NUPGE	National Union of Public and General Employees
NWT	Northwest Territories
NWTFL	Northwest Territories Federation of Labour
NWTHC	Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
NWTPSA	Northwest Territories Public Service Association
NWTTA	Northwest Territories Teachers' Association
PIPSC	Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada
PSA	(Northwest Territories) Public Service Association
PSAC	Public Service Alliance of Canada
PSSRA	Public Service Staff Relations Act
RVP	Regional Vice-President
UBCJA	United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
ULU	United Labour Union
UNW	Union of Northern Workers
USWA	United Steelworkers of America
VTa	Vacation Travel Assistance
WFM	Western Federation of Miners
YTPSA	Yukon Territory Public Service Association

INTRODUCTION

Most federal and provincial civil servants in Canada became unionized in the 1960s. The Northwest Territories was no exception to this trend, and in 1967 territorial workers began to organize. Securing legal recognition in 1969 with the passage of enabling legislation, by 1970 the Northwest Territories Public Service Association [NWTPSA] was a component union of the Public Service Alliance of Canada [PSAC], and had signed its first collective agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories. Expanding in both membership and staff throughout the 1970s, the Association began to organize and represent workers other than government employees in the 1980s. In 1987 it changed its name to the Union of Northern Workers [UNW] to reflect this new membership structure. When the territories divided in 1999 with the creation of Nunavut, so too did the union break into two separate unions. This was the result of a decision made at the UNW's 1996 convention. This MA thesis will examine the history of the UNW from its beginnings in 1967, to the 1996 decision to divide the union.

During much of this period the NWTPSA/UNW demonstrated itself to be a dynamic union within the Canadian labour movement. This dynamism is seen in its growth from approximately one hundred territorial government employees in 1967, to a membership in excess of 6,000 at the time the Nunavut union seceded. Initially made up largely of administrative and correctional staff employed in Yellowknife and the NWT's regional centres, by 1996 the UNW was represented in every community of the Northwest

Territories and active in all areas of northern working life including mines, hospitals, power plants, and community colleges, as well as the territorial civil service.

Distinguishing the UNW from other unions was the increasing number of aboriginal members throughout this period. Although aboriginal people were active in the union from its start, from 1967 to 1996 the union's leadership was composed of predominantly non-native men. As the northern public service became more representative of the Northwest Territories' population, the union's ranks were increasingly made up of men and women of Inuit, Metis, and Dene ancestry. Of these three groups, the Inuit were by far the most prominent, especially in the eastern Arctic. The use of Inuktitut grew in importance within the union. By the 1990s the union's newsletter *Sulijug* [Inuktitut for Truth] was a unique bilingual union paper publishing in English and Inuktitut.

The geographic region which the UNW represented during this period made the union exceptional in that it had by far more members north of the Arctic Circle than any other union in Canada. With much of its membership in remote, isolated communities which could only be accessed by air, organizing and servicing the membership was problematic and expensive. To members in many of these communities, Yellowknife, which housed the union's headquarters, is a large and distant urban center. Ottawa, where the UNW's parent body made its home, was in turn more distant.

Physical distance was accompanied, especially in the 1990s, by an increasing isolation from the broader labour movement. While this is seen most clearly in its

relationship with PSAC, it is also apparent in its interaction with other labour organizations, for instance the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour. On one level the sources of discontent with the Alliance stemmed from what the UNW often perceived as an insufficient level of services received, specifically grievance and arbitration handling, in exchange for dues paid. However, there were also issues of power and control, not only between the UNW and other labour organizations, but particularly within the UNW itself, ultimately leading to the division of the union in 1996.

This thesis shows how these issues of power and control within the union pertained to staff and leadership. Specifically, it will be shown that the structure of the union changed from one where a volunteer leadership gave direction to a full-time professional staff, to one in which the elected leaders, increasingly full-time salaried officers, displaced the union's cadre of professional organizers, and proceeded to write their own orders. The priorities of the union's leadership changed from representing the concerns of northern workers to furthering the interests of themselves, ultimately resulting in the permanent division of the union.

Before commencing a discussion of public sector bargaining in the Northwest Territories, it is first necessary to provide some background. This is done by first establishing what distinguishes the Northwest Territories politically from the provinces. Secondly, a brief history of the organization of civil servants in Canada is presented to provide a national context in which the Northwest Territories Public Service Association arose. Third, a look at the activities of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter

Workers in the Northwest Territories shows the economic, social, and political roles that organized labour played in the North prior to the arrival of public sector unions. Finally, the impact of the 1966 Carrothers Commission is examined to show how the need for a territorial civil service union emerged.

The primary difference between a province and a territory is one of political power. While sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act¹ delineate the respective powers of the federal and provincial governments, the legislation defining the powers of the Northwest Territories is the Northwest Territories Act. As an Act of Parliament, the Northwest Territories Act can be amended or repealed at any time. Frances Abele has argued that the Northwest Territories Act as amended in 1905 established the framework within which the territorial government still operates, except that until the 1950s these powers were exercised by a small group of bureaucrats in Ottawa.² In 1951 the Act was amended to allow for limited input from the non-aboriginal and Metis population of the Mackenzie Valley.³ The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, appointed by the Minister responsible for Northern Affairs and National Resources, had final decision-making authority. A gradual series of amendments to the Act following the report of the

¹Prior to 1980 the British North America Act.

²Frances Abele, "Canadian Contradictions: Forty Years of Northern Political Development," *Arctic*, 40:4 (1987), 310-320, 312.

³Inuit could not vote in elections until 1954, status Indians were not enfranchised until 1960.

Carrothers Commission, led to an important change: by 1974 all of the councillors were elected. Since then native people have held the majority of seats in what is now called the Legislative Assembly.

While most of the rights that provinces enjoy are shared with the Northwest Territories, there are significant exceptions. Territories are not guaranteed full, but merely observer, status at first ministers' meetings. Also, unlike provinces, the Northwest Territories does not have ultimate control over lands and resources.⁴ In addition, the Government of the Northwest Territories has no authority to establish legislation governing labour except for matters pertaining to health and safety, minimum wages, and its own civil service. For this reason, private sector unions in the Northwest Territories are governed by the Canada Labour Relations Act, which governs workers other than civil servants not covered by provincial legislation.

Trade unionism across Canada began its period of most substantial growth during the Second World War when the federal government gave legal sanction to private sector collective bargaining by Order-in-Council. Union growth in post-war Canada up to the early 1960s was mostly confined to workers other than government employees. It was only in the ten year period 1963 to 1973 that provincial and federal civil servants gained

⁴Dickerson, *Whose*, 9. While there are efforts being made to establish a northern accord which would give the Northwest Territories control over this domain, the federal government still has the final say. The exception to this is in the case of settled aboriginal land claims where in certain portions of the claim the owner group enjoys sub-surface rights.

the right to bargain collectively. The exception to this was Saskatchewan, where in 1945 the recently elected CCF government granted bargaining rights to its employees.⁵ Figure 1 shows when the civil servants of each province acquired collective bargaining rights.

The most important factor in understanding the later development of civil service unions relates to numbers. During the Second World War, the state began to play an ever-increasing role in providing for the needs of Canadians, requiring a drastically enlarged workforce. According to Craig Heron, as the state's workforce grew, it unionized.⁶ The weakness in Heron's argument is that it assumes that militancy is a function of workforce size, thereby discounting the existence of both small militant unions and large unorganized workforces. Desmond Morton argues that barring the occasional partisan inspired civil service purge, civil servants did so well for themselves, there was no need for unions.⁷ Bryan Palmer has pointed out that public sector workers in Canada made several attempts to organize prior to the 1960s, the earliest being in 1889, but each attempt was suppressed by the state.⁸ Increasing civil servant militance in the 1960s was

⁵J.C. Hodgetts and O.P. Dwivedi, *Provincial Governments as Employers: A Survey of Public Personnel Administration in Canada's Provinces*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1974), 65-66.

⁶Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History*, Second Edition (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), 86.

⁷Desmond Morton, *Working People*, fourth edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1998), 255.

⁸Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800 - 1980* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1983), 264.

Figure 1
Recognition of Provincial Civil Service Organizations as Bargaining Agents

Province	Year Civil Service Organization Granted Collective Bargaining Rights
Saskatchewan	1945
Ontario	1963
Alberta	1963
Quebec	1965
Manitoba	1965
Nova Scotia	1967
New Brunswick	1968
Prince Edward Island	1972
British Columbia	1973
Newfoundland	1973

Source: Hodgetts and Dwivedi, *Provincial*, 63-71.

likely a function of an increase in the number of employees less “professional” in the nature of their work – postal workers, prison guards, highways workers, skilled trades – people who saw themselves more as workers and more inclined to see the need for workers’ organizations.

Hodgetts and Dwivedi consider three socio-political factors in accounting for the later development of public sector trade unionism. The first of these is what they refer to

as the “social club function of staff associations.”⁹ Public sector unions often arose from pre-existing staff associations whose concerns were primarily non-economic. Beginning as social clubs concerned about standards of qualification, performance, and requirements for entry into the professions, these groups gradually took on the role of employee pressure groups. In the post-war period, as the number of civil servants began to increase dramatically, their collars increasingly changing from white to blue and pink, these existing organizations served as the nuclei of emerging bargaining agents. Under growing pressure, provinces simply passed the pertinent enabling legislation to certify these old organizations as new unions. Joseph Rose states that while private sector unions had to organize, fight for recognition, and then fight for contracts, public servants were handed their collective agreements on silver platters. The weakness with this argument is that quite often there were gaps of two to three years between the passage of enabling legislation and the signing of initial collective agreements, indicating that agreements were not automatically granted with the acquisition of bargaining agent status.¹⁰

The second reason Hodgetts and Dwivedi offer to explain the later development of civil service unions is that the existing staff organizations were conservative in their nature owing to the preponderance of senior management within these organizations.¹¹ As long

⁹Hodgetts and Dwivedi, *Provincial*, 61.

¹⁰*Ibid*, 109.

¹¹Hodgetts and Dwivedi, *Provincial*, 61. For examples of the roles of senior civil servants in the civil servants’ associations of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland respectively,

as management controlled the workers' organizations, it would be unlikely that the workers' organizations would challenge management. This challenge came in the 1960s, according to Craig Heron, because of the large number of "baby boomers" entering the civil service at the time, with higher expectations of their employers than their predecessors. These workers were more educated, a "product of their rebellious times," and more willing to challenge both management and conservative union leadership."¹²

The third reason that Hodgetts and Dwivedi offer to account for the late development of unions amongst civil servants is the inherently political nature of unions. They assert that politically active public servants are as undesirable to the public as they are to the government.¹³ When the employer is the state, the union must, from time to time, not only question the decisions of the government, but on occasion take action against it. Public sector unions are therefore often perceived as a threat to the ultimate authority of the state. Peter Warrian poses that this perceived threat to state sovereignty results in the state placing limits on what can and cannot be negotiated.¹⁴ All three points

see Gordon Burnham and Robert Vaison, *Civil Servants by the Sea*, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Employees' Association, 1976), 25, and Robert Marshall Greenwood, "The Newfoundland Association of Public Employees, 1936-1973, The Transition from Civil Servants to Trade Unionists," BA Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1984, 44-45.

¹²Heron, *Canadian*, 92-93.

¹³Hodgetts and Dwivedi, *Provincial*, 61.

¹⁴Peter Warrian, *Hard Bargain: Transforming Public Sector Labour-Management Relations*, (Toronto: McGilligan, 1996), 45. See also Dwivedi and Hodgetts, *Provincial*, 165, who argue that the concept of state sovereignty is waning in its influence over

raised by Hodgetts and Dwivedi were factors affecting the organizing of civil servants in the Northwest Territories. The historic "social club" function of staff associations, membership and leadership positions held by management, and the inherent political nature of a union in contrast to the concept of state sovereignty, all came into play at different times. However, because the NWT civil service devolved from the federal government, it is also necessary to look at the history of collective bargaining at the federal level to appreciate the distinctly northern factors associated with the origins of the Union of Northern Workers.

With the exception of postal workers, federal civil servants' organizations followed the same pattern as their provincial counterparts. Evolving from social clubs to professional associations, then pressure groups and finally unions, federal civil servants were granted the right to collective bargaining in 1967 with the passage of the Public Service Staff Relations Act. While writers such as Heron and Morton credit the work of the 1965 Heaney Report in preparing the ground for federal collective bargaining,¹⁵ Bryan Palmer, along with Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, also recognize the efforts of the postal workers. While the larger movement was born of legalism, they assert, the postal workers' unions were born of struggle. Breaking away from the larger civil service

provincial collective bargaining in recent years.

¹⁵Morton, *Working*, 258, also Robert Deslaurier, "First Collective Agreements in the Public Service of Canada," *Civil Service Review*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, June 1968, 34-35 and Heron, *Canadian*, 93-96.

movement in the late 1950s, postal workers initiated a series of illegal walkouts in the mid-1960s that amounted to recognition strikes, forcing the government to come to terms with public employees by bargaining with them.¹⁶ Representing the majority of the workers left behind by the postal workers was the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

The PSAC was formed by the merger of the Civil Service Association and the Civil Service Federation at the Alliance's founding convention in November, 1966. The CSA had a membership of 25,000 direct members employed in the national capital area. The CSF had 80,000 affiliated members of 16 separate staff associations roughly corresponding to the various departments of government.¹⁷ The merger was a direct result of acquiring collective bargaining rights. As government departments commonly had members of both organizations within their employ, the two organizations were faced with fighting a series of battles for the membership of each department or merging.¹⁸ They chose the latter option, forming the PSAC, maintaining the federal structure of the CSF with its 14 original component member unions.¹⁹ At the head of this new union was

¹⁶Palmer, *Working-Class*, 264-65; also Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz. *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993) 17.

¹⁷*Civil Service Review*, Vol. xxxix, No. 3, September 1966, 2. Also Lemelin, *Public*, 67 and Morton, *Working*, 264-265.

¹⁸Lemelin, *Public*, 108, 152, and Morton, *Working*, 261.

¹⁹These were Canada Manpower and Immigration, Customs Excise Union, Department of Agriculture Component, Department of Finance Component, Department of Transport Component, Department of Veterans' Affairs Component, Economic Security Employees' National Association, National Component, National Health and

Claude Edwards.

With collective bargaining rights secured, the Alliance quickly asserted itself. The first collective agreements were signed with the federal government on 29 April 1968.²⁰ In the first two years of certification, 95 per cent of the membership of PSAC's 14 components won collective agreements.²¹ In 1967 the Alliance officially entered the house of labour when its 93,000 members affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress.²² It was only with the affiliation of the PSAC that Canada's largest labour central established a presence in the Northwest Territories. There was, however, a labour movement already established in the North which had been active for over twenty years prior to the arrival of the Alliance.

Collective bargaining in the private sector did not begin in the Northwest Territories until after World War Two. Prior to 1920, the major economic activity in the Northwest Territories was the fur trade, which relied upon a dispersed and unorganized aboriginal work force. Even with the importation of large numbers of non-aboriginal workers with the discovery of oil, and the subsequent development of a petroleum

Welfare Component, Post Office Component, Public Works Component, Solicitor General Component, Taxation Division Component, and the Union of National Defense Employees *Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1967, vii.

²⁰*Civil Service Review*, Vol. XLI, No.2, June 1968, 2.

²¹Finkelman and Goldenberg, *Collective*, xxxi., xxxix.

²²*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1967, vii.

industry, at Norman Wells beginning in the 1920s, labour remained unorganized.²³

Although the reasons for this are not clear, William Morrison and Kenneth Coates, in their study of the Second World War defense projects of the Northwest, attribute the virtual absence of unions in the North to subsidized travel, high wages with ample opportunity for overtime, cheap room and board, and high mobility. If workers felt themselves to be unjustly treated, "they tended to leave, rather than go on strike."²⁴ These factors were likely at work in Norman Wells.

Organized labour in the Northwest Territories had its beginnings in the gold mining industry that developed around the Yellowknife area starting in 1935. By the late 1930s six mining camps were established with other explorations ongoing. By the 1940s

²³Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985), 105. Although drilling began in 1920 at Norman Wells, the actual discovery of oil occurred in 1914. The industry itself did not become viable until the mining development that occurred around Great Bear Lake and Great Slave Lake in the 1930s. See L.S. Bourne, "Yellowknife, N.W.T.: A study of its urban and regional economy," Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, September, 1963, 26-27. The terms aboriginal and native are used interchangeably in this discussion to refer collectively to the Dene, Metis, and Inuit peoples of the Northwest Territories. The term first nation is often avoided as it is a term not generally used by Inuit peoples. Indian is used only in this paper when it is the choice of the respective writer being discussed or in reference to government related topics such as the Indian Act or Indian Affairs. The term Dene refers to the five Athapaskan first nations indigenous to the Northwest Territories: Gwich'in, Chipewyan, Dog Rib, Sahtu or North Slavey, and Deh Cho or South Slavey. Metis are those of mixed First Nation and European background.

²⁴William R. Morrison and Kenneth A. Coates, *Working the North: Labor and the Northwest Defense Projects, 1942-1946* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1994), 17, 240-245.

the three largest gold mines in operation were the Con, Negus, and Giant mines respectively.²⁵ It was not until 1944, however, that attempts were made to organize the Yellowknife miners. That responsibility was taken on by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers.

The IUMMSW, more popularly known as Mine Mill, began as the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in Butte, Montana on 5 May 1893.²⁶ The first WFM locals

²⁵Bourne, "Yellowknife," 26-28. See also Coates, *Colonies*, 105. Also John David Hamilton, *Arctic Revolution: Social Change in the Northwest Territories, 1935-1994* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1994) 29. Taking its name from its original owner, the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company, the "Con" mine has had a variety of owners since first opening but has retained its original name.

²⁶"What is Unionism?" *North Star*, December 1952, 3. It is unclear how many times the *North Star* published. There are only two issues in the Northwest Territories Archives: December 1952 and January/February 1953. They have been mistakenly accessioned with a completely unrelated newspaper, the *Northern Star* which published in the early 1990s. Both this article, and the one subsequently cited, "The History of the Yellowknife District Miners' Union," were both authorized for publication by the Yellowknife District Miners' Union. For published work on Mine Mill in Canada see Mike Solski and John Smaller, *Mine Mill: The History of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers in Canada Since 1895*, (Ottawa: Steel Rail, 1984); Al King, *Red Bait: Struggles of a Mine Mill Local*, (Vancouver: Kingbird, 1998); the chapter on organizing for Mine Mill in Bryan D. Palmer, ed., *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers' Movement, 1927-1985*, (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1988); Mercedes Steedman, Peter Sushnigg, and Dieter K. Buse, eds. *Hard Lessons: The Mine Mill Union in the Canadian Labour Movement*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 1995); Robert H. Carlin, *I Know Mine Mill... Do You?* (Toronto: United Steelworkers of America, 1961); and the chapter on Mine Mill in Irving Martin Abella's *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935- 1956*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1973). John Lang, "A Lion in a Den of Daniels: A History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Sudbury, Ontario: 1942 - 1962," MA Thesis, University of Guelph, 1970, concentrates on Mine Mill's battle with the United Steelworkers of America in Sudbury. Similarly, Laurel Sefton MacDowell, *'Remember Kirkland Lake': The History and Effects*

appeared in Canada in the Rossland, BC area in 1895, but was virtually extinct by 1920.²⁷

Reinvigorated in the 1930s with the emergence of the CIO, Mine Mill's Canadian ranks were swelled, largely by the organizing efforts of Communist activists. Irving Abella, in his study of the CIO in Canada, emphasizes Mine Mill's high proportion of Communist leaders.²⁸ It was hostility towards its Communist Party influence that led the Canadian Congress of Labour to expel Mine Mill in 1949, leaving the union subject to raiding by the United Steelworkers of America who promptly launched an aggressive and protracted war against Mine Mill.²⁹

of the Kirkland Lake Gold Miners' Strike, 1941-42, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1983) gives an in depth of Mine Mill's activities in the Kirkland Lake area. Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1998), offers a very complete chapter on Mine Mill in the United States for the period from the 1930s to the 1960s. Morris Wright, *Takes More than Guns: A Brief History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers*, (Denver: International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, 1944) offers a surprising amount of the early history of the union in Canada.

²⁷Solski, *Mine Mill*, 19-37, also Abella, *Nationalism*, 86 and Carlin, *I Know*, iii.

²⁸Abella, *Nationalism*, 3, 45.

²⁹Abella, *Nationalism*, 95-110. There is no doubt that at the root of the CCL's attack on Mine Mill was anti-communism. Al King, himself a Party member during this period, is insistent that the CCF played an equally important role in the attack on Mine Mill. See King, *Red Bait*, 74-75. For a particularly biased account of the struggle between the Communist Party and the CCF for control of the labour movement during this period, see David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1981). In the same year that Mine Mill was expelled, so was the United Electrical Workers with 25,000 members. In addition, the Canadian Seamen's Union was expelled that year from the TLC with its 6,000 members. All three of these unions were Communist dominated, indicating an orchestrated attack on Communists in the Canadian labour movement. See *Union Growth in Canada: 1921 - 1967*, Economic and Research Branch, Canada Department of Labour, Ottawa, 1970, 21. The question must be asked though,

Massive membership losses moved Mine Mill to sue for peace with Steel. In 1967, the Canadian members voted three to one in favour of merging with Steel in a membership wide referendum, and on New Year's Day 1968, with the exception of local 598 in Sudbury which refused to be bound by the referendum results and remained the only Mine Mill local in existence, the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers ceased to exist, all of its locals becoming locals of the United Steelworkers of America,³⁰ including its five locals in the Northwest Territories.³¹

Mine Mill's first organizing attempt in the Northwest Territories was in 1944. In that year two members of the union came to work at Yellowknife's Negus mine with the intention of organizing the workers there. Although they were successful in signing a

how much were these expulsions and the raiding that followed them genuinely motivated by ideological reasons, and how much of it was an attempt by unions such as Steel simply to increase membership, and therefore revenues from dues, by cashing in on current anti-communist hysteria?

³⁰King, *Red Bait*, 150-152.

³¹One of the difficulties of researching the history of organized labour in the Northwest Territories is that more often than not in their collection of data regarding labour statistics for northern Canada, the Economic and Research Branch of the Department of Labour groups the Yukon and Northwest Territories together and it is not possible to separate the statistics for each territory. Other times they are reported separately. This problem is common with their various publications including *Labour Organizations, Strikes and Lockouts*, *Union Growth in Canada*, and *Union Growth in Canada in the Sixties*. In 1966 Labour Canada reported Mine Mill with four locals in the Yukon and five in the Northwest Territories. In 1967 there were 11 locals in both, but it is not indicated how many were in each. The two additional locals were probably in the Yukon, but it is impossible to say based on information from Labour Canada. See *Labour Organizations in Canada*, Economic and Research Branch, Canada Department of Labour, Ottawa, 1966 & 1967.

majority of the workers and were chartered by the international as the Yellowknife District Miners' Union, Local 802, on 23 June 1944, the local at Negus was broken when the management fired its leading members and established a company union in its place. It is not clear if the two members who attempted to organize Mine Mill at Negus had been sent by the union or they simply made the effort on their own. It is significant, though, that without any professional staff on site it simply took the dismissal of the leadership to halt the organizing drive. It was not until 1947 that Mine Mill was firmly established in the Northwest Territories, and then it would be at the Con and Giant mines and with the assistance of a paid organizer.³²

Although the post-war era saw the development of substantial transport and freshwater fishing industries in Hay River,³³ the major economic activity in the North remained mining. While the area around Yellowknife was dotted with small gold mines which only produced for a few years, the Discovery mine operated well into the 1960s; Giant and Con remain operational.³⁴ Until the merger with Steel, the employees of all

³²"History of the Yellowknife District Miners' Union," 5. By 1952 Negus had ceased production. (See Bourne, "Yellowknife," 31).

³³See John Campbell Wallace, "Hay River, N.W.T.," MA Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Alberta, 1966.

³⁴Although Giant is no longer producing it was purchased by Miraman (the current owner of Con mine) which continues to use Giant's smelter.

three were represented by Mine Mill. The opening of the Tungsten³⁵ and Pine Point³⁶ mines, and the concomitant development of respectively named communities in the early 1960s, continued to illustrate the North's reliance on mining as well as Mine Mill's commitment to organizing northern miners. It was at Pine Point that the IUMMSW successfully fought off a raid by the International Union of Operating Engineers in 1964.³⁷ When the merger with Steel took place in 1968 the Steelworkers inherited five locals in the NWT.³⁸ In later years, long time members of these locals would complain of the apathy of their younger members toward the union and that they had no appreciation of their union because they had no idea what conditions had been like before there was a union in place.³⁹ This can be explained as the result of changing conditions in the North and the changing role of the union in the lives of Northerners, especially after the merger

³⁵*NWT Data Book: 1986-87: A Complete Information Guide to the Northwest Territories and its Communities* (Yellowknife: Outcrop, 1986), 216-217.

³⁶*Data Book*, 188-189, see also Janet E. McPherson, "The Pine Point Mine" in Everett B. Peterson and Janet B. Wright, eds., *Northern Transitions: Volume One: Northern Resource and Land Use Policy Study* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1978), 65-110.

³⁷King, *Red Bait*, 135. Interestingly, despite the protracted war between Mine Mill and Steel for members, there is no evidence of the Steelworkers attempting to raid Mine Mill locals in the North.

³⁸*Labour Organizations in Canada: 1966*, 34. This is the last year that Labour Canada reported the number of Mine Mill locals in the NWT separately. In 1967 the NWT was again combined with the Yukon for a total of 11 locals. At the same time the United Steelworkers did not represent a single worker in either territory.

³⁹Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest Groups*, 42.

with Steel.

From its earliest days in the Northwest Territories, Mine Mill was active in the social affairs of the community. It is difficult to discuss the role of Mine Mill in northern communities outside of Yellowknife due to a lack of source material, but in the NWT's largest community the union kept a high profile. By the early 1950s Mine Mill activists had participated in establishing the community's first hospital, annually electing one of its members to the facility's board of governors. In addition, local 802 regularly contributed to "worthy causes" and hosted an annual Labour Day picnic to which the entire community was invited.⁴⁰ The union produced radio programs and organized community groups such as the Elks.⁴¹ Josie Gould, a long time resident of Yellowknife, moved to the community in 1965 with her husband who was employed at the Con mine. She fondly remembers the social value of attending membership meetings with him:

I guess I saw the camaraderie whenever they had a general meeting at the Con Mine Rec Hall. The whole family was involved, whether you were a member or not. The whole family went because it affected you, even if you were not the member. And that, I guess, was basically the first family I had. I thought it was great.⁴²

Gould's participation in the activities of her husband's union, and her observations of other wives' participation, helps illustrate the role of women in northern Mine Mill locals.

⁴⁰"History," *North*, 5.

⁴¹Selleck, *Dying*, 7.

⁴²Personal interview, 26 August, 1999. Gould would later distinguish herself as an activist with the NWTPSA/UNW.

It is significant that Gould equated the union with family for it certainly must have played more of an intimate role in remote, isolated, northern communities where everyone was far from friends and family and living in a community often devoid of some of the most basic of diversions available in southern communities.

The union was also active in the recreational life of the community. Dale Johnson is another long term Yellowknife resident and local entrepreneur. He came to Yellowknife in 1974 from Cobalt, Ontario [itself an old Mine Mill stronghold] and worked at Giant mine where he became involved with the union there and acquainted with its veterans. According to Johnson, the union was active in establishing curling and hockey teams, children's parties, and women's sewing clubs on Saturday nights. "The union," Johnson echoes Gould, "was a family affair."⁴³

Mine Mill also played a political role in the Northwest Territories and was consistently vocal on political issues in the North. In 1945, local 802 members Rocky Palmer and Barney McGuire, realizing the role they had both personally played in the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima as former employees of the Eldorado uranium mine on Great Bear Lake, were responsible for the Yellowknife Miners' Union being the first union local in Canada to enter the post-war peace movement by passing a resolution urging the federal government to "avoid becoming involved in an atomic axis."⁴⁴ In the same year,

⁴³Dale Johnson, personal interview, 24 August 1999.

⁴⁴McGuire, "Yellowknife," 8.

stealing the slogan from the United States' War of Independence, "No taxation without representation," the miners were able to unite a broad cross section of Yellowknife society in its campaign for an elected town council and elected representatives for the Northwest Territories.⁴⁵ In early 1953 local 802 boasted that "[c]ontinual representation to the government has brought about a good deal of improvement in Workmen's Compensation in the Territories"⁴⁶ It was not until the 1960s, though, that the union participated in the most significant development in northern politics to that time, a complete overhaul of the political structure of the Northwest Territories.

By 1966 government in the Northwest Territories was in need of significant change. Still headquartered in Ottawa after almost one hundred years, the territorial "head of state" was the Commissioner, appointed by the minister responsible for Northern Affairs and National Resources.⁴⁷ Advised by a territorial council comprised of eight members – three elected by residents of the Northwest Territories, and five appointed by the minister – the Commissioner was not responsible to it. His staff consisted of 56 individuals, most of them resident in Ottawa.⁴⁸ With the implementation of many of the

⁴⁵*Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁶"History," *North*, 5.

⁴⁷At the time, Indian Affairs had only recently been transferred to this portfolio from Citizenship and Immigration on the recommendation of the recent Royal Commission on Government Organization.

⁴⁸Gurston Dacks, Ed. *Devolution and Constitutional Development in the Canadian North* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1990), 27.

recommendations of the Carrothers Commission that year, government in the Northwest Territories was significantly changed.⁴⁹

Officially known as the Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories, the commission took its unofficial name from its chair: Alfred William Rooke Carrothers, a specialist in labour law and Dean of law at the University of Western Ontario.⁵⁰ The Carrothers Commission was the culmination of a series of political events occurring in both Ottawa and the Northwest Territories throughout the early 1960s. In 1961 many of the non-Native population in the Mackenzie Valley were agitating for political reform in the North. They were able to garner the support of the territorial council in their bid to have the NWT divided into two separate territories: an eastern, largely Inuit⁵¹ one which would continue to be administered from Ottawa, and a

⁴⁹A.W. R. Carrothers, *Report of the Advisory Commission on Development of Government in the Northwest Territories*. vols. 1, 2, and summary (Ottawa: 1966).

⁵⁰*Who's Who in Canada: 1966-68: An Illustrated Biographical Record of Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto: International, 1966), 421.

⁵¹Before proceeding with a discussion involving the Inuit, it would be wise to first explain a few areas of confusion relating to nomenclature. Although the Inuit have always referred to themselves as Inuit, non-Inuit have generally referred to the Inuit as Eskimos, a term which is considered offensive by many Inuit. It should also be pointed out that Inuit peoples live not only in what was the eastern Northwest Territories and is now Nunavut, but also in northern Quebec, Labrador, Greenland, Russia, Alaska and the western Northwest Territories. While the people of each locality all have different names for themselves, speak different languages, and have differing cultural practices, they are collectively known as Inuit peoples. This is confusing because the people in Canada's eastern Arctic call themselves Inuit. The Inuit people of the western Northwest Territories are known as Inuvialuit.

western, self-governing Mackenzie Territory that would have the mechanisms of responsible government devolved to it and eventually be admitted into confederation as the eleventh province. This movement for territorial division gained further momentum when it gained the support of the Conservative government.⁵²

The Mackenzie Territory, as envisioned in 1961, never materialized.⁵³ Instead, two years after the fall of the Diefenbaker government, the Liberal government of Lester Pearson established the Carrothers Commission in June 1965.⁵⁴ The commission solicited input from respondents on issues such as the location of the capital, division of the territories, provincial versus territorial status, and government structure. As well, it addressed questions pertaining to economic development. Carrothers took submissions

⁵²Carrothers, *Report*, 145-6; also Kirk Cameron and Graham White, *Northern Governments in Transition: Political and Constitutional Development in the Yukon, Nunavut and the Western Northwest Territories*, (Ottawa: Renouf, 1995), 48-50. Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), 191-227. John David Hamilton, *Arctic Revolution: Social Change in the Northwest Territories: 1935-1994*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 1994), 90-91, Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 363-365.

⁵³While most writers suggest that the idea died on the order paper when the Conservatives were defeated in the 1963 election [see Cameron and White, *Northern*, 48-50; also Coates, *Canada's*, 191-227; and Zaslow, *Northward*, 363-365], journalist John David Hamilton states that when the Conservative member for the Mackenzie River riding, Gene Reaume, became aware that the indigenous population had no input into the process, he took his concerns to other members of the House of Commons and generated enough backing to force the shelving of the proposed legislation. [See Hamilton, *Arctic*, 91].

⁵⁴Carrothers, *Report*, vol.1, 1.

and held hearings in communities throughout the North as well as in Ottawa, hearing from individuals representing their own personal views as well as representatives of churches, businesses, and community councils. Yellowknife, Hay River, and Fort Smith all made presentations for the purposes of being considered for the new capital. In addition, one trade union made a presentation to the commission: the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers.

The issues that Mine Mill argued for clearly illustrated the progressive and democratic nature of the union. Among the issues that Mine Mill were in favour of included the following:

- development and continued federal control of natural resources;
- incentives to permanent residency;
- continuation of federal grants with territorial control over finances;
- employment and subsidized housing for Natives as well as negotiation of treaties;
- preservation of cultural heritage;
- a fully elected territorial council;
- the establishment of the capital at Yellowknife; and
- the popular election of the NWT Commissioner.

In addition, the union argued that provincial or territorial status should be decided by a referendum.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Carrothers, *Report*, vol. 2, B21.

Mine Mill opposed division of the territories. Its reasoning was likely the same as that of the commission itself, which recommended against division for two reasons. The first was the argument of strength in unity. Carrothers believed that the people of the Northwest Territories would be better served in their dealings with Ottawa if they spoke with one voice. Secondly, the commission perceived division as being driven by, and for, the benefit of non-natives. The fear was expressed that the residual eastern territory would remain in perpetuity a politically underdeveloped appendage of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. "Division," the report stated, "could have the accidental and unintended effect of gerrymandering the indigenous peoples in the north out of effective participation in territorial self government."³⁶

Participation in the Carrothers Commission was the last significant political activity of Mine Mill regarding the Northwest Territories. Active in the economic, social, and political life of the North since 1944, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers had enjoyed a monopoly over organized labour in the territories since it first attempted to organize the Negus mine. The implementation of many of Carrothers' recommendations coincided with the merger of Mine Mill into the United Steelworkers of

³⁶Carrothers, *Report*, Summary, 5-6. Carrothers' final reason in recommending against division was paternalistic, bordering on racist. He argued that by keeping east and west together, the east had much to benefit. It was the stated opinion of the commission that in remaining together the people of the eastern Arctic would continue to have their "level of political sophistication" elevated through interaction with their neighbours in west. The commission was essentially saying that the Inuit still had a lot to learn from non-natives about politics. See vol. 1, 147.

America on 1 January 1968. This not only saw the union's disappearance [with the exception of local 598 in Sudbury], but also overlapped with the decline in prestige of private sector unions in Canada's north. Unlike Mine Mill, the Steelworkers were never the preeminent union in the North. Even before the capital was moved to Yellowknife, the first unionized public servants had made their appearance in the Northwest Territories. With the continued implementation of Carrothers' recommendations, the labour movement "North of 60" was soon overwhelmingly made up of public servants.

The Carrothers Commission not only affected the political boundaries of the Northwest Territories, but also its political structure. In addition to recommending against division, the commission recommended devolving of greater political powers from Northern Affairs and National Resources to the Government of the Northwest Territories,⁵⁷ an increased democratization of the territorial government, and the transfer of the capital to Yellowknife. This process began in earnest 18 September 1967 when the staff and families of the Government of the Northwest Territories, totaling 75 people, boarded a single plane in Ottawa bound for Yellowknife.⁵⁸ In order to address the growing needs of a modern, northern society, the federal government had steadily

⁵⁷Even today this is somewhat bureaucratically confusing as even though the Government of the Northwest Territories exercises a considerable degree of autonomy and employs its own staff, it is still technically within the purview of the successor of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

⁵⁸Mark O. Dickerson, *Whose North? Political Change, Political Development, and Self-Government in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1992), 89.

increased the number of civil servants in the North in the post-war period. As early as 1963 the number of people employed in the civil service in Yellowknife was already greater than those employed by the mines.⁵⁹ With government located in the North after 1967, with expanding responsibilities and services, the territorial staff grew exponentially. By 1970 the Government of the Northwest Territories employed 1,285 people.⁶⁰ The vast majority of these employees were members of the Northwest Territories Public Service Association. It is this union, particularly its internal dynamics, which is the subject of the following chapters.

Chapter one of this thesis outlines briefly the emergence of the NWTPSA from its initial organizing efforts to the signing of its first collective agreement in 1970. The themes explored include factors playing upon the new organization both as a public sector and a northern union. These factors include the elitism of the teachers' organization which acted to keep the "professionals" apart from the rest of the territorial union, the role played by the Commissioner of Northwest Territories in facilitating the formation of the union, and the factors which led northern civil servants to organize. Vital to this process was the interaction of northern workers with the staff and leadership of the Alliance.

Chapter two concentrates on the 1970s, documenting the exponential growth of the northern civil service and its conflict ridden relationship with the employer subsequent

⁵⁹Bourne, "Yellowknife," 54-55, 87.

⁶⁰Dacks, *Devolution*, 27.

to the expiry of its first collective agreement. Of particular concern is the inability of the union to retain either elected leaders or staff. Especially in the period prior to 1977, presidents, vice-presidents, and regional vice-presidents [RVPs] came and went with dizzying regularity. It was only by establishing the president's position as full-time in 1978 that the top leadership position gained a degree of stability. Maintaining a small staff throughout this period, the top staff position, that of executive secretary treasurer was filled and refilled continually as one by one every incumbent was fired by the executive. It was only near the end of the decade with the unionizing of the staff and the hiring of a professional from outside of the Northwest Territories that the regular turnover in this position ended. Also examined is the NWTPSA's relations with other labour organizations during that time, particularly the union's role in laying the groundwork for a Northwest Territories Federation of Labour, and its early attempts to disaffiliate from PSAC.

Chapter three looks at the 1980s. For the NWTPSA/UNW this period represents a golden age. Although volunteer vice-presidents and regional vice-presidents continued to turn over regularly, the presidency remained stable. Representing an ever-growing government workforce, with the assistance of the PSAC, the NWTPSA began to represent other workers. Largely organized by the professional staff of both organizations, this growing proportion of non-government employees, increasingly aboriginal, enjoyed and sometimes exercised the right to strike. This fundamental change in the character of the organization led directly to the 1987 change of name to the Union of Northern Workers.

This period also saw the union rise and fall in prestige within the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour.

Chapter four, the final chapter of this thesis, shows the increasing isolation and division of the Union of Northern Workers during the 1990s. Growing animosity towards both the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour and the Alliance was coupled with increasing internal divisions, caused by the continuing professionalization of the union's executive. In 1990, in an unpopular decision, the union established regional vice-presidents as full-time officers, assigning to them in addition to their historic political function, responsibilities previously performed by professional staff. Subsequently, the first vice-president was added to the union's pay roll contrary to the decision of the 1993 convention. Coinciding with this was the president's decision to allow three executive officers to retain their positions (and salaries) within the union despite having ceased to be members of UNW bargaining units. When these officers were dismissed following the intervention of the Alliance's National Board of Directors, there followed shortly the resignations of three more executive officers, including the president, at a time when the union was most in need of leadership.

For the first time ever, government workers were in a possible strike situation due to recent legislative changes. When the government's final offer, designed to split the union east and west was successful, events were set in motion that quickly saw the tearing apart of the union. Had there been experienced leadership in place, committed to the fundamental ideal of trade unionism – solidarity – a secessionist movement would not have

been provided such fertile conditions in which to take root. The bifurcation of the Union of Northern Workers resulted from a crisis of leadership caused by an historic trend in which professional union staff were displaced by the creation of a union elite which no longer served its members.

CHAPTER 1

The Origins of the Northwest Territories Public Service Association

The emergence of a civil service union in the Northwest Territories in the late 1960s parallels the emergence of the territorial civil service. Just as power devolved from the federal government to the embryonic Government of the Northwest Territories in 1967, so too, union representation of northern civil servants shifted from Ottawa to Yellowknife. This transition was made possible by three factors: the pre-existence of civil servants' organizations in the North, the efforts of northern workers in organizing their own union, and the munificence of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. The relationship established in the late 1960s between the Public Service Alliance of Canada and territorial employees provided the foundation upon which the majority of northern workers' quality of life depends today. The birth of the Northwest Territories Public Service Association in 1969, and its affiliation with the Public Service Alliance of Canada the following year, resulted from the interaction of territorial workers in their endeavours to organize a union, and the efforts of the staff and leadership of the PSAC to retain their membership in the North. The result of these converging forces was a uniquely northern union. The territorial government quickly indicated to its employees, by its maltreatment, that there was a need for a territorial public servants' union. As more positions continued to move from one government to the other, this need increased. Significantly, devolving employees did not fight to keep their PSAC membership. The Alliance attempted to retain its jurisdiction over these workers, but was unsuccessful. Rather, correctional officers,

members of a small group of employees who were already employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories prior to the report of the Carrothers Commission, initiated early organizing efforts. When approached for support in these efforts, the PSAC responded with immediate and sustained assistance. The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, essentially a benevolent autocrat with a favourable predisposition towards organized labour helped facilitate efforts by not only not opposing unionization efforts, but also by using his political power to recognize the union both officially and unofficially. The importance of the Commissioner's role is seen most clearly when compared to his counterpart in the Yukon who actively resisted the organization of the territory's civil servants. Territorial teachers are also looked at as they provide the antithesis to the NWTPSA. The teachers severed their ties to the PSAC soon after devolving to territorial jurisdiction. Like their colleagues in the South, they remained outside of the larger Canadian labour movement. After securing collective bargaining rights the Northwest Territories Public Service Association was granted component status within the Alliance. As a part of the PSAC, territorial workers were unique in that not only were they the only component that did not represent federal employees, but also the only civil service union among the provinces and territories with the backing of a national union. The chapter concludes with the successful negotiation of a first collective agreement, negotiated jointly by the NWTPSA and the PSAC.

Employment patterns in the North were rapidly changing in the 1960s. As noted earlier, by 1963 federal civil servants outnumbered miners in Yellowknife. In the wake of

the Carrothers Report, many of these government positions were in the process of being devolved to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Incumbents of these positions were given a choice of three options: stay in their position and accept their new employer, possibly at reduced wages and benefits; transfer to another federal position elsewhere in Canada and the possibility of demotion; or resign. Although no numbers are available as to how many employees chose each option, many chose to remain in their positions and take their chances with the new employer. To fill new positions, as well as those being left vacant by those who chose to leave the North at this time, hiring was done by the Government of the Northwest Territories in southern centers.¹

New hires of the territorial government were not members of a union. However, those federal employees who were slated for devolution,² but still employed by the federal government, were, by virtue of that employment, members of the PSAC, which had only recently acquired collective bargaining rights with the passage of the Public Service Staff Relations Act in 1967. The passage of the act established the Alliance as the second

¹Interview with Harold Franklin, Item 0194A, "The Formation of the NWTPSA," Union of Northern Workers Collection, Northwest Territories Archives. There are two audio cassette recordings of Franklin, the second one accessioned as item 0195B. Both are hereinafter referred to as Franklin interview A and B. Neither are dated, but the first one is marked 1987 and is more an oral memoir as Franklin is the only person on the recording. The second cassette is an actual interview, though the identity of the interviewer is unknown. Both recordings contain a wealth of information on the early life of the union.

²The term transfer is not used here as employees were not transferring, but rather taking on new employment.

certified union in the Northwest Territories following Mine Mill.

By the time the capital was moved to Yellowknife, the PSAC was well established in the North. Nils Orvik and Gary Vanderhaden, in their study of interest groups in the North, reported the Alliance's combined membership for the Yukon and Northwest Territories in 1967 at 3,500.³ The Alliance's National Component⁴ and the Department of Finance Component both had functioning locals in the NWT. John Scott, president of the National Component and member of the PSAC National Board of Directors, was a resident of Hay River.⁵ With the devolution of many of these positions from the federal government, about 2,000 individuals entered employment with the two territorial governments.⁶ Significantly, once territorial workers began to organize and receive active

³Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest*, 54.

⁴Unlike most of the Alliance's components which were generally established according to government department, the National Component is more of a "catch all" component for employees not falling within the jurisdiction of the other components. For example, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the Yukon Territory Public Service Association held local status within the National Component at different times.

⁵*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1967, 23-28. As is typical of this publication at the time, National Component locals of the NWT and Yukon are grouped together for a total of four. The Finance Component on the other hand specified one local in the NWT.

⁶Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest*, 54. Unfortunately *Labour Organizations in Canada* lists the membership numbers for the PSAC at this time by component rather than province or territory. These numbers are either inflated or the majority of these employees were in the Yukon as the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories*, 1969, 25, indicates that the Government of the Northwest Territories had 356 employees as of 31 March 1969. Orvik and Vanderhaden attribute their numbers to an interview they conducted with "NWTPSA President Charlie Parks." Parks was the PSAC Regional Representative and NWTPSA Executive Secretary Treasurer; he was never president. According to an interview with NWTPSA past president Peter Dyck on 11

assistance from the Alliance, that support did not come from its officers and members in the North, but rather from professional staff brought up from the South.

No sooner was the PSAC on the ground in the North, however, than it began to diminish in size. As employees moved from federal to territorial employment they lost their status as members of federal bargaining units and therefore their status as union members. As there was no bargaining relationship between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Alliance, no dues were deducted from these employees. Given the intention of the federal government, following the recommendations of the Carrothers Commission, to continue to devolve more positions to the territories, the development of an ever expanding territorial government had the inadvertent affect of removing from northern workers their only recently acquired right to union representation. To prevent further losses, the Alliance would have to come to terms with the government.

Late in 1967, PSAC Vice-President T. F. Gough contacted Commissioner Hodgson, claiming government employees as members of the PSAC and requesting automatic dues check-off – the practice of the employer automatically deducting union dues from the employee's earnings and forwarding them on to the union.⁷ Responding to him in a letter dated 14 December 1967, Hodgson denied the request, stating:

August 1999, Parks resigned his position after being reprimanded for spending too much of his office hours at the neighbourhood bar. These numbers should be considered accordingly.

⁷Although Gough's original request for check-off was not in the UNW Collection, Hodgson's subsequent response cited, was.

I am, of course, most anxious that employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories receive every advantage possible from employee organizations. I must, however, deal with the organization representing the majority of our employees and until such a time as there is an indication that there is actually a staff organization, I will defer the granting of check-off facilities for organization dues.⁸

Hodgson was politically astute to deny the request for two reasons. First, he was asserting the sovereignty of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The PSAC's request for automatic check-off of government employees indicated indirectly that the union did not recognize the territorial government as sovereign, but rather as another department of the federal bureaucracy. The Alliance had been formed to represent federal workers, which Hodgson clearly indicated through his refusal for check-off they were not. Second, Hodgson was undoubtedly aware by that time that certain employees of the government were actively involved in organizing their own union and its relationship with the PSAC was unclear.

The absence of participation of northern workers in the PSAC's early attempts to represent them is significant. In considering territorial employees still to be federal civil servants, no effort had been made to organize a specifically northern employee organization, indicating that although the Alliance quickly demonstrated a willingness to continue to represent northern workers, no efforts were made to organize these workers as either a distinct local or component. Early efforts by the Alliance to reclaim their

⁸Letter, 14 December 1967 from S.M. Hodgson, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, to T.F. Gough, Vice-President, Organization, Membership Education, Public Relations, and Research, Public Service Alliance of Canada. Box/file 23-2, UNW.

dwindling northern membership were missing a vital characteristic: the participation of northern workers.

Hodgson's letter to Gough confirmed that employees moving from federal to territorial employment would lose the union protection they had only recently achieved. In a 1986 article, the Northwest Territories Public Service Association's Assistant Executive Secretary Treasurer Renee Jones inaccurately wrote in the union newspaper, *Sulijuaq*,⁹ that the union was formed in 1968 by federal government employees "transferring" to the territorial government which had just moved north from Ottawa. "Many of them," wrote Jones, "were concerned that they would lose their PSAC union representation."¹⁰ While the loss of representation must certainly have been a factor in moving government employees to form a union, a more tangible loss to them at the time was the Group Insurance rates that they enjoyed as members of the Alliance.¹¹ Responsibility for initiating the formation of a civil service union for territorial employees, however, did not lie with devolving federal employees. Nor did the move towards

⁹Inuktitut for truth.

¹⁰Renee Jones, "Assistant Executive Secretary Treasurer's Report: NWTPSA – Past, Present, and Future," *Sulijuaq*, Vol. 5, No. 8, December 1986, 12, Box 25 (outsize) *Sulijuaq*, 1977-1989, UNW. The collection contains the issues of this paper from its first publication in 1974 to the spring of 1993. Issues cited after that time were generously made available by the Union of Northern Workers at their headquarters in Yellowknife.

¹¹Letter, 11 June 1968 from Claude Edwards, President, Public Service Alliance of Canada to S.M. Hodgson, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Box/file 23-2, UNW.

organization begin in 1968 as Jones reported, but rather a year earlier.¹²

Territorial employees had their reasons for wanting a union. Some of these reasons were likely accentuated by life in the North. Extremely cold, long, dark winters, isolation, the lack of amenities, and a substantially higher cost of living were all factors unique to the North that must have added to employee unrest.¹³ But generally the reasons government employees desired a union were typical of any work place – the workers wanted better pay and improved treatment by the employer. In the case of Josie Gould, when asked about the circumstances surrounding her signing a union card, the reasons were far more personal than economic. It almost reduced to “I got a boss that was a bitch.” It was not just the treatment that she received personally that got Gould involved with the union, but the treatment of others. In a 1999 interview she explained her reasons for getting involved

¹²There is a certain degree of debate as to when the union began. One unsigned article, “UNW History: From Humble Beginnings,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1992, 8-11, Box/file 9-10, claims that the union began in 1969. From a purely legal perspective that is correct for that is when enabling legislation was passed by the GNWT recognizing the union. Both Jones’ piece as well as another unsigned article, “25 Years of Labour Peace,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall 1993, (10-12) 10, assert the union was formed in 1968. However, former president Darm Crook, in a personal interview recorded 10 August 1999, as well as in an article he wrote, “UNW History – part 4 in a series: The Very Beginnings of the UNW,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 1993, 16, Box/file 9-12, states that organizing began in 1967. The most definitive account though is probably a letter to *Sulijuq* from Caroline G. Franklin-Dale, daughter of Harold Franklin, one of the key organizers of the union who passed away 25 June 1991. She takes exception to several statements made in the article “From Humble Beginnings.” Caroline, who moved to Yellowknife with her family in 1967, insists that is the year her father and others began organizing the union. *Sulijuq*, Vol. 11, No. 4, December 1992, 3-4, Box/file 9-10, UNW.

¹³These factors take on greater significance in communities that are only accessible by air.

with the union:

I saw other things happening around and I wanted to take part. And I took up the fight for one girl who I thought her boss was even worse than my boss. And it was very unfair. Every time she left his office she was in tears, and I thought "this will never do. Let's go get signed up and we'll see what we can do about it."¹⁴

Though Gould was not one of the initial organizers of the union, and did not actually sign a card until 1970, her sentiments were echoed by Orvik and Vanderhaden, who stated that the government was not regarded as a good employer.¹⁵

Harold Franklin was one of the new employees recruited by the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1967. Hired in the South, he was accompanied by his family when he came from Chilliwack, BC, to Yellowknife to work at the new correctional institute. Along with Keith McInnes, he was a key activist in organizing territorial public servants.¹⁶ As a direct hire, and not a devolving employee from the federal government, there was never any question about his membership in the PSAC. Ironically, he attributed the Alliance with some of the responsibility for creating the conditions in which northern workers felt the need for a union. Franklin complained about the "haphazard" approach of

¹⁴Gould interview. There is a certain ambiguity to Gould's comments for later in the interview she makes clear a great fondness for former Deputy Commissioner John Parker, who, she stated would get rid of any manager who was mistreating employees. Franklin on the other hand remembered Parker as "a hard nut to crack". (Franklin interview A). Parker became Commissioner in 1979 when Hodgson retired.

¹⁵Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest*, 55-56.

¹⁶Franklin interview A.

the various PSAC components with regard to employee classification in the North prior to devolution. The Alliance, Franklin claimed, had forgotten about the northern members, not giving them the attention they deserved.¹⁷ As a result, when the territories took over responsibility for these positions, not only were there no classifications in place adequately to address the unique needs of a northern workforce, neither was there a union to represent concerns of such a nature to the new employer.

The primary complaint that employees had with the government, again according to Franklin, was that they felt cheated. Prior to arriving in the North, new hires were promised housing, wage packages, and a cost of living allowance. Once employees were on-site, however, they were, in Franklin's words, "thrown to the wind." For many employees there was no housing upon their arrival in the North. Many had to stay in motels for up to two weeks, others had to live in the correctional institute where they worked.¹⁸ To make matters worse for the new hires, they had been ill-advised, if advised at all, about the high costs of northern living. Recalling his early career with the government years later, Harold Franklin espoused a sense of betrayal as to the treatment of southern hires:

We didn't get what we was promised in the interview. I didn't, and many of them [new hires] didn't. We only got what we was promised – free housing and oil – free, gratis, for the first six months or a year. Well we found out we had to pay rent. And the oil – within a year we had to start

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

buying our own oil ... Many people left at that time ... Hydro was tremendous ... We found we was paid about half of what we should have got.

Employer-employee relations soured rapidly under such conditions. For employees outside of Yellowknife, in the remote communities, these conditions were exacerbated by inadequate settlement allowances and exorbitant food costs.¹⁹ Employees quickly established a distrust of the employer.

In 1968 the PSAC was again active in the organizing of territorial employees. This time, however, it was supporting the efforts of northern workers active in unionizing the territorial civil service. In partial response to a request for assistance from McInnes and Franklin, the Alliance sent Alberta and Northwest Territories Regional Representative J. O. North to investigate conditions in Yellowknife. Reporting his observations of territorial employees in June, he told his superiors of the state of affairs prevailing:

There is considerable unrest of the employees. Most feel that they are receiving less than when they worked "outside." Turnover is terrific. In one section [Treasury] eight of the eleven employees have their resignations in for July. Wages and salaries are incorporated with northern allowance and isolation pay to form a composite salary. Accommodation is subsidized to some extent, but employees have to pay utilities. Most employees are of the opinion that their composite salary is not adequate enough to cover the extra cost of living in Yellowknife [estimated at 33 per cent more than Edmonton]. They have less dollars to save after all living costs are paid for and they feel that to work and to stay in the north [sic] there should be some cash incentive to compensate for living in less than

¹⁹Franklin interview B.

approved modes of living similar to the outside.²⁰

Both Franklin and North emphasized the high financial costs of living in the Northwest Territories, compounded by the sense of having been cheated by the employer. They also both stated that these factors led to a high turnover rate.

High turnover, or transiency as it is sometimes referred to, is historic to labour in the North. However, in the case of civil servants, and in light of the poor treatment they received from the employer, the commonly negative characterization of southern workers in the North by writers such as Ken Coates must be considered. As one of the very few historians of Canada's north, Coates' work is replete with references to non-native southerners in the North as "transients," whose "primary goal was to make money," and demonstrating "little commitment to the North."²¹ While employee turnover among civil servants in the North was indeed high, it appears to be more the result of workers being taken advantage of and misled by the employer, rather than as a result of more mercenary motives as Coates states. Like the miners before them, many soon understandably left the North. That many chose to stay and organize a union is testament to the resiliency of these workers.

²⁰Report of Trip to Yellowknife, 4 June 1968, from J.O. North, PSAC Regional Representative, Alberta and NWT, Box/file 23-2, UNW.

²¹For examples of this characterization see Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840 - 1973*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1991), xxii, 246; also Coates, *Canada's*, 13; and Coates and Powell, *Modern*, 16.

It is difficult to determine the exact nature of the early organizing of government employees in 1967 and 1968, but there were certainly two separate forces at work organizing civil servants in the Northwest Territories. As already mentioned, the PSAC made an unsuccessful attempt to have dues deducted from them in late 1967. After that point, the Alliance played a more supporting role for those workers who took the initiative to organize. According to Harold Franklin, the initial push for a union came from correctional workers.²² This is significant, as corrections was one of the few departments that the territorial government administered prior to the implementation of the recommendations of the Carrothers Report. A correctional facility was opened in Yellowknife in the fall of 1966 with the hiring done in Ottawa. The facility had difficulty keeping staff as the government was continuously recruiting employees well after the opening of the jail, indicating a level of frustration with the employer.²³ As territorial employees, these workers were part of a small group within the burgeoning community of civil servants in Yellowknife whose positions had never been represented by the PSAC. Franklin, who had previous union experience in the South, arrived in February 1967, at a time when many of the initial hires for the jail had begun to leave. Not surprisingly, when

²²Franklin interview B.

²³"Rehabilitation Stressed at Jail Opening," *News*, 15 September 1966, 1. A full page add for corrections officers for the Yellowknife facility appeared in this same publication (25 August 1966, 10) offering "very attractive salaries, relocation expenses, superannuation, Group Surgical-Medical, Annual Sick Leave, Added Special Benefits." The same ad appeared in the next issue and variations of it continued to appear throughout the next year.

organizing did begin, it was in Franklin's words, "the correctional staff that got the ball rolling." They quickly realized that they would have to organize other government workers as well, and found a lot of support among federal employees moving into territorial positions.²⁴

There is no reason to believe that correctional workers were more predisposed towards unionization than other government employees. While the territorial civil service did not really begin to dramatically increase in size until the transfer of the capital to Yellowknife in 1967, correctional workers had been on the ground and dealing with the employer for a full year before most other employees devolved from the federal government. Thus they had been dealing with the territorial government as an employer longer than others, and had more time to organize. Added to this was the reality that while most other workers were scattered throughout various offices, mostly in Yellowknife and Fort Smith, correctional workers were concentrated at the correctional facility and the correctional camp, both in Yellowknife.

Organizing began in earnest when Franklin began to work with Keith McInnes, another former union activist.²⁵ McInnes had recently moved to Yellowknife from the department of local government in Fort Smith.²⁶ "We both realized it was necessary to

²⁴Franklin interview B.

²⁵Franklin interview A.

²⁶Letter, Franklin-Dale. Also Franklin interview A. It is not clear which department McInnes worked in once he moved to Yellowknife.

have a union,” Franklin recalled. Together the two of them began a program of research, finding out about the issues facing territorial workers across the North:

We got together weekends and every night to wee hours of the morning, studying contracts, proposals; trying to find out the cost of living in other parts of the territories, talking to people in the street, talking to people by the phone, even paying it out of our own pockets making these calls, getting information. It was very hard getting the feedback from a lot of these places... Fort Smith, Inuvik, Frobisher Bay....²⁷

Although it is unclear as to exactly when the process of card signing began,²⁸ Franklin and McInnes must have early realized the daunting task that lay ahead of them in organizing a small civil service that stretched over the largest and most inaccessible reaches of Canada.

Significantly, McInnes and Franklin soon made contact with the PSAC, presumably for assistance in exchange for future affiliation:

We contacted Claude Edwards in Ottawa [at] the Public Service Alliance of Canada and told him what we had done and he said yes, before we could go anywhere we would have to get fifty per cent plus one [of government employees to sign union cards] ... before the Commissioner would even talk to us.²⁹

Judging from Edwards’ emphatic response regarding “fifty per cent plus one,” it is probable that Franklin’s and McInnes’s contact with Edwards took place after Commissioner Hodgson’s 14 December 1967 refusal to grant check-off to the PSAC for

²⁷Franklin interview A. Like many communities in the North, Frobisher Bay has since taken on an aboriginal name; it is now called Iqaluit.

²⁸Much of the early history of the NWTPSA relies on the two Franklin interviews. As is common with such materials, there is very rarely mention made of specific dates.

²⁹Franklin interview A.

territorial employees.

Edwards offered more than just advice. He sent the two organizers \$200 to help defray the costs of out-of-pocket expenses such as long distance calls, postage and such.³⁰ Later, J.O. North, was sent to Yellowknife to make his report on the conditions of government employees and to assist in their organization. In his report, North informed the Alliance's leadership that he had held three meetings with "employees and/or committees" in addition to visiting with run-of-the-mill employees. Discussions were held with an impromptu steering committee and a "general meeting" was held which elected an executive consisting of Mr. B. Kornichuk as president, Mr. DeGrandment as first vice-president, Mr. C. Elliot, second vice-president, Miss D. Kluge, secretary, and Mr. Sparks as treasurer.³¹ It is curious that neither McInnes nor Franklin, as key organizers, were on the original executive. In fact, of the original five executive members, the only one that Franklin recalled was the president, Brian Kornichuk, who left the North soon afterwards. Those who Franklin remembered as being active in organizing government workers were Saul Deitch of the purchasing department, and Stanley Mercredi, who Franklin recalled as "a great help to us." Mercredi came up with the idea of raffling off bottles of liquor at the weekly meetings in order to help out with postal expenses. In addition, Marge Porter,

³⁰Franklin interview A. Also "It Was 20 Years Ago Today," *Update*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 6 January 1989, Box/file 9-3, UNW. While *Sulijug* usually published on a quarterly basis, *Update* was usually a one sheet newsletter which was issued more regularly.

³¹North, Trip Report.

from the department of education acted as secretary for the budding union.³²

The Alliance immediately pursued recognition from the employer. A week after North filed his report, Claude Edwards wrote to Commissioner Stuart Hodgson requesting that, when the Northwest Territories Council convened 26 April 1968, it formally recognize the Northwest Territories Government Employees' Association, initiate dues check-off, and enact territorial legislation similar to the PSSRA.³³ Hodgson's official response was non-committal, stating that as there was no territorial labour law on the books, he was unclear as to how to proceed with the request and was therefore referring the matter to the Deputy Attorney General of Canada.³⁴

While Edwards lobbied the Commissioner, Franklin and his comrades worked on getting cards signed. Given that the organizing drive was based out of Yellowknife, and many prospective members were spread across the North in centres such as Inuvik, Churchill,³⁵ Cambridge Bay, and Frobisher Bay, acquiring 50 per cent plus one was a difficult task. High rates of transiency among government workers, however, made it almost impossible. Workers would sign cards and soon afterwards move on. Franklin recalled the union having to go back to the same communities five or six times for this

³²Franklin interview, A.

³³Letter, Edwards to Hodgson, 11 June 1968.

³⁴Letter, 4 July 1968, S.M. Hodgson, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, to C.A. Edwards, President, Public Service Alliance of Canada. Box/file 23-2, UNW.

³⁵Although Churchill is in Manitoba, it was the regional service centre for the Keewatin region well into the 1970s.

reason. "It was an ongoing thing," he remembered.³⁶ It was largely through the good graces of the Commissioner that this hurdle was overcome.

In the late 1960s a territorial commissioner held very real power and exercised it daily. When Edwards originally informed Franklin and McInnes that "50 per cent plus one" of government employees would first have to sign cards in order for the union to be recognized, he did so based on his own previous communications with Hodgson, whose own interpretation of established labour practice at the time was quite liberal. The more common practice at the time was that after 50 per cent plus one had signed cards, a certification vote would be held. Hodgson was offering automatic certification based on this criterion. Compared to his counterpart in the Yukon, Hodgson was generous.

It is worthwhile briefly explaining the process which Yukon civil servants went through to secure collective bargaining rights in order to show not only what a key role the commissioner chose to play, but also to appreciate fully the depth of Hodgson's generosity towards the emerging northern union. The Yukon Territory Public Service Association was more similar to federal and provincial civil service unions in its development than it was to its emerging counterpart in the Northwest Territories. By 1965 it was a loose-knit staff association affiliated with the Civil Service Federation with a fluctuating membership and without collective bargaining rights.³⁷ Two civil servants, Kurt

³⁶Franklin interview A.

³⁷*Ibid*, 54-55. See also *Civil Service Review* from this time which lists the YTPSA as an affiliate of the CSF until its merger with the CSA in 1966.

Koken and Ken Krocker, attempted to organize the YTPSA into a union and presented a position paper to the Yukon Commissioner who rejected it. Next, a senior civil servant prepared a highly statistical paper outlining the need for a union within the civil service which the Commissioner also rejected. Krocker and Koken then launched an enrollment drive and presented a membership list to the Commissioner who rejected it. Their labours were finally successful on their fourth attempt, despite having only 35 per cent of the Yukon Government employees signed. This success is attributed to the two organizers having contacted the Public Service Alliance. It is believed that Claude Edwards put pressure on the minister responsible for the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources who in turn pressured the Commissioner. Not surprisingly, the Commissioner carried out the wishes of his immediate superior and enacted enabling legislation granting bargaining rights to the YTPSA which affiliated with the PSAC as a local of the National Component.³⁸ That the Commissioner, was able singlehandedly to block the first three organizing attempts of Yukon public servants shows the full, arbitrary political power of a territorial commissioner. That it was only with pressure from the federal ministerial level that bargaining rights were granted not only shows the support that Yukon government employees enjoyed from the federal government, but also the effectiveness of Edwards as a back room negotiator. Compared to the Yukon public servants, Northwest Territories employees certainly had a friend in Commissioner Stuart Hodgson.

³⁸Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest*, 54-55.

In many ways, Hodgson could be expected to be a friend of labour in the North. Mustering out of the navy in 1945, Hodgson resumed his career as a logger. Almost immediately he became active in the International Woodworkers of America in Vancouver. Quoted in *News of the North* on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his appointment as Commissioner, he described his early days with the IWA: "I joined local 217, the biggest local in the Pacific Northwest forest industry on a Monday ... On a Wednesday I became a shop steward, on Friday, a plant committee member, and on Sunday, chairman of Local 217."³⁹ In the spring of 1949 Hodgson was elected financial secretary for the local and held that position for the next 16 years. During this time he spent six years on the CCL's executive committee⁴⁰ and was a delegate to the International Labour Organization in Geneva.⁴¹ In 1964 the minister responsible for Northern Affairs and National Resources, Arthur Laing, appointed him to the Northwest Territories Council to represent labour, and the following year Hodgson became Deputy

³⁹Craig McInnes, "Hodgson Completes 10 Years in the North: A Remarkable Man in a Difficult Job," *News*, 7 September 1977, 33. See also "I've Got the Best Job in Canada," *Canadian Magazine*, 6 January 1973, 20; Robert Tyre, "Stuart Milton Hodgson: Commissioner of the Northwest Territories," *Trade and Commerce*, November 1973, 25; "Common Sense Was Goal for Retiring N.W.T. Commissioner," *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 April 1979, 64; Stuart Lake, "Ex-Labour Leader: Hodgson Appointed NWT Commissioner," *Ottawa Journal*, 3 March 1967, 25; and "Good Luck Sir, Despite Mr. Laing," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 March 1967, np. All of the above pieces have been assembled into a clipping file under the title "Stuart Hodgson" at the NWT Archives.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Hamilton, *Arctic*, 104.

Commissioner. With the resignation of Commissioner Ben Sivertz early in 1967, Hodgson moved up to the top territorial position.⁴² Thus, when Franklin described Hodgson as “an old union man,” he was not exaggerating.⁴³

Franklin, in fact, remembered Hodgson as being supportive of a union for territorial workers – all of them:

The Commissioner made clear that he would like to see a union formed to take in everybody in the public service, including the teachers. In the

⁴²McInnes, “Hodgson Completes,” 33 and Hamilton, *Arctic*, 104.

⁴³Franklin interview A. Hodgson’s appointment to the territorial council in 1964 to represent labour raises serious questions about labour in the North. Prior to 1960, the appointed positions on the council were held by civil servants. The decision to open up these positions as political appointees outside the civil service effectively made them patronage positions. (See Hamilton, *Arctic*, 104.) One question that must be asked is what had Hodgson, as a labour leader, done to endear himself to a Liberal government to garner such a position? The other question that is asked here is what was expected of Hodgson in his capacity as a “representative of labour”? The answers to both of these questions relate to Hodgson’s involvement with the IWA. Irving Abella has described the BC labour movement prior to 1948 as “almost the personal fiefdom of the Communist Party,” with the IWA figuring prominently in its leadership. Abella, as well as Jerry Lembcke and William Tattam, describe the vicious battle for control of the IWA in BC between the Communist controlled left and a right wing “White Bloc.” The CIO, and their Canadian affiliate the CCL, in conjunction with “the resourceful combination of corporate and state power” led to the eradication of the Communist Party from the IWA by 1949,[see Abella, *Nationalism*, 111, 113, 127, 138; and Jerry Lembcke and William M. Tattam, *One Union in Wood: A Political History of the International Woodworkers of America*, (New York: International, 1984) viii, 81, 113, 133.] the year Hodgson was elected financial secretary to the largest local (and not coincidentally the year Mine Mill was expelled from the CCL). What role, if any, did Hodgson play in the anti-communist fight for the BC section of the IWA and the BC labour movement in general? Further, appointed in 1964 to represent labour on the NWT Council, there was only one union in the NWT at the time and that was Mine Mill, a union with a long history of involvement with the Communist Party. The question that begs to be asked is was there an anti-communist agenda at work in the appointment of Hodgson to the NWT Council in 1964?

meantime, the teachers, they was [sic] with us and then all of a sudden they fell out; they didn't want no part of us because they felt, to put it bluntly, that they was better than what the rest of us was... It wasn't the teachers; it was the executive that was formed.⁴⁴

As Franklin observed, unlike the rest of the territorial employees, who essentially had to build their organization from the ground up, teachers in the Northwest Territories followed a more classic model of civil service union development. Different from most other jurisdictions in Canada where their colleagues worked for semi-autonomous school boards, teachers in the NWT were employed by Northern Affairs and National Resources, and then by the Government of the Northwest Territories upon devolution in the late 1960s. Teachers organized the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association in 1953 as an affiliate of the Civil Service Federation. Its leadership was historically dominated by principals and vice-principals, essentially lower management positions within the educational bureaucracy. The stated goals of the NWTTA were "1) to promote cooperation among members of teaching staff; 2) To improve the efficiency and welfare of our teachers; 3) To facilitate worthwhile solutions to the education problems of the Northwest Territories."⁴⁵ As with other civil servants in the North, teachers began to show resentment towards their employer early in 1967 and by the fall of that year were

⁴⁴Franklin interview B.

⁴⁵Norman John Macpherson, *Dreams and Visions: Education in the Northwest Territories From Earliest Days to 1984*, Roderick Duncan Macpherson, ed., (Yellowknife: Department of Education, Government of the Northwest Territories, 1991) 18, 21-22, 78, 161, 192-193.

beginning to demonstrate a movement towards a more union-like organization.⁴⁶

Although northern teachers were members of the Alliance prior to the territorial government taking over responsibility for education, there is no indication that teachers wished to retain their membership in the organization once they changed employers. Nor is there any indication that the PSAC made any special efforts to keep them. In his history of education in the Northwest Territories, N.J. Macpherson, himself a former teacher as well as senior bureaucrat in the territorial department of education, described the government's 1969 passage of the NWTTA enabling legislation and subsequent bargaining in terms of independence from the PSAC, as if membership in the Alliance had somehow deprived teachers of their freedom.⁴⁷ It might be argued that the resentment between the teachers' association and the Alliance stemmed from the teachers' organization predating the Alliance by over 20 years and perceiving it as an unwelcome intruder. But the same could be said of the original 14 components of the PSAC, which evolved from much older staff associations affiliated with the Civil Service Federation. There is no record of antagonism between any of these organizations and the Alliance. It could also be argued that the teachers' sense of exceptionalism was based on geography, as the components of the PSAC were based on government department rather than geographic locality. This argument does not hold either as the NWTTA distanced itself from other government

⁴⁶"Teachers Unhappy," *News*, 30 March 1967, 1; and "Teachers Form a Local," *News*, 19 October 1967, 1.

⁴⁷Macpherson, *Dreams*, 192-193.

workers in the Northwest Territories. Most likely it was a matter of the professional elitism that Franklin referred to, combined with a leadership heavy with management, and a perception of themselves as a better educated elite, that kept teachers isolated from other northern workers, a phenomenon that continues to this day. With the decision of the NWTTA to go it alone, Hodgson was forced to deal with both organizations.

The NWTTA continued to retain its “professional” staff association character. Assisting the government in an 18 month investigation of education in the North in the early 1970s, the official message to their membership was “get on the bandwagon or get on the bus,”⁴⁸ meaning that if their members were not in support of the government’s new policies, their association suggested they find new jobs. As late as 1977, Orvik and Vanderhaden stated that the main priority of the teachers’ association was professional development.⁴⁹ Owing to its existence as an organization when devolution began, the teachers were able to secure enabling legislation and their first contract only slightly ahead of the NWTPSA.⁵⁰ It can only be speculated though, as to how much the teachers benefitted in these regards in terms of “spin-off” from the efforts of the organizers of the NWTPSA and their supporters in the Alliance.

⁴⁸*Ibid*, 21-22.

⁴⁹Orvik and Vanderhaden, *Interest*, 64-65.

⁵⁰*Annual Report*, 1969, 10; also 1970, 65.

As the teachers consolidated their own position, the nascent civil service union continued its efforts for recognition. After a meeting with Claude Edwards in Yellowknife, largely to address the problems posed to organizing by the inordinately high rates of transiency, Hodgson agreed to recognize the civil servants' union even though only 20 to 25 per cent of government employees had signed cards.⁵¹ This recognition was unofficial, however, as certain legal requirements needed to be met.

First, there had to be an official organization in existence. The organization and its executive that J.O. North had left in place when he departed for Edmonton in the spring of 1968 had no legal status. In order for Hodgson to recognize the union officially, a founding convention had to take place. Accordingly, on 6 January 1969, about a dozen people, delegates and observers combined, gathered at the old Legion hall in Yellowknife for the founding convention of the Northwest Territories Government Employees' Association. Harold Franklin described the event: "... it was more or less [take] the bull by the horns and appoint each other to act as what and who ... trying to get anyone to take an active part in union affairs was just about impossible to achieve." Nonetheless, by the end of the meeting a structure had been adopted and an executive elected. Keith McInnes was elected president with Franklin as vice-president. Saul Deitch was elected second vice-president and Marge Potter secretary-treasurer. Yellowknife was chosen as headquarters for the union and also as one of the regions in the organization's federal

⁵¹Franklin interview A.

structure. The regional structure of the union mirrored that of the territorial government. The other regions included Fort Smith, which ranged from the lower Mackenzie Valley, taking in the entire Great Slave Lake area with the exception of Yellowknife, and extending to Cambridge Bay in the central Arctic.⁵² The Inuvik Region included the northern Mackenzie Valley, as well as the Delta and Beaufort Sea communities. The Churchill and Frobisher Bay Regions took in the Keewatin and Baffin areas respectively. Each region was to be represented by a regional vice-president (RVP), though at this early stage only the Fort Smith Region had elected one – James Washee of the community of Rae.⁵³

With the organization in place, a legal framework next needed to be established to allow for autonomous bargaining agents within the public service. This followed in two stages. In early 1969, the 39th session of the Northwest Territories Council passed

⁵²Cambridge Bay was later added as a sixth region taking in the central Arctic area.

⁵³Franklin interview A. The presence of Washee on this early executive is significant. Later that year Washee would be the founding president of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories which later changed its name to the Dene Nation and rose to national prominence during the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline inquiry in the mid 1970s. Washee quickly disappeared from the union and he must not have considered his participation in it very important. In an in-depth biographical interview in the *Native Press* in 1971 he makes no mention of his involvement with the union. Neither is any mention made of it in Sarah Pocklington's study of the Dene Nation, nor in the Dene Nation's own official history. See "Interview: James Washee," *Native Press*, 23 May 1971, 3; Sarah Lynne Pocklington, "Dene Leadership Styles," MA Thesis, Trent University, 1993; and Dene Nation, *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration*, (Yellowknife: Dene Nation, 1984). Nor is any mention made of Washee's short lived involvement in the labour movement in the voluminous quantity of literature on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline inquiry (see chapter two).

legislation amending the Public Service Ordinance to allow for collective bargaining. The bill passed through all three readings as well as the committee stage virtually without any discussion.⁵⁴ Later that year, during the following session, the Northwest Territories Public Service Employees' Association Ordinance was passed. The legislation itself did not recognize the government employees union per se, but rather established the legal framework for the NWTPSA to operate within as the exclusive bargaining agent for government employees other than teachers should it ever be recognized by the Commissioner. The bill empowered the Commissioner to recognize such an organization if in his opinion it met the criteria set out in the ordinance. Questions were raised at the committee stage regarding voluntary membership, the absence of the right to strike, and the Commissioner's arbitrary power to exclude persons he deemed as holding confidential or supervisory positions. Two members were quite vocal in their opposition to the bill as they saw a unionized public service as a threat to the operation of government. These same two members were allowed by the committee chair to digress into an unrelated attack on southern workers coming to the Northwest Territories, making a fast dollar, and leaving, all allegedly at the expense of the local community. Their perceptions of a possible civil service union as a group of outsiders taking advantage of vulnerable northerners is significant in that it expressed, perhaps, a common but often unarticulated view of civil servants in the North. Once the chair got the hearings back on track, the bill

⁵⁴*Northwest Territories Debates*, 39th Session, Yellowknife, 1969, 18, 99, 558-559, & 694.

was voted on clause by clause and proceeded to third reading without amendment, whereupon it was passed and given assent.⁵⁵ Following passage of the legislation, as per his prerogative, Hodgson quietly recognized the Northwest Territories Public Service Association as the bargaining agent for territorial employees other than teachers. Although they would remain without the right to strike until 1996, after two years of efforts, territorial employees at last had a union.

In order to prepare for their first negotiations, the new union had to rely again on the Alliance for support. As membership dues had yet to start coming into the union treasury from the employer, the Alliance loaned the NWTPSA funds to cover expenses to get them through their first negotiations.⁵⁶ In addition, the PSAC sent two of their staff, Stu Scott and Warren Edmondson, to Yellowknife for two weeks to assist in putting bargaining proposals together. The major issues were classifications, job descriptions, and wages.⁵⁷

As there was still no official relationship between the PSAC and the NWTPSA, it seems likely that was also part of Scott and Edmondson's agenda. In a strictly legal sense, the relationship between the two was simply a case of one union helping another. On the

⁵⁵*Debates*, 40th Session, 1969, Baker Lake, 13, 16-17, 24-41, & 299; also *Annual Report*, 1969, 10-11; and Jones, "Assistant," 12.

⁵⁶Franklin interview A states the amount loaned to have been \$2000. However, in interview B Franklin is not as definite, stating the amount was anywhere from \$1000 to \$5000. See also "Twenty Years," *Update*, 1.

⁵⁷Franklin interview A; also "Twenty Years," *Update*, 1.

weekend of 15-16 May, 1970, just two days prior to the start of negotiations, the first concrete steps were taken to remedy the situation. In accordance with the PSAC Constitution, the NWTPSA convened a special convention for the purposes of affiliating. Bylaws, in conformity with those of the Alliance and with a slightly revised regional structure were adopted, a motion to seek component status was carried, and a new executive was elected, this time being sworn in by PSAC Vice-President Andrew Stewart. The table officers McInnes, Franklin and Deitch remained the same, Washee was gone, and a full complement of regional vice-presidents were elected which included Miss L. Williams, (Yellowknife), Edward Bird, (Mackenzie), Douglas Bailey, (Inuvik), Mrs. Margaret Evans, (Keewatin), and David Swan, (Baffin). Upon the closing of the convention McInnes wrote to Claude Edwards informing him of the convention's results and formally requesting component status within the PSAC for the NWTPSA. He also expressed his thanks to the Alliance in general, and Edwards in particular for the assistance they had received to date:

Without your personal effort with the Commissioner in obtaining the legislation which provides for collective bargaining we would not be able to write this letter today. Further, without the assistance of the staff of the Alliance we would not have been able to meet with management and commence collective bargaining on Wednesday next.⁵⁸

McInnes' letter in effect recognized the consistent support that the Alliance had provided

⁵⁸Letter, McInnes to Edwards, 16 May 1970. Franklin also heaps praise upon Edwards and the PSAC for their assistance in getting the NWTPSA off the ground. See Franklin interview A.

for the territorial union since he and Franklin first began to organize. The provision of funding and influential lobbying, as well as professional staff to assist in research, organizing, and facilitating the development of the organization were all essential contributions the PSAC provided that were necessary for the union to be recognized. Edwards responded to McInnes' letter of 19 May 1970 granting component status, a mere three days after the close of the convention.⁵⁹

Component status within the Alliance was a unique blessing for the NWTPSA. As a full partner, northern workers were able to draw upon resources and support outside of the territories. As the bargaining agent for territorial employees, it was the only component within the Alliance that did not represent federal employees. Unlike the Yukon Territory Public Service Association, which at the time was only organized as a local of the National Component, full component status gave the NWTPSA a seat on the Alliance's National Board of Directors. Also distinguishing the NWTPSA was that it was the only union in Canada representing civil servants [other than federal employees] to be affiliated with a larger labour body other than the Canadian Labour Congress. While provincial civil service unions would later form the National Union of Provincial Government Employees in 1976,⁶⁰ in 1970 the Northwest Territories Public Service

⁵⁹Letter, Edwards to McInnes, 19 May 1970, Box/file 23-2, UNW; also "A New Component," *Civil Service Review*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2, June 1970, 72.

⁶⁰The original provincial civil service unions to found NUPGE in 1976 were those representing the employees of the governments of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island. Eventually all provincial

Association was the only union representing civil servants outside of the federal government to have the backing of a national union. Thus, with the exception of the teachers, territorial employees became members of what would become the third largest union in Canada. For some, it was a recovery of membership that had been lost with the devolution of their positions to the Government of the Northwest Territories. For others, membership in the Public Service Alliance of Canada was entirely new.

Bargaining for the first contract began with the government on 20 May 1970. Representing the employees were McInnes, Franklin and Deitch.⁶¹ Joining them at the table was Stu Scott of the Alliance. Negotiations lasted ten days and on 8 June 1970 the first collective agreement between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Northwest Territories Public Service Association was signed. According to Franklin, its terms were very fair and the contract was commended by many unions in the South.⁶²

Thus, by the summer of 1970 employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories had made great strides for themselves since the Carrothers Commission made its report three years earlier. Emerging at a time of increasing civil servant militancy across Canada, the Northwest Territories Public Service Association was the product of

government civil service unions except in Quebec affiliated. As NUPGE expanded in later years to represent workers other than civil servants, it changed its name to National Union of Public and General Employees. (See Randall Litchfield, "New labor union formed: NUPGE," *Financial Post*, 22 May 1976, 78; and www.nupge.ca/components.html).

⁶¹Franklin interview A. Also *Annual Report*, 1970, 65.

⁶²Franklin interview A.

factors sometimes typical of any workplace, and at other times unique to the Northwest Territories. The impetus in establishing the union was not a function of devolving federal responsibilities to the territorial government, but rather grew out of a perception among government workers that they had been deceived by the employer and were being unjustly treated. This, combined with the unique realities of life in the North, led to a high turnover in staff, but also created the conditions in which a union movement could take root. Upon this foundation was added a rapidly expanding territorial work force as a result of devolution from the federal government. As these workers became territorial employees the Public Service Alliance of Canada attempted to retain them as members, but was unsuccessful. The PSAC's attempt was of a "top down," bureaucrat to bureaucrat nature and did not involve northern workers in the process. Once northern workers began to organize themselves, however, and requested the assistance of the Alliance, sustained support was immediately forthcoming. This support took the form of both monetary and professional assistance. Early in the process the PSAC sent in professional staff to help a developing volunteer leadership among northern civil servants. Working together, staff and leaders conducted research, met with workers, facilitated meetings, and organized a union. Later they would work together to negotiate a first collective agreement. At a critical point in the organizing process the top leadership of the Alliance met with the territorial commissioner to help ensure the passage of enabling legislation. With the recognition of the Northwest Territories Public Service Association, and its subsequent affiliation with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, a truly unique union, both in regards

to other Alliance components as well as other provincial and territorial civil service associations, was born. This was ultimately the result of cooperative efforts between the staff and leadership of the PSAC and an arising volunteer leadership of northern workers.

CHAPTER 2

Government Expansion and Union Growth in the 1970s

The 1970s represented a period of continuous growing pains for the Northwest Territories Public Service Association. The organization increased in membership as a result of the burgeoning state apparatus of the Northwest Territories. As the government hired an increasing number of aboriginal workers to fill these positions, many of them, particularly Inuit, became active trade unionists. Staffing needs, however, were such that the government found it necessary to continue recruiting large numbers of southern, non-aboriginal people to fill these positions. Turnover rates, hence, remained high. This too was mirrored in the NWTPSA which experienced an extremely high turnover in both leadership and staff, creating a problem of having a perpetually inexperienced leadership and staff that only began to stabilize towards the end of the decade. From 1970 to 1979 the NWTPSA was led by a total of five presidents and administered by five executive secretary treasurers. During this period, relations between the union and the employer steadily deteriorated from reasonably cordial early in the decade to the point in 1978 when both parties seemed perpetually locked in legal matters with each other. The government began using its legislative power to achieve goals it was not able to attain at the bargaining table. In response, the union used the courts to fight back. The 1970s was also a period of further internal development for the union, marked by the launching of a regularly publishing journal, and the establishment of the president's position as full-time. The NWTPSA's constant turnover in executive secretary treasurers ended at the close of the

decade with the hiring of an experienced political activist from southern Canada.

The NWTPSA's relationships with other unions remained ambivalent at best. Although the formation of a northern federation of labour was discussed throughout most of the 1970s, the priorities of unions in the North would prevent it from becoming a reality until the 1980s. While the PSAC continued to service its NWT component, relations between the two organizations deteriorated to such a point that three unsuccessful attempts were made to disaffiliate from the Alliance.

The years from 1970 to 1973 can be characterized as something of a honeymoon period for the NWTPSA. Enjoying cordial relations with the employer, the PSAC, and other unions,¹ the northern component experienced tremendous growth during this period. With a membership in 1970 of only 500 in six locals² spread out from Baffin Island to the Mackenzie Delta to the Alberta border, the NWTPSA was a small union with a very large jurisdiction. Even, as the territorial civil service and union membership continued to grow, total numbers remained small. Although the union doubled in size by 1974, it still had less

¹The exception to this peace in the house of northern labour is the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, who in 1972 attempted to raid classroom assistants from the membership of the NWTPSA. The source of this information is supplied in the background information of a 1975 article at which time the teachers' union launched its second raid on the civil servants. See "N.W.T.T.A. wants higher salaries for assistants," *News of the North*, 9 April 1975, 9; and "Classroom Assistants," *News of the North*, 16 April 1975, 15.

²*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1970.

than 1,000 members.³

The greatest challenges to servicing this relatively small membership in an expansive territory were internal, particularly with regards to retaining staff and leadership. As the union grew, it continued to experience problems with the retention of its executive secretary treasurer and its executive. Although the executive were all volunteers, the president received a small honorarium.⁴ In the wake of the 1970 convention, an office was rented in Yellowknife, and Walter Heeney of Pine Point was hired as executive secretary treasurer to service the membership on a full-time basis. It is not clear as to why, but at some point prior to March 1972 Heeney was let go because he “wasn’t working out.” By September he had been replaced by Wayne Peterson.⁵ Although

³*Labour Organizations in Canada, 1974-75.*

⁴This was decided at the founding convention in 1970 which was recorded, with the tapes being sent to the PSAC in Ottawa for transcription. The PSAC, however, lost these tapes and Harold Franklin had to later swear out an affidavit to this effect in order to collect his honorarium in 1973. A copy of this affidavit, dated 28 September 1973, is found in Box/file 4-16, UNW.

⁵Franklin interview A. Heeney, coming from Pine Point, a company town of Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company which had changed its name to Cominco in the mid 1960s, likely gained his union experience with either the United Steelworkers, Mine Mill, or possibly both. Although Franklin does not use Heeney’s name in the interview, referring only to him as a “staff person,” he is listed as executive secretary treasurer for the NWTPSA in the PSAC’s quarterly journal from March to December of 1971, with the position being listed as vacant in March of 1972 and occupied by Wayne Peterson by the September issue. Franklin indicates, however, that Peterson assisted in the negotiations for the 1972 collective agreement and the collective agreement was signed in early May, (see *Annual Report, 1972, 30*) Peterson must have been on strength by late May at least. Nothing is known of Peterson’s background. See “Officers and Components of the PSAC,” *Civil Service Review*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1, March 1971, 70; No. 2, June

Peterson proved helpful in the 1972 negotiations, he too was let go some time prior to September 1973.⁶

The turnover in the executive in this early period was even more dramatic. In the fall of 1970 Franklin developed heart problems and was forced temporarily to discontinue union activity. The union's president, Keith McInnes, accepted a job offer in southern Canada less than a year after taking office. Further complicating matters, second vice-president Saul Deitch, who became first vice-president when Franklin assumed the presidency, tendered his resignation, feeling that union activism was standing in the way of his being promoted. Of the original regional vice-presidents listed in the *Civil Service Review* in June of 1970, not a single one remained going into the convention of 1972.⁷ Although the reasons for such a high turnover among the early executives were not stated, likely it was related to the high turnover of employees in the North in general at this time, compounded by the amount of time and aggravation that any volunteer union position brought with it.

Relations with the employer at this time were generally positive. The 1972 collective agreement negotiations illustrate this. Taking only a week to negotiate, the two

1971, 54; No. 4, December 1971, 57; Vol. XLV, No. 1, March 1972, 64-68; and No. 3, September, 1972, 60-64.

⁶Franklin interview A. Also "Officers," *CSR*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, September 1973, 64-68.

⁷Franklin interview A. Also "New," *CSR*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2, June 1970, 72, and "Officers," Vol. XLV, No. 3, September 1972, 60-64.

year agreement was described by both Franklin and the government as successful.⁸

Perhaps most important for the union was the inclusion of the Rand Formula into the collective agreement,⁹ which was of great financial benefit to the union. Amicable relations were strengthened when the government offered the union empty seats on chartered planes to communities outside of Yellowknife free of charge in order to service its remote membership.¹⁰

Dealings with other unions in the early 1970s were also friendly as is indicated by the NWTPSA's second convention in September 1972. In addition to 20 delegates, Yellowknife Mayor and former Mine Mill organizer Fred Henne was in attendance as were representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress, the United Steelworkers of America, the Alberta Federation of Labour, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, and the Civil Service Federation of Alberta. Also attending was Claude Edwards, president of the PSAC.¹¹

⁸Franklin interview A; also *Annual Report*, 1972, 30.

⁹Franklin interview A. Named after Justice Ivan Rand who brokered the 1946 settlement of the UAW strike at the Windsor, Ontario Ford plant, the formula stipulated that although an employee would not be forced to become a member of the union, the employer would deduct dues from all employees and forward them on to the union because all employees benefitted from the union.

¹⁰Franklin interview A.

¹¹These fraternal guests included Frank Chafe of the CLC, Messrs F. Rudolf and P. Stonehouse of the CAA, Bill Barowski (probably Bill Berezowsky, NWT Staff rep for Mine Mill, and later Steel, since 1962) of Steel, Cliff Reid, president of local 804 USWA at Pine Point, Gene Mitchell of the Alberta Federation of Labour, and Mr. R. J. Dancer of the UBCJA. Minutes, Triennial Convention, September 1972, UNW.

One of the more significant items on the agenda was the proposal to form a Northwest Territories Federation of Labour. It appears that the push for such a move was from outside the union as it was Claude Edwards of the Alliance, and Gene Mitchell of the Alberta Federation of Labour who answered members' questions on the subject. By the end of the convention Franklin's recommendation calling on the NWTPSA to participate in the formation of such an organization was approved.¹² Franklin also expressed his gratitude to the Alliance, and in particular Edwards, for his assistance in getting the NWTPSA up and running. "Without the assistance of the Public Service Alliance of Canada," said Franklin, "we never would have achieved our position of today and with their further assistance we will be even stronger tomorrow."¹³ Thus by the close of the 1972 convention, the NWTPSA was established within the Canadian labour movement, on its way to becoming a founding member of a northern labour federation, and a grateful component member of the PSAC.

Although Franklin let his name stand for a second term, he was not re-elected.¹⁴ Given his past efforts in organizing and leading the union, as well as his participation in successfully negotiating the first two contracts, this is surprising. Perhaps these contracts were only successful for members based in Yellowknife. It is also possible delegates were

¹²Executive President's Report, *Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Franklin interview A.

weary of the union's leadership continuing to come from the capital. Kornichuk, McInnes, and Franklin had all been from Yellowknife. Whatever the reason for Franklin's defeat, Charles Goddard was elected. Goddard, a mechanic,¹⁵ had until recently been the regional vice-president for Frobisher Bay, but left the position when he transferred to Inuvik. In the position of first vice-president was Dave Colbeck who had taken over as Frobisher Bay RVP upon Goddard's transfer. The second vice-president was Brian White of Yellowknife, who until then had no experience on the executive.¹⁶ There was a decided shift of power away from the capital.

A union headquartered in Yellowknife with a volunteer president in Inuvik must have been a challenge. The need for officers to travel enormous distances by plane to carry out everyday business was another factor distinguishing the NWTPSA as a uniquely northern union. The NWTPSA was possibly the first union in Canada to be dependent on the airplane to service its members. As long as the president was a resident of Yellowknife he at least had ready access to the union's office, resources and staff as required. With Goddard in Inuvik, however, these distances had a profound impact on

¹⁵Report, Inuvik Regional Vice-President W. F. English, NWTPSA Third Triennial Convention, October 1975, Vol. 2, Box-file 4-18, UNW.

¹⁶"Officers," CSR, Vol. XLV, No.1, March 1972, 64-68; No. 3, September 1972, 60-64. Brian White is listed as resident in Yellowknife. He is remembered by Peter Dyck, however, as being out of Fort Smith. It is quite possible that at one point he transferred from one community to the other. Harold Franklin went on to become president of local one in Yellowknife and later took over as RVP for the Yellowknife region. See Franklin interview A.

leadership and staffing concerns of the union. Day-to-day workings of the NWTPSA fell to the executive secretary treasurer. By July 1973 that individual was Charlie Park.¹⁷

This *de facto* leadership by a non-elected staff person was reinforced by continuing fluctuations in union leadership. Park's position was further strengthened by the resignation of Goddard, and compounded by the previous resignations of first vice-president Colbeck and Yellowknife RVP Bill Carpenter. Goddard had accepted a position in the South; the other two had been promoted into excluded positions. As the next convention was over two years away, the remaining executive members met on 23 July 1973 to elect a new complement of table officers. As second vice-president and constitutionally in line for the position anyway, Brian White was elected president. Jim Fradsham of Frobisher Bay, and Harold Franklin were elected first and second vice-presidents respectively.¹⁸ Once again, power had shifted back to elected leaders resident in Yellowknife.

¹⁷In this light it is understandable why Orvik and Vanderhaden mistook Park for president of the union. It also appears that the union must have worked out an agreement with the PSAC on northern staffing issues as Park is simultaneously listed as the PSAC regional representative from September 1973 to September 1974. After that time he retained his position as NWTPSA secretary, but was no longer PSAC regional representative. See "Officers," CSR, XLVI, No.3, September 1973, 64-68 and subsequent issues to Vol. XLVII, No. 4, December 1974, 68-72. Much of the archival material for this period is incomplete and contains large gaps. Park first appears in the position of EST in the archival material as a guest at a Hay River membership meeting.(Minutes, Membership Meeting, Hay River Sub-Branch, 5 July 1973, Box-file 8-5, UNW.

¹⁸PSA News, July 1973, Box-file 8-24, UNW.

On assuming the presidency, White set about making structural changes to the union. He began by granting regional status to Hay River. Previous to this the South Slave community was a sub-branch of the Fort Smith region and as such not entitled to its own RVP on the executive. However, due to its high number of members and a comparatively high degree of union activism in the area, Hay River had always had its own representative attending executive meetings in Yellowknife. James Neville had performed that function since the union's founding convention.¹⁹ At a meeting of the Hay River membership in January 1973, the members unanimously endorsed the inclusion of Enterprise, Fort Resolution, Fort Providence, Pine Point, Buffalo River and "Hay River proper within the proposed new region."²⁰ With the ascendancy of White to the presidency in July 1973 the request of the Hay River membership was granted.²¹ Another structural change initiated was in the Keewatin area west of Hudson Bay. While still under federal authority, Ottawa had established Churchill, Manitoba as the administrative centre for the Keewatin. The territorial government relocated government operations for the Keewatin to inside the territories in 1974 by moving to Rankin Inlet.²² White followed suit and

¹⁹Franklin interview A.

²⁰Minutes, Membership Meeting, Hay River Sub-Branch, 4 January 1973, Box-file 8-5, UNW.

²¹President's Report, NWTPSA Third Triennial Convention, 2-5 October 1975, Vol.1, Box-file 4-17, UNW.

²²*Annual Report*, 1974, 27, 33.

moved the union's regional operations from Churchill to Rankin as well.²³ White also established Cambridge Bay, in the central Arctic, as a region.

Unlike Hay River, union activism in the Cambridge Bay area was sporadic in the early 1970s, and often initiated by the leadership in Yellowknife. This was likely due to isolation and a greater turnover in government employees. Former Cambridge Bay RVP, and later NWTPSA president, Peter Dyck was of the impression that Cambridge Bay had just been organized as a branch when he moved there with his family in October 1974. Dyck explained that a letter was sent from executive secretary treasurer Charlie Park to government employees in Cambridge Bay, explaining what needed to be done to organize locally and a meeting was subsequently held that November. Dyck, a heavy equipment mechanic originally from Swift Current, Saskatchewan with no prior union experience, recalled the meeting as being very informal:

A half dozen of us showed up at the meeting and that was the first time I ever attended any meeting, labour meeting. And they held the election and elected the local president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer and then the election for RVP [was held] and nobody wanted to run for it. Nobody really knew what it was, so they said, "Well are you interested?" "Well," I said, "Well I don't know what it is or what it does, but well yeah, okay." That's how I got involved.²⁴

Dyck was completely unaware that Cambridge Bay had been organized a year earlier and that he was, in fact, the third RVP to represent the region. Charlie Park had met with

²³President's Report, NWTPSA Third Triennial Convention, 2-5 October 1975, Vol.1, Box-file 4-17, UNW.

²⁴Personal interview, Peter Dyck, 11 August 1999.

Cambridge Bay members in December 1973 to organize the region. Messrs. E. Kinsman and L. Lockwood were elected president and vice-president respectively. Ms. M. Draeger was elected secretary treasurer. At the subsequent membership meeting on 2 January 1974, President Kinsman informed the members that NWTPSA President Brian White had granted branch status.²⁵ By March 1974 Kinsman had been elected RVP and by September had been replaced in this capacity by Lockwood.²⁶ That Dyck was completely unaware of this activity prior to his own election as RVP in November indicates that not only had the branch become completely inactive in less than a year, but, related to this, the high turnover in government staffing in the Arctic had a definite impact on union development. Again, because of uniquely northern conditions, the union not only had to adapt its structure, but also to focus more resources on keeping more remote areas active within the union.

By the mid-1970s the "honeymoon" with the employer ended. The union had to focus less on organizational development and more on an increasingly belligerent employer. The Yom Kippur War of 1973, with its ensuing energy crisis and spiraling inflation, ushered in a deteriorating relationship between management and workers everywhere. Governments sought means of limiting their expenditures and looked at

²⁵Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local 7, Cambridge Bay, 11 December 1973 and 2 January 1974, Box-file 8-11, UNW.

²⁶"Officers," CSR, Vol. XLVII, No.1, March 1974, and No.3, September 1974, 68-72.

labour costs. The response of the Northwest Territories was typical – “severe restrictions would have to be imposed.” It restricted employee travel, delayed purchases, and left vacant positions empty.²⁷ Not unexpectedly, the new economic climate strained the relationship between employer and union. “It is unfortunate,” the union reported to its membership in February 1974, “that we have been forced to carry so many cases to arbitration, and it is hoped that we can get better cooperation from the Employer in the future as these forms of settlement are expensive, and in many cases unnecessary.”²⁸

In April of 1974 a new contract was negotiated which included wage increases averaging 22 per cent over two years.²⁹ Inflation quickly caught up, however, and a year later, using a clause in the collective agreement which allowed either party to re-open the agreement for further negotiations, Brian White did just that. An escalating cost of living had eroded the 10 per cent increase that members had received in the first year of the contract. White requested a minimum of a \$1,700 adjustment in all rates of pay, but the employer refused. “A complete waste of time and money” was how White described negotiations in *News of the North*. The government was described as “inflexible and unwilling to negotiate.” Both parties agreed to refer the matter to arbitration.³⁰ When the

²⁷ *Annual Report*, 1974, 16.

²⁸ *NWTPSA Newsletter*, 15 February 1974, Box-file 8-22, UNW.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 16, 25.

³⁰ “Government and Public Service Ass’n take Salary dispute to arbitration,” *News*, 16 April 1975, 15.

arbitrator made his ruling, White received less than a third of what he sought – a \$500 across the board increase for all members for the 1975-76 bargaining year.³¹

The next round of contract talks was set to commence in the spring of 1976. The government established the tone for the talks six weeks prior to negotiations when Commissioner Hodgson announced rents for employees in staff housing would rise 8 per cent to cover increased operation and maintenance costs. As the existing agreement prohibited an increase in rents, Hodgson was clear that the increase was not to take effect until after a new contract was signed with the NWTPSA. The union was furious and “slammed” the government, stating that its decision to increase rents “contravenes the bargaining process and once again points out the government of the NWT’s dictatorial attitude towards its employees and lack of faith in the bargaining process.”³² The government’s position was articulated in language that can only be described as Orwellian, stating it was “reaching an understanding of the government’s goals to stimulate a greater degree of self-sufficiency by staff than was possible in earlier years.”³³

The two parties met to negotiate a new package later that spring. The union accepted the 8 per cent rent increase contingent upon a 12 percent increase in wages,³⁴

³¹*Annual Report*, 1975, 63.

³²“Union raps gov’t rent hike,” *News*, 10 March 1976, 1.

³³*Annual Report*, 1976, 89.

³⁴Significantly, items such as rents, utilities, settlement allowance and other non-salary monetary items were technically no longer within the realm of collective bargaining, but under article 40 of the collective agreement the subject of “joint consultation,” which

and sent the package out to the membership who ratified it in July. It was then sent on for approval to the Anti-Inflation Board which the Trudeau government had established to limit wages and prices in an attempt to curb inflation. The union did not expect any problems with the AIB,³⁵ but when the federal board reviewed the contract it reduced the wage increase from the negotiated 12 per cent to 9.8, leaving all other items the same. Initially the union was not overly concerned for they felt that they could compensate for this by making improvements to employee benefits.³⁶ The AIB and the employer both refused to support the union in this pursuit. It was the government's position that the agreement had already been ratified and if the AIB saw fit to reduce the agreed upon wage scale then so be it; everything else would remain the same.³⁷ The union felt more betrayed by the employer than it did by the AIB. Wally Firth, the NWT's NDP Member of Parliament, wrote to AIB chair Jean-Luc Pepin expressing his outrage.³⁸ A week later the AIB softened its blow by raising the wage to 10.8 per cent which the union decided not to appeal.³⁹

was left undefined. They were still negotiated, but not actually written into the collective agreement. This would later come back to haunt both parties, but especially the union.

³⁵"PSA agrees to 12% increase," *News*, 5 May 1976, 22; also "PSA ratifies contract -- 12 % increase," *News*, 21 July 1976, 2.

³⁶"To get around AIB: PSA seeks higher benefits," *News*, 22 September 1976, 11.

³⁷"Government won't back workers' wage appeals," *News*, 6 October 1976, 1-2.

³⁸"Firth shocked by rollback of PSA increase," *News*, 20 October 1976, 19.

³⁹"PSA accepts 10.8 percent raises approved by AIB," *News*, 27 October 1976, 19.

While the NWTPSA's relationship with the employer continued to deteriorate during the 1970s, its rapport with other unions in the North remained ambivalent. The commitment the union had made in the fall of 1972 to the establishment of a federation of labour remained only a statement on the books. It reported to its members in August 1975 that efforts were being made by participating unions to establish an NWT federation.⁴⁰ The topic, however, was not publicly discussed again by the NWTPSA until March of 1977 when EST Bob Fry was interviewed in the *Native Press* at which time he credited the Steelworkers with being the driving force behind such an organization.⁴¹ Likewise, according to former Yellowknife labour leader Dale Johnson, during the early to mid 1970s there was "no relationship whatsoever" between the NWTPSA and other unions in the North.⁴² By "other unions," Johnson was referring to miners' unions which until 1976 were exclusively locals of the United Steelworkers of America. Peter Dyck, however, remembered Steel being preoccupied with the prospect of a union as large as the NWTPSA taking over such an organization, and that a "chicken dance" went on between his union and others for quite some time on this issue.⁴³ Probably the main reason why a federation did not come about during this period was that all of the major unions in the

⁴⁰*Union News*, Issue No.8, August 1975, Box-file 8-23, UNW. This was actually a short lived publication of local one in Yellowknife and is the only mention of the topic in the archival collection for this period.

⁴¹"Are Unions Good for the N.W.T.?" *Native Press*, 18 March 1978, 16.

⁴²Johnson interview.

⁴³Dyck, interview.

North at the time had other priorities. The NWTPSA was handling a record number of arbitrations and was almost perpetually negotiating; the Steelworkers were engaged in a war on several fronts, facing possible strike situations at both the Giant and Con mines as well as trying to fight off a protracted raid by the Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers; and the PSAC was organizing the unorganized.

The mid 1970s saw the Alliance begin an organizing drive that took in various public servants outside the purview of both the federal and territorial governments. Another uniquely northern aspect of public sector unionism in the Northwest Territories stemmed from the PSAC's organization of employees of the City of Yellowknife. Unlike their southern counterparts, municipal workers unionized much later for the simple fact that municipalities developed later. One of the key recommendations of the Carrothers Commission had been the development of community government.⁴⁴ The territorial government actively pursued that goal, devolving to municipalities previously held responsibilities as quickly as it could. Between 1967 and 1977 the number of incorporated municipalities in the Northwest Territories rose from 4 to 49,⁴⁵ and with it the number of municipal employees. In the spring of 1975 the PSAC began signing up City of Yellowknife employees and by the end of June had applied to the Canada Labour Relations Board for certification. A lengthy legal battle ensued between the city, which

⁴⁴Carrothers, *Report*, Vol.1, 189.

⁴⁵Philip J. Airhart, Ed., *Northwest Territories: Decade of Progress*, Department of Information, Government of the Northwest Territories, 1977, 73-76.

challenged the CLRB's jurisdiction, and the Alliance.⁴⁶ In April 1977 the 18 month ordeal came to an end when the city of Yellowknife signed its first collective agreement with the PSAC after the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the CLRB's domain over municipal employees in the Northwest Territories.⁴⁷

The PSAC did not confine its organizing efforts to Yellowknife municipal workers. Jim Neville, NWTPSA RVP for Hay River actively assisted the Alliance in organizing the shore workers at Northern Canada Transportation Company, in December 1975.⁴⁸ Neville's assistance in this organizing drive indicates a positive relationship in existence between the NWTPSA and the parent union at the time. Between June and August 1977, the PSAC also organized the non-medical staff at Stanton Yellowknife Hospital.⁴⁹

Just as public sector unions in the North had their own priorities during the mid-1970s that prevented them from concentrating on the formation of a labour federation, so

⁴⁶"Labour Relations Board surprised by city council," *News*, 2 July 1975, 6-7; also "Yellowknife Employees join union," *News*, 3 September 1975, 3.

⁴⁷"City appeals certification of PSAC," *News*, 10 September 1975, 1; "Supreme court will decide if city workers are PSAC," *News*, 10 December 1975, 7; "City workers accept offer of 12% hike," *News*, 7 January 1976, 1-2; "City and union sign first contract," *News*, 29 April 1977, 3.

⁴⁸Report, Hay River Regional Vice-President, 12 May 1975, NWTPSA Third Triennial Convention, October 2-5, 1975, Vol. 3, Box-file 5-1, UNW; also "PSAC certified to bargain for NTCL shore employees," *News*, 10 December 1975, 2. As is common practice for such events, executive reports are submitted several months prior to the convention in order to be copied, collated, and distributed to delegates prior to the convention; hence the discrepancy in dates.

⁴⁹"Union rights sought," *News*, 15 June 1977, 45; "Hospital Workers vote for PSAC," *News*, 10 August 1977, 38.

too did the Steelworkers. In August 1975 Steel was gearing up for a strike at the Con mine⁵⁰ and about to begin negotiations at Giant when the Steelworkers' district office suspended Giant mine's local executive and placed local 803 under "administration," making area staff representative Ed McRae the sole person responsible for the affairs of the local. McRae, who had requested these actions, charged the local executive with misuse of union funds, but it was later learned that McRae and the district office had fabricated the accusation to declare what amounted to a state of emergency in the face of a membership raid by the Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers (CASAW), a raid supported by 803's executive.⁵¹

⁵⁰"Strike imminent at Cominco," *News*, 13 August 1975, 11.

⁵¹"Union prepared to bargain despite [sic] internal problems," *News*, 10 September 1975, 1-2; "New Union at Giant," *News*, 17 September 1975, 3; "Union to be investigated," *News*, 29 October 1975, 3; "Affairs of Local 803 'Unsettled', union says funds not misused," *News*, 5 November 1975, 1-2. CASAW was founded at Kitimat, BC by employees at the Alcan aluminum smelter there in spring 1972. Originally represented by Steel, the workers received little assistance from the international in a strike in 1970, despite the strike being sanctioned by the union's head office in Pittsburgh. After several months on strike the workers went back at the urging of the international for the same offer the company had originally made. It was later learned that the strike at Kitimat had prevented imminent lay offs at an American smelter due to a current glut in the aluminum market. The end of the strike at Kitimat coincided with the end of that glut. These and other issues led the workers at Kitimat to conclude that Steel would willingly sacrifice the interests of its Canadian membership for the benefit of its American members. CASAW was assisted by the Confederation of Canadian Unions, a left-leaning and nationalist Canadian labour central set up in 1968 as an alternative to the international dominated Canadian Labour Congress. With this assistance, CASAW was able to replace Steel at Kitimat. See Klaus Mueller, "C.A.S.A.W. History: The Early Days," unpublished paper generously made available to the author by former CCU president Jess Succamore. See also, Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley: The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980), 110-115, 120-121. In the case of the Giant mine raid there was a certain

Dissatisfaction with Steel was mostly over money. *News of the North* reported that discontent with the international had been caused by a recent dues increase.⁵² Interviewed during the 1992-94 strike, CASAW local four president Harry Seeton, who had been employed at Giant since 1973, recalled “[t]here was a lot of dissatisfaction with how we were being represented by Steel,” claiming “[t]here was a lot of money going south of the border.”⁵³ In the wake of an investigation initiated by Steel, the international saw fit to appoint a new local executive, rather than risk the membership electing one.⁵⁴ When Steel reached the point where the selection of local officers was too important an issue to be decided by the membership, it was apparent that it was fighting a losing battle. CASAW, however, failed to win certification at Giant on a technicality. It made a second attempt in November of the following year and was certified as the bargaining agent for the workers at Giant when they voted 77 per cent in favour of the new union. United Steelworkers of America local 803 became CASAW local 4.⁵⁵

irony in CASAW’s membership in the CCU as one of its founding members was Mine Mill, local 598, the sole surviving local of the union that had first organized the Giant Mine in 1947.

⁵²“Affairs,” *News*, 1-2; also Rosemary Cairns, “Union battle lost but war goes on,” *News*, 11 January 1976, 1-2.

⁵³“Devine, “Hell,” *Arctic*, 22.

⁵⁴“Union names executive,” *News*, 17 December 1975, 15; also “Affairs,” *News*, 1-2.

⁵⁵Cairns, “Union,” *News*, 1-2; also “New Giant talks follow CASAW win in workers’ vote,” *News*, 10 November 1976, 1-2.

In the meantime the NWTPSA experienced its own labour revolt. Albeit in a much smaller and less dramatic way, it too was initiated over an increase in dues. As members of a PSAC component they paid dues to both organizations. In the fall of 1975 the NWTPSA changed its dues structure from a flat rate to 1 per cent of employee earnings.⁵⁶ The conservative Hay River membership complained, resenting what they considered "subsidizing" lower income members. In addition, they "felt they were not receiving enough service for the money paid to the union."⁵⁷

Adding to their aggravation, the June PSAC convention in Winnipeg raised its dues. NWTPSA Local 1 in Yellowknife, the component's largest northern local, responded by calling into "doubt the future financial viability of the N.W.T.P.S.A.." It also complained that dues were already high and called on the executive "to communicate with members on this very important issue."⁵⁸ The reaction of the Hay River local was stronger; in September 1976 it voted to have the component disaffiliate from the Alliance.

In April 1976 Local 6 held its annual elections and chief shop steward Darm Crook was elected president of the local.⁵⁹ Crook, originally a Metis farm boy from Humboldt, Saskatchewan, had dropped out of school in 1962 and began work at the local saw mill

⁵⁶Minutes, Membership Meeting, NWTPSA Local 6, Hay River, 13 November 1975, Box-file 8-6, UNW.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 8 January 1976.

⁵⁸Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local 1, Yellowknife, 16 November 1976, Box-file 7-10.

⁵⁹Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local 6, Hay River, 1 April 1976, Box-file 8-6.

where he became a member of the local building trades union, walking his first picket line at the age of 16 as a member of the carpenters' union. He went North in May 1970 as an employee of the territorial government with his wife and family and in 1972 became shop steward at the Department of Public Works in Hay River.⁶⁰ The Hay River local met 14 September to discuss the recent PSAC dues increase. Crook played a leading role in the local's decision to pass a motion to direct the union's executive to disaffiliate from the Alliance and subsequently wrote a letter to the executive in Yellowknife informing them of the motion passed by Local 6.⁶¹ In his own words, "[w]e never heard boo back."⁶² Crook's participation in this first attempted secession from the Alliance is significant as he would continue to lead such attempts into the 1990s.

Crook recalled the next local meeting held in Hay River a month later:

The meeting was called to order and here was three strangers. I didn't know who they were ... One was Peter Dyck, one was Bob Fry, who was the executive secretary treasurer of the NWTPSA, and one was an executive officer of the PSAC from Ottawa. And I called the meeting to order, and I forget which one of them rose and were telling us what they would do to the local and how the local would be disbanded and go into receivership and trusteeship for ever moving a motion of that nature and they were really coming down on us. And I said, "I take it you guys aren't members of this local?" "That's right." And I kicked them out. And I

⁶⁰Personal interview, Darm Crook, 10 August 1999.

⁶¹Minutes, Special Membership Meeting, Local 6, Hay River, 14 September 1976, Box-file 8-6, UNW.

⁶²Crook interview.

said, "We will decide whether you guys can come back in." Well they got up and they had to go stand outside in the hallway and we debated it.⁶³

Crook remembered the local spent the next 20 minutes discussing whether or not to seat their guests, while Dyck and company stood in the hall. Eventually a motion was carried to admit them and let them "say their piece." "But you'd be surprised by how their attitude had changed, Crook continued:

There was no more threats or anything of that nature. They, PSAC: "Here's how we can work with you to overcome these problems that you guys seem to be facing here." So at the end of the meeting we rescinded our motion to disaffiliate because now we had all our promises and what not.⁶⁴

Crook's narrative is likely embellished; Dyck recalls almost none of it. In fact, Dyck, who had been elected first vice-president at the 1975 convention and who had been transferred from Cambridge Bay to Hay River that spring, did not even recall the circumstances leading up to his first encounter with Crook as being the motion to disaffiliate from the PSAC. Nor does he recall the presence of Bob Fry nor that of a PSAC officer. He does recall the meeting, however, with a good deal of humour:

I went to the union meeting, ... [a]nd there was a young upstart there by the name of Darm Crook who didn't know who the hell Peter Dyck was. He's probably the first guy I locked horns with, not quite locked horns with, but found out there was a difference of opinion.⁶⁵

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Dyck interview.

Although Dyck remembered Crook in general as “an advocate of not cow-towing to Ottawa,” he did not specifically remember Crook as an advocate of disaffiliation.

Although the PSAC dues increase did much to alienate the members of the NWTPSA, only the locals at Yellowknife and Hay River appear to have taken any action to protest and it was only the Hay River local that went so far as to propose the severing of ties with the parent union. Either the union as a whole was still committed to the PSAC, or no other locals were active enough to issue a response.

Aside from its locale, perhaps one characteristic that makes the NWTPSA/UNW unique as a northern union is its large number of aboriginal members. Although Dene leader James Washee was among the early leaders of the union, he did not stay with the union long and the union maintained a distinctly non-native character in its early days. As the territorial civil service continued to expand, and as training and educational opportunities increased for aboriginal people, their numbers within the civil service and the NWTPSA increased. In 1973, when the membership of the union was less than 900, the government employed 101 native people as classroom assistants alone.⁶⁶ In addition, it was making efforts to recruit and train native people for mid-level positions such as assessors, auditors, councillors, and adult educators.⁶⁷ While many of these individuals were active with the union, historically there has been significantly more participation from

⁶⁶*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1973.

⁶⁷*Annual Report*, 1973, 43, 70.

the Inuit than there has been from the Dene and Metis. During his time as RVP for Cambridge Bay, Peter Dyck noted "there was always Inuit involvement in everything," with some even taking training as shop stewards.⁶⁸

Dyck's recollections of Inuit involvement in the Cambridge Bay local do not, however, correspond with the general observations of Inuit involvement in the union made by Bob Fry, the union's executive secretary treasurer from 1975 to 1977. Fry was candid in his frustration in getting Inuit involved with the union. Indicating that 40 per cent of government employees at the time were native northerners, and that aboriginal employees were particularly numerous in the eastern Arctic, Fry complained, "We have a hard time getting them to understand the philosophy of what a union is. ... The concept of a union is foreign to them." Fry went on to state that one of the challenges in getting native people involved with the union was a prevailing attitude that "the employer is always right."⁶⁹ Given the historically low turnout for membership meetings in predominantly non-native locals, however, Fry's comments could apply equally to non-native members of the union.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Dyck interview.

⁶⁹"Are Unions," *Native*, 16.

⁷⁰An examination of local minutes for the Hay River and Yellowknife locals show a consistently low turnout. The Yellowknife local, with over 1,000 members by the late 1970s actually went into trusteeship at one time, with the local's affairs being run by the union executive because not enough people could be found to serve on the local executive.

Fry's observations have to be met with a certain degree of skepticism. At the time the executive secretary treasurer was the only full-time officer of the union; the entire elected executive, including the president, were volunteers. While Fry did get out to visit locals outside Yellowknife on occasion, his work primarily involved managing the office in the capital, acting as a spokesperson for the union as a whole, and dealing with membership concerns on a full-time basis. It is doubtful that much of his time was spent in communities where the potential for aboriginal involvement was highest. Nor is there evidence that the union as a whole took specific measures to encourage native involvement. In later years the union would experience a degree of success in organizing Inuit workers when particular gestures were made, but in the mid 1970s the role of aboriginal people in the union was peripheral. Orvik and Vanderhaden assert that the union was mostly concerned with "shop floor" issues. Rather than using the union to pursue political goals, native people generally worked within their own organizations.⁷¹

The role played by the NWTPSA in the inquiry chaired by Justice Thomas Berger into the federal government's decision to build an oil and natural gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley is illustrative of the union's ambivalent role towards the aboriginal population of the Northwest Territories at the time.⁷² Local 3 in Inuvik conducted its own

⁷¹Orvik, *Interest*, 55-56.

⁷²No single event stands out in the post-war history of the North more than the decision of the federal government in the early 1970s to build an oil and natural gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley. Without consulting any of the northern aboriginal organizations, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development actively courted

study of the pipeline proposal, and though expressing some reservations with regards to the environment, fully endorsed the project, reflecting more the interests of the local chamber of commerce than local native organizations.⁷³

Despite the independent actions of Local 3, the Berger Inquiry did present the NWTPSA an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with other northern labour organizations. Calling itself the NWT Labour Coordinating Committee, the NWTPSA, along with the teachers and the Steelworkers, submitted a brief to the inquiry opposing the

American oil interests commencing in March of 1971. The ministry did not anticipate the exceptionally vocal protests of native people, particularly the Dene, over this issue, as well as those of a large church-based support coalition in the South. In response, the Trudeau government established the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, taking its unofficial name from the individual who was appointed to chair the proceedings, Mr. Justice Thomas Berger. Berger took a remarkably similar approach to that taken by Arnold Carrothers a decade earlier, conducting hearings in the South as well as traveling extensively throughout the communities of the western NWT. Unlike the Carrothers Commission, the fundamental issue was not related to the nature of government, but rather the building of the pipeline and, more importantly, who owned the land upon which it was to be built. Also in the intervening ten years native militancy had significantly increased. This combined with the media attention generated by the inquiry led one writer to refer to the process as "Tom Berger's Magic Circus." The end result of the inquiry was the publication of Berger's two volume report in 1977, *Northern Frontiers, Northern Homeland* which recommended a ten year moratorium on any pipeline development to enable aboriginal groups to settle all outstanding land claims. In addition to Berger's report, there is an exhaustive body of literature on this episode in northern history. While the work of Frances Abele is the most complete – "The Berger Inquiry and the Politics of Transformation in the Mackenzie Valley," (PhD Thesis, York University, 1983) – the work of Alexander, Coates, Dene Nation, Dickerson, Dosman, Hamilton, Miller, Pockington, Watkins, and Zaslow [see bibliography for full citations] all contain accounts.

⁷³Orvik, *Interest*, 58, 60.

pipeline.⁷⁴ The intensity of this opposition, however, must have been somewhat tepid, for an article appearing in the *Native Press* six months later suggested that the gist of the coalition's brief on the pipeline was "prepare for it." Interviewed for the article, executive secretary treasurer Bob Fry was quoted as saying, "[w]e're a non-political association, so you won't see us getting directly in politics."⁷⁵ That the union's senior staff officer perceived himself and the organization he represented as "non-political" revealed much in terms of how the union interacted in the world around it. Fry's replacement would have a much more sophisticated understanding of politics, as did his boss, Brian White.

White led the union for the next four years, until that time a record for the union. Prior to the fall of 1973, the union averaged a president a year. Not a single president served a full, uninterrupted term of office. When White took over as president upon the resignation of Charles Goddard in June 1973, he had many challenges to face. There were also several factors in his favour. The first was that he had the benefit of the union being in existence for a few years and he did not have to organize it from the start. In addition, White brought with him a year's experience on the executive as second vice-president which was considerably more than any of his predecessors had brought with them to the office.

⁷⁴"Northern labor against pipeline," *News*, 8 September 1976, 1.

⁷⁵"Are Unions Good for the N.W.T.?: Part Two," *Native Press*, 1 April 1977, 20.

Executive positions below the level of president, however, retained a high degree of turnover. In his annual report to the Inuvik membership in 1974, RVP Bill English pointed out that of the current executive, only Brian White and Frobisher Bay RVP Jim Fradsham "had previous tenure and are still members." English pointed out that all other executive positions had experienced a "series of change in incumbents."⁷⁶ English continued to express these concerns at the union's third convention in October 1975, indicating that the high turnover rate resulted in a perpetually inexperienced executive.⁷⁷ The union was able to maintain a degree of stability, however, following the convention as Brian White was re-elected. Peter Dyck, only recently the RVP for Cambridge Bay, was elected first vice-president, and Ian Milligan was elected second vice-president.⁷⁸

On the staff side, conditions were equally unsettled. Charlie Park,⁷⁹ hired late in the summer of 1973 to fill the vacancy left by the dismissal of Wayne Peterson,⁸⁰ was fired in the spring of 1975. His position stayed vacant for some time, until the hiring of Robert

⁷⁶Annual Report, Inuvik RVP W.F. English, Box-file 7-25, UNW. Although English's report is undated, much of it is reiterated in his convention report cited below, indicating it was written about May of 1975 as that would have been the deadline for the submission of reports to the convention.

⁷⁷Report, Inuvik RVP W.F. English, NWTPSA Third Triennial Convention, October 2-5 1975, Vol. II, Box-file 4-18, UNW.

⁷⁸"Officers," CSR, Vol. XLVIII, No. 4, December 1975, 60-64.

⁷⁹There is some confusion as to the Charlie's last name: Dyck remembers it as Parks, the CSR consistently spells it Park.

⁸⁰The reasons for Peterson's dismissal are unknown.

Fry in July of 1975.⁸¹ For two years, Fry held the position. He appears to have carried out his responsibilities and kept a low profile, but like his predecessors, he too was fired.⁸² Taking over for Fry was his new assistant Ed McRae. Although the circumstances of McRae's departure from Steel are not known, he is remembered by that union for the role he played in the loss of Giant mine. The hiring of McRae could not have endeared the union to either Steel or CASAW, but led to innovations within the union leading to greater stability.

Upon his hiring, McRae immediately launched a new union newsletter. Although the union had made several attempts at this in the past, the publication of a union journal

⁸¹*PSA News*, July 1975, Box-file 8-24, UNW.

⁸²It is not clear what the circumstances were surrounding his departure from the union in the fall of 1977. It is possible that it was in some way related to the resignation of Brian White, who had accepted a position in the Yukon, leaving first vice-president, Peter Dyck to assume the presidency. Fry's departure could also be related to the hiring of Ed McRae, recently of the Steelworkers, as an additional staff member for both these events seem to coincide. It is also possible that his departure was in some way related to a dispute between the union and the Alliance over the method of dues payment. Whatever the reason, like all his predecessors to date, Fry was fired. "New President," *Suliyilk*, Vol. 1, No.1, October 1977, 1. Note the spelling of this publication was changed to *Sulijuq* for its second and all subsequent issues. The minutes for the full executive meeting of 13, 14, & 15 October list Fry as present in the position of EST and McRae present as "staff rep." A memorandum to the minutes of the FEM of 21 December 1978 has McRae proposing a new staff structure in his position as EST [Box-file 1-1]. At a special meeting of the FE, a vague reference is made to a pay-out package for Fry being agreed upon [Minutes, Special Meeting, FE, 9 December 1977, Box-file 1-2], suggesting that he followed the union's tradition and was sacked.

had been erratic throughout the early and mid 1970s.⁸³ Probably the greatest reason for the early failures to establish a lasting union paper was related to the factors that distinguished the union as distinctly northern: its small size and inexperience as a union, compounded by the high turnover of staff and executive, and the need to report on and distribute throughout a geographically huge area. As the size of the union's staff increased, McRae, presumably, was able to devote more time specifically to the paper. The first issue of *Sulijug*, Inuktitut for truth, in October 1977, marked the start of a regular union press that continued until 1998. With the top of the mast head listing Ed McRae as editor, the paper published news items related to the union as well as reports from the various regions and executives. By its seventh issue the paper had doubled in size and continued to grow. In 1978 *Sulijug* became a member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media, essentially a wire service for Canadian union publications.⁸⁴ With membership in CALM, *Sulijug*'s stories became much more political, especially with regards to the Trudeau government's anti-inflation measures, but also running the occasional article on international issues. While the regional reports reflected the concerns of the membership as evidenced in the minutes of local meetings, the stories originating with CALM were rarely reflective of issues being discussed at the local level.

⁸³The earliest surviving newsletter in the UNW Collection is dated October 1972 [Box-file 8-24]. Another newsletter, dated 15 February 1974, expresses a certain exasperation with the opening line: "Once again, we shall try to start, and keep rolling, a monthly newsletter [Box-file 8-22].

⁸⁴"*Sulijug* – CALM Member," *Sulijug*, Vol. 1, No.12, October 1978, 8.

Sulijug celebrated its first anniversary at the union's fourth triennial convention the first week of October 1978. President Peter Dyck submitted a 13 page report to the delegates. First among his concerns was a problem that had plagued the union for ten years: the continued turnover in executive members. While it is not clear if this in itself was a uniquely northern phenomenon within labour, or simply characteristic of organizations relying on volunteer officers, the problem was certainly exacerbated by employee turnover in the Northwest Territories. "During the course of the past three years," Dyck wrote, "there has been a total of nine resignations from the executive." He explained that of these, five had been due to incumbents transferring within the territories, or resigning from government employment. The other four had been for personal reasons.⁸⁵ When asked to speculate in 1999 on why there was such a high turnover rate in executives for personal reasons, Dyck felt that the main reason was the time commitment involved.⁸⁶

The length of Dyck's report is indicative of the increasing workload of the president's position. This was no doubt exacerbated by the constant turnover in executives, the law suit that the union was then engaged in with the employer, and the sheer size of the membership. Since the time that Franklin, McInnes, and others began to organize the union eleven years earlier, its membership had grown sixteen fold. Of the

⁸⁵President's Report, NWTPSA Fourth Triennial Convention, October 1978, Vol. 1, Box-file 5-2, UNW.

⁸⁶Dyck interview.

1,959 government employees paying dues to the union in 1978, 1,616 were signed members of the union.⁸⁷ It was with these realities in mind that the convention delegates decided to make the president's position a full-time one. No longer would the non-elected executive secretary treasurer be the most visible officer of the union; no longer would he be running the office in Yellowknife. For the first time in the union's history the executive secretary treasurer would have to personally answer to an elected member on a daily basis. During the convention's elections, it was determined that Peter Dyck would be the member that Ed McRae would answer to. The other table officers consisted of Ian Milligan and Darm Crook as first and second vice-presidents respectively.⁸⁸

The 1978 convention was also significant in that it was the first convention that began to address issues of race and ethnicity. This emanated exclusively from the eastern Arctic where Inuit make up the overwhelming majority. Reporting for the Baffin region, RVP Eli Scott-Bradley informed the convention delegates that of the 335 territorial employees in that region, 260 were Inuit. Scott-Bradley cited a "lack of education" as keeping the Inuit from getting more involved in the union's affairs. "[M]any of these [Inuit] do not have any idea of what their rights as union members are," the RVP complained. Addressing the issue of language appeared to be significant in involving Inuit members in union affairs. Scott-Bradley reported that they had started to use an interpreter at their

⁸⁷Secretary Treasurer's Report, Box-file 5-2, UNW. Under the Rand Formula all employees pay dues, but only those who sign cards are members of the union.

⁸⁸Resolutions, Box-file 5-2, UNW. Also Dyck interview.

local meetings and were translating their minutes into Inuktitut.⁸⁹ This was not just the case in Frobisher Bay. "A good amount of effort has been put into translating and we have a native steward [sic] who does a good job of interpreting," the RVP for the Keewatin region reported. "This has resulted in more interest shown by the natives."⁹⁰ Where the union made efforts at the local level to reach out to its Inuit membership it encountered a degree of success.

As aboriginal membership gained, relations with the parent body continued to deteriorate. As before, the issue was related to the payment of dues to two organizations. At a meeting of the executive on 13-15 October 1977 the revelation of questionable dealings between the Alliance and the government greatly angered the component's leadership. Previously the employer collected dues from its employees and forwarded them to the NWTPSA, who would in turn send a cheque to the PSAC for its share. At some point prior to the meeting, Alliance vice-president Bill Doherty wrote to the government and, without informing the NWTPSA, requested it to begin sending dues directly to the Alliance which would then be responsible for sending the component its share. Serious discussion of immediate disaffiliation must have followed for the motion that was carried at the end of the discussion was "[t]hat the PSA stay with the PSAC until

⁸⁹RVP Report, Baffin Region, Box-file 5-2, UNW.

⁹⁰RVP Keewatin Report, *Ibid.*

we go to fall convention.”⁹¹

It appears the dispute over dues served more as an excuse to attempt to disaffiliate. Unlike earlier, this effort was not initiated at the local level, but rather at that of the executive. That the secessionist movement enjoyed strong support indicated that there were other unknown issues at work feeding ill feelings on the part of the component towards the Alliance. The dues issue might have been more of a “straw that broke the camel’s back.” Although new to the organization, Ed McRae functioned as the unofficial leader of the faction in support of breaking away from the PSAC which also included Charlie Kennedy and Michael Miltonberger⁹² of Fort Smith, and Ron McCagg of Fort Simpson.⁹³ According to Dyck:

There was a pretty vigorous [group] – this group of executive members, Ed McRae leading them sort of, that thought the PSAC was a stick in the mud, was taking money and blood out of us and giving us nothing in return and on and on; and we should be doing this all ourselves and so forth and instead of sending this money to Ottawa, we could buy the representation cheaper and better elsewhere.⁹⁴

⁹¹Minutes, FEM, October 13-15, 1977, Box-file 1-1. It is possible Fry was in some way connected to this incident as this is the last record of his participation in the union. This, however, as previously discussed, is only one of several possibilities.

⁹²Miltonberger is now a cabinet minister in the territorial government and not a friend of the labour movement.

⁹³Although Dyck remembers McCagg out of Fort Simpson, he is listed in *CSR*, Vol.51, No.4, December 1978, 32-33 as RVP for Central Arctic. It is quite possible that at one point he transferred from one to the other.

⁹⁴Dyck, interview.

Dyck himself supported staying with the PSAC. Crook, surprisingly given his past attempt with the Hay River local, was curiously not decidedly on either side of the fence.⁹⁵ Quiet diplomacy prevailed in the end though, as no mention of the issue arose at the following convention. The subject of disaffiliation, however, would be a recurring issue. One factor that contributed to these ill feelings resulted from a lawsuit that the union and the government were involved in throughout 1978.

On 6 March 1978 the union and the employer began negotiations for a new collective agreement. Within minutes of the start of the session, the government's chief negotiator and director of personnel Robin Bates "stormed out" of the negotiations because, according to the union, "he did not agree with the position taken by the Association that all items contained in the Collective Agreement were negotiable."⁹⁶ Four days later, on March 10, Bates distributed to employees a letter stating in part: "...that on specific dates there would be increases in rental rates, and utilities, settlement allowances and removal assistance and other matters and conditions of employment to government employees."⁹⁷

Bates' letter was inflammatory because these items were the subject of article 40 of the collective agreement, which did not set out the actual rates to be paid, but

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶"NWT government backs off in union talks," *News*, 22 March 1977, 7.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

established that they would be set through consultation between the employer and the union.⁹⁸ By proceeding to alter the terms of article 40 without the appropriate joint consultation, Bates was making those changes unilaterally. In an effort to combat these unilateral changes the union proceeded with a two-pronged counter attack. The first prong was to seek certification, through the PSAC, under the Canada Labour Code. The second prong was to seek an injunction from the courts prohibiting the government from unilaterally changing the collective agreement.⁹⁹

Certification by the CLRB would effectively make the provisions of the NWTPSA Ordinance redundant by entrenching the union's rights within the Canada Labour Code.¹⁰⁰ In a press release dated 20 March, Ed McRae explained that certification through the CLRB would guarantee to the union the right to file charges of unfair labour practices as well as the right to strike which the NWTPSA Ordinance did not. McRae alleged that Commissioner Hodgson, apparently having long since shed his pro-labour sentiment, had previously threatened that if the union did not "toe the line," the government had the

⁹⁸"Court order issued against NWT government," *Sulijuq*, Vol.1, No.7, March 1978, 1.

⁹⁹*Ibid.* 7; also "Certification being sought from CLRB for NWTPSA," *News*, 22 March 1978, 7; and "NWT-PSA applies for certification," *Sulijuq*, Vol.1, No.7, March 1978. The PSAC also filed a separate application to the CLRB to certify the 68 employees of the NWT Housing Corporation who were also covered under the collective agreement. See registered letter from CLRB to Barren-McBain, (law firm) Edmonton, and Davies and Company, (law firm) Vancouver, 13. Box-file 15-10, UNW.

¹⁰⁰"NWT-PSA applies," *Sulijuq*, 1.

option of legislating terms and conditions. "By being certified under [the] CLRB," McRae stated, "we will be moving from a process of collective begging to collective bargaining in the truest sense of the words."¹⁰¹ But when the CLRB made its decision on the application in July, it ruled against the union, declaring that the union's members were "employees of Her Majesty in right of Canada" and therefore not eligible for certification under the Code.¹⁰²

The union's use of the courts was more successful. Justice Calvin Tallis of the Northwest Territories Supreme Court heard the union's application for an injunction to prevent the government from unilaterally raising rents on 15 March 1978. He did not grant the injunction, but rather ordered the government not to make any changes to article 40 of the collective agreement until a decision was reached on whether or not the items in the article could be arbitrated. Both sides then resumed negotiations on items other than those contained in article 40. Throughout negotiations, however, Bates repeatedly threatened legislation on rents. Finally, on Friday, 12 May, Bates handed a document across the table entitled "Memorandum of Understanding Between GNWT and NWTPSA," stating in part:

The parties agree that the subjects of rental and utility rates, rental conditions and private accommodation allowances are items for discussion

¹⁰¹"Certification," *News*, 7.

¹⁰²Registered letter, CLRB to Barren-McBain, 32; also "CLRB denies jurisdiction," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 1, No. 9, May-June 1978, 16; and Vince Hamer, "Court Battle Continues: PSA Silent on CLRB Decision," *News*, 24 July 1978, 1.

within the framework of Joint Consultation and do not form part of Collective Agreements between the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Northwest Territories Public Service Association.¹⁰³

Bates indicated that unless the union signed the document, negotiations would proceed no further. The union refused and walked out.¹⁰⁴ Within hours, legislation was introduced in the legislature to remove the items contained in article 40 from the realm of collective bargaining.¹⁰⁵

The lightning speed with which legislation was rushed through indicated how well orchestrated preparations had been between Bates and his political masters in the legislature. Having the force of a court order in their favour, Bates knew that the union would never have signed what the judge in the ensuing contempt case described as “articles of capitulation.”¹⁰⁶ Forcing the union to walk out was the signal to the minister responsible for personnel, Arnold McCallum, to serve notice of motion to amend the Public Service Ordinance, “... to preclude the inclusion in any collective agreement ... of matters affecting rental and utility rates, rental conditions, private accommodation

¹⁰³Judgement No. 4273, Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories, 12 December 1978, Box-file 23-6, UNW.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories: Debates*, 65th Session, 8th Assembly, Official Report, Friday, May 12, 1978, 185; also Rhonda Snary, “PSA Negotiations Grind to a Halt,” *News*, 17 May 1978, 1; and “Talks Halt,” *News*, 17 May 1978, 15.

¹⁰⁶Judgement No. 4273.

allowances.”¹⁰⁷ When the legislature re-convened on 16 May, the bill proceeded through first and second reading, with only two members objecting to the speed with which the legislation was proceeding.¹⁰⁸ The only “public” discussion that ensued was when Peter Dyck and Assistant Commissioner Mullins were allowed to answer questions by the members during committee of the whole. Government attorney Pat Flieger advised the legislature from the floor. The only amendment that was made to the bill was that it was made retroactive to September 1969.¹⁰⁹ In the space of less than four working days the government was able to circumvent collective bargaining through legislation that side-stepped both the union and the public, and flew in the face of Judge Tallis’s court order.

The union successfully sued the government for contempt. Justice Tallis’ order did not prohibit the government from unilaterally altering the terms of article 40 of the collective agreement, it only delayed the passage of such legislation until it could be decided if the items in article 40 could be arbitrated. By proceeding with legislation regardless, the government was guilty of civil contempt. On 14 December Bates and Flieger were found guilty of actively counseling the government to violate Judge Tallis’s order and each was fined \$500.¹¹⁰ Bates had already announced his impending resignation

¹⁰⁷*Legislative Assembly*, 185.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid*, 16 May 1978, 268 and 17 May, 1978, 313-334.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid*, 334-5, 364-5.

¹¹⁰Judgement No. 4273. Also Doug Earl, “PSA, Gov’t: Convictions Leave issues unresolved,” *News*, 18 December 1978, 1-2; and “Government Officials Guilty,” *Sulijug*, Vol.II, No.3, January 1979, 1.

the previous September, effective 1 January 1979, but had indicated at the time that he would stay on if need be to conclude a contract with the union. He had been hired as Director of Personnel three years earlier and was reported to have told Deputy Commissioner Parker at that time that three years was how long he expected "the job" to take.¹¹¹ It therefore appears that Bates was hired with a specific objective in mind: to drastically cut the amount of spending arrived at through collective bargaining. The government had begun preparations then for a final showdown with the union three years earlier with the recruitment of a hired gun.¹¹²

With Bates and Flieger convicted, the legality of the legislation itself was called into question.¹¹³ The union wanted to pursue legal proceedings to overturn the legislation. The PSAC, however, had different ideas. Partially motivated by a desire to improve the strained relations between the two organizations, the PSAC had covered the legal expenses of a private Edmonton lawyer. Upon the conviction of Bates and Flieger, this lawyer advised the union to continue and attempt to have the legislation overturned. Peter Dyck summed up the attitude of the lawyer, and some of his executive officers as well, including Darm Crook, as "take 'em all the way. Burn 'em at the stake and let the chips

¹¹¹"Director of Personnel announces resignation for personal reasons," *News*, 1 September 1978, 3.

¹¹²Although it is not known if the government paid the fines for Bates and Flieger, in the employer's eyes it was probably \$1,000 well spent.

¹¹³Earl, "PSA, Gov't," *News*, 1-2.

fall where they may.” According to Dyck though:

... the Alliance stepped in and said, “well, you’ve achieved some of what you want to achieve... you’ve proven that some people have been in contempt of [court], you’re never going to get housing back, so why push the issue any further and blow your so called ‘negotiation relationship’ with the government right out the window?”¹¹⁴

Dyck continued that he and all the members of the executive were “very uncomfortable personally,” that they felt powerless and “in the hands of lawyers.” Under pressure from the Alliance, the NWTPSA discontinued the action.¹¹⁵ The good will that the PSAC gained by covering legal fees evaporated.

In December 1978 McRae made a recommendation to the PSAC which would have a long term impact on labour in the North. McRae advised the Alliance that the government was expected to take over the hospitals at Inuvik, Frobisher Bay, Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Rae, as well as establishing a health clinic at Fort Smith. He recommended that this situation should be studied and that a plan should be established for the incorporation of these employees into the component.¹¹⁶ As it turned out, the complete devolution of health care to the Government of the Northwest Territories would extend well into the next decade, but in 1979 Stanton Yellowknife Hospital became the

¹¹⁴Dyck interview.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶Letter, Ed McRae, Executive Secretary Treasurer, NWTPSA, to Mr. J. Wylie, Executive Vice-President, PSAC, 13 December 1978, Box-file 23-3, UNW.

first, and therefore the model for the rest.¹¹⁷

In total, Stanton employed approximately 200 workers: about 100 nurses, nursing assistants, and orderlies; and another 100 non-professional staff who would all become employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories 1 April 1979.¹¹⁸ The non-medical staff at Stanton had been organized as local 362 of the National Component of the PSAC and had signed their first contract in March 1978.¹¹⁹ The nursing staff subsequently became members of this local as well.¹²⁰ In December the Alliance was advised that in the event the government was to take over the running of Stanton Yellowknife Hospital, the certificate issued to the PSAC by the CLRB would lapse as “successor rights” could not be invoked in a case where the succeeding employer was the territorial government.¹²¹ The territorial government publicly agreed with Dyck that the nurses should become members of the NWTPSA. But in discussion with the nurses themselves, the government attempted to impose its own “company union” by encouraging the nurses to form their own “independent association,” and even offered to pay the related legal costs. The

¹¹⁷Crook interview.

¹¹⁸“Will YK nurses join PSA?” *News*, 21 March 1979, 2.

¹¹⁹“First Contract signed,” *Sulijuq*, Vol.1, No.9. May-June 1978, 3.

¹²⁰Letter, Peter Dyck, President, NWTPSA, to A. E. Stewart, President, PSAC, 6 April 1979, Box-file 23-3, UNW.

¹²¹Letter, Maurice Wright (attorney) to Mr. W. Hewitt-White, 28 December 1978, Box-file 23-3, UNW.

nurses voted unanimously to join the NWTPSA.¹²² Publicly the union was optimistic with the devolution of Stanton and the addition of two new locals to the union, local 10 for the non- nursing staff, and local 11 for the professionals. *Suljuq* reported to the membership:

The absorption of all the hospital workers across the territories into the public service will swell the ranks of the N.W.T.P.S.A. by twenty percent. A spokesperson for the union said that this increase in membership will "increase the clout" of the union in all its dealings with the G.N.W.T.¹²³

Privately the union was not as optimistic. "I am somewhat nervous," Dyck wrote to PSAC president Andy Stewart, "about the position the employer took with respect to the Nurses and feel that even though we have been successful with this group we will have to go through the same exercise with the Nurses at all the other hospitals."¹²⁴ Given the year-long law suit that had just been concluded, as well as the government's attempted sabotage of the union's efforts with the nurses, Dyck's distrust of the employer was understandable, albeit unnecessary. When the 25 bed health center at Fort Smith became operational later in the year, its employees were members of the NWTPSA.¹²⁵ It would be another ten years, however, before the devolution of health was completed and in the interim the union concentrated on organizing outside the purview of the territorial government.

¹²²Letter, Dyck to Stewart, 6 April 1979.

¹²³"Stanton Hospital Joins PSA," *Suljuq*, Vol. III, No.1, September 1979, 1.

¹²⁴Letter, Dyck to Stewart, 6 April 1979.

¹²⁵"New PSA Members," *Suljuq*, Vol.III, No.1, September 1979, 3. See also *Annual Report*, 1979, 33.

Relations between the NWTPSA and its own staff also began to come apart again about this time. Continuing its established tradition, the executive met on 10 February 1979 and fired McRae after less than a year and a half in his position.¹²⁶ McRae retaliated by initiating legal proceedings, but the parties ultimately settled out of court, with one of the conditions of the settlement being not to discuss the specifics of the agreement.¹²⁷

McRae's dismissal coincided with an article appearing in *News of the North* entitled "Union workers join United Labour Union."¹²⁸ The ULU had just been certified by the CLRB to represent three of the four staff members of the NWTPSA. Although the original application had been for all four members, the fourth, McRae, was excluded because of his *ex officio* role on the union's executive.¹²⁹ Accusing the NWTPSA of unfair labour practices, McRae claimed he had been fired for organizing the union's staff. McRae further alleged that the NWTPSA had taken exception to his involvement in the ULU late in 1978 when the CLRB application was first filed. He also claimed that Dyck had approached him at one point and told him that things could be "smoothed out" if the ULU idea was abandoned. Dyck refused to comment on McRae's accusations at the time,

¹²⁶Minutes, FEM, 10 February 1979, Box-file 1-8, UNW.

¹²⁷Dyck interview. Legally speaking, McRae was not fired. Subsequent to the out of court procedures, McRae was reinstated and then immediately resigned. See "PSA reinstates McRae – resigns," *News*, 19 March 1979, 5.

¹²⁸Drawing on the northern identity of the new union, and probably more so McRae's sense of irony, its acronym was the name of a traditional Inuit knife used for skinning and butchering: *ulu*.

¹²⁹"Union workers join United Labour Union," *News*, 9 February 1979, 7.

and when asked 20 years later about McRae's dismissal, Dyck did not mention the subject of the staff organizing a union.¹³⁰ Without commenting on the details of the out-of-court settlement, the former union president simply stated that:

Ed McRae was let go. Very simply he was not taking the direction given him, through me, from the executive, and very simply didn't consider himself [to be one] who needed to take direction from anybody. It was an impossibility to me and him to work, to continue to work together... and there [were] a couple of other issues that come to light that caused me to take immediate action and suspend him subject to review by the executive with a recommendation for dismissal.¹³¹

McRae's organizing efforts were likely the "couple of other issues" Dyck referred to, but given Dyck's silence, it is difficult to say. It is most probable, though, that had the organization of the ULU been the motivating factor in McRae's dismissal, he would have been dismissed when the application to the CLRB was filed, rather than after its certification. An unnamed PSAC spokesperson¹³² stated at the time that McRae was fired "for being disloyal and attempting to usurp authority from the PSA's elected members." Alliance first vice-president Bill Doherty denied all of McRae's charges, stating that at one time McRae had informed the membership that the elected members had "sold out" the membership. Commenting on the formation of the ULU, Doherty indicated that it coincided with the president's position being made full-time,¹³³ implying that the catalyst in

¹³⁰"PSA fires Ed McRae," *News*, 14 February 1979, 1-2

¹³¹Dyck interview.

¹³²Probably PSAC vice-president Bill Doherty.

¹³³"PSA Fires," *News*, 1-2.

the formation of the ULU was the president's daily presence in the office for the first time. Doherty was probably right. In responding to increasing work loads and responsibilities, the establishing of the president's position as full time was bound to create friction between the elected leader and the appointed staff person who now shared an office. Making the president full-time had the unintended effect of demoting McRae from the day-to-day *de facto* leader of the union, a demotion he was unwilling to accept. The departure of McRae signaled the beginning of a new era for the union in which an elected member of the union would be running the union's affairs on a day-to-day basis. Whatever the reasons were for his dismissal, McRae must be given credit for establishing the foundation upon which much of the union's future successes would be based. Among these were the success of *Sulijug* and his foresight regarding the devolution of health care to the territorial government.

The decade of the 1970s closed on the NWTPSA with a new executive secretary treasurer – James B. “Ben” McDonald of Ottawa.¹³⁴ The hiring of McDonald was significant for several reasons. First, he was a southern hire, breaking from the union's usual practice of hiring within the North. Secondly, although he had little previous experience in the labour movement, he brought with him an administrative background with the federal department of energy, mines, and resources. Finally, McDonald was a much more politically oriented individual, having canvassed for the NDP on election

¹³⁴Minutes, FEM, 31 May 1979, Box-file 22-3.

campaigns and having been previously employed as a field worker with the Ontario Federation of Students.¹³⁵ McDonald not only brought a new face to the union, but a new attitude. Being more progressive than his predecessors, the first innovation he made was the adding of two new regular sections to *Sulijuq*; one on women's issues, the other on international labour issues. Articles on the ongoing revolution in Nicaragua and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa became more common in the union's paper. The hiring of McDonald in many ways represented the union's moving away from a parochial northern existence and into the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement.

The union had evolved considerably from the signing of its first contract in 1970. It had almost quadrupled in size from 500 members in 1970, to 1,906 in 1980.¹³⁶ During this period too, although they had not taken on any major leadership positions, Inuit had certainly become increasingly visible within the union. At the same time the union remained somewhat aloof from the labour movement in general; relations between the union and the PSAC reached crisis situations and then cooled off. Most significant for the union during this period were its relations with the employer. From a friendly point where the employer gave the union free flights in order to service its membership, tension between the union and government had become almost first nature. With a flare for understatement, the government described the change in the nature of the relationship with

¹³⁵Personal interview with Ben McDonald, 20 August 1999.

¹³⁶*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1970 and 1980.

its employees as “the development of a more formal employer/employee relationship than has existed in the past.”¹³⁷ The most significant advance during this period was in organizational development. The addition of new regions and accompanying RVPs facilitated greater local involvement by both native and non-native members. The establishment of a union press and a growing staff indicated that the union was increasing in its level of sophistication from the days that it was raffling bottles of liquor to purchase postage stamps. Although the turnover of both executives and leaders continued, the issue had been partially addressed by the end of the decade by making the president full-time and seeking out a professional executive secretary treasurer from outside the limited confines of the Northwest Territories. The 1980s would be marked by a more stabilized relationship between the union and the territorial administration, but would see both a dramatic increase in membership and the expansion of the union into areas outside the purview of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

¹³⁷ *Annual Report*, 1978, 76-77.

CHAPTER 3

The Union of Northern Workers

The relationship between the NWTPSA and other labour organizations during the 1980s can be roughly divided into three periods. The early period, 1980 to 1982/83, shows a paradoxical situation where on the one hand the union took a very active role in getting the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour finally established, but on the other hand resumed attempts to disaffiliate from the PSAC. Also during this time the union's staff demonstrated themselves to be active and committed trade unionists. The middle period, 1982/83 to 1986/87, shows the union's intra-labour relations in a more balanced state, with relations with the Federation, the PSAC, its own employees, and even unions outside of the NWT to be positive. The latter part of the decade, 1986/87 to 1989/90, is highlighted by the 1987 name change to the Union of Northern Workers. This period shows a reversal from the early part of the decade, with relations amicable with the PSAC, but increasingly deteriorating with the NWTFL. The union also temporarily allied itself with the territorial government in its battle with the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

The common thread connecting these three periods is the continued growth of the NWTPSA/UNW, particularly its growth outside of government employment. As the PSAC facilitated this growth, relations with that organization remained positive. However, as the UNW grew into non-traditional areas for a civil service union, it was increasingly perceived as a threat by other unions, particularly Local 802 of the United

Steelworkers which used its influence within the Federation of Labour to distance the UNW from the broader northern labour movement.

The founding convention of the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour took place on 17 May 1980 at Yellowknife. Canadian Labour Congress President Donald MacDonald granted the organization its charter. Also in attendance were 47 delegates from 26 union locals representing 3, 230 northern workers.¹ The reporter who covered the event was not sure how effective the new organization was going to be, given its stated commitment to both business unionism and social unionism. "Some of its stated 'purposes' are altruistic," he wrote, such as the one to "promote the cause of peace and freedom in the world...Some are practical, such as 'to aid and encourage the sale of union made goods....'"²

Darm Crook proudly recalled being a founding delegate of "the Fed."³ Together with Cliff Reid of the Steelworkers' local at Pine Point, he read through the founding charter article by article. Despite the pleas of Donald MacDonald, the new organization quickly distinguished itself as unique among CLC affiliated federations as the NWTFL

¹Chris Mousseau, "Founding meeting: A voice for Northern labour," *News*, 23 May 1980, A3. Also "NWT now has federation," *Sulijug*, Vol. IV, No. 2, June 1980, 4-5. Although it is not clear from the available literature if he was actually in attendance, Bill Berezowski, who originally came to Yellowknife in 1961 as the staff representative for Mine Mill, also claims to have been involved in the formation of the NWTFL. See Craig Harper, "Former union man recalls days gone by," *News*, 26 October 1987, 21.

²Mousseau, "Founding meeting," A3.

³Crook, interview.

refrained from supporting the New Democratic Party. “[D]elegate after delegate came to the microphone and stated they did not wish “to be dictated to about how they should vote,” reported *News of the North*.⁴

Illustrating the ever-increasing importance of aboriginal issues in the NWT, one of the major motions debated was to pressure the federal government to settle land claims. However, reflecting the overwhelming non-native membership of the northern labour movement, the motion did not “take sides,” but rather only aimed to speed up the process,⁵ thereby showing no firm support for the interests of aboriginal people on the part of the NWTFL.

The Federation was also unique with regards to its overwhelming representation of public sector unions. While dominated by public sector workers, its top positions were held by mine workers. Of the original seven member executive, two were NWTPSA delegates, two were from other PSAC components, and one was from the National Association of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians. Only two of the executive members were from private sector unions: Phil Molby and Cliff Reid, both of USWA Local 804 at Pine Point. Molby and Reid, however, were elected president and vice-president respectively.⁶

⁴Mousseau, “Founding meeting,” A3.

⁵*Ibid.* A3.

⁶Molby was elected in a second ballot, defeating Ed McRae, who after leaving the employ of the NWTPSA landed a job with the city of Yellowknife and membership in

With the exception of the formation of the NWTFL, the early 1980s, at least prior to the 1981 convention, were a time of quiet for the NWTPSA. Even the resignation of Peter Dyck from the presidency in January 1981 attracted little attention.⁷ Dyck resigned because he wanted to take up a teaching position with the vocational college in Fort Smith. Also, he was simply not prepared to give any more of himself to the union. In his own words, he was “burnt out”:

I didn't see myself making a living in the labour movement and realized that the NWTPSA as it was then was quickly getting to a point and place where it had to be a much more active and open representative, speaking publicly – [a more] visual representative of the membership than I felt I was prepared to get involved in.... I never ceased to be overwhelmed by the fact that it was a thankless job.⁸

As first vice-president, Ian Milligan took over from Dyck.

another component of the PSAC. Undoubtedly his past experience with both the NWTPSA and Steel lost him votes. McRae was able to secure a seat on the federation's executive in August 1980 as RVP for the North Great Slave region when a by-election was held to fill the position after the incumbent left the North. From this point on though, McRae disappeared from the northern public record. See Mousseau, “Founding meeting,” A3; “NWT now,” *Sulijug*, 4-5; and, “McRae new Labour federation V-P,” *News*, 8 August 1980, A5. CASAW, as an affiliate of the CCU, was not eligible for membership in the Federation.

⁷Neither the *Yellowknifer* nor the *Native Press* reported Dyck's resignation. It is unclear how the union reported Dyck's resignation as the UNW archival collection is missing several issues of *Sulijug* between June 1980 and November 1981, including any issues which would have reported on Dyck's resignation. While Dyck, in the August 1999 interview remembers resigning in 1979, his letter of resignation was read to the membership of Local 6 on 2 February 1981, indicating that he likely resigned the previous January. See Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local 6, Hay River, 2 February 1981, Box-file 8-8, UNW.

⁸Dyck interview.

Milligan's term as president was a short one, lasting from Dyck's resignation in January 1981 until the union's convention the following Thanksgiving. Milligan, for the most part, simply filled the position until elections were held. His report to the convention did little more than explain how he came to be president.

Once again the executive secretary treasurer was the *de facto* leader of the union. McDonald's convention report was over 27 typed pages.⁹ In it he discussed the hiring of additional staff, the need for a procedure to prioritize bargaining proposals, and the restructuring of various locals. He also mentioned that many of the courses that the PSAC had offered in the North were cancelled due to the membership's lack of interest, and expressed a great deal of frustration with the Alliance's slowness in dealing with the backlog of grievances and arbitrations.¹⁰

McDonald's report presaged a short-lived disaffiliation attempt. Local 9, representing the employees of the Yellowknife Correctional Centre, felt that the dues they were paying to the Alliance were wasted money and submitted a motion to the convention to disaffiliate. Although discussion of secession had arisen at both the local and executive levels in the past, it had never been the subject of a convention motion. The attempt had to be taken seriously because unlike a local or the executive, the convention had the legal authority to effect a break with the Alliance. Ironically, the motion originated from the

⁹Report to the Fifth Triennial Convention, NWTPSA, J.B. McDonald, NWTPSA 5th Triennial Convention, October 1981, Vol. 3, Box-file 6-4, UNW.

¹⁰*Ibid.* 17-22.

same local where the union was conceived in the late 1960s – the correctional facility. Unpersuaded, however, the convention delegates held firm in their loyalty to the Alliance. Fred Lamb, the RVP for Hay River, moved for a recorded vote.¹¹ Of the 37 delegates, 35 voted to stay with the Alliance and two abstained,¹² clearly indicating the overwhelming support the PSAC continued to enjoy from its northern component.

The convention elected Andrew “Fred” Lamb the NWTPSA’s new president. Lamb had moved to the NWT from the Yukon five years earlier and was employed as a mechanical superintendent with the Department of Public Works and Highways in Hay River. In addition to his experience as RVP for Hay River, he had previously served as president of Local 6. Lamb was joined on the executive by Roger Cousins, an adult educator from Frobisher Bay, as first vice-president; and Maureen Hall, an employee of the Department of Government Services in Yellowknife, as second vice-president.¹³

¹¹General Resolution # 44, By-laws and Resolutions, NWTPSA 5th Triennial Convention, Vol. 4, Box-file 6-4, UNW. It should be noted, however, that given northern attrition rates and the high transiency among workers in the NWT, it is likely that there were few, if any, workers on staff at the jail in 1981 who were part of the original membership.

¹²Agenda and Minutes, 24, 34, NWTPSA 5th Triennial Convention, Vol. 1, Box-file 6-2, UNW. Darm Crook explained in his August 1999 interview that once a motion is placed on the agenda of a convention, the motion becomes the “property” of the convention, not the mover and seconder, explaining why the motion was not simply withdrawn.

¹³“Your New Executive,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No.3, November 1981, 1.

Within less than a year disaffiliation was once again on the union's agenda. In April the PSAC met in convention and voted to increase the amount of dues payable to the Alliance by its components. This would cost the NWTPSA an additional \$90, 000 a year, increasing its annual contribution to the parent body to almost a quarter million dollars.¹⁴ The dues increase was compounded by the deteriorating quality of service from the Alliance. Arbitrations were backlogged two to three years, and appeals on employee exclusions by five years.¹⁵ On 19 July 1982 the executive authorized President Lamb to hire a lawyer "for the purposes of acquiring advice on disaffiliation."¹⁶ Although the executive had not taken a stand on the subject of their relationship with the PSAC, this was a significant situation as for the first time in the NWTPSA's history its top leadership called into question its component status within the Alliance.

PSAC national president Pierre Samson responded 18 October 1982 with a letter to Lamb discouraging disaffiliation, stating that a smaller union is a weaker union. He also pointed out that the NWTPSA was well served as a member of the Alliance should their employer suddenly become belligerent. Sampson's main point was that whatever decision

¹⁴Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local Six, Hay River, 7 June 1982, Box-file 8-9, UNW.

¹⁵Crook, interview.

¹⁶Minutes, Quorum of Executive Conference Call, 19 July 1982, Box-file 23-19, UNW. By this time, in an effort to make the decision making more democratic without significant added expense, executive conference calls became a normal part of the union's decision making process.

the component made, it should be made by the members.¹⁷ In addition, PSAC vice-presidents Darryl Bean and Jean Bergeron were dispatched to Hay River and Inuvik respectively to make the Alliance's presence felt among the membership and to counteract pro-disaffiliation arguments.¹⁸

Lamb struck two committees. The first was to report on the benefits of remaining a component of the PSAC, the second on the attributes of disaffiliation. It is unfortunate that the "Out report" did not survive, for any attempt to analyse the financial relationship between the two organizations regarding money sent to the Alliance in return for services provided would have been contained there. The report advocating continued membership in the PSAC, entitled "Out of the Fat, into the fire ... ?" raised many of the same points Samson had raised earlier. It rhetorically asked, "[c]ould the NWTPSA win a fight with the employer without the support of the PSAC if the GNWT was determined to win?" The report also noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of courses offered to NWTPSA members by the Alliance, as well as printing services, staff expertise, and a strike fund (if the NWTPSA ever succeeded in gaining the right to strike). "To disaffiliate," the report warned, "might even entice the employer to force even more disputes into the costly legal forum." The report stressed finances and services, stating at

¹⁷Letter, PSAC President Pierre Samson to NWTPSA President Fred Lamb, 18 October 1982, Box-file 19-23, UNW.

¹⁸"PSAC Executive Officers to visit NWT," *NWTPSA Weekly Newsletter*, August 1-9, 1982, 1; Box-file 8-25, UNW.

one point: "Our problem is purely financial; the solution should be the same." It concluded there was "no other umbrella organization that provides the services obtainable from the Alliance."¹⁹

The reports were mailed out to local presidents and RVPs in mid-November with instructions to have locals brief their RVPs prior to the January full executive meeting.²⁰ The executive voted on 16 January 1983. Of ten voting members, two abstained, and one opposed continuing affiliation, while the other seven voted to remain a component.²¹ Once again, the NWTPSA affirmed its loyalty to the Alliance.

Much of the expansion of the NWTPSA in the 1980s was due, rather ironically, to the government's attempts to reduce the size of its unionized work force. Continuing the implementation of the 1966 Carrothers Report recommendations, more municipalities within the NWT were incorporated throughout the 1970s. Jobs which had historically been performed by employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories became the responsibility of these communities, which received their funding from the ministry of local government. Similarly, some positions related to education previously performed by NWTPSA members were assigned to new local education authorities. As these workers

¹⁹"Out of the Fat into the fire... ? Report Favouring Continual Affiliation to the Public Service Alliance of Canada," Box-file 19-23, UNW.

²⁰Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local Six, Hay River, 1 November 1982, Box-file 8-9, UNW.

²¹Minutes, Full Executive Meeting, 16 January 1983, Box-file 1-9, UNW.

became the employees of agencies other than the government, wages dropped, benefits decreased, and NWTPSA membership dues were no longer deducted. One sizable group that experienced this process was the employees of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Established in 1972, the NWTHC was responsible for providing and servicing affordable housing for the people of the NWT through the establishment of local housing authorities. While remaining under the control of the territorial government and administered by a board of directors composed entirely of government bureaucrats and members of the NWT Council, the NWTHC was supposed to function as an independent crown corporation.²² While initially the NWTHC employees received the *de facto* benefits of the NWTPSA collective agreement, they were never recognized as government employees. In fact, when the union unsuccessfully applied for certification under the Canada Labour Code in 1978 during its court battle with the government over rents, the application listed the 68 employees of the NWTHC separately. The CLRB refused to certify any of the employees on the grounds that they were all “employees of Her Majesty in right of Canada” and therefore not eligible for certification under the CLRB.²³ Thus, while prohibited from being organized under the Canada Labour Code, housing employees were refused recognition as NWTPSA members. By 1980, as local housing authorities

²²*Annual Report, 1972*, 36-39; and *1973*, 30-32.

²³Registered letter from CLRB to Barron-McBain (law firm), Edmonton; and Davies and Company (law firm), Vancouver, 9, 13, 22, 32; Box-file 15-10, UNW.

came to take on more of the day-to-day operations, wages and benefits of housing workers fell considerably behind those of government employees.

The union was aware of this situation. In July 1980 Barb O'Neill, RVP for Inuvik, was approached by an employee of the Inuvik Housing Authority inquiring as to the "feasibility and technicalities" of organizing the IHA's employees.²⁴ In November, members of Local 6 raised questions as to the status of employees who had been transferred from territorial to municipal status.²⁵ Then in February 1981 the PSAC office in Yellowknife received a letter from Linda Pemik on behalf of the Eskimo Point Housing Association stating they wished to become members.²⁶ The letter was forwarded to NWTPSA executive secretary treasurer Ben McDonald, who informed her that similar requests had been received from workers in three other associations and that the PSAC was currently soliciting a legal opinion and would keep her posted.²⁷ Two weeks later, McDonald wrote to Commissioner John Parker complaining of the government's failure to recognize employees of housing associations, settlement councils, and education committees as government employees and therefore members of the union.²⁸ Parker

²⁴Letter, O'Neill to Dyck, 22 July 1980, Box-file 16-2, UNW.

²⁵Minutes, Membership Meeting, Local Six, Hay River, 3 November 1980, Box-file 8-8, UNW.

²⁶Letter, Linda Pemik (for the staff of the Eskimo Point Housing Authority), to PSAC, Yellowknife, 5 February 1981, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

²⁷Letter, McDonald to Pemik, 27 February 1981, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

²⁸Letters, MacDonald to Parker, 12, 19, and 23 March 1981, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

responded to MacDonald by stating, "your claim is unsubstantiated."²⁹

The union continued to receive requests from unorganized workers for assistance in unionizing. In January 1982 Fred Lamb received a letter from the Qarnngmaliryit Federation of Housing Associations, in the Keewatin region, practically begging the NWTPSA to organize their staff as they fully appreciated just how underpaid and abused their workers were. The federation was candid in claiming that the treatment their own employees received was "barbaric" and that the cause stemmed from inadequate government funding.³⁰ It is hard to imagine just how poorly management treated these workers given that it had taken the unorthodox initiative to unionize them. It is more revealing of the working conditions the territorial government created in the non-unionized public service of the Northwest Territories.³¹

In the spring of 1982 a plan to organize these workers was developed. In May, after a lengthy correspondence with Commissioner Parker which he found "not very

²⁹Letter, Parker to MacDonald, 16 April 1981, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

³⁰Letter, Stephen Kakimat, Qarnngmaliryit Federation of Housing Associations, Keewatin, to NWTPSA President Fred Lamb, 27 January 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

³¹*Ibid.*, Also Lamb to Kakimat, 18 February 1982; and Kakimat to O'Connell, 11 March 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW. The city of Yellowknife, whose employees became members of the PSAC and certified with the Canada Labour Relations Board in 1977 were considered exempt from these efforts. The employees of the town of Pine Point had also been certified with the CLRB by this time and were also exempt. See *Debates*, 23 November 1982, 682-687.

helpful,”³² PSAC lawyer Maurice Wright suggested that an official grievance should be filed for failure to deduct union dues. Article 37 of the agreement provided for a dispute mechanism – the grievance procedure. By grieving the issue, the union could counter government intransigence by taking the issue out of the government’s hands by forcing it to binding arbitration.³³ The employees in question were in a “win-win” situation. If the arbitrator ruled in favour of the union, then the workers would be recognized as territorial employees and therefore NWTPSA members, entitled to all the provisions of the collective agreement. An unfavourable ruling, on the other hand, would make them eligible to organize under the terms of the Canada Labour Code as the City of Yellowknife workers had done five years earlier. The union filed a grievance and referred it to arbitration on 3 June.³⁴

Fearing a ruling in the union’s favour, the government preempted the arbitration process by legislation. On 2 November 1982, Minister of Finance Tom Butters and Public Services Minister George Braden introduced legislation to amend the Public Service Ordinance specifically to exclude employees of the NWT Housing Corporation, community education societies, education committees, band councils and settlement

³²Letter, Maurice Wright (lawyer for the PSAC), to Commissioner John Parker, 11 March 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

³³Letter, Wright to Ms. L.E. Czemenko, PSAC Legislative Officer, 13 May 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

³⁴Letter, McDonald to Parker, 3 June 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

councils from membership in the territorial public service. Although a bloc of Inuit members from the eastern Arctic in addition to Inuvialuit leader (and future premier) Nellie Courmoyea, opposed the bill, it passed and was given assent 25 November.³⁵ “I think that it would necessarily follow,” wrote Maurice Wright following the passage of the legislation, “that if they are not employees of the NWT, then they must be employees under Part V of the Canada Labour Code.”³⁶ It would, however, be another year and a half before the CLRB began issuing bargaining unit certificates to these workers. By passing legislation to exclude what were originally 400 workers from union membership, the government inadvertently gave the excluded workers the protection of the Canada Labour Code, and with that, the right to strike, something territorial employees would not receive until 1996.

The organization of these workers did not begin immediately, and in the interim, the NWTPSA focussed its energies on the NWT Federation of Labour. The NWTFL is structured so that individual locals rather than entire unions, are affiliated with it. The logic in this is that aside from the NWTPSA/UNW, most unions in the NWT have the bulk of their membership outside of the territories. Such is the case with other PSAC components and the Steelworkers. The NWTPSA/UNW is the only union to operate

³⁵*Debates*, 2 November 1982, 18; 24 November 1982, 744; 25 November 1982, 790. See Appendix A, 2-26 November 1982, Chapter 14 of *Debates* for the full text of the bill. Ironically, one of the members supporting the bill was James Wah-Shee, one of the early executive members of the union.

³⁶Letter, Wright to Czernenko, 5 November 1982, Box-file 16-6, UNW.

exclusively in the Northwest Territories. Historically the largest union in the North, it was no small feat when the union announced in April 1983 that all 12 of its locals had affiliated with the NWTFLL, bringing in fifty cents a month in dues³⁷ from each of its 1,502 members.³⁸ According to Ben MacDonald, “‘the Fed’ wouldn’t have happened without the UNW’s support.”³⁹

The relationship that existed between the NWTPSA and the Federation at this time is complex. PSAC Regional Representative at the time Jim Brohmin described the relationship between the two organizations as reasonably good, with the NWTPSA contributing a lot of the dues, but not taking leadership positions. He indicated that the NWTFLL was largely dominated by members of the United Steelworkers of America.⁴⁰ While this was in fact the case, it has to be pointed out that in August 1982 the staff of the NWTPSA rejected the four member union created by Ed McRae, and became certified as members of the Steelworkers.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, as professional trade unionists, the staff saw the benefit and protection of being members of one of North America’s largest unions, rather than a small, independent one. However, as committed trade unionists both

³⁷“100% affiliated,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. IV, No. 2, April 1983, 8; also “NWTPSA First,” *Ibid*, 10.

³⁸*Labour Organizations in Canada, 1983*, 144.

³⁹Personal Interview, J. B. “Ben” McDonald, 20 August 1999.

⁴⁰Personal Interview, James “Jim” Brohmin, 1 September 1999.

⁴¹Canada Labour Relations Board Order, 30 August 1982, Box-file 18-9, UNW.

on and off the job, these workers were generally perceived by both the public and the labour movement in general as NWTPSA rather than Steel. USWA Local 8646 would greatly improve the stature of the NWTPSA in the northern labour movement.

In May 1983 assistant executive secretary treasurer Deborah O'Connell was elected president of the Federation. A long time labour and NDP activist originally from Ontario, O'Connell defeated Cliff Reid's bid for another term, arguing that under his leadership the Federation had kept too low a profile. Although a member of Steelworkers' local 8646 and treasurer of the Steelworkers' Area Council,⁴² as a senior ranking staff officer of the NWTPSA she was clearly identified with that organization. The Federation soon made headlines rallying labour's support for striking workers at Con Mine.⁴³

⁴²Brian Mitchell, "Labor federation elects new boss," *Yellowknifer*, 18 May 1983, A14.

⁴³"Labour federation urges support for striking steelworkers," *Yellowknifer*, 31 August 1983, A3. Not all of the NWTPSA's relations with other labour organizations were positive during this period. In the spring of 1983 the Teachers' Association attempted to "raid" the NWTPSA of its education-related members, primarily classroom assistants. NWTPSA President Fred Lamb described the attempted raid as "not based on any real concern for the well-being of these employees, but based on the Association's imminent need to increase their revenues through an expanded membership." Executive Secretary Treasurer Ben McDonald concurred, stating that the NWTTA simply wanted the classroom assistants for "cannon fodder." Given the historic insistence of the teachers' leadership of setting themselves apart from the rest of the northern public service as "professionals," Lamb and McDonald were likely accurate in their assessment of the teachers' motives. [See "NWT Teachers' Association fails to win classroom assistants," *Sulijuq*, Vol. IV, No.3, July 1983; also McDonald interview.]

In terms of native issues, the NWTPSA had no major external achievements, but internal efforts were made. The most noticeable were the articles in *Sulijuq* in Inuktitut. Beginning in June 1980,⁴⁴ the quantity of material in *Sulijuq* published in Inuktitut steadily increased so that by the mid-1990s the newspaper was in effect bilingual. This particularly northern feature distinguished the NWTPSA as unique among Canadian unions.

In the spring of 1984 the union ran the risk of appearing insensitive to the needs of its aboriginal members [and potential members] by opposing the government's proposed "affirmative action" policy. The purpose of the policy was to make native people a priority with regards to hiring, training opportunities, and internal promotions.⁴⁵ The union did not object to the government's adoption of a genuine affirmative action policy, freely recognizing the territorial civil service [and its union] was dominated by white males. Executive secretary treasurer McDonald applauded the principles of affirmative action, stating: "In the long run everyone will benefit from a good affirmative action programme"⁴⁶ But with native people as the only targeted group, the union argued that the government was advocating preferential hiring, which it saw as completely different from affirmative action. The union argued for a policy that would target all

⁴⁴*Sulijuq*, Vol. IV, No. 2, June 1980.

⁴⁵"Affirmative Action Discussion Paper: We Need Your Views," *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No. 1, May 1984, 1.

⁴⁶J.B. McDonald, "Exec. Secretary's Report: Affirmative Action: A Controversial issue," *Ibid*, 3.

under-represented groups, in particular women and people with disabilities.⁴⁷

The union's greatest achievement in improving the lives of aboriginal people was organizing workers excluded from union membership by the government's 1982 legislation. It was ironic, perhaps hypocritical, that the territorial government implemented a preferential hiring policy towards native people in 1984 considering that the majority of people excluded in the 1982 legislation were Inuit. Employed by hamlet governments and local housing authorities for the most part, in some cases these workers received pay and benefits 20 - 30 per cent lower than government employees. "The workers had low wages and poor working conditions," Lamb recalled. "They were at the pleasure and whims of the local elected politicians of the day."⁴⁸

Fred Lamb is credited with being the "driving force in getting these workers unionized." Organizing new members within the Alliance was the sole responsibility of the PSAC, so he approached the National Board of Directors and convinced them to finance an organizing drive.⁴⁹ Initially using a piece meal strategy, union officials quickly realized that, given the unique reality of organizing in the North, a systematic approach to organizing was required. The distances between communities were vast, and often the

⁴⁷"Affirmative Action: equal opportunity or racism," *Ibid*, 4-5; Also "President's Report: Affirmative Action," *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No. 2, July 1984, 4. It was not until later in the decade that the GNWT would target these groups.

⁴⁸"UNW History – Part 2 of a series: Coming to your community soon: The UNW is more than just GNWT employees," *Sulijuq*, Vol. II, No. 3, September 1992, 10-14.

⁴⁹*Ibid*.

prospective bargaining units were small, in some cases consisting of only five or six individuals.⁵⁰ The first organized was the Inuvik Housing Association on 4 August 1983. Aklavik and Cambridge Bay followed.⁵¹ Because the PSAC held all certificates within the Alliance, the CLRB issued them to the PSAC which in turn assigned them to the NWTPSA.⁵²

Although given most of the credit for the successful organizing drive, Fred Lamb himself attributed much of the early organizing success to PSAC Regional Representative Jim Brohmin, who, “ran around the countryside in moccasins and mukluks” organizing hamlets and housing associations.⁵³ Brohmin, who organized primarily in the predominantly Inuit regions of the Kitikmeot and Keewatin, was struck by the natural sense of solidarity that existed amongst Inuit workers. “There seemed to be a real sense of solidarity amongst the Inuit workers and the Inuit people,” Brohmin recalled. “It would either be a solidarity around joining [the union] or a solidarity around not joining.” Either a very high percentage of workers signed cards, or none did.⁵⁴ In most cases, the organizing drives were successful. According to Brohmin, the Inuit “understood the

⁵⁰McDonald, interview.

⁵¹“UNW History – Part 2,” 10-14; also “Negotiations Begin for Housing,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No. 1, May 1984, 7.

⁵²Personal interview, James “Jim” Brohmin, 1 September 1999.

⁵³“UNW History – Part 2,” 10-14.

⁵⁴Brohmin interview.

general concept – solidarity, speaking with one voice, and negotiating.”⁵⁵

Brohmin recalled a typical organizing drive took from two days to a week. The biggest obstacle was the weather since most places he visited were accessible only by air. The signing of cards could be done in a couple of days.⁵⁶ In some cases the union was invited, but in other cases Brohmin went in “cold.” People in the community often facilitated organizing, depending on the community’s size. Mike Ilnik, an Inuit shop steward in Rankin Inlet did the initial organizing in some of the Keewatin communities.⁵⁷ In other communities local members of the government bargaining unit helped out:

In a place like Cambridge Bay, where it’s a larger community, generally somebody who was already a member of our union would already know somebody that worked at the hamlet or the housing association. In a small place like Whale Cove I’d basically went in cold and just, basically just went over to the office and spoke to one of the people in the office and explained who I was and what I’d been doing and that person just got on the radio-phone and explained to the workers there was somebody here that would like to meet with them. The meeting took place.⁵⁸

With the workers assembled, Brohmin, with an interpreter, would explain what unions were about, and talk about grievances and collective agreements.⁵⁹

⁵⁵“UNW History – Part 2,” 10-14.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*; also Brohmin interview.

⁵⁷Brohmin interview.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

Local community leadership often impeded organizing. According to Brohmin, if a community leader did not feel there was a need for a union, the drive would not succeed. Brohmin's success depended upon local leaders. Often, after arriving in a community, Brohmin would search out the foreman because in most cases he was the "natural leader."⁶⁰ It was crucial to win over this individual because if a community leader did not support the union, few, if anybody else, would. As well, often when a new hamlet council was voted in, it would fire the workers and hire relatives. How the hamlet council viewed the union would have an impact on how the workers thought. "In many cases," Brohmin recalled, "whether or not the local community accepted the union entirely depended on what family wielded power and controlled the local council there. Sometimes they gave us thumbs up, sometimes we had to go back two or three times and convince them."⁶¹

Other factors also affected organizing. Whether or not there were existing contracts in a region affected getting units organized. If a union officer travelled in a region and supplied the organizer with a contact name, it proved helpful. Inuvik, with a long active membership in local three, was the first community to have its housing authority employees certified, and was also the first CLRB unit to negotiate a contract. Incidentally, the Inuvik Housing Authority was one of the few CLRB units which was not

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹"UNW History – Part 2," 10-14.

predominantly aboriginal in its membership.⁶²

By June 1985 the NWTPSA, in cooperation with the PSAC, signed collective agreements with the housing authorities of Inuvik, Aklavik, and Cambridge Bay, as well as the hamlet of Chesterfield Inlet. It was negotiating first collective agreements with the hamlets of Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven and Repulse Bay; as well as the Gjoa Haven, Repulse Bay, and Eskimo Point housing authorities. Applications were before the CLRB to represent the hamlet workers for Whale Cove and Rankin Inlet, in addition to the housing authorities of Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, and Fort Smith. "Overtime, call out, standby, vacation travel, travel time, comparable wages and seniority, are but a few of the benefits won by trade unionists over the years that the above workers *do not* receive ...," reported Jim Brohmin in June 1985.⁶³ By January 1988 the NWTPSA, which had officially changed its name to the Union of Northern Workers the previous fall, had members in 16 CLRB units including the Yellowknife and Iqaluit housing authorities, the Town of Hay River, and the Yellowknife Catholic school board.⁶⁴ Within the next four years the number of CLRB units doubled.⁶⁵

⁶²Brohmin interview.

⁶³Jim Brohmin, "Regional Representative: Organizing Drive," *Sulijuk*, Vol. V, No. 4, June 1985, 5.

⁶⁴"CLRB bargaining unit update," *Sulijuk*, Vol. 8, No.1, January/February 1988, 6.

⁶⁵"UNW History – Part 2," 10-14.

Bob Yaremko, former director of membership services with the NWTPSA/UNW, negotiated early agreements for some of these CLRB units in the mid-1980s. He took great pride in the part he played in organizing and empowering these workers. "The most satisfying thing for me," he stated, "is to see how these members, most of whom are Inuit, and for whom unionism was a new concept, are now running their own locals as Shop Stewards and Local Officers."⁶⁶

The cost of servicing CLRB units was expensive. Lamb worked out a deal with the Alliance to transfer a block of funding to the NWTPSA so that servicing could be done directly out of the Yellowknife office. In 1987 the NWTPSA hired Joe Ahrens as a service officer whose main job was to service CLRB units and organize new ones. "(G)one are the days," said Ahrens, "when a PSAC negotiator flew north, hammered out a contract, and left After the contract's negotiated, we're still here to enforce it," said Ahrens, referring to the increased service available from the office in Yellowknife as well as the one opened in Iqaluit that year.⁶⁷ The real beneficiaries of the markedly improved relationship between the NWTPSA and the PSAC were unorganized northern workers, in particular Inuit ones. The organizing of CLRB units continued throughout the later 1980s. Credit must go to Lamb's leadership in initiating the organization of these workers, and in fostering positive relations with the PSAC, without whose assistance and

⁶⁶*Ibid*, 10-14.

⁶⁷*Ibid*, 10-14.

support this process would not have been possible.

Despite Lamb's re-election in October 1984, the union continued to be dogged by transitory leadership.⁶⁸ Over his previous three year term, Lamb had witnessed 14 personnel changes in his executive.⁶⁹ Such a high turnover was not unusual, and previous executives had experienced similar problems. Asked to speculate on the high turnover during the mid-1980s, Darm Crook felt that it was probably the work load.⁷⁰ With the exception of the president's position, which was full-time, the executives were all volunteers. Balancing a full-time job, unpaid union work, and personal and family lives proved too much for many members of the executive. Less than five months after being re-elected, Lamb resigned. In his last report in *Sulijuq* he stated his reasons for leaving as "for the most part personal. I feel that I need more time with my family, a luxury that the presidency doesn't allow."⁷¹ Darm Crook guessed that Lamb simply could no longer take the pressure and stress.⁷² Crook became the new president.⁷³ Although as first vice-

⁶⁸Jo-Anne Wilson, "Convention Re-elects Lamb," *Sulijuq*, Vol.5, No.4, December 1984, 1; also Crook, interview.

⁶⁹President's Report, NWTPSA 6th Triennial Convention, October 1984, Vol. 2, Box-file 6-7, UNW.

⁷⁰Crook, interview.

⁷¹Fred Lamb, "President's Report," *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No. 4, June 1985, 2.

⁷²Crook, interview.

⁷³"Darm Crook New President," *Sulijuq*, Vol. V, No. 4, June 1985, 1; also "Crook gets union post," *Yellowknifer*, 15 May 1985, A15.

president Peter Dyck should have assumed the presidency, he had no intention of returning to the office. He had allowed his name to stand for first vice-president at the 1984 convention because he wanted to assist Lamb, not to take over in his absence. Upon Lamb's resignation, Dyck promptly resigned as well and the position fell to Crook, who brought to the presidency over ten years active experience with the union, having held every office at the local and executive level, except that of NWTPSA president.⁷⁴

Not all of the turnover in the union resulted from resignations. In 1985 Ben McDonald took a 13 month leave of absence. After six years as executive secretary treasurer he too cited "burnout" as his reason.⁷⁵ To fill in for McDonald during his absence, the union hired Douglas Marshall, a store-front lawyer from Toronto.⁷⁶ McDonald took the position of Executive Assistant with the Federation of Labour.⁷⁷ By this time Deborah O'Connell had left the presidency of the Federation and first vice-president David Johnson, a warehouse worker and member of the PSAC, though not the NWTPSA, had assumed control.⁷⁸ Thus when Crook took over as president of the union,

⁷⁴Crook, interview.

⁷⁵Ben McDonald, "Exec. Secretary's Report," *Ibid*, 3.

⁷⁶"Marshall Appointed," *Ibid*, 3.

⁷⁷In the fall 1986 issue of *Sulijuq* McDonald was interviewed in his capacity as EA for the Federation. See "CLC Fights the Feds on Taxes," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 5, No. 7, October 1986, 3.

⁷⁸The earliest mention of Johnson as NWTFL president is an article in the *Yellowknifer* in March 1985 in which the Federation lends its support to the Steelworkers demand for an inquiry into a death at the Con mine a year earlier. See "Labor supports

many changes were happening in the northern labour movement. Still, the union's relations with other unions were the best they had been since its earliest days. Aggressive organizing solidified the bonds with the PSAC, and the union's top staff person was working for the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour.

The period from late 1985 through 1986 represents one of the most active periods for the NWTFL, with much of this activism emanating from the NWTPSA. The nature of this activity was different too. Whereas in the past, the Federation concerned itself mainly with local concerns, now "the Fed" became increasingly active in national labour issues. One example was the strike by the combined membership of the United Auto Workers and the Canadian Airlines Employees' Association against Pacific Western Airlines. In the North, the PSAC, as well as the NWTFL as a whole supported the strikers.⁷⁹ According to Jim Brohmin, it was the members of the NWTPSA who walked the picket line at the Yellowknife Airport. "I think when there was a need," Brohmin recalled, "they [NWTPSA members] were there."⁸⁰

inquiry," 13 March 1985, A5. Although reported in the PSAC's journal *Argus* as a member of the Alliance, it is not clear which component he was a member of other than to say it was not the NWTPSA. See "UNW Convention: Name change sets progressive tone for UNW," *Argus Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 12, December 1987.

⁷⁹Lu-Ann Lovlin, "PWA strike attracts public servants," *Yellowknifer*, 27 November 1985, A3.

⁸⁰Brohmin, interview.

When it became apparent to the Federation that certain Yellowknife businesses were performing work usually done by striking employees, the NWTFL called for a boycott of those businesses. Specifically mentioned was T.C. Enterprises, a collection of stores and restaurants owned by local entrepreneur Tony Chang. Two weeks after the Federation announced its boycott of Chang's establishments, as well as other businesses doing "scab" work for PWA, the local chamber of commerce condemned the boycott as "discriminatory, predatory, and unworthy."⁸¹ It must have been working.

Another example in which the NWTPSA distinguished itself as a leader within the NWTFL, was the strike by 1,080 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers against Gainers Meat Packing in Edmonton. The strike was given national prominence due to the notoriety of Gainers' owner: Alberta millionaire and hockey team owner Peter Pocklington. In late August 1986 when Pocklington arrived at Yellowknife Airport on business, about 20 picketers organized by the Federation were there to greet him. Many of them were NWTPSA members.⁸² As the strike dragged on into October the Federation of Labour did its part in Yellowknife by forming an NWTFL Gainers Strike Support Committee. Chairing the committee was Doug Marshall, assisted by Ben McDonald, who

⁸¹Lu-Ann Lovlin, "Labour seeks boycott of businesses," *Yellowknifer*, 4 December 1985, 1; also Lovlin, "Chamber angry about boycott," *Yellowknifer*, 18 December 1985, 1.

⁸²Cathy Jewison, "Saturday pickets: Labour group demonstrates against Pocklington," *Yellowknifer*, 20 August 1986, 1; also "NWTPSA," *Update*, 22 August 1986, 1, Box-file 8-28, UNW.

though members of the Steelworkers, were identified by the local press through their connection with the NWTPSA. The committee organized a local boycott of Gainers products, hosted public meetings, and set up information picket lines in front of stores which continued to sell Gainers' products.⁸³ In addition, the committee raised funds for the striking workers. It "adopted" 25 children of the strikers, raising \$900 through a dance to purchase two Christmas gifts for each child.⁸⁴ Jim Brohmin remembered the NWTPSA, not the Federation, as responsible for raising approximately \$20,000 for the striking UFCW members.⁸⁵ It is no wonder that Jim Edmondson, a political consultant contracted by the Federation in the spring of 1986 recalled the period as a time when the NWTPSA was pretty much running the NWTFL.⁸⁶ It was only after the NWTPSA changed its name that relations with the Federation began to deteriorate.

The name change to Union of Northern Workers occurred under the increasing likelihood that the territories would split into Nunavut and a western territory. Desirous of representing workers in both future jurisdictions, and not wanting to be identified solely with the western territory, the executive met in January to consider this, as well as the

⁸³Lu-Ann Lovlin, "Labour supports boycott," *Yellowknifer*, 8 October 1986, B6; also Lovlin, "Support for Gainers' workers," *Yellowknifer*, 22 October 1986, A4; "NWTPSA," *Update*, 3 October 1986, 1; "NWTPSA," *Update*, 10 October 1986, 1; "NWT," *Update*, 31 October 1986, 1, Box-file 8-28, UNW.

⁸⁴"NWTPSA: Gainers strike support," *Update*, 28 November 1986, 1; also "NWT," *Update*, 5 December 1986, 1, Box-file 8-28, UNW.

⁸⁵Brohmin, interview.

⁸⁶Personal interview with Jim Edmundson, 2 September 1999.

changing nature of the organization with the taking on of CLRB units. It referred the idea to the triennial convention scheduled for that fall.⁸⁷ In the interim, the union expended much of its energy and resources in servicing and supporting its CLRB units which brought with them unique challenges, specifically decertification bids and strikes.

In the spring of 1987 employees of the Hamlet of Cambridge Bay applied to have the PSAC – and by extension the NWTPSA – decertified as their bargaining agent. Although the 15 hamlet employees who were members of Local 7 had made a previous bid to have the union decertified, that attempt had fizzled out. This application, however, proceeded to a hearing. “They don’t want much,” Doug Marshall wrote to union president Darm Crook referring to the Cambridge Bay workers, “just a collective agreement.”⁸⁸ In the two years since becoming members of the union, the hamlet workers had yet to receive the primary benefit of union membership – the right to collective bargaining. “We were too slow,” acknowledged Jim Brohmin. Insisting that behind the scenes there had to be government people involved in the decertification bid, he admitted the union had to take a large degree of responsibility as it took a year and a half to get a bargaining committee organized. In the meantime, the workers filed an application for decertification. Although the disgruntled workers were eventually convinced to withdraw

⁸⁷“NWTPSA,” *Update*, 23 January 1987, 1; also McDonald, interview. According to McDonald, Fort Smith RVP Wayne Cahill suggested the name Union of Northern Workers

⁸⁸Memo, Doug Marshall to Darm Crook, 6 April 1987, Box-file 16-20, UNW; also Kathy Kohut, “Undecided workers keep union,” *News*, 3 April 1987, A6.

the application, the message had been sent to the union that dues from CLRB units took greater efforts to be earned.⁸⁹

CLRB units' ability to strike presented another challenge to the union. In 1986, employees of the Inuvik Housing Authority were still seeking a contract on par with government workers, while the employer sought to eliminate gains already won by the union over the past three years. After a year of negotiations, talks broke off and the fourteen employees walked out on 21 March.⁹⁰ From the start, the NWTPSA and the PSAC supported the strikers financially. The NWTPSA donated \$2,000 to the strike fund and \$12.50 per day per person in strike pay. The PSAC paid the strikers \$125.00 per week and contributed an additional \$2,250 per month to the local to distribute to the strikers at its discretion. A strike support committee was formed under the slogan "A fight for survival."⁹¹ Importantly, the committee was not established in Inuvik, but rather Yellowknife with a much larger population, many of its residents being union members. The committee was composed of representatives from the Federation of Labour, all three NWTPSA locals in Yellowknife, as well as members of the Steelworkers and the National

⁸⁹Brohmin, interview; also Kohut, "Undecided workers," A6.

⁹⁰Untitled article, *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April/May 1987, 1; also Craig Harper, "Inuvik housing workers ready to strike," *News*, 13 February 1987, 1; Kathy Kohut, "Inuvik housing workers go on strike," *News*, 27 March 1987, 1, 14A; Darm Crook, "President's Report: PSA Members Set to Strike," *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 1, February/March 1987, 2.

⁹¹"NWTPSA Supports First Strike," *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April/May 1987, 1.

Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians.⁹²

The strike lasted 12 weeks and demonstrated some of the fundamental differences between CLRB units and the main government unit.⁹³ Aside from the obvious right to strike, CLRB units could file complaints against the employer with the board, which could order the employer to grant redress.⁹⁴ The first of these complaints, one of unfair labour practices, was filed on March 17, four days prior to the start of the strike. On March 6 the IHA fired employee Derek Lindsay on the grounds of incompetence. Lindsay was president of Local 3 and the membership representative on the union's negotiating team.⁹⁵ He was fired five days after the strike vote. When the CLRB finally heard the complaint April 30 it ordered the IHA to reinstate Lindsay and to compensate him for any losses.⁹⁶

Such heavy handed tactics by the employer did much to generate support for the strikers both inside and outside the labour movement. In the first month of the strike nearly \$9,000 was raised from unions, businesses, and individuals. "The employer's refusal to negotiate and the hiring of scab labor and a known union buster have made it

⁹²"Strike Support," *News*, 22 May 1987, A6.

⁹³"UNW History: Part 6 of a series: 25 years of labour peace, *Sulijuq*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall 1993, (10-12) 10.

⁹⁴Brohmin, interview.

⁹⁵"Inuvik Housing Authority," *Update*, 3 April 1987, 1, Box-file 8-29, UNW; also Kathy Kohut, "Union files unfair labour complaint," *News*, 27 March 1987, A15.

⁹⁶"Union Wins Unfair Labour Practice Complaint," *Sulijuq*, Vol 7, No. 2, April/May 1987, 3.

easier to win support for the workers,” Darm Crook told *News/North*.⁹⁷ That same month the Alliance published an appeal to support the striking Inuvik workers which was distributed to 1,400 union locals across Canada. Money came in from throughout the North in large and small amounts. Local 6 in Hay River contributed \$2,000 to the cause; even the staff and clients at the Northern Lights Treatment Centre gave \$110.⁹⁸ On April 30 PSAC national president Darryl Bean, accompanied by Darm Crook, flew to Inuvik and spent the day walking the picket line and offering support to the strikers before returning to Yellowknife for the NWTFL convention.⁹⁹ For a bargaining unit of 14 members north of the Arctic Circle, the support that the strikers received was truly phenomenal.

The second complaint that the union lodged with the CLRB ended the strike. On 7 May the IHA made an offer to the union which the negotiating team took back to its members who accepted it. The IHA then withdrew the already ratified contract and added two more stipulations: the union had to withdraw the unfair labour practice complaint regarding Lindsay, and it had to agree to the exclusion of four positions already in the bargaining unit. The union charged the IHA with bargaining in bad faith. The CLRB ruled in the union’s favour and the employer was ordered to pay the workers’ wages and

⁹⁷“Strikers get funds,” *News*, 24 April 1987, A10.

⁹⁸*Ibid*; also “Inuvik Strikers Get Wide Support,” *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April/May 1987, 6.

⁹⁹“PSAC National President Visits Inuvik,” *Ibid*, 3.

benefits, less any strike pay received, retroactive to May 7, the day the strikers would have returned to work had the IHA not bargained in bad faith. The IHA also had to pay the union the total amount it had paid out in strike pay.¹⁰⁰ The NWTPSA had fought and won its first strike.

Other strikes that the union fought in the late 1980s highlighted the unique cultural features of the union's membership. Unlike Inuvik, these other strikes took place in small, isolated, Inuit communities. The first was in Gjoa Haven, where 15 hamlet employees struck for one day in November 1987 after being without a contract since March 31.¹⁰¹ Jim Brohmin, along with Joe Ahrens and Dianne Strilaeff, conducted a strike preparation course with the workers there in September which included simultaneous translation into Inuktitut.¹⁰² Brohmin recalled a particular moment near the end of the course that made clear the unique nature of union organizing in the Arctic:

Through the interpreter I asked if there were any questions, and one of the workers, ... an elder in the back, put up his hand and asked a question to the interpreter. And I could tell ... that it was an important question, that

¹⁰⁰"NWTPSA," *Update*, 3 July 1987, 1, Box-file 8-30, UNW; also "Inuvik Housing Authority," *Update*, 19 June 1987, 2; "Inuvik Housing Authority Strike Ends," *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 3, June/July 1987, 1; Kathy Kohut, "Union to file complaint with minister," *News*, 8 May 1987, B7; Craig Harper, "Labor complaint to be heard," *News*, 12 June 1987, B6; Harper, "Inuvik housing strikers accept contract," *News*, 3 July 1987, 1.

¹⁰¹"Gjoa workers may go on strike," *News*, 28 August 1987, A10; also Craig Harper, "Gjoa strike still looms," *Ibid*, 7 December 1987, 15; also "25 years," *Sulijug*, 10.

¹⁰²Craig Harper, "Workers prepared for possible strike," *News*, 25 September 1987, A12.

everybody's attention was focussed on my response. And the interpreter turned to me and said, 'He wants to know if we should bring our rifles'.¹⁰³

Recognizing the cultural significance of firearms, openly carried in the community, Brohmin realized it was time to review the importance of preventing picket line violence.¹⁰⁴

Cultural factors in northern labour relations were also highlighted when union president Darm Crook went to the community and walked the picket line with his Inuit brothers. With temperatures ranging from – 45 to – 48 degrees Celsius, Crook and members of the bargaining unit took 20 minute shifts on the line. "On one of my shifts," he recalled, "the Hamlet Mayor came up and tore a strip off me. He told me this wasn't the Inuit way of solving problems and this was all my fault. I told him, 'Sir, this is the only way.'"¹⁰⁵ Although the one day strike forced the employer back to the bargaining table and won a contract without concessions on the union's part, it took the union and employer until the end of February the following year to reach an agreement.¹⁰⁶

The strike by 20 employees of the Hamlet of Cambridge Bay almost a year later was almost a replay of the Gjoa Haven strike. Again, the workers had been without a contract since 31 March, negotiations broke down in mid-June, and by September efforts

¹⁰³Brohmin, interview.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵"25 years," *Sulijuq*, 11.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*; also Brohmin, interview.

at conciliation had failed. The hamlet brought in the same negotiator that Gjoa Haven had employed the year previously, with the intention of reversing previous worker gains.¹⁰⁷ Still, there were differences between the two strikes. The Cambridge Bay strike was spontaneous. The union did not have time to send a staff person in to conduct a strike preparation course. Instead, one day after lunch in mid-September, as negotiations were ongoing, the workers, in a legal strike position, walked out on their own into – 40 degree weather. The tactic worked; within two hours a tentative agreement was reached and soon the 20 employees returned to work.¹⁰⁸

Not all of the UNW's CLRB units were small, isolated ones above the Arctic Circle. With the purchase of the NWT portion of the Northern Canada Power Corporation by the territorial government, the employees of the newly formed NWT Power Corporation became the newest and largest CLRB unit within the UNW with 111 members. Greatly facilitating the addition of these new members to the UNW was that as NCPC employees the workers were already members of the Alliance.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*, also Judy Shuttleworth, "Conciliator appointed to resolve labor dispute," *News*, 21 August 1989, 1; Shuttleworth, "Hamlet strike looms," *Ibid*, 5 September 1989, 1; Shuttleworth, "Conciliation fails," *Ibid*, 11 September 1989, 1.

¹⁰⁸"25 years," *Sulijuaq*, 11.

¹⁰⁹Maria da Luz Senra, "Union may try to block NCPC transfer," *News*, 7 March 1988, 1-2; also da Luz Senra, "NCPC workers join UNW," *Ibid*, 14 March 1988, 3; "NCPC employees to join UNW," *Sulijuaq*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1.

Also adding substantial numbers to the UNW throughout the 1980s was the territorial takeover of federally administered health care facilities. The addition of these workers to the UNW made unexpected allies of the union and the government when the devolution of these responsibilities led to a long, drawn out court case between the government and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC). Although the territories had taken over responsibility for Stanton Yellowknife Hospital in 1979, with the exception of two privately run hospitals in Fort Smith and Hay River, the bulk of health care in the NWT in the 1980s was still administered by Health and Welfare Canada. This included a system of 37 community nursing stations, 8 health stations (essentially satellite nursing stations in very small communities) and two general hospitals in Inuvik and Frobisher Bay.¹¹⁰ While the non-medical staff of these institutions were members of the National Health and Welfare component of the PSAC, the nursing staff were members of the PIPSC. In 1982 the federal government devolved the Frobisher Bay hospital to the Government of the Northwest Territories. In July, Alliance negotiator Tom Dinan met in Yellowknife with two employee representatives of the hospital: Terry O'Hara of the Health and Welfare Component, and Yvonne Peyton for PIPSC.¹¹¹ A month later Ben McDonald was in Frobisher Bay meeting with members of both

¹¹⁰*Annual Report*, 1976, 104. Frobisher Bay became Iqaluit 1 January 1987.

¹¹¹"Frobisher Bay Hospital," *NWTPSA Newsletter*, 2-9 July 1982, 1, Box-file 8-25, UNW.

organizations.¹¹² The Commissioner made it clear to PIPSC that should the nurses wish to remain members, they would be allowed if the NWTPSA agreed, and if PIPSC could show the government that the nurses in fact wanted to remain members. PIPSC made no attempt to do this and the nurses became NWTPSA members.¹¹³

In 1986 the 32 federally employed nurses elsewhere in the Baffin zone were notified that responsibilities for health care in that region were being devolved to the territories, and that as of September 1 they would cease to be employees of the federal government, but would be offered comparable positions with the new employer. The reaction of PIPSC this time was substantially different than in 1982. It approached the government and requested enabling legislation to be recognized as the bargaining agent for the NWT nurses. They were refused on the grounds that they could not demonstrate they had the support of the nurses in this endeavour.¹¹⁴ Even had PIPSC been able to demonstrate that the 32 nurses in question did in fact want to retain their membership, the government recognized the inherent difficulties in recognizing PIPSC as the bargaining

¹¹²"McDonald in Frobisher Bay," *Ibid*, 1-9 August 1982, 1, Box-file 8-25, UNW.

¹¹³Supreme Court of Canada, Memorandum of Argument of the Respondent, The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, 23 December 1988, Box-file 18-9, UNW. An article in *News/North* at the time stated that PIPSC did in fact apply to represent devolving nurses in 1982, but if that was in fact the case, its efforts were half-hearted at best. See Canadian Press, "Nurses lose labor bid," *News*, 20 August 1990, A1.

¹¹⁴Factum of the Respondent, The Northwest Territories Public Service Association, in the Court of Appeal of the Northwest Territories, 3-4, Box-file 18-10, UNW.

agent for territorial nurses when Stanton and Frobisher Bay hospitals had been represented by the NWTPSA for seven and four years respectively. In response, PIPSC filed suit in the territorial Supreme Court, charging that the legislation that gave the NWTPSA sole jurisdiction to represent government workers other than teachers violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.¹¹⁵

Initially PIPSC's challenge was successful. In September 1987 the NWT Supreme Court ruled that section 42 (1) of the NWT Public Service Act was "inconsistent with the charter of rights and freedoms, and of no force or effect."¹¹⁶ The Government of the

¹¹⁵Craig Harper, "Gov't workers have choice says court," *News*, 25 September 1988, 1. To understand the remarkably different response of the PIPSC to losing members in 1986 in comparison to 1982, one must understand the nature of PIPSC itself. Loosely associated with the Civil Service Federation in the 1950s, PIPSC made it clear as early as 1959 that it was an organization of "professionals" and wanted nothing to do with "unions." Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, as governments increasingly cut back wages and benefits of public servants, many members of PIPSC became increasingly dissatisfied with their bargaining agent. Between 1975 and 1984 twelve applications were made to have various PIPSC bargaining units decertified in an effort to replace it with a more militant workers' organization. Seven of these applications were successful, most often with the Canadian Union of Professional and Technical Employees – itself having begun as a disgruntled faction within PIPSC – being the chief beneficiary of new members. Gene Swimmer points out in his article "Militancy in Public Sector Union," PIPSC has historically been the least "union like" organization of public servants, but as a result of this haemorrhage of membership was forced to become more militant. Seen in this light, the decision by PIPSC to challenge the GNWT, and by extension the NWTPSA/UNW, was as much an opportunity for the PIPSC to send a message to its membership that it was indeed willing to fight when challenged. [See Lemelin, *Public Service*, 60; also Gene Swimmer, "Militancy in Public Sector Union," in *Conflict or Compromise: The Future of Public Sector Industrial Relations*, Mark Thompson and Gene Swimmer, eds., Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montreal, 1984, 156.]

¹¹⁶Harper, "Gov't workers," 1.

Northwest Territories appealed the ruling and the case was heard by the Alberta Court of Appeal 8 March 1988, but a ruling was not handed down until later.¹¹⁷ In the meantime, the federal and territorial governments proceeded with the devolution of the 130 remaining nurses' positions in the Keewatin, Kitikmeot, Inuvik, and Mackenzie regions.¹¹⁸ In July the appeals court ruled against PIPSC, re-affirming the Government of the Northwest Territories' right to certify bargaining units under section 42(1) of the Public Service Act.¹¹⁹ PIPSC responded by taking the issue to the Supreme Court of Canada and the case was heard in 1990 with Canada's highest court ruling against it.¹²⁰ While Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz lament this ruling as an assault against the right to freedom of association, stating that the ruling effectively gave government the right to determine what union employees may belong to,¹²¹ UNW president Darm Crook explained the ruling differently. According to Crook, the bargaining unit in question comprised government employees [other than teachers]. If PIPSC wanted to be the agent for that unit, it could sign them up like any other union. It did not have the authority to define its own

¹¹⁷As there is no NWT court of appeal, such cases are heard in provincial courts of appeal.

¹¹⁸Kirsty Jackson, "Nurses' union moves to block transfer," *News*, 14 March 1988, 1-2; also "Nurses taking battle to court," *Ibid*, 4 April 1988, 3.

¹¹⁹Jackson, "PIPS loses in battle for nurses," *Ibid*, 8 August 1988, 1.

¹²⁰Cooper Langford, "Former nurses' union renews court battle," *Ibid*, 23 January 1989, 2.

¹²¹Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*, Garamond, Toronto, 1993, 71-74.

bargaining units.¹²² While all territorial nurses were paying dues to the UNW by 1988, the certainty of their membership in the UNW was not confirmed until the Supreme Court's decision.

Meanwhile in Hay River, H. H. Williams Memorial Hospital, privately owned by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, operated entirely without unionized employees. Georgina Rolt-Kaiser, present-day president of the UNW, was surprised by this when she arrived there in 1984 to begin a part-time position at the hospital. "I asked if there was a union here," recalled Rolt-Kaiser. "I will never forget the answer I received: 'Union? Union? We don't require a union here. We're a family. We treat everybody fairly.' I will go to the grave with that," Rolt-Kaiser claims and asserted that church management played an important role in hospital culture and staff morale:

I was not of the faith . . . I gave it all my best. I worked sometimes 120 hours in two weeks overtime. I literally worked ten hours, ten shifts in a row, sometimes twelve hour shifts because they were short. Come September, and we have six brand new RNAs come to beautiful H. H. Williams Memorial Hospital, all of the faith. I was not of the faith so I never had a full-time job. So here we are September, October, November; I turned around and there was another position opening, and of course I'm a part-time employee still – mind you I'm getting lots of hours, so no problem there – but I wanted a full-time job, and they're bringing another person up because of the faith.¹²³

Not until she threatened to file a complaint of discrimination based on religion with the Employment Standards Board was Rolt-Kaiser finally given a full-time position in

¹²²Crook, interview.

¹²³Personal interview, Georgina Rolt-Kaiser, 8 August 1999.

December 1984.¹²⁴

Organizing officially began 29 November 1988. Darm Crook, Jim Brohmin, John Findlay, and Joe Ahrens all worked on the drive.¹²⁵ Findlay and Crook were both long term residents of Hay River, which must have helped as they could approach prospective members not only as professional organizers, but also as neighbours. Still, religion remained an obstacle to organizing. "We still had the faith to deal with ...," recalled Rolt-Kaiser. "And we were all going to burn in hell, and it was really, really, pretty serious, because we're going against – we're looking at religious aspects here so it was quite contentious right from the start."¹²⁶ Jim Brohmin recollected that in the beginning of the certification drive workers were split along religious lines. Although the church did not support the organizing drive, it did not play an active role in opposing it and many church

¹²⁴*Ibid.* Where the impetus to organize the hospital originated is difficult to determine. Rolt-Kaiser takes no credit, saying that in late 1988 or early 1989 someone else approached the PSAC and requested them to organize the hospital. However, according to an internal memo, the PSAC National Board of Directors authorized an organizing drive at H. H. Williams over a year earlier, so it is difficult to determine whether the drive was initiated by the employees or by the PSAC. [See Rolt-Kaiser interview; also Memo from Darm Crook to Mike McTaggart, re H.H. Williams Drive, undated, Box-file 16-3; also Fax to Jim Brohmin from Greg {no last name} PSAC, Ottawa, same file.]

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, also Brohmin interview.

¹²⁶Rolt-Kaiser, interview.

members eventually signed cards.¹²⁷ The CLRB issued a certificate on 11 May 1989¹²⁸ and Darm Crook commented that it was the longest organizing drive to date in the union's history.¹²⁹

Distinguishing the newly organized UNW local 21 was that it was one of the only locals with an all woman executive.¹³⁰ Also, as a CLRB unit, it was closer in size to the NWTPC.

The subject of CLRB units figured prominently at the NWTPSA convention in Hay River, 5-7 September 1987. The union now held 23 such certificates. In addition, tentative discussions had begun regarding the possible transfer of City of Yellowknife workers from the PSAC's National Component to the NWTPSA, as well as the merger of the union with its Yukon equivalent.¹³¹ Similar discussions would come a few months later regarding the possibility of a merger of the NWTPSA and the teachers' union,¹³² but

¹²⁷Brohmin, interview.

¹²⁸CLRB Certificate Order for H. H. Williams Memorial Hospital and PSAC, 11 May 1989, Box-file 17-16, UNW.

¹²⁹Stacey Campbell, "Hospital staff meets with union," *News*, 5 June 1989, 1.

¹³⁰Rolt-Kaiser, interview; also letter, John Findlay, PSAC Regional Representative, to Darm Crook, 6 July 1989, Box-file 17-19, UNW.

¹³¹James Lawrence, "New Name for NWTPSA, push for more members," *Native Press*, 18 September 1987, 9.

¹³²Memo to Darm Crook and Ben MacDonald from Doug Marshall, 15 February 1988, Box-file 15-10, UNW; also Notes of meeting with officers of NWTTA and UNW, topic of merger, undated, Box-file 16-1, UNW; and Crook, interview. An officer of the NWTTA broached the subject with Doug Marshall during an informal conversation on 13

none of these ideas ever came to fruition. One of the dominant themes arising out of the convention was the push for more members, particularly in the private sector.¹³³

In addition to the union's change of name, some other items of interest from the 1987 convention concerned translation, elections, and relations with the PSAC. Joe Koonoo, a unilingual Inuktitut-speaking delegate from the north Baffin community of Pond Inlet was provided with a "whisper translator" to enable him to participate in the proceedings. Through his translator he requested improved services for unilingual Inuktitut speaking members.¹³⁴ In union elections, Crook was acclaimed for another three years, with Dianne Strilaeff elected first vice-president, and Inuvik's Jim Wilson elected second vice-president.¹³⁵

Alliance president Darryl Bean addressed the convention. He spoke with hope regarding to the UNW's future relations with the larger labour movement:

You have been through your first strike – a long and bitter dispute with the Inuvik Housing Authority – and the road ahead looks difficult at best. But you have learned some valuable lessons over the last three years; you have learned who your friends are and you have identified your enemies. Your

February 1988. This was followed up by a meeting between Darm Crook, Ben MacDonald, and Kevin White representing the UNW; and Al MacDonald, John Rouble, and Blake Lyons for the NWTTA. Nothing progressed in this matter past this point.

¹³³Lawrence, "New Name," 9; also Craig Harper, "Union wants to expand membership, *News*, 11 September 1987, A9.

¹³⁴*Ibid*, 1.

¹³⁵Minutes, 120.

friends are clearly the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the union movement in Canada.¹³⁶

Bean's words were ironic for within the next three year relations between the UNW and the NWTFL were strained to breaking point. As well, the UNW would again be considering disaffiliation from the PSAC.

Less than two weeks after the close of the convention a column in the *Native Press* by Jim Evoy, a Yellowknife columnist, ushered in this process of growing alienation from other unions. Evoy had originally come to Yellowknife in 1983 as a representative of the Construction and General Workers' Union, an affiliate of the Laborers' International Union. The union essentially functioned as an employment agency, working together with Employment Canada in recruiting Dene workers for the Norman Wells pipeline project.¹³⁷ Work on the project lasted until July 1985, at which time Evoy's position became redundant and the union subsequently closed its doors.¹³⁸ Evoy left the North temporarily, but not before having established a rapport with *Native Press* writer, and later editor, Lee

¹³⁶"A Positive Note for the UNW," *Sulijug*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Convention 87 edition, (no date) 8.

¹³⁷"Union Rep explains pipeline work," *Native Press*, 2 December 1983, 14. In this capacity, Evoy was commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to write a report on Dene participation in the pipeline project. [See Frances Abele, *Gathering Strength*, {Arctic Institute of North America: Calgary, 1989} 102n.]

¹³⁸Lee Selleck, "No Jobs now for labourers, says Evoy," *Native Press*, 12 July 1985, 10-11; also "No More Union," *Ibid*, 20 September 1985, 3. Selleck later distinguished himself for his coverage of the Giant mine strike and the the murders associated with it. He subsequently coauthored a book on the subject. See chapter one.

Selleck.¹³⁹ Evoy returned to Yellowknife the following year as a columnist for the paper.

Titled "Pat on the back, kick in the butt," Evoy's 18 September 1987 column was nothing less than a declaration of war on the UNW. Accusing it of doing a poor job of representing territorial workers, he encouraged the union to fight its own battles and stay out of the private sector.¹⁴⁰ Describing the UNW as solely a government union, he made no mention of its 23 CLRB units. Despite UNW statements to the contrary in both *News/North* and the *Native Press*,¹⁴¹ Evoy charged the union with having designs on the membership of other unions. "The concept of 'One Big Union' has already alerted some of the more vocal trade unions to suspect raiding," Evoy wrote.¹⁴² If this was in fact the suspicions of other northern labour leaders, none of them stated it at the time. Evoy implied that the UNW's push for an expanded membership was sabotaging an already existent effort to organize workers in the North:

A small group of dedicated people have been trying to get some seed money to look at the possibility of forming a Northern General Workers Union. Rumours had pointed to a founding convention next year. Now it appears that they have been scooped by a public service union with an

¹³⁹Between 2 December 1983 and 20 September 1985 *Native Press* ran nine articles on the union and its participation in the Norman Wells pipeline project. In every article where the author is named, Selleck is the writer. Evoy is cited in every article.

¹⁴⁰Jim Evoy, "Pat on the back, kick in the butt," *Native Press*, 18 September 1987, 8.

¹⁴¹Harper, "Union wants," A9; Lawrence, "New Name," 9.

¹⁴²Evoy, "Pat on back," 8.

Ottawa parent body that never really paid them much attention in the past.¹⁴³

Evoy concluded by suggesting that the UNW would be better off giving its money to this effort and staying out of the private sector.

Evoy's assertions are suspect. Who were these "dedicated people" who were going to organize the unorganized – something the NWTPSA together with the PSAC had been doing for the past four years – after a founding convention the following year? Likely, these people did not exist. Evoy's motivations in attacking the UNW are completely unknown, but it is possible that he was attempting to carve himself a niche in the northern labour movement.

Evoy was not without his friends in the labour movement though. In the same issue in which he fired his broadside at the UNW, there appeared a letter titled "Thanks for interest in working people."¹⁴⁴ The letter expressed its gratitude to the *Native Press*, and Evoy in particular, for taking an interest in labour issues. It was signed "Fernand Deneault, Member of the Executive, Local 802, U.S.W.A."¹⁴⁵ That Deneault's letter appeared in the same issue in which Evoy attacked the UNW is likely not coincidental. Since the completion of the Norman Wells pipeline in 1985, Evoy was a union man

¹⁴³*Ibid*, 8.

¹⁴⁴Fernand Deneault, "Thanks for interest in working people," *Native Press*, 18 September 1987, 22.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid*, 22. Local 802 represented the Steelworkers at Con mine.

without a union card writing for a non-unionized newspaper. Deneault's letter gave Evoy the appearance of popularity among blue collar workers.¹⁴⁶ Over the ensuing months Evoy was able to impress the leadership of the NWT Federation of Labour enough – Deneault being its vice-president – to be hired as part-time executive assistant, in March 1988.¹⁴⁷ From that point on, UNW relations with the Federation would steadily deteriorate.

Shortly after coming on staff with the Federation, Evoy returned to the topic of establishing a new union for unorganized workers in his column in March 1989. Addressing his comments to construction workers, and ironically lambasting existing construction workers' unions for their "fixation on bank balances and shiny suits," Evoy dismissed public sector and mining unions as not "geared up to help."¹⁴⁸ The UNW responded to Evoy's comments – five weeks later. Agreeing with Evoy that workers must be organized to protect their interests, Ben McDonald's letter of response in the *Native Press* was nothing less than a sales pitch for the UNW:

...workers need look no further than the Union of Northern Workers. Although this union once only represented employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories, this is steadily changing. For the past few

¹⁴⁶When Deneault ran for the Western Arctic NDP nomination in June 1988 he was described in the press as having been in the North for 17 years, a former president of Local 802, and a current vice-president in the Federation of Labour. See "Deneault joins NDP race," *Native Press*, 10 June 1988, 2.

¹⁴⁷"NWTFL hires part-time staff," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 8, No. 2, March/April 1988, 9.

¹⁴⁸Jim Evoy, "Foolin' with northern workers," *Native Press*, 31 March 1989, 22.

years we have been taking on more and more non-GNWT bargaining units. Presently we are at more than 20 of these groups. And within the last year we have increased our organizing staff by three positions, and these people are travelling throughout the NWT working towards the sign-up of ever more workers into the union movement.

It seems foolhardy for a group of workers trying to organize themselves to try to start a union of their own. Why not join the largest and strongest union in the North? We have the resources and the desire to take on the job ...

We need one big union for all the various sorts of working people in the NWT: public or private sector, professional, clerical, construction, whatever. There's strength in numbers. The best nucleus for this powerful and representative organization is the UNW.¹⁴⁹

The reason it took McDonald five weeks to respond was that at the UNW's full executive meeting on 21 May the union's leadership committed itself to organizing workers employed in retail operations, hotels, and government contracting.¹⁵⁰ McDonald used Evoy's column to initiate the organizing drive.

That Evoy did not respond to McDonald's rallying cry suggests that he used his connections with Local 802 of the Steelworkers, as well as his recently acquired staff position with the Federation of Labour, to instigate something resembling the first labour battle north of sixty. It began with a letter from John J. Davis, president of Local 802. Instead of bringing his concerns to UNW president Crook, Davis wrote to Federation of Labour president Dave Johnson, enclosing a copy of McDonald's May 27 letter in the *Native Press*, and stating to Johnson: "We view this aggressive stance as dangerous to the

¹⁴⁹J. B. McDonald, "Good column Jim, y'all sign up, hear?" *Native Press*, 27 May 1989, 12.

¹⁵⁰Letter, Darm Crook to Darryl Bean, 13 January 1989, Box-file 16-1, UNW.

House of Labour and request your support and intervention.”¹⁵¹ The following day, again ignoring the UNW, Johnson wrote directly to PSAC president Darryl Bean, requesting him to review “the enclosed documents [a copy of McDonald’s letter, and presumably a copy of Davis’ letter] related to a rather controversial turn of events in the NWT,” and asked him to intervene.¹⁵² Bean’s reply two days later simply told him not to worry as the UNW was not raiding anyone.¹⁵³ This was followed by a letter from Crook to Davis to the same effect.¹⁵⁴

The planned organizing drive by the UNW among retail, hotel, and government contracting workers never got off the ground, though it is doubtful that the efforts of Evoy, Johnson and Davis had an impact on the matter. What was revealed through this series of letters were two important factors that would continue to grow in the next decade and significantly divide the northern labour movement. The first was a demonstrated hostility on Evoy’s part towards the UNW. The second was he shared this hostility not only with the leaders of Local 802, but also with the top officials of the Federation of Labour. There was certainly a willingness, if not enthusiasm, by both 802 and the Federation to embarrass the UNW, rather than confront the union and constructively deal with the issue. That the latter route was not taken is also related to the

¹⁵¹Letter, Davis to Johnson, 30 May 1988, Box-file 16-1, UNW.

¹⁵²Letter, Johnson to Bean, 31 May 1988, Box-file 16-1, UNW.

¹⁵³Letter, Bean to Johnston [sic] 2 June 1989, Box-file 16-1, UNW.

¹⁵⁴Letter, Crook to Davis, 16 June 1988, Box-file 16-1, UNW.

fact that there was no issue to be resolved. Aside from McDonald's rhetorical use of the old Wobbly term "One Big Union," at no time had the UNW made any overtures of raiding any union's membership.

This willingness to embarrass the UNW was not an isolated incident. The following February, Deneault, acting in his capacity as vice-president of "the Fed," filed a report with that organization's executive stating that he had been approached by members of UNW locals who wanted to leave the UNW and join another union. Again, at no point was the UNW approached in an effort to attempt to address the workers' concerns, nor was the union even advised in advance that such a report would be filed. If the purpose of Deneault's report was to infuriate Crook, it was successful.¹⁵⁵ More likely, it was just another attempt to embarrass the UNW.

Darm Crook generally viewed the growing conflict between the UNW and the NWTFL in the late 1980s as essentially one of personalities between Evoy and himself. "Some players," he stated, "just don't get along together." It should be remembered though that at the time, Johnson, not Evoy, was president of the Federation. Former NWTFL consultant Jim Edmondson concurred that a difference of personalities existed between Evoy and Crook, and that relations between Johnson and Crook were good until the hiring of Evoy. Johnson, however, himself a member of the PSAC, was sandwiched between his vice-president, Deneault, and his assistant, Evoy, who were both

¹⁵⁵Letter, Crook to Deneault, 10 February 1989, Box-file 16-2, UNW.

demonstrably hostile to the UNW.

Not surprisingly, Johnson became increasingly hostile to the UNW himself. Edmondson believes that there was a deliberate effort on the part of Johnson and Evoy to put a distance between the two organizations. "It was all papered over with the standard union protocol and jargon," says Edmondson. "Participants in the conflict would try to characterize it as white collar versus blue collar, but that didn't really adequately capture it because Johnson was a warehouseman...." That Crook and his two predecessors, Lamb and Dyck were all highways employees, further diminishes this artificial white versus blue collar characterization of the conflict. However, reality did not deter Evoy from attempting to perpetuate this mythology to distance the UNW from the rest of northern labour. "Evoy would always try to characterize it as 'the Fed' trying to represent the interests of 'real working men', whereas the UNW represented wimpy, effete, white collar workers"¹⁵⁶ It is too simple, though, to place responsibility for the growing division between the UNW and the rest of the northern labour movement solely on Evoy's shoulders. Evoy simply capitalized on an historic trend that had been developing in northern labour and throughout Canada since the 1960s.

Though once the largest and strongest union in Canada, the Steelworkers had been steadily declining in influence since public servants acquired collective bargaining rights. As the 1980s began, Steel was the country's second largest union with 203,000 members;

¹⁵⁶Edmondson, interview.

the PSAC was fourth, with 155,000. By 1990, however, Steel had dropped to sixth place with a total membership of 160,000 – a net loss of over 40,000 members in a ten year period. The Alliance, although having dropped to fifth place, had recorded a net gain of over 7,000 members in the same period. Steel was losing prestige.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Northwest Territories. Having inherited the organizing legacy of Mine Mill in 1968, the Steelworkers had since done no organizing to speak of in the North. As more and more northern mines closed between the late 1960s and 1987, Steel's membership declined. The loss of Giant mine to CASAW in 1976, and the closure of the Tungsten and Pine Point mines in 1986 and 1987 respectively,¹⁵⁷ left Local 802 at Con mine the only substantial Steelworkers' local remaining in the North. The only additions to Steel's membership in the NWT were small bargaining units such as Local 8646, ironically representing UNW staff. Contrasting with a shrinking Steelworkers' presence in the North was the massive growth of the NWTPSA/UNW during this period. Continued devolution from the federal government, a successful court case ensuring the membership of devolving nurses, and, most importantly, aggressive organizing of unorganized workers into CLRB units resulted in a membership that grew from 1,906 in 1980 to 3, 279 in 1989.¹⁵⁸ The Steelworkers' diminishing numbers, coupled with the continued growth of the UNW must certainly have led to

¹⁵⁷*NWT Data Book: A Complete Information Guide to the Northwest Territories and its Communities*, Outcrop, 1986, 188-89, 216-217.

¹⁵⁸*Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1980, 117; and 1989, 104.

friction resulting from resentments on the part of Local 802 and an increasing overconfidence on the part of the UNW. This division, combined with a weakening influence within the Federation of Labour and a resurgence of hostility towards the PSAC, would characterise the UNW's place in the northern labour movement in the 1990s, and be a contributing factor in the union's eventual division.

In summarizing the activity of the NWTPSA/UNW in the 1980s, the common theme which emerges is committed, aggressive organizing. The decade began with the union working closely with the United Steelworkers specifically, and the Canadian labour movement generally, in organizing the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour. While volunteer NWTPSA officers were active with the Federation from its start, it was really with the organization of the component's staff as Local 8646 of the Steelworkers that the NWTPSA became, somewhat mistakenly, identified as a leading force in the Federation. The northern public service union truly distinguished itself in the organizing of non-government workers throughout the decade. Although the actual organizing work was most often carried out by the professional staff of the PSAC, it was the statesmanship of Fred Lamb that brought about the commitment of the Alliance to embark upon this endeavour. PSAC staff were assisted in all these efforts by both the leadership and staff of the NWTPSA. Sometimes it was a single Inuit shop steward assisting in organizing hamlet workers in the Keewatin, another time it was the executive secretary treasurer meeting with hospital workers in Frobisher Bay. When the union organized hospital staff in the president's home town, he too stepped into the fray. The joint organizing of non-

government workers by the Alliance and its component was so successful that the union almost doubled in size during this period. However, as the union's success at times seemed unstoppable, it began to make others in the labour movement jealous. The seeds of divisions were sewn that would germinate towards the end of the decade. They would bloom in the 1990s.

CHAPTER 4

Divisions

The period 1990 to 1996 saw the leadership of the Union of Northern Workers increasingly alienated. This alienation was witnessed in the union's relations with the Federation of Labour, the Public Service Alliance, and, most importantly, its members. Friction between the UNW and the Federation was further exacerbated by the election of Jim Evoy to the presidency of the NWTFL in 1991. Evoy made common cause with Local 802 of the Steelworkers, and increasingly CASAW Local 4, which strained the already poor relations between Evoy and UNW president Darm Crook. Concurrently, the establishment of UNW regional vice-presidents as full-time officers led to a movement within the union's top leadership not only to consolidate greater power for itself, but to do so in a union independent of the PSAC. The executive tried further to professionalize itself by attempting to establish the first and second vice-presidents' positions as full-time. Thwarted in these efforts by the 1993 convention, the union's leadership became increasingly contemptuous of its own rules. As the leadership fought its own members, who in turn sought support from the Alliance, it became increasingly weakened as it lost officer after officer. Taking advantage of the weakened union, the government was able to push through a contract that divided the union east against west. In the absence of experienced leadership, this division was allowed to fracture the union permanently.

The spring 1991 NWTFL presidential election epitomized deteriorating relations between the UNW and the Federation. The two candidates were Ben McDonald and Jim

Evoy. “(W)hat had been kept within bounds,” commented Jim Edmondson, “really heated up.” It became a very personal conflict between the two candidates, with Evoy winning “hands down.”¹ Several factors ensured Evoy’s victory. One was the support of Steelworkers Local 802. The Federation’s office adjoined 802’s; Evoy, Johnson, and Local 802 officials met on a daily basis. Secondly, Evoy had the support of outgoing president Johnson.² Lastly, Evoy was a “much more experienced, and much, much, more ruthless political campaigner.”³ Evoy’s campaign style likely mirrored his leadership style and did not bode well for building a united labour movement. Darm Crook recalled: “When Jim Evoy became president, it started to fall apart.”⁴

Personality conflicts and issues of leadership style played important roles in keeping the UNW and the Federation of Labour apart during this period. Crook accepts a measure of responsibility for this, claiming that he could be just as intransigent as Evoy. To illustrate this, Crook recalled a meeting, the subject of which he could not remember, involving the Federation, the UNW, the PSAC, and the Steelworkers:

Jim Evoy started raving and ranting. He was just like a madman sometimes. And of course I wouldn’t back down or take his shit, so he canceled the meeting — because he couldn’t have his way ... [With] Jim Evoy, it was his way or no way. And of course, you gotta say I was that

¹Edmondson, interview.

²Jim Edmondson, personal correspondence with author, 11 June 2000.

³Edmondson, interview.

⁴Crook, interview.

way with him then. I wasn't gonna take his way or no way, so I stood my ground and said, "Well, it's our way, period."⁵

Ben McDonald concurs that Crook shared Evoy's leadership style. Referring to his former boss as "very Machiavellian," McDonald described Crook as "very much a control person."⁶ With regards to Evoy's leadership of the Federation, both McDonald and fellow UNW staffer Scott Wiggs, concur: "It was a one man show."⁷ Little consultation occurred between the NWTFL and the UNW, despite two UNW representatives on the Federation's executive.⁸

NWTFL politics and personality conflicts were not the only issues pushing the UNW and the Federation apart. In June 1991 the Canada Labour Relations Board issued a bargaining certificate for the UNW (through the PSAC) to represent the 31 first line supervisors at Con mine. As supervisory staff, they were excluded from membership in the much larger bargaining unit at Con which represented the 268 members of USWA Local 802.⁹ The UNW was now directly involved in the mining industry. This led to

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶McDonald, interview.

⁷McDonald interview; also personal interview, Scott Wiggs, 17 August 1999.

⁸Wiggs, interview.

⁹"Union signs up its first mining supervisors," *Press Independent*, 2 June 1991, 3; also "UNW snags first line supervisors at Nerco mine," *Press Independent*, 28 June 1991, 3. The supervisors at Con were organized into Local 23 which was reported to have 22 signed members and 9 Rand deductees. (See Membership Listings, Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 9-12 January 1993, 4-5.) For membership numbers for Local 802 see Ronna Bremmer, "Nerco Con miners give strike mandate to union," *News*, 18 June 1990,

friction when the territorial government began to revise the territorial Mine Safety Act. According to Darm Crook, the Federation of Labour organized the three union locals involved in mining in the NWT — Steel 802, CASAW 4, and UNW 23 — to work on the issue. The UNW sent a member of Local 23 along with North Great Slave RVP Scott Wiggs.¹⁰

The Federation refused to allow Wiggs to participate on the grounds that he was not a mine employee. The UNW responded that they would choose their own representatives and the result was the Federation barred the UNW from participating in the meetings. When the government established a committee to review the proposed legislation, all three unions were invited to nominate representatives. Bill Schramm and Fern Deneault, presidents of CASAW 4 and Steel 802 respectively, announced that they were boycotting the process, as one of the employee representatives was from one of the increasing number of non-unionized mines in the NWT. Schramm's and Deneault's

A1.

¹⁰Crook, interview. For purposes of servicing and political representation, the area north of Great Slave Lake is divided into two regions. Employees of the GNWT in Yellowknife other than correctional and hospital workers, are assigned to Samba K'e region. All other members, including those in the surrounding Dog Rib communities are members of North Great Slave region. Although Crook remembers Wiggs as a service officer at this time, he was RVP until resigning his position in order to take over the staff position of director of membership services in 1995. [See Wiggs, interview; also "Talbot joins UNW staff," *Sulijug*, Vol. 14, No. 1, February 1995, 3.] Interestingly, CASAW, as an affiliate of the CCU, was not affiliated with the Federation of Labour, but this did not stop the two organizations from cooperating with each other on issues of common concern.

position was that this individual, by virtue of not being a union member, was in fact a representative of management. While Steel and CASAW boycotted the proceedings, the UNW agreed to participate.¹¹ In response, 802, CASAW, and the Federation all publicly asked the UNW to withdraw its representative from the committee, even to the extent of organizing a protest demonstration of about 50 picketers outside the UNW building. Deneault gave a "blistering speech on the UNW's breaking of solidarity," referring to the UNW as "a renegade government union representing a handful of shift bosses."¹² "What we're facing here," continued Deneault, "is treachery within the ranks of organized labour."¹³ Crook's response was that it was the other unions that broke solidarity when they refused to allow the UNW to participate in labour's preparations for the hearings.¹⁴

¹¹Ronna Bremmer, "Unions, gov't fight over safety committee," *News*, 24 February 1992, A3; also Karen Lajoie, "Mine Safety Act Committee: UNW takes union seat in Law Review," *Press Independent*, 28 February 1992, 10. Supporting Schramm's and Deneault's position was that Jim Bacon, the employee representative from the non-unionized Lupin mine between Yellowknife and Coppermine (Kugluktuk after 1996) on the central Arctic coast was having his expenses paid for by the mine. See Marina Devine, "Unions resolve differences over mine safety committee," *Press Independent*, 20 March 1992, 3.

¹²"Union of Northern Workers criticized for taking seat on committee: UNW broke union solidarity says Steelworkers local president," *Press Independent*, 6 March 1992, 1; also Francis Thompson, "Steelworkers, CASAW march against UNW," *Yellowknifer*, 4 March 1992, 1, A27.

¹³"Mine Safety is everyone's concern," *News*, 2 March 1992, A5.

¹⁴"Union of Northern," 1; also Crook interview. Deneault countered that the UNW stopped participating in the meetings because they were too busy with collective agreement negotiations. (See Francis Thompson, "Steelworkers, UNW continue battle over safety," *Yellowknifer*, 11 March 1992, 3.

While both Crook and Wiggs saw the conflict over the Mine Safety Act as one with the Federation of Labour,¹⁵ both *News/North* and the *Press Independent* portrayed the conflict as between the UNW on one side, and 802 and CASAW on the other. Publicly the Federation remained conspicuously absent from the debate, appearing only to ask the UNW to withdraw from the committee. The *Press Independent* credited Evoy with engineering the resolution to the intra-union conflict by organizing a meeting between the three unions and working out an agreement in which all three would participate on the committee as long as 50 per cent of the committee's representatives were union members.¹⁶ Whether the government accepted this condition is not clear because the discussion disappeared from the public record at this point. Darm Crook insisted that Steel and CASAW boycotted the entire process, despite Evoy crediting them in helping to draft the new legislation.¹⁷ However the issue was ultimately resolved, it was quickly overshadowed by the strike at Giant mine.

Royal Oak Mines, under the leadership of CEO Peggy Witte, acquired Giant in the late 1980s and immediately adopted a belligerent style of labour relations. Workers' lunch boxes were searched as they left the property, pin-ups were torn down, and job and shift assignments were changed arbitrarily. More important for CASAW, the new management

¹⁵Crook interview; also Wiggs interview.

¹⁶Devine, "Unions resolve," 3.

¹⁷Crook, interview.

was trying to break the union financially. Arbitration is an expensive process which usually requires employer and union to share its costs. By forcing all grievances to arbitration, regardless of their nature and the ability to solve them at the first level, the company was clearly attempting to break the union by overwhelming it with unnecessary legal fees.

In the spring of 1992 the employer and the union attempted to negotiate a new contract. In May the membership of Local 4 ignored the recommendation of its bargaining committee, and voted 83 per cent to reject Royal Oak's offer. In an effort to prevent sabotage by miners exiting the property, Royal Oak locked out the workers May 22 – one day before the mine strike officially began.¹⁸

The conflict between CASAW and Royal Oak Mines was the longest strike in the history of the Northwest Territories, and among the most violent in Canadian history. With the employer's decision to keep the mine running with replacement workers and some union members crossing picket lines, the strike quickly became violent. On 14 June a riot at the mine's main gate resulted in eleven injured people. Following the riot, sporadic incidents of violence between Pinkerton guards and strikers were reported, as well as mysterious explosions and power failures. On 18 September an underground explosion killed nine men.¹⁹ After a lengthy investigation and trial, CASAW member

¹⁸Devine, "Hell," 24. For more complete accounts of the Giant mine strike see Selleck and Thompson, *Dying for Gold*, and Staples and Owen, *The Third Suspect*.

¹⁹Devine, "Hell," 24-25.

Roger Warren was found guilty on nine counts of murder.²⁰

From the start, support for CASAW from the broader labour movement was limited. Though not a CAW local, the Canadian Auto Workers sent in a strike coordinator,²¹ and despite the absence of affiliation, the Federation of Labour quickly assumed a leadership role. Initially quite supportive,²² the UNW became more ambivalent as the strike wore on, particularly after the 18 September murders. Officials worried that people would turn against the union movement in general. In one instance the UNW had a rock thrown through its office window.²³ UNW representative Scott Wiggs stated, "We didn't agree with their [CASAW's] tactics," hastening to add that the UNW supported them and sent members whenever there was a march or rally, but Wiggs did not feel the UNW played any significant role in the Giant strike.²⁴ Lee Selleck contends that even

²⁰Selleck, *Dying*, 313.

²¹Devine, "Hell," 25. Shortly after the strike ended in 1994, CASAW merged with the CAW. [See "CASAW joins auto workers," *News*, 6 June 1994, A3.]

²²Within the first week of the strike the UNW had joined in a boycott of a local radio station that was perceived by first vice-president Dianne Strilaeff to be broadcasting "unbalanced and sensationalist" coverage. Crook was quick to criticize Royal Oak for bringing in strikebreakers, and as late as 18 September, the day of the fatal bombing, blamed the company for the violence associated with the strike. (See Trish Saywell, "Journalists on edge over strikers' threats: Strikers accuse CJCD of bias," *Yellowknifer* 29 May 1992, 8; also Trish Saywell and Francis Thompson, "Royal Oak advertises for replacement workers at \$13 per hour," *Yellowknifer*, 3 June 1992, A8; and Darm Crook, [letter] "Labor unions don't condone violence – Crook," *Yellowknifer*, 18 September 1992, 9.

²³Devine, "Hell," 25.

²⁴Wiggs, interview.

before the murders, “[t]ime and vandalism at Giant” eroded support for CASAW from other unions, in particular the UNW. Corrections worker, and future RVP, Dave Talbot was one UNW member who often lent his support on the picket line and at demonstrations, but stopped doing so as a result of picket line discussions with CASAW executive member Al Shearing. “I knew Al Shearing for close to twenty years, and I spoke to him quite a lot out there,” said Talbot. “He discussed things with me at the picket line that eventually led me, because I was a peace officer, to feel that I shouldn’t go out anymore.” Shearing was later convicted along with fellow CASAW executive member Tim Bettger of setting the two explosions prior to the 18 September blast.²⁵ Acts of vandalism, violence, and talk of violence probably did more to discourage members of the UNW from more actively supporting the strikers.

Direct aid to CASAW from the UNW was ambiguous. Aside from running an ad for CASAW fund-raising t-shirts,²⁶ *Sulijuq* ran one article encouraging donations and advertising the “adopt-a-family” program that had been established by the CASAW Ladies’ Association for Strike Support [CLASS] to alleviate the financial burden on strikers’ families.²⁷ Interestingly, the photo that accompanied the article was one of

²⁵Selleck, *Dying*, 318. Both Shearing and Bettger resigned their positions on the executive prior to being charged, largely through the intervention of the CAW’s Hemi Mitic. See p. 179.

²⁶*Sulijuq*, Vol. 11, No. 3, September 1992, 19, Box-file 9-11, UNW.

²⁷For additional information on CLASS and the “Adopt-a-family” program see Tina Cresswell, “Strikers wives ask other unions for help,” *Yellowknifer*, 16 October

Steelworkers' Local 8646 [UNW staff] picketing the mine, rather than UNW members, suggesting that UNW rank and file played a limited role in supporting the striking miners.²⁸ The UNW executive was very sparing in its support. Although they allowed CLASS to set up an information table at the 1993 convention, a motion at the August 1993 executive meeting to contribute \$5,000 to CASAW was quietly tabled until after the strike at which time it became redundant.²⁹ Support was forthcoming from some UNW locals. Local 11 [Stanton Yellowknife Hospital] distinguished itself in raising funds for food and Christmas presents for the strikers' families.³⁰ In addition, Local 1 in Yellowknife and Local 5 in Iqaluit, made significant contributions of \$2,000 each.³¹

As the strike at Giant dragged on, the Federation of Labour experienced its own setbacks. Not all UNW locals were supportive of CASAW. Likely it was Evoy's prominent leadership role in the strike that in spring 1993 led Local 2 in Fort Smith to

1992, 11.

²⁸"Longest Strike in NWT History," *Sulijua*, Vol. 12, No.2, Spring 1993, 8, Box-file 9-12, UNW. One member of 8646, UNW Service Officer and one-time president of local 802, Bob Robertson, was arrested at one point for attacking a bus bringing in strike breakers. After the strike it was learned that Robertson was in fact an RCMP informer. Whether he was acting as an agent provocateur, or was recruited later by the RCMP is not clear [see Selleck, *Dying*, 91].

²⁹Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 August 1993, 19, 22.

³⁰"Unions respond to needs of striking Giant families," *Yellowknifer*, 6 November 1992, A5.

³¹Devine, "Hell," 25. Also, there is a photo in Selleck's book of a 20 September 1992 news conference at the CASAW headquarters. On the wall above Jim Evoy's head is a chart of contributions with UNW Local 1's contribution listed.

unanimously vote to disaffiliate from the NWTFL. "[T]he members present," stated Fort Smith RVP Keith Dowling, "felt that the ravings of Mr. Evoy are something they could do without."³² Subsequently other UNW locals also disaffiliated from the Federation.³³

The Workers' Compensation Board of the NWT also provided a forum for the UNW to strike out at Evoy. On 8 February 1993 an article appeared in *News/North* about an unnamed interest group campaigning to have Evoy removed from the board.³⁴ Originally appointed to the WCB in summer 1989,³⁵ the position provided Evoy with a substantial supplement to his salary as Federation president. While some board members were reported to make as much as \$60,000 annually in WCB honoraria, Evoy admitted to bringing in between \$30,000 and \$35,000.³⁶ Although the identity of the anonymous interest group was never revealed, in all likelihood it was the UNW. The same day the article appeared the UNW executive held a teleconference and defeated a motion to support Evoy's bid for another term on the WCB.³⁷ Largely due to the efforts of the UNW executive, Evoy was off the WCB and his income was substantially reduced.

³²Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 17-19 May 1993, 14; also Fort Smith RVP Report, UNW 9th Triennial Convention, September 1993, Box-file 7-6, UNW.

³³McDonald, interview.

³⁴Jody Ireland and Ronna Bremmer, "Evoy concerned about interest group's agenda," *News*, 8 February 1993, A28.

³⁵"WCB appeals tribunal," *News*, 7 August 1990, A5.

³⁶Ireland and Bremmer, "Evoy concerned," A28.

³⁷Minutes, Quorum Call of the Full Executive, 8 February 1993, 2.

Replacing him was UNW Local 21's Vivian Stevely.³⁸

Stevely was a nursing assistant at the hospital in Hay River. She had moved there from Saskatchewan in 1989 and had been a member of several different unions since 1977. Prior to her appointment to the WCB, she had served as president of Local 21 and was the Yukon and NWT member for the PSAC National Board of Directors.³⁹

With the conclusion of the Giant mine strike, and the appointment of Stevely to the WCB, relations between the UNW and the Federation continued to deteriorate. Probably frustrated with Evoy's failure to consult with his own executive, and thereby allowing the UNW to have input into NWTFL decisions, the UNW executive no longer saw the need in maintaining the position of Federation of Labour Liaison Officer and eliminated the position in January 1994.⁴⁰ In May the UNW executive amended its standing policy of having an open invitation to the Federation president to attend all full executive meetings by limiting the invitation to once a year.⁴¹ Largely due to the conflict between the leadership of the two organizations, the position of the UNW within the NWTFL had gone full circle; from being a founding member of the organization in 1980 to practically

³⁸"Vivian Stevely: A Strong voice for workers on WCB," *Sulijug*, Vol. 13, No. 1, February 1994, 1-2; also "Evoy is not among them: Todd names three to WCB," *Press Independent*, 19 February 1993, 3.

³⁹"Vivian Stevely," 2; also "Northern Local takes on first challenge and Wins! All in a Day's work," *Alliance*, Vol. 4, No. 5, September-October 1991, 16.

⁴⁰Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 15-16 January 1994, 54.

⁴¹Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 May 1994, 72.

controlling it in the mid-1980s, by the mid-1990s the distance between the UNW and the NWTFL had never been greater, despite the fact that over 80 per cent of the Federation's members were members of the UNW.⁴²

Internal relations within the UNW also began to deteriorate during the 1990s. Much of this was related to the increasing determination of the UNW's leadership to do away with volunteer officers at the executive level and establishing a full-time salaried leadership. Until this time the only elected officer on salary was the president. The most contentious item at the UNW's 1990 convention was the motion to make the RVPs' positions full-time, taking on the additional roles of service officers. The proposal included the provision of offices and support staff where necessary, and estimated salary and benefits for the new professional executives at \$70,000 each. Members elected to these positions who had been making more in their bargaining unit job would be paid the higher amount.⁴³ To cover these additional costs a dues increase of approximately \$80 per member annually was necessary.

Like the membership, the executive was not united on the issue. While second vice-president Jim Wilson believed it was a more democratic alternative to the hiring of service representatives and staff members, others disagreed, including first vice-president

⁴²In 1994 the NWTFL had a membership of 7,100. Of those, 5,769 were members of the UNW, thereby constituting 81% of the Federation's ranks. [See *Labour Organizations in Canada*, 1994, 111 & 189.]

⁴³"UNW Will Pay RVPs," *Sulijug*, Vol. 9, No. 3, November/December 1990, 1, 16, Box-file 9-9, UNW.

Diane Strilaeff, who advocated the hiring of more service representatives and maintaining the RVP's role as a political and voluntary one. Strilaeff contended that under the existing system, RVPs were better able to represent members because they worked *with* them, and not *for* them, out of an office, and "separate from the membership."⁴⁴ The motion was initially defeated, dividing the delegates almost in half. Later the motion was reconsidered and carried.⁴⁵ The union began to implement the decision in May 1991. By 1993 the only RVP still on a volunteer basis was the former Cambridge Bay region, now known as the Kitikmeot.⁴⁶

An issue not addressed in the debate was competence. By adding the responsibility of service officer to the RVP's job description the executive was no longer simply a political body, but one which had to carry out professional responsibilities. In the

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 1, 16.

⁴⁵Minutes, UNW 8th Triennial Convention, September 1990, Vol. 1, Box-file 7-1, UNW; also "UNW Will," 1.

⁴⁶James Hrynshyn, "UNW reps go full-time," *News*, 6 May 1991, 9; also Director of Finance and Administration Report, Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, 14, compliments of Georgina Rolt-Kaiser. Despite the addition of these officers, the union continued to hire more staff. While the Kitikmeot RVP position remained a volunteer one to the time that Nunavut members left the UNW in 1998, oddly enough, in spring 1994, while still pursuing a full-time vice-president for Nunavut, the UNW hired a service officer for the Kitikmeot instead of bringing the last RVP on full-time. [See "Kitikmeot gets full time Service Officer," *Sulijuk*, Vol. 13, No. 2, April 1994, 7.] It is not clear from the available documents, but about the same time the RVPs were made full-time, the staff of the UNW was restructured, eliminating the position of Executive Secretary Treasurer. Many of the executive secretary treasurer's responsibilities were made the job of the new Director of Finance and Administration. Ben MacDonald took over the job of Research and Public Affairs Officer.

past, service officers had been hired based on experience and training. Popular election, or in many cases acclamation, removed the element of competence as a requirement for the job.

Granting a salary to RVPs also indicated another flaw in professionalizing the executive. Generous remuneration changed the incentive to seek union office. For individuals employed as nurses, adult educators, prison guards, and highways workers, election to RVP would represent a substantial increase in pay. Even if a candidate's motives sprang entirely from a genuine commitment to the labour movement, the handsome salary and benefits left the individual open to accusations of self-serving motives.

Further efforts to alter the UNW's leadership structure were also made. In 1993 the executive attempted to implement three significant changes which would have serious long-term effects for the union. These included secession from the PSAC, the establishment of the first and second vice-presidents' positions as full-time, and enhanced powers of the executive. All these endeavours would ultimately fail.

The impetus to secede from the Alliance came from the executive. Citing the historic complaint of dues paid versus services received, the leadership met in January and discussed a motion to break from the Alliance and affiliate with the National Union of Public and General Employees. The motion was unanimously referred to the fall

convention.⁴⁷ Though not a member of the executive until later that spring, Josie Gould explained that the executive as a whole “felt that the PSAC was not doing enough ... not owning up to their obligations to the UNW.” The executive felt that the UNW could “go it alone.”⁴⁸ They were not advocating going it alone entirely though, as the motion referred to the convention also included affiliating with NUPGE. However, NUPGE and the PSAC were two very different bodies. The first had a tradition of a loose federation of mostly provincial government employees’ unions in which components have a considerable degree of autonomy.⁴⁹ The Alliance, on the other hand, had historically been dominated by federal civil servants, and UNW president Darm Crook was of the distinct impression that the Alliance National Board of Directors wanted it kept that way.⁵⁰ The Alliance also exercised a great deal of authority over its components. This can be seen in the over 20 “housekeeping” motions that the executive forwarded to the convention from its meeting in May. Anticipating a successful withdrawal bid, the proposed by-law deleted any reference to the Alliance. In cases where a by-law gave the Alliance the ultimate say in

⁴⁷Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 9-12 January 1993, 30-32.

⁴⁸Gould, interview.

⁴⁹“About NUPGE,” www.nupge.ca

⁵⁰Crook attributed a statement to PSAC vice-president Nicole Turmel which illustrates this perception. During a PSAC National Board of Directors’ Meeting in which the fate of three UNW officers was being debated, Crook alleges she stated: “If we want to continue to have our organization controlled by federal government public sector employees, we cannot allow these people to hold office in a component executive” [see Crook, interview]. Whether or not she made the statement is not as important as is that it shows how Crook perceived the relationship between his union and its parent body.

union affairs, the proposed rewording named the UNW, not NUPGE, as the final arbiter.⁵¹ The latest attempt at disaffiliation was more an issue of power than dues and services. This is seen by the "Report on the Joint UNW/PSAC Meetings Regarding UNW Affiliation to PSAC, June 2, 3, and 18, 1993", addressed at the UNW's August executive meeting. These joint meetings dealt with various issues of concern to the UNW, including the arbitration backlog, membership education, and component autonomy. Despite largely getting what it wanted from the PSAC, the UNW committee members at these joint meetings — Crook, Dowling, and Wilson — still recommended disaffiliation. The executive adopted the committee's report unanimously, reaffirming its commitment to secession, and its move to establish the first and second vice-presidents' positions as full-time ones.⁵² Both these issues were referred to the upcoming convention.

Prior to the disaffiliation vote, Alliance president Darryl Bean "took the hotseat for several hours" and addressed the convention delegates' questions and concerns. The promise of posting an adjudications officer in Yellowknife to deal with the backlog of arbitrations, and the guarantee of two PSAC education courses annually in each of the UNW's eight regions were enough to convince a slight majority of delegates to reject the

⁵¹Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 17-19 May 1993, 54-57.

⁵²Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 August 1993, 2-11. According to Crook's report to the convention the only issue resolved from the joint meetings was that of PSAC membership education. All other issues were still outstanding. [See President's Report, UNW 9th Triennial Convention, September 1993, Box-file 7-6, UNW.]

pull-out.⁵³ Of 48 delegates, 19 still voted to disaffiliate. Of those who voted to stay with the PSAC, many complained that there had been no consultation on the subject prior to the convention and that they had only been informed of the issue a few months after the January executive meeting,⁵⁴ most likely by way of an article written by Dowling in *Sulijuq* extolling the virtues of disaffiliation.⁵⁵ The vote was conducted by secret ballot,⁵⁶ uncommon for a convention resolution. Usually in the case of contentious resolutions a roll call vote is taken so that each delegate's vote is a matter of public record; secret ballots are generally employed in the election of officers and delegates, bestowing the protection of anonymity upon those casting ballots. While it was no secret that a large portion of the executive supported leaving the Alliance, there was at least one newer member of the executive who was not comfortable in publicly disagreeing with the leadership over the issue. According to Josie Gould, prior to the convention she had written a letter to Crook in which she disagreed with disaffiliation. This greatly angered Fort Smith RVP Dowling, who wanted Crook to revoke Gould's membership. She called

⁵³"Convention 93," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 12, No. 4, November 1993, 5. Increasingly in the 1990s articles in *Sulijuq* went unsigned. It is assumed opinions expressed in such pieces were done so at the behest of the union's top leadership.

⁵⁴Liz Crompton, "UNW stays with national union," *Northern Star*, 8 September 1993, 1; also Ronna Bremer, "UNW to study translation costs services for members," *News*, 13 September 1993, 3.

⁵⁵Keith Dowling, "The Future of the UNW," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall 1993, 5.

⁵⁶Minutes, UNW 9th Triennial Convention, September 1993, Vol. 1, Box-file 7-5.

Darryl Bean personally and suggested he attend the convention,⁵⁷ which he did. Bean convinced the convention to continue affiliation.

Also originating at the January 1993 executive meeting was the motion to establish the first and second vice-presidents as full-time positions. The issue was initially presented to the convention delegates as enhanced service for the membership; one VP would take charge of Nunavut while the other would be responsible for the remainder of the territories. When it became likely that the vote would be defeated, it was amended to make only the first vice-president a salaried position responsible for Nunavut. Possibly because of the accompanying dues increase, or perhaps due to lack of consultation with the membership, both motions were defeated.⁵⁸ Significantly, opposition to the motion was led by Iqaluit's Charlie Ruttan. Complaining that the estimated \$76,000 salary could not be justified when some members in the Baffin region made less than \$40,000, Ruttan was confident that the UNW did not need a full-time officer for the job. "Ordinary members have been spreading the UNW's message for years in the Baffin. We have a high profile," Ruttan told the delegates asking them to defeat the motion.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Gould, interview. Talbot also contacted Bean and made him aware of the impending secession attempt.

⁵⁸Minutes, UNW 9th Triennial Convention, September 1993, Vol. 1, Box-file 7-5, UNW.

⁵⁹"Convention 93," 6.

After the convention, *Sulijuq* reported to the membership:

Convention delegates were not in the mood for a dues increase. This was clear during the debate over adding a paid Vice-President for the Nunavut area. The main duties of this officer would be to protect the UNW's right to be the exclusive bargaining agent for employees of the future Nunavut Government if that is the wish of those employees.⁶⁰

Sulijuq was guilty of revisionism. Disregarding the fact that the original motion put to the delegates was to establish two full-time vice-presidents, the paper depicted the failure of the motion solely as a loss for the Nunavut members. It ignored opposition to the proposal as rejection of another high paid executive position, and instead portrayed it as simply membership aversion to another dues increase. Curiously, the final clause in the paragraph quoted above – “if that be the wish of those employees” – implied that the purpose of the new position was to find out what the wishes of the Nunavut members were regarding union membership in a post-division Nunavut. The real purpose of the position, however, was to guarantee that the UNW remain the exclusive bargaining agent in Nunavut after division. The first vice-president's job was to persuade the eastern membership to stay with the UNW. It was never the purpose of the position to gather information, but rather to disseminate pro-UNW sentiment in Nunavut. The executive had already committed itself in principle to keeping the union together after division at its January 1993 meeting.⁶¹ Both Crook and Gould confirm that the purpose of the position

⁶⁰“Convention 93,” 5.

⁶¹Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 9-12 January 1993, 4.

was to get the Nunavut workers “on side.”⁶² While not explained as such to the convention delegates, it was defeated all the same. The executive, however, refused to let it go, resulting in greater division between the union’s leadership and its members.

One of the less contentious convention motions was one to improve translation services for members whose first language was not English. Although the origins of the motion are unclear, given the decided apathy that it encountered following the convention, the issue did not outwardly appear to have any particularly vociferous proponents. The convention decided that each local would have a single vote on the matter and that provided a majority of locals agreed, a dues increase would be implemented to cover related costs of expanded translation services. Voting was to take place prior to the next convention in 1996.⁶³ That the executive waited until the last minute to poll the locals could have been a contributing factor in the eventual break-up of the UNW, but that is by no means certain.

Taking up a substantial portion of the convention was a large collection of resolutions collectively entitled “Executive Affairs,” something new to the union’s convention proceedings. Some of these motions sought to define the responsibilities, salary and benefits of the first and second vice-presidents if the positions were made full-

⁶²Crook and Gould, interviews. When the executive decided to go ahead anyway and installed Wilson as a full-time officer in Nunavut, the first vice-president was quite up front about his responsibilities: “I will promote the benefits of staying in the UNW.” [See “Nunavut gets new officer,” *Sulijuq*, Vol. 14, No. 1, February 1995, 4.]

⁶³Bremer, “UNW to study,” 3.

time. Other resolutions were aimed more at enhancing the powers of the executive. One example was a motion to empower the executive to determine who could attend full executive meetings as observers. In the past, the practice was an open door policy for local presidents with advance notice. As minutes of executive meetings did not generally circulate at the local level, observers were one way in which locals could be informed as to the activities of their leaders. The motion would have further reduced the ability of locals to monitor executive decisions. Another motion put forward by Dowling and Wilson was aimed at keeping RVPs informed of the activities of locals in their region by mandating locals to advise their RVP in advance of all local meetings and agenda items, as well as keeping the RVP informed of all grievances. Other motions sought to give RVPs authority to move motions at any local meeting in their region, regardless of the RVP being a member of the respective local, and to require local presidents to provide written quarterly reports to their RVP. The executive did not do as much homework in lobbying delegates to support these motions as it did in preparing them; all of the motions were defeated.⁶⁴

Collectively these motions are what Talbot referred to as an attempted “power grab” on the part of a faction of the executive he referred to as “the old boys’ club.” This group was comprised of Fort Smith RVP Keith Dowling, first vice-president Jim Wilson,

⁶⁴Minutes, UNW 9th Triennial Convention, September 1993, Vol. 1, Box-file 25, UNW.

and union president Darm Crook.⁶⁵ For the most part, the motions attempted to make local leadership accountable to the RVP rather than local membership. Combined with the executive's attempt to restrict local presidents' access to full executive meetings, this suggests that the union's leadership did not trust the judgement of the volunteer local leaders. That these motions were overwhelmingly rejected indicates the distrust was mutual.

Despite this growing mistrust, Crook and Wilson were both re-elected. Elected to second vice-president was Kitikmeot RVP David Kaiogana⁶⁶ of Local 20 in Coppermine, the first Inuk to serve on the union's executive. His nominator, Adam Egotik, also of Local 20, was prophetically ironic in nominating Kaiogana: "Nunavut is coming up. I nominate Brother Kaiogana as 2'nd Vice-President as part of Nunavut. We don't want to be left out."⁶⁷

⁶⁵Talbot, interview. Josie Gould referred to the same group as "the brotherhood" and also included Keewatin RVP Ken Stewart among their ranks. That it was a "brotherhood" is clear. Women were not made to feel overly welcome, especially if they questioned the dominant position of the executive. Prior to her resignation from the executive in spring 1993 after being excluded from union membership by the employer, former Somba K'e RVP Pam Murray was investigated by the executive for unknown "disciplinary reasons." Her successor, Josie Gould, observed problems relating to issues of gender and power as characteristic of the union's leadership at the time. "At one time we had a brotherhood," stated Gould, "and heaven help if it wasn't the right woman; heaven help her. They knew that they were tough on her. I wasn't the right woman, and my predecessor (Murray) wasn't the right woman." See Gould, interview.

⁶⁶*Ibid*, 96-101.

⁶⁷"Convention 93," 6.

Antagonism between locals and the executive started to develop well before the 1993 convention. In April of that year Darren Linaker, president of Local 2 in Fort Smith resigned his position. In a letter to Darm Crook he explained his resignation as a protest against the ways in which the Fort Smith RVP was exercising his office:

I feel our RVP is trying to unduly control and influence local 2 proceedings and I am resigning in protest of this influence. ... I find it intolerable that our RVP is trying to undermine the proceedings of UNW volunteer members of this region and need I remind you that this union was built and maintained by volunteer members.⁶⁸

Linaker's letter gives a context to the conflict which subsequently developed between Dowling and Local 12 president Paul McAdams.

Following the convention, McAdams ran against Dowling for RVP.⁶⁹ Dowling won handily, probably because he had a better understanding of election rules and procedures.⁷⁰ Shortly after his victory, Dowling attended the executive meeting of Local

⁶⁸Letter, Darren Linaker to Darm Crook, 2 April 1993. Reading file, appended to Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 May 1994. The reading file is the collection of documents – letters, reports, etc. – that is circulated among the executive prior to its meetings and is subsequently appended to the minutes of that respective meeting. Linaker's letter was not entered into the reading file until it was over a year old, begging the question, why? The answer was likely to avoid discussion of the topic until it was no longer relevant.

⁶⁹Only the three table officers and the PSAC convention delegates are elected at conventions. RVPs are elected by the membership in special regional elections.

⁷⁰Following his defeat, McAdams wrote to Crook to complain that unlike Dowling, he was not aware that he could have his campaign literature enclosed in the balloting package that was mailed out. [See letter, McAdams to Crook, 18 November 1993, Reading file, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 May 1994.] Crook responded that the committee chair overseeing the election had informed him that both candidates

12. McAdams, still smarting from defeat, instructed Dowling to leave which the RVP refused to do. In a subsequent letter of complaint to Crook, Dowling related that McAdams then grabbed him by the ear and neck and physically threw him out of the classroom where the meeting was taking place. Upon reentering the room to retrieve his keys and jacket, Dowling continued, McAdams assaulted him again, saying, "Didn't I just throw you out? ... When I talk to you boy, you listen. You're not coming in here," whereupon McAdams again threw Dowling out. The RVP lodged an official complaint with the union.⁷¹

In what appears to be an unrelated incident, McAdams' supervisor, also a member of the union, filed a complaint against the local president for harassment. McAdams had called him either "Dutch Boy" or "Dutchie" and used "highly offensive language." By taking his complaint to the union instead of simply disciplining his subordinate, the supervisor was able to deny McAdams the benefit of the grievance procedure guaranteed by the collective agreement. These actions, combined with his assault on Dowling, resulted in the executive removing him from office, fining him \$500, and suspending his membership for five years.⁷² Such stiff punishment was likely handed out with the

were advised that they could have campaign materials included in the balloting package. Crook added McAdams should have known this already because as a local president he should have a familiarity with the bylaws. Such provisions, however, were never a part of the bylaws.

⁷¹Letter, Dowling to Crook, 25 November 1993, *Ibid.*

⁷²"Report of Disciplinary Committee," *Ibid.*, 96-100.

intention of punishing dissent more than the actual offences. McAdams appealed the membership suspension to the PSAC National Board of Directors and the appeal was upheld. Darm Crook initially held the position that, although McAdams' PSAC membership was reinstated, his UNW membership was not. After consulting legal council however, Crook reversed his decision and accepted the PSAC's authority.⁷³ Having only recently failed in its attempt to disaffiliate from the Alliance, upholding McAdams' appeal was salt in the wound for the would-be secessionists. What began as a conflict, most likely of personalities, between the Fort Smith RVP and a local president, resulted in the PSAC National Board of Directors overturning a decision of the UNW executive.

Although conflicts between the executive and union members were generally kept behind closed doors, in January 1995 an article appeared in *News/North* with the title, "UNW rift opens in Fort Smith."⁷⁴ The article, based largely on accusations made by McAdams, reported that Dowling had been forced to resign from his government position in Fort Smith because he had falsely represented his credentials on his employment application. Although the circumstances surrounding Dowling's resignation were not confirmed, Dowling had resigned his position with the employer. McAdams questioned whether Dowling was still entitled to hold his position on the executive. "If you lose your

⁷³Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 13-14 January 1995, 2; also letter, Bean to Crook, Reading File, *Ibid*; also Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 15-16 May 1995, 31; and letter, Austin Marshal, lawyer, to Crook, 19 April 1995, Reading File, *Ibid*.

⁷⁴P. J. Harston, "UNW rift opens in Fort Smith: Regional VP loses job, but stays on union exec," *News*, 16 January 1995, A10.

job with your employer,” McAdams asked somewhat rhetorically, “wouldn’t you lose your position on the UNW executive?” Crook’s response was that regardless of Dowling’s employment status, he was still a member of the union and would continue to hold office until the end of his term as RVP.⁷⁵ As far as Crook was concerned, that was the end of the subject. It was not. McAdams, in a letter to the editor the following week, encouraged *News/North* to “dig deeper” on the subject of UNW executive salaries and benefits.⁷⁶

McAdams was trying to draw the media’s attention to the executive’s decision to go ahead with a full-time officer for Nunavut. The weekend prior to the story appearing in *News/North*, the executive held its regular meeting in Yellowknife. While the topic of Dowling’s status was not discussed, Crook resurrected the subject of a paid first vice-president:

Nunavut is quickly becoming a reality. The UNW must gear up in an effort to maintain our current membership in that area. We must determine what type of structure the Nunavut [and for that matter the Western Arctic] members want if they are to remain in the UNW. To that end, I will be

⁷⁵*Ibid*, A10. Beginning with the establishment of the president’s position as full-time in 1978, the union routinely negotiated clauses into their collective agreements that members elected to full-time positions with the union would be seconded from their position with the employer. Upon completion of their term of office, barring re-election, the employee would return to his or her position with the employer which they had been seconded from. Although Dowling was on the union payroll when he resigned from his position with the government, he was still a government employee until his resignation, at which time he ceased to be seconded from a UNW bargaining unit.

⁷⁶Paul McAdams, “Dig deeper on UNW story, reader says,” *News*, 23 January 1995, A7.

recommending that the UNW take our First Vice President, Brother Wilson, on full time and that he be located in Iqaluit.⁷⁷

Crook's motion was referred to the finance committee which recommended that Wilson be seconded to the union full-time for the remainder of his term of office with \$126, 923 budgeted for salary and benefits, \$113, 968 for travel, and \$20,000 for moving expenses. The executive approved the proposal in a roll call vote with only North Great Slave RVP Dave Talbot opposing the motion. Wilson, not seeing a conflict of interest, voted in favour of the motion.⁷⁸ Georgina Rolt,⁷⁹ RVP for Hay River and one of the three RVPs to abstain on the matter, was later criticized by one of her local presidents for not casting a "definitive" vote.⁸⁰

On 26 January, Peter Chaffey, president of Local 6, wrote Rolt "with regards to a few union matters which have evolved over the past few weeks." In addition to his concern over the RVP abstaining on the matter with Wilson, Chaffey was also concerned that the executive was implementing a decision that the last convention had turned down. "It is the understanding of this executive that a similar motion to create a 1st Vice President's position was defeated at the last convention held in Yellowknife in 1993.

⁷⁷President's Report, Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 13-14 January 1995, 5.

⁷⁸*Ibid*, 8.

⁷⁹Rolt married in 1995, hence references to her after that time are with the hyphenated Rolt-Kaiser.

⁸⁰Letter, Peter Chaffey, president, UNW Local 6, to Rolt, 26 January 1995, *Hub* file.

Assuming this is correct, can the FEM [Full Executive Meeting] disregard convention?"

The final issue Chaffey addressed was "the extremely negative publicity the UNW has received with regards to the recent resignation of an executive member from his employer due to allegations of falsifying a resume." Echoing McAdams in the *News/North* article ten days earlier, Chaffey asked, "[c]an someone legally hold an executive position if not an employee of a bargaining unit?"⁸¹

Rolt forwarded the matter to Crook, who, as president, was responsible for interpreting the by-laws. Regarding Dowling's employment status, Crook responded that although an officer of the union must be a member in good standing at the time of being elected to that office, "[t]here is nothing in the Bylaws that stipulates that an RVP must maintain his/her employment relationship with the employer from which he/she is seconded."⁸² According to Dave Talbot, Crook's position had reversed itself. Recalling a discussion he had with Crook prior to the situation with Dowling, Talbot had mentioned to Crook in an hypothetical manner that if he [Talbot] was ever to become UNW president, he would immediately sever his ties with the employer, feeling that a union president could not do a fully effective job knowing that eventually he would be returning to a subordinate position with the employer. Talbot alleged that Crook's response to his musings was that if that were to ever happen, he would have to resign as president.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²Letter, Crook to Chaffey, 14 February 1995, *Hub* File.

"There was no ifs, ands, or buts about it," recalled Talbot, "if I gave up my job, I would be out of a position."⁸³ Assuming the accuracy of Talbot's statement, why would Crook make such an "about face" with Dowling? The simplest answer is personal loyalty, lending greater credibility to Talbot's and Gould's allegations of an "old boys' club."

Crook's letter did not address the issue of a full-time vice-president in Iqaluit, but the following week *News/North* did.⁸⁴ In an article entitled "UNW moves toward Nunavut," reporter Ronna Bremer outlined the union's plans to establish Wilson in Iqaluit that coming spring. Bremer stated that the union was assigning Wilson to Iqaluit in order to "find out what members in the Eastern Arctic want when the NWT divides." Again, Wilson's role was depicted as one of information gathering, rather than one of campaigning for a single union in the NWT and Nunavut after division. Bremer stated that Wilson had been seconded from his job with public works in Inuvik,⁸⁵ but no mention was made of the over one quarter million dollars the executive had allocated for the project. Meeting with the combined executives of Locals 6, 21, and 22 on 27 February, Crook tried to convince the leadership of the three Hay River locals of the correctness of his actions. Not proving very successful, Crook did inform the Hay River leadership, without providing any particulars, that Dowling was currently the subject of an RCMP

⁸³Talbot, interview.

⁸⁴Ronna Bremer, "UNW moves toward Nunavut: Seeking direction from Nunavut members," *News*, 20 February 1995, A16.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

investigation (a charge the Fort Smith RVP later denied) and that Wilson's position in Inuvik was being "surplussed," and that as a result, on 30 March Wilson would be laid off,⁸⁶ bringing to two the number of executive members without membership in a bargaining unit.

The membership of Local 6 met on 1 March and passed three directives to the union's executive, asking it to uphold the decision of the last convention regarding paid vice-presidents; cease and desist from implementing the position in Iqaluit until after such action was approved at the union's next convention; and, immediately relieve the Fort Smith RVP of his duties.⁸⁷ Although Local 6 member and union president Darm Crook was in attendance at the meeting, he was unable to convince a majority of the membership to defeat any of the above motions.⁸⁸ Ten days later, having received no response from the executive, Chaffey sent a six page letter to them. Stating that he had "received no satisfaction from either our RVP, nor President Crook," the local president outlined his concerns and asked the executive to convene an emergency meeting to implement the directives. Chaffey copied the letter to the presidents of the other 21 locals and sub-locals in the UNW, in addition to PSAC National Director for the Yukon and NWT Vivian Stevely and PSAC president Darryl Bean.⁸⁹

⁸⁶Letter, Chaffey to Full Executive, 13 March 1995, *Hub* File.

⁸⁷Minutes, Membership Meeting, UNW Local 6, 1 March 1995, 4-5, *Hub* File.

⁸⁸Chaffey to Full Executive, 13 March 1995.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

Not to be outdone, Crook followed with a letter to the presidents of all the union's locals giving his side of the story. Crook avoided the issue of membership in a bargaining unit, and instead focused on the "rumours and innuendos" surrounding Dowling's resignation, stating that it was the union's job to defend Dowling.⁹⁰ Given Dowling's background as a labour leader, that he resigned his position instead of enlisting the aid of the union to defend him begs the question, why? The answer is somewhat moot as the primary issue for Local 6 from the start was not the circumstances surrounding the RVP's resignation, but rather the same one McAdams raised in January – how could Dowling continue to be a member of the executive if he was no longer a member of a UNW bargaining unit? Crook then went on to address Local 6's suggestion that the executive was undermining a decision of the union's previous convention by establishing Wilson in Iqaluit. It was his position that this action was "clearly different" than the motion that was defeated at the 1993 convention because Wilson's full-time status was only to last until the end of his term of office; there was no accompanying dues increase, and; only the first vice-president's position was being made full-time.⁹¹ Crook's arguments fell on deaf ears for the membership of Local 6; on 26 April it voted to refer its directives to the PSAC.⁹²

⁹⁰Letter, Crook to all local presidents, 31 March 1995, *Hub* File.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²Minutes, Membership Meeting, UNW Local 6, 26 April 1995, *Hub* File. According to Dave Talbot, he also had concerns about Dowling and Wilson retaining their positions on the executive and took his concerns to Alliance president Darryl Bean, who, according to Talbot, agreed with him whole-heartedly. [See Talbot, interview.] Former

At this same membership meeting a motion was entertained to approve a dues increase to cover additional expenses related to increased translation services for the 1996 convention.⁹³ As mandated by the previous convention, the executive established a committee in January 1994 to facilitate the process. When the committee made its first report in May, it reported its progress as slow; it was having problems acquiring information and getting the support of locals – only one had agreed to participate. By September it still only had three locals participating and was forced to change its terms of reference.⁹⁴ Such limited support is surprising given that of the 22 locals and sub-locals, 9 were located in the area that would become Nunavut, where Inuktitut is commonly spoken. It might have been that the leadership of the locals did not feel greater translation services were needed, or it might have been that the average member did not attend conventions. Poor communication between the committee and the locals could also have been a factor. Whatever the reasons, for purposes of economy and expediency, the committee ultimately proposed a temporary dues increase of approximately \$1.92 per member per month for twelve months in order to provide only Inuktitut translation services at the next convention. Each local was to vote separately on the proposal which

UNW president, and at the time president of Local 9, Jackie Simpson, stated that her local was “quietly in agreement” with Local 6 and directed their RVP, Dave Talbot, to inquire as to why the officers in question had not been removed from office. [See Simpson, interview.]

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴Letter, Crook to all local presidents, 9 March 1995.

required a two thirds majority.⁹⁵ When the locals finished voting, the proposal was defeated.⁹⁶ When the proposal was brought up at the 26 April membership meeting of Local 6, it was overwhelmingly defeated.⁹⁷ Reporting on the meeting the following week, Hay River's community newspaper, the *Hub*, indicated that the members were not against translation, but rather a dues increase at the same time that the union was spending money on setting up Wilson in Iqaluit.⁹⁸

As the issue of translation services seemed to fade away, the concerns of Local 6 did not. On 8 August Darryl Bean wrote to Chaffey, as well as Local 21 president Donna Heslop who had also expressed similar concerns. Bean indicated that having component officers who were not members of PSAC bargaining units was a violation of the PSAC by-laws. Bean suggested four possible routes the UNW executive could take. Since the applicable officers were no longer eligible for membership in the PSAC, Bean reasoned they could no longer be UNW members. His first suggestion, therefore, was for the officers in question to be required to resign. The second option was for either the Alliance National Board of Directors or its Executive Committee to include the officers in question

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶"Questions that are important in any language," *Sulijuq*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 1996, 9.

⁹⁷Minutes, Membership Meeting, UNW Local 6, 26 April 1995, *Hub* File; also Sandi Stanway, "Local 6 members oppose motion to increase dues," *Hub*, 2 May 1995, 13.

⁹⁸Stanway, "Local 6," 13.

as members of the PSAC. Bean was quick to point out that this was an option that he could not personally support. Option three was to allow Dowling and Wilson to retain their positions until the next UNW convention despite their ineligibility for PSAC membership. The final option was to allow the officers to keep their positions until the next PSAC convention (assuming they were re-elected in the interim) at which time the UNW could seek to change the PSAC by-laws accordingly. Should the UNW executive opt for options three or four, Bean pointed out, that choice would have to be approved by the PSAC National Board of Directors. The Alliance president closed by informing Chaffey that he was sending a copy of his letter to Crook and requesting that he be notified by September 15 as to which option the UNW executive would pursue.⁹⁹ In a conference call 7 September the UNW executive chose option four with only North Great Slave RVP Dave Talbot voting against it.¹⁰⁰ Option four, however, turned out not to be an option. Meeting 27 September the PSAC National Board ordered Wilson, Dowling, and Inuvik RVP Angus Crane removed from office.¹⁰¹ Crane had resigned his position with the government after being assured by Crook that he would be able to keep his

⁹⁹Letter, Bean to Chaffey, 8 August 1995, *Hub* File. Although Bean did not name Heslop as the other correspondent in his letter to Chaffey, in its deliberations over the four options the UNW executive only made reference to Bean's letter to Heslop, not Chaffey. [See Minutes, UNW Full Executive Conference Call Meeting, 7 September 1995, 7.]

¹⁰⁰Minutes, UNW Full Executive Conference Call Meeting, 7 September 1995, 7.

¹⁰¹S. M. Stanway, "Three UNW members ousted from union," *Hub*, 24 October 1995, 4; also Mark Sproxtton, "Union to determine officers' fate: Decision to come down October 14-15," *News*, 9 October 1995, A 17.

position on the executive.¹⁰² On 2 October Bean sent Crook a memo ordering the immediate removal of the three officers. The UNW president complied the next day. With Wilson gone, the Iqaluit operation was put on hold permanently. David Kaiogana moved into the position of first vice-president,¹⁰³ and Jackie Simpson, a Yellowknife corrections worker, was sworn in as second vice-president.¹⁰⁴ The dismissals resulted in the loss of three experienced officers, one on whom the union had placed its hope of retaining the Nunavut membership after division of the territories.

On 12 October attorney Adrian Wright, representing Crane, Wilson, and Dowling wrote to Crook requesting the reinstatement of the three deposed officers. Arguing that the PSAC could not define UNW membership, Wright also pointed out that Crook, prior to their resignations, had assured the three that they could keep their union positions. Should his clients not be reinstated, advised Wright, they would commence proceedings against the UNW for lost salaries and benefits, in addition to costs, which Wright “conservatively” estimated at a quarter of a million dollars.¹⁰⁵ Wright’s position contradicted an earlier letter by the UNW’s own lawyer who advised them that as a

¹⁰²Gould and Talbot, interviews.

¹⁰³Stanway, “Three UNW,” 4.

¹⁰⁴Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 4-5 March 1996, 1; also Personal interview with Jackie Simpson 19 August 1999.

¹⁰⁵Letter, Adrian Wright, lawyer, to Crook, 12 October 1995, Reading File, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 October 1995.

component of the PSAC the UNW could not act independently of the Alliance.¹⁰⁶ It was this advice that had been behind the reinstatement of McAdams' membership as well as the decision to obey Bean's order to dismiss the three officers to begin with. When the threat of litigation was presented to the UNW executive in October 1995, Josie Gould and Dave Talbot moved to refer Wright's letter to the union's own legal counsel. The motion was defeated and the executive instead authorized Crook to negotiate a settlement with the three officers according to an arrangement that the executive had approved in committee of the whole.¹⁰⁷

How much Dowling, Wilson, and Crane were paid is unclear. Although he does not remember with any certainty, Talbot recalls that the three former officers were paid about \$20,000 each through a trust established by the deposed officers. Agitated by both the pay out to the officers and the way in which it was done, as well as other ongoing union matters to which he took exception, Talbot went to the police. Although the RCMP disregarded his concerns,¹⁰⁸ Talbot's actions were supported by the membership of

¹⁰⁶Letter, Austin Marshall, lawyer, to Crook, 19 April 1995, Reading File, UNW Full Executive Meeting, May 15-16.

¹⁰⁷Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 14-15 October 1995, 51-52. "Committee of the Whole" is the PSAC equivalent of an *in camera* session. No minutes are kept and no business can be transacted. Therefore, when the UNW executive gave authority to Crook to negotiate a settlement according to terms "approved in 'Committee of the Whole'", it was in effect violating its own procedures. [See *Rules of Order for PSAC Meetings*, Third Edition, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Ottawa, 1984, 18-20].

¹⁰⁸Letter, Talbot to "Whom it May Concern," 14 January 1996, Reading File, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 4-5 March 1996; also Talbot, interview. Since joining the

his fellow correctional workers in Local 9.¹⁰⁹

Talbot's complaint to the RCMP was overshadowed on 17 February 1996, when, just prior to the commencement of contract negotiations, the territorial government introduced legislation to amend the Public Service Act. With division only three years away, the government wanted a balanced budget by that time and reduced labour costs were part of that agenda. Given the quantity of newspaper coverage on internal divisions that had appeared in the press over the previous year, it was no secret that the union was already divided. The government also had the element of surprise, taking the union completely unaware. The speed with which the legislation was adopted was reminiscent of the 1978 legislation which removed rents from the realm of collective bargaining in a period of four days. Introduced without warning on a Friday afternoon, the amendments

executive in late 1994, Talbot had consistently opposed Crook and the rest of the executive on matters pertaining to Dowling and Wilson. Following the dismissal of the three officers, several complaints were lodged against Talbot by various members of the union, in one case for an incident taking place three years earlier. In all cases these complaints resulted in Talbot being disciplined by the executive. Talbot has no doubt that Crook was engineering a campaign against him. Talbot also accused certain UNW staff members of taking partisan positions in some of these conflicts. Following Talbot's complaint to the RCMP, he was again disciplined by the executive, ordered to pay a fine of \$500 and to submit an undated letter of resignation. Talbot appealed to the PSAC National Board of Directors and was upheld. [See Talbot, interview; also Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting 14-15 October 1995, 34-39; Minutes, 4-5 March 1996, 23-26; letter, Talbot to "Whom it May Concern," 14 January 1996; Reading File, 4-5 March, 1996; Minutes, 25-26 July, 16-17; and Appendix D, "Investigative Report in the Matter of a Complaint Under the Alliance Constitution and the Union of Northern Workers' By-laws," Reading File, 25-26 July 1996.]

¹⁰⁹Simpson, interview.

were given assent the following Wednesday.

Commonly referred to as "Bill Two", the legislation fundamentally altered the nature of territorial collective bargaining. Replacing binding arbitration as the ultimate contract dispute settlement mechanism, the bill gave employees the right to strike. However, it severely limited those rights. One of those limitations required the Minister of Personnel and the union mutually to decide which workers would be deemed essential and therefore prohibited from striking prior to the commencement of strike activity. The bill also sought to exclude 30 - 35 per cent of the government bargaining unit from union membership.¹¹⁰

The union did what it could during the three days that the bill was given consideration. Members of the Yellowknife locals rallied at the Legislative Assembly and lobbied MLAs; other locals sent petitions to the legislature. Darm Crook met with members of the Assembly and some minor changes were made, but the bill ultimately

¹¹⁰Finance Minister John Todd insisted the number was closer to 19 per cent. Mark Sproxtton, "Changes to act threaten UNW: Bill could eliminate 30 per cent of members – Crook," *News*, 19 February 1996, A24. The union also published several articles in the following *Sulijuq*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 1996. Bill Two received more attention than any other topic in an issue of *Sulijuq*. See Darm Crook, "Dear UNW Member," 1; "Bill 2 is bad news for public employees," 4; "New exclusion rules designed to rob workers of security," 4-5; "No one wants to strike," 5; "Who can't strike," 5; also "Public Service Act," *Statutes of the Northwest Territories*, 19-20, 22-29; and "Pushing it through: Minister of Finance wants new public services act approved today," *Yellowknifer*, 21 February 1996, 3.

passed with only four members voting against it.¹¹¹ The union had lost the battle over Bill Two before it even began. The executive appointed second vice-president Jackie Simpson to coordinate a full-time fight-back campaign.¹¹² Although no one opposed the strategy, the campaign never materialized and within a month Simpson had other duties.

On 24 April, in a studio interview with CBC North, Darm Crook announced his resignation as president of the UNW.¹¹³ Questioned in 1999 about the reasons for his resignation, Crook stated that after eleven and a half years as president, “[t]hings were starting to get to me that should never get to me. They were wearing on me. I was taking them home.” While maintaining that there was no substance to Talbot’s complaint to the RCMP, Crook cited it as a factor in his decision to resign. “And when you fight that, you’re fighting the employer, you’re trying to represent the membership,” recalled Crook, “... I guess when he [Talbot] started his campaign I decided I don’t need this. ... If I stay here and fight it I’m gonna get bitter. So I pulled the pin.” Perhaps with a certain irony, Crook concluded the interview:

The organization can and will survive as long as the leaders always remember to take the direction of the convention. If convention, even if you don’t like the direction personally, but if convention gives you a

¹¹¹Crook, Gould, Rolt-Kaiser, and Talbot interviews. Also Darm Crook interview with CBC North, 24 April 1996.

¹¹²Minutes, Quorum Call of the UNW Executive, 20 March 1996.

¹¹³Crook, interview, CBC North, 24 April 1996.

direction, take it and follow it and the organization will survive. That's the governing body and you live within it – the organization will progress.¹¹⁴

Crook had been president a long time. A committed northern unionist long before becoming president, Crook was a founding member of the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour. He saw his union rise to a preeminent role within that organization, and also decline to almost pariah status. He continued with Lamb's initiative of organizing CLRB units, aggressively organizing workers outside the employ of the NWT government, and leading them in their first strikes. He brought greater stability to the executive by professionalizing the RVP positions, and attempted to do the same with the other vice-presidents' positions. These efforts, compounded with his attempts to retain executive members who were no longer eligible to retain their executive status, however, increasingly alienated the membership and brought the intervention of the PSAC. Crook had served the union well, but his length of time in office – 11 years – had distanced him from the membership. Union staffer Scott Wiggs was sorry to see Crook go, but also recognized that he had been president "a long time" and that his actions were "getting a little out of character."¹¹⁵ Crook's tenacious retention of Dowling, Wilson, and Crane until forced to let them go by the National Board; his poorly disguised contempt for the 1993 convention decision to keep the first vice-president a volunteer position; and his gross manipulation of the rules of order in compensating the above named departing

¹¹⁴Crook, interview.

¹¹⁵Wiggs, interview.

officers all did much to diminish the union's integrity at a time when it most needed the support of its members.

With Crook's departure, first vice-president David Kaiogana was in line to become the first Inuit president of the North's largest union. This was not to happen. After discussing the matter with his family, Kaiogana decided to step down from union office rather than assume the presidency.¹¹⁶ Simpson was sworn in initially as first vice-president in May, and then president in late August when Crook, who had been on vacation until then, officially ended his term of office.¹¹⁷ Simpson's first task as acting president was to oversee a contract vote with the government, the first one since NWT employees had gained the right to strike. While the actual negotiations were completed prior to Crook's resignation, the contract remained to be ratified.¹¹⁸

Just as the contract package was being mailed out for members to vote on, the executive lost another member. In late May long-time Keewatin RVP Ken Stewart resigned his position and moved to Ontario, leaving the RVP's position vacant until after the next convention.¹¹⁹ The departure of Stewart was a loss for the eastern membership

¹¹⁶Simpson, interview.

¹¹⁷Director of Finance and Administration Report, Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, September 1996, 11-12. Compliments G. Rolt-Kaiser; Also President's Report, Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 25-26 July 1996, 8.

¹¹⁸Crook, interview, CBC North.

¹¹⁹Minutes, UNW Full Executive Meeting, 25-26 July 1996, 6; also Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, 31 August - 2 September 1996. Under "Reports of Regional Vice Presidents," Keewatin is listed as "Not Represented."

and brought to six the total number of experienced officers the union had lost in the preceding seven months. With the last convention prior to the division of the territories approaching, and a proposed contract with the potential to divide the union along east-west lines to be ratified, the union was not in a good position.

The employer's final offer was not generous. Like public sector unions throughout Canada, the UNW had been forced to endure steadily decreasing wage and benefit packages throughout the 1990s.¹²⁰ In 1992, in a conciliatory gesture to the employer, the union's membership had accepted a two year contract with no wage increase in the first year, and 1.8 per cent in the second. The 1996 offer, mailed out in late May, eliminated vacation travel assistance [VTAs], a subsidy employees received to offset the high cost of northern travel. By attacking this benefit, the employer attempted to divide the union's membership along east - west lines. In the West, where the majority of members were located in the major urban centres of Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik – communities all accessible to the South by road – the loss of VTAs was merely unfortunate. In the East, however, where there were no roads, the loss of VTAs was significant. Iqaluit MLA Ed Picco summed up the division of East and West over VTAs accordingly: “[W]hen you have a roads [sic], although its nice to have a VTA you have the opportunity to drive out, well my friends in the east, air travel is not a luxury, it is

¹²⁰For a full discussion of the attack on public sector unions in Canada in the 1990s, see Panitch and Swartz, *Assault*.

a necessity.”¹²¹ Picco described the government’s attempt to split the union using VTAs as a smart “chess move.”¹²² It capitalized on existing divisions within the union and kept its opponent divided. With the majority of votes in the West, but the most drastic cuts being made in the East, Baffin RVP Andrew Johnson also saw the government’s offer as an attempt to divide the union.¹²³ The leadership recommended the membership reject the offer and began holding strike preparation meetings,¹²⁴ but when the votes were finally counted, the contract was accepted. Although the western communities predictably accepted the offer and the Nunavut ones rejected it, Crook stated that voter turn-out was very high in the West, while quite low in the East. In addition, the vote count in the East was much closer.¹²⁵ Acting president Jackie Simpson refused to give a break-down of voting patterns, saying only that more than fifty per cent of the affected members cast

¹²¹Address by Ed Picco to the UNW 10th Triennial Convention, Transcript of Proceedings, 152, compliments of Georgina Rolt-Kaiser.

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³Mark Sproxton, “UNW says yes to gov’t contract offer,” *News*, 8 July 1996, A10.

¹²⁴Mark Sproxton, “UNW members unsure on contract: Civil servants have until July 5 to make up their minds,” *News*, 10 June 1996, A16.

¹²⁵Crook, interview. Interestingly, Crook pointed out that Fort Simpson, in the western part of the NWT, broke the pattern and rejected the offer.

ballots.¹²⁶ It was later reported that 62 per cent voted in favour of the contract,¹²⁷ setting in motion what would result in the division of the UNW into two separate unions.

Prior to the ratification vote, Nunavut members had experienced a series of losses within the union. In addition to the loss of the vote on expanded services in Inuktitut, each of the three regions of Nunavut lost an executive officer. The first was Wilson in the Baffin. The loss of the Kitikmeot's Kaiogana – the only Inuit member of the executive and the only one fluent in Inuktitut – resulted in the executive reverting to an “all white” composition. Stewart's resignation left the Keewatin unrepresented on the executive. Thus, by the time the convention came up at the end of August, the UNW was sorely lacking in experienced leadership, particularly in the eastern Arctic, which was still smarting from the latest collective agreement vote.

Unbeknownst to most members at the time, the 1996 convention was to be the birthplace of a new, independent Nunavut union. In the words of Jackie Simpson, the Nunavut delegates “had a plan – they had a political action ... they were determined to become their own union.”¹²⁸ Current president, and at the time Hay River RVP, Georgina Rolt-Kaiser, remembered the 1996 proceedings as “the convention from Hell.” She added that the efforts of the Nunavut delegates to establish their own union were not expected in

¹²⁶Sproxton, “UNW says,” A10.

¹²⁷Mark Sproxton, “East - west disagree: Effects of UNW contract worry Iqaluit chamber,” *News*, 15 July 1996, A19.

¹²⁸Simpson, interview.

the West, despite advance warnings from Kitikmeot RVP Marvin Sierks. Rolt-Kaiser stated, "Basically they came out of nowhere in 1996 and ... wanted to separate."¹²⁹

It is not known when the decision was made on the part of Nunavut union leaders to attempt to secede. Reviewing the minutes of the UNW executive meetings between 1993 and 1996, one finds no hint of a growing secessionist movement within the union. On the rare occasion that the executive faced any dissent, it came from western communities: Fort Smith, Hay River, and to a much lesser extent Yellowknife. In January 1993, when the executive committed itself to remaining one union after the division of the Territories, the vote was unanimous. Even as late as the July 1996 executive meeting, the last one prior to the convention, there was no hint of a desire from the eastern leadership to break away. If the eastern Arctic membership had grievances with the leadership of the union, their RVPs were certainly not making the executive aware of them, or at least not in any official capacity, which it was their responsibility to do. At a special executive meeting the previous April, Baffin RVP Andrew Johnson, who was to lead the break-away movement, reserved his anger for the PSAC National Board of Directors for ordering the dismissal of Wilson.¹³⁰

¹²⁹Rolt-Kaiser, interview.

¹³⁰RVP Baffin Report for Convention, UNW Special Full Executive Meeting, 31 April 1996. The report was reproduced verbatim in the convention minutes under "RVP Reports."

Conflict between east and west began as soon as the convention was called to order. The first item of business was the seating of the Hay River and North Great Slave delegations. Because of complications with the delegate selection process for these regions, elections had to be re-run after the deadline, thereby requiring the affected delegates to be seated by the convention.¹³¹ What would normally be a routine procedural motion became the first round in what was to be the fight for Nunavut. Because both regions in question were western ones, not seating them would mean significantly fewer western votes, making the chances of a successful Nunavut secession more likely. Immediately, Johnson rose on a point of order, insisting that the seating of late delegates was an emergency motion and required a two thirds majority vote. Johnson's point was not accepted by the chair, and the convention proceeded to vote on the seating of the delegates.¹³² Using the recent contract vote as justification, Local 4 delegate Mike Constantineau of Rankin Inlet was especially vitriolic towards his brothers and sisters in the West:

You in the West sent us a clear message when you voted on your last agreement. What is good for you is not necessarily good for us. We accept your message and this is our response. If we cannot count on you to look after our interests then we must take control and look after ourselves. ... In time I am sure we will forgive you for what you did to us,

¹³¹Crook, Gould, and Rolt-Kaiser, interviews.

¹³²Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, 31 August - 2 September 1996, 4.

because we know you were fooled into betraying us. ... By not seating these delegates we are putting ourselves on equal footing with the West.¹³³

Adding to Constantineau's was the voice of Hunter Tootoo, also of Local 4, claiming, "We are a voice that is not paid attention to."¹³⁴ Despite the efforts of the eastern delegates, the late delegations were seated.¹³⁵

With procedural formalities taken care of, the Nunavut caucus proceeded with its "political action." Enlisting the support of Inuvik's new RVP Dave Kaufman as seconder, at the first opportunity Johnson moved the following emergency resolution:

Whereas Nunavut will become a new Territory on April 1, 1999; and
Whereas the needs of employees in Nunavut are unique and "different" from those in the "Western" Territory; Therefore be it resolved that the UNW operating within the Constitution of the PSAC and the UNW Bylaws, accept the principle of, and shall actively support the creation of a separate component of the PSAC representing the workers in Nunavut.¹³⁶

Darm Crook, curiously one of the recently seated delegates for the Hay River region,¹³⁷ argued that the motion should not be entertained because it was not in fact an emergency resolution. All motions going to convention must be submitted within a certain time frame prior to the convention. In order for a motion to be placed on the agenda after the

¹³³ Transcript of Proceedings, 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

¹³⁵ Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, 31 August - 2 September 1996, 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 21.

¹³⁷ Even more curious was Crook's status as a delegate for Local 21, H. H. Williams' Memorial Hospital. Crook was a member of Local 6.

deadline, it could only be done so as an emergency resolution, meaning that something constituting an emergency had occurred since the deadline. Only then, with the approval of two thirds of the delegates, could the item be placed on the agenda.¹³⁸ Crook's point was that there was nothing constituting an emergency relating to the motion:

Nunavut, we have known it was coming for 10 years. Each and every Local in that region had plenty of time and opportunity to submit resolutions to this convention through the proper time frames and channels for consideration. ... I don't think Brothers and Sisters, that this should be accepted as an emergency resolution because there was time to put it forward.¹³⁹

Had Simpson followed Crook's advice, her decision would have without doubt been challenged, and, overturned anyway.

Once the motion made it onto convention floor, it enjoyed wide-spread support among both eastern and western delegates. Perhaps the new RVP for Fort Smith spoke for the western delegates when he said: "... these people in Nunavut, should have, and do have the right to decide their own destiny, and all we are doing here with this motion is in fact supporting that very important principle."¹⁴⁰ When the issue was put to a roll call vote, the motion was overwhelmingly endorsed by the convention delegates with only Crook and one other Hay River delegate opposing it. One delegate from Inuvik

¹³⁸Crook, interview.

¹³⁹Transcript of Proceedings, 75.

¹⁴⁰Transcript of Proceedings, 78.

abstained.¹⁴¹ The way had been cleared for the creation of a new union to represent Nunavut workers. Like the Northwest Territories itself, the Union of Northern Workers was to divide along lines of east and west.

The “political action” that the Nunavut delegates had “orchestrated, planned, and plotted” was a complete success in spite of, rather than because of the questionable tactics employed. The creation of what would eventually become in the fall of 1998 the Nunavut Employees’ Union was born not through any long determined struggle on the part on Nunavut workers, but rather through the support they received from their brothers and sisters in the west. Josie Gould, active in the union since 1970, the year Keith McInnis and Harold Franklin signed the NWTPSA’s first collective agreement with Stuart Hodgeson, put the decision to divide the union into its proper perspective. “We were in agreement to it, but they didn’t know we were in agreement to it. They weren’t taking any chances.”¹⁴² Events throughout the 1990s contributed in bringing about the split in the UNW. The continually degenerating relationship with the Federation of Labour demonstrated that ultimately personalities were more powerful than principles in the northern labour movement. Words like “solidarity” and “one big union” were terms that had long disappeared from the lexicon of not only the UNW, but the northern labour movement in general. This was further seen in the ongoing battle with the Public Service

¹⁴¹Minutes, UNW 10th Triennial Convention, 22-23.

¹⁴²Gould, interview.

Alliance of Canada. The UNW's failed bid to separate from the Alliance was another example of the abandonment of these principles. That the Alliance had to step in and overturn decisions of the UNW executive after being petitioned to do so by UNW members on more than one occasion indicated that while the executive took care of the interests of the leadership, it was the Alliance that took care of the concerns of the membership. Significantly the Nunavut secessionists made no attempt to break away from the PSAC. From the perspective of the locals, it was the executive that could not be trusted. Added to this was a poorly timed and executed vote on Inuktitut translation services whose failure could only distance east and west, and a contract vote intentionally designed by the employer to split the membership along the same lines. Into this widening chasm was thrown a crisis in leadership. In less than a year the UNW lost seven of its top leaders, their positions being filled with inexperienced leaders or not at all. This leadership vacuum was acutely felt in the area that would become Nunavut, where the first, second, and two regional vice-presidents were lost in rapid succession. With little experienced leadership to guide the eastern membership through these perceived affronts, and little experienced leadership in the union as a whole, the Nunavut Employees' Union was born as much out of a dual crisis of leadership and credibility as it was out of the questionably enlightened attitudes of the delegates at the 1996 convention. Many might view the 1996 contract, and the failure of the union's membership in the western portion of the Northwest Territories to support the Nunavut membership through strike action, as the ultimate cause of the union's bifurcation. However, this must be considered in the context

of a union leadership conspicuously sparse in the eastern Arctic and increasingly lacking in credibility throughout the Northwest Territories. These problems had their origins in the heightened efforts to professionalize the executive throughout the 1990s.

CONCLUSIONS

Trade unionism has been present in the Northwest Territories since shortly after the northern economy began to make the transition from the fur trade to resource extraction. Since organizing the Negus mine in 1944, until it merged with the United Steelworkers of America in 1967, the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers enjoyed a monopoly in representing the interests of an organized, imported, non-aboriginal workforce. Mine Mill played an important role in the economic, social, and political lives of these workers. When the division of the Northwest Territories into an eastern and a western territory seemed imminent in the early 1960s, Mine Mill provided the federal government with input designed to ensure democracy for all northerners, and fair and just treatment of aboriginal people.

As government activities in the North evolved in the post-war period, providing for the needs of a largely aboriginal population increasingly competed with resource extraction as a priority of Ottawa. This led to the further importation of large numbers of non-aboriginal workers from the South to fill the positions of an ever-growing northern civil service. By the early 1960s the number of civil servants in the North exceeded the number of miners. Overwhelmingly employed by the Government of Canada, northern civil servants, like their southern counterparts, were without the benefit of labour unions.

The year 1967 was pivotal in the labour history of the Northwest Territories. As Mine Mill went through the mechanics of merger, passage of the Public Service Staff Relations Act granted collective bargaining rights to federal employees. These workers

promptly began to exercise these rights as members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, an apolitical business union of federal employees organized largely by government department into 14 semi-autonomous component unions. The Staff Relations Act, however, did nothing for the small number of northern workers employed by the newly restructured Government of the Northwest Territories. In 1967, in the wake of the report of the Carrothers Commission on government in the Northwest Territories, the federal government moved the territorial capital from Ottawa to Yellowknife and devolved increasing numbers of federal employees to territorial employment. The number of staff employed by the territorial government grew exponentially. As employees of the Northwest Territories, these workers were without a union.

Territorial employees quickly perceived their employer as, if not malevolent, then certainly not trustworthy, and they began to organize themselves. Significantly, the impetus came not from recently devolved members of the PSAC, but rather the Yellowknife correctional staff, one of the few territorial departments that predated the Carrothers Commission. The former federal employees were quick to rally around the prison workers, who clearly recognized the need for a larger organization with the resources and clout necessary to represent and service territorial public servants. The PSAC was the logical choice. It already had a northern membership and a loyal following of former members. Moreover, PSAC supported and assisted the efforts of these early northern activists. The Northwest Territories Commissioner, an “old union man” himself, also encouraged them. Worker transiency presented itself as a hurdle to signing up

members, but as there was no minimum number of signed members legally required for recognition [in fact as there was no legislation governing the organization of territorial civil servants at all] Commissioner Stuart Hodgeson recognized the Northwest Territories Government Employees' Association in 1969, despite its inability to sign up a majority of employees. He passed enabling legislation that changed the organization's name to the Northwest Territories Public Service Association and granted it exclusive bargaining rights for government employees other than teachers. The following year the NWTPSA became a component of the PSAC, and with the assistance of Alliance negotiators, signed its first collective agreement with the commissioner. Thus, while the push to organize northern civil servants in the late 1960s came from northern workers themselves, the process was greatly facilitated by both unique northern realities and the active support of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

As the northern state apparatus grew in both size and level of sophistication throughout the 1970s, so too did the union representing its employees. Issues pertaining to union staff and leadership in particular continued to present challenges to the NWTPSA. With an all-volunteer executive scattered across Canada's north, rapid changes in leadership remained common. Regional vice-presidents came and went, as did vice-presidents and presidents. The high turnover rate among the executive was caused by promotions, transfers, and resignations within the civil service. As well, some resigned from the executive for personal reasons, with work load figuring greatly in the equation. Establishing the president's position as full-time in 1978 stabilized the incumbency of that

position. Turnover in union staff, specifically the position of executive secretary treasurer, was also high. Originally the only full-time staff position, it was typically filled in the North by candidates from other unions. Between 1970 and 1979 the position was held by five incumbents, each successively fired by the union. The last of these left behind the legacy of a unionized staff and a regularly publishing newsletter. His successor, a southern hire with a more academic background, brought with him a level of sophistication that was representative of the union throughout the 1980s.

In addition to leadership and staff matters, native issues increasingly gained importance throughout the union's history. In the 1970s the Berger Inquiry attracted mixed responses from the NWTPSA. Of more immediate concern, at least with eastern locals, was the use of Inuktitut. With an increasing number of Inuit civil servants, the use in Inuktitut among eastern Arctic locals increased from the 1970s on. This trend continued into the 1980s. As many of the new CLRB units were in the eastern Arctic, increasing numbers of Inuit workers were brought into the labour movement. Inuktitut continued to rise in importance. The union's journal, *Sulijuq*, was almost completely bilingual by the end of the 1980s. The union's failure to approve a dues increase in order to provide improved Inuktitut translation services at its 1996 convention may well have been a contributing factor in the union's break-up.

Despite the increasing attention to aboriginal language, the union enjoyed no success in recruiting aboriginal people to leadership positions above the local level with the exception of Darm Crook, a Saskatchewan Metis. Although James Washee held the

position of RVP for the Fort Smith region on the union's first executive, he quickly left the organization to pursue his political career with the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories. From that time until the election of David Kaiogana as Kitikmeot RVP in 1990 the union's executive remained "lily white." When Kaiogana left the executive in the spring 1996, the union reverted to its "all white" status.

The 1980s were the union's "golden age." Native people were increasingly organized during the period. Stability within the offices of both the presidency and the executive secretary treasurer allowed both staff and executive actively to participate in the northern labour movement. Elected executive officers, as well as union staff, played significant roles in founding and leading the Northwest Territories Federation of Labour through much of the 1980s. Through the Federation, the NWTPSA actively participated in union activism not simply in the North, but in labour struggles of national importance such as the Gainers and Pacific Western Airlines strikes of the mid-1980s.

Most significantly, the 1980s saw the NWTPSA branch out from solely representing territorial workers. In close cooperation with the PSAC, the union aggressively organized employees of hamlets, towns, and housing authorities into bargaining units certified by the Canada Labour Relations Board. Additionally, employees of the newly re-structured Northwest Territories Power Corporation and the privately owned H.H. Williams Memorial Hospital became members of the union, forming its two largest CLRB units. Unlike their brothers and sisters employed by the Government of the Northwest Territories, members of CLRB units enjoyed the right to strike, and by 1987

the union had fought, and won, its first strikes with the support of the Federation of Labour and the active involvement of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The role played by the Alliance in organizing and servicing of CLRB units was vital. Without the aid of the PSAC, the northern component would have remained solely a territorial government employees' union.

The later 1980s witnessed deteriorating relationships with other labour organizations. Most significant among these were increasingly strained relations with the Federation of Labour. As the NWTPSA represented the most dynamic union in the North during the 1980s, it changed its name in 1987 to the Union of Northern Workers to reflect its changing nature. At the same time, the United Steelworkers of America, at one point the North's largest union, was dwindling in size and importance. Corresponding resentments – an artificial “blue collar versus white collar” divisiveness fed by elements of USWA Local 802 and the Federation of Labour's executive assistant – distanced the UNW from the broader labour movement and contributed to the union's decreasing participation in the Federation. This trend continued into the 1990s. A bitter campaign for president of the Federation resulted in the election of an autocrat and proven enemy of the UNW. This was followed by the dispute over the Mine Safety Act, and the strike at Giant mine, resulting in UNW locals starting to disaffiliate from the Federation.

Dominating the 1990s was the attempt of the UNW's elected leadership to professionalize. From 1978 until 1990, the only full-time elected officer of the union was the president, since 1984, Darm Crook. By a narrow margin, the 1990 convention

decided to combine the political role of regional vice-presidents with service responsibilities and add several more full-time officers to the union's executive. On the one hand, with the creation of a new highly paid political elite, both union staff and executives ceased to play a prominent role in the labour movement, and organizing of new bargaining units fell off drastically. On the other hand, the salaried positions led to greater stability of the executive, with RVPs remaining on the executive for considerably longer periods. But it also led to divisiveness within the union. Whereas in the past the position was typically filled by acclamation, the potential for bitter contests within the membership for lucrative incomes developed. Such was the case in the 1993 RVP contest in Fort Smith. The executive attempted to expand the number of full-time officers further at its 1993 convention by adding the first and second vice-presidents to the UNW pay roll. This endeavor, as well as the most concerted effort to date to secede from the Alliance, and an attempt to further consolidate power within the executive were all defeated. The subsequent decision of the executive to add the first vice-president to the pay roll regardless, compounded by the president's decision to allow the Fort Smith RVP to retain his position despite no longer being a member of a union bargaining unit, flew in the face of established democratic practices of the union and set in motion a series of events that culminated in the break-up of the union. By the time the PSAC National Board of Directors ruled on the Fort Smith RVP, he had been joined by two other executives who had ceased to be union bargaining unit members. Their dismissal and subsequent pay-out under questionable circumstances led directly to the resignation of the president and the

newly elevated first vice-president and was followed closely by the resignation of the Keewatin RVP. The net loss of over half the union's full executive in slightly more than six months left the union critically weakened at a particularly vulnerable time.

The coincident failure to approve increased Inuktitut translation services for the 1996 convention is illustrative of the arrogance and political short-sightedness of the executive. Waiting until the last minute to hold the vote indicated that it was not a priority of the executive. Asking the membership for a dues increase at the same time that it was allocating over a quarter million dollars for a position it had already been told was not wanted was a slap in the face to the membership. While it appears that the issue was not a factor in the ultimate decision to split the union, it was an optimum opportunity for the executive to campaign for, and actively show their support for one united union after the division of the territories. Instead, the executive passively awaited the results while defending their own increasingly questionable decisions. When the membership rejected the dues increase, it was neither a rejection of the Inuit's right to participate in union affairs in their own language, nor a rejection of the executive's leadership, but rather an acknowledgment that if the leadership could find over a quarter million dollars for the first vice-president, it did not need more money to finance translation services.

The greatest source of division leading to the union's break-up was the 1996 acceptance of the territorial government's contract offer. Government negotiators employed a ruthless, and successful, strategy of divide and conquer. Immediately preceding negotiations, territorial legislators changed the rules of collective bargaining

overnight, eliminating binding arbitration and replacing it with the right to strike. It then dared the union to exercise that right. Structured so as to be barely acceptable in the more populous West, the government's final offer was met with a combination of apathy and anger in the East. The union's leadership, recognizing the divisive nature of the offer, urged the membership to reject it. With the exception of one local in the West, only the membership in what would become Nunavut heeded the leadership's advice. Without the right to strike until only months earlier, the majority of members in the West were less sure, largely because they had less to lose by accepting the offer. The agreement was ultimately ratified because the leadership failed to convince its members to stand together in solidarity. Nunavut secessionists capitalized on this to form their own union. They had learned their lessons well from previous attempts to secede from the PSAC.

Secession from the Alliance increased in popularity since the mid-1970s when Darm Crook first proposed it as president of Local 6. Always at the heart of the issue was dues paid versus services received. The message conveyed in these attempts was that if the component did not get its way, it should quit. Larger, less quantifiable issues such as solidarity and strength in numbers were better comprehended by the people who led the union to its greatest successes in the 1980s. Professional union staffers, who understood and practiced the essential skills of building solidarity through dialogue and grass roots organizing were pushed aside in the 1990s by a highly paid elected leadership that no longer earned their pay cheques the same way their brothers and sisters did, and in several cases were no longer even members of unionized bargaining units. Barring rare

exceptions, the priorities of this new group were focused more on issues of regionalism, parochialism, and power. The executive suffered from the syndrome of being “big fish in a small pond.” When leadership of the Federation of Labour fell into the hands of an individual better versed in these qualities than themselves, the response of the UNW leadership was not to work for democratic reform, but to increasingly withdraw. Similarly, when the Alliance was perceived as not providing for its northern component, the response was to attempt to disaffiliate. It is no wonder then that the eastern delegates chose a similar option at the 1996 convention following the ratification of the collective agreement. That the leader of the Nunavut secessionist movement was one of the last remaining members of the “old boys club” was poetic justice.

Some might argue that disaffection with the Alliance was a function of perceived regional disparities, that the NWTPSA/UNW was an isolated, northern component, neglected by disinterested southern union bosses. This was not the case. Whenever the union required assistance, it was forthcoming from the Alliance. Whenever an attempt was made to disaffiliate, it was defeated by members of the union. When members felt aggrieved by their own leaders, it was the PSAC they turned to for redress. If there were those who perceived themselves to be neglected, northern workers, they were never able to convince enough of their brothers and sisters into channeling such feelings into concrete action.

By the 1990s proponents of disaffiliation were found within an executive increasingly alienated from its membership. The greater the distance increased between

the executive and the locals, the more arrogant the UNW leadership became.

Compounded by a full-time president who had been an incumbent for over eleven years, the executive increasingly saw itself not as the upholders of the rules, but as an infallible body. When, in 1993, the executive attempted to subordinate local leadership, the undemocratic direction the union was taking became apparent.

There was never a general uprising of the membership against “the brotherhood.” In all likelihood, the average member did not care about union matters until the collective agreement came up for ratification. Even then, many members, particularly in the East, did not bother to vote on it. That any members challenged the executive on the decisions it was making between the 1993 and 1996 conventions was an aberration. In the instances where issues were raised, members were almost always forced to take their concerns to the PSAC, indicating both a frustration with the UNW leadership and a belief that the Alliance could and would take corrective measures. When members requested action from the parent body regarding UNW executive decisions, they got action. The most dramatic example of this was the dismissal of the three officers in 1995. When UNW members were disregarded by their own leaders, the PSAC stepped in to defend democratic trade unionism.

In 1967 a handful of Northwest Territories government employees began to organize a union and soon called upon the PSAC for help. The Alliance responded and the union which emerged – the Northwest Territories Public Service Association – took root not only in Yellowknife, Hay River, and Fort Smith, but also Frobisher Bay, Rankin

Inlet, and Cambridge Bay. It was not inevitable that the union would divide when the territories did. It did so because the growing professionalization of the union's leadership structure not only increasingly divided the membership from its leaders, but its leaders from the Alliance. Significantly, when efforts were initiated to establish a separate union for Nunavut workers, there was never any question that it would be a component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The PSAC had served northern workers, east and west, since the capital of the Northwest Territories was Ottawa, Stuart Hodgeson was still "an old union man," and Local 802 at Con mine was Mine Mill 802. The Alliance would continue to represent northern workers, east and west.

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Georgina Rolt-Kaiser, 8 August 1999.

Jackie Simpson, 19 August 1999.

Dave Talbot, 23 August 1999.

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APPENDIX I

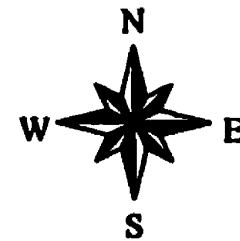
Executive Officers of the Union of Northern Workers from 1993 Convention to close of 1996 Convention

President	Darm Crook	Convention 1993 to 23 August 1996
	Jackie Simpson	23 August 1996 to close of 1996 convention.
First Vice-President	Jim Wilson	Convention 1993 to September 1995 [dismissed]
	David Kaiogana	October 1995 to May 1996 [resigned]
	Jackie Simpson	May 1996 to 23 August 1996
	Donna Heslop	23 August 1996 to close of 1996 convention
Second Vice-President	David Kaiogana	Convention 1993 to October 1995
	Jackie Simpson	March 1996 to April 1996
	Vacant	April 1996 to July 1996
	Donna Heslop	July 1996 to 23 August 1996
	Vacant	23 August 1996 to close of 1996 convention
Regional Vice-Presidents		
Baffin	Andrew Johnson	Convention 1993 to close of 1996 convention

Fort Smith	Keith Dowling	Convention 1993 to September 1995 [dismissed]
	Vacant	September 1995 to March 1996
	Don Hendry	March 1996 to close of 1996 convention
Hay River	Georgina Rolt-Kaiser	Convention 1993 to close of 1996 convention
Inuvik	Angus Crane	Convention 1993 to September 1995 [dismissed]
	Dave Kaufman	October 1995 to close of 1996 convention
Keewatin	Ken Stewart	Convention 1993 to July 1996 [resigned]
	Vacant	July 1996 to close of 1996 convention
Kitikmeot	Marvin Sierks	Convention 1993 to close of 1996 convention
North Great Slave	Scott Wiggs	Convention 1993 to December 1994 [took position of Director of Membership Services]
	Dave Talbot	January 1995 to close of 1996 convention
Somba K'e	Josie Gould	Convention 1993 to close of 1996 convention.

Appendix II

Map of Northwest Territories



Prepared by author

Source: ArcView 3.2
Created in the MUN Map Library



