

# **Divided Loyalties**

A Study of a Communist-Led Trade Union's Struggle  
For Survival in Trail, British Columbia  
1943-1955

by  
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## **Abstract**

“Divided Loyalties” examines a Communist union’s struggle to survive in the post-Second World War environment of anti-Communism and anti-trade unionism that marked one of the most violent periods in the history of the Canadian labour movement. In 1943, Local 480 of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Trail, British Columbia, was nearing the end of a six-year battle for certification as the legal bargaining agent for about 4,000 smelter workers. After it achieved that goal the following year and for the next decade, it faced new battles with the employer, the powerful Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada (CM&S) with its paternalistic president S.G. Blaylock. The local also faced an array of other opponents: a workforce suspicious of a Red-tainted union with a radical past, a company union that had been established by Blaylock after the First World War, a company-loyal newspaper, and a divided community situated in the rural West Kootenay district near the Canada-United States border. Among the local’s most vigorous adversaries were the local churches, the federal government with its secret service police, and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL). By the 1950s, it had been purged from the CCL, shunned by the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and victimized by cold warriors bent on its destruction. To survive it needed to win the support of a substantially immigrant workforce with a strong alternative culture to the dominant Anglo-Saxon one. It had to address the concerns of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of women war workers who had been hired at lower wages to replace enlisted men. And it fell into the middle of an ideological clash between the region’s two dominant left-wing political parties. Its greatest strength and potential weakness was an unabashed Stalinist named Harvey Murphy. He had been a fugitive from justice and was incarcerated in a war-time internment camp as a threat to national security, but he became an influential leader of the provincial labour movement and an outspoken advocate of workers’ rights who was hated by some and respected by others. “Divided Loyalties” begins with a victory, but Local 480’s survival for the duration of the twelve-year period of this study was far from assured.

**Keywords:** Communism, trade unionism, labour history, social history

For Leola

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## **List of Acronyms**

ACCL All-Canadian Congress of Labour  
ACTU Association of Catholic Trade Unions  
AFL American Federation of Labor  
AUC Amalgamated Union of Canada  
BCFL British Columbia Federation of Labour  
CBC Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
CIO Congress of Industrial Organizations  
CCF Cooperative Commonwealth Federation  
CCL Canadian Congress of Unions  
CLC Canadian Labour Congress  
CLDL Canadian Labour Defense League  
CMA Canadian Manufacturers' Association  
CM&S Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada  
CPC Communist Party of Canada and Canadian Peace Congress  
CSU Canadian Seaman's Union  
DOCR Defence of Canada Regulations  
FDLP Fernie and District Labour Party  
HUAC House Committee on UnAmerican Activities  
IATSE International Association of Theater and Stage Employees  
IBEW International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers  
ICA Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (B.C.)  
IJC International Joint Commission  
ILS International Lenin School  
ILWU International Longshore and Warehouse Union  
ISWU Independent Smelter Workers' Union  
IUMMSW International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine-Mill)  
IWA International Woodworkers of America  
IWW Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies)  
LA Ladies Auxiliary  
LAC Library and Archives Canada  
LPP Labour Progressive Party (Communist)

LRB Labour Relations Board  
MWUC Mine Workers' Union of Canada  
NFB National Film Board of Canada  
NWLB National War Labour Board  
OBU One Big Union  
PPBAA Pullman Porters Benefit Association of America  
RCWU Relief Camp Workers' Union  
SPC Socialist Party of Canada  
SWOC Steel Workers' Organizing Committee  
TBT Trail Board of Trade  
TDT *Trail Daily Times*  
TLC Trades and Labour Congress  
TPC Trail Peace Council  
UFLWU United Fur and Leather Workers' Union  
UAW United Automobile Workers  
UE United Electrical Workers  
UMWA United Mine Workers of America  
USWA United Steel Workers of America  
WCC Workmen's Cooperative Committee  
WFM Western Federation of Miners  
WIUC Woodworkers' Industrial Union of Canada  
WUL Workers' Unity League

“While the acts of kings and governments provide the great brush strokes on the canvas of human experience, it is the strivings and aspirations of ordinary people, and day-to-day events, that complete the picture and give it meaning. A careful reading of the history of the Kootenay district clearly demonstrates this fact. In the lives of the early fur traders, miners and lumbermen, we find thought and action which has left its imprint upon our times.”

– H.W. “Bert” Herridge, Member of Parliament for Kootenay West, 1954<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Jottings from Ottawa,” *Commentator*, June 1954. Herridge’s column appeared regularly in the Local 480 monthly.

## **Chapter 1.**

### **Introduction – Portrait of a Union Town**

Imagine a car tour of modern-day Trail, British Columbia, a town of about 8,000 on the Columbia River just a few kilometres north of the border. The town is so close to the United States that Spokane, Washington, is its nearest urban neighbour. Imagine, further, that you are riding in the light blue 1934 Buick convertible that Margot Blaylock once piloted around town. A 27th birthday gift from her father, industrialist Selwyn Gwilym Blaylock, the car is itself a piece of local history.<sup>1</sup> The guide explains that Blaylock was the president of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada (CM&S later Cominco). With the top down, riders seated in the Buick's rumble seat can spy the tops of three towering smoke stacks pinioned to the CM&S lead and zinc smelter that Blaylock presided over until his death in 1945. A passenger might ask how this tranquil, sports-loving smelter city, founded on the rich mining resources of the late nineteenth century, could have become the scene of a raucous trade union battle from 1943 to 1955. More to the point, why did workers ultimately support the Communist-led International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (common called Mine-Mill) in their attempt to form a union? As your tour unfolds, more questions will surface about Mine-Mill Local 480, the bargaining agent for 5,000 smelter workers, and its long struggle against its anti-union and anti-Communist adversaries.

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<sup>1</sup> To this day, the Blaylock Buick still appears at car shows in the Pacific Northwest to this day. For the vehicle's history, see Diana and Dick McLeod, "The Story of the 1934 McLaughlin Buick Convertible," in John D'Arcangelo, *A Trail to Remember* (Trail, B.C.: Self-published, 2015), 284-287.

Some of the answers cling to the rock walls of modern Trail. As we enter the city near the exclusive management enclave of Tadanac, a booster sign welcomes you to the “Home of Champions.” The claim is a reminder that Trail is home to the Trail Smoke Eaters, winners of the world cup in amateur hockey in 1939 and again in 1961.<sup>2</sup> The town also claims more than a few other sports stars, including baseball’s Jason Bay, of the San Diego Padres, and his sister Lauren Bay Regula, star pitcher for the 2002 Canadian national softball team, as well as nineteen National Hockey League players, and skiing Olympian Nancy Greene from nearby Rossland. With the smelter on your left, tilt your head back to view the company’s fertilizer division in Warfield, where the famed Elephant Brand is manufactured and shipped around the world. There, near where workers once punched a clock to start their shift, a plaque signals where the company’s secretive Project 9 tower once stood, built in the 1940s to produce heavy water for the Manhattan Project’s development of the atomic bomb.

Cruising down into the city from Smelter Hill along Highway 22, the Gulch is on your right. This hodgepodge of hillside houses forms the nucleus of an immigrant enclave where Italian and other eastern and southern European workers and their families have lived for generations. The Buick stops outside the Cristoforo Colombo Lodge, founded in 1905, so you can visit one of Canada’s oldest ethnic associations. Inside, a mural shows the varied activities of the ethnic enclave, including their involvement in local politics, sports, arts, and the union movement. Freight cars idle alongside the highway. They are

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<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of the Smokies, see the Trail Historical Society web site at <http://www.historicsmokeeaters.ca/first-period/>.

the property of the CM&S parent company, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), which bought the smelter from Montana copper king F. Augustus Heinze in the 1890s.

The tour passes the location of the Kootenay Hotel, burnt to the ground years ago, where Italian immigrant workers found rooms, homemade Italian food, and immigrant companionship. The Buick then veers right as Rossland Avenue merges with Victoria Street near the Trail Memorial Centre, where a thousand Trailites once danced to Duke Ellington and his band playing “Squeeze Me But Please Don’t Tease Me” and other hits. Here, also, on a winter’s evening, avid hockey fans sat in the chilly arena and hoped for another Smoke Eater world victory. The centre reaches to the edge of the Columbia where the river overflowed its banks in the great flood of 1948, inspiring workers and their families to rally to save the downtown area.

The Buick then turns onto Eldorado Street, where a mural illustrates the early prospectors who found their way to the isolated Trail Creek camp. Riding by rail and river steamers such as the *Lytton*, they all followed French Canadian prospectors Joe Moris and Joe Bourgeois, who staked four claims on Red Mountain in 1890. Most sought precious metals such as gold, silver, and copper, and in the process they further displaced the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) and Sinixt First Nations that had relied on the river for salmon for millennia. As the precious ores began to play out at the Le Roi, Centre Star, and War Eagle mines, some miners turned to labouring work in the Heinze smelter and in area mines that still yielded large quantities of lead and zinc ore. By 1906, when the CM&S began to process the ore, CPR agents shipped more immigrant workers to jobs in the hot and often dangerous lead smelter and other plants that generated extraordinary wealth for the company under the guidance of Blaylock and other managers.

Where Cedar Avenue merges with Topping Street, we are reminded of the transnational forces that shaped early Trail. The street is named for American-born Eugene Topping who with his friend Frank Hanna founded Trail Landing at the mouth of Trail Creek. The town's name was later shortened to Trail after the pioneer Dewdney Trail built in the 1860s to link mining camps along the international boundary with coastal markets. Moving along, Cedar Avenue curves into Portland Street and the Trail Labour Centre, built in the mid-1950s. At the time, the union was still part of Mine-Mill; now it is home to Local 480 of the United Steel Workers (USW), into which Mine-Mill merged in 1967, but only after fifteen years of labour warfare. Inside the union hall, a large photograph of Albert "Ginger" Goodwin is prominently displayed. Goodwin was the socialist leader of a bitter 1917 smelter strike. He was killed the following year, becoming a B.C. labour martyr. He was one of several radical trade unionists in the West Kootenay district in the early twentieth century. Others who migrated from Central Canadian mining and smelting areas brought with them a sense of the radical political views they had read about in eastern labour weeklies such as Phillips Thompson's *Labor Advocate* and later journals.<sup>3</sup>

The Buick then slows as it passes the Royal Cinema on Bay Avenue, one of two venues where Trailites could see the latest Audie Murphy western, or *Song of Russia*, or a *film noir* classic such as *Kiss Me Deadly*, or a showing of the Oscar-winning *Crossfire* by

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<sup>3</sup> For further insights into the role of the nineteenth-century Canadian labour press, see Jane Elisabeth Masters, "Canadian Labour Press Opinion, 1890-1914: A Study in Theoretical Radicalism and Practical Conservatism," MA Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1970; and Ron Verzuh, *Radical Rag: The Pioneer Labour Press in Canada* (Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1988), 75.

Grand Forks, B.C.-born Edward Dmytryk, a member of the blacklisted Hollywood Ten.<sup>4</sup> They could not see the banned film *Salt of the Earth*, at least not there, but Local 480 did find a place to screen the film about the New Mexico strike. Your tour next swings southwest to Rossland, a few kilometres uphill from Trail, to visit the Rossland Miners' Union Hall, built in 1898 by members of Local 38 of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), one of the first Canadian locals and predecessor to Mine-Mill. In one of the most famous conflicts in B.C. mining history, the Rossland local struck in 1900-1901, bringing WFM leaders north to Canada, including William "Big Bill" Haywood, the radical leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Local lore holds that in 1912 or 1913, the miners hid Wobbly troubadour Joe Hill in the hall, helping him to evade the Pinkerton private police or so a plaque claims. These labour luminaries were instrumental in fuelling a working-class consciousness throughout the West Kootenay. When the Buick stops at the old hall, you note that it still functions as a community centre.<sup>5</sup>

Back in Trail, the tour stops at more colourful street murals. One alongside the Trail Memorial Centre depicts the Smokies. Others show miners extracting ore, smelter workers preparing to tap a lead furnace, and the offices of the *Trail Creek News*, the city's first newspaper and predecessor of the *Trail Daily Times*, an early anti-union voice under editor William Curran. It was Curran in the late 1930s who sounded the alarm

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<sup>4</sup> The FBI engaged in an endless search for any evidence that entertainers like Murphy were associated with Communism. The House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC) considered *Song of Russia* pro-Soviet propaganda. *Kiss Me Deadly*, with its atomic explosion ending, might have reminded Trailites of the smelter's role in creating the atomic bomb. *Crossfire* was honoured for addressing anti-Semitism, but Dmytryk was blacklisted until he turned on the other Hollywood Ten members at HUAC hearings in the 1950s.

<sup>5</sup> See *Joe Hill's Secret Canadian Hideout*, an eight-minute film on the history of the Rossland Miners' Union Hall, produced by the author.



when Communist labour organizer Arthur “Slim” Evans was hired by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to bring a Mine-Mill union to Trail. In response to this mouthpiece for Blaylock, Local 480 founded the *Commentator* to promote the union and to encourage smelter workers to abandon the Workmen’s Cooperative Committee, a company union Blaylock had started after the 1917 strike to prevent further unionization threats. When Evans had to leave town, Communist union organizer John McPeake, a smelter machinist, replaced him, followed by Harvey Murphy who figures prominently in the study that follows.

For all the colourful murals adorning Trail, there are also graphic silences worth considering. No mural commemorates Murphy and the local Communist union organizers. None serves as a reminder of the hundreds of women war workers who replaced the 2,300 smeltermen who enlisted to fight the Nazis in the Second World War. No plaque salutes the women of Ladies Auxiliary Local 131, the independent organization that supported Local 480 in its struggle for survival. No display celebrates the years of regional political upheaval when local members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) locked horns in a quest for smelter workers’ allegiance. And there is no monument to remember the Steelworker raids of the early 1950s that pitted workers against each other under the backdrop of the Cold War and McCarthyism.

The big Buick rolls past some of Trail’s thirteen churches on its way to a final stop outside the Crown Point Hotel, rundown now but once the most lavish inn in Trail. In its heyday it was a meeting place for CM&S executives and well-heeled travellers. Other hotels provided smelter workers with Kootenay Pale Ale produced at the Columbia

Brewery in the East Kootenay. Beer parlours at the Trail Hotel and the Arlington were among the favoured venues for hard-fought political debates, sometimes punctuated by fistfights, the occasional arrest, and the subsequent police court hearing. Not a few of those debates were about Local 480 and its Communist leaders.

As your imagined tour ends and the blue Buick returns to its current owner somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, this thumbnail portrait of a union town inspires more questions about its people and their engagement in the long struggle for Local 480's survival. You might ask, as one historian asked regarding Laurier Mercier's Montana labour history, *Anaconda*, "what can a labor history of a small, remote place . . . reveal about larger historical transformations, global movements of capital, the politics of gender, and environmental aspects of industrial activity in the twentieth century?"<sup>6</sup> The answer is much, especially from the events surrounding the twelve years covered by this study.

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The period from 1943 to 1955 marks the most intense era of struggle for Local 480's Communist leadership, both in terms of winning and holding the allegiance of the smelters' 5,000 workers (see Table 1.1 – Total CM&S Employees)<sup>7</sup>. It was a time when

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, Review of Laurier Mercier's *Anaconda*, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 1, February 2004, 215-216, 215.

<sup>7</sup> The 5,000-member smelter workforce figure is based on two previous estimates: David Michael Roth, "A Union on the Hill: The International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and the organization of Trail smelter and chemical workers, 1938-1945", MA Thesis, SFU, 1991, 29, notes that there were 4,000 CM&S employees in the late 1930s. Lance H. Whittaker, "All is not Gold: A Story of the Discovery, Production and Processing of the Mineral, Chemical and Power Resources of the Kootenay District of the Province of British Columbia and the Lives of the Men who Developed and Exploited Those Resources," Trail, B.C., 1 October 1945, 257, offers a total of 5,000. The unpublished manuscript commissioned by S.G. Blaylock is available in Cominco Ltd. fonds MS2500, B.C. Archives, Victoria B.C. The CM&S

North American labour leaders warned Communist unions like Mine-Mill that they would be eliminated from the ranks of the labour movement. Fear mongering about Communism began as early as 1935, when the excitement of a new industrial unionism, initially led by United Mine Workers (UMW) leader John L. Lewis under the

**Table 1.1      Total CM&S Employees**

YEAR	TOTAL	YEAR	TOTAL	YEAR	TOTAL
1937	6,926	1943	7,554	1950	8,585
1938	Unavailable	1944	6,437	1951	8,834
1939	6,111	1945	6,362	1952	8,866
1940	7,117	1946	7,799	1953	7,932
1941	7,647	1947	8,434	1954	7,668
1942	8,059	1948	8,639	1955	7,980
		1949	8,829		

**Source:** “Director’s Report,” *CM&S Annual Report* for the year indicated. Figures include all employees in smelter plants and offices as well as the CM&S-owned West Kootenay Power and Light Company. The 1937 total was drawn from “CM&S Net Profit,” *Trail Daily Times*, 5 April 1938, 2.

banner of the CIO, surged at conventions of the craft-dominated American Federation of Labor (AFL). Two years later the CIO broke from the AFL, opening the doors to job-hungry industrial workers from immigrant families like those in Trail. By the early 1940s, the CIO had begun to shed its radical image. The CIO drive to organize by

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Annual Report for 1956, showed total employees for 1955 as 7,980. This figure included mine workers at the Sullivan Mine in Kimberley, B.C., as well as those at several other local area mines. It also included clerical workers. The reports do not provide a breakdown.

industry slowed by the final year of Local 480's fight for legal recognition in 1944.

Leaders then set the stage for expelling Red unions. The U.S.-based CIO leaders, whose most significant organizing victories had been spearheaded by Communists in the 1930s, began to tack towards an anti-Communist course that would greatly complicate matters for Local 480 and other Mine-Mill locals.

This part of the CIO history is well known, but less studied are the details of CIO organizing efforts in smaller, more rural settings such as Trail, where Local 480 had to overcome many obstacles. For example, a sizeable portion of Trail workers was proud of the company's financial success. They had to be persuaded to abandon their relatively comfortable "company town" status, and even after Local 480 achieved legal recognition, many workers continued to reject the Communist union. Other obstacles surface for historians in examining the mechanics of Communist organizing highlighted by the Local 480 story. Among them, how the local overcame years of company loyalty that promoted adherence to company unionism, or how it sidestepped the Communist taint that threatened to undermine worker confidence in the union to provide effective collective bargaining and other services, or how it addressed the obstacle represented by the political and cultural differences inherent in a predominantly Catholic immigrant workforce, including Italians, Croatians, and several other smaller ethnic groups who regularly heard vocal opposition to the Local 480 Communists from the pulpit. Historical accounts are more available regarding how the male-dominated Red union addressed issues the women of Trail raised, including the views of stay-at-home spouses and female war workers. There is an inadequate historical record of how Local 480 leaders faced the obstacles erected during the anti-Communist hysteria of the post-war period. Precious

few details appear about the strategies, tactics, and tools that were used to gain and sustain smelter workers' loyalty in Trail, and there is still research to be done on Local 480's allies as well as its enemies and what actions they took to support their objection to the union. Moreover, we labour historians must sort through how the local, national, and transnational forces played out in Trail and other locales. We also need a clearer sense of how the Cold War, with its McCarthyism-like witch-hunts in both the U.S. and Canada, influenced events in Trail. Finally, as noted in our imagined city tour, we need a clearer sense of the extent to which the struggles in Trail, in a relatively obscure, semi-rural corner of British Columbia hundreds of kilometres from major urban centres, influenced the North American labour movement in the post-war era.

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Mine-Mill locals were already under attack by the time certification came to Local 480. Sensitive to fears unleashed by defecting Soviet cypher clerk Igor Gouzenko in late 1945, Mine-Mill unions girded for the anti-Communist backlash that came as the shooting war ended and the Cold War began. The passage by Congress in 1947 of the anti-Communist Taft-Hartley Act sanctioned attacks on Mine-Mill's leadership. Many, including international president Reid Robinson and secretary-treasurer Maurice Travis, were harassed by the courts and the labour movement throughout the Cold War period.<sup>8</sup> The effect of such official anti-Mine-Mill actions undermined the union in Canada as well, where the authorities adding their own corrosive measures. Continuing fears of

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<sup>8</sup> Anne Fagan Ginger and David Christiano, eds., *The Cold War Against Labor: An Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute 1987), provide many examples of the harassment policies against Mine-Mill leaders.

renewed war, the atomic bomb, and further economic shortages, accelerated the anti-Communist campaign that warned Canadian workers to beware of international unionism and its Red proponents. It was not obvious that workers in Trail, a city of about 11,500 in 1951, would remain loyal to Local 480 (See Table 1.2 – Population Growth Patterns for Trail.)<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1.2      Population Growth Patterns for Trail**

YEAR	POPULATION	% CHANGE	CENSUS	VARIATION
1921	3,312	–	3,020	292
1931	8,037	+142.7	7,573	464
1941	9,902	+23.2	9,392	510
1951	11,909	+20.3	11,430	479

**Source:** *Official Community Plan Technical Report for the City of Trail, B.C.* prepared by EPEC Consulting Western Ltd., Cranbrook, B.C., 1981. Copy obtained from the Trail Historical Society. Variation: *Canada Census* (1951), Population – General Characteristics, Vol. 1, Table 6, p. 684.

The struggle to maintain class solidarity during this period of intensified political confrontation forced the smelter community to choose sides. From the moment Local 480 won legal certification, smelter workers were forced to question a long-established order in this single-industry town, ruled as it was first by a paternalistic industrialist and later by powerful corporate managers. From late 1945 onward, the debate fostered by anti-Communists and anti-unionists challenged Local 480's hard-won status as the smelter workers' legitimate representative. It also tested the class solidarity that had existed,

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<sup>9</sup> The *Canada Census* (1951) reports Trail's population as 11,430 for that year. The population of the separate municipality of Tadanac, which housed company management staff, was 479. Those figures stabilized through the mid-1960s, but by 1986, Trail's population had dropped to 7,950.

however unevenly, since the first workers began hauling ore from Kootenay region mines. Indeed, local class awareness and solidarity were part of a continuum, an ongoing evolution of class-consciousness in the Kootenays. As British social historian E.P. Thompson has argued, rebellions, revolutions, and radical reform movements can seem to occur overnight, but education and experience worked over long periods to inform consciousness of workers.<sup>10</sup> The same held for the labourers who encountered Local 480 in Trail.

Among the first events that shaped local class-consciousness was the Rossland miners' strike in 1900-1901, when WFM Local 38 demanded a shorter work day. Fifteen years later, that consciousness was further developed when Ginger Goodwin led members of Mill and Smeltermen's Union Local 105, predecessor to Local 480, in the daring but failed 1917 strike for better wages and shorter hours. Stanley Scott, among others, has examined the union's flawed strategy in executing the 1917 strike, its abandonment by the parent union, and the magnitude of Blaylock's wartime victory over workers. The strike left a memory of the union's failure, and an ongoing concern among potential union organizers that no union could succeed in confronting Blaylock and his company union.<sup>11</sup> Remembrances of old-timers who participated in such strikes and other battles for workers' rights, particularly the 1917 strike and the martyring of Goodwin, would

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<sup>10</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Howard Scott, "A Profusion of Issues: Immigrant Labour, the World War, and the Cominco Strike of 1917," *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 2, 1977, 54-78.

later influence the trend toward left-wing politics among Trail workers at a time when Communist ideas were in the ascendency in the 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>12</sup>

These strikes testify to the early militancy of Trail smelter workers and local miners. They reveal a familiarity with the radical trade unionism of the IWW and the One Big Union (OBU). As Jeremy Mouat explains, the local miner's unions that "played a special role in the instant resource towns of the western cordillera" influenced Trail workers.<sup>13</sup> In the inter-war West Kootenay, this early militancy informed the smelter workforce's preparation first to embrace a union and then to engage in class warfare to sustain it. Not all smelter workers chose the same path, however. A quite different history applied to dissenters who preferred loyalty to the company over a Communist union. Exploring the resulting conflict and understanding the motivations driving a range of participants, is a central theme of this study.

Local 480 had emerged from a twelve-year struggle against anti-union forces that attacked with an arsenal of anti-Communist political action tactics and rhetoric. The union also battled oppositionists in the leadership of the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), the Canadian counterpart of the CIO, and the socialist CCF. Since the initial appearance of the CIO in Trail, smelter workers had debated whether to accept a Communist-led union. As this study shows, the debate leaned toward Mine-Mill as provincial and federal laws became more favourable to unions, but the post-war struggles exposed the local to internal challengers, an increasingly vocal anti-Communist

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<sup>12</sup> See Gerald Boucher, "The 1901 Rossland Miners' Strike: The Western Federation of Miners Responds to Industrial Capitalism," BA Graduating Essay, University of Victoria, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Mouat, 74.



employer, and a society hostile to Communists. Those struggles indicated that Local 480 was never a consensus choice. Many Trailites did not welcome this union with its radical and even violent past. Nor did everyone view support for Mine-Mill as the best means for achieving economic security after the Great Depression and decades of benevolent employer paternalism. In this politically hostile environment, the local was never fully secure about its ability to withstand an internal takeover of the union by anti-Communist smelter workers who simply wished to abandon Mine-Mill. That ambivalence fostered their reluctance to reject the forces that challenged Local 480. Trail's fractured labour politics complicated the maintenance of Local 480's tenuous foothold in a workplace with a history of following the employers' wishes, a compliance suspended only once, and then only briefly during the Goodwin-led 1917 strike.

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This study revisits those years of struggle via a thorough review of several key sources, particularly the mainstream, Communist, and union press, but also oral histories and hundreds of pages of secret police reports. Personal accounts are regrettably limited to English-language sources, but those consulted paint a diverse portrait of the union's early days and enrich the story through interview subjects' candour about their anger, frustrations, and hopes. A range of secondary sources help to expand this study beyond a "remote" place by permitting comparisons with similar communities enduring similar struggles. The goal has been to uncover evidence showing why and how the Trail union survived and flourished despite its Communist ties and the forces that gathered to oppose it.

This methodology has not answered all the questions raised here, but it indicates that there is much for labour historians to gain from studying the local impact of anti-Communism. The local mainstream press, represented by the *Trail Daily Times*, *Nelson Daily News*, and *Rossland Miner*, offers a sense of daily life in Trail and the varied biases in reporting local union and political events. Here we find the raw material with which editors like William Curran, who edited the *Times* for most of the period under study, attempted to shape public opinion with often strident front-page views on socialism, Communism and trade unionism. Curran's *Times* conscientiously supported CM&S policies and it readily opened its pages to company managers whenever they wished to address employees. Here, too, one finds a rich source of opinion in the letters to the editor pages. Of course, these were carefully selected but a nugget of hard truth occasionally appeared as part of the mixture of vicious attacks on Local 480 and the CIO. On occasion the letters also revealed a humourous side to how Trailites viewed the many debates associated with the union struggle.

Supplementing these sources are Mine-Mill and other union newspapers, as well as various Communist publications. Local 480's *Commentator*, Mine-Mill regional leader Harvey Murphy's *B.C. District Union News*, and International Mine-Mill's *Union* fought a seemingly endless battle to build and defend the union.<sup>14</sup> These sources furnish much national and international union movement news, emotive editorials, angry political debate, descriptive coverage of membership events, and lengthy accounts of ideological squabbles. They help to unfold a history told as much as possible in the words of local

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<sup>14</sup> The trade union press cited throughout this study is part of a long tradition of radical labour journalism. For examples in the U.S., see Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *The American Radical Press 1860-1960* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1974).

union members and their spouses through letters, memoirs, oral histories, and columns. Labour was aided and occasionally hindered by the equally strident Communist press – the *Canadian Tribune*, *Pacific Tribune* and various Red predecessors. Here we find unabashed, unashamed, and often tongue-in-cheek rebuttals and rebukes to the anti-union and anti-Communist forces that set upon Local 480 and constantly harassed it. Other labour publications as well as those of the CCF discuss the intense rivalries that characterized the Kootenay political scene in the 1940s and early 1950s.

In addition to large collections of archival fonds covering CM&S history, some files designated “restricted” and requiring company permission to access, four unpublished manuscripts by former company staff members provide important source material. They focus on the company’s development as an engine of the provincial and national economy, and they document the integral role played by S.G. Blaylock. By offering anecdotes and personal remembrances, the manuscripts add rich detail about an extraordinary but little known corporate leader. Extant speeches, many published in the local press, also render clues about Blaylock’s personality, leadership style, social values, and views on the mining and smelting industries. Lance Whittaker is perhaps the most accomplished of the official company historians. The CM&S public relations director and early editor of *Cominco*, the glossy company magazine launched during the war, portrays Blaylock as concerned with the well-being of his workers; in short, a worker’s friend. He was an “individualist,” Whittaker wrote, who “fought almost savagely any attempt to curb individual rights.” Indeed, Blaylock’s “language was sprinkled with the cusswords

he had early learned at the smelter and it made him one with the men.”<sup>15</sup> To his union critics, however, he inevitably put profits first and was immovably set against unionization, a side that does not factor into Whittaker’s account. He and other company historians pay uncritical homage to Blaylock. They avoid fairly assessing the union-company conflicts covered in this study. None offer more than footnote-length reference to the Communist leadership of Local 480. This is understandable given that Trail Communists encouraged workers to question company wisdom, argued that the CM&S hindered their progress as a class, and sought to alter the social conditions that had given rise to the existing labour-management relationship.<sup>16</sup> CM&S annual reports were a further primary source, offering fiduciary details though sometimes lacking specific information about the makeup of the workforce (nationality, gender, wage differentials, etc.) Nevertheless, they provide a portrait of corporate Trail and its pivotal role in the base metals and fertilizer markets as well as its highly profitable wartime contribution.

Local historian Elsie G. Turnbull adds to the historic imagery of Trail, but she also joins the CM&S historians in praising the company’s accomplishments and its role as a benevolent corporate citizen.<sup>17</sup> “Blay himself put Company welfare before pleasure, hobby or self-interest,” she wrote, “and he asked the employees to consider themselves

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<sup>15</sup> Whittaker, 228.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to the Whittaker manuscript, three other unpublished company histories were consulted: Howard W. Bayley, “Cominco: A Historical Outline,” Vancouver, B.C., January 1976; and H. Fargey, “A Chronological Record of outstanding Events in the History of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada, Limited,” Trail, B.C., January 1949; and, Unnamed Author, “A Portrait of Progress: The Story of Cominco,” place and dated not provided. Author’s copy obtained from the Teck Resources communications office in Trail, B.C.

<sup>17</sup> Elsie G. Turnbull, *Trail, A Smelter City* (Langley, B.C.: Sunfire Publications, 1985) particularly stresses this benevolence.

part of ‘The Consolidated Family’.”<sup>18</sup> Her admiration for Blaylock’s fatherly management style tends to overlook evidence of how his cooperative approach to labour-management relations, much admired by other industrial leaders, was paternalistic and inherently exploitative. Workers did not necessarily hold Blaylock’s personal wealth against him, but there was always a tension between his notion of equality of opportunity and the outcomes sought by the union. Evidence also reveals that while Blaylock retarded the union’s progress, a Red-led strategy of boring from within his cooperative committee system worked against him. Turnbull’s histories and the work of company historians contain many anecdotes about community and work life and are valuable for grasping the rush-to-riches pioneering spirit that was at the heart of company town life in Trail and the surrounding mining communities of the Kootenays. We also find a sentimental pro-management slant that Local 480’s leaders railed against in Mine-Mill sources.

In addition to published biographies and memoirs, this study benefits from many oral history interviews with Local 480 leaders, especially those conducted in 1983 by Richard Bell, as well as six lengthy interviews with Harvey Murphy.<sup>19</sup> Murphy was a pivotal figure in this study, making sociologist Rolf Knight’s unpublished transcript based on extensive discussions with Murphy in 1976 and 1977 particularly helpful. Other resources include a short biographical memoir written by Murphy’s daughter Maryann, then a student of Knight’s at the University of Toronto, and interviews by David Millar, Alice M. Hoffman, Allen Seager, and David Chudnovsky. Journalists Jack Webster and

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<sup>18</sup> Turnbull, *Trail Between Two Wars: The Story of a Smelter City* (Victoria, B.C.: Morriss Printing Co., 1980), 72.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Bell, “Labour organizations at Cominco,” BC Archives, Victoria, B.C.

Doug Collins contributed insights into Murphy as a union organizer, negotiator for Local 480, and a Communist activist. Much information was also gleaned from a lengthy interview conducted prior to Murphy's wartime internment, when he gave sworn testimony before a Defence of Canada Regulations (DOCR) advisory committee in 1942. Chaired by Daniel O'Connell, the committee relied on secret police reports and personal profiles on Murphy, dating back to 1929 and extending to Murphy's death in 1977, as well as references to many of his associates. These sources, although heavily redacted and biased, supplied leads to other sources of information and often included near verbatim reports on speeches, crowd estimates, colourful commentary on political meetings, strikes and other union events.

David Michael Roth critically examines the company, the union, and the smelter community in an unpublished MA thesis, and its conclusions have benefitted this study. But Roth also raised questions that required further research. For example, Roth notes the slow progress of enrolling members in the first five years of organizing. He discusses the reasons behind the "stalled" campaign, concluding that Local 480's organizing success in the mid-1940s essentially mirrored legal changes, notably B.C.'s Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (ICA) amendments in 1943 and the federal government's PC 1003 the following year. The local's eventual victory, he argues, "centred around state intervention into labour-capital relations."<sup>20</sup> No doubt the new laws set the stage for a national debate regarding what the new industrial legality meant for the future of trade

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<sup>20</sup> Roth, 73

unionism in Canada.<sup>21</sup> But other factors were also at play, notably a long gestation leading up to the drive and the determination of Communists like Slim Evans to engage smelter workers in the possibility of seizing their rights even when faced with a dominating corporate leader such as Blaylock. This study argues that the class struggle to form and sustain Local 480 was intrinsically shaped by the aggressive local Communist leadership that Evans introduced and that others carried forth. The poor membership growth figures that Roth notes were doubtless a result of fear and uncertainty within the smelter ranks, but once Local 480 became the legal smelter bargaining agent with Murphy at the rudder, sensible approaches to collective bargaining grounded in local concerns led to a wide, though not unchallenged, acceptance of Mine-Mill among smelter workers regardless of its radical image. This study contends that there was a long working-class awareness process underway that lay dormant but ready to ignite with the correct combination of leadership, economic circumstance, and union-inspired solidarity.<sup>22</sup>

Among the many secondary sources consulted, Jeremy Mouat is one of the few academic historians to thoroughly examine the economic history of the Trail-Rossland area. Mouat investigates the CM&S's international business connections as it built its reputation as an industrial giant. Those non-local ties helped it emerge as a provincial and national economic powerhouse.<sup>23</sup> But he also strives to go beyond the workplace to

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<sup>21</sup> Cy Gonick, Paul Phillips and Jesse Vorst, eds., *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: 50 Years of PC 1003* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995) offers several views on the industrial legality question.

<sup>22</sup> This study references early strikes in the Kootenay district, as well as comments from several old-timers who either remember pivotal events or recall the stories of old.

<sup>23</sup> Jeremy Mouat, *The Business of Power: Hydro-Electricity in Southeastern British Columbia 1897-1997* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1997), Chapter 4 in particular.

understand the mining and smelting community in all its complexity. Like Thomas G. Andrews and others, Mouat employs class, ethnicity, gender, and religion as categories of analysis, a method that this study strives to emulate.<sup>24</sup>

U.S. Mine-Mill histories, such as Morris Wright's *Takes More than Guns*, and Mike Solski and John Smaller's history of Mine-Mill in Canada, help deepen our understanding of the perspectives of active union combatants.<sup>25</sup> Stephen L. Endicott's history of the Communist Workers' Unity League (WUL) fleshes out the union influence of the CPC and the eventual interplay between party leaders and regional union cadre like Local 480's Red leadership. Benjamin Issit's work on the socialist left in B.C. includes Kootenay-specific political activities that influenced and were influenced by Local 480. At the local level, Communist Al King's memoir of his years as a member of Local 480 in the 1940s and as its president in the 1950s offers a rich collection of anecdotes, reflections, and cryptic comments on the CM&S, Blaylock, the local media, company unionism, churches, and other aspects of the local's history discussed here. For example, King provides portraits of the leading figures that appear in Local 480's past, and his colourful personal accounts of the local's involvement in the simmering class conflicts that resurface regularly in the chapters that follow are filled with remembrances of the rivalries and comradeship of the times. Through King's memoirs and the oral histories of

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<sup>24</sup> Mouat, *Roaring Days*, 88; Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Morris Wright, *Takes More Than Guns: A Brief History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers* (Denver, CO: International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Press and Education Department, 1944); Solski and Smaller, *Mine Mill*.



other smelter workers, we are given a ringside seat from which to view and assess Local 480's struggle for survival.<sup>26</sup>

These commentaries offer first-hand accounts of the ideological battles that engaged Local 480 leaders and their adversaries. They provide intimate evidence for historians studying the history of Canadian Communism and socialism. Scholars have expounded substantively on party policy and the technical details regarding conference resolutions, debates, expulsions, and leadership rivalries, but few focus in detail on the labour politics specific to a semi-rural setting like Trail. John Manley's work on the CPC casts light on the importance of Trail when he notes that local union organizers often ignored, or may have never known, the fiats emanating from party headquarters in Toronto or the politburo in Moscow. Rank-and-file leaders developed "a pragmatic reading of prevailing circumstances."<sup>27</sup> CPC leaders may have seen themselves as controlling unions, but they "had little feel for the culture and mentality of western labourism" of which Local 480 became a part.<sup>28</sup> Instead, it was the local efforts of Communist organizers that awakened workers "to the possibility of challenging industrial subordination."<sup>29</sup> Some Local 480 leaders shared a belief in that possibility, and this study reveals how their pragmatic reading of local circumstances shaped Mine-Mill's fight to represent the smelter workforce.

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<sup>26</sup> This study reviewed many of the interviews directly related to Local 480 history, but much more can be done with these and similar interviews at the BC Archives and various archival repositories where labour oral histories can be found.

<sup>27</sup> John Manley, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism, and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921-1928," *Labour/Le Travail*, 41 (Spring 1998), 147-80, 152.

<sup>28</sup> Manley, "Salvaging...", 150.

<sup>29</sup> Manley, "Communists and Autoworkers...", 133.

On the national labour history scene, some scholars argue that worker-inspiring events like the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which provided impetus for the western labour revolt, had a short-lived impact.<sup>30</sup> Despite the promise of widespread insurrection, as described by A. Ross McCormack among others, the unrest rapidly dissipated. Trail workers, for example, shied from further labour confrontations after the loss of the 1917 strike.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it was because, as Martin Robin argues, the mid-1920s was a period “hampered by repression and depression” in which “the labour movement was unable to wield a powerful independent political influence.”<sup>32</sup> In any event, the political doldrums that followed the western labour revolt saw union organizing efforts in Trail lapse into a long period of inactivity and company unionism. Certainly, it was punctuated by occasional attempts by outsiders to rekindle the spirit of radicalism that marked the 1917 strike and earlier WFM militancy, but to no avail. Jean Barman has argued that this failure of union organizing could be attributed to a workforce “not sufficiently conscious of themselves as a single entity or class,” but this underrates the notion of long-term class formation and the slow maturation of a resistant working class.<sup>33</sup> In Trail, however, this study points to several occasions where the local is stimulated by references to earlier working-class struggles in the region and elsewhere across the continent.

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<sup>30</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978) seems to express this view.

<sup>31</sup> A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Radical Movement 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 213.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: a History of British Columbia* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1991), 223.

Situating this study in the broader historical context of the North American mining and smelting West and associated radical trade union activism, allows further comparisons between Trail and the outside world in the late-war and post-war period. In this regard, historian Laurie Mercier's work, especially *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City*, provides important contrasts between Trail with her Montana smelting communities. Butte and nearby Anaconda are of special interest because these western U.S. towns were analogs of Trail: large immigrant populations, single-industry employers, vibrant mining cultures, and storied histories of union-company confrontations. Like Mouat and Andrews, Mercier shows how religion, ideology, ethnicity, gender, community, and class were interconnected identifies that permeated the history of working-class culture in Anaconda as they did in Trail. Mercier's account of Fritz Heinze and the two other Butte copper kings, for example, parallels the later example of Blaylock and his matching paternalistic management style. As Mercier states, studying the "roles of communities in molding working-class consciousness" is critical because it helps historians to analyze "how market capitalism, corporate and union policies, gender and cultural ideologies, and state and national politics influence and interact with workers and residents to shape a community history."<sup>34</sup>

As in Trail, Montana workers were "united by class, with a common immigrant Catholic heritage," and they "contested the meanings of Americanism, unionism, and gender roles in daily arenas of contact, including the workplace, home, and community

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<sup>34</sup> Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 2.

institutions.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, there were striking differences between the two working-class communities. While Mercier’s Montana trade unionists organized an Irish Catholic workforce, Trail organizers needed to appeal to predominantly Italian Catholic workers. That necessitated contending with language barriers while trying to persuade both Italian and other eastern and southern European workers to accept Local 480 in their own self- and class-interest. While the Anaconda union could count on some immigrant workers being Marxists, the politics of Trail immigrants are less well known. Based exclusively on English-language sources, this study probes their social and religious backgrounds much the same way as Mercier to reveal that some immigrants came from cultures with radical political traditions. One issue explored here is whether such factors helped Local 480 Communists in the post-war smelter city. That immigrant union supporters soon became members of the union executive, suggests that radical background did matter.

Mercier documents the “ruthless and shrewd” anti-worker measures taken by copper king Marcus Daly in the late nineteenth century. Blaylock and his successors were less ruthless but equally shrewd in twentieth-century Trail, borrowing strategies and tactics from American industrialists. In the end, Butte Miners’ Union Local 1 retreated from its radical past, although one can argue that it was never particularly progressive.<sup>36</sup> The so-called “Mother Local,” described by Harvey Levenstein as “impervious to charges of Communist domination,” may have helped create the IWW, but innate conservatism eventually resulted in a lessening of interest in the WFM’s founding

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<sup>35</sup> Mercier, *Anaconda*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Jerry W. Calvert, *The Gibraltar: Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1993) discusses BMU’s founding and its role in the founding of the IWW.

traditions and constitutional principles.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, Local 480 leaders remained loyal to a class-based philosophy enshrined in the Mine-Mill constitution, and they would maintain some, but not all, of the union's progressive ambitions in the post-war period. More than anything, the U.S. and Canadian Mine-Mill locals saw themselves as what Mercier called community unions that were prepared to act as union citizens for the betterment of the larger population. Both might be characterized as precursors to what today is often called social unionism. As a result, both faced anti-Communist chiding.

Other historians of the North American mining and smelting West have also helped to contextualize Local 480's struggle within the evolving working-class culture of the Pacific Northwest. Butte and Trail, for example, faced potential internal conflicts as a result of national origin and ethnic-based prejudice in those communities. As David Emmons has noted about Butte's Irish workforce, ethnicity could also influence labour relations. The town's "Irish enclave" was a strong immigrant community with an accompanying associational life that provided job security and social advantages. Trail had a similar ethnic enclave that absorbed a steady influx of Italian workers, but the town was more ethnically diverse. That blend of cultures challenged Local 480 to apply CIO constitutional principles against racism and discrimination to any workers. The labour movement leadership's traditional anti-immigrant position, as documented in David Goutor's *Guarding the Gates*, had to be tempered for Local 480 leaders to draw immigrant trust. It was a task that demanded consistency.<sup>38</sup> With so many CM&S

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<sup>37</sup> Harvey A. Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 318.

<sup>38</sup> David Goutor, *Guarding the Gates: The Canadian Labour Movement and Immigration, 1872-1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

employees coming from immigrant families, Local 480 strived to sustain support but, as we shall see, the enclave, with its traditional family and community values, was often more important, and offered greater protection to immigrant workers, than the union.

Another challenge for Local 480 was the continental context. A clash of left ideologies within the labour movement would preoccupy Local 480 leaders beginning in the late war and post-war era and especially as Cold War hysteria gripped American and Canadian society. Several scholars have focused on McCarthyism's impact on labour, offering explanations for how politics on both sides of the border threatened the existence of Mine-Mill affiliates. *The Cold War Against Labor*, for example, is a two-volume collection of academic, personal, and journalistic reflections that serves as a testament to the depth of historians' efforts to understand why the labour movement attacked itself so venomously, or as one author put it, why it sent "a deep, penetrating chill into the homes of countless workers, with women, Blacks, and immigrants as special targets."<sup>39</sup> Here, as well as in Mercier's study of raiding in Montana, the intimate views of those closest to and most deeply affected by the movement's anti-Red actions in Montana provide insights into Trail's situation as well.<sup>40</sup>

Labour history scholars have documented how Communist union organizers were curtailed once labour initiated its own Cold War. Irving Abella notes that, "although there

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<sup>39</sup> Anne Fagan Ginger and David Christiano, eds., "Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers: The Salt of the Earth," in *The Cold War Against Labor*, 591.

<sup>40</sup> Laurie Mercier, "'Instead of Fighting the Common Enemy': Mine Mill Versus the Steelworkers in Montana, 1950-1967," *Labor History*, Volume 40, Number 4 (1999) 459-480. For an analysis of two raids in Canada, see Joan Sangster, "Canada's Cold War in Fur," *Left History*, Volume 13, Number 2 (Fall-Winter 2008), 10-36; and, Julie Guard, "The Woman Question in the Canadian UE," PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1994.

are many nasty things one can say about the Communists, undeniably in building a viable industrial union movement in Canada, theirs is a contribution not easily measured.”<sup>41</sup>

When CIO leaders tilted to the right, they began to weed out Communist organizers, such as Slim Evans in Trail, defanging left unions on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border.

Anti-Communist union leaders and ideologues “felt that merger with the strongly anti-Communist ACCL [All Canadian Congress of Labour that merged with the CCL in 1940] would dilute the Communist element which, for three years, had dominated CIO activity in Canada.”<sup>42</sup> Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse argue that Communist organizers in Canada in the 1930s were the key to creating “powerful and lasting trade unions”:

Through these unions, the workers won a greater share of the wealth they helped to produce. Through these workers, the Communists hoped to achieve an even more ambitious goal: the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a social state based on the Soviet model.<sup>43</sup>

At the peak of their activity, Communists were a tiny but effective minority. This was certainly the case in Trail. “In the labour movement, as nowhere else in Canadian life, the Communists were visible agitators, calling for radical changes in Canadian society and attracting the enmity of business leaders, conservative politicians, and union rivals.”<sup>44</sup> As will be discussed, Red purges and union raiding after the war were the weapons of choice in countering the influence of Red unions. This anti-Communist arsenal severely

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<sup>41</sup> Irving Martin Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-56* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 221.

<sup>42</sup> Abella, *Nationalism...*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1947-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 310.

<sup>44</sup> Whitaker and Marcuse, *Cold War Canada*, 316.

undermined the ability of unions such as Local 480 to advance the so-called “Soviet model” should that have been their goal.<sup>45</sup>

CIO historian Robert Zieger states that the Cold War labour purges and subsequent raids of the 1950s were justified as an “initial repudiation of the Stalinoid impulse” even though they “did nothing to advance the cause of the industrial working class and invited employers’ counterattacks.”<sup>46</sup> Steve Rosswurm laments the high cost of raiding. He and others are critical of the demobilizing result of the practice.<sup>47</sup> Karl Korstad, for example, notes that food and tobacco workers in the American South were “seriously weakened by the raiding efforts of the CIO.”<sup>48</sup> Michael Honey’s account of Operation Dixie’s drive to organize African American workers in the South documents the disaster caused by Steelworker raiding tactics in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>49</sup> Bert Cochrane views the Cold War-induced raids similarly, while David Caute questions the anti-Communist strategy, noting that the business community saw anti-Communism as a way to weaken the labor movement.<sup>50</sup> The same is true of Robert Cherny and others, all

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<sup>45</sup> Whitaker and Marcuse, 465, note 16, qualify the term “Red union,” describing Mine-Mill as an “allegedly ‘Communist’ union.”

<sup>46</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 376.

<sup>47</sup> Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992)

<sup>48</sup> Karl Korstad, “Black and White Together: Organizing in the South with the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural & Allied Workers Union, 1946-1952,” in Rosswurm, 93.

<sup>49</sup> Michael K. Honey, “Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing,” in Robert W. Cherny et al, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* ( New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 216-244, 233.

<sup>50</sup> Bert Cochrane, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 314. See also, Art Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO 1936-55* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994). David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). See also Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003).



of whom depict the “fruitless practice” of raiding.<sup>51</sup> Yet few scholars cite Trail as a prime example.

Labour’s Cold War was part of a widespread hysteria obsessed with Communist infiltration of society, but it is difficult to pin down exactly how Communist-led unions were infiltrating and to what end. In the quest to answer this and other questions about Red influence, U.S. historians have long concerned themselves with the left politics of the CIO and its Mine-Mill affiliate, but even Vernon Jensen’s exacting analysis of Mine-Mill’s international leadership lacks a detailed explanation of just how Communist the Mine-Mill Communists really were. Jensen traces the inside battles over Communist influence, revealing instances where they might have corrupted the union, but he presents precious little evidence to show how that influence harmed the union, especially its rank-and-file members. He argues that Mine-Mill Communists were instituting a Moscow “program,” pointing especially to Mine-Mill publications that mouthed Communist terminology.<sup>52</sup> Yet there is no evidence, for example, of company sabotage or attempted takeovers of the means of production. Jensen suggests that the Communists’ real intention was covered up by their effective collective bargaining practices, but in Trail, as we shall see, there is little documentation to support Jensen’s analysis.

Several studies of U.S. Communism further complicate our understanding of the putative Red threat.<sup>53</sup> Roger Keeran, for example, argues that the purging of Communists

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<sup>51</sup> Cherny et al, eds., “Introduction,” *American Labor and the Cold War*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Vernon H. Jensen, *Nonferrous Metals Industry Unionism, 1932-1954: A Story of Leadership Controversy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1954).

<sup>53</sup> Mark Naison, “Communism from the Top Down,” *Radical History Review*, 32, 1985, 97-101, offers a critique of the anti-Communist views of Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

from the labor movement eliminated “progressive elements” and caused the “steady erosion” of unions.<sup>54</sup> Levenstein argues that

in crushing the Communists, the labor movement also lost unionists who, despite their short run disrepute, in the long run would have helped increase the stature of organized labor in the eyes of the public as well as the workers.<sup>55</sup>

Ellen Schrecker notes that “raiders and internal dissidents” drained union strength to bargain strong collective agreements.<sup>56</sup> Analyses of the impact of Cold War raiding on women, people of colour, and the social relations in raided communities also speak to specific events in Trail. As Joan Sangster argues, the Cold War in Canada was used not only to stifle dissent but also the “discussion of equity issues” and the unionization of women.<sup>57</sup> Anti-Communism was a persistent theme well before Local 480 emerged. Leftist views had been part of Kootenay public discourse at least as far back as the days of Ginger Goodwin, and continued to figure prominently in the 1940s and 1950s. It is crucial to keep this in mind, because by 1943, when Local 480 was in the home stretch of its journey to legitimacy, arguments about Communism were already thoroughly vetted in the smelter city. That history has already been well documented by Roth and others, but the period traced in this study is less well-travelled and thus permits us to trace Local 480’s emergence as a legalized union opposition to the many forces that stood in the way

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<sup>54</sup> Roger Keeran, “The Communist Influence on American Labor,” in Michael E. Brown et al, eds., *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 192.

<sup>55</sup> Levenstein, 331.

<sup>56</sup> Ellen Schrecker, “Labor and the Cold War: The Legacy of McCarthyism,” in Cherny et al, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War*, 7-24, 15.

<sup>57</sup> Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 83.

of its continuing quest to represent the smelter workforce during a period of increasingly volatile social and political times.

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The following chapter-by-chapter outline highlights the challenges that awaited Trail's Red union as well as the strategies and tactics employed by the opposition. Chapter 2 examines the role of the Workmen's Cooperative Committee (WCC), the company union that Blaylock formed after the 1917 strike. The WCC leadership's growing anti-Communism, its collusion with Blaylock, and its attacks against Local 480's Communist leadership illustrate the fundamental challenges of unionizing in a remote company town. The pro-company *Trail Daily Times* reported and editorialized on what the WCC cited as the negative aspects of unionism and the positive attributes of Blaylock's co-operative management approach. As Roth so aptly described it, Blaylock held over them both "the 'carrot' of paternalism and the 'stick' of coercion," a situation the WCC would not dare challenge.<sup>58</sup> With the arrival of Communist union organizers, smelter workers began to see the possibility of a more democratic workplace. How would they respond to Local 480's Communists? How would they react to the predictable confrontations with the employer and the employer-cowed WCC? Would a successful bid to represent the smelter workforce stop a dissatisfied segment of the smelter population from continuing to reject Mine-Mill in favour of a new legal company union, the Independent Smelter Workers Union (ISWU)?

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<sup>58</sup> Roth, 19.

Chapter 3 recalls how Trail's mothers, sisters, daughters, spouses, and girlfriends joined a domestic army of lesser-paid industrial war workers that replaced male smelter workers fighting fascism in Europe and the Pacific. Women workers adapted to the traditionally male workplace in a variety of ways. Not all appreciated Local 480's leftist politics and some disagreed with its bargaining policies. Some viewed Local 480 as a hindrance to winning a more prosperous and fulfilling future, while others embraced the union vision. These gender issues challenged male smelter workers' vision of that future. Communists knew that the Mine-Mill constitution called for gender equality, but the membership's male breadwinner values complicated their ability to honour that goal. Takaia Larsen notes that the local ignored "the voices of the almost 2,000 women workers who were employed at the plant."<sup>59</sup> Even members of the local Mine-Mill ladies auxiliary who supported the local refused to be reduced to a mere adjunct of the male organization. The auxiliary members had their "own political agenda including women's emancipation," Elizabeth and Andrea Quinlan explain, but it was not obvious how Communists on the auxiliary executive committee could encourage the male leadership to support gender equality while fighting the employer and capitalism in general during the exigencies of the post-war period.<sup>60</sup>

Chapter 4 examines the cultural background and political inclinations of Trail's immigrant workers and their families with special emphasis on the influences of the anti-Communist Catholic Church. Many churches opposed the Red union, but the Catholic

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<sup>59</sup> Takaia Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds: Women, Work and Memory in Trail, British Columbia During and After the Second World War," MA thesis, University of Victoria (History) 2007, 73.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Quinlan and Andrea Quinlan, Textually mediated labour activism: An examination of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Canadian Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union, 1940s-1960s," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Volume 16, Number 3, 2015, 137-157, 150.

clergy were the most forceful antagonists. Early immigrants continued to follow the teachings of the Church and Old-Country-based religious belief systems as they adapted to the New World. In the 1940s, Local 480 worked to attract second-generation smelter workers, but they had to overcome the anti-union Church doctrine of the older generation. This was a particular problem for the atheistic leaders of Local 480 especially when some priests' "talents could be easily adapted to the needs of North American capitalists," as Donald Avery notes.<sup>61</sup> What Local 480 leaders were contending with, Steve Rosswurm explains, was a Church view, supported by national and international labour leaders such as CIO president Phillip Murray, that "radicalism of any sort became increasingly suspect and procapitalism became a political and religious litmus test."<sup>62</sup> Was there any potential for radical immigrant workers, some of them supporters of the CPC, to assist Local 480 in its continuing struggle?

Chapter 5 documents the seemingly ceaseless clash of ideologies between Local 480 and the Catholic Church, the predominantly protestant CCF, and the CPC. Although all three groups shared a common goal, there were major differences between them, especially the two bitter political party rivals. Local 480's leaders had a way, however, of closing those divisions. Murphy unlatched the door to anti-Communist attacks both within Mine-Mill and in the broader labour movement with his notorious "underpants speech" in April 1948, presenting Local 480's numerous adversaries with an obvious opportunity to shun him and other Communists. To the media, he epitomized the evil

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<sup>61</sup> Donald Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), 46.

<sup>62</sup> Steve Rosswurm, "The Catholic Church and Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU," in Steve Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 120.

Communist labour leader, and he exposed Mine-Mill to angry anti-Reds in the CCL and the CCF. How did the local try to mitigate the damage as they faced a union movement leadership pressing to purge its ranks of Red troublemakers like those at Local 480? As Isitt notes, CCF leaders were “desperate to distance themselves from Soviet Communism” and were adamantly opposed to the idea of “unity with Communist and non-Communist workers against a common enemy.”<sup>63</sup> What was the stimulus behind the smelter anti-Communism that nearly succeeded in wiping out the old Communist guard that built Local 480? How did Local 480 contend with the anti-Communist strategy behind the ISWU? When anti-Red Claire Billingsley became Local 480 president in 1947, the same year the U.S. Congress passed the anti-Communist Taft-Hartley Act, how did Local 480’s Communists address this new threat? How did they cope with the increased level of fear that McCarthyism would generate even in the remote Kootenay region?

Chapter 6 explores the Red purges and the associated raiding of Local 480 beginning with Billingsley’s efforts to usurp Local 480’s Red leadership. We observe him moving quickly from Mine-Mill international representative, to the Local 480 presidency and, finally, to a self-appointed role as the arch-enemy of local Communists. Billingsley’s goal was nothing less than the total demolition of the Communist-led local. How did Trail Communists deal with this internal existential threat and subsequent external attacks by a union that was in the vanguard of labour anti-Communism in North America? As the Steelworkers manoeuvred to “liberate” Trail’s smelter workers, their

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<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Majority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 90.

anti-Communist propaganda tried to motivate smelter workers to abandon their legitimate union. We need to understand why Billingsley worked so hard to deliver them into the hands of the waiting raiders, the effectiveness of Steel's Red-baiting strategy, why early support for the USWA reflected lingering company loyalty among workers who had long supported company unionism, and how a spring 1951 *Maclean's* article by noted journalist Pierre Berton influenced workers to side with the raiders. These and other issues are examined as Local 480 stalwarts, some charter members, struggled to maintain a hold on the union they helped to found. This was a struggle amidst vast anti-Red hostility. As Al King recalled, "All the preachers were preaching . . . and the paper was flailing away at us and the company was putting out garbage . . . warning people to beware the evil Communists."<sup>64</sup>

Chapter 7 continues the story of threats to Local 480 by Steelworker raids. Local 480 leaders, encouraged by Murphy, continued to defy the McCarthyite tactics of the Steel raiders, first by supporting the famous American singer-civil rights activist Paul Robeson in his efforts to regain his passport, and later in the airing of the pro-leftist union film *Salt of the Earth*. As Laurel Sefton McDowell explains, a "radical minority remained loyal to Robeson" and Local 480 was a member of it.<sup>65</sup> Despite Cold War anger against it, the local assisted a Mine-Mill-sponsored series of four Robeson concerts at the Canada-U.S. border. The chapter explores the motives of local members to support the popular singer, widely thought to be a Communist or Red sympathizer, and a second act

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<sup>64</sup> King, *Red Bait!* 74-75.

<sup>65</sup> Laurel Sefton MacDowell, "Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story," *Labour/Le Travail*, Volume 51, Spring 2003, 177-221, 177.

of resistance involving the banned U.S. movie *Salt of the Earth*. Produced by three members of the Hollywood Ten, a group of blacklisted filmmakers, the film was a moving depiction of class struggle and worker solidarity in New Mexico that had fallen victim to what Ellen Schrecker calls the “injustice of McCarthyism.”<sup>66</sup> Among the unresolved questions is whether the concerts and the public film screening represent an attempt to launder Mine-Mill’s public image or were acts initiated solely in the spirit of resistance.

The conclusion highlights the legacy of the Communist versus anti-Communist struggle that preoccupied the smelter city from the final year of the organizing drive into the Cold War 1950s. It assesses the local after the Steel raids had been abandoned, the CCL and CCF had declared a moratorium on anti-Communist actions, and the labour movement was regrouping to form the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The lull gave Communist Mine-Mill leaders, who were happily celebrating the founding of a fully autonomous Canadian Mine-Mill, a false sense of security. World events had overtaken McCarthyism, but while Local 480 survived the worst of the Cold War excesses, further raiding would plague Mine-Mill locals elsewhere. The question is how Trail’s tribulations influenced the modern labour movement. In what ways did it help shape that movement when its leadership made significant compromises encouraged by the new labour laws of the post-war era?<sup>67</sup> Local 480 rejected the CCF in the early 1950s, but King, Murphy and others also left the CPC. How did these actions influence its

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<sup>66</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1998),

<sup>67</sup> Sangster, “Cold War in Fur,” 11.



dedication to a progressive labour movement? Would Local 480 continue to dissent and militantly introduce capitalist-challenging alternatives to the mainstream business unionism that emerged after the Cold War?

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In responding to the above questions, this study tries to balance views and information about the company and other institutional participants, but it remains biased toward a democratic labour movement that was open to a diversity of progressive ideas regardless of their source. That does not mean it has avoided examining Local 480's mistakes and misjudgments over the dozen years covered, but the author tends to side with Mine-Mill during much of the period. In the interest of fully declaring a bias, then, this is a study wholly in sympathy with the working people who built Trail and helped it to thrive. Sympathy on the part of historians while tasked to be fair and accurate is a much-debated issue, but as Bryan D. Palmer suggested, "it is this sympathy that enables the social historian to grasp the importance of cultural continuities in the midst of economic transformation, to glimpse the tenacity of common people struggling against increasingly harsh realities."<sup>68</sup> What follows was written in this same spirit.

As is argued here, Local 480's battles of more than half a century ago left their small mark on labour history and it is a reminder that labour's struggle whether in Trail or elsewhere is a celebration of the capacity of working people – with a handful of determined activists in the lead – to sustain themselves despite the odds. In the smelter

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<sup>68</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1979), xvi.

city that we toured at the outset, the fight tested the long-gestating working-class political roots of Trail workers for the first time in a quarter century. In the aftermath, Trail's working-class identity would be further transformed and smelter workers would continue to shape the distinctive social fabric of the small interior B.C. city. The clashes resulting from conflicting values and ideologies – from divided loyalties – would mould the community's future, influencing local businesses, civic politics, churches, ethnic associations, working-class cultural institutions, and family life. The union's response to changing economic, cultural, social, and environmental circumstances would have an impact on Trail and environs into the twenty-first century. Rewinding to 1943, we begin this study of how that history unfolded.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Company Unionism and Blaylock's Cooperative System**

When Local 480 finally won the legal right to represent Trail's smelter workers in mid-1944, the union's Communist leaders might have thought it marked the finish of an arduous six-year quest for legitimacy. To their chagrin, it provided only a short breathing space before Mine-Mill's anti-Communist detractors began to erect new roadblocks to inhibit the local's advance as an affiliate of what was then considered one of the most progressive, and radical, unions in North America. S.G. Blaylock was among the local's most virulent adversaries and his chief weapon was the Workmen's Cooperative Committee (WCC), the company union that he created after the 1917 strike based on the then highly fashionable theories of labour-management cooperation. Indeed, Blaylock and the WCC proved worthy anti-union adversaries.

Blaylock was hired by the CM&S in 1899, fresh from completing a science degree at Montreal's McGill University. He worked for a time in the company assay office, but quickly earned a reputation as an innovator, propelling an inexorable rise to the top of the corporation. Paradoxically, Blaylock was not a risk taker like those the nineteenth-century "freaks of fortune" that Jonathan Levy describes in his study of risk-management capitalism. By contrast, Blaylock was a cautious and methodical business executive unlikely to expend company funds before commissioning a thorough scientific

research plan. He tried to ensure, to the extent possible, that he did not plunge the CM&S into the “economic-chance world of capitalism.”<sup>1</sup>

Three examples reveal Blaylock’s canny business sense and caution. First, he hired R.W. Diamond, who later became a CM&S vice-president, to develop a unique method for extracting zinc from ore shipped to the Trail smelter from Kimberley’s Sullivan Mine. During the First World War, the company produced metals for the Allies, but its scientists struggled to discover a way to increase the production of zinc, the metal needed to produce shell casings. The success of the Blaylock-Diamond process was widely recognized and in 1928 it won Blaylock the James Douglas Medal for Metallurgy from the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.<sup>2</sup> His next innovation would earn shareholders substantial dividends into the 1930s when he resolved a pollution problem, resulting in a new profit centre to be discussed later. Such masterstrokes gained him both respect and suspicion within the smelter workforce. Well before becoming the company’s third general manager, Blaylock had also built a reputation for innovation in labour-management relations as well, using the WCC as his main instrument.

A few years before he received his medal, *Saturday Night* magazine in Toronto described Trail as “a workingman’s paradise” where there was “no talk of strikes” and

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Author unknown, “A Portrait of Progress: The Story of Cominco,” unpublished manuscript, 441 pp., 84-96, provides a detailed account of the development of Sullivan Mine and the process of separating lead and zinc from the extracted ore. Copy obtained from the communications office of Teck Resources, Trail, B.C. Jeremy Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995) also details the zinc separation process.

where “no words of discontent or disloyalty to the Company is (sic) heard.”<sup>3</sup> The cooperative scheme that Blaylock had advocated and supported financially nevertheless led to lengthy and heated arguments for and against unionization. By the mid-1930s, some smelter workers began to question this paradise. They often worked twelve-hour shifts in the lead furnaces, the foundry, sintering plant, zinc processing plant, as well as smaller plants refining other metals and later fertilizers. Some men had trade skills, some were experienced machinists and equipment operators, but others worked on labour gangs shovelling and transporting heavy ore from boxcars to processing plants. They often endured record-breaking heat in summers and below-zero temperatures during West Kootenay winters. Each plant presented different hazards depending on the metallurgical processes, some of which led to frequent fatalities, while silicosis and lead poisoning were the most deadly workplace diseases suffered by men surrounded by intense heat, gasses, and dust.<sup>4</sup> Workers often complained that nothing was done to improve unsafe working conditions. “There were hazards everywhere,” Local 480’s Al King recalled in describing the smelter workplace of the period:

There were hot metal burns and abrasions caused by furnace eruptions, and smoke and fumes from the furnaces that caused asthma and chest diseases. Each plant had different kinds of hazards and nothing seemed to be done about any one of them. The number of accidents was high and there was no such thing as a Safety Committee.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stanley H. Scott, “A Profusion of Issues: Immigrant Labour, the World War, and the Cominco Strike of 1917,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Volume 2 (1977), 54-78, 55, quotes the *Saturday Night* article of 10 April 1926.

<sup>4</sup> “CM&S Treat ‘Leaded’ Employees Inhumanly,” *Commentator*, 30 November 1938, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Al King with Kate Braid, *Red Bait!: Struggles of a Mine-Mill Local* (Vancouver: Kingbird Publishing, 1998), 25.

Management was often tone deaf. The *Trail Daily Times* once joked that an international conference studying the “menace of silicosis” should also examine the “dusty Kootenay roads” as contributing to the problem.<sup>6</sup> Such flippant remarks tried to excuse the company of responsibility, but union supporters, and especially the Trail families that had endured workplace injuries and deaths, did not appreciate these callous attempts at humour.

Safety hazards and all-too-frequent workplace deaths and injuries only bolstered incentives to pursue unionization. Growing CM&S profits and increased dividends for its shareholders, even during the Depression years, also worked in favour of a union. Soaring CM&S profits could act as a catalyst for union organizing when workers learned of the company’s five-year net profit average of \$8.3 million for the late 1930s, \$10.5 million over the war years, rising to a five-year average of \$33.7 million in the post-war period (see Table 2.1 – Net Profits 1935-1949). Those high profit levels and persistent shortages of household staples might also have coaxed some Trail workers to seek ways to win a fair share of the profits in the form of improved wages and safer working conditions. In 1938, the CIO offered them what they were looking for, although not everyone saw it that way. Some workers would embrace the idea of a union, while others shunned it having heard that Communists were among its leaders. The WCC presented the latter group with what seemed a safer option.

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<sup>6</sup> “A ‘Dusty’ Question,” *TDT*, 8 September 1937, 4.

Strictly enterprise-based schemes such as the WCC were thought to present real or imagined alternatives to adversarial trade unionism. WCC leaders were loyal, willing to accept Blaylock's benevolence regarding workers' welfare, and in some cases prepared

**Table 2.1 CM&S Net Profits 1935-1949**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NET PROFIT (Million)</b>	<b>5-YEAR AVERAGE (Million)</b>	<b>AGGREGATE DIVIDENDS PAID (Million)</b>
1935	\$4.3		\$4.2
1936	\$6.9		\$6.5
1937	\$14.7		\$11.4
1938	\$6.2		\$2.0
1939	\$9.3	\$8.3	\$6.5
1940	\$9.1		\$7.4
1941	\$12.2		\$8.2
1942	\$12.2		\$8.2
1943	\$9.1		\$8.2
1944	\$9.8	\$10.5	\$8.2
1945	\$11.5		\$8.2
1946	\$23.3		\$13.9
1947	\$37.3		\$26.2
1948	\$54.7		\$36.0
1949	\$41.6	\$33.7	\$31.1

**Source:** "Director's Report," CM&S *Annual Reports* for year indicated.

to serve as his anti-Communist agents. To assist them, Blaylock provided funding, paid time off work, meeting space on company property, and open access to the smelter

workplace. In return, WCC leaders provided a frontline anti-union defence for the CM&S president, using anti-Communist rhetoric to discredit Mine-Mill organizers in company-supported publications and in the *Times*. Even before 1938, when the Local 480 organizing drive began, Blaylock, the WCC, and the *Times* had combined to dissuade workers from joining any union but least of all the CIO-backed, and allegedly Communist-led, Mine-Mill. Even later, when the 1943 amendments to B.C.'s ICA Act banned company unions, when federal order-in-council PC 1003 legitimized them, and finally the B.C. Labour Relations Board accepted Local 480's certification application, the trio of allies would continue crusading to undermine the smelter workers' legal bargaining agent.

Blaylock initially founded the WCC to ensure labour peace and to improve productivity at the CPR-owned CM&S smelter after the calamitous 1917 strike.<sup>7</sup> When the First World War ended, Blaylock created what became the quintessential company union, one that few workers dared challenge over the next twenty-five years. In fact, it was such a notable success that Blaylock boldly counselled other industrial leaders to "stop this warfare between capital and labor and substitute cooperation."<sup>8</sup> He had without doubt taken similar advice from other industrialists about how to control workforces, especially those likely to join unions. Though the WCC had his special stamp, his idea shared similarities with such schemes such as Britain's Whitely system and the one

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<sup>7</sup> The strike was calamitous for the smelter workers and for Mine-Mill Local 105, for the parent union withdrew its support as winter set in. See Scott, "A Profusion of Issues," for a full account.

<sup>8</sup> "Mr. Blaylock on Industrial Relations," *The Miner*, June 1937.



instituted at the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company.<sup>9</sup> Although company historians do not note it, Blaylock was undoubtedly influenced by the ideas of Sir Henry Thornton, president of Canadian National Railways (CNR) from 1922-1932, and architect of a cooperative system at the publicly owned “People’s Railway.” As Allen Seager explains, the American-born Sir Henry was “a master of the inter-related arts of public and employee relations.” He “had few peers” in cultivating relations, even organizing a radio station to broadcast his idea as “the hottest gospeller of cooperation” from coast to coast.<sup>10</sup> The CM&S president may also have studied the labour situation at the Pullman Company, where a much larger workforce of company-loyal African-American porters and maids had embraced company unionism in the 1920s. There were similarities between the WCC system and the Pullman Porters Benefit Association of America (PPBAA), including the company-controlled grievance process, financing PPBAA administrative costs, and sponsoring its annual conventions. As with WCC members, some Pullman workers saw the PPBAA as a way to be “part of one big family,” engendering “a true cooperative spirit.” Blaylock also hoped to engender that spirit in his workforce, but like Pullman executives he was unwilling to share power with the WCC.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> S.G. Blaylock, “Presidential Address: Industrial Relationship,” Annual General Meeting, Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, Winnipeg, March 1935, discusses the Whitley commission. *CM&S Annual Report*, 1920, B.C. Archives MSS 2500, Cominco files, Box 427, Files 1-8, “Misc: C.M. & S. Co. Correspondence and Records, 1933-1942 (S.G. Blaylock),” notes the adaptation of the Whitley system at the Trail smelter. H.J. Macrae-Gibson, *The Whitley System in the Civil Service* (London: The Fabian Society, 1922) describes the system as it was used for many years and notes that it failed when attempted in private extractive industries like mining. Daniel M. Vrooman, *Daniel Willard and Progressive Management on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), see in particular “Chapter 2 – 1923-1926 – The Cooperative Plan” which provides a full history of the 1922 strike and aftermath.

<sup>10</sup> Allen Seager, “‘A New Labour Era?’: Canadian National Railways and the Railway Worker, 1919-1929,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series #2 (1992), 171-195, 190-192.

<sup>11</sup> Beth Thomkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

He most certainly borrowed from the Colorado Plan developed by William Lyon Mackenzie King, the future prime minister of Canada and author of the cooperation-espousing *Industry and Humanity*.<sup>12</sup> King had recommended the plan to industrialist John D. Rockefeller to mitigate the public relations damage resulting from the bloody Ludlow Massacre in the coalfields of Colorado on 20 April 1914.<sup>13</sup>

The WCC dovetailed exquisitely with Blaylock's other schemes to ensure workplace harmony and corporate prosperity in the 1920s and 1930s. These included "employee welfare plans[,] apprenticeships, a housing scheme, . . . life assurance, pensions, and various other schemes that brought the company prominently to the fore in industrial welfare."<sup>14</sup> So successful were the CM&S president's efforts to maintain a modified company town that a 1926 *Saturday Night* magazine article asked why newspapers were not quoting Blaylock instead of the wealthy automaker Henry Ford regarding solutions to society's ills. After all, Blaylock's

'practical demonstration of the wisdom of a square deal to the workingman' certainly could apply for all union/management affairs in the Dominion. 'For the benefit of its workers' . . . could we not have a few more men like S.G. Blaylock helping to turn each industrial centre into a workingman's paradise.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> W.L. Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918) was deceptively progressive sounding for its day with its stress on the importance of community spirit and cooperation among the parties to industry – labour, capital, management and the community.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) provides a detailed account of the massacre. It is noteworthy that during the 1920s, the staunchly anti-Communist United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) accepted a new Colorado Plan – in Colorado – but the original intention was to exclude that union.

<sup>14</sup> "Blaylock of C.M. & S. Dies," *Nelson Daily News*, 20 November 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, "Profusion," 54-55, citing *Saturday Night*, 10 April 1926.

Within this paradise, Blaylock contended, the company had “established a friendship between the management and the workmen.”<sup>16</sup> But there would be no room for a union, no place for friendly relations between organized labour and management, and no prospect of allowing Red agitators to unionize Blaylock’s smelter.

In addition to the welfare plans and the relative job security, Blaylock had earned the WCC’s respect for his sound business sense. Workers, too, had reason to respect “Mr. Blaylock,” as Trailites referred to him. During the Depression especially, they were “passed over lightly,” according to a company historian. Wages were cut, yes, “and working time, for single men, was halved,” but in cooperation with the WCC he ensured that “practically none were laid off.”<sup>17</sup> They also came to respect Blaylock’s business acumen. Since before the 1917 strike, smelter workers had observed the then CM&S assistant general manager manoeuvre his company into increasingly profitable situations. Indeed, Blaylock seemed to be an industrialist with a Midas Touch. A case in point was his company’s response to a charge that it was polluting the environment around the farms of Washington State’s Stevens County near Northport, where a closed smelter had once been a CM&S competitor.

County farmers and other land owners had complained that sulphur dioxide fumes from the Trail smelter destroyed crops, rendered soil unusable, and caused substantial smoke damage. Eventually the International Joint Commission (IJC), formed in 1909, was tasked to investigate the case. In 1931, it concluded that the CM&S owed the farmers

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<sup>16</sup> S.G. Blaylock, “A Record of Achievement: What of the Future?” An address to the Rossland Junior Board of Trade, Rossland, BC, 11 January 1944, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Whittaker, 257.

\$350,000 in damages. It also demanded that the pollution stop, creating concern for the Canadian economy should the smelter shut down. Enter Blaylock, who promised to “end pollution” as soon as proper abating devices were in place. Dissatisfied with the IJC’s settlement proposal, the two national governments agreed to arbitration. The tribunal filed its report in 1941, but by then Blaylock had turned “lemons into lemonade” through a process that recaptured the sulphur dioxide and converted it into profitable “Elephant Brand” fertilizer.<sup>18</sup> As one environmental historian notes, the company was soon earning “more from the fertilizer and acid recovered from the wastes than it did from its depression-reduced smelting of zinc ores.”<sup>19</sup> The case ultimately protected industry but failed to address serious pollution problems. As John Wirth argues, “Consolidated carried the spear for the industry, the managers of which knew each other and acted as a group when fundamental interests were at stake.”<sup>20</sup> WCC leaders and smelter workers could not help but be impressed by the ingenuity of Blaylock’s solution.<sup>21</sup>

As the tribunal hearings proceeded in the fall of 1938, smelter workers began to hear arguments for and against forming a union. CM&S business successes such as the pollution abatement scheme could only add to the impediments facing union organizers.

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<sup>18</sup> Blaylock Mansion web site: <http://www.blaylock.ca/about-us/history> used the lemon quotation.

<sup>19</sup> Keith A. Murray, “The Trail Smelter Case: International Air Pollution in the Columbia Valley,” *BC Studies*, No. 15, Autumn 1972, 68-85, 76-77. Several other environmental historians have commented on the smelter fumes case that continues to be cited today. A comprehensive study by John D. Wirth, “The Trail Smelter Dispute: Canadians and Americans Confront Transboundary Pollution, 1927-41,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, April 1996, 34-51, is noteworthy as is Allen L. Springer, *Cases of Conflict: Transboundary Disputes and the Development of International Environmental Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). It includes a section on the Trail smelter legacy.

<sup>20</sup> Wirth, 39.

<sup>21</sup> The *Times* provided daily front-page wire service coverage of the arbitration hearings from at least 23 June 1937 when the tribunal met in Washington, D.C. through July and August at the Spokane sessions and into October.

Why would the workers need a union with such a capable corporate leader at the helm? Were not the workers happy to find a small amount of the ever-growing profits appear in their paycheques every month? As an early newspaper editor commented, “the descending smelter smoke will come to them as balm to the nostrils.”<sup>22</sup> The Trail smelter dispute might inadvertently also have offered an argument in favour of unionization, for it revealed the hazards to which workers and the public were exposed by the failure to curb pollution in and outside the workplace. Communist unionists could point to the willingness of industrial employers to sacrifice workplace and environmental safety for excessive profits. They would also point to government complicity in favour of “protection of a vital economic resource” in spite of the pollution threat.<sup>23</sup> By the summer of 1939, the war in Europe made the Trail smelter a key supplier of lead, zinc, and now fertilizer to the Allied Forces.

The smelter fumes case shared the headlines with the CIO, which was rapidly gathering support across North America in the late 1930s. The union’s surge in popularity prompted the *Times* to redouble its efforts to stop the perceived Communist-inspired invasion of Trail. It launched a crusade against Local 480, regularly publishing articles hostile to the CIO, and warning smelter workers that Communists were behind the new labour organization. As early as winter 1934-1935, *Times* editor William Curran printed tirades about “Red agitators” roaming the nation, “preaching Communism without

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<sup>22</sup> Murray, 73, quoting an editorial from the *Trail Creek News*, 19 October 1895, the predecessor to the *Trail Daily Times*, which republished the comment on 23 December 1950.

<sup>23</sup> D.H. Dinwoodie, “The Politics of International Pollution Control: The Trail Smelter Case,” *International Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Canada and the United States (Spring 1972), 219-235, 235.

hindrance.”<sup>24</sup> He singled out “Communist agitators” such as Arthur “Slim” Evans, who had gained a national profile during the unemployed protests of spring 1935 and eventually played a prominent role in organizing Local 480.<sup>25</sup> Future Local 480 president Al King scoffed at the *Times* for its “scathing editorials about ‘Big Union Bosses’” and attempts to “inflame people against the very idea of the ‘little guys’ challenging the mighty citadel up the Hill.” As far as the Communist King was concerned, Curran trucked in “real bottom line, capitalist dogma.”<sup>26</sup> Other union leaders shared that view, insisting that “the press was controlled by big business and deliberately unfair to organized labor.”<sup>27</sup>

From the labour standpoint, Curran produced a toxic argument designed to strike the fear of unions into local smelter workers and their families. The number of stories about CIO-led strikes was rivalled only by the tally of anti-Communist articles about the CIO and about Communism in general. All but affirming the *Times*-Blaylock alliance, local historian Elsie G. Turnbull noted that Curran was a “close friend” of Blaylock, “and as such supported Blay’s many projects for community advancement.” She adds that “Blay saw it as his duty to shoulder responsibility by guiding both company and town through the hard years and he needed the support of competent and trustworthy individuals.”<sup>28</sup> Apparently, Curran had no qualms about being seen as a pro-company editor and easily sided with the CM&S president regarding his use of the WCC to block

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<sup>24</sup> *TDT*, 20 February 1935, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *TDT*, 11 June 1935, 4.

<sup>26</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Philip M. Glende, “Labor Makes the News: Newspapers, Journalism, and Organized Labor, 1933–1955,” *Enterprise and Society*, Volume 13, Number 1 (February 2012), 39-52, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Turnbull, *Trail Between Two Wars*, 67.

Local 480. “It is obvious,” wrote Curran, “that in S.G. Blaylock . . . Canada has one of its most able and socially-minded business executives.” As evidence, he pointed to “the handsome benefits granted to laborers in the employ of the company through the forward-looking character of its labor policy.”<sup>29</sup>

CM&S managers uniformly sided with Blaylock regarding the company union. They were awed by the WCC system. It was “one of the most remarkable experiments in industrial labour organization on the North American continent,” Whittaker opined.<sup>30</sup> A forty-four-year veteran of the company, Howard W. Bayley, remarked:

There was not a shift lost by strikes and wages[,] and fringe benefits at Cominco were comparable to any union organized company. Whether or not the same success would have been achieved without Blaylock’s strong personality and genuine sincere interest in his work force is open to question.<sup>31</sup>

WCC leaders revelled in the praise and revered Blaylock. “He was a powerful man,” recalled William Campbell, the WCC’s full-time, company-paid secretary from 1939 until its demise in 1943. “He had unlimited powers,” Campbell insisted and during his time with the WCC “we had no actually serious problems. They were all dealt with, as he [Blaylock] said, in a co-operative manner. I don’t think you can do better than that.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “A Progressive Employer,” *TDI*, 22 September 1937, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Whittaker, “All is not Gold,” 224.

<sup>31</sup> Howard W. Bayley, “Cominco – A Historical Outline,” January 1976, 37. Unpublished manuscript archived at the Communications Office, Teck Resources Ltd., Trail, BC.

<sup>32</sup> William Campbell interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Glenmerry, BC, 22 August 1983, BC Archives, sound recordings, “Labour organizations at Cominco” series, Tape 1, Track 1, Call number: T4101:0014 and 15.

Local 480 activists did not share this view. They called the WCC paternalistic, undemocratic, and corrupt. Former Local 480 executive member Les Walker recalled that a committee – there were several under Blaylock’s system – was

composed of one man elected from each department on the Hill . . . men appointed to the committee promptly quit work; that is, they came to work each day and punched in the clock but they never put their working clothes on . . . they managed to get themselves on various sub-committees, such as fuel, gardening, fertilizer and all that sort of thing.<sup>33</sup>

Al King called the WCC “a cozy fellowship” in which the committee members “were too scared to say boo.” Blaylock “sat at the head of the table with a gavel and when that gavel came down, the decision was made – period.”<sup>34</sup> The president’s appointment as WCC chairman was “apparently divine in nature,” King stated in his memoirs. “He was never elected . . . . Sometimes the men (they were all men in those days) would try and pass their own motions, but Blaylock just ignored them.”<sup>35</sup>

Some Local 480 activists adopted a “work with them, work against them” approach reminiscent of the early Communist strategy of having members “bore from within” their unions to exert Communist influence. Ralph “Duke” Hyssop, who arrived from Alberta seeking work in the mid-1930s, adopted this approach with his WCC position. “I got on the co-operative committee,” he recalled, “and the main objective for myself and some others was that we would destroy [it].”<sup>36</sup> Hyssop was displeased at what he saw as Blaylock’s favouritism toward loyal committee members. Even those who

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<sup>33</sup> Solski and Smaller, 37.

<sup>34</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Abram “Duke” Hyssop interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Nelson, B.C., 19 October 1983, B.C. Archives sound recordings, “Labour organizations at Cominco” series, Call number: T4101:0022.



were not passionate union supporters were drawn to the union by the weaknesses of the WCC. Some workers scoffed at its failure to negotiate a seniority system, while others complained that it was incapable of acting as a true workers' representative. As George Bishop recalled, "There was no such thing as a grievance. Just a friendly chat with the head man."<sup>37</sup> For Pat Romaine, it "eventually reached the stage where nobody with any sincerity or conscience in them would run for the committee." Romaine described the committee as a "hierarchy . . . of very incompetent, lazy bums. They didn't have to do anything. Just sit in the office."<sup>38</sup>

Local 480 complaints about the WCC were met with indifference, but naysayers clearly irritated both WCC loyalists and Blaylock. To nullify their impact, the company union established not one but two publications with clandestine CM&S assistance. The WCC first attacked the credibility of Local 480's *Commentator*, founded in late 1938, when a "group of bona fide workers" issued the *Communicator*, a rival newsletter. The group declared that "The truth had been handled carelessly" by the "deliberate and malicious liars,"<sup>39</sup> and they accused the *Commentator* of being run by "racketeers preying on honest workers" that would lead the Trail workforce "into the hands of a communist group."<sup>40</sup> The *Communicator* ceased after one issue, but a second venture called the *Co-operator* ran slightly longer. Touted as the "voice of the workmen" and allegedly not at all "inspired, reviewed, 'blue-pencilled' or censored" by Blaylock, the paper pledged to

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<sup>37</sup> George Bishop interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Trail, B.C., August 1983, BC Archives sound recordings, "Labour organizations at Cominco" series, Call number: T4101:0010.

<sup>38</sup> Pat Romaine interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Castlegar, B.C., 29 June 1983, B.C. Archives sound recordings, "Labour organizations at Cominco" series, Call number: T4101:0005 and 0006.

<sup>39</sup> "Smelter Group Calls Halt to Lie Campaign," *Communicator*, 25 February 1939, 1.

<sup>40</sup> "New Paper Answers Commentator Abuses," *Communicator*, 25 February 1939, 1.

“deal in absolute FACTS.” The *Co-operator*, the editor stated, would be “very much unlike the slanderous union sheets coming into Trail and published by so-called ‘leaders’ and ‘protectors’ of labor under the camouflage of the C.I.O.”<sup>41</sup> The claim of independence was a flat-out lie. CM&S personnel manager C.W. Guillaume later told the RCMP that “we, through our paper, exposed the agitator [Slim Evans] in his true colours and I am thankful to say I believe it [the drive] is at last dead, if not buried.”<sup>42</sup>

The *Commentator* denounced the *Co-operator*, arguing that it had “descended to the lowest and most vulgar way of fighting, namely, ‘red-baiting’.”<sup>43</sup> The WCC paper responded that “‘Reds’ Don’t Like the Co-op Committee System”<sup>44</sup> and that Local 480 Communists were “agitating campaigners.”<sup>45</sup> Apparently stung by the *Commentator*’s attacks on Blaylock and his WCC, the *Co-operator* editor suggested that the CIO was made up of a pack of “foreign labor parasites” led by “warped-minded bosses” who used “communistic inspired tactics.” Moreover, it claimed that the CIO insinuated

that we are ignorant human animals; that we lack the intelligence and ‘guts’ to conduct our own affairs with the management of the Company; that we have allowed the Company to strip us of our rights and privileges, and that we have placed our bodies and souls and minds into the hands of an industrial Frankenstein.

The editorial then praised Blaylock and condemned the CIO for its “rotten record of strikes and bloodshed and human suffering.” Clearly, Local 480 had elicited a strong negative reaction from the company loyalists publishing the new organ. Purporting to

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<sup>41</sup> “No Thanks, Mr. Evans!,” *Co-operator*, 7 March 1939.

<sup>42</sup> Roth, 39.

<sup>43</sup> “Blaylock’s Co-operator,” *Commentator*, 17 April 1939.

<sup>44</sup> “‘Reds’ Don’t Like the Co-op Committee System,” *Co-operator*, 21 March 1939.

<sup>45</sup> “No ‘Bag of Tricks’ In the Co-Op System,” *Co-operator*, 21 March 1939.

speak for all CM&S workers, the *Co-operator* exclaimed that “we have a very distinct aversion to their particular shade of RED.”<sup>46</sup>

In his study of the organizing drive, Roth agreed with Local 480’s negative assessment of the WCC. What the union faced was a population that “had internalized company power to the point where they believed that what was good for the ‘Company’ was good for them,” he noted.<sup>47</sup> The WCC was only one aspect of the company’s “web of paternalism.” Its anti-union arsenal also included an array of schemes designed to ensure worker and general public support. Medical insurance and mortgage plans, funding of municipal improvement projects, sports events and picnics were all evidence of the company’s good intentions regarding the community. However, “these programs were not in any way philanthropic,” Roth argued, but rather were “designed to protect company interests.”<sup>48</sup> He concluded that the CM&S “made the ‘carrot’ of paternalism also the ‘stick’ of coercion.”<sup>49</sup> Roth’s account appropriately draws on research into corporate welfarism in Canada to examine Blaylock’s WCC and his various company programs. In his study of the Canadian steel industry, for example, Craig Heron notes that “the measures that promised some economic security probably worked more successfully at building workers’ ‘consent’ to the company’s undisputed control than most of the more transparently patronizing programs aimed at boosting loyalty and morale.”<sup>50</sup> Margaret

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<sup>46</sup> “No Thanks, Mr. Evans!” *Co-operator*, 7 March 1939.

<sup>47</sup> Roth, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Roth, 18; Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 113, describes company town welfare as a “web of dependency.”

<sup>49</sup> Roth, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Margaret McCallam, “Corporate Welfarism in Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 1990, 46-79, 72, quoting Heron, *Working in Steel*, 109.

McCallam argues that “Despite talk of profit-sharing, industrial democracy, or income security, employers continued to exercise their unilateral power to cut wages, speed up production, and dismiss union activists.”<sup>51</sup>

Blaylock may have been sincere in his concern for workers’ welfare, but his vision of welfare capitalism fit a pattern of business behaviour that privileged efficiency. The pattern, though, did not always achieve its desired results. As Gerald Zahavi notes, workers’ loyalty was often a contested loyalty,<sup>52</sup> and Lizabeth Cohen argues that welfare capitalism actually empowered workers and prepared them to join unions. She suggests that “By starting the process of bringing workers together in the workplace through mixing them ethnically and encouraging their collaboration in work groups, it helped equip them to challenge their employers several years later.”<sup>53</sup> While Cohen and Roth seem to contradict each other, the end result was the same in Trail: welfare capitalism, with its paternalistic underpinnings, and the failings of the company union, both exposed by Local 480, might have helped open the door to legitimate labour relations.

Blaylock hoped that the WCC, along with his version of welfare capitalism, would convince his workforce to refuse unionization and reject the Communists. As Andrew Parnaby explains, employers not unlike Blaylock “hoped to nurture a sense of harmony on the job, gain greater control over the work process, and stave off the

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<sup>51</sup> McCallam, 73.

<sup>52</sup> Gerald Zahavi, *Workers, Managers, and Welfare Capitalism: The Shoemakers and Tanners of Endicott Johnson, 1890-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), presents the case for how workers managed welfare capitalism to their advantage at times.

<sup>53</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 209.

intervention of unions and the state.”<sup>54</sup> However, he adds, the “pursuit of welfare capitalism here [i.e., among dock workers] required more than the creation of a company union and promotion of a cooperative workplace.”<sup>55</sup> In Trail, it also included questioning the real intentions behind the company’s apparent good corporate citizenship. It was up to Local 480 leaders to reveal the capitalist motives behind Blaylock’s plans and they willingly accepted the challenge.

Despite Local 480’s early efforts to seed discontent about the WCC, a “sweeping employee vote” endorsed the company union in April 1939, securing for another year what CIO organizers considered a secretive system of worker control.<sup>56</sup> The *Times* announced that it had learned of a union plot to “nominate and elect [CIO] sympathizers as departmental representatives” to the WCC. Editor Curran warned smelter workers “to beware of the insidious political machinations of a professional labor agitator.”<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Blaylock accelerated his behind-the-scenes efforts to stop Local 480.<sup>58</sup> In a speech to the WCC’s annual “smoker,” for example, he made his long-held anti-union views clear:

Unionism is so easily converted into a racket. It seems to thrive better on industrial strife than on industrial peace, consequently we frequently find its proponents distorting and magnifying everything that can be used to make dissatisfaction, and rarely ever giving credit where credit is due to a

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<sup>54</sup> Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 10.

<sup>55</sup> Parnaby, 11.

<sup>56</sup> “Co-operative Committee Is Endorsed In Sweeping Employee Vote,” *TDT*, 12 April 1939.

<sup>57</sup> “The Next C.I.O. Manoeuvre,” *TDT*, 12 April 1939.

<sup>58</sup> “Blaylock Heads C.M. & S.,” *TDT*, 28 April 1939.

company, and where the giving of such credit would tend to increase the happiness of the worker.<sup>59</sup>

Blaylock gave the gathering of loyal workmen, which included foremen and shift bosses, an economics lecture replete with charts and graphs designed to show that the workers were getting their fair share of company profits and not simply forfeiting them to company shareholders. Local 480 repeatedly insisted that shareholders were reaping major benefits at its members' expense, pointing to B.C. Labour Department statistics to support its contention that smelter workers received below-average wages.<sup>60</sup> Then, referring to "the Utopia that the C.I.O. was headed for," Blaylock delivered a thinly disguised blow against Local 480's leaders, saying that recent community unrest "has undoubtedly been augmented by the poison-pen articles and teachings that have been distributed in our midst so industriously for the last ten months." He finished with this plea to WCC leaders:

Whether or not you decide to throw your lot in with international unions is mainly your own affair. It is hard for me to think that the Company would refuse you anything you could gain by striking [for] you have the comfort of knowing that your Company is your friend and that if trouble comes to you, it will do its utmost to help you as it has helped hundreds of your fellows in the past.<sup>61</sup>

The smoker speech suggests that Local 480 had hit a sore spot at the top of the company.

Gerald "Gerry" M. Thomson was among the WCC members in attendance. A member of the smelter's labour gang, he shared an enthusiasm for local sports, especially

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<sup>59</sup> S.G. Blaylock, "An address to the annual smoker of the Consolidated Workmen's Cooperative Committee, Trail, BC, Friday, May 26, 1939," Trail City Archives, Manuscript ascension no. 86-lib 1-11, 1.

<sup>60</sup> "Government Labor Statistics Confirm Disadvantages of Smelter Employment, *Commentator*, 12 August 1941, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Blaylock "Smoker" speech, 2.

the Trail Smoke Eaters hockey team, which won the world amateur championship in 1939. Thomson, who would soon be elected chair of the WCC,<sup>62</sup> was an equally enthusiastic Blaylock defender, but his defence strategy would be complicated by the election to the WCC of Harry Drake, a charter member of Local 480 and a tireless Communist recruiter. Drake's election lent credence to the *Times's* earlier charge that the enemy was nesting in the WCC camp.

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When Harvey Murphy, already a controversial figure within the CPC, first appeared in Trail in March 1943, the WCC was reaching the end of its institutional life. Murphy became a regular visitor in Trail as he assumed his duties as Mine-Mill's western district region director and Local 480's chief organizer. His spouse Isobel welcomed the new Mine-Mill post because money was tight for the Murphy family, which eventually included three children. The appointment was also an important regeneration of Murphy's reputation. He had been refused several mining positions in Alberta after his release from an internment camp in Hull, Quebec, where he had been incarcerated for eleven months after a Defence of Canada Regulations advisory committee charged that he was a national security risk.<sup>63</sup> With the CPC initially supporting and then rejecting what it called an imperialist war, Murphy, like all Communists, faced public anger over the declaration in August 1939 of the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact. Then, in June 1941, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the CPC had to reverse its anti-war position

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<sup>62</sup> "G. Thomson New Chairman Of Committee," *TDT*, 10 May 1939; "Smelter Workers Committee Elects Officers for Term," *TDT*, 4 May 1939.

<sup>63</sup> Murphy was released on 9 September 1942, according to secret police files obtained through Access to Information legislation, RG 146, File A2009-00396, LAC (1929-1942).

and Murphy became a strong Allied booster through the rest of the conflict. To that end, he insisted that Local 480 and other Mine-Mill locals abide by the CIO's no-strike pledge as a way to aid the Allied war effort. Meanwhile, the party, which the Canadian government had banned in 1941, was struggling to maintain a public presence. By 1943, though, the Soviet Union had joined the Allies, placing Murphy and other party stalwarts in a more favourable ideological situation. The change also placed Local 480's Red leaders in a better position to combat the anti-Communist CM&S president. By most measures, Murphy was the right choice to finish the job that his fellow Communists Slim Evans and John McPeake, a smelter machinist who had replaced Evans, had started years earlier. But Blaylock's West Kootenay industrial empire was well fortified, with the *Times* and WCC leaders providing a steady patter of anti-CIO name-calling and Red bashing.

Trail may have been late in shaking off its company union chains, but now it was about to witness a seasoned and shrewd Communist union man in action. Murphy had been involved in the CPC since close to its inception in the early 1920s and was tutored in left politics at the hearth of Tim Buck, a Stalinist who would eventually become CPC general secretary. The young Murphy soon took to the streets as a militant political agitator and would regularly appear on police watch lists wherever he went. Buck groomed him as a future party bureaucrat after seeing the young man follow the party line as he participated in strike actions throughout the late 1920s. In the early 1930s Murphy endeared himself to Alberta miners by advising the Mine Workers' Union of



Canada (MWUC), an affiliate of the Communist Workers' Unity League (WUL).<sup>64</sup> When he married Isobel Rae, a Nova Scotia miner's daughter from Blairmore, Alberta, in 1934, it solidified a living link to his political romance with the Alberta miners. There he had gained much of the experience he would need to succeed in his new assignment. His even earlier experience during the Depression, assisting the unemployed workforce in Ontario in its fight for a decent living, would also be valuable in B.C. Murphy's many clashes with anti-union industrial employers had equipped him well to preside, if not over the collapse of the Blaylock regime, then at least to act as an exposé of CM&S flaws.

Some of the smelter workers would welcome Murphy's talk of gaining the freedom to decide for themselves once a "real" union represented them. Others would not so readily accept that Local 480 was the best route to that freedom. For Blaylock and his WCC leaders, Murphy was yet another outside labour agitator intent on invading the smelter and disrupting the big happy family that Turnbull lauded and that Blaylock pretended existed. A Communist union, the *Times* had warned, would disturb the relative tranquillity of their company town. Murphy, well known to Trail Communists, if not the general population, had disturbed tranquillity in the past. Years of secret police surveillance records testified to it. Although his internment had successfully removed him from the labour battlefronts that he had visited throughout the 1930s, he had vast experience at organizing miners, factory workers, and the unemployed. Now on 21 March 1943, Murphy was set to engage in his first smelter war. Would Blaylock, Trail's premier capitalist, disarm the life-long Communist challenger to his mountain domain?

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<sup>64</sup> "Just a Little History," *Commentator*, 31 March 1944, 4.

Would Murphy's long-held Communist beliefs and his unabashed public display of them prove a liability or an asset for Local 480? Would the anti-Red company union try to use Murphy's Red past as it attempted to undermine the local? Initially, it seemed that the answer to all three questions was yes.

Soon after his arrival, a flurry of letters to the editor appeared in the *Times* that attacked Murphy and Local 480 Communists. Murphy joined the letter-writing spree, condemning the "underhanded rumours and gossip being spread in attempts to dissuade workers from joining the union." He focused on those who had told Trail's Italians that they would be interned if they became union members. He also criticized those who frightened smelter workers by saying they would lose their pensions if they joined.<sup>65</sup> A. Oakey defended Murphy and "his splendid record as a fighter against relief cuts and those 20c a day slave camps," a reference to his Depression-era work in Alberta and with the unemployed in Ontario.<sup>66</sup> "R.G.S.A." reminded smelter workers of the tough strikes of 1901 in Rossland and 1917 in Trail before charging the CIO "heels and lickspittals" with "ruthlessly leaving women and children in real want until the men crawled back to the owners for their jobs again." The writer told smelter workers that they did not need the help of professional labour leaders because they had "more security and privilege than any other workers."<sup>67</sup> Frederick Buckley contributed to the discussion through amateur poetry:

For those of us who climb the hill,  
The most of us have had our fill

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<sup>65</sup> "Letter – Kenneway Was Ensured Hearing Says Murphy," *TDT*, 10 April 1943.

<sup>66</sup> "Letter – Murphy Has Splendid Record Says Writer," *TDT*, 10 April 1943.

<sup>67</sup> "Letter – Writer Urges Workers Not To Spoil Good Thing," *TDT*, 10 April 1943.

Of letters written to the press,  
On 'Kenny,' 'Murph' and Happiness.  
So let us form a union, gents.  
Let's unite some brains and common sense  
And go at things in moderation –  
All – labor, liquor and taxation.<sup>68</sup>

An anti-CIO "Smelterman" kept the debate lively with a warning: "Don't be so foolish as to sell your birthright to the CIO and pay them \$1 a month or more for a promise. Don't do something that may result in the ghost town of Trail."<sup>69</sup> "Sincere," calling the CIO organizers "enemies of our well being," used a familiar fable about a greedy dog and a bigger bone to argue against unionization.<sup>70</sup> William L. Bell warned Italian workers in Trail to "beware of the fine smooth talk of the union," claiming he had witnessed police carting the Italian miners of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, off to a camp in spite of them being union members.<sup>71</sup> Local 480 member Frank F. Meade would later refute the claim, pointing to their support of fascism as the real reason for their detention.<sup>72</sup> Meade also added this humorous assessment of the letter-writing squabble in a comment addressed to editor Curran:

We beg of you not to take our sunshine away by even cutting down your present ration of 10 anti-union to 3 pro-union 'letters to the editor'. After all, we are but a tiny group of Local 480 members who have nothing much to live for. We are told that if our union takes over, Trail will be a ghost town . . . men and women will starve by the thousands . . . and our International representatives (who, they say, are really fugitives from Alcatraz) will milk us dry and then abscond with our dough.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Labor, Liquor and Taxation," *TDT*, 10 April 1943.

<sup>69</sup> "Letter – Trail Could Be A Ghost Town Warns Smelterman," *TDT*, 14 April 1943.

<sup>70</sup> "Letter – Writer Asks Why Workers Should Turn On Committee," *TDT*, 15 April 1943.

<sup>71</sup> "Letter – Remember Cape Breton Italians Warns Writer," *TDT*, 15 April 1943.

<sup>72</sup> "Letter – Meade Replies To Bell Letter," *TDT*, 22 April 1943.

<sup>73</sup> "Letter – Anti-Union Letters Amuse Member of Local," *TDT*, 17 April 1943.

Then, the editor announced that the daily would stop publishing comments on the CIO versus WCC issue “unless such letter contains what the editor feels is some new contribution.”<sup>74</sup> It had been a rare display of public participation in the pages of a newspaper seldom given to allowing political comments contrary to its own to appear. Apparently, Curran considered that two further anti-CIO letters offered some “new contribution.” M.A. Plumber questioned Murphy’s claim that he (Murphy) was paid \$200 a month. He wanted him and the other “hot-headed agitators” from the CIO “sent back into oblivion so far as Trail is concerned until the big job [the war] is successfully completed.”<sup>75</sup> Then “C.A.M.” calculated that the CIO stood to gain \$78,060 in union dues from Trail workers and asked: “Is our present peace of mind, our present independence and the many little ‘unseen or unthought of bonuses’ worth losing?”<sup>76</sup> Clearly, the WCC still had influence, but coming changes to labour law in B.C. would ensure that Local 480 held the winning hand against the company union and Murphy helped them play it.

Long warned of the troubles that would arise with the coming of the allegedly strike-prone Red CIO, some Trailites considered Communists as bad or worse than the Nazis. Murphy, as much as he was a *bona fide* trade unionist, was also an old-line Communist who made no secret of the fact. He parroted the policies of Stalinist CPC leader Tim Buck. Of course, there would always be lingering doubts about how loyal Communists would be to the Allied cause; they had flip-flopped before and could do it again. Some observers would later point to the CM&S’s ultra-secret Project 9 heavy

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<sup>74</sup> “This Paper Has Placed Limitation On Labor Letters,” *TDT*, 10 April 1943.

<sup>75</sup> “Letter – Workers Do Not Need CIO To Conduct Affairs,” *TDT*, 24 April 1943.

<sup>76</sup> “Letter – Writer Discusses Financial Side Of Promised Raise,” *TDT*, 24 April 1943.

water plant in Warfield, which began operations in 1943 to assist the Manhattan Project in building the atomic bomb. In *Maclean's*, Pierre Berton would take readers back to that time, fretting that Murphy might use the union to give away atomic secrets to Moscow.<sup>77</sup> It was one of several critical reasons for Blaylock and the CM&S managers that followed him to get to know Comrade Murphy much better.<sup>78</sup>

While Murphy worked with Local 480 militants, pushing for certification during his first year as Mine-Mill director, Aaron R. Mosher, president of the CCL, the CIO's Canadian counterpart, tried to curb the growing power of its Communist affiliates. In Vancouver, he suspended the boilermakers, led by Communist Bill White, and the iron shipbuilders after a report claimed the "outlawed Communist party had 'concentrated their numbers and strategy inside practically all shipyard workers' unions in Vancouver'." White called Mosher a "Right-wing, reactionary, red-baiting son-of-a-bitch."<sup>79</sup> The CCL nevertheless also suspended the B.C. district council of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA).<sup>80</sup> With Murphy and other Local 480 leaders politically close to the IWA leadership of Communist Harold Pritchett, these ousters were a clear sign of more anti-Communist labour purging to come. Blaylock's WCC was paving the way for exactly that in Trail, under the guidance of its new chair Dave Kenneway.

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<sup>77</sup> Pierre Berton, "How a Red Union Bosses Atom Workers At Trail, B.C.," *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 April 1951, accused Local 480 of being in league with Moscow.

<sup>78</sup> There is no full-length biography of Murphy. See the bibliography for a list of sources that have been accessed to provide biographical information for this study.

<sup>79</sup> White, *Hard Man*, 189, notes the suspension and the name-calling.

<sup>80</sup> "Labor Congress Suspends Union At Vancouver," *TDT*, 26 January 1943, 1.

The *Commentator* had incensed Kenneway with an article entitled “Fink Unions Show Hand” that had attacked him for halting the collection of donations by women from the Rossland lodge of the Croatian Fraternal Union of America.<sup>81</sup> The money collected was destined for a wartime Russian, i.e., Soviet, aid fund and Kenneway objected to it, disregarding the fact that the Soviets were now Canada’s Allies. Trail mayor Herbert Clark sided with the WCC leader in the controversy, while Local 480 defended the Croatian lodge’s right to help “Russia.” One of the women that Kenneway stopped from collecting donations was Mrs. K.E. Dosen, spouse of Dan Dosen, a charter member of the local and an avid Communist.<sup>82</sup> Thus the local had a duty to support the Croatian immigrants who were among its growing membership, but it also undoubtedly saw this as a chance to discredit the WCC. “This high-handed action on the part of these finks can serve no other cause but that of Hitler,” the union journal charged. “It is [an] indication of the depths to which they sink in carrying out their roll [sic] in a company union set-up.”<sup>83</sup>

The Croatian lodge confrontation might have been the last anti-Communist act of the old company union, for in the spring of 1943, the B.C. government amended its ICA Act (1937) and Blaylock’s cherished WCC, as such, was outside the law. The organization could and did apply for certification under the amended law, but was not accepted as a *bona fide* union. The *Commentator* christened the new law a “‘Bill of Rights’ for labor.”<sup>84</sup> At the same time, Communists were displeased that Mackenzie King had so far refused to legislate an end to a 1940 ban on most Communist activities, despite

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<sup>81</sup> “Letter – Kenneway Replies to Accusation,” *TDT*, 27 January 1943, 4.

<sup>82</sup> “Council Endorses Mayor’s Action in Halting Ticket Sale,” *TDT*, 26 February 1943.

<sup>83</sup> “Fink Unions Show Hand,” *Commentator*, 25 January 1943.

<sup>84</sup> “New Labor Legislation Great Triumph for British Columbia Unions,” *Commentator*, 22 April 1943.

an all-party federal committee recommendation to lift it. The *Commentator* called it “a piece of class legislation directed against the working class” and criticized Justice Minister Louis St. Laurent for imposing the ban “on the grounds that he dislikes ‘Communism’ as a theory.”<sup>85</sup> The union paper failed to mention that the delicate political balance that King struggled to maintain in Quebec might have influenced the decision to keep the ban in place. As Chris Frazer argues, “King intended to placate his Quebec power brokers who in no uncertain terms opposed legalizing the CPC.”<sup>86</sup>

Also supporting local Communists was Mine-Mill international president Reid Robinson who had stated at a convention that

if the Communists believe that we should organize the unorganized to better the conditions of the workers of this country so that we can better prosecute the war effort – and you want to call anyone who supports such a program a Communist, you have that right to call me a Communist.<sup>87</sup>

While this debate simmered, Blaylock and other employers asked B.C. government officials to protect “what are known as company unions.”<sup>88</sup> The *Commentator* countered the group’s arguments, saying that such protections “would mean companies could continue to oppose labor’s rights – block their efforts to organize and once again precipitate all over again, the struggle of the workers to organize their own unions.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> “Editorial – Why the Ban on the Communist Party Should Be Lifted,” *Commentator*, 22 February 1943.

<sup>86</sup> Chris Frazer, “From Pariahs to Patriots: Canadian Communists and the Second World War,” *Past Imperfect*, Vol. 5, (1996), 3-36, 20.

<sup>87</sup> “Industrialists Attack Union,” *Commentator*, 22 February 1943.

<sup>88</sup> “Protection Of Company Union Asked,” *TDT*, 5 February 1943.

<sup>89</sup> “Editorial – Why Company Unions Should Be Outlawed,” *Commentator*, 22 February 1943.

The legal changes emboldened Murphy as he manoeuvred on Blaylock's far left flank, but the company president had another political worry as well: CCF MLA H.W. "Bert" Herridge was pressing him for answers to an allegation that the company had received an "amazingly conservative assessment for tax purposes."<sup>90</sup> The Herridge initiative had won him kudos from Local 480 leaders and they would later return the support, as shall be shown. Deflecting public exposure of the company's privileged tax status, a *Times* letter from "Contented" shifted discussion back to the CIO, arguing against having a union replace "our co-operative committee" and warning the CIO that fighting comrades overseas "might be quite disappointed to come home and find another system in force."<sup>91</sup> "Security" responded in support of the union:

Fellow workers and Mr. 'Contented'[,] Up to date we workers in Trail have had a fairly good deal from the manager of the workmen's committee, but supposing Mr. Blaylock should lose health and leave this world and the services of this company, and supposing his successor is a real skin flint, now this is not impossible. Well, suppose the committee approaches this skin flint manager and executive and he says 'No boys. It's no dice.' Then what do we do?<sup>92</sup>

"Security" then noted that many smelter soldiers were members of Local 480 and that they expected to find a union when they came home. "They would be our brothers if they were here now," the letter writer concluded, and they would return to their jobs well educated by other trade unionists fighting in Europe and Asia. On the opposing side, "Strike-Shy" outlined the various benefits that the company bestows on its employees:

Let's be reasonable and sensible,  
Let's not chase rainbows,

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<sup>90</sup> "Letter – S.H. Kyle States His Position in Tadanac Situation," *TDT*, 6 April 1943.

<sup>91</sup> "Letter – Workman Urges That System Be Preserved," *TDT*, 29 March 1943.

<sup>92</sup> "Letter – Union Member Answers Letter By 'Contented'," *TDT*, 30 March 1943.



Let's not be blinded by  
High-sounding, impossible promises.  
Let's not kill the goose  
That lays the golden egg,  
Let's not bite the hand that feeds us.<sup>93</sup>

The passage of the B.C. ICA amendment did not mean that Local 480 had finally won the hearts and minds of the majority of smelter workers. The demise of the WCC was a definite blow to Blaylock's workplace hegemony, but he and his conservative employees still posed a threat. Local 480, which had for so long been locked in public combat with the old WCC, had some important advantages going forward, including an existing organization and political momentum. Now, however, it would have to engage in a smelter war against a newly constituted and legal organization called the Independent Smelter Workers Union (ISWU). Its supporters, Trailites like the above letter writers, were set to hail the reinvented company union as it prepared for a B.C. Labour Relations Board vote that would determine whether Mine-Mill or the ISWU would legally represent Trail's smelter workforce.

Preceding the vote, Local 480 issued a bulletin claiming that Sullivan Mine workers in Kimberley, in southeastern B.C., had accepted Mine-Mill as their bargaining agent.<sup>94</sup> The ISWU refuted the claim and that was followed by another plethora of letters in the *Times*, arguing for and against the ever-nearer prospect of a Mine-Mill union being certified in Trail. "Contented" again led the charge, hailing the WCC for ensuring that Trail workers "did not feel any effects of the depression." The writer charged Murphy with "collecting too much of the folding stuff" and postulated that no more than five per

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<sup>93</sup> "Letter – Count Blessings Is Admonition Of Trail Worker," *TDT*, 30 March 1943.

<sup>94</sup> "Committee Denies Sullivan Mine Men Accepted Union," *TDT*, 12 April 1943.

cent of smelter soldiers were members of Local 480.<sup>95</sup> Another letter from W.A. Plumber chastised smeltermen for “booing” ISWU chairman Kenneway at a meeting.<sup>96</sup> One from an “Anti-union Ex-Miner” counselled workers to remain members of the ISWU.<sup>97</sup> “J.W.M.” attacked Murphy for his “abuse of our hospitality and insults to our fellow citizens.” He advised workers to “not be misled by the vague promises of these travelling organizers.” In his view, and clearly echoing Blaylock’s routine conflation of “Reds” and “Rackets” from south of the border, the CIO was “nothing but a streamlined racket that escaped the FBI . . . . Any national tie-up with the CIO would soon find us governed not from Victoria or Ottawa but from Denver.”<sup>98</sup> An “Onlooker” from Rossland also took the WCC-ISWU’s side:

Remember when Bill, or Charlie or John went and ‘joined up’ – remember saying ‘well, s’long Bill, good luck to you – we’ll keep the joint running good so the old job will be ready for you afterwards’. Wonder what Bill and the other 1,500 to 1,800 C.M.&S. employees will think when they come back and find they have to shell out \$18.00 plus ‘special assessments’ every year to a bunch of large stomached gentlemen back in New York for which they don’t get a darn bit more than they are getting now. Maybe Bill will be getting the odd two bits more a day but believe me he’ll be earning it.<sup>99</sup>

The LRB vote results were announced on 20 April and Mine-Mill’s fight took a backward step when the ISWU won by a slim majority (1,977 to 1,888), making it the smelter workers’ legal bargaining agent.<sup>100</sup> The *Commentator* called it “pretty odiferous,”

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<sup>95</sup> “Letter – Contented Replies To Union Writer,” *TDT*, 1 April 1943.

<sup>96</sup> “Letter – Booing Kenneway At Union Meeting Rapped By Writer,” *TDT*, 5 April 1943.

<sup>97</sup> “Letter – Ex-Union Man Does Not Want Outside Union,” *TDT*, 29 April 1943.

<sup>98</sup> “Letter – Wealth Produced By Labor Belongs To All Says Writer,” *TDT*, 8 April 1943.

<sup>99</sup> “Letter – Workers Asked To Consider These Points,” *TDT*, 9 April 1943.

<sup>100</sup> “Day-Pay Employees Vote for Committee Plan 1,977 to 1,888,” *TDT*, 20 April 1943.

questioned the arithmetical skills of the election scrutineers, and declared that the vote was a “boomerang” because more smelter workers joined the Mine-Mill local on voting day than the two previous days.<sup>101</sup>

In the midst of the letter-writing free-for-all, Blaylock purchased a full-page ad in the *Times* to counter “a decided increase in propaganda against big companies.” He denied charges of war profiteering by displaying a complex array of figures showing that although the “company is making good profits,” they were not excessive and much of it was reinvested in company operations. Blaylock provided a simplified balance sheet to show what the company actually owned along with a chart of “interesting figures” to exhibit how much the company had spent. No doubt it was a sincere attempt to share knowledge of the business risks involved in running such a large corporation and the need to remain a lean operation during the war years. Blaylock, the war booster, was also concerned for his community’s future. But it was also a comprehensive attempt to rebuff accusations of “profiteering and even of pilfering the public purse” that were often heard from Local 480 leaders and letter-writing members.<sup>102</sup> The *Commentator* was succinct in its view that the “industrialists of Canada are organized to put over their freedom of exploitation program . . . . Coinciding with the slanderous smear campaign against the unions is the industrialists’ attempt to organize company unions all across Canada.”<sup>103</sup>

With Local 480 posing a growing threat, Blaylock’s public messages exerted more pressure for labour-management cooperation. “Labour relations are probably the

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<sup>101</sup> “Company Set-up Boomerangs,” *Commentator*, 22 April 1943.

<sup>102</sup> “A Company Reports to Its Employees,” *TDT*, 5 April 1943.

<sup>103</sup> “Contribution – Shades of the Future,” *Commentator*, 22 April 1943.

most important single thing in the welfare of a nation,” he wrote in a submission to a National War Labour Board (NWLB) inquiry.<sup>104</sup> “Unquestionably,” he added, “the country’s emergency is being used by some leaders of international labour to force international unionism over all industry.” He also blamed the 1935 Wagner Act – named for U.S. Senator Robert Wagner and passed by Congress during the New Deal – for “a very large part of the labour unrest.” And he attacked all labour acts in North America as “bound to create dissension between men and management rather than to create harmony and co-operation.” Blaylock praised his record in establishing the “proper relationship between workmen and management,” and criticized unions:

This system has the advantage that it tends to bring the workmen and the management into closer harmony, while the remote control bargaining agencies will tend to put them further apart. To realize this, one has only to read or listen to the speeches of the international organizers, which consist almost entirely of abuse of management and industry, and frequently governments, in connection with high profits, poor wages, poor conditions and general profiteering, interspersed with high-sounding phrases that their only concern is to increase the war effort.<sup>105</sup>

Continued wartime work stoppages might have prompted some readers to agree with him, including editor Curran who pleaded with unions to follow the example of the British labour movement, which “postpones its class struggle until after the war.”<sup>106</sup>

Congratulations seemed in order in mid-May when Local 480 announced that it had reached the majority required by law to once again apply for certification. President Fred Henne immediately requested a meeting with Blaylock to commence negotiations

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<sup>104</sup> S.G. Blaylock, “A Submission to the Enquiry Being Conducted by the National War Labour Board,” Trail, BC 15 May 1943.

<sup>105</sup> Blaylock submission to NWLB.

<sup>106</sup> “Intolerable Stoppages,” *TDT*, 1 May 1943.

for a first collective agreement.<sup>107</sup> The company president refused the request and instructed the ISWU to “continue its battle against Mine-Mill under the auspices of a ‘legitimate’ union.”<sup>108</sup> Little had changed and why would it? The ISWU had installed much of the old WCC executive as its officers. Attempts to challenge the ISWU through Local 480’s new bid for certification led to a summer-long labour ministry investigation that decided against Mine-Mill. The decision would not be announced until later, but that did not prevent the *Commentator* from resuming its war with the company union. Among its now familiar weapons of choice was a poem:

We never speak of workers’ rights,  
We vote for the Company union.  
They tell us that it leads to fights,  
So I vote for the Company union.  
The Company has always said  
That men who talk like that are ‘Red,’  
We listen to the boss instead  
And vote for the Company union.<sup>109</sup>

The union paper also turned on Blaylock’s fellow industrialists, charging that “corporation executives . . . are skimming off gravy in salaries and bonuses with ladles that are from 50 to 200 per cent larger than they were in 1940.” The article listed the salaries of those executives and, while Blaylock’s name was not among them, the union’s implication was clear enough.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “Local 480 Attains Majority,” *Commentator*, 19 May 1943.

<sup>108</sup> Roth, 65.

<sup>109</sup> “Poets’ Corner,” *Commentator*, 19 May 1943. For a detailed discussion of working-class poetry in Trail, see Ron Verzuh, “The Smelter Poets: The Inspiring Role of Worker Poetry in a BC Labour Newspaper during the ‘Age of the CIO’,” *BC Studies*, No. 177, Spring 2013, 85-126.

<sup>110</sup> “U.S. Executives Salaries Take Joy-ride,” *Commentator*, 19 May 1943.

As summer approached, Mine-Mill international president Reid Robinson visited the smelter city and 1,200 Local 480 members and their families greeted him with a march through downtown streets to the strains of the Rossland City Band. Among other targets, he centred out Blaylock in his remarks to the crowd:

a man like Blaylock, who throughout the past years has been Monarch of all he surveys, will not give up this power easily and he . . . would continue with phoney unions and any other power at his disposal to turn the workers away from their democratic union. He stressed the fact that the Company undoubtedly had the full support of the local newspaper and would continue to use it against the workers, who had grown tired of Mr. Blaylock's despotic paternalism and wished a voice of their own.<sup>111</sup>

Close to that same day, as if to counter Robinson's remarks about "phoney" unions, the ISWU reported that the NWLB had accepted its request for a smelter worker pay increase of twenty-five cents. ISWU chair Kenneway had requested the increase for tradesmen only, but the labour board initially rejected it.<sup>112</sup> Blaylock then appeared before the board in what might have been the final time that the creator of the WCC would publicly represent the employees. The NWLB subsequently reversed its decision and the *Commentator* grudgingly acknowledged the increase. "We say good for Mr. Blaylock and his representations," the paper sarcastically remarked, "now let's get the increase for all the employees."<sup>113</sup> Kootenay West MP William K. Esling, a Conservative politician and former owner of the *Trail Creek News*, a *Times* predecessor, also entered the smelter war zone in fulsome praise of Blaylock and the WCC-ISWU. Although he did not use the term workers' paradise, from Esling's vantage point, Trail was indeed that, thanks to the

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<sup>111</sup> "Reid Robinson Speaks Before Large Audience – Hundreds Parade," *Commentator*, 21 June 1943.

<sup>112</sup> "War Labor Board Broadens Raise to CM&S Trades," *TDI*, 21 June 1943.

<sup>113</sup> "Just Think What A Real Union Will Do...," *Commentator*, 21 June 1943.

CM&S, and it was his way of issuing a warning to workers in his constituency not to vote for Red Mine-Mill.<sup>114</sup>

Kimberley's Local 651 ratified a first collective agreement that November, leading the *Commentator* to assume that "very soon the infamous Workmen's Committee will be just a bad memory for the C.M.&S. workers, and company unionism will be no more."<sup>115</sup> Careful not to name Blaylock, the editorial further warned that "Hitler, darling of the German anti-union, anti-democratic big bosses, is being defeated and we want no little Hitlers to grow up at home."<sup>116</sup> When CPC leader Tim Buck visited the smelter city in mid-November, Local 480 extended "Tim a hearty welcome," describing him as "one of Canada's outstanding labor leaders."<sup>117</sup> It also republished two items from the Communist *Canadian Tribune* on the Amalgamated Union of Canada (AUC) to which the ISWU was affiliated. At its November convention, AUC organizers had ejected the *Tribune's* scribe for calling the AUC a "new strike-breaking organization."<sup>118</sup> But the AUC got no sympathy from Local 480, for it wholeheartedly agreed with *Commentator* writer R.S. Gordon's claim that the AUC was "a fifth column among the workers" that is "part of the general offensive against labor" being pushed by social forces that included "a handful of renegades from the ranks of the workers."<sup>119</sup> The *Commentator*, trolling for

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<sup>114</sup> "Trail's Story Gets Around," *TDT*, 28 June 1943.

<sup>115</sup> "Company and CIO Reach Agreement For Kimberley Workers," *TDT*, 4 November 1943.

<sup>116</sup> "Kimberley Local 651 Negotiates Agreement with C.M.&S. Co.," *Commentator*, 15 November 1943.

<sup>117</sup> "Tim Buck to Give Address in Trail Thursday, Nov. 18," *Commentator*, 15 November 1943.

<sup>118</sup> "In a Den of Finks," *Commentator*, 15 November 1943.

<sup>119</sup> "Fink Convention Bars Labor Press-Scab 'Federation' Born in Hamilton," *Commentator*, 15 November 1943.

evidence of AUC meddling in smelter union affairs, revealed that Charlie McLean of Trail was a first vice-president of “the new fink set-up.”<sup>120</sup>

The ISWU scored another victory when the NWLB agreed that Trail smelter workers would get paid time and half for work performed on most statutory holidays.<sup>121</sup> That created yet another hurdle for Local 480 leaders and more bad news would arrive soon when the labour department announced that there would be no representational vote at the smelter because the union did not have the required sign-ups.<sup>122</sup> Frustrated Local 480 organizers had been preparing for a possible vote, but even if it succeeded it would not include the strike threat. That right had been signed away long ago when Mine-Mill’s international office urged its locals to accept the CIO’s controversial no-strike pledge in aid of the war effort. As Roth noted, “Mine-Mill’s no strike pledge is a measure of Community influence within the union.”<sup>123</sup> However, as Laurel Sefton MacDowell notes, other CIO unions refused to give up the strike weapon. Steel’s Millard, for example, “was supportive of the war effort but not at the expense of workers’ rights.”<sup>124</sup>

Also seeming to play into the ISWU’s hand was the federal labour minister’s announcement that wage controls would be tightened and penalties increased on unions that strike in defiance of the law.<sup>125</sup> The company union could boast that it had at least won some wage gains for smelter workers and in principle it was against strikes. In the

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<sup>120</sup> “The Rogue’s Gallery,” *Commentator*, 15 November 1943.

<sup>121</sup> “ISWU Gains Award,” *TDT*, 1 December 1943.

<sup>122</sup> “CIO Fails To Reach Majority,” *TDT*, 28 December 1943.

<sup>123</sup> Roth, 68.

<sup>124</sup> Laurel Sefton MacDowell, “The Career of a Canadian Trade Union Leader: C.H. Millard 1937-1946,” *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (1988): 609-632, 616.

<sup>125</sup> “Wage Control Order Aims at Stabilization,” *TDT*, 9 December 1943.



meantime, Blaylock continued to fight for his company union, stating that “a socialist state cannot succeed without ruthless dictatorship” and suggesting that if unions were to get “undisputed power” Canada would “have a very unstable existence.”<sup>126</sup> Trail’s Reds openly challenged that view, arguing that all those “attempting to create disunity and falsifying the real issues of socialism as related to post-war progress” represent the “conspiracy of big business against the people of our country.”<sup>127</sup>

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Another volley of anti-Communist rhetoric confronted Local 480 in early January 1944 when D.V. Mitchell, head of the AUC, told the *Times* that the labour movement should command no respect “so long as it broke its word by condoning strikes and walkouts.”<sup>128</sup> The following day, Mitchell fenced with Murphy in a public debate that saw the two men slinging accusations at each other.<sup>129</sup> It would not be the last time Trailites heard from Mitchell, for the AUC leader soon moved his national newspaper, the *Amalgamator*, from Hamilton, Ontario, to the smelter city. Once in Trail, the monthly continued to publish as the voice of independent unionism. Vigorously anti-CIO, its primary purpose was to support and defend the notion of industrial co-operation. This appealed to some Canadian workers, including some in Trail, because it suggested an autonomous status instead of being tied to international unions like Mine-Mill and it played into the nationalistic fervour promoted by the AUC.

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<sup>126</sup> “S.G. Blaylock Sends Confident New Year’s Message to Employees,” *TDT*, 31 December 1943.

<sup>127</sup> “District Labor Progressives Meet Sunday,” *TDT*, 11 January 1944.

<sup>128</sup> “Mitchell Says Labor Has Lost Confidence,” *TDT*, 19 January 1944.

<sup>129</sup> “Mitchell and Murphy Clash Over Legality,” *TDT*, 20 January 1944.

As the new LRB certification vote neared in the spring of 1944, Blaylock devoted much of a forty-five-minute speech, aired on Trail's CJAT radio station, to extolling the virtues of free enterprise, dismissing the socialists, and chastising militant trade unionists. "State ownership is fore-ordained to inefficient operation," he said of assumed CCF plans to nationalize industry. He hoped that his workers could become "full partners in the enterprise" because "the endeavours of the men would have been reflected in their pay cheques." He warned against the "dangerous views of many politicians" and advised rejection of the "propaganda put out by the apostles of gloom." Assuredly he was referring to Local 480 Communists. He then praised his company's wartime production levels and once again reminded workers that they "enjoy the highest wages paid in any similar industry in Canada." However, he was careful to avoid the issue of equal pay for women war workers. (As discussed in detail later, since mid-1942 they had been working at the CM&S doing traditional male jobs for 80 per cent of the pay.) Blaylock concluded his speech by ordering his listeners to "Snap out of our lethargy" and avoid developing a "defeatist attitude."<sup>130</sup>

The Blaylock broadcast grated on Local 480 Communist Harry Drake who won space in the *Times* to state that "while the C.M.&S. has built itself up to[,] as Mr. Blaylock says, 'tops the world over', C.M.&S. workers have received a very small portion of that in wages." He then refuted Blaylock's other claims, concluding that smelter workers have much to gain by joining Mine-Mill for it promises to give them "a real share of the great wealth they have worked to create."<sup>131</sup> Murphy, too, appeared

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<sup>130</sup> "Blaylock Outlines Future of Company as Free Enterprise," *TDT*, 12 January 1944.

<sup>131</sup> "Letter – Drake Says Blaylock Made Misrepresentation," *TDT*, 17 January 1944.

enraged by the Blaylock speech, commenting that “for Blaylock to assert that ‘free enterprise’ and the right of ‘monopoly control’ were things for which our boys are laying their lives down . . . were [the] subversive utterances of a bigot.” The company president

ridiculed the ability of the Canadian people to manage their own economic affairs and also expressed contempt for any government control of industry. Free enterprise, he maintained, should have unbridled control of its operations.”<sup>132</sup>

If local Mine-Mill leaders were ever hopeful that Blaylock might eventually accept Local 480 as the smelter workers’ bargaining agent, that speech made clear his adamantly negative views regarding unions and Communism.

In any event, it might have been the last such statement from the CM&S president, for in February the King government’s long awaited “Canadian Wagner Act” was introduced in the form of Order-in-Council PC 1003. As the nation’s labour law, it lacked teeth regarding unfair labor practices, but would “greatly assist trade unions in avoiding difficult and expensive legal proceedings in which companies have been able to find refuge.”<sup>133</sup> The new law made collective bargaining compulsory, called for mandatory grievance procedures, and superseded provincial labour legislation, including B.C.’s ICA Act. Local 480 was poised to benefit from the new law and would do so, but not before yet another smelter war broke out with the ISWU.

One year after Murphy’s arrival, the local again applied for certification and the ISWU re-engaged in the battle for members’ allegiance. The *Commentator* countered this

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<sup>132</sup> “Harvey Murphy Gives Other Side of Blaylock’s Plea for ‘Free Enterprise,” *Commentator*, 3 February 1944.

<sup>133</sup> “Editorial – New Labor Code Big Step Ahead,” *Commentator*, 29 February 1944.

new offensive by dubbing the AUC's Mitchell "Canada's hopeful 'Labor Front Fuehrer'" and mocking him for pursuing a "career of company stooging started when he was made president of Sir Edward Beatty's flop C.P.R. company set-up."<sup>134</sup> Local 480's frustration over the ISWU's steady issuance of anti-Communist references spilled over to Blaylock for his "utter contempt for the rights of labor." Organizers warned smelter workers to pay no attention to his "rants" about industry not trying to take advantage of the war effort to reduce wages. The paper reminded readers that in 1943 "a C.M.&S. worker actually received less money than in 1937," adding:

Let us not be fooled by the glib phrases that he [Blaylock] uses to cover up the hidden wage cuts we have actually received during the war, while the C.M.&S. Co. was a party to the sit down strike of industry against the 5% profit that our government was going to allow.<sup>135</sup>

The *Commentator* also had the sad task of publishing a short obituary for Slim Evans, who had died from injuries sustained in a traffic accident in Vancouver.<sup>136</sup> Evans's death was a symbolic blow to the Local 480 Communists who had met him and been inspired by his tireless fight for industrial democracy, especially in Trail.

It was premature for the Mine-Mill local to hold a victory celebration on 1 May as the LRB decision had still not been announced, but it might have seemed appropriate for a Communist union to celebrate on a Communist international worker holiday. Later that week, an evening parade was attended by 1,300 Trailites who marched to "snappy march

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<sup>134</sup> "Kirkland Lake Snubbs (sic) Amalgamated President," *Commentator*, 29 February 1944.

<sup>135</sup> "Editorial," *Commentator*, 15 February 1944, 2.

<sup>136</sup> "Arthur Evans Dies Following Accident," *Commentator*, 15 February 1944, 4.

music,” sang workers’ songs, and carried banners “proclaiming ‘Put Victory First,’ ‘Smash Fascism’ and ‘CIO Means Unity and Strength’.” As Roth described it,

The crowd was addressed by CCF MLA H.W. (Bert) Herridge, various Mine Mill officials and the Vice-President of the CIO Ladies Auxiliary. The guest speaker of the evening was IWA ‘red bloc’ leader, Harold Pritchett, who told those assembled that time was ‘running out’ for the ‘Blaylock system’.<sup>137</sup>

Then on 2 June, the cause for the celebration was confirmed. Local 480 leaders achieved the goal they had long been fighting for: the B.C. LRB finally recognized Local 480 as the legal bargaining agent for Trail’s smelter workers.<sup>138</sup> After suffering constant anti-Communist attacks, the Red union had won.

The first set of union negotiations since the 1917 strike began soon after the announcement, and on 17 June 1944 a “working agreement” was signed in which “CM&S agreed to recognize Local 480 and cancel all previous agreements thus terminating the ISWU bargaining agency status.” A grievance procedure was accepted at that time; however, the local still awaited a wage settlement decision from the NWLB.<sup>139</sup> The company acknowledged the union a few days after the announcement as Local 480 named its bargaining committee, an amalgam of political persuasions from the left including international president Robinson, international Mine-Mill executive member Chase Powers, and Murphy. Added to the list were these charter members of the local:

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<sup>137</sup> Roth, 71-72.

<sup>138</sup> “CIO To Bargain In Trail,” *TDI*, 3 June 1944.

<sup>139</sup> Roth, 72.

Gar Belanger, Dick Gop, Dan Dosen and George DeGroff. Communists all. Local labour politician Leo Nimsick, another charter member, was also on the committee.<sup>140</sup>

Forced by law to accept Local 480 and to sign a union contract for the first time in his long career, Blaylock was not happy in his 1944 year-end message:

Unquestionably there are revolutionary forces in the air. Let us keep them there as harmless as exhaust steam given off from a high-pressure engine doing good and useful work. Do not let yourselves be fooled. As with the engine, no constructive accomplishment results from these noises and vapours.<sup>141</sup>

Soon after, Blaylock promoted W.S. Kirkpatrick to assistant general manager, a powerful position from which Kirkpatrick would later act as the CM&S's chief anti-Communist.<sup>142</sup> It was a bad omen for the smelter workers' new union.

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Early in 1945, Murphy and the CM&S announced that they had replaced the working agreement ratified the previous summer with a more official binding contract.<sup>143</sup> The *Commentator* ran a photograph on its back page that showed the group signing the historic pact. Remembering the arrival of Slim Evans as the starting point of the Mine-Mill drive in 1938, the paper said the "agreement marks a big step forward for the workers on the Hill." The CM&S workforce would now enjoy a proper seniority provision, grievance procedure, shop steward system, health and safety improvements,

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<sup>140</sup> "Bargaining Group for CIO Named," *TDT*, 5 June 1944.

<sup>141</sup> "S.G. Blaylock Extends Christmas Greetings," *TDT*, 23 December 1944.

<sup>142</sup> "Blaylock Says Buchanan's Retirement Is Great Loss," *TDT*, 30 December 1944.

<sup>143</sup> "Bargaining Pact Is Completed Between Consolidated, Union," *TDT*, 16 January 1945, 1.

and items agreed upon earlier like holiday and overtime pay.<sup>144</sup> The local quickly signalled that there was more to negotiate when it gave notice that the agreement would end as of 29 January 1946.<sup>145</sup> Blaylock had informed his shareholders of the new reality in his 1944 annual report.<sup>146</sup> It seemed that this was the final blow to his WCC and his dream of a cooperative, union-free smelter. It also seemed that the Communists, among others on the Local 480 bargaining committee, had finally won what must have seemed an interminable struggle.

Blaylock, who stepped down in spring 1945 due to illness, died that November at sixty-six years of age, leaving Kirkpatrick and other CM&S managers to continue with the struggle to unseat Local 480 in the post-war years. The company also supported the WCC's successors as they prepared to initiate a series of skirmishes in a renewed smelter battle. As their struggle with Trail's anti-Communists proceeded, many new combatants would be introduced and some old company union members would rejoin the fray. Clearly, the spirit of Blaylock's old WCC would continue to infuse the smelter workplace as North America entered the uncertain post-war period.

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<sup>144</sup> "Local 480 and C.M.&S. Co. Sign Collective Bargaining Agreement," *Commentator*, 31 January 1945, 1.

<sup>145</sup> R.E. Stavert (replacing the late S.G. Blaylock), Director's Report in the CM&S Company's Fortieth Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1945.

<sup>146</sup> S.G. Blaylock, Director's Report, *CM&S Annual Report*, year ending 31 December 1944.

### Chapter 3.

## Gender Conflicts and Ladies Auxiliary Politics

Although Local 480 weathered the anti-union accusations of S.G. Blaylock, the *Times*, the AUC, and the company union, a more intimate and challenging battle was being waged in the smelter city. Letters to the *Times* revealed that inside workers' homes, many smelter spouses frequently worried that the union would breed strikes and undermine household income. Many of these women were anti-Communist and adamantly opposed the union. Some supported the company union. "An Observant Woman" boldly declared that the CIO "is only interested in the dollars it would get from this rich centre." She feared the union would "dictate to us in the best Hitler style."<sup>1</sup> Women in the smelter were another source of friction. Trail women were among a quarter million in Canada who worked in the war industries.<sup>2</sup> Their presence posed new problems for Mine-Mill both during the war and when soldiers returned to jobs that Blaylock, with the full agreement of chief negotiator Murphy, had promised. These tensions inhered even in the newly formed Mine-Mill Ladies Auxiliary (LA) Local 131, even among women who supported Local 480's Communist leadership. They too complained about a male-dominated union. Thus, even as Mine-Mill began to prevail in Trail, gender revealed further fault lines in the workplace and at home.

While many unions paid only lip service to women's equality, Joan Sangster has argued that Mine-Mill and other Communist unions "tried to highlight women's union

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<sup>1</sup> "Catholic Church Clear on Labor Stand," *TDT*, 18 March 1939, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Wendy Cuthbertson, *Labour Goes to War: The CIO and the Construction of a New Social Order, 1939-45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 130.



and class consciousness.”<sup>3</sup> In the early 1930s, for example, Murphy, then working with miners in the Crow’s Nest Pass area of Alberta, recognized that “a negative attitude on the part of the miners’ wives . . . would prove fatal to union solidarity.” As Allen Seager noted, Murphy recognized that

the women not only involved themselves tirelessly in the more mundane aspects of relief work, but proved their determination to win a better way of life for their children, on the picket line and during the marches and demonstrations which became an almost daily occurrence.<sup>4</sup>

In Trail, though, some women doubted whether Local 480 leaders shared these attitudes. This complicated the local’s bargaining and political agenda. If Local 480 did subscribe to a rigid Marxist class analysis, they may not have fully acknowledged the role of gender, let alone race or religion. Had the local’s leaders seen the advantages of linking class with gender, perhaps Trail’s women might have played a different role in what Ruth Frager calls the “adaptation and resistance not only to class inequality but also to other fundamental aspects of domination and subordination” represented by the CM&S.<sup>5</sup> As it was, the local seemed content to avoid the issue.

As illustrated below, women war workers, homemakers, and members of LA Local 131 actively debated related issues: the alleged Communism of the CIO, company unionism, merits of Mine-Mill, and attacks on Communist unions such as Local 480. Despite Mine-Mill’s constitutional statements in support of women’s equality, though, it

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<sup>3</sup> Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Allen Seager, “A History of the Mine Workers’ Union of Canada, 1925-1936,” MA Thesis, McGill University, 1977, 160.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth A. Frager, “Labour History and the Interlocking Hierarchies of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender: A Canadian Perspective,” *International Review of Social History* 44, 1999, 197-215, 246.

was not obvious that the Trail local would uphold these values. There were in fact numerous signs that it would favour the traditional views of rank-and-file male members. Although local union leaders were willing to include women, it was only on male terms, only if male members benefitted as wage earners, and only within their limited understanding of women's role in the union. In effect, it was union patriarchy. Nevertheless, the women brought important gender considerations into play.

Local 480 leaders knew, for example, that they needed women war workers to bolster sagging membership figures during the organizing drive. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, membership lagged in the double digits (seventy-three in 1941). As the war gained momentum, Roth noted that “conditions set up a vicious cycle that devastated union growth.” High wartime turnover required constant recruitment in a fluctuating workforce. As “membership bottomed out and recruitment stagnated,” recruiting the new female workforce was imperative, but this required a change in tone and emphasis.<sup>6</sup> To attract female workers would require an organizing strategy that promised that unionization would have a positive impact for women. One tactic of persuasion was to show that female workers would enjoy increased wages as had occurred at some wartime workplaces organized by the CIO. As early as spring 1941, the *Commentator* reported CIO-bargained increases that “mean clothes, entertainment, and freedom from worry for the worker and his wife; it will enable some to marry. These dollars won by the CIO will buy education and food for millions of workingmen's children.”<sup>7</sup> It added, “women are the biggest winners in the new pact between the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee

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<sup>6</sup> Roth, 58.

<sup>7</sup> “Editorial,” *Commentator*, 12 May 1941, 2.

[SWOC] and the U.S. Steel Company.” The base wage would rise to 72.5 cents an hour from the previous fifty-six cents, “the same as the minimum rate for male workers.”<sup>8</sup>

This was an enticing prospect for Trail women, and as they entered the previously male-only plants on the Hill, the local might have been expected to support the CIO demand for equal pay for equal work. Instead, local leaders subordinated women’s pay equality to protect male members from post-war losses. Takaia Larsen interviewed eleven women war workers for an oral history study. She argues that the union leaders “took the stance that they were only temporary workers.”<sup>9</sup> The *Commentator* signalled what women could expect when it released a gossip item in the paper’s popular “I Heard on the Hill” column. The piece noted that the company was “toying with the idea of filling some smeltermen’s jobs with women.” Treating the rumour as a joke, the writer asked “whether it is to be in the melting room, sheet-casting, tank-pulling, lead sheet or Tadanac police.”<sup>10</sup> If it was meant as humour, though, the joke was on the men. Women quickly filled these jobs.

Understandably, then, support for the as-yet-uncertified local was mixed among women war workers, some of whom were filling vacancies left by the high staff turnover during wartime or to replace some of the 2,359 enlisted men destined for overseas duty. In 1944, the CM&S workforce totalled 6,437, which included employees at Sullivan Mine in Kimberley and other surrounding CM&S properties where women were also

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<sup>8</sup> “Women and the CIO,” *Commentator*, 12 May 1941, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Takaia Larsen, “Sowing the Seeds: Women, Work and Memory in Trail, British Columbia During and After the Second World War,” MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2007, 73.

<sup>10</sup> “I Heard on the Hill That,” *Commentator*, 12 August 1941, 1.

working in non-traditional jobs.<sup>11</sup> Using a Labour Department determination that 7.7 per cent of workers in five B.C. smelters, the largest being CM&S, were women, we could estimate that as many as 500 women were employed at the smelter at the peak of wartime production.<sup>12</sup> It is an imperfect indicator, but there was no government or company record to verify how many women were employed from 1942 to 1945 (see Table 3.1 – Estimated Number of Female Employees at CM&S During WW II).<sup>13</sup> Larsen suggests that “almost 2,000 women workers” were doing traditionally male jobs during the war, but she provides little documentation.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether Larsen’s estimate is based on the problematic assumption that a woman filled every job vacated by an enlisted man. CM&S president Blaylock did not specify how many women were hired. He merely noted that they were used “extensively” and provided “splendid services” alongside “old employees [retained] after normal pensionable age.”<sup>15</sup> A current Cominco manager explains that the failure to declare the number of females was “due to communication policies at the time related to the war effort.”<sup>16</sup> It could also indicate a wartime company policy of withholding employment data.

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<sup>11</sup> Director’s Report, *CM&S Annual Report*, 1944. The 1945 report lists a 42 per cent turnover rate in Trail in that year and it jumped to 51 per cent the following fiscal year.

<sup>12</sup> Roth, 89, ft 11, cites BC Department of Labour figures showing that there were 52 women war workers for the five smelting companies surveyed and that figure rose to 207 in 1944.

<sup>13</sup> Eric W. Sager, “Women in the Industrial Labour Force: Evidence for British Columbia, 1921-53,” *BC Studies*, Issue 149, Summer 2006, 39-62, advised caution regarding the accuracy of the survey figures.

<sup>14</sup> Larsen, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Director’s Report, *CM&S Annual Report*, 1945.

<sup>16</sup> Carol Vanelli-Morosz, former communications director, Teck Resources, Ltd. Email correspondence with the author, 9 December 2016.

**Table 3.1      Estimated Number of Female Employees at CM&S During WW II**

YEAR	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	ESTIMATED FEMALES
1942	8,059	621
1943	7,647	589
1944	6,437	496
1945	6,362	489

**Source:** “Director’s Report,” CM&S Annual Reports for year indicated. The presence of female employees is acknowledged in wartime annual reports, but no figures are supplied. Thus, the estimated female workforce at the Trail smelter is a calculated guess based on a Labour Department estimate that 7.7 per cent of the wartime employees at five British Columbia smelters, the largest of which was at Trail, were female. The total number of employees includes those at Trail and Kimberley operations as well as office personnel, most of them female.

Regardless of the number of women working at CM&S plants, their greatest concern was wages. Women earned only 80 per cent of the rate enjoyed by the departing soldiers for largely the same work. As Larsen notes, “women’s wages never reached the level of men’s,” yet the CM&S ceiling was “far above” the prevailing minimum for women. She also notes that “many women across Canada were paid as low as 65 percent the wage of men.”<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the wage rate was a sore point, as one Local 480 member addressed through a *Commentator* poem:

Ladies, we invite you, now you’re  
Working on the hill,  
Come join your union brothers,  
Make this union stronger still;  
Accept no lower wages, no matter what they say,  
If you replace a man, you’re entitled to his pay.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Larsen, 23-24.

<sup>18</sup> “Poets’ Corner – To the Ladies,” *Commentator*, 20 October 1942, 4.

In the same edition an article expanded on the poem's main point, urging women to join the union "for a greater production effort for sure protection of your rights to equality," adding that "without complete equality there cannot be complete unity of purpose in winning of the war."<sup>19</sup> The writer reminded the company that lower wages to students the year before had caused production to suffer, and that the same could happen with women. Despite the magnanimity of the poem and article, women posed a continuing problem for

**Table 3.2 Individual Wage Earnings by Gender in Trail in 1951**

<b>WAGES</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>
< \$500	193	151
\$ 500 - \$ 999	111	140
\$1,000 - \$1,499	127	203
\$1,500 - \$1,999	180	185
\$2,000 - \$2,499	527	102
\$2,500 - \$2,999	1,229	42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,367</b>	<b>823</b>

**Source:** *Canada Census* (1951), Population – General Characteristics, Vol. 1, Table 64, p. 644.

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<sup>19</sup> "Women on the Hill," *Commentator*, 20 October 1942, 3.

male leadership in Local 480. Beyond lip service, poetic or otherwise, the union was not prepared to address the obvious wage disparities even if the issue reached the bargaining table (see Table 3.2 – Individual Wage Earnings by Gender in Trail in 1951).

Underlying all these tensions was a strong dedication within the smelter worker ranks to a male breadwinner model. While Local 480's Red organizers might have agreed theoretically with the ideal of female equality, they were not about to challenge bedrock working-class values. Going too far might, of course, have undermined men's support for Red leadership in the context of certification votes or local union elections. Much effort had already been expended to convince the remaining male workforce to join the union. In addition, as Roth notes, "while this assurance of equal rights may have stemmed from a strong egalitarian impulse among Local 480's membership[,] it also reflected a fear that women might undermine the union."<sup>20</sup>

A third concern was the perceived need to postpone efforts to win women's rights while war raged. Local 480 Communists, once unsupportive of the Allies, had been fully engaged in the fight against fascism since mid-1941 when the Anglo-Soviet alliance emerged following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. Women's equality, it seemed, would have to wait until that fight was won. For Trail Communists, the war became a convenient excuse: women's wage parity had to be set aside for the sake of "Total War." Ironically, wartime propaganda, whether left wing or simply pro-British, painted an unambiguously enthusiastic portrait of women war workers, showing them as integral players in the battle for increased production and in their role overseas.

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<sup>20</sup> Roth, 63.

In a 1942 article entitled “British Compliment the Work of Canadian Girls,” Trailites learned from the *Times* that some of the forty-five Canadian women working at the Mechanized Transport Corps in London, England, are “driving lorries, ambulances, government cars, mobile canteens and libraries.” One woman from Victoria is “a full-fledged mechanic and overhauls vehicles,” the article declared.<sup>21</sup> In the U.S., a University of Chicago “experiment in training women for war industries” had attracted 1,200 applicants for an initial thirty spots. Sixty women eventually attended the ten-week course to be trained for wartime roles as administrators and supervisors in “five major fields . . . office supervision, personnel problems, accounting and statistical techniques, secretarial practice, and business organization.”<sup>22</sup> Such reports encouraged Trail women to serve the war effort by doing traditional male jobs in the smelter. However, the articles did not specify that they would be doing them at discriminatory wages.

By the end of the war some of those women would question why their union had not devoted itself harder to resolve women’s workplace issues, but for the moment duty called. As Wendy Cuthbertson explains, women would be “urged to leave what was assumed to be their home-centred private life and take up the masculine public duty of aiding the war effort.” Hundreds of thousands of Canadian women would come “streaming into the nation’s industrial workplaces,” and their presence on traditionally male shop floors would soon test the sincerity of CIO claims to support equal pay for equal work.<sup>23</sup> Trail women were as keen as any to join the wartime industries. When

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<sup>21</sup> “British Compliment The Work of Canadian Girls,” *TDT*, 22 April 1942, 4.

<sup>22</sup> “Chicago Women Train to Work in War Plants,” *TDT*, 22 April 1942, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Cuthbertson, 124.



Blaylock advertised jobs for women on May Day 1942, “the firm’s employment office was swamped with women” applicants. A queue formed long before the office opened. About two hundred women applied. The *Times* ad read simply “Help Wanted Female” and requested “Applications for various types of plant work.”<sup>24</sup> But as one historian has noted, what it did not say was that they would be “saddled with excessively long training periods or were designated ‘helpers’ rather than operators.”<sup>25</sup>

The prospect of women entering the smelter workforce led one company manager to query labour department officials in Ottawa on how best to apply the B.C. Factories Act to the employment of women. “Although it is not affirmatively stated in the Act, it is intimated that no woman shall be employed before the hour of 7:00 in the morning nor after the hour of 8:00 in the evening.” He added, “it will probably be found necessary to employ women on shift work, the same as the men.”<sup>26</sup> The *Times* editor shrugged off concerns about the Factories Act, seeing the influx of women applicants as “just another indication of the willingness of the women of Canada to buckle down and co-operate for an all-out war effort.” Within the framework of Total War, women backed men, “ready and willing to step into their shoes in war factories, on farms and in all necessary civilian services.”<sup>27</sup> A news photograph, picturing a young woman at work, was archly captioned:

Not long ago this attractive Canadian girl looked upon a file as something used solely to manicure her nails. Today, after joining thousands of other

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<sup>24</sup> *TDT*, 1 May 1942, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Roth, 89, footnote 11.

<sup>26</sup> BC Archives, Cominco Records, MS 2500, Box 419, File 6, “Letter to Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Inspector, Department of Labour from CM&S,” 5 September 1942.

<sup>27</sup> “Women’s Ready Response,” *TDT*, 6 May 1942, 4.

girls in war industries, she can handle a file as deftly as any man in turning out parts in an aircraft factory.

The caption, which estimated that “between 50,000 and 75,000 women are now employed in industrial war work,” seemed at once admiring but also amazed that they might be capable of performing the male tasks.<sup>28</sup>

*Times* cartoonist Glen Lehmann’s reaction to the women was typical of smelter workers. He featured women war workers in his front-page cartoon strip, one noting that “Men workers began to look to their laurels as women were called up to register for employment.” The cartoonist asked: “Who was it said, ‘One women is as good as any two men?’”<sup>29</sup> Seventeen Trail women obviously thought the question applied to the armed forces as well when they joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, although positions open to them were still segregated from men’s roles as pilots, gunners and mechanics.<sup>30</sup>

Newspapers across the country heralded Canadian women for assisting the all-out war effort. “In Britain,” the *Times* reported, “there is a great potential of women workers, the only bar to their employment being their family responsibilities. To overcome this, hundreds of crèches and day nurseries have been opened all over the country where working women can leave their children during the day.”<sup>31</sup> Young unmarried women and those without children were saddled with the “onus of replacing men in war industry rests” with them. “Younger women who can stand the gaff should enlist in industry with the same spirit of self-sacrifice as young men who have enlisted for fighting service,”

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<sup>28</sup> “Women Join Industrial Parade,” *TDT*, 7 May 1942, 5.

<sup>29</sup> “Peek At The Week,” *TDT*, 9 May 1942, 1.

<sup>30</sup> “Women Officer Is With RCAF Recruiting Unit,” *TDT*, 7 May 1942, 4.

<sup>31</sup> *TDT*, 4 May 1942, 5.

counselled Mrs. Rex Eaton, assistant director of the women's division of Canada's national selective service program.<sup>32</sup> Trail women across all age classes willingly entered the smelter workforce "proving they could do anything a man could," according to Elsie Turnbull:

Besides office work in all departments they handled testing equipment in [the] assay office, refineries, leaching plant, ammonia and hydrogen plants and wherever needed. Dressed in coveralls, rubber boots and leather gloves, they acted as clean-up gang. They shovelled sand for concrete shell covers; they scrubbed dirty cathode plates and did light work in tank rooms.<sup>33</sup>

Women were also working at assaying, lead refining, carpentry, industrial painting, welding, "as well as various jobs in the coke ammonia, nitrate, and sulphuric acid plants and the rubber shop." Graham Dolan of the international union added that, "The women, by golly, are breaking the chains that have bound them for hundreds of years." The *Union* editor encouraged locals to support equality for women war workers with the rallying cry "More power to 'em."<sup>34</sup> It was a fresh outlook on gender equality that not all CIO unions appreciated when the war ended. While equal pay appealed to some Trail workers, women elsewhere were also concerned about the fate of B.C. men as they saw the first published casualty lists by 1942. The *Times* focused on immediate matters of war – the listed dead and missing in action after the Battle of Dieppe and other events in Europe. It was uninterested in the new social order Local 480 leaders and the

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<sup>32</sup> "Women Must Replace Men in Canadian Industries," *TDT*, 8 June 1942, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Turnbull, *Between*, 81-82.

<sup>34</sup> "Women's New Role," *Commentator*, 20 October 1942, 1-2.

left sought.<sup>35</sup> By 1945, seventy-four smelter workers had died and five were missing in action (see Table 3.3 – West Kootenay Residents in Wartime Service).<sup>36</sup>

**Table 3.3 West Kootenay Residents in Wartime Service**

RESIDENTS	NUMBER
Cdn Forces	5,884
Other	919
Cdn Other	131
Not Stated	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,031</b>
World War I	1,662
World War II	5,130
Both Wars	239

**Source:** *Canada Census* (1951), Population – General Characteristics, Vol. 1, Table 64, p. 644. Division 2 includes Trail as well as Castlegar, Kinnaird, and Salmo, three villages near Trail where many smelter workers lived.

The smelter enthusiastically hired a female workforce, especially after the *Times* reported that the West Kootenay district returned a 10,364 to 3,653 “Yes” vote in the April plebiscite on conscription for overseas military service.<sup>37</sup> The positive response

<sup>35</sup> “35 B.C. Men Are Listed,” and “Canadian Casualties At Dieppe Are 3,350,” *TDT*, 15 September 1942, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Blaylock, Director’s Report, CM&S Annual Report, 1945, copy accessed at the company Communications Office, Trail, BC.

<sup>37</sup> “Kootenay West Votes “Yes” by 10,364 to 3,653,” *TDT*, 28 April 1942, 1.

meant many men would soon leave smelter jobs. Earlier, the pro-conscription newspaper had warned that a “No” vote could lead to the Allies losing the war, reminding unions that “the very first acts of repression instituted by both Mussolini and Hitler upon their accession to power was the ruthless suppression of all labor organizations, the assassination of their leaders, and the theft of their funds.”<sup>38</sup>

In their first year on the job, Blaylock reported that women workers were “most satisfactory.”<sup>39</sup> The new company magazine, *Cominco*, added that “Women today are making one of their most direct and most important contributions to the war effort in industry.” *Cominco* columnist Jean Thomson wrote, “here in our own plant as elsewhere the women are taking over the jobs heretofore carried on by men. They are doing a good job; some are even showing how to do a better job.”<sup>40</sup> She applauded “the women power that is complementing manpower,” even if many smelter jobs were dirty, boring and tedious. Nevertheless, she wrote,

There’s something very exciting and romantic about millions of women marching to their war jobs every day and swarming home at night. Eager, busy, they are piling up material force behind the greatest armies in history. Girls who never dreamed of a job outside a department store or an office are getting grease on their hands and liking it.<sup>41</sup>

In the double bind of gender duties, however, women were still expected to “continue their labour at home” as wives, mothers, and daughters.<sup>42</sup> Despite such demands, media

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<sup>38</sup> “Labor and Plebiscite,” *TDT*, 4 April 1942, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Blaylock, Director’s Report, CM&S Annual Report, 1942, copy accessed at the company Communications Office, Trail, BC.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Thomson, “For the Ladies – Woman Power,” *Cominco*, April 1943, 25.

<sup>41</sup> Thomson, “Woman Power,” 25.

<sup>42</sup> Larsen, 29-30, compiled her list from *Cominco* magazine and interviews. She further notes that women were often assigned to janitorial duties, “but more often than not they did much the same jobs men did.”

propaganda glamourized their role. Norman Rockwell famously created the American feminist icon Rosie the Riveter as a cover illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post*, widely read by English Canadians, but Canadian propagandists had already coined Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl and other symbols for the same purpose two years earlier.<sup>43</sup>

**Table 3.4 Smelter Workforce Turnover During WWII**

YEAR	TRAIL (Percent)	KIMBERLEY (Percent)
1941	30.0	19.4
1942	55.2	40.1
1943	55.0	38.2
1944	41.9	55.2
1945	50.9	60.8

**Source:** Director’s Report, *CM&S Annual Report*, 1945, notes that the average pre-war turnover was about 10 per cent. The report adds “the labour shortage during 1945 was more acute than in any of the former war years. The situation was dealt with by giving preference to productive operations, by continuing to use women extensively, and by retaining older employees after normal pensionable age. The splendid services of the women and these older men are gratefully acknowledged.”

In Trail, men maintained control of all the supervisory positions, while women in varied ways were signalled as temporary presences. Despite their satisfactory work, their labour remained desired only so long as men were unavailable and increased employment opportunities exacerbated high turnover rates at the smelter (see Table 3.4 – Smelter Workforce Turnover During WWII). CIO unions like Mine-Mill were aware of the potential for exploitation, but the union response was hardly adequate to the task of ensuring gender equality in the workplace. The CIO was committed to a policy of equal pay for equal work, as Cuthbertson explains. “It was wartime conditions that had

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<sup>43</sup> Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 344.

encouraged CIO unions to take up the cause of women's equality," she writes, and "the most frequently used argument for equal pay was women's right to equality." However, the unions also "argued the merits of equal pay in terms of boosting the war effort and supporting male wages."<sup>44</sup> Local 480 was no different. "If women are employed at the smelter,' argued the *Commentator*,

it is partly the responsibility of the men to see that these women are paid at the going rate, and not used as a means of job competition . . . It is likely that many workers will be displaced from their present jobs for women who will . . . be given preferred jobs hoping to win them over as allies in any situation that may arise between employers and the men.

In 1942, the union paper bluntly proposed hiring the unemployed "before any stampede for women is created."<sup>45</sup> Local 480 leaders were caught betwixt their union's emancipatory rhetoric and the political and cultural realities of their male breadwinner values.

In that regard, Larsen is pointedly critical of the local, noting that president Al King's account of Local 480's wartime role was "devoid" of women workers' voices. As King stated in his memoir: "When the war was over, though, and the veterans came back to work at the Trail smelter, the women had to leave. They went willingly, I think, because they knew when they took the jobs that they were just taking our places while we were away." Larsen remarks that "there is no first-hand evidence that all female workers

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<sup>44</sup> Cuthbertson, 143.

<sup>45</sup> "Women in Industry," *Commentator*, 17 May 1942, 1.

were happy to leave their jobs, ” and asks “what voice did they have to protest?”<sup>46</sup> Local 480 never accepted women as equal members of the workforce.

The *Times* and other commentators argued that this absence of support was a sign of the times and that everyone understood that women would have to leave their wartime jobs when the men returned home, but as historian Dorothy Sue Cobble argues, in the U.S. “most hoped to keep these plum jobs at war’s end.”<sup>47</sup> Trail women may have shared that view, but Local 480’s male members and its Communist leaders never supported that possibility. Researcher Joanne Pepper’s oral history interviews with male smelter workers revealed that the men generally viewed women workers as temporary. As one interviewee put it, “my wife went to work in the hydrogen plant because she had to have something to live on while I was away.” When she was laid off, she never worked outside the home again.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, they were following masculinist traditions that hailed back to the earliest days of the mining and smelting industry in B.C. Clearly, patriarchy was central here, but for some women equality was a threat to the nuclear household ideal. Hence, many conservative women continued to oppose equal rights and sexual liberation.

Judging from Pepper’s interviews and Larsen’s conclusions, the Communists leadership’s dedication to class-based solutions and male breadwinner considerations ruled the day as women were forced out of higher-paying jobs at the end of the war. When they left their smelter jobs, at least some women, possibly the majority, stopped

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<sup>46</sup> Larsen, 73.

<sup>47</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Joanne Pepper, interviews conducted while employed at CM&S/Cominco, 1977, Tape T4350: 1-35, B.C. Archives, Cominco fond MS 2500, cited in Larsen, 65.



earning a living wage. They fell back on lower-paying work as domestics, hospitality workers, and office clerks. Many returned to unpaid work as housewives. Cobble argues that in the 1930s, when women joined union ranks in droves, “unions neither made special efforts to organize jobs in which women worked nor did they adjust their ideology to embrace the differing perspective of women.”<sup>49</sup> By the 1940s some women did take “to the picket lines and to shop-floor leadership,” but not in Trail.<sup>50</sup> Local 480 leaders gave women scant support for self-advocacy. Some of the more doctrinaire CPC members might have argued that class came foremost in the struggle against capitalism, but none seemed to consider gender or ethnicity as factors of analysis. The possibility that gender-related concerns might merge with class interests to further worker solidarity apparently did not occur to them. Instead, King and other Communist union leaders viewed women’s equality as subordinate to the real enemy, which was the capitalist class and their system. As a result, women went back to the home and returning soldiers went back to their old jobs. The male traditions were maintained, but the challenges to it would continue to stretch the limits of Mine-Mill as an advocate of gender equality.

For those women war workers who did join Local 480, some fully embraced the union. During the war, for example, Irene Vetere became a union trustee and a shop steward in the sulphate plant in Warfield. Betty Mar and Peggy Ball were also elected as trustees.<sup>51</sup> Local 480’s male members nevertheless expected the union to represent male interests first. Mine-Mill was “proud of its ‘rank and file democracy’ within which

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<sup>49</sup> Cobble, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Cobble, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Roth, 89-90, note 11.

‘women members are guaranteed equal rights’,” King stated in his memoir.<sup>52</sup> In Larsen’s view, “Mine Mill regarded women more as wives than workers. At this time they were more important to the union as auxiliaries than full-fledged members.” Serving the war effort at home was also seen by male smelter workers as more traditional women’s work: sewing, knitting, and organizing drives of one type or another, and volunteering for Red Cross duties. Even women who enlisted in the military were given a choice of mostly traditional roles. Only in the factories did women move beyond “women’s work.”

Much to some people’s surprise, women worked well. Jean Stainton, who served in the smelter’s oxide leaching plant from 1942 to 1945 at a daily wage of \$4.35, remembered enjoying the job despite male condescension. “Management realized that we were turning out to be better than they thought,” she recalled. At first, though, they “just thought we were silly women not realizing that women are very good at multi-tasking.” Stainton did not support the union. When she learned that Local 480 leaders planned to eliminate performance bonuses in favour of a more equitable wage system, she turned against Local 480. “We told them, why don’t you leave it this way? We’re getting the bonus,” she recalled. “Now if they make it that we get X number during the day we’re going to lose the bonus. We could tell that this is what would happen but they didn’t listen to us. Then they were crying afterwards.”<sup>53</sup>

Other women no doubt shared Stainton’s view that smelter jobs paid well and were a way to help soldiers overseas. They also shared her anti-union sentiments. A

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<sup>52</sup> Larsen, 72, quoting King, *Red Bait!*, 53.

<sup>53</sup> Jean Stainton interview conducted by the author, Trail, B.C., 10 May 2010. Transcript and DVD in author’s files.

“Smelterwoman,” for example, wrote to the *Times* to complain that a CIO organizer had “requested that I join the union or threatened I would lose my job.”<sup>54</sup> In a second letter, she called Murphy a liar and charged that he “doesn’t believe us women can do a man’s job and stay in the fighting line.” She advised women to “be brave and keep in line with an honest and desirable heart and soul to fight Hitlerism.”<sup>55</sup> Women critics were not new to Local 480 leaders. Early on, a *Times* letter writer accused the union of starving strikers’ children and urged the editor to “Keep on rubbing it into the C.I.O.”<sup>56</sup> Another, calling herself “A Smelterman’s Wife,” chastised union organizers for wasting workers’ precious time. “When our evening’s work is over, and the bucket is filled,” she wrote, “we take one last look at the big stacks and pray God for the safety of our men.”<sup>57</sup> Still another “Smelterman’s Wife” wrote about a young man who had died when the union refused to assist his family after he had scabbed. “Last night there were six women in my home,” she added, “and all were against the C.I.O. idea.”<sup>58</sup> A “Company Man’s Wife” argued that “If we allow a few injustices to blind us to good things, we make it very hard for our husbands. Each day they are up against the arguments meant to foment trouble [by] the agitators scattered through the plant.” She asked smelter spouses to “Stop for a minute to consider how contemptible is this element of disruption in our midst under the guise of bettering our lot.” She warned men that union leaders “will disappear fast after they have led you into trouble.”<sup>59</sup> A “Laborer’s Wife” chastised these letter writers for not

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<sup>54</sup> “Smelterwoman Urges Fight For The Truth,” *TDT*, 15 April 1943.

<sup>55</sup> “Letter – Smelterwoman Disappointed By Union Silence,” *TDT*, 21 April 1943.

<sup>56</sup> “Union Had Money For Booze, But Not Food During Mine Strike,” *TDT*, 8 March 1939.

<sup>57</sup> “No Happiness From C.I.O., Asserts Smelterman’s Wife,” *TDT*, 8 March 1939.

<sup>58</sup> “Smelterman’s Wife Tells Tragic Story of Unionism,” *TDT*, 16 March 1939.

<sup>59</sup> “Worker’s Wife Says There Is Much to Be Grateful For,” *TDT*, 5 September 1940.

identifying themselves. Isabelle Piper instead asked women to “lend a helping hand to the cause of Labor.”<sup>60</sup> In the anti-union *Times*, such letters of union support were aberrations.

Wartime jobs gave some Trail women a glimpse of “a larger world,” one that offered wider possibilities, a chance for some economic independence, and even the “opportunity to lead.” CIO support for gender equality, however halting, “contributed to their expanded sense of their rights and their proper due,” Cuthbertson argues.<sup>61</sup> Larsen agrees that women’s “horizons and opportunities did expand,” but “stereotypes and generalizations persisted.” Men’s comments about women war workers did illustrate “the dominance of a male breadwinner ideal as female competency was consistently described in male terms.”<sup>62</sup> Men’s predominant view was that a woman’s place was in the home, often couched in patriotic terms. For example, an article in the *Rossland Miner* argued that “while other nations seek to destroy our way of life, claiming womanhood and her great gift of motherhood, for the nation, we still believe, and are fighting for, the sanctity of our homes and the family life.” The writer concluded that “the strength of the nation still lies, we believe, in the home.”<sup>63</sup> Even “A Rossland Union Woman,” writing in the *Trail Ad-News*, a *Times* rival, expressed her “Women’s Appeal” in similar terms:

Do you realize that you are letting our boys down by not fighting together in an organization such as a trade union through which you can get equal rights with men, better jobs and better conditions? When you have done this you will be able to proudly welcome home and truthfully admit that

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<sup>60</sup> “Wherein The Times Is Severely Reprimanded,” *TDT*, 17 March 1939.

<sup>61</sup> Cuthbertson, 144.

<sup>62</sup> Larsen, 63.

<sup>63</sup> Janis Nairne, “Smelterwomen,” *The Arrow*, July 1973, 9.

you have done a good job while they've been gone and have made things easier for them to take over.<sup>64</sup>

Such home-front loyalty did not preclude a critical debate in Canada that would encourage Trailites to at least consider whether it was socially acceptable in post-war North America for women to join the male workforce and to challenge the breadwinner concept. In the short run, however, and like elsewhere in Canada, Trail women faced what has been called "the prevailing twentieth-century pattern of privileging men in the workforce." As Joy Parr observes, men maintained their breadwinner status under a capitalist "system run by and mainly to benefit some men."<sup>65</sup> A study of mining women reiterated the point using Mine-Mill as an example:

Mine Mill's commitment to social unionism ensured that women's activities, although separate from those of the male union members, were regarded as legitimate (at least by the leadership). Yet the space the women were able to claim within the Canadian Mine Mill still reaffirmed the male breadwinner's role and limited women's activism to the cultural prescriptions of domesticity.<sup>66</sup>

Regardless of that assumed legitimacy, it was clear that Local 480 was going to follow what Ruth Milkman described as a "family-wage ideology [that] relied heavily on the male's right to an improved standard of living as the family breadwinner, and implied a fundamental difference between the rights of male and female workers."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "A Women's Appeal," *Trail Ad-News*, 29 July 1943.

<sup>65</sup> Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 7.

<sup>66</sup> Laurie Mercier and Jaclyn Gier, eds. *Mining Women: Gender in the Development of a Global Industry, 1670 to 2005* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 239.

<sup>67</sup> Ruth Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

In mid-June 1944, when Local 480 negotiated its first working agreement in twenty-five years, women war workers' jobs went unprotected because their newly certified union agreed to "do everything in its power to help the company to carry out" its earlier promise to re-employ soldiers in their old jobs. This included "laying off all employees who have been engaged since the others enlisted."<sup>68</sup> The fact that Murphy and Local 480's Communists signed the agreement suggested that, despite the principle of equality cited in the Mine-Mill constitution, the male breadwinner tradition remained paramount in the smelter city.

That autumn, a debate occurred over who should be laid off first after the war, women or men. Blaylock honoured his agreement with the union when he announced that about 2,500 employees serving in the military would come home to their old jobs. He "hoped to continue in employment a large proportion of temporary men taken on during the war who are qualified to carry on,"<sup>69</sup> but he did not mention the women who had kept the plants running. For them, the local's political concerns paled before imminent unemployment. As Cuthbertson notes, the war had opened up a vision of "a larger world they could inhabit, one with more vocational choice, greater financial security and independence, the chance to work outside the home after marriage, and the opportunity to lead."<sup>70</sup> Larsen found that Trail women war workers depicted the war as "a time of change and mobility and the post war period as one of stagnancy and restriction," yet wartime experiences had given them new ways to perceive themselves and their

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<sup>68</sup> "Consolidated and Union Talk Labor Agreement," *TDT*, 17 June 1944.

<sup>69</sup> "C.M.&S. To Re-Employ 2,500 Men," *TDT*, 27 October 1944.

<sup>70</sup> Cuthbertson, 144.

capabilities. Larsen surmises that “they carried these changes with them for the rest of their lives, influencing their marriages and families.”<sup>71</sup> But by 1945, demands for equal opportunities for women were being postponed and any widespread effort to support such demands would not surface with any collective force until Second Wave feminism arrived in the 1960s.

As the Allies advanced towards decisive victory, and women workers prepared to resume their lives as homemakers or in more traditional female jobs, CCF MLA Laura Jamieson of Vancouver called for a 25-cent raise. The wage hike was nevertheless secondary to her desire to allow women the choice to remain in the workforce. She claimed that the “cycles of depression” among female workers “are characteristic of the capitalistic system with security of income denied the family.” She also blamed capitalism for its failure to “provide for low cost housing,” and its “refusal to provide health insurance led to a high maternal and infant mortality rate.”<sup>72</sup> Local 480’s Communists no doubt agreed, but they did not see the benefit of connecting the fight against capitalism to women workers at the smelter. Instead, they sponsored a “Smelter Queen” contest “in recognition of women’s rights.”<sup>73</sup> It was billed as part of May Day celebrations and would be a way to “pay tribute to the fighter of the fairer sex.” The *Commentator* thought it was a fitting event “in honor of their faithful service during our hour of need.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Larsen, 104.

<sup>72</sup> “Legislature Told Women Industrial Workers Feel Decrease in Production,” *TDT*, 6 March 1945, 5.

<sup>73</sup> “Smelter Queen Contest,” *Commentator*, 3 April 1945, 1.

<sup>74</sup> “Smelter Queen Contest,” *Commentator*, 24 April 1945, 2.

Murphy's *BC District Union News* reminded Trail readers that for women war workers, so much heralded, peace began with mass layoffs. As small compensation, Local 480 had asked the company to give laid-off women the annual Christmas bonus. The company complied and sent each woman \$37.50, representing "half the Christmas bonus."<sup>75</sup> It was a stinging reminder that, although they did equal work, women never received equal pay. A sarcastic *Times* letter writer would later call upon Trail women to join her "International Union of Down-trodden Housewives of Trail, Rossland, and Kimberley." She signed the letter "Aw. Turnitoffsky," a pun referring to Murphy's original surname Churnikovsky.<sup>76</sup> Some women no doubt found it humorous, but the loss of jobs and the union's disregard were no laughing matter.

Although most of Trail's women war workers returned to traditional roles, they had precipitated what Claudia Goldin called a "quiet revolution" in which ever more women entered the workforce in the ensuing decades. "These working-class women," Laurier Mercier suggests, "sought more fundamental change, both in their relationships with male unions and in the world. They struggled for women's equal rights and universal child care, world peace, and inter-racial solidarity, and in general a more progressive postwar society."<sup>77</sup> Regrettably, change came slowly.<sup>78</sup> In the 1950s, married

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<sup>75</sup> "Bonus Won," *BC District Union News*, 15 December 1945, 1.

<sup>76</sup> "Letter - Ladies Only," *TDT*, 21 September 1946, 4; and, "Locals Condemn Disruption, Send Back Petitions," *BC District Union News*, 21 January 1946, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Laurie Mercier, "Gender, Labor, and Place: Reconstructing Women's Spaces in Industrial Communities of the Canadian and U.S. Wests," draft manuscript for an article submitted to *Labor History*, Volume 53, Issue 3 (August 2012), 389-407, 403.

<sup>78</sup> Chris Cescon, videotaped interview by the author, Trail, B.C., 12 May 2013, worked in the smelter's old melting room in 1979, part of a new wave of women workers redolent of the war workers of the 1940s. She was active in Local 480, twice joining the bargaining committee, but she recalls that sexism was common. She also joined the local's women's committee, which was intended to improve the lot of women workers on the hill, but they faced a steep climb.



women in Canada represented 39 per cent of wage-earning women and in “manufacturing it was even higher.”<sup>79</sup> In Trail, however, fewer women found non-traditional work at the smelter. With the war in Europe won, the CM&S and Local 480 welcomed soldiers with promised jobs. Considering the actions of Murphy and Local 480 Communists regarding women war workers, gender analysis reveals that Trail women experienced material inequality (i.e., class) after the war. Concerns for returning veterans ensured that most women would not realize a continuation of their wartime earnings and status. Some did praise women, even advocating that they remain in smelter jobs, but the prospect of former employees returning home after risking all for country and freedom created an immense political and ethical problem for those who wished to maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, another group of Trail women was preparing to enter the debate about conflicting male-female traditions.

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Two years after the first wave of women war workers entered the smelter gates, Local 480 leaders welcomed the formation of Ladies Auxiliary Local 131, chartered on 27 June 1944. “The ladies have shown great interest in the struggle of Local 480,” Mine-Mill representative Don Guise, another Communist, told the *BC District Union News*. Thirty women signed the charter application. Edith Woytella was the first president, A. Littlely was secretary-treasurer, and Leona Pollack was recording secretary.<sup>80</sup> The executive also included Edna Henne, wife of Local 480 president Fred Henne, and Kay

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<sup>79</sup> Sager, 59.

<sup>80</sup> “Trail Ladies Get Charter,” *BC District Union News*, 10 July 1944, 6.

Dosen, wife of Dan Dosen, a charter member of the local. Dosen, a Communist, had worked closely with CIO organizer Slim Evans in the late 1930s. Communist Tillie Belanger, wife of Local 480's first president Gar Belanger, was among the founding members, and she and Kay Dosen added political action to the auxiliary agenda.

Larsen's study discounts the possibility of an effective political role for the auxiliary, arguing that in the post-war period Local 480 leaders relegated women to a support role:

Although much progress and many changes had indeed occurred during the war regarding ideas about gender, after the war it was simpler to regress back to those "old ideas" and circumvent those changes even within a union which claimed to recognize "the rights of all women to free independence, the right to be treated as equals with men in all dealings such as wages, working conditions and grievances."<sup>81</sup>

Although Larsen is undoubtedly correct within the context of Trail, she does not acknowledge the independence of Trail women within the auxiliary. As other scholars have recognized, such organizations had separate constitutions and the political will to act in the interests of women as well as men at the smelter. Trail's auxiliary was a prime example of how "auxiliaries offered a way for them to participate in class politics and work for their economic interests and communities outside the home," notes Mercier. She adds that Mine-Mill, unlike many international unions, "recognized the broader political and economic value of women's participation and actively encouraged women's auxiliary membership, often arguing that 'A union without the women is only half organized'."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Larsen, 79-80, quoting "Smelter Women and the Union," *Commentator*, 15 March 1943, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Laurie Mercier, "Borders, Gender, and Labor: Canadian and U.S. Mining Towns during the Cold War Era," in Oliver J. Dinius and Angela Vergara, eds., *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities* (Athens/London: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 158-172, 162,

The presence of Communists on the auxiliary executive might have created a sense of complacency amidst Local 480's Red leaders; after all, even before LA Local 131 was chartered there had been some feistiness among female Trailites. A few months earlier, Henne addressed a meeting of future auxiliary women, suggesting their function was to "be a follow-up of Local 480." Lucia Sigfried, a visiting LA vice-president from Idaho, countered that the auxiliary did not "just follow" but worked alongside the local.<sup>83</sup> She won the point and got a round of applause. Once chartered, the auxiliary immediately showed its support for the Communist-led local, yet it maintained that it was independent of the union. Belanger and Dosen subscribed as much to the Mine-Mill constitution as their spouses. They were not interested in playing the wartime role of other Trail spouses, such as participating in the Red Cross knitting circles, and some refused to be known solely as the wife of someone, an identifier that even the *Times* women's page editor had rejected.

It stood to reason, then, that ladies auxiliary members would not see themselves as a mere adjunct of the male-dominated union, providing meals, organizing bake sales, and supporting husbands. Contrary to some male expectations, they planned to actively defend the union against anti-Communist attacks. Years later, spouses of prominent Local 480 activists broadcast a message of support entitled "How Disruption of Our Union Affects the Womenfolk."<sup>84</sup> Tillie Belanger occasionally used the *Union* newspaper to warn that Local 480's enemies "are nothing more than vultures out to destroy you and

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quoting from the "Report of the Proceedings of the 38<sup>th</sup> Convention," Joplin, Missouri, August 1941, 9-10, 84-85.

<sup>83</sup> "Ladies Form Auxiliary," *Commentator*, 29 April 1944, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Constable Murray, 6 March 1950.

Mine-Mill.” Her politics were clearly stated in one article where she argued against union action that “tends to disunite the working class but strengthens the ruling class to the point where it can further exploit and destroy the Trade Union Movement and the freedom of the working class.”<sup>85</sup> As Local 480 president Henne learned, LA Local 131 members could often be fiercely independent but remain ideologically in agreement with him and other local left-wing leaders.

One *Commentator* writer, perhaps recalling Sigfried, reflected on how “brothers and sisters of the surrounding communities” had worked side by side to establish “a broader democracy in the feudal empire of the Consolidated.”<sup>86</sup> As an example, during the 1946 mine workers strike in B.C., Murphy, not always seen as a strong supporter of women, remarked that workers’ spouses stood “staunchly beside our brothers” during strikes.<sup>87</sup> But he, as with Henne and other Local 480 leaders, usually viewed the auxiliaries as being behind rather than alongside the union. King, for example, claimed that they recognized the importance of auxiliaries, but Larsen challenged the claim:

His statement about the function of these Auxiliaries illustrates the attitudes towards women that the union held: “Their purpose, as set out in our Constitution, was to see to ‘education and training of women in the labour movement and to assist their Local Union in time of need and labour disputes, to support the Union in its legislative efforts and to provide educational and cultural activities for our members and their children’.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> “Calls raiders ‘vultures’,” *Union*, 24 April 1950, 4.

<sup>86</sup> “What Local 480 Means to Our Town,” *Commentator*, 29 April 1944, 3.

<sup>87</sup> *BC District Union News*, 6 May 1946.

<sup>88</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 52.

Larsen added that King, while proud of his union's "rank and file democracy" and its putative guarantee of women's rights, "regarded women more as wives than workers."<sup>89</sup> Like Henne, the men of Local 480 seemed to envisage a typical LA member as a "good union girl" who "worked to support her family, used makeup moderately, kept her stocking seams straight, and went out on the picket line with her man because having 'girls come on the line . . . puts more pep in the gas'."<sup>90</sup>

Contrary to that image, auxiliary members were far from mere sponsors of social activities like whist parties and tea dances. In fact, Mine-Mill's Canadian auxiliary constitution's mandate included the education and training of women in the labour movement, assistance to their local unions in times of need and labour disputes, support for the union regarding legislative work, and the provision of educational and cultural activities for children. Elizabeth and Andrea Quinlan argue that Trail's LA Local 131 and other Canadian auxiliaries applied themselves to achieving their political ends through the execution of their constitutional obligations. Through their study of auxiliary newsletters from some of the twenty-five Mine-Mill LA locals that existed in Canada in the late 1940s, the Quinlans concluded:

traditional forms of 'women's' work were crucial to maintaining the social fabric of the union and provided a local system supporting the health and welfare of the community. However, the MMSW LA was more than a 'reserve army' of emotional and supportive labourers. Their independence from the men's locals was formalized in the MMSW's and Auxiliary Constitutions. In practice, their fund-raising activities provided them with

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<sup>89</sup> Larsen, 72.

<sup>90</sup> Quinlan and Quinlan, 137.

some financial autonomy, which they used to support their own political agenda including women's emancipation.<sup>91</sup>

Mercier points to examples of how auxiliaries assumed a political role, struggling for "women's equal rights and universal child care, world peace, and inter-racial solidarity, and in general a more progressive postwar society."<sup>92</sup> Members "took advantage of strikes to station themselves publicly on picket lines, they utilized assumptions about their roles in the feminized space of the kitchen to insert themselves into union affairs." At auxiliaries like LA Local 131, "the male unionists' attention to the kitchen space, to the women's delight, represented some acknowledgement of the women's value to the union's cause and an accession to at least one of their requests." But the process of being acknowledged as political activists was frustrating. A Cobalt, Idaho, auxiliary president urged her members to continue offering their help to the local union, but she also urged them to insist that "women can do more than cook a good dinner, put on a banquet or help with that dance or picnic."<sup>93</sup>

Although Mine-Mill auxiliaries worked primarily to support the development and preservation of a democratic union movement, police officers saw them as potentially subversive organizations. Mercedes Steedman further elaborates:

During the post-war period, whenever an auxiliary in Rossland, British Columbia, or Port Colborne, Ontario, held a tea party, local RCMP officers would report the event to the Security and Intelligence Branch in Ottawa."

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<sup>91</sup> Quinlan and Quinlan, 150.

<sup>92</sup> Laurie Mercier, "Gender, Labor, and Place: Reconstructing Women's Spaces in Industrial Communities of the Canadian and U.S. Wests," *Labor History*, Volume 53, Issue 3 (August 2012), 389-407, 403.

<sup>93</sup> Mercier, 399.

Even Christmas raffles, bazaars, and charity draws were documented.<sup>94</sup> In the case of Communists Belanger and Dosen of LA Local 131, police interest was piqued even further. Like other progressive auxiliary members, they “worked for the cessation of weapons testing, for full disarmament, and for the creation of conditions that ‘would enable women to fulfill their roles in society, as mothers, workers, and citizens which includes the right to work, the protection of motherhood, equal rights with regards to marriage, children and property’.” Mine-Mill women like those in the Trail auxiliary, “held a different vision of postwar economic and social recovery, and in the immediate postwar years, week after week, year after year, they continued to organize around that vision and build on it, despite constant RCMP intimidation and surveillance.”<sup>95</sup>

The Trail auxiliary’s organizational skills were recognized at the international level. Some U.S. auxiliary leaders credited LA Local 131 as an innovator. In fact, International Mine-Mill promoted the local’s display of leadership as a way to increase auxiliary involvement, including an essay contest in which one of the essay writers argued that “women needed to join men in ‘upholding our International Constitution’, and ‘preserve the democratic rights of all workers’ including ‘freedom to choose one’s own religion, or politics’.”<sup>96</sup> The essay, the contest winner, was written by Rachel Wood, a former wartime worker at the Trail smelter and LA Local 131’s financial secretary.

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<sup>94</sup> Mercedes Steedman, “The Red Petticoat Brigade: Mine Mill Women’s Auxiliaries and the Threat from Within, 1940s-70s” in G. Kinsmen, D. Buse, and M. Steedman (eds), *Whose National Security: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000) 55-71, 55.

<sup>95</sup> Steedman, 68.

<sup>96</sup> “Prize-winning essay: What Being a Member of an MMSW Auxiliary Means to Me,” *Union*, 24 April 1950, 6.

Perhaps the Trail auxiliary's boldest organizational effort was a defensive action in 1947 when Belanger and Dosen, among others, took issue with Butte, Montana, miner's spouse Mary Orlich, president of Mine-Mill's international auxiliaries. During the 1946 Butte miners' strike, Orlich had "invoked the language of class in urging others to 'war on these big bosses'," but that January she had "quickly diverted her wrath away from corporations and onto Mine Mill."<sup>97</sup> "Commies are a common enemy," she declared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and pledged to "organize all housewives in America to fight this scourge."<sup>98</sup> Canadian auxiliary president Kay Carlin of Sudbury, Ontario, warned Orlich that she was "playing right into the hands of reaction."<sup>99</sup> LA Local 77 at Kirkland Lake, Ontario, demanded Orlich's "immediate expulsion from the ranks of honest working women," a call Kimberley's LA Local 137 supported.<sup>100</sup> The Trail auxiliary even more fiercely opposed Orlich, accusing her of "pandering to the capitalist press."<sup>101</sup> "You say it is the Commies who are disrupting the unions," wrote LA Local 131 recording secretary E.M. Busquet, but "it is people like yourself, who are the stooges of Big Business by playing right along with them in the labor splitting tactics, who are the true disruptors." Her next statement might have come directly from Belanger or Dosen, the two leading Reds in the Trail auxiliary group:

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<sup>97</sup> Mercier, "'A Union Without Women is Only Half Organized': Mine Mill Women's Auxiliaries, and Cold War Politics in the North American Wests," in Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (eds.), *One Step Over the Line: Towards a History of Women in the North American Wests* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press/University of Alberta Press, 2008), 7 (downloaded version pagination).

<sup>98</sup> "Miner's Wife Fights Off Red Invasion of Union," *Saturday Evening Post*, 18 January 1947. Orlich was married to one-time Butte Local 1 president Dan Orlich who also became a vocal anti-Communist.

<sup>99</sup> Mercier, "A Union Without...", 7.

<sup>100</sup> "More for Mary," *B.C. District Union News*, 3 March 1947, 4; "Demand resignation," 24 March 1947, 2.

<sup>101</sup> "Auxiliary Activities," *B.C. District Union News*, 30 April 1947, 7.



You are in the same category as the Hitlerites in Germany and the Mussolinis in Italy who first disunited the unions through rotten propaganda and then were able to build Nazism and Fascism. Do you want this to happen in America? We believe that you have made a terrible error in attacking a minority group in the Union and that you [must] resign immediately . . . .<sup>102</sup>

Other Canadian auxiliary members called Carlin the troublemaker. The *Times* fanned these ideological differences and the resulting dissension among Canadian auxiliaries. It predictably saluted Orlich for her stand against Communists in the union movement. Relying heavily on the *Post* article, the *Times* editor agreed with Orlich that “when the commies are in the picture, nobody wins.”<sup>103</sup>

The affair led International Mine-Mill to organize a new auxiliary central body after charging Orlich with “deliberately neglecting Canadian locals ‘for disruptive reasons’.” Orlich continued to battle the Communists, but she was marginalized within the union. Mine-Mill men also condemned Orlich’s Red baiting but, as Mercier notes, they did so through gender stereotyping, dismissing her as “a particular gender rather than [a] political weakness.” The Tired Mucker, Murphy’s star columnist, characterized her as “just a simple little housewife,” impugning that she was a racist duped by the “Great Dog” of capitalism.<sup>104</sup> A Butte Mine-Mill Local 1 executive member accused Orlich of “meddling in men’s union affairs” and the *Post* article was “the usual run of anti-union hokum.”<sup>105</sup> LA members like Belanger and Dosen rejected such sexist

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<sup>102</sup> “Auxiliary Activities,” *B.C. District Union News*, 14 April 1947, 7.

<sup>103</sup> “Miner’s Wife Fights Red Invasion,” *TDT*, 16 January 1947, 4. Mary Orlich was married to Dan Orlich, an executive member of Local 1 in Butte and one-time president.

<sup>104</sup> “An Open Letter to Mrs Mary Orlich,” *B.C. District Union News*, 17 January 1947, 3. Note that Murphy identifies the Tired Mucker as Ted Ward, “the tired-looking man with the pipe who taught me almost everything I know about newspaper work,” “Around the District,” *B.C. District Union News*, July 1955, 5.

<sup>105</sup> “Mason Knows the Score on This,” *B.C. District Union News*, 4 February 1947, 4.

attitudes, but with the Orlich battle concluded they turned to other initiatives, including support for Local 480 in its confrontations with the CM&S.

Although Trail's auxiliary continued to fight anti-Communist union adversaries, the Local 480 leadership's view of its role was not one of equal partnership such as Idaho auxiliary president Sigfried had described to president Henne. Instead it was to be a mere appendage of the male union's class war in Trail. Mercier argues that this "inability to embrace the potential of working-class solidarity across gender lines, union rhetoric to the contrary, diminished labor internationalism's clout to match global capital."<sup>106</sup> More contradictions loomed.<sup>107</sup> Belanger and Dosen would themselves be irritated by their own party's view that women merited only secondary status and that "by failing to question the ideal of the male breadwinner, socialists obscured a full exploration of women's economic exploitation" well into the future.<sup>108</sup>

Murphy had always acknowledged that a successful auxiliary could overcome the idea that a trade union "is only for the men and women have no interest... [The] whole family is affected." If not for women's organizing, he claimed, "strikes in mining towns would not be effective." Therefore, the labour movement "is as important to bring home to the women as it is to the men." Murphy highlighted women's "power" in the home and

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<sup>106</sup> Mercier, 403.

<sup>107</sup> Betty Donaldson to William Longridge, 9 and 20 May 1964, IUMMSW (Canada) Files, Box 62, File 16, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia, reveals that in 1964 auxiliary president Betty Donaldson resigned after complaining to Canadian Mine-Mill secretary-treasurer William Longridge that she could not abide a decision to raid an iron mine on Texada Island, BC. "Raiding is wrong and will only lead to destruction," she argued. Longridge replied that the Texada situation was part of the ongoing struggle to hold Mine-Mill strongholds. It seemed on odd discussion considering that Mine-Mill had fought against Red-baiting Steel raiders in the 1950s.

<sup>108</sup> Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 236.

in reaching other women in the community. He also admitted that the “main trouble there is still the attitude of the men towards the Auxiliary,” but by then the moment for achieving effective class solidarity, combining gender with class, was fast disappearing.<sup>109</sup>

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When Trail’s women welcomed home their smelter soldiers, they met men who were suffering disillusionment different from their own. Men who saw fellow veterans forced to congregate in hobo jungles before the war, now seemingly resigned again to similar camps, asked themselves whether anything had changed. While they were abroad, their smelter colleagues, male and female, had engaged in an internal war that involved repeated attacks on Local 480 Communists. The *Commentator* told them that Mine-Mill leaders were being “persecuted, jailed, beaten, hunted by police, and killed” for activities in militant trade unions. It blamed the “Red Bogey” for undermining “organized labor, its leaders or supporters, who with justice in their hearts, fought to better the lot of the common man.” These “Red Bogey men,” who use “this Red issue,” were declared “despicable.” They “fall into the Hitler category in attempting to divert the attention of people away from the real issues so that these reactionaries can become the ruling force.” Such tactics, the paper warned, would “cause division and return us to the road to Fascism.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Mercier, 399, quoting Murphy’s correspondence with Mine-Mill’s western auxiliary organizer Betty Donaldson, 11-13-62, Box 62 folder 16, IUMMSW Western District Union Files 1955-67, Ladies Auxiliaries, 1962-64, UBC.

<sup>110</sup> “Editorial – The Red Bogey,” *Commentator*, 4 June 1945, 2.

With women war workers returning to traditional roles, the notion of a future free of gender bias was postponed. Women continued to support men and men continued to foreground the male breadwinner ideal. The auxiliary maintained its independent stance and, as internal workplace conflict intensified between Mine-Mill, the ISWU, and later the raiding Steelworkers union, LA Local 131 members found themselves filling more pressing political support roles but also functioning as food providers and social conveners. War weary Trailites may have been forgiven for feeling indifference to the fast-paced political developments being set in motion by a federal election call in mid-1945. Their weariness soon increased after learning in the *Times* that Trail smelter workers had been secretly producing “heavy water which is used to control the release of energy in the [atomic] bomb.”<sup>111</sup> Coupled with those worries, the men and women of Trail would once again have to choose sides regarding Local 480. The end of the war transitioned to another kind of war, and the union again found itself at the centre of conflict. It would be a war of ideologies with the Catholic Church playing a key role within the smelter city’s immigrant enclave and on the anti-Red frontlines.

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<sup>111</sup> “Trail Helped in Atomic Bomb,” *TDT*, 13 August 1945, 1. Ron Verzuh, “Blaylock’s Bomb: How a Remote British Columbia City Helped Create the World’s First Weapon of Mass Destruction,” *BC Studies* (Summer 2015), provides a full account of the Trail smelter’s role.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics in Trail's Immigrant Enclave**

When the Second World War officially ended on 2 September 1945 with Japan's surrender, social relations were forever altered both globally and in remote corners such as Trail. Local servicemen began to return to their old jobs, supplanting women at the CM&S smelter. Some soldiers welcomed their new status as Local 480 members; others balked at its Communist leadership. There were mixed memories of the "good old days" when Blaylock's Workmen's Co-operative Committee (WCC) reigned in Trail, and some of its remnants remained irreconciled to the new Red union. When the opportunity arose, they again worked to oust Local 480. Now, though, they and others emphasized anti-Communist arguments. Indeed, post-war battles involved nativist attitudes, ethnic traditions, cultural differences, Old World politics, and religious affiliations within Trail's immigrant enclave. The Catholic Church and Protestant denominations emerged as key opponents of Local 480, influencing some in their congregations with spiritually based critiques of Communism.

In autumn 1945 the *Trail Daily Times* was busy reporting scientific details of the atomic bomb, advising Trailites how to cope with possible future bombings. This further fuelled post-war fears, especially among immigrants whose families in Europe had been directly affected by the war. Synchronized with Church intentions, the daily also resumed its crusade against socialism and Communism. Following the *Vancouver Sun*, it declared, Marxist intellectual Harold Laski, as that "high priest of the left" who "shouts from every stump in England that the new age of communism is dawning and that capitalism will

soon be only a memory.”<sup>1</sup> Although local church leaders from three major denominations held different shades of opinion, they largely backed the *Times*’s opposition to Communist-led dissent. Before the war, Trail clergy frequently advised immigrant parishioners, especially Catholics from Italy, Croatia, and other Slavic communities, to avoid unions and “those Godless Communists” at Local 480.<sup>2</sup> Now they redoubled their efforts and members of the clergy who had supported unionization also came under attack. Always critical of Red sympathizers, the *Times* was unrelenting in its excoriation of Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup> Christened the “Red Dean” by the media, the head of the Church of England was criticized for preaching cooperation with the Soviet Union in the rebuilding of the post-war world.<sup>4</sup> Johnson was not the only minister to support unions, but most religious leaders counselled their working-class congregations to beware of Red outsiders such as Mine-Mill western regional director Harvey Murphy.

Interestingly, one of Murphy’s early experiences with the Church ended up helping the union during the Crow’s Nest Pass miners’ strike of 1932. Reverend M.A. Harrington, who later became the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kamloops, B.C., refused to

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<sup>1</sup> “A Word Of Advice,” *TDT*, 12 October 1945, 4. At the time, Laski, a political theorist and economist, served as chair of the British Labour Party. See Michael Newman, *Harold Laski: A Political Biography* (London: Merlin Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 31. *Canada Census* (1941) Vol. II, Table 38, p. 637, records that Trail’s population was 30 percent Catholic. The separate municipality of Tadanac, a CM&S management enclave was 12 percent Catholic. Perhaps as much as half the smelter workforce was Catholic.

<sup>3</sup> Support for Hewlett’s views among Trail’s Anglicans and the English primate’s political views were scarcely binding on Canadian prelates. The November 1947 Synod of the Ontario church, for example, heard a thundering denunciation of “Russia and Communism” from a senior bishop, C.A. Seager. See “Archbishop Seager Dies,” *London Free Press*, 10 September 1948.

<sup>4</sup> “Prime Minister Is Interviewed – Believes Anglo-American Friendship Is First Need,” *TDT*, 28 October 1942, 1. See also John Butler, *The Red Dean of Canterbury: The Public and Private Faces of Hewlett Johnson* (London: Scala Publishers, 2011).

join an anti-union campaign. In Blairmore, Alberta's "Red Square," Murphy denounced Protestant ministers, but exempted "the Catholic priest who has remained neutral."<sup>5</sup> Things were different in Trail where smelter workers soon heard Church elders tout a pro-employer ideology, and religiously sanctioned political views carried influence. In Trail's pioneer years, however, there was "a culture or subculture in which non-belief was an acceptable option," Lynne Marks explains, and in the West Kootenay's mining and smelting communities "this culture was grounded in labour radicalism and socialism."<sup>6</sup> Even so, many Local 480 members rejected the atheism of Communist labour leaders such as Murphy, Al King, Gar Belanger, and Harry Drake. King was in fact a kind of object lesson of the link between Marxism and godlessness. A former altar boy and future local president, King once remarked, "I'd never heard of good people not believing in God," yet his reading of *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* led him to reject the Church.<sup>7</sup> Not all union members followed this path, but in Trail the Communist-led union was understood as at least irreligious, if not anti-Christian.

This was no small matter in Trail. The town boasted at least thirteen churches, and parishioners, especially immigrant families, attended regularly.<sup>8</sup> Denominations included Mormons, Baptists, Lutherans and Seventh Day Adventists (see Table 4.1 – Religious

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<sup>5</sup> Allen Seager, "The Pass Strike of 1932," *Alberta History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 1977), 1-11, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Lynne Marks, *Infidels and the Damn Churches: Irreligion and Religion in Settler British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 47.

<sup>7</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Jamie Forbes, "Churches," *Trail of Memories: Trail, BC 1895-1945* (Trail, BC: Trail History and Heritage Committee, 1997). *Canada Census* (1941) Vol. II, Table 38, p. 637, records that Trail was twenty-one percent Anglican (Church of England). This rose to thirty percent in Tadanac where Blaylock, an Anglican, would have been counted.

Denominations in Trail, 1941-1951). A significant minority of Trailites were Church of England (Anglicans), but perhaps half the population was Roman Catholic. Moreover,

**Table 4.1 Religious Denominations in Trail 1941-1951**

<b>Denominations</b>	<b>Number of Adherents</b>	<b>% in Trail (1951)</b>	<b>% in Trail (1941)</b>	<b>% in Tadanac (1941)</b>
Baptist	203			
Ch of England	2,058	17.93	20.04	30.19
Gr Orthodox	56			
Jewish	49			
Lutheran	319			
Mennonite	21			
Presbyterian	1,145	10.01		
Catholic	3,520	30.79	30.24	12.35
Uk/Gr/Cath	57			
United Church	3,418	29.90	22.90	38.62
Other	584			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,430</b>			

**Source:** *Canada Census* (1951), Population – General Characteristics, Vol. 1, Table 41, p. 489. *Canada Census* (1941), Religious Denominations in Canada, Vol. 2, Table 38, p. 637.

**Note:** Tadanac, Canada spelled backwards with a T for Trail, was the nearby CM&S management community built on company property.



religious life was never merely local. The politics of Ontario, Quebec, and the home country circulated within the clergy and laity. The religious and the secular mixed freely in the local smelter workforce. On the surface this could seem irrelevant to Local 480. Church attendance was not an official concern of the union, and smelter workers were free to worship as they pleased. Indeed, prominent labour leaders encouraged this. CIO president Philip Murray and Canadian Steelworker president Charles Millard both came from strong Christian backgrounds.<sup>9</sup> Their religious motivations and the social gospel messages of CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth, Methodist Marxist Albert E. Smith, and Toronto-based Salem Brand influenced many. The “call for men to find the meaning of their lives in seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society,” as Richard Allen explains, likened socialism to a radical form of Christianity in the minds of many labourers.<sup>10</sup> Smith spoke of the “essentially religious spirit of Labour” and founded several labour churches in Western Canada before abandoning Christianity in favour of Communism.<sup>11</sup> Within a short period after the end of the war, however, church attitudes in Trail rapidly turned towards rabid anti-Communism. A *Times* reprint from *The Canadian Churchman* illustrated that attitude when it stated that “Communism is a creed of nihilistic revolution, for the attainment of which all cruelties and all betrayals of normal human values are justified.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Laurel Sefton Macdowell, “The Career of a Canadian Trade Union Leader: C.H. Millard 1937-1946,” *Industrial Relations* Vol. 43, No. 3 (1988), 609–632, 611, provides details about Millard’s religious background.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, “Labour Churches,” 159.

<sup>12</sup> “Communist – This is it,” *TDI*, 29 September 1948, 3.

As Local 480's enemies multiplied, union leaders concluded that a key challenge was first- and second-generation immigrant families, most of whom retained some of their Old World values. Their forefathers and foremothers had come to Trail during the late nineteenth-century migrations from Europe. Among the first to arrive in 1895 were the Italians some of whom travelled north from Montana copper magnate F. Augustus Heinze's Butte smelter (see Table 4.2 – Immigration to Trail by Period of Migration).<sup>13</sup> Ensuing immigrants were lured by New World promises of shipping agents who were paid for delivering cheap and docile labourers to companies such as the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and its CM&S operations in Trail. By 1910, more than half the smelter workforce in Trail was Italian.<sup>14</sup> By 1939, however, 75 percent of the workforce was

**Table 4.2      Immigration to Trail by Period of Migration**

<b>YEARS</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
1911-1920	635
1921-1930	1,028
1931-1940	213
1941-1945	28
1946-1951	535
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,439</b>

**Source:** *Canada Census* (1951), Population – General Characteristics, Vol. 1, Table 52, p. 525.

<sup>13</sup> Elsie Grant Turnbull, *Trail: A Smelter City* (Langley, B.C.: Sunfire Publications Ltd., 1985), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Scott, "Profusion," 61.

native to Canada or other parts of the British Empire, suggesting that second-generation eastern and southern Europeans had assimilated.<sup>15</sup> This made both social and economic sense. Immigrant children were on average better educated, had tradesmen's credentials, and were more likely to be promoted to shift boss and foremen roles. During the war, many immigrant women filled the positions of their soldier spouses and other male relatives.

To win certification in 1944, and to retain its membership over the next decade, Local 480 leaders understood they had to appeal to immigrant workers and their families. This meant accepting, or at least tolerating, labourers' strong religious ties and the anti-union propaganda coming from the pulpits. The union's efforts to engage non-Anglo labourers, though, fuelled nativist and racist complaints that "foreigners" had brought the Communist union to Trail. It was a view that politicians and governments reinforced with dark pronouncements about outside agitators, often assumed to be foreigners. Thus, while in principle the union was "absolutely committed to the fight for full racial equality," the social and cultural geography of Trail imposed a number of practical constraints on what the union could fight for without alienating a majority of Trailites.<sup>16</sup> The term "racial" applied primarily to African Americans in the U.S. although Asians increasingly battled for similar rights on the West Coast in the twentieth century, and Mine-Mill's constitution reflected that usage. However, as David Roediger and others have argued, "the equation of blackness with the ethnicity of new immigrant groups" within the labour

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<sup>15</sup> *Annual Report*, CM&S, 1939.

<sup>16</sup> Hunter Bear, "A Page from the History of a Fighting Union," *Socialist Viewpoint*, Volume 4, Number 8, September 2004, [http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/sept\\_04/sept\\_04\\_10.html](http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/sept_04/sept_04_10.html), in an obituary for Herbert Hill, labour secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

movement lessened the status of the “other.” The concept of “whiteness,” he adds, allowed Anglo-Saxon workers to make themselves the default standard of racial acceptance. Italians in Trail, by contrast, or any person with a more swarthy complexion faced discrimination based on a peculiarly northern European metric of whiteness.<sup>17</sup>

Political pressures only mounted with reports that the U.S. was deporting left-wing immigrants, a threat that only grew with the McCarran Internal Security Act and Walter-McCarran Act in the 1950s. The result was a “nationwide roundup of foreign-born workers and political activists.”<sup>18</sup> Such news must have concerned some within Trail’s immigrant enclave, particularly those who fled to Canada to escape because of depression, war, and discrimination in Europe. Many had come from Catholic countries with strong antipathies to leftist ideology. Parents conveyed Old Country convictions to their sons and daughters, but there is no clear evidence that the second-generation adopted parental views. Conversely, Local 480’s long struggle to gain support, and local churches’ anti-union views suggest that cultural factors did influence union acceptance before the war. Such values remained prominent in Trail’s immigrant enclave after 1945, playing a significant role as Cold War anti-Communism surged. Thus, even after Local 480 became the legal representative of smelter workers, Catholic and Protestant clerics remained opposed to Communism. Using religion to build opposition to unions might

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<sup>17</sup> David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London/New York: Verso, 1999), 179.

<sup>18</sup> Fred Rinaldo, “Defending Foreign Born Workers” in Anne Fagan Ginger and David Christiano, eds., *The Cold War Against Labor: An Anthology*, Vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute 1987), 553.

have seemed a new tactic to Trail unionists, but in fact it was as old as the labour movement itself.

In the formative days of North American unionism, the “Protestant religious press was bloodthirsty in its reaction” to workers in general, noted Richard Hofstadter. “The laborers were described as ‘wild beasts’ and ‘reckless desperadoes’” who “if they could not be clubbed into submission” should be “mowed down with cannon and Gatling guns.”<sup>19</sup> Organized religion tempered its anti-proletarian views in the 1930s. Mainstream Protestant churches, perhaps sensing they were losing working-class support, noticeably softened their views on unions, even embracing the CIO’s industrial unionism. Catholic Churches encouraged clergymen to work with unions, depending on the circumstances. Ironically, Local 480 leaders found themselves reprinting excerpts from the sermons of several American religious leaders, including a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. “Religious leaders of all faiths have gone on record many times in support of collective bargaining through union organization,” noted the *Commentator*, adding that

They realize that genuine social justice, a fundamental principle of all religious teachings, must be put into action in our world today. They recognize the only possible way of putting this principle into action; by means of collective bargaining by the workers through a union of their own choice.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 150.

<sup>20</sup> “The Church Speaks Out for Organized Labor,” *Commentator*, 2 November 1938.

The union organ added that the “company-dominated Union, the so-called independent Union, labor spies, the discharge and the blacklist, are still too frequently the American industrialist’s answer to man’s fundamental fight to organize.”<sup>21</sup>

Father Charles Owen Rice, discussed later in the context of anti-Communist Church actions, was lauded in the Local 480 paper for his opposition to company unions such as Blaylock’s WCC. “No matter what happens,” Rice remarked, “the companies win and the workers lose.”<sup>22</sup> Richard L.G. Deverall, editor of the *Christian Front*, opined that Pope Leo XIII believed Catholic unions were “most appropriate” and that the CIO was an organization that “took in all the workers, including Negroes and the unskilled.” Many of Trail’s Italians and other southern and eastern Europeans fit the latter category. “Not only is it every Catholic’s privilege to join the CIO,” Deverall said, “but it is every Catholic’s duty to join this union.”<sup>23</sup> Methodist Bishop Francis J. McConnell also appeared in the *Commentator*, stating that the “non-union man eats the fruit planted and cultivated by the unionist.”<sup>24</sup> Reverend John P. Monaghan’s pro-union message on the American network radio program *Catholic Hour* was also published to appeal to Trail’s Catholic workers. A published author, Father Monaghan urged them “to join Unions so that labor can become, as it should be[,] ‘one of the most vital organs in a democratic social order’.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “‘Join a Union’, Priest Tells Workers,” *Commentator*, 12 July 1939. Also note

<sup>22</sup> “Catholic Priest Hits Co. Unions,” *Commentator*, 6 February 1939. From its inaugural issue in November of 1938, the *Commentator* reprinted items like “The Church Speaks Out for Organized Labor,” “Catholic Priest Hits Co[mpany] Unions,” and “It is the Duty Of Every Catholic To Join the Union.”

<sup>23</sup> “It is the Duty of Every Catholic To Join the Union,” *Commentator*, 23 March 1939.

<sup>24</sup> “Do Your Share,” *Commentator*, 13 March 1939.

<sup>25</sup> “Join a Union...,” *Commentator*, 12 July 1939, 4. Father John P. Monaghan, *Towards the Reconstruction and Christian Social Order* (Washington, D.C.: National Council of Catholic Men, 1939). The council produced *The Catholic Hour*.

It was the priests who “actively supported trade-union struggles – almost entirely CIO – through public speaking, picket-line involvement, and a multitude of other activities,” who “played a particularly significant role in legitimizing CIO organizing drives and refuting charges of communism.”<sup>26</sup> But as anti-Communism became a dominant preoccupation for leaders of national labour organizations and Canadian and American government officials, most if not all the churches turned against Communist-led unions. As Steve Rosswurm explains,

As purely negative anticommunism became all consuming to Catholic labourites, radicalism of any sort became increasingly suspect and procapitalism became a political and religious litmus test. Working-class Catholics . . . were left to cope with the vagaries of American capitalism on their own.<sup>27</sup>

Catholic clergy eagerly supported purging Communists from unions such as Mine-Mill.<sup>28</sup> Robert Asher notes that even pro-union priests were “very worried about the emergence of communist-led unions.” This led “to many Catholics, not just priests, . . . forming various kinds of organizations that are dedicated to trying to identify and expel those who are considered communists from labour unions.”<sup>29</sup>

Numerous Catholic clergymen preached anti-Communism in the U.S., but none more effectively than Canadian-born Charles Coughlin. His weekly broadcasts, widely syndicated on American radio and heard by many Canadian listeners, railed against union

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<sup>26</sup> Steve Rosswurm, “The Catholic Church and Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU,” in Steve Rosswurm, ed. *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 122.

<sup>27</sup> Rosswurm, 120.

<sup>28</sup> Rosswurm, “Catholic Church,” 121.

<sup>29</sup> Rick Stow, *The Battle Within* (DVD-CD ROM), New Liskeard, Ontario, 1996, rev. 2010, 51 and sidebar interview with University of Connecticut historian Robert Asher conducted by Stow, 15 December 1995.

organizing in both countries. Coughlin was widely influential in the late 1930s among Catholics and other faiths. Father Rice, notwithstanding his earlier statements against company unions, also led the fight against the CIO, inserting himself into union affairs wherever Catholics were in large numbers.<sup>30</sup> “One outstanding characteristic of Rice’s anticommunist efforts,” notes Rosswurm, “was its sheer opportunism – his acceptance of aid from virtually anyone.” Rice “received a car from Chevrolet’s central office for ‘important work for the welfare of . . . [the] country and sane industrial relations’.”<sup>31</sup> He was assisted by CIO president Murray, a staunch Catholic who saw his CIO work as tantamount to enforcing papal encyclicals.<sup>32</sup> Murray pursued his campaign against Communist leaders in CIO unions from early on. He supported the anti-Communist work of the Association of Catholic Trade Unions (ACTU), and his national office subverted left-wing unions and quietly sanctioned raids. Murray even “bankrolled Father Rice’s anticommunist activities.”<sup>33</sup> Mine-Mill was a specific target of Catholic anti-Communism. When two anti-Communist activists approached Father Joseph E. Donnelly in 1942, this fully committed anti-Communist focused on the brass-making factories around Waterbury, Connecticut. Mine-Mill locals in the state’s Brass Valley were a key

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<sup>30</sup> Joining Father Rice in the US were Father Peter Deitz, “a veteran laborite” (Rosswurm, 121), Paul Weber, “the nation’s most important and intellectually innovative ACTU activist” (Rosswurm, 125), Father Philip Carey, “director of the Xavier Labor School” (Rosswurm, 126), (Rosswurm, 127), and Father Eugene F. Marshall, who “attacked two Catholics” in his Massachusetts parish for voting in favour of a Communist union president (Rosswurm, 133).

<sup>31</sup> Rosswurm, “Catholics,” 132.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* also known as *On the Condition of Workers* (the Latin stands for “of revolution”), the 1891 encyclical on the “Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor, supported the right of workers to organize and join unions while also condemning Communism, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html). Forty years after the Pope issued his encyclical, the Vatican published the forty-five-page *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. Also called *On the Reconstruction of the Social Order*, the document warned Catholics “against the tenets of Socialism,” [https://w2.vatican.va/content/plus-xi/encyclical/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragessimo-anno.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/plus-xi/encyclical/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragessimo-anno.html).

<sup>33</sup> Rosswurm, 129.



concern. Donnelly established the Westbury Catholic Labor Council (later the Diocesan Labor Institute) as the base for his long struggle. He recruited more than twelve labour priests, warning that “dangerous outsiders preaching unhealthy . . . un-American political theories and social teachings were trying to take over the local union.”<sup>34</sup>

It is not clear whether Trail religious leaders held a similar collective position, but the presence of so many practicing Catholic and Protestant smelter workers signalled the need for Local 480 leaders to counter strident religious messages if they were to retain a majority of Trail’s smelter workers. Such was the intent of special meetings that the local organized for Italian workers.<sup>35</sup> But as Father Donnelly and others turned against Mine-Mill, publishing and broadcasting their anti-Communist messages, no matter how much Local 480 Communists tried, a change of heart was doubtful. So critical were the public views of religious ideologues such as Donnelly, Rice, and Coughlin that many union publications, including Mine-Mill’s, took pains to publish any pro-union comment from men of the cloth. In one *CIO News* item, for example, a Father Michael Mulcaire of Portland, Oregon, praised the CIO for preaching “the doctrine of Charity and Justice which Christ himself preached almost 2,000 years ago.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the pro-labour stance of some labour priests, clergy escalated their “unrelenting war on CIO Communists and those who worked with them.”<sup>37</sup> Constantly trying to allay fears about the CIO’s alleged Communist ties, the *Commentator* published the views of Catholic Archbishop Victor

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<sup>34</sup> Ronald W. Schatz, “‘I know My way Around a Little Bit’: Bishop Joseph Donnelly and American Labor, 1941-1977, *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, 2016, 33-61, 37.

<sup>35</sup> Roth, 63.

<sup>36</sup> “CIO Wins Praise Of Oregon Priest,” *CIO News* (Mine-Mill Edition), 1 May 1939.

<sup>37</sup> Rosswurm, “Catholics,” 130.

Sanabria of Costa Rica. “Reactionaries all call me a Communist because I open my arms to the poor,” he stated. “For these people, Christ would be a Communist too.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite attempts to reform the union image, many smelter workers and their spouses remained sceptical of Local 480. In a typical response, “An Observant Woman” told the *Times* that “the Catholic Church is not against unions but prefers the WCC in Trail.”<sup>39</sup> Most clergy remained adamantly anti-union, especially regarding the CIO, and assuredly anti-Communist. Their views seemed bound to dampen the union message among Italians and other immigrant families, without whose support there could be no union. In the late 1950s, churches continued to influence union affairs. By then, clergy had considerably refined their anti-unionism and anti-Communism strategies. In the Northern Ontario Mine-Mill stronghold of Sudbury, for example, Bishop Alexander Carter assigned Father Alexandre J. Boudreau to establish a labour school. His sole aim was that “Mine, Mill must be destroyed, and disappear from the map of Canada.”<sup>40</sup> During the 1950s, Boudreau trained Sudbury workers in the anti-Communist tactics that eventually fuelled a major Steelworker raid that divided the workforce in the Nickel Belt town.

Faith-based values help explain resistance to Mine-Mill among immigrants. When resistance softened, immigrant men began to assume elected roles within Local 480. Slavic immigrant Don Dosen, for example, was repeatedly elected as a union officer.

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<sup>38</sup> “A Bishop Answers,” *Commentator*, 29 February 1944, 3.

<sup>39</sup> “Catholic Church Clear On Labor Stand,” *TDT*, 18 March 1939.

<sup>40</sup> Jason A. Miller, “Divided We Stand: A Study of the Development of the Conflict Between the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and the United Steelworkers of America in Sudbury, Ontario (1942-1969),” MA Thesis, McMaster University, 2003, 135.

Italian immigrant son Remo Morandini became the local's secretary-treasurer. The Church never ceased to be a source of influence, however. Its warnings of unions, coming from a revered institution, remained persuasive among Italian and other immigrant groups. As Richard Polenberg explains, "nationality communities within each city might center on the church." The war had heightened "ethnic self-awareness," and churches were pillars of their communities.<sup>41</sup> Those from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, for example, tended to be stalwart Catholics who felt pressure from local clergymen who remonstrated against any sign of union support. Some parishioners did reject the dictates of the local clergy. Donald Avery notes that churches faced "some degree of indifference and hostility which went beyond what they had known in the conservative world of the European village." Some parishioners regarded clergy "as agents of an exploitative landholding class in Europe – in short[,] men whose talents could be easily adapted to the needs of North American capitalists."<sup>42</sup> Avery's observation applies to Trail as well, where "all of the churches" supported the CM&S.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, company managers reciprocated by supporting religious leaders. Al King noted that most supervisors were "staunch Presbyterians who surrounded themselves with an array of largely Scottish subordinates who had many things in common – they loved Scotch whiskey [sic], haggis, and the company, and they hated unions and anyone from the inferior (i.e., Non-British) races."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Polenberg, *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 38-40.

<sup>42</sup> Donald Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), 46.

<sup>43</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 12.

Unsurprisingly, religion influenced the smelter city even during the pioneer mining days, when prospectors and future smelter workers received the ministrations of missionary-minded clergymen. Among the earliest was the Anglican Reverend Henry Irwin, affectionately known as Father Pat.<sup>45</sup> Others followed, but while the early churches and clergymen brought the Word of God to pioneer mining communities, it was not until the Reverend A.E. Smith arrived in Nelson in 1911 that a pro-socialist fervour reached Canada's mining West. Pastor Smith was a radical proponent of the social gospel. He did not limit himself to the pulpit of Trinity Methodist Church on Sundays, but brought the Word and an acute sense of social justice to surrounding mining camps. Years later Smith joined the CPC and became a tireless director of the Communist-aligned Canadian Labour Defense League (CLDL), which defended many trade unionists, including persecuted immigrant radicals.<sup>46</sup> The CLDL came to the aid of jailed union leaders. In the early 1930s Smith toured widely to secure the release of eight imprisoned national CPC leaders, including general secretary Tim Buck. Smith's adventures regularly made the news and were generally known among the Canadian left. Local 480 Communists were well aware of the legend of the "Red Reverend."

The CLDL "skillfully intertwining communism with the defense of civil liberties in Canada," J. Petryshyn explains. They launched protest campaigns, bringing a substantial following but also influencing the country's political leaders.<sup>47</sup> Those efforts

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<sup>45</sup> "History of St. Andrews," St. Andrews Anglican Church, Trail, B.C., <http://standrewstrail.ca/about/history-of-st-andrews/>

<sup>46</sup> Rev. A.E. Smith, *All My Life – Crusade For Freedom: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1949).

<sup>47</sup> J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925-1940," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 10 (Autumn 1982), 39-63, 39.

came at a cost. Like the CCF's Woodsworth, Smith lost standing among Methodists after the Great War, and after the Second World War the only pro-Communists Methodists were connected to Chinese missions. This was also the case with Dr. James G. Endicott. Endicott, a United Church of Canada moderator and founder of the Canadian Peace Congress (CPC), brought his views to Trail in 1950. His visit coincided with the formation of the Trail Peace Council (TPC) endorsed by Local 480, whose members helped collect signatures for the Stockholm Peace Petition, a document the *Times* and other media called "a piece of Communist trickery."<sup>48</sup> The daily quoted Endicott as fearing "the Christians more than the communists because too many Christians worshipped Mammon."<sup>49</sup>

For all these reasons Local 480 leaders eventually concluded that courting West Kootenay churches was a mug's game. Indeed, the *Times* later reported that the Vatican instructed Catholics worldwide not to vote for Communists.<sup>50</sup> The Trail Church adhered to the policy, and other denominations counselled their congregations similarly. Such views resonated with Blaylock, son of a British-born Anglican minister.<sup>51</sup> Local 480 leader Gar Belanger recalls that the Catholic Church circulated a leaflet to Trail Italians urging them to oppose the union. In a 1983 interview, he questioned whether the Church

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<sup>48</sup> "A Pledge to Sabotage," *TDT*, 11 August 1950, 4.

<sup>49</sup> "Endicott Draws Big City Group," *TDT*, 8 June 1950, 2. See also Stephen Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). Note that Endicott's cousin, Dr. William James Endicott, a prominent medical practitioner affectionately known to Trailites as "Dr. Jim," and his family were active in the council and petition collection.

<sup>50</sup> "Catholics Cannot Vote for Communists," *TDT*, 43 March 1948, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Blaylock was born an Anglican on 18 February 1879 at the small town of Paspébiac in predominantly Catholic Quebec. His father was Lancashireman Thomas Blaylock, an Anglican minister at St. Augustine parsonage in Danville, Quebec. He and his wife later lived in Nelson, BC, and are buried there.

had acted alone, implying that the company may have helped draft the anti-Red document.<sup>52</sup>

Despite alleged company-clergy complicity, anti-union scolding from the pulpit, and nativist attitudes, Trail's immigrants were never the docile workers that shipping agents and other labour recruiters had portrayed. Many were unaware of the pressures they and their families would encounter in North American industries such as CM&S, and in company towns like Trail, but neither were they devoid of political opinions and expectations of their employers. Although some early Italian and Austro-Hungarian immigrant workers may have been "ignorant of the political ideologies of the union," Blaylock and other CM&S managers feared that they were "probably conspiring radicals."<sup>53</sup> They had some justification. Many eastern Europeans were cognisant of the socialist, Communist, and anarchist debates rippling through workplaces back home. Some may have tried to escape political persecution during the social and economic turbulence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Laurie Mercier and Jaclyn Gier note of mining women, it helped that "although the immigrant populations sought new opportunities, they also brought with them the traditions of labor from their home countries, traditions that often led to even more radical responses to the exploitation they encountered in their adoptive or temporary homelands."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Belanger interview transcript from Richard Bell's 1983 series housed at the B.C. Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Eric A. Christensen, *Labour History in British Columbia and the Right to Strike: A Case Study as Portrayed by the Labour Dispute Between the International Mine, Mill and Smeltermen's Union and the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. on November 15, 1917 in the city of Trail, B.C.* (Nelson, B.C.: Notre Dame University, 1976), 51.

<sup>54</sup> Laurie Mercier and Jaclyn Gier, eds. *Mining Women: Gender in the Development of a Global Industry, 1670 to 2005* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 173.

Still, it remained for Local 480 to convince immigrant smelter workers, especially the numerous Italians, that it made sense to stick with the Communist-led union. Local 480 leaders sought out union sympathizers inside the immigrant enclave. Italians retained pride in their native political heritage and nineteenth-century figures such as Giuseppe Garibaldi and revolutionary leader Giuseppe Mazzini. They were also aware of the anarchist movement supported by Errico Malatesta, a friend of anarchist visionary Mikhail Bakunin, and of Malatesta's promotion of the union movement.<sup>55</sup> Although they might have been discreet, some Trail immigrants were likely Old Country leftists who encouraged fellow smelter workers to support the union.

George Pozzetta notes that North America had become home to "a variety of leftist radicals, who sought very different cultural and political goals." He argues that syndicalists such as Carlo Tresca and Arturo Giovannitti "considered Italian Americans as part of the world proletariat." They encouraged mass strikes and radical-led worker demonstrations.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Avery argues that many European immigrants, especially from Italy and the former Austro-Hungarian states, hailed from societies "where collective action against economic and social exploitation was an established fact."<sup>57</sup> Many had been exposed to social protest movements back home, and many "were prepared to resist forcibly the demands of exploitative capitalism in Canada."<sup>58</sup> Contrary to religious

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<sup>55</sup> See Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (Toronto: Thomas Dunne Books-Macmillan, 2006); and, Davide Turcato, "Making Sense of Anarchism: The Experiments with Revolution of Errico Malatesta, Italian Exile in London, 1889-1900," Doctoral Dissertation, Department of History, Simon Fraser University, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> George Pozzetta, "Italian Americans: History, Early Migration, The Emergence of Little Italies, Acculturation and Assimilation," <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Ha-La/Italian-Americans.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Avery, 48.

<sup>58</sup> Avery, 62.

doctrine, this included joining unions and embracing socialist ideas. Immigrant workers were willing to mount working-class protests of their own, and Avery suggests that work slow-downs occurred often. In Trail, most immigrants were likely “more attuned to rural peasant than to urban industrial values,” yet such immigrants still contained the “suitable raw material for a militant working class.”<sup>59</sup>

In shaping that militant consciousness, many immigrants joined radical union organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) and the One Big Union (OBU). They also supported the CPC. These were the forces they believed were seeking social change through revolutionary action.<sup>60</sup> The earliest immigrants would have been aware of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), Mine-Mill’s original name, and its radical history. Some would have heard stories from old-timers recalling the 1901 Rossland miners’ strike, the 1912 labour unrest in B.C. mining camps, and the 1917 smelter strike. Yet in Trail and elsewhere Old World peasant cultures and North American identities “helped transmit a sense of cultural uniqueness,” argues Polenberg.<sup>61</sup> Local 480 had to navigate all these cultural counter-currents to survive.

Trail’s immigrant workers hoped to create a new life in the smelter city, but they met the same racism and exploitation others had faced from nativists and those who owned and controlled industrial North America. Al King, reflecting on the many nationalities employed at the CM&S smelter in the early years, recalled that “the Welsh

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<sup>59</sup> Avery, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Avery, 143.

<sup>61</sup> Polenberg, 38.



and the Danes in particular were outstanding for their union militancy.”<sup>62</sup> Later he regularly witnessed discrimination against workers from eastern and southern Europe, as well as a high degree of chauvinism:

The longer I worked at CM&S, the more injustice I saw. Apart from the well-known health hazards, there was a lot of chauvinism. The company was highly organized into a ‘pecking order’ that delivered blatant discrimination at its lower end. If you had good connections, or were WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant], you had an edge. On the other hand, the workers who got some of the dirtiest, crappiest jobs, were the Italians. They called them ‘wops.’ There were others who were also treated badly.<sup>63</sup>

Local 480, if it were to adhere to the Mine-Mill constitution, had to protect its immigrant membership from ill treatment. To that end, the *Commentator* tried to assure immigrant workers of the union’s value by publishing articles and letters that addressed issues of specific concern to them. These included positive comments from Catholic leaders, improved workplace health and safety, news from the Old Country, union demands for sickness and funeral benefits, workers’ compensation, and other labour legislation.<sup>64</sup> The local even tried to use the courts to counter corporate and Catholic Church anti-union messages in its appeal to immigrant families. In one early case, CIO organizer Slim Evans involved the well-known D’Andrea family when he filed a legal charge of “intimidation” against Blaylock. Invoking British Columbia’s newly minted ICA Act, the charge was laid after Louis D’Andrea felt intimidated by an article in *Liberty*, a popular American magazine Blaylock had circulated to employees. The article

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<sup>62</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 28.

<sup>64</sup> Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 56-57, notes that the United Mine Workers of America rivalled Mine-Mill in this regard.

featured a frightening cartoon that D'Andrea claimed led him to turn against the union.<sup>65</sup> Five days later, D'Andrea told a Trail police court that "I was yellow" in explaining that he had been threatened by other workers for his support of the union and was afraid they would ostracize him or worse.<sup>66</sup> The trial was big local news. *Times* reporters treated D'Andrea as a farcical dupe. This damning image helped discredit the union's assertion that Blaylock was guilty.<sup>67</sup>

Mine-Mill lost the case despite the best efforts of lawyer John Stanton, who suggested that Blaylock had used the company union to undermine Mine-Mill. Stanton noted that Tim Buscombe, the WCC chair, had suggested the article would be "a good one to distribute to CM&S employees."<sup>68</sup> The WCC revelation, coupled with D'Andrea's stumbling testimony, led Judge Donald MacDonald to declare Blaylock innocent. Calling the case "a crown of thorns pressed down on the brow of labor," he added that "some great advances have been made in the cause of labor. Some great mistakes have been made in the cause of labor, and I think this is one of them." The *Times* reduced the trial to "a day of light humour."<sup>69</sup> The conservative *Labour Truth* was equally unimpressed, noting even the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) had criticized Local 480 Communists

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<sup>65</sup> C. Nelson Sparks, "Why Akron is a Ghost City: How Strikes Brought Ruin," *Liberty*, 24 September 1938, 15, shows a Frankenstein-like figure stomping buildings and destroying everything in his wake. His bare chest has the word "Lawlessness" stamped across it.

<sup>66</sup> "'I Was Yellow' D'Andrea Tells Court – Tormented By Opinion Intimidation Trial Witness Explains His Inconsistent Actions," *Trail Daily Times*, 31 October 1938, 1.

<sup>67</sup> "Twelve Beers – Louis D'Andrea, Harassed by Conflicting Emotions, Hoists a Few For Moral Support," *Trail Daily Times*, 31 October 1938, 1, typified the *Times* reporting style.

<sup>68</sup> Roth, 33.

<sup>69</sup> "Intimidation Case Dismissed – No Evidence – Great Mistake In The Cause of Labor Asserts MacDonald," *TDT*, 1 November 1938, 1.

for using such a “foolish charge.”<sup>70</sup> The verdict and negative press cultivated ambivalence about the value of unionization among immigrants, especially Italian Catholics. Church leaders who had been critical of the CIO-affiliated Mine-Mill now used the D’Andrea trial as an example of why Catholics should avoid Local 480.

The D’Andrea case heightened skepticism about whether the Communist-led union could guarantee immigrant equality, but Harvey Levenstein argues that in International Mine-Mill’s commitment to equality and non-discrimination Communist unionists “distinguished themselves from many non-Communists through the sacrifices they were willing to make for racial equality.” Mine-Mill Reds played key roles in combatting discrimination “in both shops and union affairs,” yet regional leaders such as Murphy knew they had to walk a fine line in upholding the union constitution.<sup>71</sup> Even as memories of D’Andrea faded, immigrant workers remained uncertain when Murphy opposed a mine employers’ scheme to bring to Canada “displaced persons from Europe on ten-month contracts.” The issue involved hiring 2,300 foreign workers, an action Murphy dubbed “post-war adventurism in labor importation.” He decried the program’s explicit anti-Communist stipulations, complaining that it might lead to the unfair treatment of Canadian workers. On the one hand, he supported workers “suspected of communist leanings” or trade union sympathies. As he put it,

no man was or will be selected by the bosses’ team who has ever evinced the slightest inclination towards becoming a trade unionist in his native country. He must not be a thinker, his back alone is wanted, and if his

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<sup>70</sup> “Plight of Evans A Desperate One,” *Labour Truth*, December 1938, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Harvey A. Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 332.

head were not needed for muscular control, he could just as well leave it behind in Europe. It's not required by the bosses.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, "If a pool of unemployed, competing for jobs, is established in the industry then wages can be kept to the lowest standards." Murphy did not oppose immigration but criticized the selection of "unskilled workmen" who would be "under contract to pay back their debt" and could be "liable to arrest and imprisonment for breach of contract if they" sought other employment. He labelled it "a dastardly scheme," but his actions echoed how he and Local 480 once dealt with women war workers. Local 480 leaders said they wanted fair treatment for the female workers who replaced soldiers, but they feared that women's lower wages would suppress male wages as well. Both this and the foreign workers case forced Murphy to devise arguments that would both support Mine-Mill members and show concern for the plight of imported labourers. Immigrant workers in Trail had to sort through considerable contradictory evidence to determine whether the union would actually protect them from discrimination.

Local 480 leaders had to address ethnic differences and religious beliefs within the immigrant enclave below the Hill, but they may not have realized that the religious values of workers were part of the "complicated nature of working-class identities" that shaped their politics.<sup>73</sup> Like other industrial workers, Trail's smelter workers were a

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<sup>72</sup> "Mine Bosses' Paper, In Amazing Story, Reveals D.P. Exploitation Plans," *B.C. District Union News*, 12 March 1948, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Steve Rosswurm, "The Contextualisation of a Moment in CIO History: The Mine-Mill Battle in the Connecticut Brass Valley during World War II," in Donna T. Haverty-Stacke and Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Rethinking U.S. Labor History: Essays on the Working-Class Experience, 1756-2009* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 169.

complex mix of “competing hierarchies and overlapping identities”<sup>74</sup> Communist leaders were aware of the importance of those factors, but they never fully grasped the nature of local working-class culture. As Rosswurm observes,

It was the working class and its rock-solid commitment to a set of values that the communists and their allies – past and present – could not understand and respect, but could only caricature or condemn. Some of these were spiritual, some political; many praise-worthy, others mean, prejudiced, and reactionary. All were deeply held.<sup>75</sup>

With such a large immigrant workforce, allegiance to local clerics and the immigrant enclave would trump union allegiance. This was not the case in Trail.

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Local 480 nevertheless faced an immensely diverse cultural tableau. The 1941 Canada Census listed twenty different European and Asian immigrant groups in Trail (see Table 4.3 – Population by National Origin in 1941), but a handwritten registry of CM&S severances from 1928 to 1932 reveals that twenty-six nationalities, not including British subjects and Americans, worked at the smelter.<sup>76</sup> Croats, though not as populous as Italians, also contributed to a diverse Kootenay cultural landscape. By 1914, the Croatian population had swelled to between 6,000 and 10,000 mostly young males in Canada.<sup>77</sup> Like other immigrants, they were guided by often-unscrupulous labour

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<sup>74</sup> Rosswurm, “Contextualisation,” 171.

<sup>75</sup> Rosswurm, “Contextualisation,” 184.

<sup>76</sup> *Book of Severances*, A Registry of Dismissals and Severances, CM&S, 1928-1932, copy available at the Trail Historical Society, Trail, B.C.

<sup>77</sup> Gabriele Scardellato and Marin Sopta, eds., *Unknown Journey: A History of Croats in Canada*, Polyphony Series 14 (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1994), 16. Note that Yugoslavs, a nationality that then included Croats, were not included in *Canada Census* data for 1941.

recruiters.<sup>78</sup> Many were sojourners seeking money to return to their homelands. Some found prosperity. Others, as Ervin Dubrovic notes, found “poverty, illness, maiming, frequent alcoholism and madness.”<sup>79</sup> Most men worked in mines “filled with noxious gases.” Their “health deteriorates quickly; they live in small, smelly and crammed accommodations.” They were “uneducated and spiritually neglected, [and took] to alcoholism [and] debauchery.”<sup>80</sup> Many worked in steel mills, mines and smelters in Ontario and B.C. They “were among the first in Canada to accept . . . the United Mine Workers of America” and to join the Croatian Fraternal Union, a branch of which was in Rossland.<sup>81</sup> Those who settled in Trail built a small community among the Italians in the Gulch, and they founded St. Cyril and Methodius Lodge 281, with a membership ranging from twenty to thirty miners.<sup>82</sup>

Anthony W. Rasporich notes that “Drahomanov populist social democrats” were among the first of three waves of Croatian migrants to Canada.<sup>83</sup> Human and labour rights advocates such as the Slovenian author Louis Adami and Croatian Communist Stjepan Lojen shared their brand of politics with fellow immigrants.<sup>84</sup> Croatians were scattered

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<sup>78</sup> Scardellato and Sopta, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ervin Dubrovic, *Merika: Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880 – 1914* (Online book based on an Exhibition at the City Museum of Rijeka, Croatia, 2008, <http://muzej-rijeka.hr/merika/merika.pdf>), 185.

<sup>80</sup> Dubrovic, 186.

<sup>81</sup> Anthony W. Rasporich, *For a Better Life: A History of Croatians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), 69.

<sup>82</sup> Rasporich, *Better Life*, 69.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony W. Rasporich, “Three Generations of Croatian Immigrants in Canada: A Hartzian Perspective,” in Scardellato and Sopta, 15. Mykhailo Drahomanov was a Bulgarian-born socialist scholar who “welcomed the liberation of the southern Slavs from the Turks but cautioned against tsarist imperialism in the Balkans,” including Croatia. For a biography, see “Drahomanov, Mykhailo,” *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CD%5CR%5CDrahomanovMykhailo.ht>

<sup>84</sup> Dubrovic, *Merika*, 191.

around the B.C. interior. Some worked at the Granby mine at Copper Mountain, others in Princeton. Both towns had notable CIO and Mine-Mill presences. Croatians in Trail were “more firmly established” according to Rasporich, with more married with Canadian-born children. Management regarded these longer-term residents as “conservative Austrians,” while newcomers such as Kootenay Croatian Petar “Pio” Fucek participated in several miners’ strikes, promoted “radical ideas and organization among the mining fraternity,” and was interned as an enemy alien during the First World War.<sup>85</sup>

**Table 4.3 Trail Population by National Origin in 1941**

**British Isles**

<b>English</b>	<b>Irish</b>	<b>Scotyish</b>	<b>Other</b>
2,920	906	1,882	191

**Other European Races**

<b>French</b>	<b>Austrian</b>	<b>Belgian</b>	<b>Cze/Slov</b>	<b>Finnish</b>	<b>Greek</b>	<b>Hung</b>	<b>Italian</b>
200	159	31	92	33	168	36	1,636
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Dutch</b>	<b>Polish</b>	<b>Romain</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Scand</b>	<b>Ukrain</b>	<b>Other</b>
43	81	149	17	176	397	114	60

**Asiatic and Other Races**

<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>Other Asians</b>	<b>Indian/Eskimo</b>	<b>Other</b>
2	--	2	--	12

**Source:** *Canada Census* (1941), Vol. 7, Table 32, p. 498-499.

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<sup>85</sup> Rasporich, *Better Life*, 126.

Small as it was, Trail's Croatian and Slavic population might also have been influenced by radical Ukrainian and Finnish immigrant workers, especially in mining communities elsewhere in British Columbia and Alberta.<sup>86</sup> Each ethnic group formed its own associations and news organs, and promoted its own, often-radical political views to other ethnic communities around the country. Polenberg argues that immigrant newspapers and radio stations "bound immigrants to their native cultures," but they were on the wane after the Second World War as governments more closely monitored their content.<sup>87</sup> Ukrainians and Finns supported the CPC "because of its emphasis on industrial organization and the unemployed" and "the party's advocacy and at times use of violence strongly appealed to many European immigrant workers."<sup>88</sup> Communists offered a bridge between their former and current homelands, Avery argues, and "enterprising European 'comrades' were given an opportunity to become involved in trade union and political activity" inside the CPC.<sup>89</sup>

Like other immigrant groups, Doukhobors endured nativist pressures. Persecuted by the Russian Orthodox Church, members of the peasant religious sect migrated to Canada from southern Russia in 1899 and to the Kootenays in 1908. Local historian Greg Nesteroff notes that some of his Doukhobor ancestors worked for the CM&S and "were

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<sup>86</sup> "Nine Applications for Naturalization Are Granted At Rossland," *TDT*, 20 September 1939, reveals no applicants from either the Ukraine or Finland, although three other Scandinavian countries were represented.

<sup>87</sup> Polenberg, 55.

<sup>88</sup> Avery, 117. Avery also provides accounts of immigrant involvement in activities that were dubbed a "Red Scare" in the early 1930s that led to deportations as the federal government clamped down on Communists of all nationalities.

<sup>89</sup> Avery, 140-141.



integral in building the Brilliant dam for Cominco in the 1940s.”<sup>90</sup> They played little role in CM&S smelter affairs, however. Company documents record a handful of Russian employees in the early 1930s, but it is not clear whether they were members of the sect.<sup>91</sup> There is no evidence that Doukhobors were involved with the union. Moreover, given the views of future CM&S vice-president R. D. Perry, it is doubtful that sect adherents would have found employment at the smelter. In the early 1960s, when Doukhobor violence was at its peak, Perry remarked that “an outside enemy couldn’t get away with these depredations but a fanatical group, pampered over the years as a quaint, religious sect, can terrorize Canadians and destroy their property because of a lack of protection.”<sup>92</sup>

President Blaylock made no attempt to embroil his company in Doukhobor conflicts – to do so might have stirred hostility from other immigrants.<sup>93</sup> At a later date, the Sons of Freedom sub-sect’s bombing of the CM&S-owned West Kootenay Power and Light Company transmission lines illustrated the estrangement of the group from the CM&S and the union.<sup>94</sup> Frequent coverage of Doukhobor troubles in the *Times* suggested that the sect members were not involved significantly in the local mining and smelting industry. The violence turned nativists within the Anglo-Saxon community even further against them. Some smelter workers and CM&S managers saw a vast, unbridgeable

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<sup>90</sup> Greg Nesteroff, email correspondence with the author, 14 October 2011.

<sup>91</sup> CM&S *Book of Severances*, 1928-1932.

<sup>92</sup> There are several histories of the Doukhobors the most recent being Ashleigh Brienne Androsoff, “Spirit Wrestling: Identity Conflict and the Canadian ‘Doukhobor Problem’, 1899-1999,” PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011. The Perry quote is taken from “They May Take the Law in their Own Hands,” *Columbian*, 13 March 1962.

<sup>93</sup> Despite such isolation from other groups, *Canada Census* (1941), Vol. II, Table 32, pp. 498-499, reveals that 176 individuals of Russian descent resided in Trail in 1941, some of whom might have been former members of the radical Doukhobor sect.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremy Mouat, *The Business of Power: Hydro-Electricity in Southeaster British Columbia, 1897-1997* (Victoria, B.C.” Sono Nis Press, 1997) 156.

difference between the sect and Canadian society. The B.C. branch of the Canadian Legion called the military exemption extended to religious groups because of their pacifism “a gross injustice,” which forced “British speaking people . . . to take up arms to help defend people who are unwilling to do their part.” The Trail branch, which had long objected to the exemption, concurred with the “resolution of protest.”<sup>95</sup>

The Trail-Rossland area was also home to a small Asian population, but census records reveal no employment at the Trail smelter until the 1930s, when company records include a few Chinese cooks.<sup>96</sup> Ronald Shearer notes that some found employment in nearby Rossland doing “menial tasks in low social status” jobs. They were relegated to “the bottom of the social hierarchy, a social underclass perhaps one step up from the prostitutes who shared Chinatown with them.”<sup>97</sup> During the Second World War, Japanese families were even less visible while being interned in the nearby Slocan Valley. Local 480 leaders paid scant attention to Japanese internees, but they were long aware of local internment camps of another type, one that helped build union solidarity.

During the Depression jobless men were placed in relief camps on the outskirts of Salmo, China Creek, and Shoreacres. In April 1935, some men joined a province-wide strike called by the Relief Camp Workers’ Union (RCWU) to protest low pay and poor conditions. Future Local 480 organizer Slim Evans, who would soon lead the historic On to Ottawa Trek, spearheaded the strike in which about 64 out of 100 Kootenay strikers

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<sup>95</sup> “Legion In B.C. Protesting Army Exemption Given Doukhs,” *TDT*, 7 August 1940.

<sup>96</sup> The CM&S *Book of Severances* 1928-1932 notes that three Chinese cooks were dismissed in 1930 for having poor cooking skills. Others recorded their reason for leaving as poor working conditions.

<sup>97</sup> Ronald A. Shearer, “The Chinese And Chinatown Of Rossland: Fragments From Their Early History,” one of four essays posted at <http://www.rosslandmuseum.ca/> under the title “Fragments: Essays on Neglected Aspects of Rossland’s History,” Vancouver, 2010.

were arrested. Significantly, “close to 60 were of foreign extraction.”<sup>98</sup> When similar demonstrations broke out in June, the *Times* blamed “communist agitators” who sought only “to make trouble.”<sup>99</sup> Although not organized at that time, Trail smelter workers witnessed the strike action and read about the Vancouver demonstrations, both of which possibly increased fear of unions but also may have heightened interest. Whatever their views, or those of the Blaylock-friendly WCC, when Evans appeared in Trail three years later as a CIO union organizer, there was some awareness of his capacity to lead.

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Local 480 leaders knew they needed to find ways to capture and hold immigrant interest. To that end the *Commentator* built solidarity with Red immigrant workers by complimenting the Russian people as neighbours to, and liberating heroes of, Slavic people during the war. “In the smoking, corpse-littered streets of Stalingrad,” the paper argued in 1943, “the safety of British and Canadian cities has been won. The Russian people are defending not Russia alone, but humanity.”<sup>100</sup> During the war it was normal to hear pro-Soviet sentiments, but the *Commentator*’s passion for Communist leaders was aimed particularly at immigrants who shared their politics. In that period, different tactics were used to appeal to Italians. Amid increasing hostility within the Trail community, Italians’ sense of ostracism only grew after Mussolini extended his military adventurism from Libya and Ethiopia into British territory, including Egypt. As a result, leaders of the fraternal Cristoforo Colombo Lodge, one of Canada’s oldest immigrant organizations,

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<sup>98</sup> “Eighteen Relief Camp Workers Sentenced to One Day,” *TDT*, 11 April 1935, 1.

<sup>99</sup> “Editorial – Trouble-Makers Foment Relief Demonstration,” *TDT*, 11 June 1935, 4.

<sup>100</sup> “Editorial – Canada’s Debt to Russia,” *Commentator*, 25 January 1943, 2.

pledged the “complete loyalty of every Canadian citizen of Italian origin in Trail.” Lodge leaders also announced that “every wage earner in the Italian community has arranged to give \$1 or more a month to the Red Cross fund throughout the war.”<sup>101</sup> In a telegram to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, they dissociated themselves “absolutely from the policy being followed by the Italian government in declaring war on Britain and France.”<sup>102</sup>

Lodge leaders understood that Mussolini’s collusion with Hitler threatened the status of Italo-Canadians in the mining West, so, as Patricia K. Wood notes, the lodge “formed an ‘anti-Fifth column organization’ and, with \$450 collected from Italian workers[,] pledged to establish their own Red Cross unit.”<sup>103</sup> She added,

There were several arrests in Trail and some pressure to “check up on” the Italian employees of Cominco. A letter to the editor from “an old veteran” questioned how much of their money was being sent to family in Italy and thus “financing Mussolini’s war effort.” S.G. Blaylock, the head of Cominco, denied there were any problems. “They are working peacefully,” he said. “As long as they continue to do so they can do just as much good toward Canada’s cause as anyone else.”<sup>104</sup>

Reporting on Blaylock’s reassurances, the *Times* described “an emphatic demonstration of patriotism on the part of Trail Italians to their new allegiance.” The daily added that the Italians – about 400 at the meeting chaired by Colombo Lodge president Oliver D’Andrea – “felt sure that the arrangements being made will take care of any eventuality in a satisfactory manner.” It added:

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<sup>101</sup> “Trail Italo-Canadians Reaffirm Their Loyalty,” *TDT*, 10 June 1940.

<sup>102</sup> “Trail-Italo,” *TDT*, 10 June 1940.

<sup>103</sup> “Trail Italians To Form Branch Of Red Cross,” *TDT*, 11 June 1940.

<sup>104</sup> Patricia K. Wood, *Nationalism from the Margins: Italians in Alberta and British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2002), 53.

The company president stated he was prepared to allow the Italians to continue their work with the Consolidated provided they took over the responsibility for all their nationals. If they could do so they would remain in good standing, but on the other hand as the country was at war failure on their part to prevent sabotage of any kind by their nationals would be fatal to Italian interests in the company. Mr. Blaylock warned they might be subjected to much unpleasantness if Italy declared war, but advised them to keep their tempers.<sup>105</sup>

The *Commentator* responded angrily, claiming Blaylock had but one goal: “to suppress one section of the workers, to divide them from their fellows and ultimately to make exploitation of both Italians and non-Italians that much easier.” From Local 480’s perspective, “Mr. Blaylock told Italians that they must spy on each other and report to the CM&S if they wished to remain in good standing with the company.”<sup>106</sup> This would have appealed to some immigrants who supported the union, but ethnic tensions inside the smelter exposed more complex tensions. Some anti-Local 480 nativists cautioned that “‘You’ve got so damn many wops and so many of these Scotchmen, you’ll never get them all together’.” The local’s first president, Gar Belanger, recalled this hostility and how the local had “to ignore this propaganda that was seeping underground all the time saying ‘you can’t do it’.” Moreover, “I think the company actually utilized it through some people on the job.” The union executive nevertheless stood firm. Belanger noted:

this was all a bunch of crap because it doesn’t make a difference who people are, they have the same hopes and desires for a decent life. So we go to a few Italian fellas, people that we knew. They started to come around. We had meetings with them on a pretty regular basis . . . . We just ignored the so-called racial thing. We went ahead as if they were just men, that’s all. We were correct in that analysis.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> “Italian Citizens Demonstrate Their Patriotism To Canada,” *TDT*, 31 May 1940.

<sup>106</sup> “Doesn’t Mr. Blaylock Agree With Ernest LaPointe?” *Commentator*, 10 June 1940.

<sup>107</sup> Belanger interview transcript.

Clearly, though, there was a need to recognize tension building among immigrant workers, and to understand that some families viewed the union as contrary to Church teachings. The union's pro-Soviet stance must also have worn thin on immigrants who were "victims of Soviet expansionism."<sup>108</sup> Perhaps they viewed the union option as a pointless socio-economic strategy. After all, thanks to Blaylock, they could order cheap coal through the company, buy groceries at the company store, and grow vegetables in the company gardens, where everything from water to tools was supplied for them. Company benevolence seemed "utopian."<sup>109</sup> Thus some immigrant workers saw more advantages in the CM&S than Local 480. Blaylock's philosophy, as noted earlier, was one of friendly cooperation between workers and employers rather than collective bargaining. This was acceptable to some immigrant workers.

Fred Tenisci, an Italian smelter worker and businessman, was among those who supported the company. Local 480 leaders knew that Tenisci and others disparaged the union, but they were uncertain how to combat it. Virginio Tesolin, a pro-union farmer of Italian descent from Grand Forks, B.C., about sixty-five kilometres west of Trail, offered one solution. In a letter written in Italian and addressed to the *Commentator*, he criticized Tenisci for siding with the company and for discouraging Italians from joining the union. "Tenisci says that workers are satisfied [with] these conditions of working and also of payroll, and sings . . . thanksgiving and praise to CM&S." The likes of "Tenisci are for big companies, are licking the feet of CM&S," Tesolin raged. Then, praising the CIO, he argued that the union "is strength and we are determined to join despite CM&S and all

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<sup>108</sup> Polenberg, 121

<sup>109</sup> Belanger interview transcript.

Tenisci.” Referring to anti-union smelter workers as “saboteurs,” he concluded that, “when you’re not organized, you are at the mercy of the Industrial Company.”<sup>110</sup>

Tesolin’s animosity was sparked in part by Tenisci’s support for Mussolini’s fascist party, but he was also motivated by his belief in unions.<sup>111</sup> By publishing his letter in Italian, Local 480 leaders hoped to raise union consciousness among Italians. Tesolin’s willingness to come forward also revealed that not all Italians were beholden to Blaylock; some were willing to give the CIO a chance. Perhaps they hoped the Tesolin letter would convince other Italian workers to join the union, but they did not stop other Trailites from trying to dissuade their fellow immigrants from supporting Mine-Mill. The *Commentator* noted, for example, that an Italian businessman “is using his influence to intimidate workers of Italian descent from joining the union.” It advised readers to:

note that the only two Italians ever to damn the union publicly in Trail are now spending their time in a concentration camp. The two in question were very loud-mouthed in praise of the CM&S and spent considerable time in collecting guns from Italians for the CM&S, in advising members to quit the union, and in trying to keep other Italians from joining. They thought they were smart enough to cover their Fascist activities with a cloak of approval of their anti-unionism from the CM&S. They weren’t.

The union paper alluded to the businessman’s fascist activities and assured readers: “No worker of Italian descent need be afraid to join the union no matter how much the CM&S is displeased.”<sup>112</sup> One of those businessmen was Tenisci, whose pro-Mussolini comments eventually landed him in the Hull, Quebec, internment camp. Ironically, Harvey Murphy

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<sup>110</sup> “Chi Siamo E Sono,” *Commentator*, 10 April 1939, 4.

<sup>111</sup> Leonard Tenisci in Ray Culos, *Injustice Served: The Story of British Columbia’s Italian Enemy Aliens During World War II* (Vancouver: Cusmano Books, 2012) describes his father’s involvement with the fascists.

<sup>112</sup> “Fascist Activities in Trail?” *TDT*, 27 June 1941.

was incarcerated in the same camp for at least part of Tenisci's stay, but there is no evidence the two ever met.

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Despite vocal opposition to the union within the immigrant enclave, all Trailites, regardless of their national origin, entered the post-war period hoping they would benefit from the spoils of the long, costly conflict. Enough voted to support Local 480 the year before that new CM&S president R.E. Stavert, who replaced the ailing Blaylock in April 1945, had to be as vigilant as his predecessor. Some of the 1,098 out of 2,359 CM&S men and women who had enlisted were back at work and some had supported Mine-Mill even from the battlefield.<sup>113</sup> Although Stavert did not count immigrant enlistees, some had joined the military roll and some had returned viewing the union as their best opportunity for a better post-war Trail.

For local churchmen, war's end might also have signalled an end to the fight against Communism. Perhaps now their fears of immigrant parishioners siding with the Red union would subside. Perhaps Sundays could return to the pre-Murphy days when people still remembered the gentle Father Pat. Perhaps now, finally, the warnings of Church elders would be heeded and Trailites would see that Mine-Mill and its Red leadership were bad for the smelter city. But such prayers would go unanswered and their parishioners would not always behave as counselled.

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<sup>113</sup> "C.M.&S. Reports on Activities in 1945," *TDT*, 11 April 1946, 2. See also R.E. Stavert, Director's Report, *Annual Report*, CM&S, 1945.



Cold warriors, some from local churches, continued to condemn Local 480 and supported anti-Communist union efforts to lure immigrant workers from the Mine-Mill local. The Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) signified its own commitment to religious-based activism when in 1947 at the Assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Mackinac Island, Michigan, the CCL leadership embraced a quasi-religious movement seeking cooperation between labour and management. The assembly, attended by 700 delegates from the U.S. and Canada, drafted a “manifesto on the future of industry and of democracy.” It claimed that “Labor’s destiny,” in part, was “to find again the fire and conviction of labor’s pioneers, that labor led by God can remake the world.” Signatories included Steelworker leader Charles Millard, Steel international representative John V. Riffe, and Elroy Robson, assistant to CCL president Aaron Mosher.<sup>114</sup> For some older Local 480 members, the MRA’s manifesto surely rekindled memories of the company unionism so cherished by Blaylock. And though not yet well known in Trail, Millard’s signature on the manifesto was also significant. For some Catholic immigrant smelter workers, the MRA might have seemed promising when in 1950 Pope Pius XII gave it his blessing for its efforts to “abolish Communism.”<sup>115</sup> But despite the endorsement of Millard and others, Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) president Percy Bengough would later call it a threat to organized labour. The *Times* called him “irresponsible.” In the

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<sup>114</sup> Peter Howard, *The World Rebuilt: True Story of Frank Buchman and the Achievements of Moral Re-Armament* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951), 232.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel Sack, *Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Movement* (New York: Pulgrave MacMillan, 2009), 159.

editor's view, the TLC leader's comments "detract from the real efforts MRA adherents are making in labor-management affairs."<sup>116</sup>

The Right Reverend F.P. Clark, Anglican Bishop of Kootenay, also added support for the anti-Red crusade when in 1949 he cited local church doctrine with regard to Communism, calling it "the greatest threat in the world today." There was a "communistic fear of organized Christianity," he sermonized, condemning the "red persecution of churchmen" who "practice a genuine religion which fundamentally rebukes and destroys the false 'religion' of Marxism."<sup>117</sup> Some immigrants would listen, but enough rejected such advice from the pulpit to sustain the local for the moment. Now, however, Local 480 entered the post-war period faced with another hurdle, one steeped in anti-Communist ideology. Maddeningly for local leaders, it would be led by one of their own members, a man pledged to purify the union's pink-tinged image allied with the local clerics, CM&S management, and those immigrant workers who remained reluctant participants in Communist-led Mine-Mill.

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<sup>116</sup> "Moral Re-Armament," *TDT*, 23 March 1953, 4.

<sup>117</sup> "Bishop of Kootenay Tells Rotarians of Communist Weak Spot," *TDT*, 17 March 1949, 2.

## Chapter 5.

### A Clash of Ideologies in the Smelter City

Although the shooting war had ended, Trail's ideological war was only beginning. Local 480 had won the right to represent all smelter workers. Its Communist leadership had won the loyalty of some immigrant workers, but opponents of Mine-Mill and other leftist unions did not surrender. South of the border serious threats to unions emerged in the form of the early Cold War. Closer to home smelter families were rearticulating church-centered and media-fostered concerns about militant unions such as Mine-Mill. Canadian labour reporter Jack Williams noted that a rash of post-war strikes exemplified the "clouds gathering on the Canadian labour horizon," noting that 1945 strike patterns paralleled the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.<sup>1</sup> Such musings did nothing to quell the conservative views expressed by the *Trail Daily Times*. By early 1946, front-page headlines prompted even more Red baiting. The defection of Russian cipher clerk Igor Gouzenko the previous September led Ottawa to initiate a spy probe. Gouzenko gave federal authorities names of several alleged Soviet spies. In March, Montreal Communist MP Fred Rose was charged with espionage under the Official Secrets Act. Communist organizer Sam Carr was suspected of being a Soviet spy recruiter. Both stories appeared regularly on the *Times* front page.<sup>2</sup> Harvey Murphy later dismissed the Rose trial as

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<sup>1</sup> "Canadian Labor Clouds Are Gathering," *TDT*, 3 October 1945, 2; "Current Labor Unrest Is Similar to 1919 Pattern," *TDT*, 31 October 1945, 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Rose Preliminary Hearing Finishes," "Carr Was Paid by U.S. Red Party," *TDT*, 26 March 1946, 1. Interestingly, the *Times* seemed to miss a story that was relevant to the West Kootenay Doukhobor population. Emma Woikin, a Saskatchewan member of the persecuted religious sect that had migrated from Czarist Russia in the 1890s, was also convicted of spying and imprisoned. See June Callwood, *Emma: The Story of Treason* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1984).

trying the Soviet Union with “dime thriller dramatics calculated to impress and thrill the ignorant,” but it did heighten smelter workers’ wariness of Communist-led Mine-Mill.<sup>3</sup> The media frenzy also empowered anti-Communist Claire Billingsley, who had resigned the union representative’s job Murphy had arranged for him. Anti-Communist measures even encouraged Billingsley to campaign for the Local 480 presidency.

By summer 1946, perhaps energized by the Russian spy revelations, police in the Kootenays were trying to build a case to deport Murphy, “the well known Communist,” himself an immigrant who had come to Canada from Poland as a boy. In September they noted his strike-supporting speech to a Mine-Mill District Union meeting in Vancouver. “In his usual manner, he flayed capitalism, the government, Liberals, etc.,” wrote an unnamed police officer.<sup>4</sup> The *Times* warned that “responsible labor leaders are convinced that Communists in Canada and the United States are aiming at nothing short of a general strike.”<sup>5</sup> The next day the Trail daily reprinted a *Financial Post* article accusing “rabble-rousing, balding Harvey Murphy” and other Communists of exerting “a powerful influence in ten major Canadian unions.” It was all considered respectable and necessary Red bashing for CCL president Aaron Mosher as he built his case for the future purging of rebellious Red affiliates like Mine-Mill. In October, a hard-rock miners’ strike at thirteen British Columbia locations ended and miners “emerged as the highest paid in North America” with no visible damage to employment prospects.<sup>6</sup> Trail’s smelter

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<sup>3</sup> “Spy Scare,” *BC District Union News*, 1 April 1946, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Unnamed officer, correspondence entitled “Extract – Murphy, Harvey – Strike – International Union of Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers,” “E” Division, Vancouver, 19 September 1946.

<sup>5</sup> “General Strike Is The Aim,” *TDT*, 23 September 1946, 4.

<sup>6</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 58.

workers, having avoided a strike thanks to their 1946 collective agreement, supported the miners during their long struggle, yet the Trail CPC club and Local 480 were in disarray and the West Kootenay region was about to enter labour's Cold War, with Billingsley leading the way.

When Mine-Mill hired him in 1945, Billingsley stated that “to build a Union worthy of the support of all the C.M.&S. employees, I’m sure we must have truth, trust, understanding and cooperation.”<sup>7</sup> The *Commentator* hailed him for his wartime role in encouraging workers to make substantial Victory Loan investments and for his leadership on the employees’ medical committee. Billingsley had initially embraced the union because he saw “so much favouritism up the hill” and that “stronger representation” than Blaylock’s WCC was needed.<sup>8</sup> Within two years, however, Murphy and the Local 480 Communists concluded that the Saskatchewan-born Billingsley had no intention of living up to the *Commentator*’s initial praise, at least not in the way Murphy had hoped.

Few knew it then, but Billingsley would later reveal himself to be a determined anti-Communist at the head of an anti-Mine-Mill group within Local 480. Al King would later describe its members as “opportunists,” a label King and other leftists had bandied about in Communist circles during the 1940s, especially concerning spurned British Columbia CPC leader Fergus McKean.<sup>9</sup> Joining Billingsley were carryovers from the

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<sup>7</sup> “R.C. Billingsley Appointed Int. Rep.” and “New Organizer Asks Co-operation in Letter to Workers on the Hill,” *Commentator*, 31 January 1945, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Claire Richard Billingsley oral history interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Labour Organizations at Cominco Series, Trail, B.C., 17 August 1983, BC Archives Sound Recordings, Call number: T4101:0011-0012, transcript pages 3 and 6.

<sup>9</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 54. Donald William Muldoon, “Capitalism Unchallenged: A Sketch of Canadian Communism, 1939-1949,” MA thesis, Simon Fraser University (History), 1977, offers a detailed description of McKean’s charges of opportunism. His book is titled *Communism Versus Opportunism: An*

WCC and its legal successor, the ISWU. As he prepared to replace former bomber pilot Don Berry as president, Billingsley campaigned on the theme of who would best represent smelter workers and played heavily on their anti-Communist feelings.<sup>10</sup> He consistently increased those sentiments as he tried to lay the groundwork for the total demolition of Red Local 480.

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Several events in the spring of 1947 undoubtedly influenced smelter workers as their loyalties seesawed between company unionism and Local 480's Reds. First, there was the contentious re-election of International Mine-Mill president Reid Robinson, which triggered a hail of accusations that his leadership had a "Moscow smell."<sup>11</sup> Second, and perhaps more influential, were the revelations of Pat Sullivan, the Communist secretary-treasurer of the TLC since 1943 and leader of the Canadian Seaman's Union (CSU). Sullivan disavowed the CPC and levelled allegations against several Communist union leaders, including Murphy. After reading Sullivan's claims, the Mine-Mill western director called him a "Judas" and a "sell out" who, like others, "betray their fellow men." Murphy also noted that the ISWU, Trail's affiliate to the anti-international Amalgamated Union of Canada (AUC), had distributed Sullivan's comments to the smelter workforce in hopes of further undermining the Mine-Mill Communists.<sup>12</sup> The ISWU, a legal version of the banned WCC, withered by 1948, so Billingsley turned to the Steelworkers as a new

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*Examination of the Revision of Marxism in the Communist Movement of Canada* (Vancouver: Self-published, 1946).

<sup>10</sup> "Don Berry," *B.C. District Union News*, 4 February 1947, 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Communism Splits Miners' Union," *TDI* (reprinted from *The Northern Miner*), 14 February 1947, 4. The question of whether or not Robinson was a Communist remains unanswered, but he was hounded by such accusations both inside Mine-Mill and out.

<sup>12</sup> "Sullivan Finds His Level," *B.C. District Union News*, 24 March 1947, 4.

ally. The much larger union – a million strong – had by then begun to assume the mantle of chief adversary of the Red leadership of Local 480, as discussed in the next chapter. Meanwhile, the *Times* contended that Sullivan’s statements had thrown organized labour into the “throes of a convulsion” involving a struggle between “the rank and file of many unions and a powerful handful of Communists.”<sup>13</sup> To the general public, this resembled the revelations of the Gouzenko affair. To CCL leaders, Sullivan’s statements were more ammunition for ousting their left-led affiliates.

Following a summer of more anti-Communist attacks, Murphy was still unaware of Billingsley’s plans, but he knew that the Trail local was in trouble. He surmised that several “right-wing” CCF members had taken control of the local, and the CPC had been “totally ineffective” in wresting it away. He responded by hiring fellow Communist Jack Scott, a war hero and veteran Communist, to “get the Party in shape” and to turn things around at Local 480. It was a “terrible situation,” Scott recalled. “Several good people were there but they just did not know how to go about things. Some were fairly heavy drinkers and women-chasers, and they spent most of their spare time at that occupation rather than politics.”<sup>14</sup> Scott succeeded, partly because, in his words “Murphy wasn’t underfoot.”<sup>15</sup> The district director had been busy elsewhere in his vast western territory, acting, in Scott’s view, as “lord of all he surveyed,” leaving Scott unfettered by a man who had “nobody to say nay to him.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “Revolt Against the Communists,” *TDT*, 26 March 1947, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Scott, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, ed., *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927-1985*, (St. John’s, NL: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Scott, 84.

Scott clearly did not like Murphy, but their paths to Red unionism followed a similar trajectory. Both joined the CPC early, Murphy in his youth in the 1920s and Scott in 1931. Both had been organizers in the unemployed workers' movement in Ontario. Scott may have met Murphy when they organized for the Workers' Unity League (WUL) in the early 1930s. When the CPC dismantled the WUL in 1935, ordering Communists to merge with CIO unions, Scott joined the On to Ottawa Trek led by Slim Evans, the original CIO organizer in Trail, but to Scott, Murphy was a "thorough bureaucrat."<sup>17</sup>

With the CPC club shaping up in Trail – about thirty members met regularly – Scott was elected as zinc plant shop steward and then chief steward. He learned that smelter conditions were "really terrible": long hours, restrictive workplace rules (no talking, no smoking, no coffee breaks), hazardous workspaces, prejudice against immigrants, and disrespectful supervisors.<sup>18</sup> It was also clear that rectifying these problems required a long and taxing struggle. In Scott's view, Murphy's dictatorial behaviour made things worse, so he challenged him. "Murphy was used to throwing his weight around," he recalled, and Scott had vowed to stop taking orders when he returned from Europe as a decorated war hero.<sup>19</sup> Their differences sharpened as the two men vehemently debated bargaining issues.

As Scott pursued his assignment, *Times* readers were warned to beware "the menace of the cancer of communism which is rampaging through the vitals of our

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<sup>17</sup> Scott, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, 83-84.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, 87.



society.”<sup>20</sup> Sullivan’s revelations received full play.<sup>21</sup> Anti-Red stories were endless, but they seemed to grow when Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act in June 1947, a law requiring American labour leaders to sign affidavits swearing they were not Communists. Failure would bar their unions from using federal labour department services. As David Caute explains, big business in the U.S. had “spent several million dollars each year on stimulating the belief that the Wagner Act, the union shop and the repeal of ‘right to work’ laws were all products of Moscow’s machinations.”<sup>22</sup> Other historians argue that the new labour legislation was ostensibly intended to avoid a repeat of the 1946 rash of strikes.<sup>23</sup> For Murphy and Local 480 Communists, however, it created a new mood of fear and intimidation, and it gave new impetus to enemies such as the AUC, which stepped up its anti-Mine-Mill campaign with the *Amalgamator*, the offices of which had recently moved from Hamilton to Trail. Billingsley compounded Scott’s problems by deciding he no longer wanted to be part of a “Communist-dominated union” and he drew closer to the AUC.<sup>24</sup> An independent union advocate, the AUC had long been an enemy of international unions like Mine-Mill and Local 480.<sup>25</sup>

That fall, Billingsley was elected local president, replacing Berry, and *Times* editor Bill Curran magnanimously congratulated Local 480 members on “having the

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<sup>20</sup> “Communists Thrive on Apathy,” *TDT*, 23 June 1947, 4.

<sup>21</sup> “Communists in Nearly All Trade Unions in Canada – Pat Sullivan,” *TDT*, 26 July 1947, 1; “Sullivan to Release Bigger Expose of Reds,” *TDT*, 24 July 1947, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Caute, 249.

<sup>23</sup> Robert W. Cherny, William Issel and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript from an interview conducted by Richard Bell in 1983.

<sup>25</sup> “Fink Convention Bars Labor Press–Scab ‘Federation’ Born in Hamilton,” *Commentator*, 15 November 1943, negatively describes the AUC and cites its apparent links to employers.

courage to cast aside its Communist president.”<sup>26</sup> Fred Henne, who had been elected Local 480 president in 1944, had opened the door for Billingsley by taking a Mine-Mill staff representative position in the far north. Berry replaced Henne briefly and in October, Billingsley handily won the local election. Soon “paranoia and fear infected everyone,” King recalled. It was hardly surprising that the Billingsley group, exploiting “the popular ‘anti-red’ phobia,” was in ascendancy.<sup>27</sup> “Some of the guys on the Hill honestly believed that we, the more left-leaning members of Mine Mill, were dangerous to them.”<sup>28</sup> Billingsley then set to work dismantling Local 480. He received unexpected assistance in November from an article penned by former Communist John Hladun in *Maclean’s* magazine. Under the heading “They Taught Me Treason,” Hladun, who had attended the International Lenin School (ILS) in Moscow, tagged Murphy as a fellow graduate and alleged they had trained in espionage techniques and military action.<sup>29</sup> Murphy called it “poppycock,” but admitted that he had attended the school in the early 1930s, a potentially damning admission at a politically charged time.<sup>30</sup>

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The year 1948 promised to be even tougher for Communist labour leaders. Local 480 had successfully negotiated collective agreements annually since 1944, but years of

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<sup>26</sup> “Red Tentacles Threaten Labor,” *TDI*, 7 April 1947, 4. It is unclear whether Don Berry was a Communist, but Fred Henne was a CPC member.

<sup>27</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 69.

<sup>28</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 68.

<sup>29</sup> John Hladun, “They Taught Me Treason,” *Maclean’s*, was a three-part series that ran from 1 October to 1 November 1947. For one description of the ILS, see John McIlroy, Alan Campbell et al, “Forging the Faithful: The British at the International Lenin School,” *Labour History Review*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (April 2003), 99-128.

<sup>30</sup> “Murphy Belittles McLean’s Article on Communism,” *TDI*, 3 November 1947, 3.

infighting over the local's Communist links took a toll. Across Canada, from the founding of the CCF in 1932 to the creation of the CCL in 1940, a negative reaction to Communism was also building and about to explode with the purging of Communists, heightened vilification of the CPC, and the expulsion of Red affiliates from national and international labour bodies. CCL president Mosher supported the travel restrictions the American government was already proposing and practicing, and he said the "dominion must be on guard against subversive elements" as well.<sup>31</sup> Closer to home, the CM&S was preparing to be more aggressive in its opposition to Reds.

CM&S vice-president R.W. Diamond had launched the first salvo the previous September, telling an engineers' meeting that Communism was "a destructive subversive force" with which "there must be no compromise."<sup>32</sup> William S. Kirkpatrick, who soon became the CM&S assistant general manager, followed in February with a CJAT radio address to smelter families adapted from a pamphlet innocuously titled "Your Union and You." His target was Communism and local Reds. "Very skilfully and highly organized efforts are being made," he said, to "bring your locals under communistic domination." They were supposedly "working vigorously and continuously to destroy our freedom." Communists would take away "your freedom to bargain collectively." Al King called it "a blatant management attempt to urge union members to get rid of any suspected Communists."<sup>33</sup> A *Times* editorial supported Kirkpatrick, who later became president of

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<sup>31</sup> "Smelter Union Asks That Border Be Left Open," *TDT*, 18 February 1948, 4.

"Keeping Out The Comrades," *TDT*, 17 March 1948, 4.

<sup>32</sup> "'Ideal Society' Should Be Goal Says Diamond," *TDT*, 11 September 1947, 2.

<sup>33</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 71, includes quotations from the Kirkpatrick pamphlet.

the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, claiming the CM&S manager only wanted to “strengthen, not weaken, your union.”<sup>34</sup>

The editorial triggered a full page of letters to the editor. R. Adamache, a Local 480 member, accused the company manager of “trying to split Labor!”<sup>35</sup> A “Worker and Democrat” suggested that Adamache was a Communist, but even if not, “the Murphys and Chernikoffskys [Murphy’s real surname misspelled] would appreciate your mode of communistic attack.”<sup>36</sup> “A Businessman” called Adamache a Communist for praising the Soviet Union, adding, “I have fired a red hot machine gun on hoards of misguided Germans who like the present communists had been sold on the idea that their dream of world conquest was righteous.”<sup>37</sup> Adamache urged *Times* readers not to listen to “the propaganda of the capitalists.”<sup>38</sup> King accused the *Times* of using pro-Kirkpatrick claims to “inflame people against the very idea of ‘little guys’ challenging the mighty citadel up on the Hill.”<sup>39</sup>

With Billingsley presiding over Local 480, secretary J.A. Saunders announced the dissolution of the ISWU, but its disappearance did nothing to quell anti-Communism. Hladun, a one-time West Kootenay resident, Ukrainian nationalist, and thoroughly disillusioned with the Soviet Union, renewed his attack on local Communists and Murphy. The *Times* reported on his “brilliant expose of communism” to a Nelson, B.C.,

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<sup>34</sup> “Strengthened Union Could Hit Communists,” *TDT*, 12 February 1948, 2.

<sup>35</sup> “Kirkpatrick ‘Red-baiter’,” *TDT*, 23 February 1948, 4.

<sup>36</sup> “Get the Facts, Mr. Adamache!” *TDT*, 25 February 1948, 5.

<sup>37</sup> “Businessman Vs. Adamache,” *TDT*, 25 February 1948, 5.

<sup>38</sup> “Adamache Hits Back,” *TDT*, 25 February 1948, 5.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 70.

audience.<sup>40</sup> Justice Minister Louis St. Laurent announced in mid-March that “Canada is cracking down on labour-union communists fleeing from the anti-communist Taft-Hartley labor law of the U.S.”<sup>41</sup> Both the TLC and the CCL wholeheartedly supported a government ban on Reds. They also refused a Mine-Mill request for assistance on the cross-border travel issue.<sup>42</sup> That paved the way for the second deportation of Reid Robinson, recently demoted to Mine-Mill international vice-president, as a subversive “labour union official.”<sup>43</sup>

The next incident further alarmed the largely non-ideological rank-and-file smelter workers who were already skeptical of Murphy as their chief negotiator because of his openly leftist politics. Any increased Red baiting only exacerbated worker confidence in Murphy and Local 480’s leadership. It also presented the anti-Communist CCL leadership with more pretexts to rid the labour movement of Murphy and the other Communists that Sullivan and Hladun had fingered. The incident in question took place on 8 April, at a banquet in Victoria. Murphy gave a speech in which he scolded eighty-two labour leaders at an annual labour lobby of provincial politicians. Irving Abella recounts the evening, which began with “a good deal of drinking and carousing.” Murphy, who apparently had had too much of his favourite whisky, made “some highly distasteful remarks about the private lives of some labour leaders.” One of his “less lurid”

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<sup>40</sup> “Independent Smelter Union Dissolved,” *TDT*, 1 March 1948, 2; “John Hladun Looks Forward To Trail Visit,” *TDT*, 10 March 1948, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Reds Will Find It Hard To Enter Canadian Labor,” *TDT*, 12 March 1948, 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Labor Congress Will Not Interfere With Government’s Ban on U.S. Union Organizers,” *TDT*, 11 March 1948, 1.

<sup>43</sup> “Canada Will Bar All Communists,” *TDT*, 4 March 1948, 1. Maurice Travis became president in 1947, replacing Robinson.

statements was that “the Congress officials were ‘phonies’ and ‘red-baiting floozies’.”<sup>44</sup>

The next day, Murphy’s impromptu remarks appeared on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun* in a story written by an enterprising reporter named Jack Webster.

According to Webster, who some believed had helped to orchestrate the event, Murphy was angry that the CCL did not support Robinson after the Canadian government arrested and deported him.<sup>45</sup> Murphy “denied that Robinson advocated [the] overthrow of the Canadian government,” Webster wrote. “‘It’s a lie,’ he [Murphy] said, ‘and they can’t prove it. It shows up our red-baiters including CCL officials.’”<sup>46</sup> The Canadian Press news service soon reported that CCL western director William Mahoney, later to play a key role in Trail, called Murphy’s remarks “unsubstantiated, improperly presented and despicable charges.” The fifteen offended delegates promptly walked out of the meeting when Murphy refused to withdraw his remarks.<sup>47</sup> Mahoney said the speech “destroyed the prestige labor needs to do its job and give bread and butter to the people.” Perhaps more hurtful, Malcolm Bruce, a former colleague of Murphy and known for his own political outbursts, called his one-time comrade’s comments “wholly indecent and inexcusable.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Abella, 121.

<sup>45</sup> “Reid Robinson Deportation Is Ordered,” *TDT*, 10 April 1948, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Jack Webster, “Labor Lobby Split by Murphy Speech,” *Vancouver Sun*, 9 April 1948. Webster, like the CCL leaders Murphy criticized in his speech, was no friend to Communists. In *Webster! An autobiography by Jack Webster* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 37, he writes that “They [Communists like Murphy] had taken over the labour movement and I believed they had to be evicted. I hounded them.”

<sup>47</sup> “Harvey Murphy To Face Trade Union Charges,” *TDT*, 10 April 1948, 1-2.

<sup>48</sup> “Labor Censures Harvey Murphy,” *TDT*, 14 April 1948, 2. See William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) for a short biographical note on Bruce. See also Ron Verzuh, “Proletarian Cromwell: Two Found Poems Offer Insights into One of Canada’s Long-forgotten Communist Labour Leaders,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Issue 79 (Spring 2017), 185-227, discusses in detail an early critique of Murphy that Bruce authored. Bruce eventually became a Trotskyist.

Al King remembered the speech vividly. Murphy “told the full meeting that if Mosher was going to kiss the boss’s ass, he better be sure to pull his pants down first.”<sup>49</sup> Scott added that the speech was “funny no doubt, but not exactly tactful.”<sup>50</sup> Vancouver shipyard union leader Bill White, also a Communist, added a gritty personal touch. Puzzling about the fuss, he remarked: “You hear people blame the downfall of the Communist Party on Murphy’s Underwear Speech, but Christ, they were just waiting for any phoney goddamned excuse and that happened to be it.”<sup>51</sup> White later claimed the CCL’s actions against Murphy and ongoing internal party bickering led to the demise of the CPC as “the dominant force on the B.C. labour scene, and the end of any widespread militancy in B.C. labour.”<sup>52</sup> This gave too much importance to the underpants speech, but Stephen Gray drew a similar conclusion in his study of District One of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA), arguing that “the Marxist tradition in British Columbia was left gradually to wither on the thin vines of political sectarianism and academic discourse.”<sup>53</sup> What is undeniable is that Murphy’s speech handed anti-Communists an opportunity, and their first move was to suspend the Mine-Mill director for two years.

The suspension hardly diminished Murphy’s power in Trail. He was still an effective union organizer and negotiator. As Mine-Mill lawyer John Stanton recalled, he

related well to working people, who enjoyed his gravelly-voiced exposes of the greed and stupidity of certain employers and politicians . . . . No

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<sup>49</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 76.

<sup>50</sup> Scott, 252.

<sup>51</sup> Howard White, *A Hard Man to Beat: The Story of Bill White, Labour Leader, Historian, Shipyard Worker, Raconteur: An Oral History* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, c1983), 168.

<sup>52</sup> White, 171.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Charles Gray, “Woodworkers and legitimacy: The IWA in Canada, 1937-1957,” PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University (History), 1989, 10.

matter what difficulties Murphy faced, he always seemed to land, cat-like, on his feet. His more than generous ego and a certain foxiness were so noticeable that one could never be quite sure where one stood with Murphy.<sup>54</sup>

But he was not foxy enough to escape the CCL Red hunters. The underpants speech opened a new phase of the CCL's Cold War in Trail. They had been purging radicals for decades, but now the CCL and TLC, following the lead of American parent unions, had the perfect excuse, as White said, to escalate their anti-Red attacks. The incident in Victoria renewed talk of expulsions and may have legitimized the purging of Reds from the CCF that the national leadership, spurred by future national leader David Lewis, had already endorsed in the hope of gaining a stronger foothold for the party in Trail.

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In the late 1940s, the union movement entered a period of "[political] violence seldom witnessed in the history of Canadian labour," Bryan D. Palmer argues, marked by escalating confrontations between the CCF and the CPC.<sup>55</sup> Activists within the CPC, who had been tireless organizers in the 1930s, were now seen as evil doers dominating the movement. Some depict the CCF as the purveyors of "heroic democratic socialism" versus the "dark forces" of Communism, and, as Palmer argues, the CPC lent credibility to this depiction by its willingness to "alternatively encourage and discourage class struggle as evidence of its disregard for the workers' true needs."<sup>56</sup> But calling Communism in Trail a "dark force" was hardly accurate. Reginald Whittaker and Gary

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<sup>54</sup> John Stanton, *My Past Is Now: Further Memoirs of a Labour Lawyer* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 119.

<sup>55</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1983), 245.

<sup>56</sup> Palmer, 246.



Marcuse note that, “the Communists were visible agitators, calling for radical changes in Canadian society and attracting the enmity of business leaders, conservative politicians, and union rivals.”<sup>57</sup> Despite the CPC’s shifting labour policies and some “shady dealings” by Communist labour leaders, Palmer argues that Communists, including some in Trail, still believed they could sense “the mood and needs of their membership.”<sup>58</sup> But would they get a chance in Trail?

In retracing the history of labour socialism in Canada, Gad Horowitz argues that the “extreme left varieties” in British Columbia originated in the American tradition of radical unionism represented by Mine-Mill’s predecessor, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM).<sup>59</sup> While socialism did not thrive in the United States, it was welcomed in B.C. Emphasizing the Hartzian theory of fragmentation, Horowitz suggests Americans rejected the Marxism of European immigrants whereas Canadians accepted the milder Fabian socialism espoused by a largely British immigrant population. As he states,

The socialism of the United States, the socialism of [Daniel] De Leon, [Victor] Berger, [Morris] Hillquit, and [Eugene] Debs, is predominately Marxist and doctrinaire, because it is European. The socialism of English Canada, the socialism of [James] Simpson, [J.S.] Woodworth, and [M.J.] Coldwell is predominantly Protestant, labourist, and Fabian, because it is British.<sup>60</sup>

Considering that early waves of immigrants were British, this theory is doubtless true. But Horowitz seems to deny a role by politically savvy groups of Marxist thinkers who arrived later from eastern and southern Europe, as discussed in Chapter 4. These radicals

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<sup>57</sup> Whitaker and Marcuse, 316.

<sup>58</sup> Palmer, 252.

<sup>59</sup> Gad Horowitz *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 26.

<sup>60</sup> Horowitz, 26.

did have an influence on workers, even in remote settings such as Trail. When the CCL formed the British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL) in 1944, those immigrants among others elected non-Communist Daniel O'Brien as president but placed three top Communists on his executive board, including Harvey Murphy as first vice-president. Horowitz argues that the coalition provincial government cooperated with the Communist-led BCFL "in diverting the labour vote from the CCF."<sup>61</sup> This arrangement led to an ideological war between the CPC and the CCF as the two parties engaged in a continuous battle for electoral supremacy. That ensuing struggle was as contentious and divisive in the Kootenays as anywhere, and Local 480 was on the frontlines.<sup>62</sup>

The local's Communist leadership was caught in a dilemma. While a handful of members still maintained CPC memberships, many were also CCF activists. They may have been loyal to their Communist chief negotiator and to the Local 480 Reds, but they sought political solutions from both parties. During their long struggle for survival in the 1940s and early 1950s, Local 480 members did not consistently follow a single ideology. Political pragmatism made sense, but it led CCF anti-Communists and CPC local members to continually subject each other to public opprobrium, thus confusing and frustrating voters. Whenever possible, some smelter workers had voted for left alternatives ranging from the old Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) to the CPC and the CCF. Yet early voting records for the federal West Kootenay riding suggest that the majority of Trailites more often than not opted for Conservative candidates at the ballot

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<sup>61</sup> Horowitz, 125.

<sup>62</sup> James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

box.<sup>63</sup> From 1921 to 1945, Trail helped elect Conservative William “Blind Billy” Kemble Esling first to the provincial legislature in Victoria and then to the federal Parliament in Ottawa.<sup>64</sup> Like his fellow Tories, Esling was a vocal anti-Communist and an inveterate supporter of local business, especially the CM&S.<sup>65</sup> Few labour-friendly candidates were elected in B.C. until 1933, when the CCF won several seats on the strength of about 30 per cent of the provincial vote.<sup>66</sup> None succeeded in the Trail-Rossland riding that year, but the party’s success heightened local awareness of the left-wing movement and gave impetus to worker-friendly regional politicians such as Local 480 member Leo Nimsick, who garnered a modest 891 votes in 1937. Leftward politics had its limits, however. CPC candidates never won the Trail-Rossland riding, nor were they even viable contenders (see Table 5.1 – Trail-Rossland Election Results). However marginal at times, the local

**Table 5.1 B.C. Election Results in Trail-Rossland**

Political Party	1937	1941	1945	1949	1952	1953	1956
Liberal	1,877	1,789	-	-	3,331	2,899	1,960
C/PC	1,251	1,883	-	-	1,690	621	252
CCF	891	3,621	933	4,588	2,541	3,470	2,839
LBR	-	37	-	-	-	-	-

<sup>63</sup> Voters returned Conservative Richard McBride as BC premier from 1903 to 1915. See *Electoral History of British Columbia 1871-1986*, Elections British Columbia, [http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986\\_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf](http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Esling, born and educated in Philadelphia, was a pioneer newspaperman who once owned several newspapers in the region, including the *Miner* and the *Trail Creek News*, the city’s first newspaper and predecessor to the *Trail Daily Times*.

<sup>65</sup> Austin F. Cross, “Tribute to a Great Canadian: An Appreciation of the Great Services Rendered to Canada by an adopted son...W.K. Esling, MP,” *Cominco Magazine*, November 1944, 2 and 30, reprinted in *Canadian Business*, illustrates Esling’s close ties to the CM&S.

<sup>66</sup> James Naylor, “The British Columbia CCF’s Working-Class Moment: Socialism Not Populism,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2014), 101-121, offers an analysis of the 1933 CCF victories.

SCA	-	-	261	-	-	-	-
COAL	-	-	3,171	5,910	-	-	-
PCCF	-	-	2,060	-	-	-	-
BCSCL/SC	-	-	-	-	3,979	4,182	5,097

**Source:** *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1971-1986*, Elections British Columbia, Victoria, B.C., 1988, [http://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986\\_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf](http://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf).

Above party acronyms are as follows: C/PC was the Conservative/Progressive Conservatives, PCCF was the People's Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, LBR was the Labour Representative Committee, SCA was the Social Credit Alliance, COAL was the Coalition of Liberals and Conservatives, and BCSCL was the Social Credit League. See also *History of Federal Ridings Since 1867*, Parliament of Canada, <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/>.

left-wing vote had long always alarmed the CM&S. The *Commentator* and the Communist *Pacific Tribune* were particularly vexing, highlighting the company's record profits during the war years. Local 480 used such data to curry support from politicians who agreed with their views, but they encountered significant barriers, including company union advocates, corporate paternalism, and internal dissension among workers who self-identified differently. As well, the local leadership had to cultivate a greater sense of class solidarity among the workers. Meanwhile, the CM&S was busy undermining all such agency.

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Trail's workers were certainly aware of their working-class status and the class distinctions of the smelter city. Labour-friendly politicians had fuelled this consciousness with bold statements about the smelter management class's dominance over workers' lives and the need to challenge capitalism as epitomized by the CM&S. Colin Cameron, a left-wing CCFer who represented Comox in the provincial legislature from 1937 to 1952, established a loyal following in the West Kootenay district as far back as 1939 when he

wrote an article for the CCF's *Federationist* entitled "Why A Union Is Needed In Trail." The smelter, he said, embodied the "evolution of Capitalism" and the "class struggle."<sup>67</sup> The "venomous attack" from an outsider, in this case a Vancouver Island Scot, incensed *Times* editor Curran who called on city council to demand a formal apology.<sup>68</sup> Cameron's remarks were calculated to boost the local union drive, but his radicalism could hardly have helped the local public image of Local 480 Communists. But this did not seem to slow the energetic Local 480 Reds who went on to win the support of smelter workers. Some also wanted the local to play a more political role.

The wartime banning of the CPC as a subversive organization blocked Trail workers from participating in the electoral process as CPC supporters, but by 1943, the Communists were preparing a replacement called the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), with Murphy on its national planning committee. In Trail, Local 480's Harry Drake formed an LPP branch hoping to secure support from smelter workers.<sup>69</sup> Drake's hopes came to nothing. Soon after Labour Day that year, the CCL and the CCF announced a political partnership that had major implications for the political ambitions of Local 480 Reds. The *Times* may have unwittingly come to the LPP's aid, warning that it "is impossible for the CCF to be the representative of labor and still represent other classes," apparently believing that the new alliance could lead to a mass revolt.<sup>70</sup> Curran warned that "Revolution can never be the . . . permanent solution to any problem, political or

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<sup>67</sup> "Colin Cameron's Impressions of Trail," *TDT*, 29 May 1939, 4.

<sup>68</sup> "Editorial – A Venomous Attack On This City And Its Citizens," *TDT*, 29 May 1939, 1.

<sup>69</sup> "Tim Buck Party Organizes Branch At Trail Meeting," *TDT*, 7 October 1943.

<sup>70</sup> "CCF Plus CCL," *TDT*, 17 September 1943.

economic.”<sup>71</sup> That autumn, he charged the CCF with “promising everything to everybody.”<sup>72</sup> He later concluded that “the CCF brand of socialism is outmoded utopianism” tantamount to “totalitarianism.”<sup>73</sup> The *Times* had been baiting Reds since the early 1930s, when it became a daily. It never missed an opportunity to attack the “parlor-pinks and the rabble-rousers” of the labour movement.<sup>74</sup> Now Curran warned workers not to embrace “a system, which, under some vast bureaucracy, would control and regiment their whole future.”<sup>75</sup> This poorly described Local 480’s Communist leaders, and the parent union, but it was part of Curran’s well-worn and relentless pro-CM&S mantra.

Also serving to undermine Drake’s hopes for the LPP, Local 480 was embroiled in a local political controversy when it claimed publically that the CCF had agreed to join forces with the LPP as the Rossland civic elections neared in late 1943. The CCF denied the claim.<sup>76</sup> Then the *Times* hinted that the LPP and CIO had collaborated to allow Communists to enter into local municipal politics.<sup>77</sup> When ballots were counted, the *Times* trumpeted the defeat of labour candidates, saying they were “backed by both the CIO” and the LPP and that “Rossland electors obviously do not want politics brought into their civic affairs.”<sup>78</sup> Drake responded to the CCF’s rejection of the LPP’s proposal of unity, stating it constituted a “great threat against a united labor movement.” The Local

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<sup>71</sup> “Revolution Unnecessary,” *TDT*, 18 September 1943.

<sup>72</sup> “CCF Promises,” *TDT*, 5 October 1943.

<sup>73</sup> “‘Orthodox’ Socialism,” *TDT*, 8 October 1943.

<sup>74</sup> “The Profit Motive,” *TDT*, 9 October 1943.

<sup>75</sup> “Labor and the CCF,” *TDT*, 6 October 1943.

<sup>76</sup> “Union Admits Its Error; CCF and Transportation Deny Their Endorsation,” *TDT*, 15 December 1943.

<sup>77</sup> “The CIO Bulletin,” *TDT*, 16 December 1943.

<sup>78</sup> “Rossland Rejects United Labor,” *TDT*, 17 December 1943.

480 Red, who had long faced the brunt of anti-Communist and anti-union criticism in Trail, concluded that “red-baiting of this sort, attacking the left wing of the labor movement[,] confuses the real issues facing the people and will allow reactionary forces to return to the pre-war times of so-called free enterprise and monopoly.”<sup>79</sup> It was not the last time the CCF and LLP would lock horns or that Local 480 would find itself embroiled in political controversy.

When H.W. “Bert” Herridge was nominated in 1945 as the West Kootenay CCF candidate, the *Commentator* dutifully rallied Local 480 members around the Kaslo, B.C., farmer. The paper chided members, “Are we going to sit idly by twiddling our thumbs, saying it doesn’t matter who gets in, our vote wouldn’t influence the outcome anyway?” It warned that a loss in this federal election could take them back to “the cutthroat days of keen competition, forcing the wages and living conditions of other people down, developing another descending spiral of human welfare.” Local 480 should not be a “free riding ‘maverick’ in our Canadian commonwealth, but a more determined ‘active citizen’, one that would vote against ever returning to the 20c day relief camps, and the spectacle of disillusioned youth asking for a job and getting tear gas and clubs.”<sup>80</sup> Presenting a class analysis of the “industrialists of the world,” it insisted that if the management class could manoeuvre for their class interest, then the working class should do similarly. “Are we to sit idly by and allow the Blaylocks and Mitchells [federal labour

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<sup>79</sup> “Writer Raps CCF For Failure To Stop Red-Baiting,” *TDT*, 9 December 1943.

<sup>80</sup> “The Union and Political Action,” *Commentator*, 31 January 1945, 2.

minister Humphrey Mitchell] to rant about the Pinks and the Reds and to castigate the international unions?”<sup>81</sup>

In blessing Herridge, Local 480 unwittingly spiked his prospects. CCF “chieftains in Vancouver” (the CCF’s B.C. Council) nixed the nomination, viewing Herridge as too closely associated with the union’s Communist leaders. The *Times* exploited the divided left, remarking that it “appears that freedom of choice of CCF candidates is curtailed and that the wish of the electors of any riding can be overruled by a supreme council of some kind in Vancouver.”<sup>82</sup> The CCF leadership’s rejection of Herridge’s nomination spurred additional criticism from the *Commentator*.<sup>83</sup> The union paper advised CCF leaders to reconsider, adding that the party should not “interfere with the free, progressive flow of the logics of life and retard the movement of the people in their united march onward.”<sup>84</sup> Harry Drake encouraged Kootenay progressives to weld “themselves into a common bond.” The Liberal-Conservative coalition government, he insisted, “stands threatened by CCF policy, and as a result of the considerable swing to the left of the masses in the last few years.” Herridge had the support of Local 480 members and “his policies on the war, and for [political] unity, have been supported by the LPP,” but there were “malicious attempts being made to represent Mr. Herridge’s nomination as purely LPP-influenced,

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<sup>81</sup> “Editorial – Unions and Politics,” *Commentator*, 13 January 1944, 4.

<sup>82</sup> “CCF Tactics,” *TDT*, 25 October 1944.

<sup>83</sup> “Commentator to be Bi-weekly Paper,” *Commentator*, 15 February 1944, 4, was wishful thinking at best. The paper published irregular for the next year and would never reach biweekly frequency.

<sup>84</sup> “A Popular Candidate,” *Commentator*, 27 November 1944.



deliberately [to] confuse people and act as a cover for anti-unity forces in the CCF leadership today.”<sup>85</sup>

The following spring the *Times* again criticized the CCF executive for opposing Herridge, declaring that by shunning the popular candidate the party has “destroyed its own organization in this riding for many years to come.” To “those whose ideals do not include socialism and who look towards the continuation of our way of life under the system of free enterprise,” the CCF had exposed a “major weakness in party ideology.”<sup>86</sup> A week later, the daily reported that the LPP had endorsed Herridge as the “People’s CCF” candidate in the June Dominion election.<sup>87</sup> The CCF leadership then replaced Herridge with Frank Tracy, also from Kaslo. CCF president A.T. Alsbury explained that Herridge “will masquerade as a federal candidate” but “he will be the actual spokesman of the Communist Party.”<sup>88</sup> That was as good as it got for the *Times* in its untiring crusade against the left. The next day the *Times* called Herridge an unreconstructed Communist, “whatever title he may assume,” and “those who want him to run” supported LPP policies. This included Local 480, which had circulated a petition urging the CCF executive to accept Herridge’s candidacy.<sup>89</sup>

In late May, the CCF placed an advertisement in the *Times* noting that CCF MP Angus MacInnis, an ardent anti-Communist, would address Kootenay voters. The son-in-

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<sup>85</sup> “Letter – Drake Presents Labor Progressive Stand on Herridge,” *TDT*, 6 November 1944.

<sup>86</sup> “Mr. Winch Is Persuasive,” *TDT*, 16 May 1945, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Maurice Hodgson, *The Squire of Kootenay West: The Biography of Bert Herridge* (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House, 1976) provides details on Herridge’s long career as both local MLA and MP.

<sup>88</sup> “Communist Party Backs Herridge in June 11 Election,” *TDT*, 22 May 1945, 1. Thomas Alsbury would become mayor of Vancouver in 1959.

<sup>89</sup> “Mr. Herridge Has Been Tagged,” *TDT*, 23 May 1945, 4.

law of the late CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth, MacInnis would speak against Local 480's support of Herridge. MacInnis was unequivocally aligned with the party's national leadership on the question of collaborating with the CPC. As James Naylor and others have shown, the CCF had adopted a policy of "avoiding any public association with the Communist Party," yet rejecting "knee-jerk anti-Communism."<sup>90</sup> The ad warned that a "great national movement is being attacked by the most unscrupulous campaign in Canada's history." The ad also tried to debunk some of the anti-CCF arguments, insisting that "every possible lie, distortion and slander is being used by Big Business and its political parties against the thousands of Canadians who form the CCF."<sup>91</sup>

The distance between the CCF leadership and the local sentiment erupted at a public meeting a few days later. MacInnis tried to justify the CCF rejection of Herridge to a Trail audience by explaining that "Herridge got too big for the party." This brought a volley of accusations of CCF hypocrisy. When confronted with the issue of how long Frank Tracy had been a party member, MacInnis was unable to answer. The meeting degenerated into accusations against smelter workers who had "belonged to the 'Maple Leaf' union [a reference to the ISWU] or to the CIO."<sup>92</sup> War veterans in attendance might have shared these concerns, but for many, politics, regardless of its colour, was secondary to getting resettled at home and resuming work at the smelter. The ensuing election exposed the weakness of the CCF position and Herridge rode Local 480's unwavering

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<sup>90</sup> Naylor, 244.

<sup>91</sup> "Which serves our country best? – Fear based on slander or Reason based on facts," *TDT*, 29 May 1945, 3.

<sup>92</sup> "Angus MacInnis Says Herridge Defiance Was Repudiation of the CCF," *TDT*, 31 May 1945, 3. Among Local 480 leaders, the Maple Leaf union was a pejorative nickname for the Independent Smelter Workers' Union. See King, *Red Bait!*, 48.

support to victory as an independent “People’s CCF” candidate for the Kootenay West riding in Ottawa. He polled more than a thousand votes ahead of the Conservative candidate. Meanwhile, the official CCF candidate lost his deposit, winning only 8 per cent of the popular vote.<sup>93</sup> CCF federal leader M.J. Coldwell, touted in certain quarters as the “next prime minister,” emerged with only three British Columbia seats – four, counting the rebellious Herridge. The *Times* was unhappy with the Herridge win, calling him “an orphan in a strange land” and declaring that the new MP was tainted by his Communist support.<sup>94</sup>

In reality, Herridge’s victory was less about his supposed Communist sympathies than a power struggle with the CCF. Indeed, Herridge’s commitment to Communism was never clear. Local 480 supported Herridge because he backed smelter workers’ right to a fair deal from the employer and perhaps because he was the only electable leftist in the West Kootenay. With its electoral losses, CCF support dipped in B.C. and federal elections, and the Social Credit Party soon took over many of these CCF ridings behind future premier W.A.C. Bennett. CCF stalwarts nevertheless blamed Communist influence for the losses, and, as Benjamin Isitt explains, “powerful forces in the national CCF and B.C. section turned against dissidents in their own ranks.”<sup>95</sup> Ironically, Herridge, once expelled from the CCF “for advocating cooperation with the communists,” was

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<sup>93</sup> “Herridge Majority Is 1,102,” and “Soldier Vote Is Key to Election,” *TDT*, 12 June 1945, 1.

<sup>94</sup> “Kootenay West’s Member,” *TDT*, 13 June 1945, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Majority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 92.

readmitted to the party.<sup>96</sup> Local 480 eventually withdrew its endorsement of the CCF as its political voice.<sup>97</sup>

The political fallout from the 1945 election continued to interest Trailites, ample evidence of which could be found in the anti-CCF *Times*. Voters across B.C., Ontario, and the nation pondered its significance. A royal commission investigated charges by Ontario CCF leader E.B. “Ted” Jolliffe that, among other things, Ontario premier George Drew had organized a political “Gestapo,” spying on CCF and other left politicians.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, the CCF’s provincial council punished the Kootenay West riding for its defiance during the Herridge nomination squabble by severing ties to the People’s CCF, withdrawing the Trail CCF club’s charter, and suspending neighbouring Warfield’s charter. The Trail club fought back. “We had hoped that the decisive expression of the people’s will in Kootenay West would cause the provincial executive to realize that a very serious mistake had been made,” wrote a member of Herridge’s campaign committee. Instead, the party leadership assigned an organizer to build “a movement purged of all those democratic elements who insist upon the fundamental right of the rank and file to choose the members who will represent them in the parliaments of this country.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Isitt, 89.

<sup>97</sup> “CCF No Longer Political Voice of Trail’s Local 480,” *TDI*, 10 March 1949, 1.

<sup>98</sup> Walter Stewart, *The Life and Political Times of Tommy Douglas* (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2003), 179-183, in a section called “The Hate Campaign,” says Drew set up a political police force in 1943 using tax money and that Captain William J. Osbourne-Dempster, code named “D.208,” was a “political spy” charged with setting up files on “anyone who levelled any criticism against the government, free enterprise, or international finance.” Drew used the term “Gestapo” in a speech broadcast by the CBC, 24 May 1945.

<sup>99</sup> “CCF Breaks With People’s Group,” *TDI*, 16 July 1945, 1.

A week after the expulsion and suspension, two Herridge supporters wrote to the *Times* to say that the local clubs “believe in the democratic rights of the people to choose their own candidate and we also believe in the principles of the Regina manifesto,” notably the call to nationalize the banks and other private institutions.<sup>100</sup> By that point it was clear that not everyone in the CCF leadership shared those beliefs. The party was moving toward the centre of the political spectrum. There would be less room for revolutionary platforms such as those contained in the famed manifesto. The *Times* noted a comment in the CCF-supporting *Canadian Forum* advising party leaders to shift the CCF program from “all-out socialism to some socialism.” The *Forum* argued that “What our society needs in order to win the peace is enterprise, both public and private.”<sup>101</sup>

Such ideas departed significantly from the founding document and beliefs of the “People’s CCF” in the Kootenays. The political rebellion was short-lived, but it strongly suggests that the majority of Trail’s smelter workers were more interested in bread-and-butter results than in winning any ideological battle. In the minds of CCF leaders, hopes of electing CCF candidates hinged on cultivating a less radical image. For leftists like those at Local 480, who adhered to a “revolutionary stance” and radical social change, the CCF was decreasingly a political home. In James Naylor’s view, radical ideals had been cast aside. “Labour socialists, had seen themselves, by their essence, as outsiders,” and, “Labour’s position gave workers a unique ability to understand capitalism, develop an ethical critique of capitalist social relations, and organize themselves, as a class, to

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<sup>100</sup> “Letter – Expelled Members Of CCF Reply To B.C. Executive,” *TDT*, 21 July 1945, 4.

<sup>101</sup> “It’s Up To Business Men,” *TDT*, 31 July 1945, 4.

replace it.<sup>102</sup> Anti-capitalism was fading in the CCF, and the demands of its manifesto were giving way to a strategy of parliamentary reformism. Local 480's Communists had no place at the national level, and their role within the provincial CCF was diminishing as well.

The purging continued in late July as the CCF executive expelled three Kootenay members for supporting Herridge. Harry Drake was among them.<sup>103</sup> Payback came during the 25 October B.C. election, when the CCF, while winning fourteen seats elsewhere in the province, lost the Trail-Rossland riding formerly held by Herridge to a Liberal-Conservative coalition candidate. The coalition easily secured a majority in Victoria. Social Credit did not win in any of the sixteen ridings it contested, but the right-wing party ran strongly, revealing things to come. Tim Buck's Communists ran twenty-one candidates, but they won no seats. The *Times* crowed that the LPP had achieved its purpose of dividing the left and punishing the CCF for its failure to "co-operate."<sup>104</sup> Murphy's *B.C. District Union News* supported former Local 480 organizer and war veteran Sgt. Gordon Martin's bid as a Communist, and Local 480 man, Bill Cunningham, a "People's CCF" candidate for Rossland-Trail.<sup>105</sup> Neither won.

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By the late 1940s, Herridge had long earned the respect of Local 480 members as their representative in both provincial and federal jurisdictions. Along with CCF leftists

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<sup>102</sup> Naylor, 314.

<sup>103</sup> "Three CCF Members Expelled," *TDT*, 30 July 1945, 1.

<sup>104</sup> "The Communists Win In Defeat," *TDT*, 31 October 1945, 4.

<sup>105</sup> "IUMMSW Candidates," *B.C. District Union News*, 15 October 1945, 3.

Colin Cameron and rebel CCFer Rod Young, a one-term MP from Vancouver, they represented labour issues in the Kootenays. The CCF also found working-class voters gravitating in their direction instead of the national party. Under provincial leader Harold Winch, the B.C. CCF also supported CPC on some issues. In one of the *Times* editor's frequent attacks on the CCF and the CPC, Curran opined that "To what extent the Communists are using the cloak of the CCF to further their aims it is, of course, impossible even to guess, but both are devoted to the weakening and elimination of many of our institutions."<sup>106</sup>

Such editorials, coupled with the Herridge affair and the open criticisms voiced by CCF rebels, contributed to the vacillation of Trail smelter workers as the Cold War rose. As Isitt notes, CCF leaders were "desperate to distance themselves from Soviet Communism." They opposed "unity with Communist and non-Communist workers against a common enemy."<sup>107</sup> Al Warrington, a Communist Local 480 executive member, recalled that the local CCF group "wouldn't take in anyone who they suspected of being a Mine-Mill guy."<sup>108</sup> Despite the bad blood, Leo Nimsick, a member of the bargaining team that negotiated the first Local 480 collective agreement in 1944, was eventually elected to the provincial legislature on a CCF ticket in Cranbrook-Kimberley. The East Kootenay sent Thomas Uphill to Victoria, where he served coal miners' interests for forty years.<sup>109</sup> A Boer War veteran and future Fernie mayor, Uphill ran as a candidate of the

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<sup>106</sup> "CCFers Strong For Soviet," *TDT*, 19 October 1946, 4.

<sup>107</sup> Isitt, 90.

<sup>108</sup> Al Warrington interview, conducted by Richard Bell, Kaslo, BC, 29 June 1983, BC Archives sound recordings, "Labour organizations at Cominco" series, Call number: T4101:0017, :0018 and :0019.

<sup>109</sup> Isitt, 86.

Fernie and District Labour Party (FDLP). He “was friendly with the Communists,” Tom Langford and Chris Frazer remembered, which “infuriated the anti-communist leadership of the BC CCF.”<sup>110</sup> Cedric Cox, another charter member of Local 480 who worked as a pattern maker at Cominco, won Winch’s Burnaby seat after his death in 1956. The Rossland-born Cox served in the Royal Canadian Navy during the war, and, upon his return, he married Ernest’s daughter Eileen.<sup>111</sup> After moving to the Lower Mainland, he supported such left-wing causes as the “Fair Play for Cuba” campaign. All four blurred the lines between Communist and social democratic activism, though only Herridge brought the matter to a full boil.

In 1953, the local supported Communist Mathilda “Tillie” Belanger as its federal nominee. A registered nurse and spouse of Gar Belanger, the local’s first president, Tillie had been secretary of Mine-Mill Ladies Auxiliary Local 131.<sup>112</sup> She supported Local 480 and advocated a larger role for the auxiliary in the politics of smelter workers. The CCF’s Herridge handily won the seat and Belanger came in last with 347 votes, losing her legal deposit.<sup>113</sup> Despite the loss, her candidacy signalled Local 480 leadership’s renewed eagerness to support the CPC over the CCF, but it also signified the unwillingness of Local 480 members to follow their Communist leaders. Moreover, it may have presaged the fear that would accelerate as McCarthyism and the broader Cold War took hold.

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<sup>110</sup> Tom Langford and Chris Frazer, “The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass, 1945-1958,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 49 (Spring 2002), 43-81, 48.

<sup>111</sup> Daisy de Jong Webster, *Growth of the NDP in BC, 1900-1970* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1970), 26.

<sup>112</sup> “LPP candidates contest Kootenay West, East seats,” *Pacific Tribune*, 17 July 1953, 7.

<sup>113</sup> “How British Columbia Voted,” *Pacific Tribune*, 14 August 1953, 6.



By 1948, animosity between left and right within the CCF and between it and the CPC was set to explode. Although the CCF opposed anti-labour legislation, its leaders were also responsible for some of the most vicious anti-Communist commentaries. In its ongoing war with local anti-Communists, Local 480 was caught between rival parties with competing left-wing ideologies. Some members supported both, favouring the CPC in ideological debates at clandestine club meetings, but the CCF at the ballot box, as in the Herridge case. About half the founding executive of Local 480 were CPC members and advocates of the Communist-inspired Popular Front movement in the 1930s. Several would remain loyal Mine-Mill members into the late 1940s.<sup>114</sup> From the end of the war, their ties became every more frayed. Their political loyalties were regularly tested as some members adhered to the CPC's class analysis of the workplace and society, while others backed the CCF socialism and still others its evolving social democracy.

The CCF and the CPC shared some policy views and both tried to exploit their commonalities in appeals to members, but Trail's Communists and CCF adherents had been intra-class enemies since the socialist party's inception. In spite of the CCF's anti-capitalist stance, CPC members viewed the CCF as sellouts. Always a strong supporter of Stalinist CPC leader Tim Buck, Murphy stoked the anti-CCF machine with hardline condemnations of the socialist party, seizing every opportunity to denigrate the CCF. By the mid-1940s, the angry denunciations that characterized the "social fascist" name-calling of the Comintern's Third Period gave way to more sophisticated battle cries. When, for example, the party tried to encourage local unions to affiliate, Murphy replied

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<sup>114</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 35, notes that seven of the 15 founding members of the local were Communists. Several held executive positions after the war.

that “the CCF has challenged the right [of labour] . . . to fight for legislative gains except through their party.”<sup>115</sup> As a vice-president on the Communist-heavy BCFL executive, he did not want to share power.

Antipathy between the two parties had been building for more than a decade. As Issitt notes, “throughout its history, foreign policy and cooperation with the Communist Party were persistent sources of conflict in the BC CCF.”<sup>116</sup> Some CCF leaders insisted the party could only advance if it shunned Communists. To that end it tried to purge all its Reds. Much of this “Red War” revolved around the IWA, with Murphy acting as a key adviser to the largest B.C. union and a bastion of labour Communism in the province. From 1946 through 1948, Murphy played a feature role in IWA District One president Harold Pritchett’s struggle against an anti-Communist group within his union known as the “white bloc.” The group, characterized by some as business unionists, had existed since 1940 and had split the union along left-right lines.<sup>117</sup> The split focused attention on several controversial issues, including the Marshall Plan (which the white bloc supported and Pritchett opposed), support for the CCF as labour’s political voice, and the IWA’s supposed subservience to the Soviet Union. The split was exacerbated by the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, sanctifying white bloc anti-Communism.

Central to the split was Pritchett’s fight against amendments to B.C.’s ICA Act in 1947 and 1948. He argued that the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association (CMA) had

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<sup>115</sup> Horowitz, 129.

<sup>116</sup> Issitt, 87.

<sup>117</sup> See Jerry Lembcke, “The International Woodworkers of America in British Columbia, 1942-1953,” *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 6 (Autumn 1980), 113-148, for a detailed account of the split.

assisted on drafting the amendments to bring the province's labour laws into closer alignment with the U.S. act. Murphy helped shape the IWA's opposition and was partially responsible for the split, Stephen Gray argues. For Pritchett's trade unionists, "the traditions and struggles of the 1930s still echoed" and Murphy played on those memories.<sup>118</sup> Similar to some of the Trail smelter unionists, Gray remarks,

many of these men were noted for their inattention to broader ideological and party work, and detachment from the more general political concerns of the Party. What distinguishes them was their approach to union work, which, during the organizational phase of industrial unions in Canada, was particularly effective and won them a broad following.<sup>119</sup>

But, as Isitt notes, those days had passed and the Red Wars of 1948 ultimately "curbed communist power in B.C. unions."<sup>120</sup> The split precipitated the B.C. IWA's break from the international to form the Woodworkers Industrial Union of Canada (WIUC), which was disastrous for IWA Communists. Like Mine-Mill, they were ousted from Canada's labour movement. Murphy, added Gray, "had a large say in the decision" to break away, describing it as "one of the worst mistakes the [Communist] party ever made."<sup>121</sup>

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The CCF remained in ideological turmoil through 1954, the year it suspended maverick MP Rod Young, a Trotskyist.<sup>122</sup> Elaine Bernard attributes this to Cold War anti-

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<sup>118</sup> Stephen Charles Gray, "Woodworkers and legitimacy: The IWA in Canada, 1937-1957," PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University (History), 1989, 222.

<sup>119</sup> Gray, 14-15.

<sup>120</sup> Isitt, 55, discusses the Red Wars in detail.

<sup>121</sup> Gray, 403.

<sup>122</sup> Elaine Bernard, "The Rod Young Affair in the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation," MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1979, 79. By 1954, the CCF's patience with Rod Young, the MP for Vancouver-Centre, had come to end. The outspoken maverick had been sternly disciplined by the BC CCF executive for being part of "extreme leftist elements" in the party. The party

Communism. The CCF's drift to the right "was vehemently opposed by many party members who fought to reaffirm the socialist character of the organization." Local 480 was among those caught in this fight. Some members identified with the old SPC, a founding organization of the CCF whose B.C. section adamantly supported political education and Marxian-guided political action.<sup>123</sup> Unsympathetic CCF leaders blocked "two Trail CCF Club delegates" from discussing their more radical views at a Vancouver convention.<sup>124</sup> Local 480 found itself in the midst of this political scrum, battling to hold to its Mine-Mill roots against a growing opposition of anti-Communists.

At first glance, the British Columbia section of the CCF was a Marxist-leaning thorn for federal party leaders such as party national secretary David Lewis. Indeed, as Isitt writes, CCF members such as Ernest Winch and son Harold Winch saw themselves as further left than the CPC. They even called themselves "comrade," much to the chagrin of Lewis and others.<sup>125</sup> In his autobiography, Lewis recalled his animosity towards the Reds in the 1940s. He was "a strong opponent of communist activity in the labour movement," seeing CCF stalwarts as naive for not realizing that the CPC was "one of Stalin's puppet instruments for the defence of the Soviet Union and of his brand of

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convention approved of the discipline. Some delegates also took exception to Young-sponsored resolution that proclaimed, "there can be no final escape from the agonies of war until capitalism as a system is eliminated and a socialist society developed . . . All else is illusion." The CCF was moving steadfastly in the opposite political direction when Young declared that "I would be proud to have people tell me I'm a Communist." Young's resignation was the last act of a five-year battle of the CCF's left and right wings. As Bernard puts it, "Rod Young became the stick with which the right successfully beat the left." Trailites were made well aware of the affair as attested here: "Controversial CCF'er Rod Young Resigns," *TDT*, 12 July 1954, 3 and "CCF Approves Action On Extreme Leftists," *TDT*, 18 April 1955, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Bernard, 1.

<sup>124</sup> Isitt, 93.

<sup>125</sup> Isitt, 87.

communism around the world.”<sup>126</sup> Yet years later, Lewis still rued the political rivalry between himself and Murphy because of how it undermined their joint fight against capitalism: “no one in the CCF or in the labour movement enjoyed the factional struggles which lasted for some years; they consumed time and energy which could have been put to more productive use.” The bitterness of the split always remained close to the surface, but Lewis regarded the differences as “unavoidable for the sake of both the unions and the CCF.”

Others regard the CCF-CPC wars as a drag on the union movement that watered down the CCF promise to represent workers and their families in the legislatures of the land. Political scientists Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz argue that the ideological warfare of the 1940s led the CCF to align with “the most conservative and opportunistic elements of the union leadership, who, upon winning this internecine struggle, placed their own indelible stamp on the labour movement.”<sup>127</sup> CCF leaders’ motives were undoubtedly also influenced by global developments and shifting allegiances. Lingering animosities about the CPC’s changing policies before and after the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact also mattered, and as a result the party never fully recovered its credibility. In the next decade, Trail’s left-leaning smelter workers were demoralized by repeated revelations about the Communist world. Some renounced their membership during the civil war in China, others withdrew when the Stalin-era atrocities were exposed, and still others followed upon learning of the further suppression of democracy

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<sup>126</sup> David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), 150.

<sup>127</sup> Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, “Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Industrial Relations,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (Spring 1984), 133-157, argue that the “crusade” to oust Communists after the war “was directed against the tradition of socialist ideas and militant rank-and-file struggle, as much as at members of the Communist Party.”

in Eastern Europe. Disillusionment bred more and more hostility towards full-blown Communists in the ranks. Discussions about the negative aspects of world Communism brought cheers for the CCF's victory over labour's Communist left. Lewis, MacInnis, Coldwell, and other CCF leaders proudly pointed to the removal of a perceived impediment to electoral success. Eliminating radicals also curtailed opposition to the party's rightward policy thrust. However, for members still willing to fight capitalism, the party leadership's hardening views represented a closing of that possibility.<sup>128</sup>

Disagreements intensified as the Cold War legitimized the purging of leftists from the labour movement and the CCF, and changes at the national level destabilized relations between the CCF and Local 480 leaders. In Trail, Mine-Mill Reds faced off against an energized right. The CCF shuffled further right in endorsing the United Nations decision to enter the Korean War and rejecting of the Stockholm peace petition. In response, Local 480 members established the Trail Peace Council and collected petition signatures in protest. When Nimsick signed the document, he made himself even more of a pariah in the CCF leadership's eyes, yet CCF MLA Ernest Winch's name was also on the list. Party moderates regarded the petition as a Communist-inspired measure that they refused to endorse. As Isitt states, they "viewed the [Peace] Congress as an LPP (Communist) front and would have nothing to do with it."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Naylor, 142, notes that the ideological clashes between the CCF and CPC in fact dated to the 1930s, when many CCF rank-and-file members were "radical socialist (and largely Marxist)," yet while many CCF Marxist socialists rejected the CPC, they nevertheless shared much in common. Naylor, 133, adds that other CCF members, especially those from the old Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), disregarded "CCF prohibitions on political alliances with Communists."

<sup>129</sup> Isitt, 94.

CCL and the CCF executives viewed Murphy's 1948 suspension as good for both organizations. They hoped to eliminate an obnoxious radical, but they could not end his union's "class struggle."<sup>130</sup> Murphy simply moved to a conciliation board and spoke out against logging companies on behalf of the IWA.<sup>131</sup> He also returned to the Crow's Nest Pass area of Alberta to support Communist Ben Swankey's election campaign.<sup>132</sup> It was familiar and friendly territory, a reminder of his role in forming one of the nation's first "socialist city halls" at Blairmore, but others could not escape his indiscretions.

In August 1948, the CCL suspended Mine-Mill, resulting in 5,000 Local 480 members being "removed from the CCL fold."<sup>133</sup> Murphy hoped "reinstatement should not be too difficult," but there were obstacles.<sup>134</sup> The furor surrounding Murphy enabled Billingsley to retain the Local 480 presidency in the July 1948 elections, beating out Harry Drake, the skilled mechanic who had introduced Al King to Communism.<sup>135</sup> Jim Quinn, a one-time member of the provincial legislature and a fierce anti-Communist, also won election.<sup>136</sup> Billingsley consolidated control of the executive committee by barring

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<sup>130</sup> Mine Mill was one of the few red unions to leave intact its constitution's Marxist language. "We hold that there is a class struggle in Society," it read, and "that the producer...is exploited of the wealth which he produces...that the class struggle will continue until the producer is recognized as the sole master of his product...[and] that the working class, and it alone, can and must achieve its own emancipation." Quoted in Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 14-15.

<sup>131</sup> "Harvey Murphy," Secret police report by unnamed agent, 1 October 1948, includes "Murphy blasts 'CCF News' smear on IWA conciliation board award," *Pacific Tribune*, 1 October 1948.

<sup>132</sup> "Harvey Murphy," Secret police report by Corporal J.S. Connors, "K" Division, Lethbridge, Alberta, 16 June 1948, included a copy of Murphy's CJOC radio station broadcast supporting Communist electoral candidate Ben Swankey.

<sup>133</sup> "5000 Workers Removed From Fold of C.C.L.," *TDT*, 25 August 1948, 1.

<sup>134</sup> "Harvey Murphy Says 'Reinstatement Should Not Be Too Difficult'," *TDT*, 26 August 1948, 1.

<sup>135</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 30-31.

<sup>136</sup> "Billingsley Again Heads Smeltermen," *TDT*, 8 July 1948, 2.

Mine-Mill staff representative John Gordon, “a nice fella [but with] socialist ideas.”<sup>137</sup> In September, Murphy won a vote of confidence from Mine-Mill, but it was a local victory. Hostility remained entrenched elsewhere.<sup>138</sup> A few weeks later the *Vancouver Province* claimed Murphy had outlived his usefulness as “a communist tool.” The CCL’s Mahoney was quoted as saying “Murphy’s petty and childish defiance might make more difficult the task of the miners’ union to have itself reinstated with the CCL.” The daily concluded that “as an exposed Red and recognized trouble-maker,” Murphy has shown that “he is more interested in raising Cain than in raising wages and working conditions.”<sup>139</sup>

The left lost more ground at the CCF’s 1948 national convention when a resolution opposing the Marshall Plan was defeated, but the ideological squabbling was hindering the CCF quest to win over trade unions. Even so, it did not prevent party leadership from moving against its left wing. Indeed, it headed full-speed into the Cold War allied with the CCL in eliminating Red affiliates in a “roaring battle over communism.”<sup>140</sup> Murphy’s suspension, a headline-grabbing ejection of Jack Scott at the U.S. border that autumn, and continuing developments on the international Communist scene, especially in China, set the stage for further anti-Red manoeuvres.<sup>141</sup> In late 1948, a Canadian Press article noted that Reds “absorbed a sound trouncing in Canada’s two big labor congresses, and by the end of the year they were pretty well on the run on all Canadian fronts.” Presidents Percy Bengough of the TLC and Aaron Mosher of the CCL

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<sup>137</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript.

<sup>138</sup> “Murphy Gets Confidence Vote,” *TDT*, 4 September 1948, 1.

<sup>139</sup> “Harvey Murphy All Washed Up,” *TDT*, 16 September 1948, 4.

<sup>140</sup> “23 Powerful TLC Unions Guarantee To Back Drive Against Communists,” *TDT*, 3 September 1948, 1; “Unions Discuss Ways of Clearing TLC of Communist Members,” *TDT*, 2 September 1948, 1.

<sup>141</sup> “Trail Man Refused U.S. Entry,” *TDT*, 15 September 1948, 1.



assured affiliated anti-Communist unions that Red purges would intensify in the 1950s.<sup>142</sup> As a result Trail workers faced a ferocious political storm. Billingsley's anti-Communists further threatened Local 480 from the inside, tempering hopes of recruiting smelter workers as members to the CPC. Indeed, no broad effort followed, but that may have allowed smelter workers to still support their Red leadership, raising anew the question of just how Communist Mine-Mill's leaders were.

Few historians provide a clear answer. Vernon Jensen, in his U.S. study of Mine-Mill's Communist connections, focuses mainly on the international union, arguing that the Reds worked to destroy democracy and "concentrated on persuading the organization to espouse their policies." What those policies were is never clearly stated, but "they were always careful not to challenge the concept of collective bargaining." Jensen adds:

[They] usually created the impression of being militant bargainers and staunch defenders of the workers' interests. They were astute enough to know that they could not accomplish their real purposes if they could not make a positive showing to the rank and file . . . . They often pushed grievances energetically to foster the belief that collective bargaining and the workers' interests were their chief, if not their sole, objectives.

For Jensen, examples of good trade union practice were merely "camouflage for gaining freedom to pursue other objectives as it suited them." He frets that Communists proffered "left-wing policies and programs," but he fails to explain how this "convenient camouflage" harmed union membership.<sup>143</sup> The Red-led Local 480 is a particularly problematic example with which to test his theories.

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<sup>142</sup> "Reds Feel the Pinch – Industrial Relations Harmonious As Canadian Wages Hit New Peaks," *TDT*, 30 December 1948, 5.

<sup>143</sup> Jensen, 296.

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Murphy and Local 480 leaders knew the Red baiting would only worsen in the 1950s. Indeed, the *Times* foreshadowed these trouble times when it advised unions to “remain aloof from political parties . . . because world revolution has no part in labor’s legitimate progress.”<sup>144</sup> The *Commentator* replied that this must be “very appealing to the Times’ sponsors (Big Business),” but workers had as much right as big business and industry to participate in politics.<sup>145</sup> Still, the union’s survival depended on the leaders’ focusing on bread-and-butter unionism. Some observers view this as a failure to convert Trail into a Red bastion, but the pragmatism of Murphy and Local 480 leaders solidified local Mine-Mill support. Solidarity took precedence because the Communist leadership was about to face its greatest threat yet. It was an adversary that had emerged from the ranks of organized labour itself to lead the labour movement’s anti-Communist campaign across North America.

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<sup>144</sup> “Unions and Politics,” *TDT*, 18 August 1953, 4.

<sup>145</sup> “Unions and Politics,” *TDT*, 1 September 1953, 1.

## **Chapter 6.**

### **Steel Cold Warriors and Trail's Red Union**

Labour peace in the smelter city seemed elusive in late 1949. Local 480 members were buffeted by competing leftist ideologies within the union and anti-Communist elements within the community. Each was eager to establish hegemony and all signs pointed to a new phase of union disruption that would push local Red leaders to their limits. Harvey Murphy's ill advised "underpants speech" the previous spring became a pretext for more anti-Communist purges that ostracized radical locals from the labour movement. As part of the anti-Red plan went, the CIO-affiliated Steelworkers would raid and replace Mine-Mill. The presumed victory would relieve the CCL and empower CCF factions aligned with Big Labour. Trail's Communists seemed doomed to lose control of Local 480, yet nothing would transpire quite as expected.

Although North America's left was under steady attack and Mine-Mill was a key target, the Trail local, despite its obscurity, was indeed vulnerable to the continental siege known as McCarthyism. Some dynamics of the siege were as present in the smelter city as in other Mine-Mill locations in the United States. Some tactical responses were also similar, but Local 480 was not without resources. It resisted the rightward tilt of the CCL and the conservative unionism of the TLC. In examining the motivations of the raiding strategy, the Local 480 story exposes nuances that historians have overlooked in the broader picture. The personalities, adversarial situations, and blend of left politics in the Kootenays reveal that there was no monolithic political machine at work in Trail or, for that matter, anywhere else. Although smelter workers did not sympathize with all the

views of Local 480's Communists, nor remain uncritical of Harvey Murphy's Marxism, neither did Murphy impose his Communist Party doctrine upon them. Trail Communists acted pragmatically with an eye on rank-and-file interests. This ended up mattering greatly when they came under fire from enemies old and new as the Cold War swept across North America. Yet while this was a continental story, it also mattered that in Trail the battle began slowly and clandestinely from within.

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Early in 1949, while the Steelworker leadership was still eyeing the right moment to launch what some Local 480 leaders would later characterize as an invasion, the anti-Red *Trail Daily Times* was preparing the ground with renewed attacks on Mine-Mill. The back and forth gave some indication of what would follow. In an editorial, "Do Reds Run Local 480?" Bill Curran suggested that Murphy "is busy these days telling the boys 'on the hill' that this communist stuff is a lot of hooey." He then likened Murphy to revolutionary Soviet leader V.I. Lenin:

Communism, to hear Murphy talk, is no insidious, rotten scheme to control the minds and bodies and souls of the whole world. It is a 'sweetness-and-light' campaign to elevate and make princes out of the poor downtrodden peoples of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Readers quickly responded. F.J. Warne wrote "I am not a communist and I am sure that my firm and unshakeable belief in God and Christianity would not be compatible with membership in the communist party," but he would "defend Murphy's right to believe

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<sup>1</sup> "Do Reds Run Local 480?" *TDT*, 10 February 1949, 4.

what he pleases, as long as his beliefs do not conflict with his union obligations.”<sup>2</sup> Ernie Weed scolded Curran, saying he had “fooled very few people with your red-baiting and union splitting attempts,” and he accused the editor of supporting the CM&S in its efforts to “Break the Union at Any Cost!”<sup>3</sup> Other letter writers, though, shared the *Times*’s concerns. One letter titled “Is Local 480 Commie Tool?” counselled smelter workers to think of their wives, children, and country. “Men like Harvey Murphy,” the author cautioned, “are out to destroy our Canadian way of life, and sell our country to the Kremlin.”<sup>4</sup> Weed again retorted, “I would much rather wear the communist mask than the Fascist one which has been stuck on you.”<sup>5</sup> One of Local 480’s few female activists, Irene Vetere, spoke out:

You all yell ‘communism,’ hoping to build up such a hysteria within the union that the members will be so busy fighting amongst themselves or searching through that smoke of yours [that] they’ll miss the real issue at stake, namely, their bread and butter.”<sup>6</sup>

Curran was unapologetic, reminding readers that the daily was “unalterably opposed to communist infiltration into labor unions.” His objective was to “drive that insidious and unwholesome little group of communists into . . . obscurity.”<sup>7</sup>

In mid-March, Communist *Pacific Tribune* writer Bruce Mickleburgh reignited a long-standing local controversy when he published accusations about deceased CM&S president S.G. Blaylock. Mickleburgh accused the industrialist of combining “terrorism

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<sup>2</sup> “Letter – Be An Active Union Member,” *TDT*, 14 February 1949, 3.

<sup>3</sup> “Letter – An Active Union Member Speaks,” *TDT*, 14 February 1949, 3.

<sup>4</sup> “Is Local 480 Commie Tool?” *TDT*, 16 February 1949, 2.

<sup>5</sup> “Letter – Weed Again,” *TDT*, 18 February 1949, 2.

<sup>6</sup> “Trail Times Clouds Issue,” *TDT*, 21 February 1949, 4.

<sup>7</sup> “Editorial – Re-stating the Issue,” *TDT*, 28 February 1949, 1.

and paternalism” so that “scores of thousands of workers cursed the name Blaylock.”<sup>8</sup> “To them his company unionism meant miserable pay, stretchout, speedup, industrial illness, accident, and – above all – fear.” CM&S general manager R.W. Diamond was similarly criticised for anti-Communist statements that were “a package of poison for the mind” and promoting a “‘good’ union with ‘responsible leaders’, not ‘Communists’ like Murphy.” This riled Trail’s anti-Communists, and four smelter workers – Gar Belanger, Ernie Weeks, Lloyd Noakes and Jack Scott – further antagonized relations by distributing the Mickleburgh articles to Local 480 members. The *Times* said the articles were “verbal sewage” by “philosophers of snarl” who hoped to “completely paralyze” the local metal industry.<sup>9</sup>

On 1 April, the day annual contract negotiations began, the *Times* reported that the four employees had been “sacked” for distributing “maliciously untrue statements” about the company.<sup>10</sup> As Al King saw it, CM&S management had brought its “full vengeance . . . down on [former Local 480 president] Gar Belanger’s head, along with those of the three co-workers.”<sup>11</sup> Billingsley distanced himself from the affair, saying the articles were part of a “smear campaign.”<sup>12</sup> He nevertheless succumbed to membership pressure and filed a grievance that went to an arbitration hearing with Murphy representing the union. The majority report upheld the firings, but Murphy’s minority report stressed the ideological reasons behind the firings, arguing that the plant-gate

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<sup>8</sup> See Bruce Mickleburgh, “Consolidated Prepares an Inside Job,” *Pacific Tribune*, 11 March 1949, 5; and, “The War Scare Pays off – For Consolidated,” *Pacific Tribune*, 18 March 1949, 5.

<sup>9</sup> “Editorial – The Threat Is Ominous,” *TDT*, 31 March 1949, 1.

<sup>10</sup> “C.M.&S. Sacks Four Local Employees; Union Orders Probe,” *TDT*, 1 April 1949, 1.

<sup>11</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> “Reds Condemned By Kimberley Workers In Protest Ballot,” *TDT*, 4 April 1949, 2.

distribution of the articles was retaliation for “pamphlets delivered with pay envelopes by the company over past weeks.” Those pamphlets included “attacks on district union officers [that were] maliciously anti-labour.” The company’s response was “slanderous and malicious to a far greater extent than the leaflet complained about.”<sup>13</sup> Belanger’s firing was nevertheless upheld. Board lawyers quoted the British Masters and Servants Act to support the company’s “right to fire employees for holding opinions contrary to their own concerning policies of the company.”<sup>14</sup> King said the arbitration panel’s decision epitomized the company’s “hostility to Mine Mill.”

The Mickleburgh controversy encouraged Billingsley to hasten his support for a raid on Mine-Mill, using it to foster “a spirit of division inside the union, encouraging it to decapitate itself.”<sup>15</sup> For Billingsley, Communism was the real enemy. He remembered how Harry Drake, Fred Henne, and Richard Gop had “tried desperately to get me into the Communist Party,” promising they would get him elected local president. For Billingsley, Local 480 was a Red enclave; CPC members controlled the union. There were no more than 125 Communists in the Trail area, he estimated, but their influence was outsized. “If you’re hungry, and you can’t feed your kids,” Billingsley argued, “you’re going to join any organization that promises your kids are going to be fed.”<sup>16</sup> As King saw it, however, Billingsley was leading a hugely destructive force against Local 480 and he had an abundance of help.

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<sup>13</sup> “Fear Rule Back To Trail With Board Decision,” *B.C. District Union News*, 27 June 1949, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript.

Beyond Trail, Billingsley posed a threat to Murphy's authority over the union's western region. When Billingsley was elected president of the District Union in spring 1949, Murphy declared the results null and void, citing irregularities involving the Mine-Mill constitution.<sup>17</sup> The *Times* editor, heavily betting on Billingsley to win, had forecast Murphy's "ouster," but Murphy's action threw a wrench into Curran's hopes.<sup>18</sup> New elections would not occur until October, but Murphy was unapologetic.<sup>19</sup> He admitted that the cancellation was "disappointing," but he insisted it showed "how seriously we treat the upholding of the constitution."<sup>20</sup> This time, though, most observers saw only a political ploy that confirmed a habit of manipulation and underhanded politics that the CCF and CCL had criticized for more than a decade.

With a Local 480 election scheduled for that May, Al King tried to re-energize his campaign for the presidency. His defeat and that of other Red candidates had prompted the *Times* to boast that "not one red was elected."<sup>21</sup> Given a second term as president, King warned, Billingsley would "subvert the union from within as a leader of a group of unionists eager to leave Mine-Mill for the Steelworkers Union."<sup>22</sup> In reality Mine-Mill's problems were internal as well. Murphy's high-handed actions led delegates to the CCL convention to expel Mine-Mill in early October. The *Times* again crowed that the "communist heyday in Canadian unions is about over," but it warned that "communists

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<sup>17</sup> "Billingsley is President and McGhee Secretary in B.C. Ballot Results," *B.C. District Union News*, 17 May 1949, 1.

<sup>18</sup> "Murphy ouster is Foreseen As Result of Vote," *TDT*, 25 April 1949, 1.

<sup>19</sup> "Unanimous Decision Sustains Constitution, Calls New Convention," *B.C. District Union News*, 27 June 1949, 1.

<sup>20</sup> "From Our Mistakes, Too," *B.C. District Union News*, 27 May 1949, 4.

<sup>21</sup> "Communists Licked in Union Election," *TDT*, 7 July 1949, 1.

<sup>22</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 69.



will not relinquish their stranglehold on Mine-Mill,” and that Murphy, the “communist mastermind of western Canada[,] will continue on his nefarious course.”<sup>23</sup> The same month, Murphy announced the results of the repeated District Union election: Communist Ken Smith had defeated Billingsley by about one hundred votes.

The Mine-Mill election was but one front in a many-sided war. The Smith victory was tempered by the news that the CIO had dropped from good standing six affiliates, including Mine-Mill. In all, ten affiliates were under investigation for being “too ‘left wing’.”<sup>24</sup> The investigation was a reminder that while the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association (CMA) had failed to insert a Taft-Hartley-inspired anti-Communist affidavit into B.C.’s 1948 amendment to the ICA Act, Big Labour had decided that leftist unions were no longer an asset. Adding insult to injury, a year-end news roundup portrayed 1949 as a “spectacular” year because “Canadian labor tightened the screws on communists.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the only good news for Local 480 was that Curran had accepted a new job managing the *Nelson Daily News*, but his replacement was no better.<sup>26</sup> King feared the British-born Dennis Williams would bring “a more sophisticated and . . . a more dangerous editorial expertise toward combating organized labour in Trail.” Instead of the “blatant anti-union pro-employer fulminations of past Trail Times writers,” the new editor would turn up the Cold War heat.<sup>27</sup> The daily would feature even more Red baiting as Murphy and the Local 480 leadership prepared to face its biggest challenge yet.

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<sup>23</sup> “Crucial Days for Local 480,” *TDT*, 4 October 1949, 4.

<sup>24</sup> “Smelter Union Loses Good Standing in CIO,” *TDT*, 17 December 1949, 1.

<sup>25</sup> “Industrial Relations Harmonious As Canadian Wages Hit New Peak,” *TDT*, 30 December 1949, 5.

<sup>26</sup> “W.A. Curran Named Managing Director of Nelson Daily News,” *TDT*, 31 December 1949, 1.

<sup>27</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 72.

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CCL leaders had long nurtured a deep hatred of Communist unionists and they shared a personal dread of the Red affiliates' leaders. Like Murphy, many of these leaders had been schooled in parliamentary procedure, and they regularly challenged union meetings with points of order and other constitutional tactics. The CCL leadership was not alone in its contempt. Persistent anti-Red propaganda in papers like the *Times* stoked anti-Communist sentiment across society. As 1950 began, the CIO put its Red-dominated unions "through the wringer."<sup>28</sup> In Trail, the long-planned raid was unveiled when CCL president Aaron Mosher announced that the Steelworkers had been given "authority to organize the workers in Canada's metal mines and smelters."<sup>29</sup> Mine-Mill locals across North America became the target of a well-heeled million-member international union. The key targets in Canada were smaller locals in the gold mining regions of Northern Ontario and Quebec. The raid initially ignored CM&S and Inco, Ontario Mine-Mill activists Mike Solski and John Smaller argue, because they were considered "impregnable," but soon Steelworkers began to raid larger locals such as Local 480, Local 637 in Port Colborne, Ontario, and eventually Local 598, Mine-Mill's largest Canadian affiliate with 13,000 members in Sudbury.<sup>30</sup>

Canada's labour movement had been fighting Communist unions since at least the founding in 1929 of the Communist Workers' Unity League (WUL), but success in eliminating them had often been elusive. By 1950, however, all the essential anti-Red

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<sup>28</sup> "Mine-Mill a Failure Says Officer – Expulsion From CIO Foreseen," *TDT*, 1 February 1950, 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Steel Union Would Oust Mine-Mill – CCL Plans to Organize Unemployed," *TDT*, 20 January 1950, 1.

<sup>30</sup> 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 Publishing, 1984), 126.

purge requirements were in place. In “its battle against communism,” Irving Abella notes, “everything was fair to the CCL leadership.”<sup>31</sup> Yet “unquestionably, very few members of the expelled unions were Communists . . . . Their sole crime was simply their insistence on electing leaders to whom the Congress objected.”<sup>32</sup> The decision to purge was

Caught up in the anti-Communist hysteria which hallmarked the late 1940s and early 1950s . . . . [C]oncerned about its image and what the affiliation of the ‘Communist’ unions was doing to that image, the Congress patriotically decided to rid itself of its left-wing membership. This was accomplished without too much difficulty or even much soul-searching. The Communists had to go and ways were found to expel them. That these ways were brutal and perhaps even unconstitutional was irrelevant.<sup>33</sup>

The CCL effectively emulated its craft-union counterpart, the TLC, which had already ruthlessly purged itself of the Communist-led Canadian Seaman’s Union (CSU).<sup>34</sup> Like the TLC, CCL leaders devoted more time, energy, and money to the Red purges than perhaps any other task, and perhaps with some justification since the radical changes the Communists desired were not goals the CCL and TLC leadership shared.

Organizationally, the Steelworkers were a very different union from Mine-Mill. Steel was bureaucratic, centralized in its decision-making, and leaders departed from rank-and-file wage levels and class associations. It was “an oligarchy of staunchly conservative men,” notes Judith Stepan-Norris, and it contrasted sharply with Communist

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<sup>31</sup> Abella, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Abella, 163.

<sup>33</sup> Abella, 221.

<sup>34</sup> See John Stanton, *The Life and Death of the Canadian Seamen’s Union* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978) in which the Mine-Mill lawyer offers his version of events.

leaders, whose salaries stayed close to rank-and-file salaries. Her analysis also showed that the higher the pay for a union leader, the less likely he (and it was a mostly male leadership) tolerated dissent. Thus Steel was an “enduring and powerful bastion of anti-Communism within the CIO.”<sup>35</sup> Other labour historians agree that Steel was probably the most predatory of the CIO-CCL unions, and its leadership was probably the most doctrinally anti-Communist. Its attack on Murphy and Local 480 was certainly among the most notorious examples of Red baiting in Canadian labour history. A win in Trail would be a precious jewel in the crown for the raiding Steelworkers and Canadian Steel leader Charlie Millard.

For Millard and others, battles with Mine-Mill were inherently ideological. When Mine-Mill representatives criticized the Marshall Plan, a hugely popular post-war stimulus policy, as anti-worker and benefitting multinational corporations, their opponents would note that the unstated problem was that the Marshall Plan was anti-Soviet. Mine-Mill also attacked American foreign policy on convention floors, openly and ceaselessly criticizing the CCL’s anti-Communist views and its failure to organize the unorganized. In short, Communist leaders did want the labour movement to assault post-war capitalism, not collaborate with it, and it was easy work for critics to link Red positions with Soviet designs. Some would pay for their pro-Soviet views with their jobs and the loss of a sense of personal security. Marginalization of Communist leaders also undermined the credibility of the 1930s view of Trail’s labour socialists and Communists that a working-class revolution was possible even in a post-war North America.

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<sup>35</sup> Judith Stepan-Norris “Strangers to Their Own Class?” *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 68, No. 3, August 1998, 329-353, 340.

For Mine Mill lawyer John Stanton, the union purges revealed the “harmful things that working people can be induced to do to one another” when guided by “an aggressive, power-hungry group of union leaders.”<sup>36</sup> Solski and Smaller argue that Billingsley and his pro-Steel Local 480 executive adopted “the ‘boring from within’ tactic in the strategy to destroy Mine Mill.” They in fact seemed to follow a kind of raid playbook:

First, executive boards purporting to act on behalf of Mine Mill members created issues of dissent with International convention and conference decisions; next they withheld per capita payments; and, finally, they withdrew from Mine Mill, attempting to take the local membership either into the CCL or directly into the Steelworkers.<sup>37</sup>

John Lang argues that because this involved persuading local leaders to switch allegiances, Steel’s “huge patronage system,” could have a “corrupting influence on local labour leaders.”<sup>38</sup> King saw it the same way.

Billingsley was a Quisling determined to destroy the union. He concocted a “damned devil’s brew” that the Mine-Mill local would have to contend with.<sup>39</sup> The Billingsley group stopped payments to the strike fund and death benefit plan, and they “emptied the bank account by paying each other full wages.”<sup>40</sup> Billingsley, self-described as the “Number One Bad Boy in the union split,” had earlier said that the local’s “money was channelled into Communist front organizations.”<sup>41</sup> Thus for him draining the treasury was necessary to erase the local’s Red taint. Undoubtedly, he was what the Steel raiders

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<sup>36</sup> Stanton, *My Past Is Now*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> Solski and Smaller, 126.

<sup>38</sup> John B. 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, 129.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 75.

<sup>41</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript.

needed to succeed in ousting Mine-Mill's Red guard, but he was also a godsend for the CCF, which was collaborating with the Steelworkers. With Billingsley on the inside, the CCF and Steel had only to wait to be led through the smelter gates. As the leading cold warrior union, Steel was an obvious ally against the Red menace, so it was time to formally invite the raiders to town.

Murphy, King, and other Communists viewed CCF-CCL-Steel anti-Red politics with considerable alarm. King knew that Billingsley "and his bunch of githorns" had been working hard to convince Local 480 members that Steel was their best option. Indeed, as King remembered, with the aid of the CCF-CCL alliance against the Reds, the plan was "to exclude all active Mine-Millers . . . from all union business." His frustration was in part proprietary: "it was the Communists who built the goddamned union."<sup>42</sup> The CCF, CCL, and Steelworkers had all developed anti-Red positions in the 1930s that they then nurtured across the 1940s. This was a golden opportunity for Millard, a former CCF member of the Ontario legislature, and Billingsley. To take advantage of it, Millard assigned Herbert Gargrave, a former CCF MLA (Mackenzie), to coordinate the smelter raid with Millard overseeing the operation.

A former Mine-Mill man now aligned with Steel and a top CCL leader, Millard also assigned CCL western director William Mahoney and CCF organizer Murray Cotterill, both Steelworkers, and CCL public relations director Jack Williams to keep close watch over the raid zone. Billingsley meshed with most of the crew. Cotterill, Mahoney and Williams were in his words "good guys," but Gargrave came off as self-

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<sup>42</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 75.

aggrandizing because winning was part of his personal strategy to be re-elected to the provincial legislature. Clearly, the raid was linked to politics. In Sudbury, for example, the Ontario CCF “performed the classic exercise of self-immolation,” refusing to endorse its candidate Bob Carlin in Ontario’s 1948 election unless he supported the CCL position on the Mine-Mill raids. The seat went to the Conservatives, and a CCF stronghold was “destroyed for many years to come.”<sup>43</sup> Now, two years later, B.C.’s Trail-Rossland riding was on the table.

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On 9 February 1950, the very day U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy gave his speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, inciting what became known as McCarthyism, the Steel raiders attacked Trail.<sup>44</sup> Armed with Billingsley’s endorsement, an ample supply of anti-Communist literature, and a war chest big enough to buy regular advertisements in the *Times*, the “blitz” began. A full-page ad warned Mine-Mill members that to remain in the Canadian labour movement, they had to accept Steel as their new bargaining agent.<sup>45</sup> Given the CCL expulsion, this was technically true. The ad advised shop stewards to abandon Local 480. Billingsley, his executive, and all stewards and chief stewards except Communist Dan Dosen, a charter Local 480 member, resigned *en masse*. Local 480 Reds regarded the ad as tantamount to a request for the local to commit suicide, and the gambit seemed likely to succeed. Instead of the Number One bad boy, Billingsley now was

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<sup>43</sup> Solski and Smaller, 126.

<sup>44</sup> Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, Speech, Wheeling, West Virginia, 9 February 1950, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6440>.

<sup>45</sup> “We’re Staying With CIO-CCL,” *TDT*, 9 February 1950, 5.

“branded all across Canada as being a traitor,” by Mine-Mill and other Communist-led unions.<sup>46</sup>

Billingsley explained that “I just turned all these cards loose up the hill and in about two days we had, I guess, a couple of thousand signed up.”<sup>47</sup> King, by contrast, depicted Billingsley diligently visiting all the plants, “telling people that Mine Mill was no longer in existence,” and signing them to Steel. The company was fully complicit, blessing Steel’s efforts. As King saw it, management allowed these “traitors to their union” to sign up members on company time.<sup>48</sup> He explained:

When Billingsley and the Steel raiders signed up our members, they asked them to sign two things: one was to the company, revoking their dues checkoff to Local 480 . . . . The second thing our members were asked to sign was a Steel membership card – but no money changed hands [even though the] law required that a minimum one dollar be paid whenever anyone signed an application card as a union member.<sup>49</sup>

That oversight and Steel’s failure to administer an oath on signing a union card were fatal mistakes that later would effect the raid.

In the meantime, a week after Steel’s first ad appeared, the CIO formally expelled Mine-Mill. Billingsley was elated. As the “provisional president,” he told the *Times* the expulsion confirmed his own actions. Mine-Mill was “an utterly powerless instrument for collective bargaining or local union service.”<sup>50</sup> Others demurred. Kitch Bannatyne compared the Billingsley group’s walkout to Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour and asked,

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<sup>46</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 79.

<sup>50</sup> “Local President Praises CIO Action in Expelling Mine, Mill,” *TDT*, 16 February 1950, 2.



“What kind of blood flows through the veins of the ones who are responsible for this split in the working men?”<sup>51</sup> His comment triggered another letter war. Murphy, meanwhile, helped mount a counter-action to keep the smelter local in the Mine-Mill fold. Calling the raid “a most disgusting exhibition of treachery,” he accused Steel of paying the CCL \$50,000 for the Trail jurisdiction.<sup>52</sup> He also appointed John Gordon, a future Rossland mayor, as Local 480 administrator, and Gordon convened a meeting on 10 February attended by hundreds of confused members. Murphy explained that Local 480 was far from dead. Gordon called for nominations to fill executive positions, and Jack Scott nominated King for president. King remembered hearing “a chorus of voices”:

Then John Gordon said, “We haven’t got time to conduct a ballot, so for each position, I’m going to send you down to the back.” There was a big washroom back there, the only other large room in the place. So Gordon says, “You eighteen go back into the toilet and when you come out of there, whoever you decided on among yourselves will be the new president.”<sup>53</sup>

As a result, King was named president and the new Local 480 leadership, dubbed the “Shithouse Executive,” was charged with pursuing the counterattack.<sup>54</sup> Their first concern was an empty bank account. King appealed for help from other Mine-Mill locals and worked to win back the support of the membership. Bargaining would begin on 1 April, and if the union did not have a majority signed up by the end of January, the company could file to decertify it. The Steel raiders could at the same time apply to the LRB for certification. In the Mine-Mill camp, King recalled that “it seemed the entire

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<sup>51</sup> “Mine-Mill,” *TDI*, 16 February 1950, 4.

<sup>52</sup> “Murphy Replies,” *TDI*, 9 February 1950, 1.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 80.

<sup>54</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 80.

world including the church, the press, the company, the leadership of the CCF and too many other unions all wanted to see the end of Mine Mill.”<sup>55</sup> Adding to the confusion, Steel named the raiding group the Trail and District Smelterworkers Union Local 4281.<sup>56</sup>

Local 480’s defenders took to the airwaves and print media. Gordon blamed hangovers from Blaylock’s old company union, and its legal reincarnation after the war, for splitting the union through “deliberate falsehoods and misrepresentation.”<sup>57</sup> Former Local 480 president Percy Berry called the raid a “dastardly act.” Adopting a Shakespearean tone, he praised the Local 480 loyalists as

Men who balk at condoning treachery, deceit, men who know full well there is an honorable and decent way to settle all differences, without turning worker against worker, wife against husband, brother against sister and home against home and setting a whole community aflame to satisfy the greedy ambitions of a few.<sup>58</sup>

Writing under the pseudonym “The Cheerful Cynic,” Chuck Kenny used his *B.C. District Union News* column to amuse loyal Local 480 members and mock Steel raid leaders.

Murphy preferred the rhetoric of betrayal, portraying the Billingsley “clique” as “traitors,” “seceders,” and “ratting shop stewards” from “the old company union gang.”<sup>59</sup>

The CCL was “guilty of ‘treachery unknown to decent labor organizations.” He then rallied Mine-Mill to remember “our martyred dead, we fight to see these traditions

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<sup>55</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 82-83.

<sup>56</sup> “Trail Union Battle Moves to Supreme Court,” *TDT*, 15 February 1950, 2.

<sup>57</sup> “Same Old Company Union Gang Goes Steel, Where They Must Feel at Home,” *B.C. District Union News*, 7 March 1950, 3.

<sup>58</sup> “Percy Berry Broadcasts [sic] Reflects General Opinion of Trail Populace,” *B.C. District Union News*, 14 August 1950, 8.

<sup>59</sup> “Loyal Workers Repulse Trail Seceders, Raiders, New Officers Take Over,” *B.C. District Union News*, 7 March 1950, 1.

live.”<sup>60</sup> New to the Communist executive, Al Warrington chided those who discredited Mine-Mill as “Communist” and advised union members not to follow “these Iscariots.”<sup>61</sup> Mine-Mill defenders also bought ads in the *Times*, one of which included a report condemning raids and pledging to protect Local 480 from the Steel raiders.<sup>62</sup>

Demonization characterized the actions of both Mine-Mill and Steel. Addressing a mass meeting in Trail on 19 February, International Mine-Mill president John Clark told the crowd that the CIO-CCL raiders were “worse than ‘Pinkertons and paid stool pigeons and union busters of early labor history in North America’.” Ontario’s Bob Carlin “compared the CIO-CCL tactics with those of Hitler” and urged Trail women to “stand behind their husbands.” Chase Powers a Communist on the international executive, called the Steel tactics “those of ‘cannibals’” and similar to “Mussolini’s telling the Ethiopians he was going to ‘liberate’ them.” Murphy likened the Billingsley group to “the executive of the Knights of Columbus walking out and joining the Orange Lodge.”<sup>63</sup> In response Steel issued another full-page ad on 21 February that explained “Why the C.I.O. Expelled Mine, Mill,” referring to the union’s legacy of “devotion to the Communist Party.”<sup>64</sup>

Throughout this internecine union struggle, a crew of police officers kept the raid “under close but discreet surveillance” and recorded many comments as it gathered evidence of the assumed “subversive activities” of Mine-Mill. Police Constable J.G.E.

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<sup>60</sup> Trail Meeting Blasts CIO-CCL Policy of Ruin,” *B.C. District Union News*, 7 March 1950, 1.

<sup>61</sup> “Kimberley Knows the Score,” *B.C. District Union News*, 7 March 1950, 4.

<sup>62</sup> “Consistency Thou Art A Jewel,” *TDT*, 22 February 1950, 6.

<sup>63</sup> “‘Raider’ Tactics Blasted at Mass Meeting,” *TDT*, 20 February 1950, 3.

<sup>64</sup> “Why the C.I.O. Expelled Mine, Mill,” *TDT*, 21 February 1950, 6.

Murray of the Grand Forks, B.C., detachment submitted frequent, detailed reports on Murphy and other Communists involved in the events in Trail. There was much evidence to sort through. On 20-22 February, Mine-Mill convened a national convention in Trail attended by international Mine-Mill leaders and other union dignitaries. Two Tacoma, Washington, Mine-Mill convention guests were refused entry to Canada at the Paterson, Washington, border crossing near Rossland. Authorities said they lacked proper credentials. Secret police reports believed the two were a “diversionary action” meant to deflect attention from International Mine-Mill secretary-treasurer Maurice Travis, a leading Mine-Mill Communist who had been banned from Canada. Travis had travelled north to attend the conference and perhaps secretly to assist the fight against the raiders. His stay was short-lived. Billingsley had guided police enthusiastically to where he was staying and cheered when Travis was expelled at the border, saying “they should have thrown the book at him.”<sup>65</sup> Watching it all, Constable Murray thought “the battle for supremacy is close” and the situation “generally tense.” He also noted “both unions are indulging in ‘exposees’ [sic].”<sup>66</sup>

The confrontation escalated in March with each union purchasing at least half a dozen ads. Steel alluded to the smelter’s atomic bomb-related heavy water plant, secretly code-named Project 9, arguing the “operations in Trail are vital to the national security of Canada.” The implication was that the Communists were “waging such a desperate battle

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<sup>65</sup> Billingsley oral history transcript.

<sup>66</sup> “Subversive Activities of I.U.M.M. & S.W.,” Secret police report by Constable J.G.E. Murray, RCMP Detachment, Grand Forks, B.C., 12 April 1950 obtained from the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) through Access to Information requests.

here” and passing secrets to the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup> Mine-Mill gave as good as it got, but as the month wore on tempers flared. In one incident at the Legion Hall, King was charged with assault after Charles Bradbury, a member of the newly formed rival Steel local, was “kneed in the groin” when he allegedly “shouted profanities” at Murphy. Bradbury had also recommended “shooting the likes” of Local 480 Communists just as he had the Japanese enemy during the war.<sup>68</sup> King, a Second World War veteran, was arrested, convicted, and given a suspended sentence. While the incident could have bolstered Mine-Mill’s fortunes among members who respected King for his toughness, an image that resonated with the male breadwinner culture of Trail, it could also have blackened Local 480 by substantiating suspicions among Steel backers that Communists were insensitive and violent.

The Legion infraction was relatively minor compared to Labour’s Cold War violence south of the border, and it certainly did not lead to an abatement of hostilities. In early March, Steel applied for certification to the B.C. Labour Relations Board.<sup>69</sup> Late in the month Local 480 announced its plan to negotiate a seventeen-cent raise for smelter workers when collective bargaining began.<sup>70</sup> The demand seemed reasonable given that the CM&S (now Cominco) had announced a \$41.5 million profit for 1949,<sup>71</sup> but Steel responded on 1 April with another add warning smelter workers not to “be fooled” or

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<sup>67</sup> “The Cat’s Out Of The Bag,” *TDT*, 24 March 1950, 1.

<sup>68</sup> “King Convicted After Assault,” *TDT*, 17 March 1950, 6.

<sup>69</sup> “Steel Requests Certification,” *TDT*, 10 March 1950, 1.

<sup>70</sup> “Mine-Mill After 17c Increase,” *TDT*, 29 March 1950, 1.

<sup>71</sup> “Cominco Profits Hit \$41,588,033,” *TDT*, 13 April 1950, 1. Allowing for inflation, that figure would become almost \$421 million in 2016.

“used by the Communists behind Mine-Mill.”<sup>72</sup> Mine-Mill retaliated five days later by decrying Steel’s “despicable underhanded methods.”<sup>73</sup>

During a lull in the “union war” in mid-April, Constable Murray took time to note rumours of a woman “in Trail – ‘master-minding’ [the] Mine Mill campaign.” The woman in question was Communist militant *extraordinaire* Becky Buhay, long remembered in Red circles for her leadership of the CPC’s women’s department and for her role as what one historian calls a “pioneer socialist feminist in Canada.”<sup>74</sup> Buhay, a well-known CPC leader, never visited Trail during the raid, but she was not the only female that worried Murray. The Steel raid also attracted Ladies Auxiliary Local 131, which broadcast anti-Steel warnings over radio station CJAT. That and other pro-Mine-Mill actions confirmed for the constable that the “background of the individuals is significant.” His assumption was correct: some auxiliary members were Communists.

Police observers also noted that Local 480’s defences against the Steel raiders were strengthened by three other developments that spring. The first involved the hiring of F.E. “Buddy” DeVito, a fiercely proud member of Trail’s Italo-Canadian community, as a temporary International Mine-Mill representative. Constable Murray noted that DeVito “takes the stand that I.U.M.M. & S.W. is right in this dispute and that it has benefitted the City of Trail.”<sup>75</sup> Second, Father Clarence Duffy spoke at a 10 March meeting as a representative of the Canadian Peace Congress, a national peace advocacy

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<sup>72</sup> “Don’t Be Fooled – On Any Day! *TDT*, 1 April 1950, 6.

<sup>73</sup> “Organized Labor Supports Mine-Mill,” *TDT*, 6 April 1950, 5.

<sup>74</sup> Constable Murray’s report, 12 April 1950; Endicott, *Workers’ Flag*, on Buhay, 161.

<sup>75</sup> Constable Murray’s report, 14 March 1950.

group. Father Duffy advised Local 480 members to “‘stand fast’ against the inroads of ‘raiding’ so-called labour organizations and that ‘the good would win out in the end’.” He then “gave his blessing” to Local 480.<sup>76</sup> The third development involved Liberal MP Jim Byrne who also took Local 480’s side in the Trail raid. The Kootenay East member turned on CCF MP Angus MacInnis, a founder of the CCF and a devoted Red battler since the party’s beginnings in 1932.<sup>77</sup> Byrne, a proud Mine-Mill Local 651 executive officer in Kimberley, B.C., told MacInnis in the House of Commons that “my union steadfastly refused to become a part of or join the political machine of the CCF Socialist party.” The allusion to a CCF-CCL cabal operating against workers’ interests in Trail and Kimberley could not have been made more clear to MacInnis who counter-charged that Byrne was “parroting Harvey Murphy” and that he “should state clearly where he stands, with Harvey Murphy or with [CCL secretary-treasurer] Pat Conroy.”<sup>78</sup>

The Steel ad campaign and Mine-Mill’s responses continued into May, with Steel boasting the “Greatest Wage Increase Gained In Canada This Year” after a thirteen-cent-an-hour wage hike was won for its Hamilton local.<sup>79</sup> *Times* editor Williams mostly kept clear of the raid battles, but he did publish an editorial comparing Communism’s hammer and sickle to “Hitler’s crooked cross.”<sup>80</sup> Also in May and much to the chagrin of the CCF and the CCL, the LRB rejected the Steel certification bid on grounds that some card

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<sup>76</sup> Constable Murray’s report, 13 March 1950.

<sup>77</sup> See James Naylor, *The Fate of Labour Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the Dream of a Working-Class Future* (Toronto, 2016), for a full discussion of the CCF’s drift towards social democracy.

<sup>78</sup> “Byrnes [sic] backs Mine-Mill in House, *Pacific Tribune*, 7 April 1950.

<sup>79</sup> “Steel Wins 13c An Hour Increase!” *TDT*, 3 May 1950, 6.

<sup>80</sup> “Beat Them at Their Own Game!” *TDT*, 29 May 1950, 4.

signers were not in good standing because Steel had waived their initiation fees. Raid organizer Gargrave announced that Steel would appeal the decision, but the *Times* called it a “major victory” for Murphy.<sup>81</sup> The ruling was met with jubilation at Local 480, as it was a significant setback for Gargrave and the Steel raiders.

Millard and other Steel leaders were stunned. They decried the technicality of losing due to the “not in good standing” issue and accused the LRB of ruling out of fear of the industry and the CPC. They also seemed to pivot immediately back into war mode, calling the decision “short-sighted” and pledging “this key defence plant [the Project 9 tower in Warfield] will be wrenched from the grip of the communist machine.” Steel leaders also accused some employers of “dealing with the communist unions in order to save a few cents an hour.”<sup>82</sup> Murphy rubbed salt in their wounds when he editorialized that the CCL had “somehow confused this court action and the developments in Korea.” He added that the raiders and their CCL allies “have branded the government’s Labor Relations Board as supporting ‘communists’ . . . . What simpletons they must think the workers are.”<sup>83</sup> At a Steel Local 4281 meeting, the uncertified union aspirants nevertheless resolved to “carry on the fight” to “purge a communist-controlled organization.”<sup>84</sup>

On 23 May, Local 480’s leaders signed a new collective agreement, and two weeks later they filed a civil suit against Billingsley and two collaborators “for breaking

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<sup>81</sup> “Steel Certification Refused – Membership Said Not In Good Standing,” *TDT*, 6 May 1950, 1.

<sup>82</sup> “Some Companies Dealing With Reds To Save a Few Cents, Say Steelmen,” *TDT*, 12 May 1950, 2.

<sup>83</sup> “Refuge of Scoundrels,” *B.C. District Union News*, 11 July 1950.

<sup>84</sup> “Appeal by Steel Is Ordered,” *TDT*, 9 May 1950, 2.



their oaths and deserting their posts.” The action may have helped Mine-Mill lawyer John Stanton delay the LRB vote.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, with the LRB denying the Steel application, auxiliary secretary Tillie Belanger announced a “giant victory celebration” for July that would acknowledge that “in spite of all the lies, red-baiting and general disruption Steel has indulged in, our workers . . . have shown their true desire for democracy and honest trade unionism, not dictatorship of Millard and his raiders.”<sup>86</sup> At the celebration, Murphy praised the local, noting “it was the first time in the history of Trail . . . that a ball was held to honor the smeltermen.” Later he reported “thousands dancing on the huge arena floor” to the music of a band from Spokane, Washington, and that the local raised \$300 for Manitoba flood relief with each participant paying a “nominal charge of one dollar.”<sup>87</sup> Victory was short-lived, however, and the labour peace was soon being threatened again.

By autumn 1950, Local 480 leaders faced more Red baiting, partly due to their outspoken opposition to Canadian participation in the Korean War. Miraculously, Murphy and the others escaped purging even though the labour movement was in full Red-cleansing mode, but Steel won a reprieve from the Supreme Court, which overturned the LRB decision against it. Having won that court battle, Steel still had to win the membership vote.<sup>88</sup> In September the TLC, spent a week “thrashing the red fringe of its 500,000 members,” then ordered its affiliates to “rid themselves of communistic officers.” The *Times* described it as a labour convention that will go “down in Canadian

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<sup>85</sup> King, 83. See also “Local 480 Case Against Bolters Up in Fall,” *B.C. District Union News*, 11 July 1950, 1.

<sup>86</sup> “Auxiliaries – Trail,” *Union*, 5 June 1950, 5.

<sup>87</sup> “Trail Celebration is Unqualified Success,” *B.C. District Union News*, 11 July 1950, 1.

<sup>88</sup> “Saunders and Steelworkers Win in Supreme Court Case,” *TDT*, 21 September 1950, 2.

labor history as one of the roughest on communists.”<sup>89</sup> The CCL no doubt felt more impetus to continue its own purge when past seaman’s union leader and former Communist T.G. “Gerry” McManus told *Maclean’s* readers “the reds are ready to wage war inside Canada.” He named ten top Canadian Communist unionists, adding that many Reds are also “operating under cover in the armed forces.”<sup>90</sup> Citing McManus’s allegations, the *Times* characteristically urged that “no guard must be dropped, no word let slip, no action left unreported which can aid these persons in their avowed intention of sabotaging the Canadian way of life.”<sup>91</sup> Even though he was doubtless among McManus’s top Reds, Murphy negotiated a 7.5-cent raise for smelter workers that November to cover the rise in the cost of living associated with the Korean War.<sup>92</sup>

Elsewhere, Mine-Mill pushed back on several raiding fronts. In Montana, “ingrained radicalism” may have led to anti-raid militancy. Vernon Jensen argues that the raid failed in Butte because Local 1 had a radical left-wing contingent, a strong company influence, and an intense local dislike of outsiders. Unlike in Trail, where Billingsley played a key role introducing the raiders, Steel failed to court local leadership in Butte. Nor did Butte businesses, especially the primary employer, appreciate Steel taking Mine-Mill’s place and, perhaps, compromising company control more effectively than the smaller Mine-Mill had done.<sup>93</sup> A Steel victory in Montana “might have marked a turning point” in mining and smelting unionism, Jensen further argues, but he does not address

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<sup>89</sup> “TLC Orders Affiliates To Oust Red Officers,” *TDT*, 16 September 1950, 5.

<sup>90</sup> “Canadian Reds Claimed Set To Wage Underground Fight,” *TDT*, 10 November 1950, 1.

<sup>91</sup> “Canadian Underground,” *TDT*, 13 November 1950, 4.

<sup>92</sup> “Cominco Boosts Wages 7 ½ c,” *TDT*, 22 December 1950, 1; “Contracts and Unions,” *TDT*, 17 November 1950, 4, in which the *Times* argues against such an increase.

<sup>93</sup> Jensen, 277-278.

the potential influence of the success in Trail during this period even though its anti-raid effort was at least as notable and well publicized in *Union*, the international's newspaper.<sup>94</sup>

David Saposs asks of the Butte raid, "Why did a rank and file, which is basically non-Communist, decisively support a Communist-line leadership?" The answer for him was that "the residue of class-consciousness . . . made the Butte miners deaf to the charge of Red."<sup>95</sup> Laurie Mercier's account of the Steel raid on Anaconda's Local 117 partially agrees, explaining that "Montanan workers may have been anticommunist, but they clung to the ideals espoused by their independent, western-based union." Some workers in Trail were anti-Communist, but a critical factor distinguishing the Canadian context was that many Trail workers also belonged to the left-wing CCF and were adept at using it to win support for their Mine-Mill local issues. Back in Montana, Mercier argues that Steel's anti-Communism did not convince a majority of Local 117 members at Anaconda to abandon Mine-Mill. Instead, regional allegiances undermined the Steel venture. Steel complained that Mine-Mill "had an advantage in extolling their union's historic presence in the West."<sup>96</sup> The same could be argued for Trail, but Red baiting was an undeniable assist for Steel. Critics suggest that the Anaconda local's eventual capitulation to Steel "assured the rapid demise of Mine-Mill," but nothing was foregone with the Canadian locals, including Local 480.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jensen, 293.

<sup>95</sup> Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, 320.

<sup>96</sup> Mercier, "Instead...", 473.

<sup>97</sup> Mercier, "Instead...", 478.

Emboldened by the Butte and Anaconda victories, Utah workers also managed to beat back a Steel raid in 1951. “Under the deft control of Al Skinner,” Mine-Mill thwarted the big union, wrote Jensen.<sup>98</sup> Connecticut’s Brass Valley copper workers also retained Mine-Mill, as did miners in Arizona. In fact, soon after its CIO expulsion, Mine-Mill won thirty-eight of forty-seven National Labour Relations Board-directed elections in the U.S. As Robert Keitel argues, Steel’s attempt to “lure the miner away from his union” through Red baiting backfired. Instead of inciting “rank-and-file resentment against their leadership, [it] possibly added to the solidarity of the union to withstand external attacks.”<sup>99</sup> Trail among many other Mine-Mill locals “resisted raids by the right wing and survived, and, unlike the UE [United Electrical workers], the IFLWU [International Fur and Leather Workers], and the UPW [United Public Workers of America] . . . also evaded disaster at the hands of the party’s foremost leaders, who in 1952 first called from the ‘underground’ for ‘a return of the left wing to the mainstream of American labor’.”<sup>100</sup> Local 480’s political independence also defied the party dictate as the local girded for a new round of Steel raiding.

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Local 480 Communists enjoyed a brief respite in 1951, but the threat of a renewed Steel raid haunted the Mine-Mill union hall. As the Cheerful Cynic told his *District News* readers, the New Year was starting out more or less where 1950 left off:

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<sup>98</sup> Jensen, 275.

<sup>99</sup> Keitel, 37.

<sup>100</sup> Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, quoting Joseph Robert Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 203.

This is the time of year Local 480 gets ready for bargaining, the steel workers get ready for disrupting, the CMS gets ready for a big laugh (seeing their employees split), the local radio station gets ready for a big boom, the Trail Times gets the red ink out of moth balls, the RahRah gang of last February 9 gets free radio time (paid by honest workers) to practice elocution over the ether waves, and the citizens of Trail and district are entertained for a few weeks by watching a minority group of wage earners trying to cut their own throats with a red herring.<sup>101</sup>

Some of the *Times*'s "red ink" warned Trailites of the evils of Communism, pointing to Korea as "conclusive proof [of] what communism means to ordinary, decent people."<sup>102</sup> The battle over the right to represent Trail's smelter workers was about to take a new turn.

In early March, the B.C. Supreme Court agreed to hear Local 480's civil suit against Billingsley and his confederates.<sup>103</sup> Two weeks later the Court granted Steel's request for a representational vote.<sup>104</sup> The legal table thus seemed even, but Steel found ways to keep the focus on Mine-Mill's Communists. Addressing the problem of rising costs of living, raid coordinator Gargrave argued against price controls. "Wages are not holding their own against the rising living costs," he argued with *Times* editor Williams, and consequently to freeze or control wages under such conditions is to freeze injustice.<sup>105</sup> Despite such pro-worker views, the Cheerful Cynic dubbed Gargrave "Hustling Herbie" and pictured him "prancing down the street on a snow white charger with a bucket of red paint under each arm." In his usual strident fashion, Kenny suggested that "everybody was red or riding pink elephants, including the company and

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<sup>101</sup> "It's the Steelworkers and Company vs. Mine, Mill," *B.C. District Union News*, 26 February 1951, 6.

<sup>102</sup> "They Flee They Reds," *TDT*, 8 January 1951, 4.

<sup>103</sup> "Supreme Court at Rossland To Hear Local 480 Suit," *TDT*, 3 March 1951, 2.

<sup>104</sup> "Court Orders Labour Board Rehear Trail Labour Case," *TDT*, 17 March 1951, 1.

<sup>105</sup> "Letter – Denies Nonsense," *TDT*, 2 March 1951, 4.

the government conciliation board.”<sup>106</sup> He might have included a writer from *Maclean’s* who was about to become the Steelworkers’ new ally.

On 1 April 1951, six years after the *Times* had told its readers about the role of the Trail smelter in the production of the atomic bomb, Pierre Berton retold the story, this time emphasizing how a Communist-led union controlled workers at a secretive plant that supplied the Manhattan Project. Berton would later become one of Canada’s most respected journalists, a television celebrity, and a popular historian. In 1951, however, his article, crackling with sinister reminders of the 1945 Gouzenko spy revelations, had delivered Cold War paranoia to the doorsteps of Trail residents.

Long aware that Murphy was a proud and unrepentant Communist, Trail’s unionized smelter workforce might not have been shocked by Berton’s talk of Reds running the Mine-Mill local. Few residents, though, fully realized the atomic bomb production role played by the heavy water produced secretly from the U.S. Army-financed plant in nearby Warfield. Berton flagged how “the reds are still on top in a fight that could involve our security.”<sup>107</sup> He described the “hush-hush” wartime plant, arguing that “there is good reason to doubt that Project 9 has been wholly isolated from the Communists who run the Mine-Mill union,” the plant’s vulnerability to sabotage, and the ease of converting nearby fertilizer plants “to munitions-making.” Berton warned readers that the “significance of the atomic developments at Trail has not escaped the Communist Party” and quoted the Communist *Pacific Tribune*: “The atomic products of Chalk River

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<sup>106</sup> “It’s the Steelworkers and Company vs. Mine, Mill,” *B.C. District Union News*, 26 February 1951, 6.

<sup>107</sup> This footnote covers this and all other quotations from the *Maclean’s* article by Pierre Berton, “How a Red Union Bosses Atom Workers at Trail, B.C.,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1 April 1951, 7-10, 57.

and Trail can be made to serve the interests of humanity, but only if the jackals of big business within the labor movement are decisively ousted.” Berton also took personal shots at Murphy, who was “paunchy,” “husky-voiced,” “one of the top Party members in Canada,” and ran Mine-Mill’s western Canadian district “as a one-man show.” There was no separation between Murphy and the party line in his *District News*, and he appointed representatives “who are almost always Party members or Party followers.” To Berton, there was something fundamentally odd about Murphy, with whom “his henchmen dislike going to movies or hockey games . . . because he’s apt to take his eyes off the screen or blue line at crucial moments to talk shop.”

The article neatly conformed to the aims of the Steel raiders. Berton tied Mine-Mill to Communist firebrand Beckie Buhay, who he claimed was clandestinely present to assist the Mine-Mill local, a suspicion Constable Murray had shared but was unable to substantiate. Berton also warned of the presence in Trail of International Mine-Mill leader Maurice Travis, whom Berton described as a “huge man” with “a patch over one eye which was kicked out in a fight with Steelworkers.” Berton concluded by noting the darkly mounting support for “the Communist-controlled union.” Like other mainstream journalists, as well as the Steel raid leaders, Berton wielded patriotism to stigmatize Mine-Mill. Morris Wright, the long-time editor of Mine-Mill’s *Union*, argued that such claims degraded the labour movement and “brought the raiders into ever closer collaboration with employers and their stoolpigeons, antiunion politicians, vigilantes, the antilabor press, and backward workers who identified their interests with the

employer.”<sup>108</sup> Accusations of a lack of patriotism, coupled with years of Red bashing, might have rankled those Local 480 members who had served in the Second World War.

It fell to the *District News* to rebut Berton’s well-timed attack seemingly designed to undermine the union’s 1951 bargaining program and bolster the Steel raid. The Cheerful Cynic claimed *Maclean’s* had “issued scarlet-colored glasses to one of their writers and turned him loose on Trail.”<sup>109</sup> Kenny satirized Berton, noting that he had indeed visited the Local 480 offices and was apparently “a bit taken aback when he saw the fresh blood dripping from the sickle and hammer . . . . We poured him a flagon of vodka with Joe Stalin’s compliments” and he “was soon leading us all singing the ‘Red Flag’.” Kenny wondered whether “the Steel Workers were paying his [Berton’s] expenses” In a final slight, he quipped that the local gave the journalist “a few samples of our A bombs and H bombs and he promised to come again next year around bargaining time and give us some more publicity.” Thus the *District News* tried to laugh it off, but the Berton piece gave additional ammunition to the anti-Red contingent in Trail.

In early May, the local got some long-awaited good news when the provincial LRB rejected Steel’s reapplication for certification, again confirming Local 480 as the legal bargaining agent for Trail’s smelter workers. Refusing both the order of Supreme Court Justice John V. Clyde and the advice of the *Times*, the LRB noted “the applicant has failed to prove that a majority of employees in the bargaining unit applied for are

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<sup>108</sup> Morris Wright, “Raiding Mine-Mill,” in Ginger and Christiano, *Cold War Against Labor*, 612.

<sup>109</sup> This footnote covers this and all further references to the article “The Cheerful Cynic,” “Maclean’s Mistake,” *B.C. District Union News*, 30 April 1951, 2.



members in good standing of the applicant union.”<sup>110</sup> Amazingly, the board also rejected Steel’s allegations that Local 480 was “communist dominated,” reporting that it could find no evidence to support that Steel claim. CCL president Mosher called the decision a “denial of basic democratic rights.” Murphy replied that it “comes with ill grace . . . from a man who . . . voted to decertify the Canadian Seaman’s Union” and to expel Mine-Mill without a membership vote.<sup>111</sup> The *District News* predictably said the decision “completely demolished” the Steel case and damned the union and its allies for “using blackmail” on Local 480. “Their own stock-in-trade, red baiting, reached the most ridiculous depths” when “their red smear” enveloped the LRB and CM&S.<sup>112</sup>

Although bargaining had already concluded, and B.C. Appeal Court Chief Justice Gordon Sloan had awarded the local a mandatory union dues checkoff system, Gargrave continued his Red baiting.<sup>113</sup> Advertisements in two June editions of the *Times* criticized Local 480 for its slow negotiations, low wage demand, and the so-named “Murphy-Sloan Formula” as a means to “force every worker – Mine-Mill supporter or not – to pay into their treasury.”<sup>114</sup> By month’s end, however, the automatic dues checkoff issue was losing traction and Local 480 had settled for a 17.5-cent raise.<sup>115</sup> Gargrave remarked that the

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<sup>110</sup> “Labor Board Refuses to Rehear Steel Application,” *TDT*, 7 May 1951, 1.

<sup>111</sup> “CCL Says Ruling Denial of Rights,” *TDT*, 10 May 1951, 2.

<sup>112</sup> “Editorial – They Got Their Due,” *B.C. District Union News*, 28 May 1951, 1.

<sup>113</sup> “Dues,” *TDT*, 9 June 1951, 1.

<sup>114</sup> “Wages Are Your Business,” *TDT*, 1 June 1951, 2; “More Wages...What About Them?” *TDT*, 16 June 1951, 2.

<sup>115</sup> “Cominco and Union Agree On 17.5-Cent Hourly Boost,” *TDT*, 30 June 1951, 1.

company “got off very lightly with Mine-Mill,” implying that Steel would have wrung a larger raise, but he refrained from further anti-Communist comments.<sup>116</sup>

The contentious LRB ruling faded more slowly. At the CCL’s autumn conference, secretary Pat Conroy told delegates the LRB should be condemned for refusing to certify Steel, accusing the board of acting “in collusion with a communist union [Mine-Mill] to break a CCL union.”<sup>117</sup> During hearings in September over changes to B.C.’s main labour law, the ICA Act, Gargrave returned to the LRB’s refusal to certify the Steel local, arguing it should have allowed certification based on the union’s acceptance of the members-in-good-standing rule. Murphy called Gargave a “liar” and Steel replied in kind.<sup>118</sup> Not wishing to refight the ruling, though, Local 480 focused on changes to the act that would modernize trade unionism: faster certification, the right to strike after negotiations break down, and the right to discuss union business in the workplace.<sup>119</sup>

CM&S also waded in, recommending that the ICA Act be “amended to prohibit communists from holding office in a labour organization or representing any labor groups in collective bargaining.”<sup>120</sup> The *Times* applauded this as a “masterpiece” that “struck a necessary blow” at Communist union leaders.<sup>121</sup> Murphy attacked the company’s main proposals, particularly the one insisting that union leaders sign affidavits, as an attempt to

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<sup>116</sup> “Letter – Gargrave Replies,” *TDT*, 26 July 1951, 4.

<sup>117</sup> “CCL Floors Red Fringe in Opening Meet Tussle,” *TDT*, 18 September 1951, 3.

<sup>118</sup> “Steel Statement Hits Labor Relations Board,” *TDT*, 7 September 1951, 3.

<sup>119</sup> “Local 480, Civic Union Briefs End ICA Session,” *TDT*, 8 September 1951, 2.

<sup>120</sup> “Cominco Would Bar Reds From Union Office,” *TDT*, 6 September 1951, 1.

<sup>121</sup> “A Blow For Mr. Murphy,” *TDT*, 10 September 1951, 4.

create a “reign of suspicion, fear, and thought control.”<sup>122</sup> Gargrave added that the Sloan formula would “voluntarily grant approximately \$14,000 a month to a suspect communist controlled union one month, and the next month propose a ban on [Communists].” He called the proposal “ludicrous,” then added sarcastically that “the company should be well satisfied with Mr. Murphy.”<sup>123</sup>

Throughout autumn 1951 the CCL was besieged by a series of top-executive resignations during a power struggle between Steel’s Millard and the CCL’s Conroy.<sup>124</sup> The internal acrimony, which eventually ended with Conroy’s resignation, relieved some pressure from Mine-Mill. Instead of continuing to raid Local 480, Millard had to focus on consolidating his CCL power base. Murphy took advantage of the pause to produce a facsimile of a cheque as proof of his previous claim that Millard had purchased the right to raid Mine-Mill, paying \$50,000 to the CCL.<sup>125</sup> The raid, he argued, “was part of a miserable sell-out by the CCL big shots, secretly conniving with Millard – a cash sale – selling the workers in the metal mining industry.”<sup>126</sup> Through it all the CCL leadership continued to purge Communist-led affiliates, expelling the International Fur and Leather Workers Union (IFLWU) after a “clamorous uproar from left-wingers” at its annual meeting. Far from cowing Mine-Mill, the IFLWU expulsion simply raised its ire. As Joan Sangster notes, the AFL’s Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen Union (AMCBW) took a similar approach to the Steel raiders in that it “tried to entice workers

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<sup>122</sup> “Murphy Blasts Cominco’s Proposals to ICA Board,” *TDT*, 7 September 1951, 1 and 4.

<sup>123</sup> “Letter: Steel’s Opinion,” *TDT*, 13 September 1951, 4.

<sup>124</sup> “Third CCL Official Walks Off Job in Leadership Split,” *TDT*, 22 September 1951, 1.

<sup>125</sup> “Battle With Murphy Costs Half-Million,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 September 1951, acknowledges the payment.

<sup>126</sup> “The Truth Is Out,” *B.C. District Union News*, 28 September 1951, 5.

away from the IFLWU by stressing two issues: it claimed to be far superior at bargaining . . . and it relentlessly pressed home a patriotic [anti-Communist] appeal.”<sup>127</sup> Mine-Mill repeatedly rejected both claims, but that did not stop Conroy from supporting the Steel tactics.

Surprisingly, in October, Steel Local 4281 announced a new, two-month drive for Local 480 members. The raid was on again. Gargrave soon spoke of a “healthy” membership in Trail and “surprising success.”<sup>128</sup> Murphy complained that Steel’s Shakey Robertson was helping to “maintain the disruption which has already cost the United Steelworkers over half a million dollars of the workers’ money.” Robertson, a former miners’ union secretary from Cumberland, B.C., was “doing a Hladun,” Murphy charged, “his stock-in-trade being that he is a turn-coat Communist.”<sup>129</sup> Cominco piled on with an advertisement in early November extolling the virtues of free enterprise, and a week later the company laid off three shop stewards for leading a wildcat strike in the lead smelter.<sup>130</sup> A thousand Mine-Mill members protested at the plant gates with Ladies Auxiliary Local 131 distributing leaflets demanding “Put the stewards back to work!” and “No more unjust firing of our union brothers.”<sup>131</sup> After a Local 480 member attacked a Local 4281 member for passing out raid literature, Steel’s Robertson claimed that Murphy “organizes with violence.” Murphy replied that he would “sue Steel for libel if they don’t retract that statement.” The threat may have had a positive effect, for Steel

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<sup>127</sup> Joan Sangster, “Canada’s Cold War in Fur,” *Left History*, 13, (Fall-Winter 2008), 10-36, 18.

<sup>128</sup> “Steel Union Plans Intensive Campaign; Mine-Mill Unconcerned,” *TDI*, 29 October 1951, 2.

<sup>129</sup> “A New Deal For Steel?” *B.C. District Union News*, 31 October 1951, 4. John Hladun, discussed earlier, had visited Trail to discredit Murphy because he was a Communist.

<sup>130</sup> “Cominco Discharges Three Stewards Over Walkout,” *TDI*, 9 November 1951, 1.

<sup>131</sup> “Arbitration board deals with firing of Trail workers,” *Pacific Tribune*, 23 November 1951, 6.

ceased to distribute the raid materials until, it said, the issue of the fired stewards was resolved.<sup>132</sup>

Both unions were back in court near the end of November. The same week, the *Times* took issue with the LRB, charging that its actions regarding the ongoing question of Steel's certification application were "cloaked in secrecy."<sup>133</sup> As the year ended, the arbitration board ruled against Local 480 in two of the three steward layoff cases.<sup>134</sup> Year-end news roundups said labour unity had been "tested in 1951,"<sup>135</sup> and nowhere had that been truer than in the smelter city where yet another raid attempt was rumoured for the New Year.

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In early 1952, perhaps judging that its recommendations about the proposed ICA Act amendments were not sufficiently heeded, the CM&S published a full-page ad in the *Times* under the heading "Communism." It was an aggressive new tone from a company that had remained relatively silent during the bitter union rivalry between Mine-Mill and Steel. Since the final full year of Blaylock's presidency, the company had been forced by law to accept Local 480 as the smelter workers' bargaining agent. Sensing an opportunity to eliminate the union, it unleashed a stronger-than-ever anti-Red message. The hearing committee was unlikely to disallow Communist union leaders, so CM&S instead took its case to the people, insisting on its "right to refuse to accept for permanent employment

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<sup>132</sup> "Unionist Hurt, Slander Suit Threatened," *TDT*, 13 November 1951, 1.

<sup>133</sup> "The Labor Board," *TDT*, 29 November 1951, 4.

<sup>134</sup> "Arbitration Upholds Firing of Two Cominco Shop Stewards," *TDT*, 22 December 1951, 1.

<sup>135</sup> "Employment High But Labor Unity Tested in 1951," *TDT*, 27 December 1951, 6.

Communists or other subversive characters.”<sup>136</sup> The CPC was “highly disciplined,” and its members “slavishly” obeyed party dictates, which included supporting the revolutionary policies of the Soviet Union. The company, along with the CCF and CCL, were drawing an ever-tightening circle around Local 480. The *Times* seconded CM&S’s call to refuse anyone who “would follow the dictates of the kremlin [sic].”<sup>137</sup>

Local 480 still had allies, of course, most notably Local 651 at Sullivan Mine, which in January placed an ad in the *Times* urging Trail workers to “cast forth the disruptive elements who labour at the task of publishing disruptive bulletins and who spend the dues of other Union men to create and foster ill feeling and trouble amongst the workers.”<sup>138</sup> Later, Local 649 members at Copper Mountain, B.C., condemned “the tactics used by the anti-labor Steel organizers in Trail,” daring Gargrave and “Robinson to come to Copper Mountain and try these same union-busting tactics.” They would find a “hot welcome.”<sup>139</sup> In February, B.C. Supreme Court Justice J.O. Wilson found against Mine-Mill in its conspiracy case against Billingsley, Laurie Hamilton, and L.R. Bailey, and ordered the local to pay all damages.<sup>140</sup> Gargrave hailed the LRB rejection of the conspiracy suit, and rumours soon circulated that the raiders might redouble their efforts to convince smelter workers to switch unions.

In the midst of this turmoil, the union tried to sustain its normal functions. During the hiatus between the initial raid and threatened new ones, Local 480 leaders turned to

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<sup>136</sup> “Communism,” *TDT*, 26 January 1951, 5.

<sup>137</sup> “No Communists,” *TDT*, 28 January 1952.

<sup>138</sup> “To All Workers On The Hill,” *TDT*, 16 January 1952, 8.

<sup>139</sup> “To The Workers On The Hill,” *TDT*, 18 April 1952, 2.

<sup>140</sup> “Mine-Mill Damage Action Dismissed,” *TDT*, 4 February 1952, 1.

the annual round of negotiations. The problem was that the union war had become normality. At a pre-bargaining meeting, for example, Local 480 representatives criticized Steel, which had re-applied for certification two days earlier, for “‘continued disruption’ on the eve of bargaining.”<sup>141</sup> Steel, meanwhile, advertised that it had again signed a majority of the smelter workers and was offering them a chance to join a union that was not “unduly dominated by members and supporters of the world Communist movement.”<sup>142</sup> Murphy again called the Steel raiders liars for claiming to have signed a majority of workers and accused them of splitting the bargaining unit.<sup>143</sup> The *Times* suggested that MLA Leo Nimsick had “compromised” the CCF by siding with Mine-Mill over Steel.<sup>144</sup>

Finally, in mid-May, an LRB vote determined that Local 480 had won the right to represent about 5,000 workers in Trail. Earlier the board had granted the local joint bargaining rights with Local 651 in Kimberley, strengthening its bargaining power. The struggle for union supremacy in the smelter city seemed at an end, but the vote was worryingly close, with less than 300 votes separating the two contestants. Still it was decisive enough that even the *Times* called on Steel Local 4281 members to rejoin Local 480 so as to present “a united bargaining front.”<sup>145</sup> Seeming to cede the high ground to Local 480, it added:

Labor’s hand is strengthened by this decisive result and the good of the community is served by the elimination, which it is hoped will result [in

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<sup>141</sup> “The Hollinger Story,” *TDT*, 3 March 1952.

<sup>142</sup> “A Statement...” *TDT*, 11 March 1952.

<sup>143</sup> “Mine-Mill To Fight Steel’s Bid For Bargaining Rights,” *TDT*, 22 March 1952.

<sup>144</sup> “CCF Compromised,” *TDT*, 15 May 1952

<sup>145</sup> “Mine-Mill Wins Union Vote In Trail,” *TDT*, 15 May 1952.

an end] of the constant bickering in the jurisdictional dispute which has flared in Trail for two years.<sup>146</sup>

In truth it had been longer than two years. Since the late 1940s, Steel had been raiding Local 480, clandestinely at first and then in greater openness starting in February 1950. Now the labour war was finally coming to an end. “Red-Tinged Union Triumphs at Trail,” read the *Vancouver Sun*’s headline on 15 May. The vote “ended the biggest, longest and most bitter jurisdictional fight in B.C. labor history,” the daily added.<sup>147</sup> When the victory celebrations subsided, Murphy noted that any of the eleven raid conspirators who had steered Local 480 members to Steel in the late 1940s would have to stand trial if they wanted to rejoin Mine-Mill, but others would be welcomed back into the fold.<sup>148</sup> At the close of May, Steel dropped its certification application at the LRB.<sup>149</sup> With the long battle behind them, Local 480 was ready to run Steel leader Millard out of town when he visited Trail on 1 June. Earlier, the *Times* confirmed that Gargrave was also leaving and “expected to be given a new organizing assignment elsewhere.” Steel would, however, keep its office until the three-year lease ran out. A Mine-Mill bulletin quipped that it meant “three more years of disruption.”<sup>150</sup>

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Like other union raids in North America during the 1950s, Trail’s monumental struggle pitted two unions against each other in a way that left the company perhaps

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<sup>146</sup> “Decisive Vote,” *TDT*, 16 May 1952.

<sup>147</sup> Fred McNeil, “Mine Mill Keeps Trail,” *Vancouver Sun*, 15 May 1952.

<sup>148</sup> “480 Celebrates,” *TDT*, May 16, 1952.

<sup>149</sup> “Steel Drops Certification Application,” *TDT*, 28 May 1952.

<sup>150</sup> “Union Issue Flares Anew; Mine-Mill Pickets Wrong Spot,” *TDT*, 4 June 1952.



strengthened. Deception and secret collaborations marked the contest. The LRB hearings exposed unscrupulous actions by both unions. The board's decisions nevertheless held, bringing anti-Communist criticism from as far away as the *Vancouver Province*.<sup>151</sup> Al King credited Murphy for orchestrating the victory over Steel. He was "brilliant, tactically," King wrote, but most of the established labour leadership did not share this view.<sup>152</sup> Contempt was the more consensual sentiment. The business press stopped at nothing to discredit Murphy and Mine-Mill. Even Mine-Mill lawyer John Stanton agreed with the business press's depiction of Murphy as an opportunist. Stanton had attended the court proceedings and LRB hearings to add legal weight to the Mine-Mill arguments being presented. Trail experienced "the full fury of a Steel raid backed by the leaders of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the CCL," he wrote.<sup>153</sup> Noting that the CCF would gain electoral support from a Steel win, Stanton argued that the CCL "made Mine Mill a punching bag by suspending it."<sup>154</sup> For Stanton, Steel lived up to its cold warrior reputation. He observed that being "unable to attack Mine-Mill's record as a good, fighting union which represented its members well, Steel resorted to innuendo and to anti-communist ploys."<sup>155</sup> Yet, he noted,

Failure at Trail caused no change in policy for Steel. To that union it was only a small tactical loss. The main strategy of raiding went on. Indeed, Steel's international convention held in May 1950 pledged itself to a programme which would carry out the directive of the CIO to organize the workers in the metal mines, mills, smelters, and factories. To speak of

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<sup>151</sup> Jean Howard, "This Column," *Vancouver Province*, 16 May 1952.

<sup>152</sup> King, *Red Bait!*, 114.

<sup>153</sup> Stanton, *My Past Is Now*, 102.

<sup>154</sup> Stanton, 103.

<sup>155</sup> Stanton, 106.

“organizing” workers who were already well organized may sound irrational, but in the crazy logic of the Cold War, “anything goes.”<sup>156</sup>

In July 1952, a huge, fifty-day strike monopolized the attention of Millard and other Canadian Steel leaders, rendering the Trail smelter raid ancient history.<sup>157</sup> By year’s end, the U.S. Senate issued a report urging rank-and-file Mine-Mill members to revolt against their Red leadership. After reading it, Murphy stated that B.C. Mine-Mill members would have “nothing but contempt” for it because they “are solidly behind the leadership, regardless of politics, because we do a job as union leaders.”<sup>158</sup> And he was correct despite the view that good bargaining was somehow a blind, as Jensen called it, for Communist infiltration.

This is not to say the battle had no effect. The failed raid did indeed disrupt the grand plan to reshape the North American labour movement by purging radical Reds. Trail was a bulwark against that agenda, but the battle seemed to turn less on ideology than on insider-outsider dynamics. Yes, Billingsley’s group were locals, but they undermined themselves by willingly handing Local 480 to a mega-union with little allegiance to Trail. Like the Communists in the small Montana farming community that Gerald Zahavi studied, Trail Communists fought for “alternate social, intellectual, and psychological spaces within the greater society around them.”<sup>159</sup> In so doing, they posed

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<sup>156</sup> Stanton, 115-116.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Charles Millard, conducted by Jack Spiese, 13 February 1968, 25. Copy obtained from the Pennsylvania State University, Historical Collections and Labor Archives.

<sup>158</sup> “Mine and Smelter Workers Urged to Oust Red Leaders,” *Vancouver Sun*, 30 December 1952.

<sup>159</sup> Gerald Zahavi, “‘Who’s Going to Dance with Somebody Who Calls You a Mainstreeter’: Communism, Culture, and Community in Sheridan County, Montana, 1918-1934,” *Great Plains Quarterly*, 16 (Fall 1996) 251-286, 272.

no threat to the community. In fact, Local 480 was an exemplary practitioner of homegrown social unionism, what Mercier called community unionism. The leaders were part of the local political culture and able to lend support to social causes, often by sidestepping unwanted CPC policy based on what made sense locally. Murphy, King, and others may have been consummate Red foot soldiers, but they did not march in lockstep with any political party. The Communist-led local's continued support for CCF MP Bert Herridge, who had backed them in the raids, was partial proof of their willingness to travel whatever political path proved most advantageous to the local union and its rank-and-file members, regardless of party politics.

The Mine-Mill propaganda campaign instilled the view that the Steelworkers, CCL, and CCF were interlopers. Although some were sincere in their belief that the Red purges were best for the movement, these outsiders were portrayed as primarily interested in the union dues and votes of smelter workers. They were willing to join with the local array of anti-Communists to ostracize workers because of their beliefs. This was not unlike the response of hundreds of other industrial workforces that found themselves invaded by Steel in the 1950s. But Trail succeeded. Similarly, many locals had the support of ladies auxiliaries, but none were stronger in their political support for the Communist leadership and against the raiders than Trail's LA Local 131. That the Steel raiders disregarded that support diminished its chances of success.

On that broader international stage, as with its willingness to fight for peace, the Trail local revealed a strength that the Cold War had already subdued in other Mine-Mill locals. Trail Communists did not face the same intensity of McCarthyism that U.S. locals did. Nevertheless, as secret police reports show, they still faced the threat of public

disgrace powered by the state. Despite this vulnerability, however, they did not fully succumb to those negative social forces. Instead, they developed an anti-raiding strategy that included creative cultural tactics redolent of the Communist-inspired Popular Front in the 1930s. Perhaps its physical isolation helped protect it from a full McCarthyite onslaught, but the Canadian government's silent complicity with U.S. authorities suggests that it was as vulnerable as anywhere else. Indeed, Murphy had been an ideal target for the anti-Communists, but he would continue to be a wily adversary.

## Chapter 7.

### Resisting Canadian McCarthyism in the Kootenays

Local 480 may have survived the alliance of Kootenay anti-Communists and the raiding Steelworkers in Trail, but national public opinion was turning against the left and Communist union leaders were being purged and persecuted. Nevertheless, the local did have allies in its struggle against McCarthyism. H.W. “Bert” Herridge, the Kootenay West MP first elected in 1945 on a wave of Popular Front support, continued to use his *Commentator* column to decry the right-wing movement creeping across the international boundary. Herridge asked whether Canada was “going to allow U.S. congressional committees to put the finger on any Canadian?” and whether the government would force Canadians to “submit to a witch-hunting cross-examination?”<sup>1</sup> Stanley Knowles, a young North Winnipeg CCFer who held the seat of the late founding leader J.S. Woodsworth, also publicly opposed “all efforts to establish McCarthyism in Canada.”<sup>2</sup> Beyond Parliament Hill, embattled unions such as Local 480 led the resistance to this growing menace to civil society, but it also sought new strategies as North America moved deeper into the Cold War maelstrom.

Trailites, like all Canadians, desired a post-war peace and prosperity. By the early 1950s, prosperity seemed within sight for smelter workers and their families. Cominco had purchased the largest zinc furnace in the world, suggesting bright prospects. Eaton’s, the mail-order giant, established two new stores in the Trail area, indicating expectations

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<sup>1</sup> “Jottings from Ottawa,” *Commentator*, February 1954, 5.

<sup>2</sup> “Keep McCarthyism Out of Canada!,” *Commentator*, February 1954, 6.

of rising sales as Local 480 continued to negotiate annual wage increases and better benefits, including the promise of a superior pension plan. The first television soon arrived in Trail, and the cost of living dropped for five straight years. There were strikes, of course, almost as many as in 1946,<sup>3</sup> and layoffs were looming at Cominco, making people wonder what Local 480 could do. But Trailites could also take solace in the Dominion Bureau of Statistics finding that Trail had the highest per capita income in Canada.<sup>4</sup> The Communist-led Local 480 remained the official bargaining agent for wages, benefits, and pensions, while the conservative Social Credit Party gained control of B.C.'s government.

Peace seemed more elusive. The United States detonated a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific, reviving memories of the horrors of the atomic bombings of Japan, and Trail civil defence teams took atom bomb emergency courses. Hucksters played on anxieties, offering "A big fat pill costing about \$4 [that] probably would save you from radiation sickness or death from an A-bomb."<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower became president and Stalin died a few months later. Churchgoers followed American evangelist Billy Graham's globetrotting Christian crusade, while younger people, perhaps less concerned about the future, enjoyed live music at the popular Playmor dance hall in nearby South Slocan. The media said Communists taught children to "laugh at God-believing parents," and protesters picketed Ottawa over the impending execution of Soviet spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.<sup>6</sup> In the midst of all this, Quebec labour organizer Patrick Walsh, an alleged

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<sup>3</sup> Labor Front is Rocked By Major Strike Wave," *TDT*, 2 October 1953, 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Wives Help," *TDT*, 3 December 1953, 4.

<sup>5</sup> "Pill Gives Protection Against A-bomb Death," *TDT*, 7 April 1953.

<sup>6</sup> "Children Should Laugh At God-Believing Parents States Communist Radio," *TDT*, 8 January 1953, 12.

Communist, stepped forward to condemn the Rosenbergs. Like Pat Sullivan, John Hladun, and Gerry McManus before him, Walsh also exposed Communist unionists, accusing them of spreading “communist propaganda and caus[ing] discontent and strikes.”<sup>7</sup> As with the earlier cases, the *Trail Daily Times* devoted its front-page to Walsh’s claims, while hailing the TLC for easing out “the last stronghold of communism” by suspending the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU).<sup>8</sup> The free enterprise system was on the rise, Communism was in retreat, and Local 480 needed a new political strategy.

The union had to remove the Red taint but retain its hard-won dignity as an affiliate of one of the continent’s great trade unions. Two continental events presented possibilities for accomplishing these goals. The first event involved a famed opera singer, the other a blacklisted movie. There was an easy way and a hard way to survive politically in the Kootenays. In one direction lay reunification with the Canadian Congress of Labour and a safer political home inside the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. The other route led to continued pariah status. Local 480 president Al King and his Communist executive chose the more socially progressive and harder way, risking further disapproval by local churches, media, and conservative social and ethnic organizations. Conversely, the harder way also promised to revitalize its reputation as an

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<sup>7</sup> “Walsh Tells of Red Sabotage Plans,” *TDT*, 28 February 1953, 1; “Full-Scale War On Communists By RC Church Set Off By Laborite,” *TDT*, 23 March 1953, 4. David Lethbridge, “Jew-Haters and Red-Baiters: The Canadian League of Rights,” *AntiFa Info-Bulletin*, 2 February 1999, 1-6, notes that Walsh was the research director for the anti-Semitic CLR, a contributor to Canadian fascist Adrien Arcand’s *Unite National*, and is associated with the anti-Communist *L’Action Catholique*. He was also a police informer who praised Quebec’s repressive Padlock Law, and he testified against alleged Communists before the HUAC in Washington, D.C. During the Mine-Mill’s Inco strike in the late 1950s, Walsh posed as “National Director of the Mine-Mill rank and file committee.”

<sup>8</sup> “Canada’s Last Red-Led Union Is Suspended By Congress,” *TDT*, 22 August 1953, 1.

independent-minded union that stayed true to its constitution and, at the same time, distanced itself from the spectre of Stalinism. The local had little to lose in light of its apparent victory over the Steelworkers as the raiding subsided.

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The local's decision to join the anti-McCarthy fray stemmed from rapidly unfolding events in Vancouver at the end of January. Harvey Murphy was at the centre of the action, as Local 480 and others tried to manage Mine-Mill's long sullied public image. The setting was the fourth annual national conference of the Canadian wing of Mine-Mill, which coincided with the ninth annual meeting of Mine-Mill's Western Regional District. Murphy decided to invite Paul Robeson, an acquaintance and world-famous singer, actor, and civil rights activist, to address the joint meeting and sing for the two thousand or more delegates. On the day of Robeson's arrival, Mine-Mill district president Ken Smith, secretary-treasurer Les Walker, a long-time Local 480 member, and Murphy drove forty-eight kilometres to Blaine, Washington, to escort Robeson across the Canada-U.S. border, but they returned empty handed. Robeson had had his passport seized and was told he was barred from leaving the U.S. The singer returned to Seattle with his travelling companion Vincent William Hallinan, a left-wing lawyer from San Francisco. Robeson was in good company. Hallinan, who had also been invited to address the convention, was legal counsel to Harry Bridges, the Australian-born leader of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) who had long been harassed



by government officials for suspected Communist activities.<sup>9</sup> Hallinan called the border incident “typically Nazi.” He had been banned as well.<sup>10</sup>

What happened next exemplified Murphy’s shrewdness as a union organizer. To salvage the situation, he arranged for Robeson to call the Vancouver convention from Seattle’s Marine Cooks and Stewards Union hall (the singer was an honorary member). When the call went through, the throng of trade unionists was regaled by one of the world’s great bass-baritones for fifteen minutes.<sup>11</sup> Robeson received an enthusiastic response when his voice came through the phone lines, as well as concern when the audience learned of how his passport had been confiscated.<sup>12</sup> Tension ran high in the Denman Auditorium, as the convention became a protest meeting.<sup>13</sup> The Mine-Mill and Communist presses dwelled on the delegates’ high emotions. Murphy’s *District News* called the Robeson affair “A Slap at Freedom” and printed a resolution passed by the convention urging delegates “to vigorously protest against this action of the U.S.

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<sup>9</sup> At least as early as March 1939, Local 480 members had been hearing about the ILWU leader, “Harry Bridges Calls for Political Action,” *Commentator*, 13 March 1939, 4.

<sup>10</sup> “Paul Robeson ‘Under Domestic Arrest’,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 February 1952, 2, attributes the Nazi quote to Hallinan and notes that he “was taken from a north-bound train at the border, and returned to Seattle.” “Robeson held U.S. at border,” *Union*, 11 February 1952, 2, also notes that Hallinan had been banned.

<sup>11</sup> Jordan Goodman, *Robeson, A Watched Man* (New York: Verso, 2013), describes the event.

<sup>12</sup> For a full account of all four Peace Arch concerts, see Ron Verzuh, “Mine-Mill’s Peach Arch Concerts: How a ‘Red’ Union and a Famous Singer-Activist Fought for Peace and Social Justice during the Cold War,” *BC Studies*, No. 174, Summer 2012, 61-99.

<sup>13</sup> “Robeson to sing at Peace Arch on May 18,” *Pacific Tribune*, 3 February 1952, 12, noted that the audience was “tense” during the impromptu concert and that the meeting launched a protest against his banning. “Robeson held U.S. at border...,” *Union*, 11 February 1952, 2, also describes the meeting as a “protest rally.”

Department of State.”<sup>14</sup> International Mine-Mill’s *Union* devoted only slightly less space to the event,<sup>15</sup> and the Communist *Pacific Tribune* filled a full page.<sup>16</sup>

The mainstream media was decidedly less sympathetic. The *Vancouver Sun* wrote only that “leftist trade unionists” were foiled and paid cursory attention to Robeson’s telephone concert. The paper noted that the singer would offer a concert at Blaine’s Peace Arch Park in the spring, as per a promise Murphy had made to delegates. The *Sun* did not report Murphy’s suggestion that the whole incident was part of a broad policy of thought control. But with that notion in mind, the conference agreed that public resistance needed to be organized and the promised Peace Arch concerts were an excellent starting point. If American authorities would not allow Robeson to come to Vancouver, Murphy reasoned, then Mine-Mill would bring its delegates to Robeson.

Had the authorities needed to defend the suspension of the singer’s constitutional right to free passage, they might have said it was a matter of national security; they were protecting the nation from the threat of Communist infiltration. But they needed no such defence. After all, it was the McCarthy era and Communist sympathizers and labour leaders had no choice but to adjust. For the singer-activist’s adoring Canadian fans, Robeson’s ban defied logic.<sup>17</sup> He had earned worldwide recognition for his art, intellect (he was a lawyer who was said to speak several languages), and athleticism (he had played college football). How could his own government turn on him? The answer was

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<sup>14</sup> “Slap at Freedom,” *B.C. District Union News*, 11 February 1952, 3.

<sup>15</sup> “Robeson held at U.S. border, speaks to rally by telephone,” *Union*, 11 February 1952, 2.

<sup>16</sup> “Robeson to Sing At Peace Arch on May 18,” *Pacific Tribune*, 3 February 1952, 1.

<sup>17</sup> At that time, passports were not required to cross the Canada-U.S. border, so to many observers it seemed the American authorities were violating Robeson’s rights.

partly to be found in his visit to the Soviet Union, during which he called the “workers’ state” inspiring. Such behaviour was enough to justify the U.S. action, which to some Canadians seemed undemocratic at best and fascistic at worst, to borrow from lawyer Hallinan’s terminology. Nevertheless, the action against Robeson had enjoyed the complicity and approval of the Canadian government.

Despite the singer’s popularity, the lead-up to the first Peace Arch concert was beset with problems. First, although Robeson garnered accolades abroad, his popularity at home had plummeted, partly because he defiantly continued to publicly laud the accomplishments of the Soviets, lambast President Harry S. Truman for his Korean War decisions, and celebrate the birthday of Joseph Stalin.<sup>18</sup> Robeson had openly criticized American policy since the 1940s, and that alone ensured a battle line between him and the State Department. His caustic remarks about American corporate exploitation added to American excuses for withdrawing his passport, and arch-anti-Communist FBI director J. Edgar Hoover authorized relentless spying operations. By the 1952 concert, Robeson had been roundly condemned as a “fellow traveller” and Kremlin stooge by everyone from world-class boxer Sugar Ray Robinson<sup>19</sup> to Robeson’s fellow entertainer Josh White.<sup>20</sup>

Murphy had thus chosen an ally that made the U.S. and Canadian governments equally concerned, despite denials by Canadian authorities. Mark Kristmanson traces

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<sup>18</sup> Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 655. Also note that Robeson challenged Truman’s failure to support anti-lynching legislation, thus further irritating the authorities in Washington.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York: The New Press, 1989), 394.

<sup>20</sup> Duberman, 391.

Canadian government concern about Robeson to at least 1940, when officials were advised to bar his entry under the War Measures Act. Police informants watched Robeson more closely after that, and the Mounties stepped up surveillance when he appeared on Canadian stages. His political statements had long made authorities want to ban him from Canadian soil. By the 1952 concert, then, Robeson and his views were well documented by Canadian authorities at all levels. They had sufficient information to support the State Department's view that the American singer should be barred. In fact, there had been a decade of data gathered by cold warriors on both sides of the international boundary. Canadian officials were no more tolerant than Americans. Murphy and other Mine-Mill Communists might have suspected Ottawa's role in barring Robeson and that Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent had "authorized the ban," but because the Americans acted first, St. Laurent's official action, or lack of it, remained secret.<sup>21</sup> Canadian authorities were nevertheless complicit in banning Robeson, and police reports noted he had used his concerts as a cover for Communist activities.

In all this, Robeson operated as a kind of cultural Rorschach test. As Reginald Whitaker notes, Robeson's "quest for equality led him over the years towards definite sympathy for the philosophy of Communism, and to support struggles that were also supported by the Communists," but for ordinary Canadians he was more likely known and honoured for singing of "Ol' Man River" in Hollywood's version of *Show Boat*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Fred Rose was a Communist member of Parliament from 1943 to 1947, and several other prominent Communists held public office at different jurisdictional levels. It seems possible that they could have been aware of secret cabinet discussions regarding the Robeson banning plan. Mark Kristmanson, *Plateaus of Freedom: Nationality, Culture, and State Security in Canada, 1940-1960* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212, noted St. Laurent's action.

<sup>22</sup> Reginald Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Denys, 1987), 169.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government saw him simply as a Red and worked to ensure Robeson's songs and speeches did not reach Canadian ears. As early as 1947, the federal cabinet recommended banning the singer. St. Laurent even insisted that Robeson's Canadian concert earnings be subject to income tax. This action might have seemed a further intrusion, but it was a legal requirement applied to any foreign worker. The 1952 concert, then, would have been a serious, albeit legal, defiance of official views in both nations. With one exception, the Canadian government continued to ban the singer as late as 1956, and even then he was permitted to sing but not to speak.

Despite these clandestine government measures, Robeson's ban must have struck his admirers as an over-reaction. Nowhere were fans more captivated by Robeson than Canada, but these were not normal times. The ultra-paranoid Communist witch-hunts in the U.S. were shadowed by a less noisy yet pervasive repression in Canada. Robeson and other members of the entertainment industry, especially those working in Hollywood, were prime targets for cold warriors. Murphy, lower profile Communists, and Local 480 leaders were also targets.<sup>23</sup> But Robeson, along with other internationally known musicians and film stars, endured a special enmity. Marian Anderson, for example, was known locally as a classical opera singer. But people the world over, including Trailites, also knew her as a quiet but forceful voice for social justice after her famous 1939 Washington, D.C., concert at the Lincoln Memorial, considered "a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights movement."<sup>24</sup> Though Trail families did not get a chance to see Anderson

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<sup>23</sup> David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) fully describes the climate of fear.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas A. Brown, "Marian Anderson: Realizing History Through Song," In the Muse Performing Arts Blog, Library of Congress, 9 April 2013, <https://blogs.loc.gov/music/2013/04/marian-anderson-realizing-history-through-song/> . For a history of the Lincoln Memorial performance, see Raymond Arsenault, *The*

perform live, they were treated to the music of jazz great Duke Ellington who played the Trail Memorial Arena. And on the silver screen, they could watch western matinees starring Audie Murphy, Edward G. Robinson in the latest gangster movie or Katherine Hepburn in a comedy romance.<sup>25</sup> The FBI suspected them all of having Communist sympathies, but Robeson presented an even more appealing target for the FBI's Hoover.

The singer faced angry criticism that he was a member of the Communist party, a charge he always denied, but like all African Americans, he also faced the social barriers of racial segregation.<sup>26</sup> His outspoken criticism of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, a sure sign that he supported Red unions, must also have irked the federal authorities along with the compliant AFL and CIO leaderships that had generally accepted the new legislation. The goal was to marginalize leftist voices, yet their actions, as Canadian writer Laurel Sefton MacDowell argues, actually cemented bonds:

The radical minority in the labour movements of Canada and the US was purged in the late 1940s, as Communist-led organizations were seen as a threat to "free" trade unions. That minority remained loyal to Robeson and maintained contact with him, even as he came under FBI surveillance, his phone calls were tapped, and his rooms bugged.<sup>27</sup>

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*Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York, Knopf Doubleday, 2011), 224-225, describes the FBI claims about Ellington. David Smith, *The Price of Valor: The Life of Audie Murphy, America's Decorated Hero* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2015) discusses Murphy's views on Communism in Chapter 8 – "A Hero Goes to Hollywood." See FBI files on Anderson at <https://vault.fbi.gov/Marian%20Anderson/Marian%20Anderson%20Part%201%20of%202/view>. Robinson and Hepburn were noted liberals of their day.

<sup>26</sup> Howard Fast, *Being Red: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 79, notes that Robeson "confessed to me that he was not a [Communist] party member (not then or even in his lifetime)." Buhle et al., *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 656, states that Robeson defended the rights of Communists during the anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1940s and 1950s but that "he was not a member of the Communist Party."

<sup>27</sup> Laurel Sefton MacDowell, "Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story," *Labour/Le Travail*, Volume 51, Spring 2003, 177-221, 177.

The American Congress followed Taft-Hartley in 1948 with the Smith Act, authorizing the indictment of Communist party leaders, and the McCarran Act in 1950, permitting the stifling of dissent and the creation of internment camps for subversives.<sup>28</sup> Robeson spoke out vehemently against both laws, and Mine-Mill leaders, Local 480 Communists among them, echoed such critiques of U.S. domestic and foreign policy.

By early 1952, as Mine-Mill's conference was about to begin in Vancouver, government officials in both countries seemed determined to make examples of the singer and the union, yet neither had reckoned with Robeson's public popularity. Whether or not Murphy and conference organizers recognized it, Mine-Mill was about to benefit from its association with, and championing of, Robeson's rights. Their support of him provided a world stage for speaking out against repressive state controls, the fragility of human freedoms in a capitalist state, and the racism that permeated the U.S. labour movement.

In the past, few black workers had crossed the Canada-U.S. border to work at Cominco and subsequently join Local 480. Nevertheless, the union fought discrimination where it could. When Vancouver longshore worker Clarence Clemons was beaten to death in December 1952, the local demanded justice after an inquiry ruled the death an accident.<sup>29</sup> When black Mine-Mill Alabama regional director Asbury Howard was turned

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<sup>28</sup> Buhle et al., *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 601, notes that the McCarran Act "made provisions for the establishment of political concentration camps."

<sup>29</sup> "Mine-Mill Sends Ten Delegates to Convention," *TDT*, 16 January 1953. Also, *Pacific Tribune*, 17 October 1953, 1, noted that "a group of thirty-three residents from Trail sent a petition to the Vancouver mayor and the police commission stating: 'It would be a disgrace if Canada, and particularly B.C., were to acquire the world-wide infamous reputation of the United States regarding the mistreatment of the colored peoples.'" The quotation is cited in Ryan Bernard Porth, "Why Clarence Clemons Died: Power, Narrative, and the Death of a 'Negro Longshoreman' in Vancouver, 1952-1953," MA Thesis-History, University of British Columbia, 2003.

away at the border when attempting to attend a Local 480 meeting, King and local CCF politicians mounted a similar protest.<sup>30</sup> This was all in keeping with Mine-Mill's history of "invariably" taking "the most uncompromising stand against racism."<sup>31</sup> When the CIO's Operation Dixie collapsed due to anti-Communism, Mine-Mill continued to back the civil rights movement even as anti-Red CIO unions such as the Steelworkers abandoned all pretence of organizing black workers. In fact, the Steelworker local in Birmingham, Alabama, was controlled by the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>32</sup>

The Korean War also complicated the situation surrounding the Robeson Peace Arch concerts. The concerts came as the war entered its second year, and Communist parties and "progressive" unions in Canada and the U.S. had strongly opposed Allied or U.S.-led United Nations participation in the war. They had also called for a ceasefire regardless of ideological differences. With Robeson's pre-existing reputation for fighting for peace and freedom around the world, he was a perfect ally in anti-war activities, and Murphy was poised to reap a public relations boon from the concerts. However, other events would soon intervene. As we have seen, though, just as the concerts were to begin, the Steelworkers again claimed to have signed a majority of the smelter workers. A new battle for control of the Trail smelter workforce was unleashed, making Local 480's much needed participation in concert planning an added burden, but one with potentially positive consequences.

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<sup>30</sup> "Union Official Refused Admission to Canada," *TDT*, 15 October 1953, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ann Fagin Ginger and David Christiano (eds), *The Cold War Against Labor, Vol. 1 and 2* (Berkeley, CA.: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, 1987), 652.

<sup>32</sup> Ginger and Christiano, 657.



Writers for Communist and Mine-Mill publications attending the Sunday, 18 May 1952 concert, reported an impressive audience of 40,000 people. Murphy's *District News* writer exhausted his bank of superlatives, declaring that "the numbers participating and the degree of enthusiasm attained, exceeded even the wildest dreams of the District Union sponsors." He declared it "a victory second only . . . in the annals of the district" to Local 480's defeat of the Steel raiders.<sup>33</sup> The *Pacific Tribute* noted that "Neither obscure threats of 'trouble,' the studied smears of the daily press nor all the subtler intimidations could deter people who felt a sense of personal outrage" over the travel ban.<sup>34</sup> Mine-Mill's *Union* said "the unprecedented turnout was a new triumph for the union fresh from its victory over CIO Steel at Trail."<sup>35</sup> By all union accounts it was a heart-warming occasion, a veritable Woodstock of its time. Families picnicked and listened to Robeson sing and speak. Children asked for his autograph. Men and women sought to shake his hand. Robeson addressed the largely Canadian audience of admirers graciously and in statesmanlike fashion. By the time the crowds departed, Mine-Mill felt it had a major victory to celebrate, but not everyone agreed. The Vancouver dailies highlighted traffic jams and the presence of the border patrol. The *Times* limited its coverage to a paragraph from The Canadian Press wire service. It estimated a mere six thousand had come to hear the "Negro baritone." This was a far cry from how Local 480 member Elmer Pontius remembered the event. He recalled a sense of rapture at being in the huge crowd. He had risked the long journey by car from Trail with other union members and fellow Kootenay

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<sup>33</sup> "Victory at Trail Gives Fresh Impetus to CM&S Mine, Mill Negotiations," *B.C. District Union News*, 6 June 1952, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "30,000 Hear Robeson Border Concert Sponsored by Canadian Mine-Mill," *Union*, 2 June 1952, 3.

Communists, and driving home, they were “elated in the wee hours of the next morning.”<sup>36</sup>

Murphy and Local 480 immediately planned a second concert for the following summer, while a recording of the May 18 concert went into production as a three-disk set with the title *I Came to Sing*, borrowed from a poem by Chilean Communist Pablo Neruda. The record “sold out,” according to Mine-Mill district president Ken Smith, and the proceeds helped to defray the cost of the concerts.<sup>37</sup> Mine-Mill reaped the public relations benefits of the concert as much as possible. Who could blame it? The leadership had been ostracized from the main labour movement, hunted by Cold War authorities, and hounded by police spies in both countries. The McCarthy Senate hearings and those of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC) had the effect of dampening any public sympathy that had existed for Red unions during the early days of the CIO. Public opinion, shaped by fear, had shifted substantially away from unions. All of this made the success of the concerts all the more imperative for Mine-Mill and the Communists. The *Commentator* promoted future concerts in 1954 and 1955 with a photo of Robeson and reprinted reportage from the *District News*. “We protested then and we are still protesting,” one article proclaimed, “and with Paul, we will keep on fighting for those things we all hold in common ‘so long as there is a drop of blood in our bodies’.” The *Commentator* noted with irony the hinged gates of the Peace Arch and the inscription “May these gates never be closed.” Given Robeson’s denial of passage, this was not the

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<sup>36</sup> Videotaped interview with Elmer Pontius conducted by the author, 19 July 2010, in Trail, BC. Pontius continued to be a member of the CPC until his death on 21 June 2011 at age eighty-three. See “Obituaries,” *TDT*, 27 June 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Album cover notes, “I Came to Sing – Paul Robeson Peace Arch Program,” a three-disk record album produced by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, 18 May 1952.

reality, for “those gates are closed.” The paper urged Trail readers to “get to the Peace Arch on the appointed day, by car, by train, by thumb or by God.” The gathered forces would

by sheer weight of numbers, counted in the thousands, force those gates open again, so that not only the continental canned generals, the Skywanis and the rotund Rotarians may pass freely back and forth, but also you and I, Paul Robeson, Vince Hallinan and a score of others may also enjoy the privilege of visiting freely with our friends and neighbours, at will.<sup>38</sup>

It is not clear whether many Trail smelter workers or mine workers at Cominco’s operations in Riondel and Kimberley heeded the call. It was a 650-kilometre drive to the coastal border, and while Kootenay residents such as Pontius were among the throng at all the concerts, how many others followed was not recorded. There was no doubt, however, that Local 480 had taken a major ownership share of the Robeson concerts. The *Commentator* later explained the local leadership’s rationale for supporting the musical events:

We in Mine Mill in Canada may well feel proud of our having taken a leading role, through our Annual Peace Arch Robeson Concerts, in a fight, which not only involves civil liberties but also our rights as Canadians to determine whom we wish to hear sing and speak. It is our answer to the McCarth[y]ites who seek to dictate to Canadians their particular brand of thought control.<sup>39</sup>

Such sentiments did not impress anti-Communist labour leaders in Canada and the U.S. They had quickly fallen into line with Cold War thinking, and supporting a Communist-

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<sup>38</sup> “Paul Robeson Sings,” *Commentator*, June 1954, 8.

<sup>39</sup> “Why the Annual Robeson Concerts Sponsored By Mine Mill in Canada?” *Commentator*, July 1954, 8.

led union's publicity concerts, no matter how pure the larger cause, was not appealing to CIO unions given the anti-Communist views that dominated the political landscape.

Mine-Mill was also vexed by an ongoing struggle for the soul of the left. Would it be Communist or social democratic? This was the political backdrop to how labour leaders viewed the concerts. The Steelworkers union had tried to add to its ranks another 5,000 dues-paying members, and it hoped to strengthen its status in the CCF by delivering those workers' votes. Coming on the heels of the LRB decision against Steel, the concerts sweetened the Mine-Mill victory, but they also might have given the union a false sense of security. The Mine-Mill of the 1950s was a pale image of its former self, the violence-prone Western Federation of Miners (WFM). When the WFM became Mine-Mill in 1916 to distance itself from its former radical image, Mine-Mill began a long evolution towards a less imposing political force. The union continued to take progressive stances, including its anti-racist, anti-war, anti-capitalist, and pro-workers' rights positions, but the CCF and CCL purges ensured it pariah status in the post-war world. Mine-Mill had enemies everywhere. Its leaders were constantly harassed by police, CIA, FBI, and other agencies rooting out Communists and, as in Trail, members everywhere were constantly pressured to abandon their union.

Mine-Mill was still viewed as farther to the left than most other unions. It saw the concerts as a multifaceted way to engage in the political moment, but the kudos it won from some quarters for fighting for Robeson's constitutional rights was also a fight for its own survival against the radical right. As MacDowell argues, "Mine Mill's rhetoric about civil liberties, while genuine, also reflected its interest in broader civil liberties for its leaders, so that they could work politically without constraints, and create a better climate

for their views.” They paralleled the tactics of the CPC’s early campaigns, in which the rhetoric of freedom and democracy was used to protect its leaders:

This consistent position by Communist activists was self-interested, but it inadvertently helped protect the civil liberties of others as well. The larger audience attracted to Robeson’s concerts wanted to see him, undoubtedly, but many were also concerned about guarding civil liberties in a period when policy-makers determinedly escalated security measures.<sup>40</sup>

Benjamin Isitt characterizes the concerts as symbolic of the defiant attitude that marked the B.C. Communists and the B.C. Mine-Mill leadership. The Peace Arch concerts were an “unlikely series” that the Cold War era tried to purge from the historical record. This amnesia also abetted the historical purging of Mine-Mill itself.<sup>41</sup>

The first Peace Arch concert, coming as it did in the Cold War spring of 1952, must have seemed like the stars aligning for Robeson and Murphy. From one viewpoint, their collaboration was a chance for the union to build public support for its many causes. With the singer as a willing partner, the Red union leaders could make a much broader statement about the things they believed in and that made them militant trade unionists. It allowed Mine-Mill, and indirectly the Communist Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), to thumb their noses at the governments that had harassed their leaders for decades. For once the movement had commanded an audience far greater than was customary. People listened when Robeson came to sing, and Murphy, Local 480, Mine-Mill, trade unionism, and the Left were the beneficiaries of a moment that is largely forgotten today. From another viewpoint, however, the concerts could seem a hopeless effort in a political

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<sup>40</sup> MacDowell, “Paul Robeson,” 10.

<sup>41</sup> Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 67.

climate in which the union movement was at war with itself. From that perspective, the concerts were waving a large Red flag in the face of non-Communist unions, especially Steel. Under the CIO's Philip Murray in the U.S. and the CCL's Aaron Mosher in Canada, both conservatives, the concerts were provocations that reinforced their determination to eliminate the Communist-run unions that threatened a post-war compromise sought by both national governments.<sup>42</sup> With Murphy and the Red leaders at Local 480 among the most militant elements of the Canadian labour movement, the concerts signalled their defiance of McCarthy-influenced administrations in Washington and Ottawa and the House of Labour itself.

Murphy, always wily when it came to political manoeuvring, orchestrated one of the most enduring cultural events in labour history, but as a defence strategy, if that is what they were, the concerts failed to buttress Mine-Mill. They did, however, accomplish something less measurable. Many concert-goers, including Trailites, gained awareness of multiple issues of world significance, including peace, racism, and the negative impacts of the Cold War. The smelter community's population was exposed to debates from afar, partly in the pages of the revived *Commentator* and, as always, in the *Times*. Citizens who cherished Robeson's voice heard progressive views and witnessed the arbitrary power of the state in trying to control public opinion. Murphy, though, remained keenly aware that Local 480 was as vulnerable as ever. In an interview with Jack Webster, the

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<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the legal and political implications of the postwar compromise in Canada, see Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour before the Law: The Regulation of Workers' Collective Action in Canada, 1900-1948* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Peter S. McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). On the American side, see Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Unions: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Mine-Mill district director said he feared the raids might return, and less than a week later Charlie Millard issued a “declaration of war” against Mine-Mill in the *Vancouver Province*. The Steelworkers were “preparing the groundwork for a general ‘liberating’ raid by Steel on Mine-Mill locals across Canada.”<sup>43</sup> With the second Peace Arch concert fresh in people’s minds, and a third planned for summer 1954, it seemed Mine-Mill’s cultural front had no deleterious effect on Steel’s raiding spirit.

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With Millard’s promise of renewed union warfare, and the continued criticism by local anti-Communists, Local 480’s Communist leaders’ security seemed as precarious as ever. Then in early 1953, Mine-Mill opened up a hornet’s nest by agreeing to sponsor *Salt of the Earth*. The film was produced by three of the filmmakers known as members of the Hollywood Ten who were blacklisted in 1947 for refusing to testify before HUAC. *Salt* was soon labelled subversive. Thus the fight to produce and distribute the film became a frighteningly intense and at times violent undertaking. By early 1954, *Salt* drew a wide phalanx of critics determined to ban it from North American theatres.<sup>44</sup> Observers considered the threats against the film an affront to freedom of expression and an indirect

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<sup>43</sup> “Steel Union to Battle Mine-Mill,” *Vancouver Province*, 19 December 1953.

<sup>44</sup> Eric Arnesen, ed., *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1307, says *Salt* was “banned.” I prefer the term blacklisted to describe the result of actions by politicians, governments, some unions, the Chamber of Commerce, and other institutional enemies of *Salt*. It also more accurately situates the actions of Hollywood studio operators who issued the Waldorf Statement in 1947 barring the Hollywood Ten from working in the motion picture industry. It was the start of a much more pernicious process of blacklisting anyone who by innuendo, association or even appearance was considered a Communist or fellow traveller. For more on the Hollywood blacklist, see Jeff Smith, *Film Criticism, the Cold War, and the Blacklist: Reading the Hollywood Reds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) which offers a thorough review of writings through several waves of memoirs, histories, and reports. Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood’s Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) offers a critical and readable account, whereas Paul Buhle and Patrick McGilligan, *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997) cover the individual stories of the blacklisted in their own words.

attack on its sponsor: Mine-Mill. Along with the Robeson concerts, suppression of the controversial film placed Murphy and Local 480 under heavy scrutiny, but that very attention was also another chance to challenge the repressive Cold War atmosphere. The local responded by sponsoring a public showing in the Kootenays of the only American film ever blacklisted in the U.S.<sup>45</sup>

To cold warriors and anti-unionists, *Salt*'s fictionalization of a 1951 strike against the Empire Zinc Company in Grant County, New Mexico, was a blow against the capitalist system and anti-union hegemony by showing how these forces threatened the North American way of life. Communist members of Local 480 no doubt considered it a fair critique of what they had been fighting, but other members might have perceived a harmless Hollywood love story in a faraway Mexican-American community. Whatever the local views, Trailites' interest was piqued when Mexican-American trade unionist Anita Torres visited the smelter city in January 1954 on a promotional tour and recounted the events that led to the making and possible unmaking of *Salt*.

Torres and her husband Lorenzo had been involved in a violent, fifteen-month strike at the Empire Zinc mine in Bayard, New Mexico. Trail audiences were moved by her recollection of company and police harassment, the use of scabs, and the public campaign to discredit their union. She explained how the men and women of Mine-Mill Local 890 faced down "machine guns and police goons" and even went to jail.<sup>46</sup> Torres depicted a struggle against the heart of Cold War political intolerance, including the fight

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<sup>45</sup> For an account of *Salt*'s appearances in Canada, see Ron Verzuh, "Remembering Salt: How a Blacklisted Hollywood Movie Brought the Spectre of McCarthyism to a Small Canadian Town," *Labour/Le Travail* 76 (Fall 2015): 165-198.

<sup>46</sup> "Anita Torres Tells of Jencks' Battle To Free Her People," *B.C. District Union News*, 29 January 1954.



against the anti-Communist Taft-Hartley Act and other repressive laws. She also touched on the case of Clinton Jencks, the Mine-Mill representative who was arrested and jailed under Taft-Hartley, and the personal ordeal to make *Salt*. Local 480 audiences listened attentively to this “heroine of Mine-Mill,” and Ladies Auxiliary Local 131 presented her with two blankets (an appreciative gift as the young Torres experienced her first Canadian winter). Local 480 treated her to a Trail Smoke Eaters hockey game, a sport she mistakenly assumed was played on horseback.<sup>47</sup>

Torres’s tale of overcoming reactionary forces added a touch of optimism to lingering post-war concerns. Like everywhere else, Trailites feared the possibility of renewed world war, the atomic bomb, economic instability, and political intimidation. For a small contingent of Communist trade unionists, those fears seemed increasingly real. As Gary Marcuse and Reginald Whitaker note, by the Korean War “the focus of the anti-Communist campaign had shifted from the ideological threat posed by Communists to the threat of industrial sabotage by individual Communists.”<sup>48</sup> Trail’s Mine-Mill members were an obvious target. RCMP surveillance teams were ferreting out subversive elements in a “meticulously organized, extensive, and explicitly ideological” manner, writes Larry Hannant.<sup>49</sup> This was a time when, as David MacKenzie argues, “many Canadians were suspected of so much disloyalty and subversion based on so little

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<sup>47</sup> “Anita Torres,” *Commentator*, February 1954. Torres also visited Kimberley, Copper Mountain and Britannia.

<sup>48</sup> Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 348

<sup>49</sup> Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine: Investigating the Loyalty of Canada’s Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 85.

evidence of any wrong doing.”<sup>50</sup> It was even worse in the U.S. during what David Caute calls “the great fear.”<sup>51</sup>

Produced at the height of an era of state-induced paranoia, *Salt* departed from the rules of censorship that Hollywood studios had been operating under since the Production Code Administration, or Hays Code after Will H. Hays, was introduced in the 1930s “to protect the masses from the evil influence of the movies.”<sup>52</sup> During the Progressive era, when filmmaking was coming of age, “the cinema championed the cause of labor, lobbied against political ‘bosses,’ and often gave dignity to the struggles of the urban poor,” Kay Solan explains.<sup>53</sup> But the Hays Code aimed to actively regulate such political content along with its moralistic mission to curb sexual and violent content. *Salt* producers defied the Hays rules, borrowing on earlier filmmakers’ attempts to depict class struggle and worker solidarity. Famous directors such as John Ford, Billy Wilder, and Frank Capra strived for a more sympathetic image of working people, sometimes portraying industrial unions in a positive light. However, other filmmakers characterized workers as victims, union organizers as thugs and, of course, union leaders as sneaky

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<sup>50</sup> David MacKenzie, *Canada’s Red Scare 1945-1957 – Historical Booklet No. 61* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2001), 10.

<sup>51</sup> David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 368.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1. Hays was president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) from 1922 to 1945. Note that the disappearing of *Salt of the Earth* extended to some academic treatments of Hays Code censorship. In 1981, Malcolm Dean, *Censored! Only in Canada* (Toronto: Virgo Press, 1981) traced the stories of many films rejected by Canadian censors in the 1940s and 1950s, but there is no mention of *Salt*. In 1994, Frank Miller, *Censored Hollywood: Six, Sin, and Violence on Screen* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc. 1994) provided an exhaustive account of battles between censors and Hollywood studios, but he too skirted all reference to the blacklisted *Salt*.

<sup>53</sup> Black, 7, quoting Kay Solan, *The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

Communists. Such images easily passed Hays censor Joseph I. Breen.<sup>54</sup> *Salt* producers sought to escape such negative Hollywood characterizations by portraying a real-life event that included “the related themes of sexual and ethnic repression.”<sup>55</sup> By interrogating the Cold War era’s political sensibilities, *Salt* invited what Ellen Schrecker calls the “injustice of McCarthyism.”<sup>56</sup> Mining industry employers similar to the CM&S objected to its overt glorification of working-class unity as well as its emphasis on racial and gender equality. *Salt* exposed the underbelly of capitalism’s inherent inequality, and conservatives responded by blacklisting the film as a social and cultural threat.

In his study of the suppression of *Salt*, James J. Lorence shows how influential conservatives in the film industry, including Hollywood unions such as the International Association of Theater and Stage Employee’s (IATSE), worked to undermine the film’s production and distribution. Lorence contends that *Salt*

provides a mirror of Cold War America that reflects not only the intense fear that gripped Americans in this period, but also the dark side of corporatist settlement that locked business unionism and corporate power in a firm embrace in the 1950s.<sup>57</sup>

Ellen Baker argued that the suppression of *Salt* meant the loss of a “vibrant alternative popular culture” and “a generation of committed organizers and a critical perspective on

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<sup>54</sup> For more on Breen, see Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood’s Censor: Joseph I Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 846.

<sup>56</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 331.

<sup>57</sup> James J. Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 1.

American political economy.”<sup>58</sup> Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner concur, placing *Salt* in a rich legacy of ostracized films.<sup>59</sup>

The year 1954 would be one of the toughest years for leftists in North America. Even institutions unrelated to trade unionism, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), experienced harsh political scrutiny. Given this level of state and corporate surveillance, Local 480’s plan to show *Salt* in Trail was risky business. Some local leaders and long-time Communists such as president Al King and Harvey Murphy had already faced official anti-Communism, yet Torres’s account about the Local 890 strike, Jencks’s jailing, and the making of *Salt* emboldened Local 480. Resisting censorship was a chance to live up to Mine-Mill’s reputation for fighting discrimination, which included its locally unpopular support for the Doukhobor community when local unionized railway workers threatened the Sons of Freedom sub-sect with “vigilante action.”<sup>60</sup> Torres’s description of the vigilante scene in New Mexico echoed Local 480’s willingness to oppose discrimination on principle.

On 14 March 1954, just two months after Torres’s visit and following several glowing reviews of *Salt* in the labour press, and after multiple attempts to suppress the release of this “celluloid document of socially conscious unionism,” *Salt* premiered at

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<sup>58</sup> Ellen R. Baker, *On Strike and On Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 251.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner, *Radical Hollywood: The Untold Story Behind America’s Favorite Movies* (New York: The New Press, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> “Vigilante Action Proposed By W. Kootenay Trainmen,” *TDI*, 4 August 1953, 3; “Track Blasting – Who’s to Blame,” *Commentator*, 5 October 1953, 3.

New York City's Grande Theater.<sup>61</sup> *Union*'s Morris Wright noted the "overflow audiences" and raved, "many have called it 'the best picture I ever saw'." The *New York Post* called it "solid picture making" and "not subversive in actual content," making the *Post* writer wonder why "so many people have worked so hard to keep it from being made or shown at all." The *World-Telegram* actually thought *Salt* downplayed the violence, saying it showed "much less of repression, discrimination and violence than actually happened."<sup>62</sup>

In spite of a boycott orchestrated by IATSE on orders from its New York office, the Canadian premiere took place at the Variety Theatre in Toronto on 9 August 1954. *Salt* director Herbert Biberman remembered that they were "relegated to a miserable theatre . . . with equipment so poor that it was almost impossible to understand the dialogue."<sup>63</sup> The Toronto public broke the boycott, said *Union*, but the paper admitted the showing had been "greatly hindered by opposition from the projectionists' union." CBC film critic Nathan Cohen called *Salt* "an exciting experience, a deeply human drama in the documentary manner perfected by the Italians in such masterpieces as *Open City*, *The Bicycle Thief*, and *Shoe Shine*."<sup>64</sup> However, much of the mainstream U.S. media demonized the film as Soviet propaganda and avoided reviewing it. The *Trail Daily*

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<sup>61</sup> Lorence, *Suppression*, back cover.

<sup>62</sup> "'Salt of the Earth' finally on screen! Packs N.Y. theater every performance," *Union*, 29 March 1954.

<sup>63</sup> Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 184.

<sup>64</sup> CBC review: <http://www.donnellycolt.com/catalog/product345.html>. Biberman, *Salt Story*, 184, provides the longer text of the CBC review from which this quotation is drawn.

*Times*, despite its years of anti-Communist editorializing and front-page articles criticizing the making of *Salt*, failed to review the film.<sup>65</sup>

Local 480's promotion of *Salt* stalled during bargaining that spring, but it accelerated after ratification of the collective agreement in June. Promoting the film was tough going. Virulent media and political attacks on *Salt* mounted throughout the summer months. The *Commentator* countered by urging members to ask their politicians to help get the film into Canadian theatres. "The fight is still on to bring [the film] before the Canadian people for the first time," the union paper noted, but "Big Business opened up its guns on this story, even as it started to be filmed, in a brazen attempt to smash and sabotage its production."<sup>66</sup>

Toronto unions continued to rave about *Salt* at the largest Labour Day parade in the city's history. More than seventy unions joined Frigidaire Local 303 of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) which used its float to salute *Salt* as "the most exciting motion picture union workers ever made." Fronted by a Canadian Legion band, the float stressed "the entertainment value of the picture with its humor, human emotions, love and tenderness." Praise from union papers was listed on the float. "Ranks with Grapes of Wrath," crowed the *Bindery News*. "A great film," noted *Ford Facts*. "A motion picture of, by and for workers," opined *Hotel and Club Voice*.<sup>67</sup> Beyond the parade, though, the assault continued.

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<sup>65</sup> "Mine, Mill Movie Said New Weapon for Russ," *TDT*, 24 February 1953, 1; and, "Mine, Mill Filming Hit From All Sides, TDT, 3 March 1953, 1, are but two examples of the *Times*'s coverage of the *Salt* story.

<sup>66</sup> "When Is It Coming?" *Commentator*, June 1954.

<sup>67</sup> "UAW float, Legion band hail picture" *Union*, 27 September 1954.

Murphy railed at critics, accusing the big theatre chains of “sabotaging it and denying to the movie goers the opportunity” to see it.<sup>68</sup> His *District News* also published testimonials about the film, including one from Ernest Winch. The outspoken CCF MLA from Vancouver declared that *Salt* was “an excellent film, and faithful in the slightest respect to life.” He laughed at charges that the film was propaganda:

anything is propaganda to the bosses when they are revealed in all their nakedness, and this film doesn’t exaggerate their tactics in the least. They are and have always been much more ruthless than they are shown in the film.<sup>69</sup>

The problem for supporters and critics alike was that each group largely preached to its own choir. This bifurcation of audiences is underscored by the fact that the *Times*, the one paper that depended upon readers from both camps, abstained from reviewing the film. The end result was a failure to break down the barriers erected by both camps.

Indeed, from the moment *Salt* was conceived, it was in trouble that only deepened over time, and the problems only increased when screenwriter Michael Wilson, an Oscar winner and brother-in-law of producer Paul Jarrico, joined the film.<sup>70</sup> Like many Hollywood film workers, Wilson and Jarrico had been in the Popular Front, a broad coalition of activists that Michael Denning notes “increased influence on the participation of working-class Americans in the world of culture and the arts.”<sup>71</sup> As the Great

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<sup>68</sup> “Around The District Union,” *B.C. District Union News*, September 1954.

<sup>69</sup> “Veteran MLA Praises ‘Salt of the Earth’,” *B.C. District Union News*, September 1954.

<sup>70</sup> Wilson won the Oscar for *A Place in the Sun*, the 1951 film adaptation of American novelist Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy*. He went on to write two more Oscar winners, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. He was blacklisted after HUAC declared him an “unfriendly witness.”

<sup>71</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), xvii.

Depression deepened, director Biberman, Jarrico, and Wilson joined the Communist party and became more active in Hollywood unions as they gained strength and challenged work rules at the big studios. After they were blacklisted in 1947, the ostracized filmmakers turned their talents to making a film that would exhibit all the progressive traits that they felt were missing from traditional Hollywood screen offerings. They eventually found what they were searching for in the New Mexico strike and wrote the script in cooperation with its main subjects. Such writing by committee was contrary to the top-down studio system. So was the egalitarian ethos that marked the film's production style.

Billed as “an honest movie about American working people,” *Salt* recounted a real life story that highlighted the powerful role of women in winning the strike.<sup>72</sup> From film historian Carl Weinberg's perspective they succeeded. *Salt's* main themes are carefully constructed and foregrounded in three scenes, he explained. In the first, Ladies Auxiliary Local 209 proposes that the women staff the picket line. Next, they are shown on the picket line and being arrested. As Weinberg notes “Not only did women . . . maintain their lines; they also jumped on cars, threw rocks at strikebreakers, and deployed various ‘domestic’ items as weapons.”<sup>73</sup> Both scenes illustrate a militant feminist group enacting their convictions as politically aware women. At a time when many Mine-Mill men were uncomfortable with the leading role played by females, the filmmakers highlighted this agency, thus challenging filmgoers with a depiction of

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<sup>72</sup> Promotional brochure circulated before the film's New York premiere at the Grande Theatre in Manhattan.

<sup>73</sup> Carl R. Weinberg, “*Salt of the Earth: Labor, Film, and the Cold War*,” *OAH Magazine of History*, October 2010, 42-45, 43. Electronic version at <http://maghis.oxfordjournals.org/>.



women as more than supporters of a male-dominated union. Given their own demand for independence, members of Ladies Auxiliary Local 131 in Trail supported the independent stance taken by the New Mexico auxiliary. The fact that they hosted Torres and attended a showing of the banned *Salt* was tangible evidence of that support. The last scene shows men hanging laundry. Weinberg calls it “the most striking in the whole film,” and far in advance of Second Wave feminism’s emphasis on “job discrimination, the politics of housework, and the sexual double standard.” Thus *Salt* was not simply a class-based critique of post-war capitalism but also a direct challenge to the male breadwinner tradition.<sup>74</sup>

For Weinberg and others, class, gender and ethnic relations form the heart of *Salt*. Through that prism Ellen Baker suggests we see “the interplay of historical contingency, individual action and larger historical dynamics.” *Salt*’s micro-history offers a “nuanced understanding of the texture of local society and of the relationship to . . . larger historical forces.”<sup>75</sup> That description applied to the smelter workers and the smelter women of Trail in the 1950s, a factor that clearly resonated with them in the film. Other analysts focus on *Salt*’s efforts to counter the right-wing propaganda that flowed so freely in the North American media. It was an example of how filmmakers could exercise the principles of cooperation, collaboration, and communalism to create a film that would stand as an artefact of what could be done when filmmakers were allowed to express their political

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<sup>74</sup> Weinberg, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Baker, *On Strike...*, 244.

vision rather than be restricted by the studio rules created by Hays with the compliance of movie moguls.

Torres recounted how *Salt*'s filmmakers and their novice cast encountered hoodlum violence, vigilante actions, and even the U.S. government's refusal to allow *Salt* star Rosaura Revueltes to re-enter the U.S. to complete filming after visiting her home in Mexico.<sup>76</sup> Film unions also strongly opposed the showing of *Salt*, leading Mine-Mill's Denver office to comment on the intensity of the Red Scare tactics against the film.<sup>77</sup> It also puzzled Rossland's George B. Casey, who saw it while a guest delegate at the International Mine-Mill convention at Louisville, Kentucky. In his view it was "a class conscious movie that will be a dividend payer wherever practiced." Casey was a founding member of Local 38, the WFM local that had once represented Rossland miners.<sup>78</sup> Trail's Mine-Mill leaders also contended with anti-Red forces as best they could, but as Local 480's Al King observed, "Because of anti-red hysteria, a lot of people didn't want a pro-union movie . . . to be made."<sup>79</sup>

Given such angry opposition, it seemed increasingly unlikely that Local 480 could show the film, but finally the November edition of the *District News* announced that the "celluloid curtain" had risen. *Salt of the Earth* would be shown in the Kootenays.<sup>80</sup> The local first thought it had secured a Trail theatre in September, either the Strand or the Odeon, but the "top brass put their foot down." The Vancouver-based cinema owners had

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<sup>76</sup> "Movie completed despite violence by company finks," *Union*, 9 March 1953.

<sup>77</sup> John Clark, "The President's Corner: I tasted 'Salt of the Earth'," *Union*, 4 January 1954.

<sup>78</sup> George B. Casey, "The Open Forum: Thanks from an old-timer," *Union*, 12 October 1953.

<sup>79</sup> Al King, *Red Bait!*, 66-67.

<sup>80</sup> "Around The District Union," *B.C. District Union News*, November 1954.

joined the Cold-war-inspired blacklist crusade. The *Commentator* complained: “we as free Canadians (?) are not to be exposed to a film that portrays the life and love story of a Mexican-American miner and his wife by the veto of these high movie magnates.”<sup>81</sup> The break came when Mine-Mill abandoned the search in Trail and instead hired the Castle Theatre in nearby Castlegar, where many smelter workers lived.<sup>82</sup> The union paper advertised five screenings on 15 and 16 December, and it reprinted a positive review by *The New York Times*.<sup>83</sup> Bosley Crowther noted that *Salt* depicts a “conflict that broadly embraces the love of struggling parents for their young.”<sup>84</sup> This hardly sounded like the evil Red menace that many papers had described.

Despite the many attempts to suppress *Salt*, local movie-goers seemed anxious to see it. Smelter poet E.M. Nobes, a Local 480 office secretary, joined about 900 residents at the Castle Theatre, many travelling the forty kilometres of gravel road from the larger centres of Trail and Rossland.<sup>85</sup> Like others in the audience, Nobes was deeply touched:

It made me feel with each new reel  
Unprecedented pride  
To know Mine, Mill has brought this thrill,  
To warm your heart inside.<sup>86</sup>

Pride and warm feelings came at a cost, however. The film and its union sponsor suffered repeated salvos from cold warriors such as future American president Ronald Reagan,

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<sup>81</sup> “‘Salt of the Earth’,” *Commentator*, November 1954.

<sup>82</sup> “‘Salt of the Earth’ Showing at the Castle Theatre,” *Commentator*, November 1954.

<sup>83</sup> “Salt of the Earth 9,” (ad), *TDT*, 13 December 1954.

<sup>84</sup> Advertisement, *Commentator*, December 1954.

<sup>85</sup> “Castlegar movie packed for ‘Salt of the Earth’,” *Union*, 3 January 1955. For more on Nobes and other worker poets, see Ron Verzuh, “The Smelter Poets: The Inspiring Role of Worker Poetry in a B.C. Labour Newspaper During the ‘Age of the CIO’,” *BC Studies* No. 177, Spring 2013, 85-126.

<sup>86</sup> “‘Salt of the Earth’,” *Commentator*, September 1954.

then head of the Screen Actors Guild, anti-Communist IATSE leader Roy Brewer, and HUAC “friendly witnesses.” The New York-based labour columnist Victor Riesel worked closely with Brewer, FBI director Hoover, and others to ensure that *Salt* stayed blacklisted.<sup>87</sup> Riesel saw *Salt* as a “potential danger to the Korean War effort.”<sup>88</sup> Meantime, former colleagues of the Hollywood Ten were giving HUAC the names of anyone they thought might be a Communist. Even former Hollywood Ten member Edward Dmytryk, born in Grand Forks, B.C., seventy kilometres from Trail, turned on his colleagues.<sup>89</sup>

For Murphy and the film’s Local 480 boosters, *Salt* was a cultural way to resist, but it was at best a minor triumph. The film was never widely distributed, and the Red baiting did not abate. As hockey and ski season approached, the *Commentator* noted that “our membership all throughout Canada are subjected to big scare headlines and all the intimidation and hysteria against our Union that the big boss and the paid press can muster.”<sup>90</sup> Police continued to surveil local Reds. Constable J.J.E.R. Boissonneault of

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<sup>87</sup> Aaron Leonard, “The Bureau and the Journalist: Victor Riesel’s Secret Relationship With the FBI,” *Truthout*, 14 February 2014, briefly outlines Riesel long career as an FBI collaborator who in 1956 is blinded by an acid attacker apparently seeking revenge for Riesel’s reporting on mob connections to a Long Island union.

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/14545-the-bureau-and-the-journalist-victor-riesels-secret-relationship-with-the-fbi>

<sup>88</sup> Lorence, *Suppression*, 78. Note that the Trail smelter had long been a producer of high-grade zinc.

<sup>89</sup> See Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Viking, 1980). For specific details on the Dmytryk betrayal, see Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980). See also, Richard English, “What Makes a Hollywood Communist?” *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 May 1951. See also, Ron Verzuh, “Hollywood Turncoat,” *Boundary Historical Society Report*, Grand Forks Historical Society, Grand Forks, B.C., 2015, 79-83.

<sup>90</sup> “Butler-Brownell-Humphrey,” *Commentator*, October 1954, 7. For a brief outline of the act, see Carl Auerbach, “[Communist Control Act of 1954](#),” [Major Acts of Congress](#). 2004. *Encyclopedia.com*. 9 March 2014 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

Nelson Special Branch provided detailed assessments of the situation, noting that while the local was under the “control and guidance” of “a strong subversive element,” a “movement has been afoot in local 480 to oust Al King.” The constable also observed that Murphy “had spent considerable time in Trail prior to the elections in an effort to boost King’s stock,” but “the rank and file were not impressed.” King won the election with 570 votes that December, only 170 votes more than challenger Pete Jensen, suggesting that King was in for a “precarious year.”<sup>91</sup>

Other police reports seemed to confirm that Steel was about to renew its raids on the “red-tinged” union, but by early 1955 it was evident that Charlie Millard and his big CCL affiliate were unlikely to mount a new attempt at Trail.<sup>92</sup> The spirit of resistance that had been on display at the Castlegar showing of *Salt* still prevailed in Trail. When the smoke settled, as much as it ever did in the smelter city, what remained was an intact local union despite an increasingly hysterical anti-Communist world. Murphy still railed against the local theatres for refusing to screen *Salt*, and he charged Cominco with censoring it in Tulsequah, a northern B.C. mining community.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, Mine-Mill’s Canadian locals moved a step closer to autonomy when Local 480 delegates to the twelfth annual B.C. District Union convention proposed to partition Canada’s Mine-Mill locals from the international.<sup>94</sup> Concerned like many Canadian Mine-Mill locals that laws

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<sup>91</sup> “Subversive Activities in I.U.M.M.&S.W. Trail, B.C.,” Secret police report by Constable J.J.E.R. Boissonneault, Nelson Special Branch, 3 December 1954.

<sup>92</sup> “Steel Union to Battle Mine Mill,” *Vancouver Province*, 19 January 1954. Clipping extracted from secret police files obtained under Access to Information law.

<sup>93</sup> “He Likes ‘Salt’,” *B.C. District Union News*, May 1955.

<sup>94</sup> “Autonomy Declared Objective of Canadians, International, Alike,” *B.C. District Union News*, January 1955, 1.

such as Taft-Hartley and Butler-Brownell-Humphrey were undermining the labor movement north of the border, Murphy suggested that quasi-independent status “may mark a new epoch in unionism on this continent.” It would underscore Mine-Mill’s dedication to democratic unionism, rejecting “stricter and more bureaucratic control and domination” and ending the “expulsions, suspensions, and threats” that had plagued the locals for so long.<sup>95</sup>

Finally in July, with the blessing of the 50th international convention in Spokane that spring, seventy delegates from across Canada formed an autonomous Canadian Mine-Mill union. The meeting was held in the old Rossland Miners’ Union Hall where so much of local labour history had occurred since WFM Local 38 members built it in 1898. As Murphy noted, it was “a fitting place” for the realization of “the dream of the original founders of our great International Union in Canada.” Stressing unity, Murphy concluded that Mine-Mill members, “those of the present, and the hardy old-timers of the past, were as one in voice and deed and the labor movement of this continent, whose eyes were on Rossland for those days, witnessed events of great importance.”<sup>96</sup> Among the resolutions adopted was one encouraging locals to purchase ten copies of *False Witness*, the telling confession of Harvey Matusow, the FBI informant that had put Clinton Jencks of *Salt*

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<sup>95</sup> “Delegates Unanimously Endorse Canadian Autonomy Proposal,” *B.C. District Union News*, March 1955, 1.

<sup>96</sup> “Rossland Hall Again Throbs to History As Canadian Autonomy Becomes Fact,” *B.C. District Union News*, July 1955, 1.

fame and many others behind bars.<sup>97</sup> Another resolution urged them to “endeavour to further the distribution of the Mine, Mill film ‘Salt of the Earth’.”<sup>98</sup>

The July meeting was a historical juncture. Murphy’s role as Mine-Mill western regional director would soon end and his job as chief negotiator for Local 480 would be complicated by his new role as vice-president of the new national union. His departure brought an abrupt halt to the publication of the *District News*. There was speculation that the CPC would appoint a new editor to replace Murphy, suggesting the party had been in control of the biweekly for the past decade, but the paper permanently ceased publication. Murphy would nevertheless continue to visit Trail although his presence in the smelter city would steadily diminish. As editor of the national *Mine-Mill Herald* he ensured that the activities of Local 480’s Communists were well reported, including their continuing resistance to McCarthyism and to other attempts to impose political repression in the smelter city.

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Although the promotion of cultural events such as the Peace Arch concerts and the showing of *Salt of the Earth* did not accomplish the goal of lifting the Red taint from Local 480, there is no doubt its leaders took significant ownership of these events. Nor is there evidence to suggest that Local 480’s participation in organizing the events led dissenting smelter workers to be more accepting of the Communists at the helm. By 1955

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<sup>97</sup> Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes*, chronicles Harvey Matusow’s career as an informant, noting that even his *False Witness* did not sway a judge in El Paso, Texas, to exonerate Jencks. He believed that “Matusow’s about-face was part of a communist plot.”

<sup>98</sup> “Union Leader School Urged By Convention,” *TDT*, 20 July 1955.

McCarthy was finished and Murphy was gone, but Mine-Mill's international leaders still faced years of court battles. For Al King and the others at Local 480, the goal of supporting the larger social causes endorsed by their union had been achieved only momentarily, for the two events passed quickly into a murky Cold War history almost as ostracized as Mine-Mill itself. Conversely, those who had once supported the company union assaults and Steel raids finally seemed to accept Al King as their president. Communist haters continued to reside in Trail, and the local Cold War carried on for a time, but for Trail's smelter workers it no longer seemed to matter whether or not they were led by Reds.



## **Chapter 8.**

### **Conclusion – The Complicated Legacy of Local 480**

At the outset of this study, we took a fictional tour in Margot Blaylock's big blue Buick. When we arrived in Rossland, we saw the historic Rossland Miners' Union Hall where in the summer of 1955 the autonomous Mine-Mill Canada was founded. It was among the ten largest labour organizations in the country at that time.<sup>1</sup> The conference marked a historic milestone for host Local 480, which was then the largest Mine-Mill affiliate in Western Canada. Indeed, the vote for autonomy signalled the start of a hopeful new era for Canadian Mine-Mill locals. For Local 480 in particular, it spelled the end of a bitter contest for survival that had lasted since the late 1930s when a Communist union organizer named Arthur "Slim" Evans brought the CIO to town. Canadian Mine-Mill locals would maintain fraternal ties with their American parent union, but Communist-led affiliates like Local 480 hoped that by creating a new organization they would at least dull, if not eradicate, the U.S.-centred Red baiting that had long afflicted their union. Local 480 might also have hoped that it would signal the denouement of the local anti-Communist campaigns that had plagued it from its earliest days.

A year after the founding of a Canadian Mine-Mill, the Communist community was shaken to its roots by Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's exposé of the Stalin era atrocities. Revelations about the Great Terror of the late 1930s and other destructive

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<sup>1</sup> *Labour Organization in Canada*, 44th Annual Report, Department of Labour, Table X, 1 January 1955, 17, lists Mine-Mill's Canadian membership as 32,000. The other nine large unions ranged from 23,750 members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to 60,000 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA).

Soviet policies drove many members to abandon the Communist parties of Canada and the United States. There is no way to calculate how many Local 480 Reds left the party, but we do know that Al King and Harvey Murphy joined the exodus. The man who called himself the “reddest rose in the garden of labour”<sup>2</sup> had quit the CPC after being advised it would be in the union’s best interest to return to the CCL fold.<sup>3</sup> Memberships fell again in 1956 when Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest to crush a Hungarian revolt. That fall the CCF conference adopted a new guiding document called the Winnipeg Declaration to replace the Regina Manifesto. Influenced partly by the party’s rise to power in Saskatchewan, some believed a moderation of its socialist policies was the path to federal power through social democracy. Others, however, viewed the new document as softening the quest for a socialist economic strategy for Canada, replacing it with a proposal for a mixed economy within the capitalist system. For the left wing of the party, among them Local 480 activists, it might have seemed the demise of a real commitment to working-class revolution.

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The Mine-Mill historiography is emblematic of a broader transition from *old* to *new* labour history. Before the 1970s, labour historians focused on the mechanics of large trade unions and their leadership disputes. Vernon Jensen’s *Nonferrous Metals Industry Unionism* perhaps most pointedly represents this approach in that it focuses on internal

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<sup>2</sup> The origin of the “reddest rose” phrase is elusive, but it is noted in Endicott, *Workers’ Flag*, 126.

<sup>3</sup> In a debate with Steelworker leader Larry Sefton in Port Colborne, Ont., in 1991, Murphy said he had resigned from the party in 1957 after an Ontario Labour Relations Board member named Russell Harvey suggested it would help the union at the Canadian Labour Congress. “But it didn’t matter a hang.” See transcript “Debate btw Harvey Murphy & Larry Sefton,” Northern Ontario Labour Industrial Relations Archives, File P009, Laurentian University Archives, 15.

wrangling at the top level of the union and fails to explore the many influences that shaped the rank-and-file membership. New labour historians rejected the premise that the past can be understood narrowly through the perspective of leadership. Instead, they have taken a prismatic approach, examining a fragmenting spectrum of class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, nature, sexuality, and other categories to highlight the diversity of worker identities and experiences. Laurie Mercier's *Anaconda*, and her work on women and men in Montana, ably represents this approach, and it is crucial for developing a historical portrait of Communist-led Local 480 in Trail, for it was a battleground not only within the labour-management vortex, but also involving public opinion wars, religious concerns, and ethnic loyalties. The result reveals the local's struggle for survival during a period of rapidly evolving working-class social and economic politics in the Kootenays.

Mercier's notion of community unionism, and the social relations that gave rise to it in Montana, offers many comparisons with Trail while permitting contrasts that help to illustrate the differences between communities regarding the question of Communist influence. Mercier also adopted a transnational perspective, identifying Canadian aspects of the Mine-Mill history that Jensen referred to only in passing, thus underscoring the methodological distinctions between the *new* and *old* school. This is not to say that the older scholarship is of no value. Indeed, Jensen and others have answered difficult questions that explain crucial administrative phases of union history, including the alleged Communism of Mine-Mill president Reid Robinson, which had a profound influence on how Murphy conducted union business as the union's western regional director. Where the *old* school approach told union and nationally based tales, however, the *new* labour history is finding experiences that are at once more socially fragmented

and temporally evanescent, yet also more continental in scale. “Divided Loyalties,” then, is a *new* labour history that emphasizes the transnational dimensions of Local 480’s struggle, and how a local history that is usually understood as Canadian reveals how a “small, remote place” can speak to the larger global community, offering insights into how we organize our working world.

Old and new labour historians have long understood that the events of the mid-1950s, including those recounted here, represent a turning point in leftist history. The merger of the CCL and the TLC to form the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in 1956 marked a distinct shift to the right. Murphy’s efforts to restore labour unity in B.C. through cultural events and peace activism did not in fact halt the deterioration of revolutionary fervour, and anti-Communists assisted that decline by framing calls for peace and unity as Red ploys. Jensen himself called unity “mostly a blind behind which the left-wing forces were building for the future.”<sup>4</sup> Allen Seager notes, however, that Murphy “refused to recant his political beliefs, or ‘bend the knee’ to the ‘socialist’ witch hunters.” In the end, it was Murphy’s bargaining skills and life-long promotion of trade unions, not party membership recruitment or revolutionary rhetoric that made him a resilient union figure and helped Trail’s Mine-Mill Local 480 survive.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, for some members of Local 480, long a left bastion in the Kootenays, the CCF’s policy shift and the CPC’s fall from grace seemed to spell the abandonment of ideals that the Communist leadership had long espoused, but these endings did not signal

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<sup>4</sup> Jensen, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Allen Seager, “*Memorial to a Departed Friend of the Working Man*,” *Bulletin of the Committee on Canadian Labour History*, Vol. 4 (Autumn 1977), 9-14, 12.

a final defeat for the small group of Reds that had fought and largely won its smelter conflicts. They could claim victory in many instances, including struggles against a CCF leadership and local conservatives set on annihilating Mine-Mill. They did hold their own against the powerful CM&S-Cominco, an employer that had endeared itself to the community once erroneously called a workingman's paradise. They did defeat the company union. Local 480 did turn back the Cold War-inspired Steel raiders and their smelter collaborators. And they did resist Cold War-inspired fear and hate fomented by the CIO and the CCL and by the Catholic Church. Indeed, as the new, autonomous Mine-Mill began, Local 480 Reds had much to celebrate even though the fight for survival was hardly at an end.

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Given the continental, indeed global, forces working against the survival of a Red union, this study has asked why Trailites accepted and then defended a union vilified by the right and left alike. The most straightforward answer is that Local 480 sustained the respect and support of Trail's smelter workers because, regardless of the infighting, it was effective in defending worker interests. What complicates this assessment is the anti-Communism that otherwise gripped Trail from the earliest days of what has been called the "Age of the CIO."<sup>6</sup> Smelter workers did want better wages and working conditions, things Murphy did obtain, but did they also want the kind of radical social change that Murphy and Mine-Mill advocated? There were divided loyalties in Trail, but the majority of Trail's smelter families accepted the local in spite of its Communist history because it

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), 21.

was an effective defender of their class interests. Sympathy for a local underdog against the corporate giant – the workers’ David versus the company Goliath – might also have mattered. That Local 480’s leaders were from Trail, and thus insiders, also had an influence. Such acceptance would have grown from an appreciation of the relatively non-violent nature of Local 480’s long struggle to survive. Unlike many North American smelting towns, Trail saw little violence during the 1940s and 1950s. Confrontations did occur at the plant gates and fistfights did break out at local beer parlours such as the Arlington and Trail Hotel. But the union did not embrace sabotage or other violent measures to fight an employer that engaged in anti-Communist rhetoric. Instead, Local 480 deployed reasoned, if at times bombastic, arguments in newspapers, radio broadcasts, and speeches. They mixed fact, opinion, and amateur poetry to deliver blows composed of rhetoric and sarcasm.

The union used these weapons to criticize a paternalistic style of management that had cowed workers for more than two decades. It deftly exposed the fallacious claim that a company union could truly represent workers while being funded by the company. With the founding of the *Commentator*, Local 480 also showed it could challenge the anti-Red, anti-union *Trail Daily Times*, often exposing the latter as a tool of the smelter’s owners and free-enterprise capitalism. The *Times* continually escalated its attacks against the union and its Communist leaders through syndicated articles, editorials, and letters to the editor. It tried especially to leverage gender differences in the Trail community, encouraging smelter spouses to write anti-union diatribes, but the *Commentator* stood its ground, working to foreground class differences over other categories of identity.

What further complicates matters is how history itself played a role in Local 480's acceptance among smelter workers. In Trail's early years, we can observe what E.P. Thompson described as the making of a working class over a long gestation marked by strikes and protests.<sup>7</sup> The evolution of that consciousness was manifested in 1901 when Local 38 of the Western Federation of Miners, a founding affiliate of the storied Wobblies, struck for shorter hours in Rossland. Seventeen years later, Ginger Goodwin led Mill and Smeltermen's Union Local 105, predecessor to Local 480, in the 1917 smelter strike. Both events were ingrained in the memories of old-timers, who regularly recounted them to later generations of smelter workers. Others recalled the early political influences in the Kootenays as left-wing parties struggled to co-exist. This lived and embodied past supports the contention that Trail's working-class matured over a long period, and that Local 480 found support among some Trailites to develop as a left-wing union. This gradual process also shaped labour-management behaviour and future social relations between the union and the CM&S. The lengthy battle against company unionism also influenced attitudes about the Red union. Anti-Communist supporters of Blaylock's Workmen's Cooperative Committee regularly confronted Local 480, yet the majority of workers rejected its arguments and those of its legal clone, the Independent Smelter Workers' Union (ISWU). Ever since Slim Evans brought the CIO to Trail in 1938, the local had built a loyal base that helped it emerge as the formal representative of the smelter workers once B.C.'s ICA Act was amended in 1943 and the King government issued order-in-council PC 1003. David Michael Roth argues that the certification of the local came as a direct result of the legal changes, but this denies the value of the years of

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<sup>7</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963), 8.

organizing and education work that must surely have influenced the workers to eventually accept Local 480.

The impact of the union on Trail's women also complicates our explanations of why Local 480 survived. Although many eventually supported the local, some women embraced it reluctantly. Many homemakers, for example, disavowed interest in the Red-tinged union because they feared it could become a drain on family income, especially during strikes. Some women provided moral and material support, but others saw little benefit. Female war workers also threatened to undermine support for the Communist leadership when they demanded stronger adherence to the Mine-Mill constitution regarding gender equality and a reconsideration of its support for the male breadwinner model. Ladies Auxiliary Local 131 also challenged male attitudes towards women even as it supported Local 480's Reds. A post-war opportunity might have been lost when the union agreed to mass layoffs of women at war's end. The debate certainly helped map the political terrain for a later feminist movement, and it set an example for other North American auxiliaries for how to remain independent from male unions and exert pressure for progressive initiatives.

In short, Local 480's survival elicits a series of contingent and qualified historical responses. Immigrant workers slowly gravitated toward the union, but ethnic loyalties and religious beliefs pushed and pulled them in idiosyncratic ways. Local churches did encourage congregations, many filled with immigrant families, to reject Local 480 as a pack of godless Communists. Many took that advice. The local leadership had few defenses against church pronouncements, and their efforts to win the church-going smelter workforce by providing comments from pro-union priests and other progressive



members of the clergy were ultimately futile. Spouses of smelter workers were a prime target for anti-union and anti-Communist messages from the churches, and letters to the *Times* by mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters attested to the success of those messages. It was no different inside the union. In the struggle for ideological acceptance, Local 480 members debated political preferences, and most did not blindly adhere to any one party. Some were card-carrying Communists, but supporting the CCF was an option that many members exercised at election time. There was a lingering labour-socialist tradition, and the local had its share of autodidact street Marxists such as Murphy, Bill Pritchard, Ernest Winch, Harold Pritchett, and Jack Kavanagh. The local's defence of Bert Herridge and his People's CCF also showed a willingness to reject party policy when it did not suit local needs. Thus only a handful of smelter workers signed CPC membership cards, but many more incorporated Communist views into their homegrown beliefs. Trail's fellow travellers ultimately sided with Local 480 leadership on bargaining strategies, and they accepted the local's views regarding many social and economic issues of the day.

There is no historiographical consensus about this, however. Robert Zieger has noted that industrial workers did not have "much stomach for the kinds of root-and-branch confrontation" that Communists often promoted, but members in Trail did trust Murphy and the local's Communist leadership to act in their collective and class interests.<sup>8</sup> Mine-Mill in Trail, as with Mercier's local in Anaconda, saw itself as part of a broader leftist community and acted accordingly. For example, it joined the Allied war effort with other Communists, as Chris Frazer has described, but some enlistees rejected

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<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 374.

the party's anti-war stance in the late 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Local 480 supported strikes, community improvements, fundraising for the less fortunate, and it fought racial and political injustices across Canada and the United States. It was in the vanguard of the 1950s peace movement.<sup>10</sup> But these actions, however radical for the McCarthy era, were not evidence of a seething hotbed of Communism, as repeatedly claimed by journalists, police agents, church leaders, company managers, and others in the smelter city.

Nothing underscores the complexity of this story like trying to figure out just how Communist were the Local 480 Communists. If we define a Communist as someone who advocates the violent overthrow of an elected government, there is no evidence that Local 480 Reds served as Soviet-controlled spies or that they were guided to sabotage the then-largest lead and zinc production facility in the British Empire. Certainly Communist smelter workers were at times rabble-rousers in defending their political views in local pubs and at political meetings. They also circulated Communist Bruce Mickleburgh's highly critical *Pacific Tribune* articles about Blaylock and the CM&S. In concrete terms, though, there were no work stoppages while Communists served on the Local 480 executive. Indeed, thanks to Murphy, Mine-Mill adhered to the CIO no-strike pledge throughout the war. This could be construed as Local 480 Reds supporting the Soviet Union and world Communism, but a no-strike pledge was surely good for the war effort. Mine-Mill's rigorous acceptance of that pledge after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union was seen as a self-aggrandizing move. War had created a much-enlarged potential

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<sup>9</sup> Frazer, "From Pariahs to Patriots," documents this role.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008) provides new information on the enlistments to be found in Soviet files. However, none were identified as coming from Trail.

membership in the mining and smelting industry, and a show of patriotism could have softened the public view of Communist union leaders. Yet when Local 480 Reds might have had a chance to pass nuclear secrets to the Soviets after Blaylock decided to aid the U.S. Army in building the atomic bomb, no such effort emerged in spite of the claims made by Pierre Berton in *Maclean's*. In fact, Communist influence was mostly limited to articles in union newspapers such as the *Commentator*, pieces that borrowed Marxist language to express politically inspired opinions.

Conversely, if a Communist is defined as someone who clandestinely seeks to control unions by manipulating a political process with the intent of influencing policy and daily union activities, then there is definitely evidence at Mine-Mill. Jensen, for example, has documented a political “machine” at International Mine-Mill headquarters with international president Reid Robinson a “willing tool” that “left-wingers” used to “gain great influence at the top of the organization.”<sup>11</sup> The resulting clamour from adversaries distracted the union leadership from its task of representing the rank-and-file. For all the ballyhoo at union meetings, however, the only impact on members’ well being was the waste of funds and energy that would otherwise have been dedicated to organizing, bargaining, and grievance appeals. A minority of Local 480 smelter workers did complain about being ill served by the Communist leaders, and they used anti-Communist rhetoric to discredit the union. The problem, however, was that despite the rumours, there was little evidence of any radical subversives in Trail. Randi Storch adds that local Communists in the American Mid-West did not always follow the dictates of

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<sup>11</sup> Jensen, 297.

the party. In the U.S., unionists often took issue with national and international party positions, arguing that these would not work in their communities. Each locale had its own unique circumstances, employers, and working-class dynamics.<sup>12</sup> Harvey Levenstein finds the same dynamics in the auto industry, where Communists “ignored or defied the party line.”<sup>13</sup> Even in Trail, with the maverick Stalinist Murphy leading the way, we spy the complexity of leftist unions’ social and cultural politics on a continental scale.<sup>14</sup>

The politics of personality are crucial to this interpretation. Smelter families did not always like Murphy, nor did all Local 480 Communists like his politics, but his reputation among Trailites as a fearless and successful organizer and negotiator against the powerful and profitable CM&S mattered greatly. There were instances in which he was not guided by the interests of all Trail workers, and detractors such as Mine-Mill lawyer John Stanton seized on such moments.<sup>15</sup> What seemed to save Murphy, though, was an unwavering intent. His blend of western-based labour socialism and a freewheeling form of local Communism revealed a desire to advance goals that Local 480’s Red leaders considered progressive, despite CPC views to the contrary. This path

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<sup>12</sup> Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-35* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007) provides several examples of how this occurred in Communist organizations in the U.S. Mid-West. Other historians also voiced opinions about the inherent problems of enforcing party discipline from afar: Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Labor Unions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Trafford Publishing, 1981); Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975); Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988); and, William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Levenstein, 335.

<sup>14</sup> Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1974) describes Murphy’s maverick style.

<sup>15</sup> John Stanton, *Never Say Die!: The Life and Times of John Stanton A Pioneer Labour Lawyer* (Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1987). See also Howard White, *A Hard Man to Beat: The Story of Bill White* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 2011).

was set in the earliest days of Local 480's Communist leadership. Communist Slim Evans led the initial charge in the late 1930s as part of the movement toward industrial democracy that the CIO symbolized. Communist John McPeake, a local machinist, carried the CIO banner when Evans was Red baited out of town. Communist Murphy carried forward the work of Evans and McPeake to certification. And Communist Al King's small cohort of local Communist trade unionists defended that legacy during the nadir of post-war anti-Communism.

This did not mean that the local's Communist leaders did not make mistakes. Rather than advocate solidarity with the CCF, for example, they dissipated much of their energy in fruitless attacks. In the 1930s, Murphy and other Communists accepted the instructions of the Soviet Comintern's Third Period, calling the CCF "social fascists." Trail Communists Harry Drake and Gar Belanger tried to coax the already circumspect CCF to embrace unity, but this too was seen as a manipulative gesture. Elections for Mine-Mill District Council were another misstep. When Communist candidates appeared to lose, Murphy arbitrarily voided the results and held a new election seeking a more favourable outcome. Put simply, there was reason to mistrust Trail's Communists, and national CPC leaders also earned this distrust. As Lita-Rose Betcherman argues, Tim Buck and Tom McEwen were "cynical and opportunistic," more interested in the "advantages of martyrdom," and willing to play the "politics of provocation":

Whenever the powers-that-be acted humanely, instead of welcoming such actions the Communists tried to find ulterior motives. They maligned and undermined other groups who were seeking ways to alleviate the suffering of the jobless. The party leaders deceived themselves and their followers

about Stalin's Russia. Only by comparison with a stony-hearted Establishment might they seem like . . . heroes.<sup>16</sup>

Murphy was guilty of practicing a similar brand of take-no-prisoners ideological warfare, as fellow Communist Jack Scott observed, and he seems vulnerable to accusations of using the bargaining table to “camouflage” his aim to aid the Communist cause.<sup>17</sup> What critics must contend with, however, is Local 480's high-quality collective agreements with no apparent left-wing political motives.

The bread-and-butter thesis for why smelter workers accepted a Communist union is also complicated by the twists and turns of the Steelworker raids. These conflicts exposed both strong support for Local 480 Reds and the tentativeness of that loyalty. The election of Claire Billingsley as Local 480 president in 1947 revealed smelter workers' contingent faith in Mine-Mill. Billingsley campaigned to lure members to the Steelworkers, and many joined his revolt, blindsiding Local 480 leaders. The outcome, though, was not as over-determined as the David-and-Goliath billing suggests. This was a tremendously intimate battle, pitting workers and families against each other. In the case of Labour Relations Board hearings and those dealing with changes to the labour laws, it also pitted lawyers and legislators against each other. The resulting bad blood seemingly benefitted the employer, yet for nearly three years Local 480 repulsed the raiders. The very resilience of the local inspired supporters, as well as unions across North America, to resist Cold War enemies. Steel's anti-Communist strategy worked in other smelter towns, but in Trail it made Local 480 members defiant. Support for Red leaders

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<sup>16</sup> Lita-Rose Betcherman, *A Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928–1932* (Toronto: Deneau, 1982), 216.

<sup>17</sup> Jensen, ix.

ultimately repelled the much larger union and sustained the local for another fifteen years.

That Local 480 Communists were mostly homegrown smelter workers, not the “outside agitators” Trail’s anti-Communists claimed, was another factor in sustaining local support. Men and women who came home as decorated veterans helped combat the rising tide of anti-Communism, and the remaining leaders who declared themselves Communists faced the ostracism that unfolded elsewhere. But they “were very much upfront about resisting McCarthyism,” recalled Bill King, Al King’s brother and a former labour minister in the B.C. government of Dave Barrett. “They didn’t shrink away from their beliefs and their radicalism at all.”<sup>18</sup> Although job seekers poured in from other parts of Canada and the U.S., union leaders who worked at the smelter were supported by other Trailites when they were fired or harassed out of jobs by smelter foremen and managers. Members interpreted such pogroms as blows against the community as a whole. This homegrown factor also emboldened Red leaders to challenge the employer. They could argue with some credibility that they were managing a union in the best interests of a community built not only by the company through its largesse but also by the workers through their toil. All this buttressed Communists as they struggled against the strident anti-Communism threatening to stifle Local 480.

Trail’s experience, along with that of some other Mine-Mill locals, thus stands in contrast to continental patterns. The Red purges in late 1940s and early 1950s drastically reduced the number of members with “a much wider social vision than most other

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<sup>18</sup> Videotaped interview with Bill King, conducted by the author, Fruitvale, B.C., 19 November 2014.

American unionists of the 1950s.”<sup>19</sup> This process left many battle scars that undermine trade union power to this day. Indeed, in ejecting Reds such as Murphy and the Local 480 Communists, who were widely acknowledged as effective trade union leaders, the movement lost its chance to challenge capitalism’s hegemonic grip on the post-war economy. Further changes in federal labour law and labour-management relations also curbed the possibility of 1930s-style shop-floor revolts. Mine-Mill’s tradition of fighting employers and its Communist baggage did not fare well in this new era. Compromise at times hog-tied Trail workers in ways that privileged anti-Communists, but it did not silence Local 480’s radical stances to the degree that it curtailed the will of other unions to confront employers and to challenge capitalism.<sup>20</sup> The victory over Steel, though significant, also thrust Local 480 to the periphery of the union movement, a holdout against the post-war legal compromise most CCL unions had accepted.

Regardless of its pariah status, Local 480 continued to win guarded local support in its efforts at Cold War resistance. The union’s cultural program exemplifies the contingent nature of its support. The four Robeson Peace Arch concerts did attempt to expose McCarthyism, but they were also entertainment. Some members who attended were fully committed to the vision of Communism, but Local 480 members who helped to organize the concerts were also fans who admired Robeson despite widespread if false claims that he was a Communist. Celebrity mattered as much as ideology, perhaps more. Conversely, Local 480’s screening of *Salt of the Earth* attracted 900 out of thousands of

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<sup>19</sup> Levenstein, 331.

<sup>20</sup> Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour Before the Law: The Regulation of Workers’ Collective Action in Canada, 1900-1948* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001).



workers and their families. This might seem like an underwhelming show of support for the Red leadership, but at the end of 1954, at the height of the McCarthyist witch-hunts, that turnout was a positive indicator. After all, with the constabulary regularly spying on Local 480 and Murphy, it was perhaps a respectable indication of community support for the Red local and its fight to resist McCarthyism as embraced by local anti-Communists.

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The survival of Local 480 was never a given. Indeed, evidence suggests that it was just barely accepted in Trail. Close to half of the 5,000 smelter workers and their spouses consistently rejected the Communist-led local, many preferring Blaylock's "one big happy family." And CM&S managers worked to undermine Mine-Mill by supporting internal and external attacks on the Trail local. Some attackers were class enemies; others were members of the local working class who collaborated in purging Communists. This latter group seemed to yearn for the security of the welfare capitalism that had assisted smelter families throughout the Depression, or they sided with company unionists and the Steel raiders, or they shared the view of the CCL and the CCF that Communism had to be expunged from the labour movement and society. Despite divergent motivations, a significant number of smelter workers opposed Mine-Mill. Voting patterns reflected these strong anti-Local 480 sentiments. Underscoring the sustained divisions within the smelter workforce, and furthering bolstering the contention of divided loyalties, the 1943 LRB certification election actually favoured the company union by a thin margin of 100 votes over Mine-Mill, and the final vote in the early 1950s on Steel's bid barely failed by a 300-vote margin. Thus we must reckon with a sizable minority of Trail workers who were never willing to side with Mine-Mill and the Communists.

Trail workers' divided loyalties paralleled patterns in other mining and smelting communities as well as labour politics in capitalist economies more broadly. On the one hand, workers tended to respect the company. It had been instrumental in establishing and transforming Trail into a relatively well-endowed city that provided relatively steady incomes. On the other hand, and despite the many attempts to discredit their union, workers also respected Mine-Mill. It was often the only force willing to challenge the employer in the name of workers' self- and class interests. Those conflicting loyalties were in constant flux throughout most of the Second World War until Mine-Mill was certified as the legal bargaining agent. Once certified, Local 480's Communist leadership saw the union as vital to shaping the community on and below "the Hill." This had less to do with ideology than civic pride, family needs, and a city polluted with disease-causing lead. Local 480 addressed the latter issue often as its members were stricken with deadly lead poisoning and silicosis.

While Trailites generally viewed Communism as a threat to national security, they varied on how serious this threat was at a local level. Police surveillance teams thought they were protecting national security by spying on the "subversive activities" of "Red" trade unionists. Pierre Berton implied that Trail Communists might pass atomic secrets to the Soviets, but there is no evidence that anyone did so. Proof was never the main goal, however. Berton's innuendo was sufficient ammunition for right-wing politicians, and some on the left, who wanted to damn all Communists, especially trade unionists. So it was as well for some labour leaders seeking to oust unionists with whom they did not agree politically. Trail's smelter workers weighed these arguments and ultimately decided to accept and retain Mine-Mill.

From a collective bargaining viewpoint, it was a wise decision. Local 480's Communist leaders broke the CM&S's paternalistic hold on the lives of its workers and their families. What perhaps mattered most were wage increases, providing for families, and health and safety in a notoriously unsafe industrial workplace run by a company that could be as anti-worker as it was anti-Communist. Local 480 won better and fairer wages by forcing the elimination of a bonus system that took wages from workers' pockets and kept them in confusion. The local also negotiated better pensions and safety measures that began to address chronic health problems such as lead accumulation, silicosis, and asbestosis. All smelter workers, regardless of their views of Local 480 and its Communist leaders, experienced gains in the workplace and the community in the 1940s and 1950s.

Success in bargaining made Local 480 a force to reckon with in the CCF and the community. Advocating for environmental safety measures, improved health care, and better housing also created political space within which to oppose the bomb and to nurture support in Mine-Mill's ongoing battles against Steel raiders. After the founding of Mine-Mill Canada in 1955, Murphy used the Canadian union's new national *Mine-Mill Herald* to rail against the raiders over the next decade. When the two unions did merge in 1967, Murphy and Al King, two of the biggest Reds in B.C., took jobs with their old union nemesis, eliciting howls of disapproval from some leftists in the labour movement. The criticism is understandable, yet – and Murphy's and King's role in this is not clear – Steel gradually became one of the more progressive labour organizations in Canada.

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As with our fictional tourists at the beginning of this history, visitors to the smelter city today can still spy vestiges of the company town that Butte copper king F. Augustus Heinze built in the mid-1890s. The giant factory dominates the city below the Hill, but it employs only about 1,000 workers today compared to the 5,000-plus in the 1940s.<sup>21</sup> The Big Stack, as the locals call it, still towers 125 meters over the cityscape, and still spews smoke from the zinc, lead, fertilizer, and other refineries that keep the smelter's new owner, Teck Resources Ltd., prosperous and the workforce stable. Some of the red-roofed stairways workers used to climb to work – three shifts every day with a day off after a six-shift run once referred to as a “Murphy Day” – are still visible. The world-champion Smoke Eaters still play hockey at the Cominco Arena, the rink the CM&S built in 1949 that is now part of the Trail Memorial Centre. Other parts of S.G. Blaylock's legacy also remain, including a hospital, gymnasium, the management community of Tadanac, and Blaylock Mansion near Nelson, B.C. Mine-Mill's union hall, built after the raids ended, is now the Steel hall. The Cristoforo Colombo Lodge is a solid landmark “up the Gulch.”

Yet there are also important changes. The smoke emanating from the smelter stacks is less toxic these days, although as late as 2010 Teck was fined for polluting Lake Roosevelt in Northern Washington State.<sup>22</sup> Trail's once-denuded hillsides are again mantled in green. Italian-Canadian residents grow grapes with which to make local wine and other residents tend healthy vegetable gardens and orchards using Elephant Brand

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<sup>21</sup> The figure 1,000 is an estimate drawn from the Local 480 dues list for the July 20, 2017, pay period.

<sup>22</sup> “Timeline of Teck's Pollution and Spills,” Northport Washington Blog, The Northport Project, posted 13 November 2010 as <https://northportproject.com/2010/11/13/timeline-of-tecks-pollution-spills/>.

fertilizer. The Columbia River still flows wide and fast past the smelter, but upstream dams ensure that it will never again overflow its banks as it did in the great flood of 1948. Despite local protests, Teck demolished the Project 9 tower in the early 2000s, and with it the open secret of the smelter's role in building atomic bombs. A plaque now marks the site.

Many of these images conjure memories of S.G. Blaylock's empire, an era filled with the promise of prosperity, but they give no hint of the conflicts this study explores. With the exception of Local 480's union hall on Portland Street, there are few, if any, tangible reminders of how local Mine-Mill Communists built a union and fought for its survival during the Second World War and the Cold War. As the world lurches further right those memories may serve anew to remind people of the divided loyalties that tested the social fabric of the smelter city. Trail's workforce, diminished as it is, still enjoys an admirable level of job security. Elsewhere in North America, workplaces have continued to suffer through the economic uncertainty that has seen jobs and industries downscale or even disappear since the 1970s.

With the election of billionaire businessman Donald Trump in 2016, workers face even greater threats. Their unions, already long in decline, must fight even harder, as Local 480 did, to protect their memberships and stave off decertification. Just as the Taft-Hartley Act had a negative impact on unions like Mine-Mill in the 1940s and 1950s, Trump's rule by executive order and 'tweet' promises to harm workers by revising labour laws. Some American state governments are emboldened by the Trump presidency, for example, to continue pressing for right-to-work legislation that undermines unionization efforts. In Canada, where union density is more stable, the situation is not as grave, but

the promise of a new relationship between labour and the federal government under Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is slow to materialize.<sup>23</sup> After a decade of Conservative government under Stephen Harper, Trudeau basked in a comparatively positive public image his first year in power. A cover story in *Rolling Stone* described Trudeau as “a rational, forward-thinking leader” who is from “the manor born.”<sup>24</sup> But public sector unions, Canada’s largest, are “struggling to see progress.”<sup>25</sup> In B.C., where Murphy and other left-wing labour leaders once lobbied legislators against the pro-business ICA Act, new hope springs from the election of a more labour-friendly NDP government in 2017.

In spite of such political hopes, though, the prospect of a labour movement able to challenge modern-day capitalism seems more and more to belong to a bygone era. News media regularly declare the death of unions, and those that survive do not appear willing or prepared to mount any sustained resistance to the super-wealthy One Per Cent as a “new Cold War” rapidly unfolds.<sup>26</sup> For organized labour to fend off the worst excesses of that war, it would do well to revisit its past, to remember a labour history that seriously embraced socialism as the better road to progressive social change, and to rekindle the

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<sup>23</sup> In Canada, union density had dropped to under 30 per cent in 2014, Canadian Megatrends, Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015005-eng.htm>. But in the U.S., the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, reported that density had fallen to 10.7 per cent in January 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>. Some estimates show that among non-agricultural workers the number of unionized workers in the world’s richest nation had dropped to single digits in 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Rodrick, “The North Star,” *Rolling Stone*, 10 September 2017, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Anne-Frédérique Hébert-Dolbec “Justin Trudeau is not Charming all Canadians,” *Equal Times*, 9 March 2017, <https://www.equaltimes.org/justin-trudeau-is-not-charming-all?lang=en#.WYyB-K3Mz64>.

<sup>26</sup> Investigative journalist Robert Parry used this term as well as “new McCarthyism” on the alternative news network *Democracy Now*, 6 March 2017.

spirit of struggle and resistance that Mine-Mill Local 480 displayed in Trail so many decades ago.

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