CLASS CONFLICT AND POLITICAL FACTIONALISM:
A HISTORY OF LOCAL 213 OF THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, 1901-1961

by

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ABSTRACT

British Columbia's economy is heavily reliant on electrical processes, yet little is known of the electrical workers who built, and continue to maintain, the dams, powerhouses, substations, and the thousands of miles of transmission and local power lines. A major purpose of this thesis is to analyze the electrical workers through a sixty-year history of an important and often controversial union: Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

As an approach to working-class history, this thesis questions the primacy of socio-economic "structure" in explaining the subsequent political outlook of local union leadership. While investment decisions by capitalists and the creation of regional labour markets are significant in underpinning working-class militancy, the interaction of such factors with the human agency—with personal charisma, honest leadership, the ability to extract concessions from employers, and the development of effective electoral machines—provides the key to the broad political outlines of local union history.

Three themes characterize the history of Local 213: the first is the local's struggle for better wages and better working conditions against recalcitrant employers. The second is the relationship between Local 213 and different varieties of socialism in British Columbia. Electrical workers generally supported cautious social democratic practices, but there have been important exceptions. The third theme is the intervention
of outside forces, in particular the international office of the IBEW, whenever the electrical workers appeared to support either radical leaders or radical proposals. Intense dislike and lack of support for the American-controlled IBEW has been the result. While this thesis looks only at electrical workers, these three themes are undoubtedly characteristic of much of local trade union history in British Columbia.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**APPROVAL** .................................................... ii

**ABSTRACT** .................................................... iii

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................... v

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ........................................ vii

**LIST OF TABLES** ............................................. viii

**LIST OF GRAPHS** ............................................... ix

**INTRODUCTION** ................................................ 1

**CHAPTER**

I  The Structure of the Electrical Industry in British Columbia to 1961 .......................... 16

II  Boomers, Grunts and Narrowbacks: The Radical Tradition, 1901-1919 .......................... 46

III  The Defeat of Radicalism, 1919-1922 ................................................................. 77

IV  The Morrison Years, 1922-1939 ................................................................. 101

V  Radicalism Renewed, 1939-1953 ................................................................. 140

VI  Unholy Alliance, 1953-1955 ................................................................. 184

VII  Towards Militancy at Lenkurt ................................................................. 213

**CONCLUSION** .................................................... 236

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

  Illustration 1 ..................................................... 217
  Illustration 2 ..................................................... 222

**APPENDICES**

A  Tables and Graphs ............................................. 240

B  Selected Primary Source Documents ............................................. 257

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ................................................ 280

vii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Canada Census, 1911-1961--Census Enumeration of Construction Workers in British Columbia and Vancouver</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canada Census, 1911-1961--Census Enumeration of Electrical Workers in British Columbia and Vancouver</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Accident Claims Caused by Electricity, 1917-1931</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of Accident Claims and Total Amount of Compensation Paid in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Official Strikes and Lockouts Affecting Electrical Workers in Local 213's Jurisdiction, 1901-1961</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Estimated Membership of Local 213, 1901-1960</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Local 213's Business Agents and Presidents, 1901-1960</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF GRAPHS

GRAPH

1  Number of Claims as a Result of Causes in All Accidents, 1917-1931 .......................... 244

2  Cost of Causes in All Accident Claims, 1917-1931 ........... 245

3  Number of Accident Claims in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961 ................... 248

4  Total Compensation Paid (Charged) in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961 .......................... 249

5  Estimated Membership of Local 213, 1901-1960 ............ 253
INTRODUCTION

On October 8, 1923, the delegates to that year's convention of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) voted to expel William F. Dunne, a representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), for his publicly stated commitment to communism. Given a chance to be heard before leaving, Dunne launched into a vociferous denunciation of the AFL leadership: "I make a distinction between you, international officers," he thundered, "and the membership. . . . Drawing the same salaries as the employers, living in the same hotels, eating the same food, belonging to the same fraternal orders, hobnobbing with them in their clubs! What do you know or care about the eternal struggle of the wage-earners?" Continuing his attack, Dunne went on to declare:

Sam Gompers, head and shoulders above 90 percent of you intellectually, also despises you . . . . Gompers understands you: he knows your prejudices and your ignorances, your preferences and your idiosyncracies, and he plays upon them as a violinist does upon his instrument. He wants no intelligent leadership and he sees that none develops.

Who was this shrewd outcast of the AFL? Although an American, William F. Dunne first became prominent in 1913 when he was elected business agent of Local 213 of the IBEW in Vancouver, British Columbia. Representing the electrical local at the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC), he was also elected vice-president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, before accepting a job as international organizer for the IBEW in 1914.² Dunne remained in contact with Local 213 until 1915,³ but spent most of the war years south of the border. From 1917 to
1923 he lived and worked in Butte, Montana, representing electricians employed by the Anaconda copper company. A founding member of the Communist Party of the United States, he went on to become an editor for its major eastcoast newspaper, the Daily Worker. One-time communist candidate for Governor of New York state in 1927, Dunne had an eventful Party career, before he was finally purged for "semi-Trotskyism and unprincipled Leftist adventurism" in 1946.4

The object of this thesis is not to chronicle the life and times of the class-conscious Billy Dunne, but to analyze him in the context of Canadian radicalism. His career illustrates much about the history of British Columbia's labour movement. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the fact that Dunne's views appear to have held sway in locals of an international craft union, just the sort of labour organization that has traditionally been viewed as a bastion of conservatism. In British Columbia, however, Gompersism, or "business unionism," was repeatedly challenged and occasionally repudiated by significant numbers of craft workers, including the membership of IBEW Local 213. Basing their practice on a radical critique of industrial capitalism, these militant electrical workers opted for a politically and socially active brand of quasi-industrial unionism, in the process challenging employers, government, and the AFL.

Little is known about electrical workers or electrical trades unionism in British Columbia. Local 213 has published two anniversary accounts of its own history, but like most "official"
union publications, these are limited by their brevity and lack of serious analysis. Only two scholars have examined the electrical workers. In a 1982 article on the "Collins Overland Telegraph," Kathleen Fitzgerald focussed on a multitude of problems that plagued an ambitious project to build a telegraph line connecting British Columbia with Western Europe via an arctic route. Construction of this first electrical project in the province, which began in the mid-1860s, was characterized by harsh working conditions, poor wages, and para-military company discipline. Perhaps it was not surprising that a strike broke out amongst these electrical workers in July, 1865. However, as Fitzgerald's sources are sketchy, they could not lead her to a very deep understanding of the men who punched through the Collins telegraph system.

To date, the most valuable contribution to the historiography of electrical workers in British Columbia is Elaine Bernard's 1982 history of the BC Telecommunications Workers Union. In The Long Distance Feeling, Bernard surveys much of the early history of Local 213 as the telephone (now called "telecommunications") workers were an integral component of the local up to 1919. The telephone workers then split away to form their own local union, in turn leading to the formation of an independent Canadian union by the 1950s. Bernard's work is balanced and well-researched throughout, but she has not fully studied either the radical current existing among the electrical workers, or the local's long-standing internal debate on the merits of international trade unionism.
If little is known of electrical workers in British Columbia, the same holds true of electrical workers in other parts of the world. In the United States one of the few important studies is Michael A. Mulcaire's 1923 doctoral thesis, "The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers: A Study in Trade Union Structure and Functions." Mulcaire did not go beyond a cursory outline of the IBEW's origins and internal organizational developments up to 1920. Neither did he fully explain the industrial union movement that created a "dual" IBEW between 1908 and 1914, having chosen instead to concentrate on the conservative craft component of the electrical workers. Such a focus serviced the early history of only one part of the IBEW. A book of completely different scope is Francis X. Gannon's recent semi-official biography entitled Joseph D. Keenan, Labor's Ambassador in War and Peace (1984). Involved in the politics of labour in Chicago since the mid-1930s, the War Production Board during World War II, and elected international secretary of the IBEW from 1954 to 1974, Keenan is virtually worshiped by Gannon as a modern-day hero. At one point the author describes his subject as a man "without guile in a world full of guile," even if he was "anti-Communist to his very bones." This absence of critical appraisal discredits Gannon's book for the serious student.

In England, electrical workers became prominent in 1957 when court action was taken against the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and its communist officers for ballot-rigging. Found guilty, the communist leadership was wiped out in the next election, a defeat
which signalled the Party's virtual extinction within the union. C. H. Rolph provides an almost verbatim account of the court testimony in All Those in Favor? The E.T.U. Trials (1962).\textsuperscript{13} The parallels with the experience of the Communist Party in Local 213 are intriguing, though there was never any question of the need of the communists to have to fix elections on this side of the Atlantic. George Gee, communist business agent of the local following the Second World War, won every election in which he participated by huge majorities.

There is a larger body of writing on British Columbia's labour and left-wing movements that helps to shed light on some of the events that affected Local 213. An early effort was William Bennett's communist-inspired work, Builders of British Columbia (1937),\textsuperscript{14} that provides a near-caricature of the exploitation of labour by capital and the ensuing struggle for survival by the trade union movement. Other publications followed at a much later date. Paul Phillips' No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in BC (1967)\textsuperscript{15} was far more comprehensive than Bennett's idiosyncratic version of events, and provided a more useful outline of both the changes and continuities of labour and the left in the province. Phillips was especially insightful when he suggested that the militant, frequently radical tradition of workers in British Columbia's resource frontier spilled over into the major urban areas and "was supported by many construction trades unionists who tended to be conservative business unionists in other more stable areas of the country."\textsuperscript{16} Such valuable observations were, however, left
largely unexplored. More recent writings, such as those of Martin Robin, A. Ross McCormack, and David Bercuson, reiterated, in different ways and in greater detail, much of what had been covered earlier by Phillips, though they often paid even less attention to workers and their leaders outside the primary, extractive industries. Moreover, in their concern to explain eventual social democratic political success, they consistently obscured the persistent work of groups and organizations further to the left within the trade union movement. The emergence of the Communist Party as a force to be reckoned with in the late 1930s, for example, is not easily understood in light of the much-vaunted victory of the "reformers" over the "rebels and revolutionaries" in 1919. This is as true for Local 213 as it is for some of the major industrial unions in the province. Much the same can be said of Carlos Schwantes, who, in Radical Heritage (1979), provided convincing arguments for using the regional economic and social context of the Pacific Northwest to study the evolution of left-wing labour and political circles; he too concentrated his efforts on explaining "why organized labor in America failed to develop a viable socialist-labor-reform party comparable to the Labor Party in Great Britain or the New Democratic Party in Canada." Two authors who do not share such a social democratic focus are Jerry Lembcke and William Tattam. In one of the most important books published to date on the history of labour in the Pacific Northwest, One Union in Wood (1984), they claim to explore a new "conceptual framework" as it relates to the
volatile political evolution of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA). Their objective is to demonstrate how "the historically uneven social conditions resulting from the development of the wood products industry . . . produced a politically fragmented work force." They analyze such factors as the development of capital formation in the industry, the political and social backgrounds of certain immigrant working-class groups, and the legacy of activism left behind by the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). These elements, they conclude, then intersected in the formation of the IWA in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and gave rise to "personal and ideological differences between union leaders and factions." But while lumber workers in the region were politically divided, Lembcke and Tattam also believe that "the Communist composition of the IWA's leadership at that time accurately reflected the balance of social forces within the union." 

Election results show quite clearly that lumber workers did indeed support the communist leadership of the IWA. However, the authors' boldly-stated claim that this can best be understood through a "structural interpretation" of the union's history is overdrawn. Support for communists by lumber workers was not just the logical outcome of historically structured determinants, such as the timing of investments by capitalists or the creation of regional labour markets in the forest industry. The popularity of the communist leaders can be better explained as a result of the numerous years the communists spent organizing in the lumber industry. In the process they established close personal ties
with key groups of lumber workers, proved their worth as "honest" leaders, and, most important, were finally able to provide visible evidence by the start of the Second World War that they could also "deliver the goods" in negotiations with employers.\textsuperscript{27} Lembcke and Tattam admit as much in their conclusion when they write: "one can explain [in sociological terms] the persistence of rank-and-file support of the communist leaders through reference to the primary group relationship between those leaders and the union's members."\textsuperscript{28}

A combination of such forces operated on the history of IBEW Local 213. On the one hand, structural determinants played an evident part in fostering the economic and social conditions affecting electrical workers. These, in turn, led to militancy, industrial unionism, and respect for the opinions of an ever-present radical element. On the other hand, the political nature of the local's leadership was more often than not determined by hard work, individual talent, the development of effective electoral machines, and proof of ability to win substantial concessions from employers. It was no more inevitable that the "left" would gain a foothold among the electrical workers in 1939, for example, or that it would lose it in 1960. Yet the effects of the Great Depression on the electrical workers, as with the massive red scare that followed World War II, were important underlying factors in deciding the outcome of these events. As with society at large, it was the intricate interaction of structure with human agency that produced the broad outlines of Local 213's political history.
The central issue that remains is how the communists' "primary group relationship" with the rank and file was effectively destroyed. As an adjunct to their main thesis, Lembcke and Tattam revise Vernon Jensen's well-known claim that "native rank-and-file anti-communism crystalized in 1941 to oust, by democratic means, the [IWA's] Communist leadership." They also revise Irving Abella's additional contention that the poor tactical preparation of the Communist Party was largely to blame for communist defeats. In *A Hard Man to Beat* (1983), Bill White, former president of the Marine Workers and Boilermakers Union, lent credence to Abella's critique, blaming the IWA's Harold Pritchett for "one hell of a blunder" in miscounting delegate support for the Party's leadership slate at the 1948 BC Federation of Labour convention.

Lembcke and Tattam reject these ideas out of hand. They point, instead, to the successful employment of undemocratic and repressive techniques by the anti-communist forces of the state, the IWA's right-wing, several national labour organizations, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), as being primarily responsible for the double defeat of the Communist Party in 1948. The rank and file in the IWA did not abandon its communist leaders, they insist, because "in spite of vigorous and resourceful opposition, referendum elections had returned communist leadership to District offices." They conclude that "what is notable about the period, therefore, is less the failure of the [Communist Party] than the power and resourcefulness of
the State and the refusal of the non-Communist labor groups to accede to the leaders elected by the rank and file.\textsuperscript{33}

The case of the electrical workers supports the findings of Lembcke and Tattam concerning the separation of communist leaders from rank and file union members. In the events leading up to 1955, as in the aftermath of 1919, Local 213's left-wing leadership was subject to massive attacks by groups whose actions were definitely not representative of rank and file sentiments. The imperatives of capital during the red scares that followed the two world wars—"to smash labour militancy and solidarity"\textsuperscript{34}—caught up to Local 213, though the fact that the local's left-wing leadership hung on for so long after the second scare represents a curious disjuncture from the mainstream of events affecting trade union life in the province. This was probably related to the decision by the left-wing leadership to disassociate itself as much as possible from the Communist Party, though this tactic proved unsuccessful in the end. Local 213 is also an anomaly in the sense that the subterfuge and back-handed maneuvering in 1955 provides a vivid contrast with the open, well-publicized fight, that had earlier taken place between the red and white blocks, both in the IWA and the BC Federation of Labour. By choosing examples such as the electrical workers, historians thus can begin a probing study of specific unions at the local level in order to gain a further understanding of labour and labour radicalism in British Columbia.

Aside from the main tension between structural determinants and human agency, this thesis will demonstrate how three broad
themes, already touched upon in the literature, have characterized the history of Local 213 from 1901 to 1961. The first theme revolves around the local's on-going conflicts with employers, the struggle for better wages and better working conditions being a pre-condition for the very existence of trade unions. The second theme relates to the tension within the local over the interpretation and implementation of socialist tactics and ideas. While the electrical workers in Local 213 have more often than not tended towards support of cautious social democratic practices, as exemplified by William F. Dunne, this has not always been the case. The third theme points to the intervention of forces outside the local whenever the rank and file of Local 213 appeared willing to accept either radical leadership or radical proposals as solutions to their industrial problems. The lack of local autonomy, both on those occasions and at other, less crucial times, has long been an important bone of contention within Local 213. While this thesis looks only at electrical workers, these three themes are undoubtedly characteristic of much of local trade union history in British Columbia.

Seven chapters follow: Chapter one looks at the economic background of some of the major electrical employers in the province, in particular that of the BC Electric Company. Chapter two studies the early years of Local 213, and the gravitation of the electrical workers from craft towards industrial unionism as a more effective means with which to deal with powerful employers. Chapter three is an account of the intervention into Local 213's internal affairs by the international office of the
IBEW as a result of the local's adherence to the One Big Union (OBU) in 1919. Chapter four, entitled "The Morrison Years," looks at the persistent influence of socialism, industrial unionism, and the demands for local autonomy under business agent E. H. "Teddy" Morrison from 1922 to 1939. Chapter five describes the growth in influence of the Communist Party among the electrical workers between 1939 and 1953. Chapter six provides a detailed description of the intricate maneuverings that were undertaken to rid Local 213 of its communist leadership in the two years leading up to 1955. Chapter seven concludes by giving a brief account of the continuing militancy and political factionalism of the electrical workers up to 1961 and beyond.
NOTES


2 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213, Minute Books, May 19, 1913, p. 1; British Columbia Federationist, Dec. 5, 1913, p. 4; and Oct. 23, 1914, p. 4.


7 For instance, a set of rules drawn up in 1864 required employees "both in the land and marine service to wear a 'uniform' without cost to the Company. Our system of accounts is similar to the Quartermaster's Department of the Army. Camp guards will be posted." Ibid., p. 36.


11 Ibid., p. xiii.
12 Ibid., p. 176, "End Notes, p. 52."
14 William Bennett, Builders of British Columbia (Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1937).
16 Ibid., p. 163.
18 The reference here, of course, is to the title of McCormack's book.
20 Ibid., p. 7.
22 Ibid., p. ix.
23 Ibid., p. 16.
24 Ibid., p. viii.
26 Ibid., p. 181.
27 The authors use almost the same words. Ibid., p. 176.
28 Ibid.
29 This is Lembcke and Tattam's description of Jensen's main argument. Ibid., p. vii.


CHAPTER I--THE STRUCTURE OF THE ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY

IN BRITISH COLUMBIA TO 1961

Electrical workers in British Columbia had been subject to the policies of several large employers since before the inception of Local 213. These employers have included the BC Telephone Company, the BC Electric Company, and some major construction contractors, such as the Hume and Rumble Construction Company, Peterson Electric, BC Bridge and Dredging, and the CHE Williams Construction Company. Smaller utilities and construction contracting firms were also a part of the electrical workers' experience, but these have had a less important impact due both to the limited number of workers they employed, and to their often short existence. Large or small, however, the employers played a vital role in the evolution of Local 213, and were directly responsible for some of the attitudes and economic problems electrical workers would be forced to deal with throughout their history.¹

Workers on the Collins Overland Telegraph project were the first to undergo the disappointing experience of being "laid off;" the completion of a cheaper trans-Atlantic cable in 1867 by a competing firm forced this early electrical employer to abandon its grandiose plans for a northern communication link with Europe.² However, other electrical ventures soon followed in British Columbia. In 1878, Robert McMicking, a private entrepreneur who had spent several years working as a telegrapher for the Western Union Telegraph Company (the successor to the Collins firm) in the Cariboo gold fields, successfully built the
first telephone line in Victoria. In 1880, with the financial help of Victoria MP Edgar Crow Baker, his Victoria and Esquimalt Telephone Company was incorporated. McMicking helped set up several smaller telephone operations on the British Columbia mainland, but lost control of the Victoria company to Baker who, by 1883, held twenty-six out of a total of fifty-five shares.3

In 1884 two real estate promoters from Port Moody established the New Westminster and Port Moody Telephone Company. But the company collapsed when the Canadian Pacific Railway decided to move its terminus to Vancouver. Taken over by the Bank of British Columbia, the firm re-emerged as the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company. Establishing a new capital base of $100,000, it also acquired the investments of Dr. James M. Lefevre, one of the leading figures on a new board of directors. In order to finance an attempt to win control of a number of competing firms, majority interests were then sold in 1898 to the Yorkshire Guarantee and Securities Company of Huddersfield, England. Changing its name once more, this time to British Columbia Telephones Limited, it became the leading telephone company in the province. In expanding the scope of its operations, including the Victoria company McMicking had originally pioneered with Edgar Crow Baker, the telephone company also obtained the services of Yorkshire's resident manager in British Columbia, William Farrell.4

Control of the new company returned to Vancouver in 1902, and by 1906 Dr. Lefevre and William Farrell had combined their holdings to become the firm's principal shareholders. By then
the company had also changed its name for the last time, to become the British Columbia Telephone Company Limited (or "BC Tel" as it is known today). BC Tel would help set the pattern for collective bargaining in the electrical industry, its paternalism proving a constant source of irritation to the local union. Elaine Bernard has shown how the firm, beginning in 1911, attempted to cultivate the loyalty of the workers by setting up company-oriented clubs, organizing social events, initiating a benefit fund, and even going so far as to purchase a holiday camp in 1917 for the use of its female telephone operators at Buccaneer Bay. When these efforts did not succeed in weaning employees away from competing trade union loyalties, management could also resort to more coercive methods. In 1919, striking BC Telephone operators were replaced by strikebreakers, leading, in turn, to the complete eradication of the IBEW presence a few years later.

Antagonism to trade unionism was typical of employers across the country at the time. Feeling that unions could jeopardize "the company's right" to make independent business decisions, employers resisted what they perceived as "yielding the management of my business to your trade union." In British Columbia, former premier James Dunsmuir, whom the Vancouver World felt was "not an extremist in his views," told a 1903 Royal Commission that if he recognized the right of a union to represent the workers employed in his coal mines, "then we are dictated to by a committee of the union as to what should be done and what should not be done . . ." Business historian Michael Bliss has claimed
the closest to a balanced judgement that most businessmen would have agreed with was the conclusion of a 1909 *Industrial Canada* article: "Unionism undoubtedly is a good thing, in some ways, but like strychnine, it must be taken in small doses." ⁹

During the 1880s and 1890s, other electrical employers had also emerged in British Columbia, particularly in the construction of electric railways, street lighting, and hydro-electric power. Here, too, Robert McMicking was a pioneering entrepreneur. In 1883 he won a contract from the municipality in Victoria to build three 150-foot masts, topped with carbon arc lamps totalling 50,000 candle power. When placed at strategic points they provided illumination for several of Victoria's main thoroughfares. The new street lighting system was successful at the outset and was expanded in 1886 to include an additional twenty-six masts. But McMicking ruined his growing reputation with questionable penny-pinching schemes. On moonlit nights, for instance, he would order his lamps turned off because he felt they were no longer absolutely necessary for the visual safety of the Victoria community. Such miserly management understandably provoked the ire of the city's residents. In addition, McMicking's erstwhile partner, Edgar Crow Baker, had over-extended himself financially in the company's promotion, and was privately lobbying Victoria's municipal council to take over the firm. For these reasons, the city of Victoria exercised its contractual option and took control of the entire street lighting system in 1886. ¹⁰
Undeterred from fulfilling his corporate ambitions, McMicking gathered together a few well-to-do "friends," excluding the unreliable Baker, and incorporated the Victoria Electric Illuminating Company Limited on May 19, 1886. This company was the first to build an incandescent lighting system in Canada. Relying on the incandescent light bulb invented by Thomas Edison in 1881, the new lighting system quickly replaced gas lamps, the traditional home lighting technology of the nineteenth century. The practical advantages of electricity over gas were explained at length by the newspapers of the day. As the Victoria *Colonist* pointed out: "In bedrooms touch buttons are placed at the bedside so that a person is not under the necessity of getting out of bed to blow out the light." In October, 1889, McMicking re-entered the arc-lighting field. Further technological advances now made it possible for arc lamps to be used indoors "for the illumination of large offices, stores, and public buildings." His first twenty-five lamps were powered by Edison and Ball dynamos, driven, in turn, by a fifty horsepower steam engine. In 1890 Nanaimo became the second Vancouver Island community to have electric lights illuminating its streets at night. Light in this instance was also produced from electric arc lamps. These were owned by a small, independent firm, the Nanaimo Electric Light, Power and Heating Company. Four years later, in 1894, a steam-driven plant opened with two 25 kilowatt (kw) generators supplying power for use in the local coal mines.

The use of electric power soon became widespread in the mining industry of British Columbia. During the mining boom of
the 1890s large numbers of workers were employed by electrical companies in the West Kootenay mountain region. Smelters, such as F. Augustus Heinze's at Trail Creek Landing (forerunner to the giant Consolidated Mining & Smelting operation at Trail), required abundant supplies of cheap, reliable energy. The presence of local water resources, combined with recent technological advances in turbines, transformers, and transmission lines in the United States and eastern Canada, meant that that source of energy would be hydro-electricity. The hydro-electric plant owned by the Nelson Electric Light Company on Cottonwood Creek was the first in British Columbia to go into operation in January, 1896. It was quickly followed by a similar operation on Sandon Creek, owned and operated by the Sandon Waterworks and Light Company, which opened in 1897. But the largest of these plants belonged to the West Kootenay Power and Light Company (WKPL). Built in 1897 at Lower Bonnington Falls on the Kootenay River, it provided much needed power for the smelter at Trail and the mines at Rossland. By 1898 WKPL's plant was generating an impressive 1800 kw and easily outstripped its predecessors and competitors at Nelson and Sandon. The new power proved successful because it was efficient: when the operators made the switch from coal-fired generators to hydro-electricity, the cost of running air compressors in the Centre Star gold mine dropped from $5.15 per horsepower per month to $3.87 per horsepower per month. Other mines purchased heavier electrically-driven equipment, with the War Eagle mine installing the largest electric hoist manufactured to that date in the
It was not long before the new mining centres of Phoenix, Grand Forks, and Greenwood were also being serviced by power lines owned and operated by West Kootenay Power and Light. 22

Another center of growing importance in the field of electricity was south-western British Columbia, centering on the cities of Victoria and Vancouver. Small competitive firms in the 1880s and the first years of the 1890s provided the impetus for the initial development of their electric street lights and electric railway lines. But as was the case in the telephone industry, this first generation of companies did not have sufficient financial strength to survive the vicissitudes of the business cycle. Bankrupted by the depression of 1893-1896, the previously independent Victoria Electric Railway and Lighting Company, the Westminster and Vancouver Tramway Company, and the North Vancouver Electric Company Limited were swallowed up in 1896 by the Consolidated Railway and Light Company. Restructured in the following year, the firm re-emerged on April 3, 1897, as the British Columbia Electric Railway Company (or simply "BC Electric"). 23

The merging of these coastal utility firms was engineered by Robert Horne-Payne, an important British financier, and by Frank (later Sir Frank) S. Barnard, future lieutenant-governor of British Columbia. Horne-Payne was chairman of British Empire Trust, which also raised capital for the Canadian Northern Railway, owned by Canadian entrepreneurs Sir William Mackenzie and Sir Donald Mann. 24 Mackenzie and Mann were extraordinarily
influential in shaping Premier Richard McBride's railway policies between 1907 and 1915. The result, as G. W. Taylor points out, is that "through the good offices of Mackenzie and Mann . . . Horne-Payne had direct access to the Premier's office in Victoria." With the help of such high-level contacts, Horne-Payne is credited with directing as much as $500 million worth of British capital into Canadian industry and investment portfolios.

By contrast to the aristocratic Horne-Payne, the rough-hewn Barnard was the son of F. J. Barnard, founder of the famed Barnard Express that plied the Cariboo highway in the 1860s. Born and bred in British Columbia, Frank S. was as astute as his father and had risen to become a director of the Columbia and Kootenay Steam Navigation Company. Horne-Payne and Barnard first met at Nelson in 1894 as guests of Sir William Van Horne, the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Following this initial meeting, Barnard invited Horne-Payne to tour Kootenay Lake with him and inspect mining developments in progress in the region. Already immensely impressed by the natural wealth of the province, Horne-Payne's imagination was further fired when Barnard unfolded to him the possibilities of developing light, power, and street railway resources on the Pacific coast. A deal was struck, with Frank S. becoming Horne-Payne's right-hand man in Vancouver. Corporate histories credit Barnard for doing much of the leg-work in organizing the business deals that resulted in the emergence of the BC Electric Company.
The BC Electric Company—like BC Tel—was initially underwritten by the Yorkshire Guarantee and Securities Company. G. P. Norton, head of the British financial firm, helped select with Horne-Payne some of the founding managers and directors for the BC Electric Company. They sent out from London such notable figures as William Farrell, who, as mentioned earlier, went on to found BC Tel. Other figures included Johannes Buntzen, R. Henry Sperling, and George Kidd. Horne-Payne became chairman of the new utilities giant and Barnard managing director. By the start of the First World War, BC Electric could boast of having created one of the largest electrical enterprises in the British Empire. The company had a network of hydro-electric power facilities capable of generating more than 113,000 kw and had built a massive array of power lines distributing this electricity throughout southwestern British Columbia. Future acquisitions, such as those of the Western Canada Power Company in 1921 and the Bridge River Power Company in 1925, were to enlarge the scope of BC Electric's hydro-electric network even more. In addition, BC Electric also held all of the street railway lines in the Lower Mainland's cities and their suburbs, six electric interurban lines, as well as a variety of gas companies. By March of 1926 the company employed 3,240 people, covered a territory of 1,500 square miles, and served a population of over 375,000 people.

The BC Electric Company learned quickly the techniques of what its historian, Patricia Roy, has cited as "lobbying and wirepulling," which the first general manager, Johannes Buntzen, complained were "necessary in order to get a favorable hearing
from the ruling bodies" in British Columbia and Canada. A combination of "delicate" and "discreet expenditures" on various legislators and government officials, together with the bankrolling of carefully chosen political campaigns, meant that the company was usually able to obtain the right-of-ways, water rights, and regulatory authority necessary to expand the scope of its operations or increase its rates.

Roy has described BC Electric's industrial relations policy as one of "paternalism . . . [in which] the company's directors and managers believed in treating their employees fairly but firmly." Though Roy's survey ends in 1928, it appears that the basic outlines of this policy remained unaltered in the following decades. As with BC Tel, however, paternalism did not preclude attempts to weaken, destroy, or intervene in the internal affairs of the unions with which BC Electric had to deal, if management felt they were acting "irresponsibly," or were unrepresentative of the employees' "true feelings." Though the company proved amenable in 1907 to signing an open shop agreement with Local 213 of the IBEW, longtime BC Electric president, George Kidd, would later describe the electrical workers' organization as "one of the most costly and offensive unions any company ever had to deal with." Kidd believed the union was led by "aggressive labour agitators with extreme socialistic and syndicalist views."

During the British phase of its ownership (1897-1928), the BC Electric Company began a long and fruitful relationship with two of Vancouver's leading electrical contracting firms: Hume and Rumble, and Peterson Electric. The former won contracts on both
dams and substations (inside work), and transmission line jobs (outside work), stringing high-tension electrical lines from far-away dams to major urban and suburban substations. The latter, in contrast, was almost exclusively a line company, specializing in stringing local electrical lines from Lower Mainland substations to wherever they needed to be connected. All three companies would be significant actors in collective bargaining in the electrical trades. BC Electric worked out its agreements in head-to-head negotiations; electrical contracting firms, on the other hand, negotiated theirs in conjunction with the General Contractors' Bureau prior to 1928, and with the Building and Construction Industries Exchange of British Columbia in the 1930s and 1940s. Nevertheless, the companies were always careful not to provide the unions with the ability to "whipsaw" or "leap-frog" any one of them, terms used to designate the effect of maverick corporations in collective bargaining.

The "British" nature of the most important player in collective bargaining with the electrical workers changed abruptly at the end of the 1920s. In April, 1928, the preferred and deferred ordinary shares of BC Electric were purchased by some of the most important financial concerns in eastern Canada, including Nesbitt, Thompson and Company; the Royal Bank; and Wood, Gundy and Company. Of the fourteen members of the new board of directors formed later that year, seven were from Montreal and Toronto, placing effective control of the company in eastern capitalist hands. The British Columbia Power Corporation (BCPC), the name of the new holding company controlling BC
Electric and its subsidiaries, precipitated the resignation of Robert Horne-Payne. Having been in poor physical health for quite some time, Horne-Payne then died in October of the same year.

Four months after they had established the new holding company, the directors of the BCPC issued 1,000,000 new shares of Class A stock and 1,000,000 new shares of Class B stock of the BCPC. Class A stock was to sell for sixty dollars a share, receive 3-1/3 percent interest per annum, but would carry no voting privileges. The directors of the BCPC also sold 250,000 Class B shares to the public for the same price, the shares that had voting rights, and retained 750,000 for themselves. While a new power plant with four turbines of 35,000 kw each was announced for Ruskin in 1928, its eventual cost proved much lower than the amount to be raised by the issue of the new stock. The new plant appears to have been a sop for public interest. The real intent in issuing the new shares was to create an artificially high value for the existing capital goods of the company, thereby allowing the directors to become instant multimillionaires. As The Vancouver Sun pointed out in several hard-hitting editorials, the "watered" stock would be detrimental, in their opinion, to the people and economy of British Columbia. The Sun's worst fears appeared to be confirmed when increases in tram rates were sought by the newly-owned BC Electric Company in Vancouver ten months later. The company maintained that an annual return of 2.31 percent was too low for the investments they had made in the electric transportation
Increases in tram rates were soon followed by increases in the rates charged for light and power. These progressive hikes, according to the Sun, "go to pay interest on this $50,000,000 watered stock." The newspaper's wrath was further increased when BC Electric's annual report was issued for the twelve months ending June 30, 1929. Net earnings were reported as $4,600,171, and on an actual capitalization of $25,000,000, represented a profit of 18.4 percent. As Vancouver alderman Warner Loat charged at the time, "on such a basis, if the railway was really earning only 2.31 percent, the other services of the company are making exorbitant profits." He then claimed that Vancouver citizens were paying more for their light and power than the people of other Canadian cities, which was generally true, and suggested that rates should be lower here than elsewhere because costs of production were lower.

The company expanded when it bought the Kamloops municipal system and acquired control of the National Utilities Corporation in June, 1929. While quieting the accusations of watered stock, BC Electric's purchases now raised the spectre of monopoly control in the industry. The only towns that remained outside the company's grasp on Vancouver Island, for instance, were Duncan and Nanaimo, the first served by Canadian Utilities Limited, the second by the Courtenay municipal service. Calls for a public inquiry into the BC Electric Company's finances were made at the time by a variety of groups, but it seemed that Horne-Payne's alleged influence with the premier's office had passed on to the new owners of the company.
The long depression of the 1930s severely affected British Columbia's electrical industry. While those projects announced prior to 1930 were slowly completed in later years, the number of jobs available shrank considerably. Countless workers were laid off throughout the province, with the membership of Local 213 declining to around 400 members between 1930 and 1934 (see Appendix A: Table 6 and Graph 5). In addition, for those fortunate enough to remain working, hours of work were reduced and wages were cut.

This dismal picture ended with the start of the Second World War. Jobs then began to outstrip the number of skilled workers available, particularly in the burgeoning shipyards of the province. Wage increases soon followed as the country climbed out of the Depression. Donne Nicholle, a foreman for Hume and Rumble in charge of wiring aircraft carriers at the time, remembers the problems the sudden turn-around in the economy created:

Our jobs started anywhere around eight o'clock in the morning and went to anywhere up to one or two o'clock the next morning—awful hours. . . . I had men like policemen on their days off and firemen on their days off. They even used to go down through Cordova Street and pick up all the drunks and anything they could get a hold of. For helpers I had about twenty-five girls, of which, I would say, twenty were prostitutes. You were gonna wire a ship with that kind of crew? I had maybe a few good guys. Oh, it was terrible . . . we did it all with part-time labour.

The improvement in the amount of work available continued after the war. In fact, the years from 1945 to 1961 witnessed one of the most important expansions in the history of British Columbia's economy. Population in the province rose from an
estimated 949,000 in 1945 to 1,629,000 by 1961, an increase of 71.6 percent over the sixteen-year period.\textsuperscript{54} The net value of production soared from close to 615 million dollars in 1946 to 1.9 billion dollars by 1961. This included an increase in value in excess of 200 percent in the manufacturing sector, and also an increase in construction expenditures from ninety-three million dollars in 1946 to almost 580 million dollars by 1957.\textsuperscript{55}

British Columbia's economic boom resulted in an important impact on the electrical industry. BC Electric's system serviced 150,000 customers with nine hydro-electric stations generating a total capacity of 235,000 kw in 1946. It grew phenomenally in the next fifteen years, to a system which had 346,000 customers with sixteen hydro-electric stations generating a combined capacity of 1.1 million kw by 1961.\textsuperscript{56} Under the direction of President A. E. "Dal" Grauer, a native British Columbian who believed that "socialism was the major threat" to the province's prosperity,\textsuperscript{57} the firm spent $650 million during those years, an investment that helped the company consolidate its position to the point that it provided almost ninety percent of the electrical energy serviced to British Columbians by 1961.\textsuperscript{58} West Kootenay Power and Light increased its capacity in the same fifteen-year period by 171,000 kw to a total of 606,000 kw, most of it going to feed the massive electrical requirements of the Cominco operations at Trail and Kimberley.\textsuperscript{59} In addition, between 1934 and 1960, the total number of union tradespeople in the British Columbia electrical industry increased almost tenfold (see Appendix A: Table 2).\textsuperscript{60}
Much was to change in August, 1961. Premier W.A.C. Bennett announced, to everyone's surprise, that the BC Power Commission—a small government-owned body created in 1945 and servicing a number of communities not on the BC Electric or WKPL power grids—was taking over the BC Electric Company. In the premier's words: "It is government policy now that basically all electric power and energy that supplies the public should be under public auspices." The announcement heralded the end of one era and the beginning of another in British Columbia's multi-million dollar electrical industry.

As mentioned earlier, a second area of employment for the members of Local 213 was electrical contracting. From five or six unionized firms in business during the 1930s, the number increased to over thirty firms in the Vancouver area alone in the 1950s. Small firms employed one or two electrical workers, while the giants in the industry could hire upwards of 300. With the construction of post-war megaprojects like the Alcan-Kemano complex, "inside wiring" was transformed from a craft into an industry in British Columbia. While on the largest jobs consortia were necessary, individual contracting companies continued to compete with each other to install the wiring needed in office buildings, hospitals, dams, bridges, mines, or factories. Several firms had long and extensive histories in British Columbia, and at least two could date their origins prior to 1920. The Hume and Rumble Construction Company had been founded in 1918. As its name indicated, the firm consisted of a partnership between two individuals: Fred Hume and Percy Rumble.
However, the first-named easily became the leading personality in the venture, and later assumed complete control when Rumble sold him his shares in 1945.63

Fred Hume, co-founder of radio station CFXC (now CJOR), was born in New Westminster in 1892, and started out as a lineman and testboard operator for BC Tel. When told he was being transferred to Victoria in 1918, he quit his job and went to work in Rumble's electrical appliance store in the Royal City. The partners' breakthrough into the construction trades came in 1922 when BC Electric decided to contract out its local line work in an attempt to circumvent the militant linemen on its own payroll. The New Westminster firm's successful completion of their contract to erect poles and power lines marked the beginning of BC Electric's long relationship with what was known as Hume and Rumble by 1926. Thereafter, the company regularly received between forty and fifty percent of the number of contracts let by BC Electric.64 Hume and Rumble were equally well connected in the public sector and received the contract to wire the new campus of the University of British Columbia in the 1920s. Both in transmission line work and inside wiring, Hume and Rumble soon clearly outdistanced its nearest competitors, and by 1940 was easily the largest electrical contracting firm in western Canada. The firm could then boast of having electrified such well-known landmarks as the "new" Vancouver Post Office, the "new" City Hall, the "old" Second Narrows Bridge, Templeton High School, Vancouver Technical School, the Vancouver Hotel, Grace Hospital, the Shell Oil Refinery in Burnaby, and the Vancouver City
The well-liked and civic-minded Fred Hume served as mayor of New Westminster during the 1930s and was elected to the same position in Vancouver from 1950 to 1958. His passions for lacrosse and hockey served to cement the friendly relations he maintained with his employees, including their socialist and communist trade union representatives. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, he established a particularly close relationship with his company's leading shop steward, Ed Simpson, a member of the Communist Party of Canada, but more importantly, manager of Hume and Rumble's industrial hockey team.

The CHE Williams Company, on the other hand, was founded in 1911 by "Chuck" Williams, originally an American lineman and even at one time business agent for Local 77 of the IBEW in Seattle, Washington. Not much else is known of Mr. Williams except that he was quietly successful in Vancouver. By the start of the Second World War his company had electrified such projects as the two Ballantyne piers, the first Georgia Street Viaduct, the Devonshire Hotel, the Birks Building, the Orpheum Theatre, and the Lions Gate Bridge.

Little else is known of the history of electrical contractors in British Columbia prior to the 1930s. The Great Depression had, of course, put a damper on the industry and few large projects had been undertaken. Even such giants as Hume and Rumble had been forced to slacken operations, with the Vancouver Hotel sitting unfinished for several years until enough funds could be found to complete the building. The economic boom that began with the Second World War, however, contrasted dramatically
with the 1930s. Hume and Rumble first won contracts to electrify aircraft carriers in 1940, and there soon developed a myriad of other electrical projects throughout the province. There were so many jobs available, in fact, that the "big five" in Vancouver could not do all the work themselves. Once Hume and Rumble, CHE Williams, Peterson Electric, Mott Electric and the JH Macrae Company Limited had taken in all the work they could, new contracting firms came into existence to fill the vacuum. Bill Waddell, current president of CHE Williams, remembers those years well: "Most of the people couldn't handle the work. We couldn't handle it, Hume and Rumble couldn't handle it; there was just too much work. So naturally we went after the larger, what we might call the more lucrative jobs, and that created the room for other contractors."

An important result of this vacuum was that BC Bridge and Dredging Company Limited, a general contractor up to the end of the Second World War, decided to get involved in the total process of construction—including all the piping, mechanical and electrical work. They bid for, and won major industrial contracts in British Columbia. As the only "industrial

* BC Electric announced a fifty million dollar post-war expansion in 1944. This was followed a year later by the company's public tender for bids on the massive Bridge River hydro-electric development; for bids on the interconnection of its own and several American power grids in 1946; the construction of the Kidd substation and reconstruction of the Horne-Payne substation in 1947; the construction of the Chilliwack, Scotia, and Balfour Substations in 1948; the double-circuit transmission line from Victoria to Nanaimo in 1949; upgrading of the La Joie hydro-electric dam and the Buntzen Lake Plant No. 1 in 1950; the construction of the Jones Lake power plant and the new Sperling substation in 1951.
contractor" in the field until the early 1960s, they were responsible for the construction of such important projects as the Bloedel pulp mill in Port Alberni in 1946; the Harmac pulp mill near Nanaimo in 1948; the rebuilding of the Powell River Company's mill in 1952; and two more large pulp and paper mills in Prince George in 1956-57. 71

The effect of the boom on labour relations between Local 213 and the established electrical contracting companies was generally positive. Wages rose significantly faster than they had in the past, and the contractors were officially "strike-free" until the late 1950s. What few problems did exist for the industry were outlined by Howard Hume, Fred Hume's son and president of Hume and Rumble during the 1950s and 1960s. He complained, in particular, that the long layoffs between jobs meant that his company's roster had sometimes fluctuated in the 1950s from a peak of 1,000 persons to a low of 500. In the process he lost skilled linemen to other firms. Such lack of continuity in employment, he added, had also

. . . forced wages up in the construction industries. . . . a lineman's earnings of $5,000 annually only puts him in the same income category as a comparatively low-paid worker in manufacturing who only earns $2.25 per hour but enjoys year-round employment. . . . Much of the steam would eventually come out of construction union wage demands if employers were able to offer a greater stability of employment. 72

Furthermore, while several leading contractors had been former electrical workers and union members themselves, and could therefore work out collective agreements with Local 213 fairly successfully, the same could not be said of other firms. New companies both in contracting and closely-related fields of
electrical work (the neon light industry, for example), sometimes tried to ignore certain stipulations in the collective agreement, and this often produced confrontations at places of work where Local 213 had been successful in organizing the workers. 

Another problem facing the industry after the Second World War was BC Bridge and Dredging's refusal to participate in the joint bargaining council of electrical contractors, and also going over the heads of local trade union representatives. The company signed instead what were known as "international agreements." International agreements were contracts between industrial contractors and the international officers of building trades unions such as the IBEW; these agreements were highly controversial as they allowed the industrial contractors to operate around the province without having to involve themselves in the troublesome process of collective bargaining at the local level. BC Bridge was the most important but not the only significant firm with this type of contract with the IBEW. The Stone and Webster Construction Company, as well as the firm of Brown and Root, both large American dam construction specialists, also held international agreements with the IBEW in British Columbia. Henry Ayling, former head of personnel and labour relations for BC Bridge, recalls the hard feelings that were engendered by his company's special status: "Now a local union could strike a local contractor, but they couldn't strike us because we were under an agreement with the international. We were very unpopular among certain members of the electrical contractors because they couldn't get the same conditions."
Electrical workers in Local 213 earned a living from an industry in which both the conditions and nature of work could vary according to the job procured. For a lineman, erecting street lights, telephone and telegraph systems, or stringing high-voltage power lines was the usual experience. For an inside wireman, electrifying buildings, dams, ships, smelters, or pulp and paper mills was a more likely job. As the major electric utilities were long dominated by the BC Electric Company on the one hand, and the British Columbia Telephone Company on the other, a large percentage of electrical workers would have practised their trade while directly or indirectly influenced by the policies of these particular firms. Almost as important in nurturing the interaction between employers and employees were the electrical contractors. Dominated by Hume and Rumble after the mid-1920s, they often acted in close cooperation with the utilities. The result was a complex bargaining structure. Local 213 negotiated with both large- and small-scale capitalist enterprises, and, after the creation of the BC Power Commission in 1945, with the state itself.

The historical impact of the electrical industry on British Columbia was enormous. In addition to fuelling the industrial take-off of the economy at different stages in its development, leading "captains of industry" also left their names on several geographic landmarks. Buntzen Lake in Port Moody, Sperling Avenue in Burnaby, Murrin Park outside Britannia Beach, Grauer's "Power Tower" on Burrard Street in Vancouver, as well as a multitude of substations named after directors and managers were
left to posterity by the BC Electric Company. Hume Park in New Westminster and Rumble Street connecting Burnaby to the Royal City are constant reminders of the two electrical contracting partners, while the Farrell Building, on Vancouver's Seymour Street, lends an imposing physical presence to the continuing monopoly enjoyed by the BC Telephone Company.

No buildings, monuments, or geographic place-names were ever named after electrical workers employed by these firms. Yet individual electrical workers were graced with personalities as colourful as some of their employers, and through their local union--Local 213 of the IBEW--they were able collectively to exert an influence on the history of the province that should not go unexamined.

1 Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 63.
3 Ibid., pp. 9-11.
4 Ibid., p. 11.
5 Ibid., pp. 43-47.
6 Ibid., pp. 87-88.

3 Bernard, op. cit., p. 9-11.
5 Ibid., pp. 9-11.
6 Ibid., pp. 43-47.
For more extensive accounts of this period of electrical development, see Green, op. cit., pp. 145-147; "Centennial Issue--1971," Progress (BC Hydro publication, 1971) p. 6; and Roy, "The Illumination of Victoria," op. cit., pp. 82-88.

For a list of the board of directors of this company, see Green, op. cit., p. 147.

The differences between incandescent and arc lighting are as follows: the first relies on a low voltage-high amperage system, and lights up two filaments (today made of tungsten) that glow when power is passed through it. Incandescent lights are generally used for residential purposes. Arc lamps, on the other hand, rely on a high voltage-low amperage system. It also has two filaments instead of one, but these are placed at a distance from one another. Placed in a vacuum and surrounded by either mercury or sodium gas, electric power is forced to jump from filament to filament, thereby lighting up the gas within the enclosed chamber. Arc lamps are the forerunners of fluorescent lights and are used predominantly in industrial areas because of their greater luminosity.

Cited in Green, op. cit.

Ibid.


Ibid., pp. 12-15. See also Mary D. Taylor, op. cit., p. 15.


Ibid.

G. W. Taylor, op. cit., p. 175.

Ibid.

Mary D. Taylor, op. cit., p. 27.


G. W. Taylor, op. cit., p. 74.

26 G. W. Taylor, op. cit.

27 The Vancouver Daily Province, Oct. 7, 1928 (Third Section), p. 5.


32 The takeover of the Western Canada Power Company, for example, eventually allowed BC Electric to add 116,000 kw to its capacity. "Chronology of the BC Electric," BC Electric Employees Magazine, Jubilee Issue, (May, 1947) no page number.

33 "Impressive Facts About the BC Electric Railway," The BC Electric Employees Magazine (March, 1926) p. 50.


35 Ibid., especially p. 244 and p. 251.


37 This first agreement between individual members of Local 213 and the BC Electric Company included the following rates of pay: first class linemen were to receive forty-three cents per hour, second class linemen twenty-five cents per hour, and the city foreman, George Beach, forty-four cents per hour. Personal files of Percy Hambly.


Details of the stock issue were described in a letter to the editor in *The Vancouver Sun*, May 22, 1928, p. 6. See also *ibid.*, p. 6.

The estimated cost of the first stage was $7,250,000. The second stage would probably have cost a similar price. Cited in *Ruskin Power Development* (Vancouver: BC Power Corporation, 1930) p. 22. For more on the Ruskin project, see E. E. Carpenter, "The Power System of the British Columbia Power Corporation, Limited," prepared for presentation at the Pacific Coast Convention of the Association of Industrial and Electrical Engineers, Vancouver, B.C., Aug. 30 to Sept. 2, 1932, pp. 9-11.

One editorial in the *Sun* claimed that:

Through market manipulation and "re-financing," the capital stock of the BC Electric has been raised from twenty-five to eighty millions, and not one cent of that money goes into the assets of the company.

Nobody with a respect for common intelligence would attempt to explain how dividends could be paid upon that increased capital of fifty-five millions of inflation except at the expense of the householders of Vancouver.

Vancouver people have not the slightest inclination to pay nor the slightest intention of paying dividends on that fifty-five millions; it would be unreasonable to ask them.

Our civic authorities, right here and now, must make Vancouver's position definite and plain.

*(The Vancouver Sun* (editorial) May 22, 1928, p. 1. On the other hand, the *Province* responded some time later by stating that:

There is neither sense nor honesty in this persistent attempt to make it appear that B.C. is exploited for the selfish interests of eastern capitalists. If there were capital enough available in B.C. for the economic exploitation and development [of the province] it might be different. As it is, there is something dishonest and despicable in the voice which calls for the entry of outside capital today and then talks about the domination of eastern interests tomorrow . . .

*(The Vancouver Daily Province* (editorial) July 9, 1929, p. 6.


*Sun*, July 10, 1929, p. 8.
46 The Sun appeared not to be able to make up its mind as to whether it was $50,000,000 worth of watered stock or $55,000,000. Ibid.


48 Ibid.

49 Mary D. Taylor, op. cit., p. 74.

50 The National Utilities Corporation at that time owned or controlled the Port Alberni Electric Plant; the City of Alberni Electric Light Plant; the Cumberland Union Waterworks Company; the Royston Light and Power Plant; and the Parksville Light, Power and Heating Company. M. D. Taylor, op. cit., p. 65.

51 Ibid.

52 The Labor Statesman, Dec. 1934, p. 5. The exact number of electrical workers lost to the local during these early depression years is unknown. There was, nevertheless, a marked decline in membership. See Minute Books, Local 213, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Feb. 12, 1934, p. 48.

53 Interview with Donne Nicholle, May 16, 1983.


55 Ibid., Survey of Production, 1930-1961. The year 1957 is cited in this instance, as it was the peak year for construction expenditures during the fifteen-year period under discussion. By 1961 construction expenditures had fallen to approximately 425 million dollars, still over four times as high as in 1946.


60 The membership of Local 213 increased from approximately 400 members in 1934 to about 3,500 members in 1960. For approximate numbers see The Labor Statesman, Dec. 1934, p. 5; and The Vancouver Sun, Sept. 13, 1960, p. 6.
Local 213 established collective agreements with the BC Power Commission shortly after its creation in 1945. However, as the few workers employed by the Commission lived and worked in isolated interior communities, they were quickly asked by the International Office of the IBEW to join either sub-locals affixed to Local 213, or in other, separate locals set up in the interior after World War II. In addition, in a 1959 Royal Commission on the British Columbia Power Commission, Gordon Shrum pointed out that: "The Commission enjoys a [great] degree of flexibility in the application of its work forces because of its agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The clauses of this agreement relating to jurisdiction are such as to minimize disputes." Gordon Shrum, Chairman, Royal Commission on the British Columbia Power Commission (Victoria: King's Printer, 1959) p. 52.


Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hume, May 14, 1983.

Interview with Donne Nicholle, op. cit.

Sun (Magazine Section) May 9, 1936, p. 2.

Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985. See also Fred Hume's obituary in the Province, Feb. 18, 1967, p. 2.

Interview with Bill Waddell, May 2, 1983.

The list of BC Electric's new projects between 1945 and 1961 seemed almost endless. BC Electric, Historical Record 1944-1958 (pamphlet) BC Hydro Library. Furthermore, there was also an increase at this time in the number of pulp and paper mills in British Columbia. In 1945 there had been seven in existence in the province; by 1961 there were twelve, and all of the original seven had been either expanded or reconstructed. Pulp and paper mills employ important electrical processes, and their construction also provided much work for electrical contracting firms.

Interview with Bill Waddell, op. cit.

Interview with Henry Ayling, April 26, 1983.

Cited in article by Bruce Young, "Power Line Construction Sparks Contractor Success," Electrical Contractor and Maintenance Supervisor (Feb., 1962) p. 40. Jim Kinnaird, former business agent of Local 213, and late president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, wrote:
The requirement of construction labour force mobility puts great pressures on the construction worker's family life, but is also the reason why he is so attached to his craft and his union. It is the only constant factor in many construction tradesmen's employment life. He cannot expect to work always in a particular geographical area of the province, and he cannot expect to remain with one particular contractor. Because of the nature of the industry . . . contractors feel no obligation towards their tradesmen and vice versa. Again the hiring hall is a stabilizing influence.


73 Interview with Don Wilson, Jan. 26, 1983.
74 Interview with Art O'Keeffe, Nov. 8, 1985.
75 Interview with Henry Ayling, op. cit.
76 In the Lower Mainland alone, some of the major substations are named Arnott, Atchelitz, Barnard, Dal Grauer, Horne-Payne, Ingledow, Kidd, Mainwaring, McLellan, Murrin, Newell, Sperling, and Walters—all names of former leading BC Electric functionaries.
CHAPTER II--BOOMERS, GRUNTS AND NARROWBACKS:

THE RADICAL TRADITION, 1901 - 1919

Vancouver Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was founded on November 6, 1901, following a speech to unorganized electrical workers in the city by a representative from nearby Seattle Local 77. Joseph Watson, general organizer for the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC), granted the charter to seven electrical workers, probably telephone linemen and a few inside wiremen.¹ The founding of the local was part of an attempt by US-based international unions to protect the interests of their membership by expanding their organizational scope, particularly into Canada, at the turn of the century; IBEW Local 213 was one of close to 230 international union locals chartered north of the forty-ninth parallel between 1898 and 1902.²

The Vancouver local succeeded in establishing collective bargaining in the telephone industry. Union demands in 1902 were for $3.25 per eight-hour day, up from the usual nine-hour day at $2.75 for journeyman linemen. Such wages and hours of work were identical to those recently established in Seattle by Local 77.³ A hard-fought two-and-a-half week strike followed, and a surprisingly weak and unprepared telephone company was forced to concede journeyman rates of $3.00 per eight-hour day, a limit of "one apprentice to every two repairers," and a closed shop agreement.⁴ Local 213 also forced the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company to "recognize" the telephone operators' auxiliary local, a progressive step at the time,
despite the admittedly second-class nature of the (female) auxiliary organization.⁵

Obtaining the closed shop was an important breakthrough for the electrical workers in Local 213. It permitted the local to control entry onto the job-site, thereby protecting the existence of their organization, and imposing qualifications that allowed the workers to "rescue the electrical trade from the conditions of an unskilled trade to which it had fallen," one of the oldest and primary objectives of the IBEW.⁶ It also gave the local the opportunity to establish itself on a stable financial footing; it was no longer as dependent on the dues of a few inside wiremen employed in the building trades, and on a host of "boomers," or travelling linemen.⁷

In theory, the closed shop meant that only members in "good standing" with the IBEW could be hired by the telephone company. When electrical workers were needed, the company would have to request Local 213 to send the required number. If enough union members could not be obtained, then the firm could hire the individual of its choice, "provided such person makes application to join the union."⁸ In practice, however, the telephone company ignored the union's hiring hall and hired whom it pleased. With the economy at the start of a buoyant period and with little unemployment amongst its members, Local 213 initially acquiesced, concentrating its efforts on signing up new employees. The recent wage increase, combined with the prestige surrounding the only "closed shop" agreement in British Columbia's telephone industry, facilitated the organizing task.⁹
But the benefits of trade unionism proved short-lived for some IBEW members. When the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company combined with other firms in the province to form the British Columbia Telephone Company, the new firm made plans to rid itself of the electrical union. In January, 1906, following the extension of the closed shop agreement with the men, pressure was placed on the female telephone operators, which management felt was Local 213's weakest link. Asked to sign "yellow dog" contracts forswearing the union, the telephone operators turned to their union brothers for help. Local 213's negotiators drew up a draft agreement which demanded the closed shop for their "electrical working sisters," but the company rejected the proposed agreement.10

The strike of both linemen and operators began on February 22, 1906. But management was better prepared than their predecessors had been in 1902. BC Tel successfully recruited strikebreakers and won the support of city businessmen and the daily press. Solidarity among the strikers began to melt away, despite an effort to shore up the strike by M. J. Sullivan, vice-president of the Pacific District Council of the IBEW. Groups of linemen and operators drifted back to work as negotiations on outstanding issues remained deadlocked. Satisfied that Local 213 had broken its contract by walking out with the operators, the company threw out the collective agreement.11 Another--minus the closed shop--would not be established until 1911. As for the operators' auxiliary local, it had for the time being been crushed.
Despite the outcome in 1906, Local 213's struggles on behalf of the telephone operators (which would be resumed in 1913) spoke to its progressive political and organizational principles. Quick to open its ranks to all types of electrical workers, Local 213 included telephone switchboard and exchange installers, employed by the BC Telephone Company; dynamo tenders and powerhouse operators, employed by the power companies and responsible for maintaining major substations and distributing power around the province; and inside wiremen, called "narrowbacks," an apt description for those often forced to practice their trade in narrow corners and cramped spaces. Better known as "electricians," these building trades workers represented the core of Local 213's craft component. When a portion of them left in 1908, close cooperation was maintained with their independent local, Local 621, leading eventually to reamalgamation in 1925. Also included as members of Local 213 were unskilled groundmen (or "grunts"), who assembled the wooden poles and steel towers used in erecting thousands of miles of telephone, transmission, and local power lines. An integral part of the line crews, the groundmen also helped supply tools and equipment to the high-climbing linemen. This last-mentioned group consistently remained among the most militant members and long assumed the mantle of leadership in Local 213. Employed in stringing or repairing high-tension wires for the electric utilities, the linemen were generally big, athletic-looking men. In 1912, a reporter for the *British Columbia Federationist*, a widely-read left-wing labour weekly, even went so far as to
describe them "as one of the sturdiest bunch of slaves that ever tugged at a chain or climbed a pole:"

Fearless, alert, rough and ready, and every inch of them men, they are not afraid to look the boss in the eye or tell their fellow workers where they are heading. The outdoor life in the grove of the magic Pacific seems to have impressed itself into the physique and fibre of every man of them. To see them board a [railway] car or grab a pole, or to hear the clanking of their "climbers" is to admire them.... And it does one good to see the delegates of the central labour body sit up and take notice when one of their representatives... corrals the floor and proceeds to define and defend any position taken. Here's to the linemen! May their shadows never grow less.

With such a wide variety of electrical workers as members, it was clear--despite bouts of aberrational behaviour relating to non-caucasian workers--that Local 213 was moving toward a position of industrial unionism. The local supplied electrical workers to companies after a three-year apprenticeship program, and made but nominal efforts to specialize its membership in the specific requirements of the telephone, light, power, or construction industries. As far as Local 213 was concerned, there was no difference between a "telephone man" and any other type of electrical worker--there were only journeymen and apprentices. Much of the work demanded was fairly straightforward and could be done by anyone with basic electrical training. For more technically demanding tasks, there was a core of highly skilled craft workers who, on occasion, were expected "to carry" their less knowledgeable union brothers. Potentially the cause of countless internal squabbles, this heterogeneous combination of skills and abilities was cemented together by the radical political influences the local encountered in the Vancouver
Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) after 1902, and in the BC Federation of Labour after 1913. More pragmatic reasons, however, cannot be overlooked. It was evident to many electrical craft workers that joining forces with relatively unskilled workers such as telephone operators and groundmen would enhance, not diminish, effective collective bargaining. There was also the natural appeal of an aggressive organization to workers in an industry noted for unreliable employment. Long periods of idleness between construction projects frequently vitiated relatively high hourly wages in terms of the members' yearly incomes. The union's nickname, "IBEW--I Bum Every Winter," vividly recalls the seasonal dimension of work in the electrical trade.

Even more important in motivating the local's militancy was the danger associated with some of the members' work. This was particularly apparent to the local's linemen who were required to string new electrical wires next to existing ones, or repair damaged high-voltage lines. The well-known propensity of electricity to jump from wire to wire and search for ground, meant that linemen had to be constantly alert. Even then, unseen hazards lurked everywhere. When working with what were supposed to be dead lines, linemen could be electrocuted when a live wire accidentally came too close to the one which they were handling. Whether within ten feet or ten miles of the place of work, this lack of "clearance" could be deadly. The result was a noticeable willingness to down tools over what were considered unsafe working conditions. On October 28, 1912, for example, the
linemen in Local 213 debated the "Matter of the W.C.P. Co. [Western Canada Power Company] asking men to string wire with only 3 ft. clearance while it was alive," and resolved that "Members be instructed not to work on the poles unless the line is cut dead and [the] B.A. has submit[ted] a grievance regarding the matter to the W.C.P. Co."19

Throughout Local 213's first sixty years of history, several among its leading personalities have been killed while on the job. Thomas Laurenson, an influential shop steward for the telephone workers and delegate to the operators' auxiliary local, was electrocuted in 1905. So was local union president E. C. Knight in 1913. The same misfortune befell president J. B. Brown in 1928 and president H. J. Astbury in 1947.20 The earliest available statistics draw a similar picture (see Appendix A: Tables 3 and 4 and Graphs 1 to 4). In 1918 the British Columbia Workmen's Compensation Board reported a total of twenty-nine accident claims in Electric Wiring of Buildings, Electric Light and Power Plants, and Telephone and Telegraph Systems. There was a decrease to twenty-two in 1919, but the figure rose to forty-seven in 1920.21 Yet more striking were the occasional reports of such accidents in the labour newspapers of the province, where electrical workers learned of these horrors and became determined to combat them. On January 2, 1914, the BC Federationist reported that:

Edward Charles Knight, a BCER [British Columbia Electric Railway] lineman, was instantly killed on Friday, December 26th, by coming in contact with a live electric wire at the corner of Twentieth Avenue, Inverness Street and Kingsway. Electrocution was caused by a current of twenty-two hundred volts. Mr. Knight had
ascended a pole in connection with the hanging of a light when the accident occurred. He had scraped the insulating material off a wire and stuck the knife he had used into the pole. In bringing his arm back his hand struck the primary wire, completing the circuit and causing instant death. As he was strapped to the pole, he was prevented from falling to the ground. His companions immediately climbed to the cross arm and brought him down. Life, however, was found to be extinct after about forty-five minutes work at resuscitation.

Within the IBEW the appeal of industrial unionism was not unique to Local 213. Such forms of organization were widespread in many IBEW locals, even though industrial unionism was at odds with the traditional and often arbitrary distinctions of the union's international office, which consistently sought to separate electrical workers into distinct categories. Two bitterly opposing factions emerged in the course of the dispute during the first decade of the twentieth century. One was led by international president Frank J. McNulty, an inside wireman resolutely opposed to unauthorized strikes (or "wobbles") often used by electrical workers against recalcitrant employers. Following Samuel Gompers, McNulty believed that skilled workers could only win concessions by building exclusionary craft unions with a reputation for "conservative" behaviour. McNulty's policies were resented by many of the linemen's locals, more often than not based in the west. These formed the core of a "dual" IBEW in 1908 which Local 213 immediately joined. The rebel locals were led by American socialists J. J. Reid and J. W. Murphy. Keen supporters of Samuel Gompers' perennial left-wing rivals for the AFL presidency, Reid and Murphy were also sympa-
thetic to the argument in favour of industrial rather than craft unionism.

Until 1913 it appeared as if Reid and Murphy had launched a mere house-cleaning program. Hoping to win over the McNulty locals, they were cautious in advancing any major policy changes (see Appendix B: Document 3). But such caution did not imply a lack of criticism of either the AFL or McNulty's IBEW. Rebel locals regularly condemned Samuel Gompers and even went so far as to call McNulty "a scab." Matters came to a head in 1912 in the Ohio courts, which determined that the McNulty IBEW alone had the right to control the funds, call conventions, or hold the contracts of the brotherhood. With little left to lose, the rebel faction boldly set a new course at its Denver convention of 1913, setting "aside all Fear and Proceed[ing] in Line With all the Progressive Organizations of Labour by Adopting the Industrial Form." New constitutional clauses reflected the new direction (see Appendix B: Document 4). One in particular was meant to lessen complaints from workers compelled to pay "another big initiation fee" every time they joined a different union. The new constitution stated that any IBEW local could accept, in lieu of initiation fee, "the paid up membership card of a member of any recognized labour union or organization." Moreover, as the rebel Electrical Worker explained: "Any Employee in the Electrical Industry of 16 Years [or over] was qualified for membership in the Brotherhood; the aristocracy of the 'unions' was eliminated from the constitution wherever it seemed to
appear; and in its stead the idea prevailed that if union men
cannot take a 'chance' on fellow workers, who then?"30

The reasons for Local 213's support of the rebel IBEW were
many, and included the "old question" of the Canadian locals'
long-standing demand for a special vice-presidency to be created
for the Dominion.31 Unresolved, the issue appeared at the
rebels' founding St. Louis convention in 1908 (see Appendix B:
Document 2), when Local 213's delegate, Edward C. Knight, rose to
to say: "Let Canada be one district . . . I am an IBEW man and I
live in Canada. I do want to see some one in charge of this
Dominion."32 To the satisfaction of the Canadians, an additional
vice-presidency was indeed created and filled by Quebecker John
(Jean) Monjeau, whose responsibilities included Canada,
Newfoundland and Alaska.33

In addition to the national question, regional and personal
alliances helped to account for Local 213's support of the "dual"
IBEW. Vancouver workers had established close ties with the San
Francisco-based Pacific District Council of the union, and these
were reinforced by the participation of the regional organization
in establishing a first collective agreement with the Western
Canada Power Company in 1912.34 While the Pacific District
Council was careful to straddle both IBEW unions, influential
officers were outspoken in their opposition to McNulty35 (see
Appendix B: Document 1). Finally, the ill-fated Edward Knight,
Local 213's delegate to successive rebel conventions, rapidly
found favour with the new administration and served on the
executive board of the "dual" IBEW throughout most of its brief
life between 1908 and 1914. The decision to adopt industrial union principles of course dovetailed with the organizational requirements of Local 213, and was supported by socialists such as Knight, who once explained his opposition to a proposal to pay higher salaries to union officials because: "I really believe we came here for the betterment of our class, and [if] it is our class we are going to fight for . . . it must be based on self-denial." 36

Local 213 took to heart the reformist sentiments of the rebel IBEW, but these were not enough to sustain the support of like-minded locals from around the continent. The AFL's predictable decision to back McNulty in 1909 had created a host of problems, not the least of which was recognition and cooperation from city, state, provincial, and national trade union bodies. 37 The judgement of the courts in 1912 served only to demoralize these locals even more. Several of them re-applied for admission into McNulty's IBEW and were accepted on the payment of the current month's per capita tax. Local 213, however, referred in its Minutes to the need of "protection from McNulty disrupters" in the months following the legal decision, 38 and in fact made little attempt to rejoin McNulty's IBEW until the autumn of 1914. Re-affiliation was decided following extensive negotiations, including a deal to appoint W. F. Dunne to the post of general organizer for Washington and Oregon. 39 Cautioned by the BC Federationist that they could not afford to remain apart and that it was better to "hang together than be hanged separately," 40 the rebel locals across Canada ratified
these arrangements by referendum, though there was little doubt of the animosity that remained.

Compounding the poor relations between Local 213 and the craft-oriented IBEW was a rising tide of disputes among Vancouver electrical workers, employers, and the state. On June 5, 1911, a wage dispute involving 116 carpenters escalated into a general building trades strike involving 5,500 men and 54 firms in Vancouver. The central issue was a concerted drive for the open shop by the Vancouver Employers' Association. The general strike of the building trades lasted until July 27. Most of the unions reached settlements with contractors on an individual basis; plumbers and electricians were the last to settle as their employers were the most resolute in their declaration favouring the open shop.

A second strike in March, 1913, involved 320 tradesmen employed by the BC Telephone Company. The most important issues, at the end of a period of relative economic prosperity, were recognition of the union, better wages and working conditions—in particular for the operators who, according to the union, were being "denied the true rights of womanhood"—and a reduction in the ratio of apprentices to journeymen.

Complicating matters was that the 1913 dispute fell under the jurisdiction of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (the Lemieux Act). This legislation, enacted by the federal government in 1907, considered the uninterrupted operation of "public utilities" such as BC Telephone and BC Electric as essential to the well-being of the community. It decreed that no
strike or lockout could commence until a public investigation had been completed. The IDIA put in place a procedure allowing the parties under dispute to submit their arguments to a three-member Board of Conciliation, composed of one representative each from management and employees and a third jointly nominated by the first two, or appointed by the Department of Labour. The findings of the Board were non-binding, but if they were not accepted as grounds for a settlement, the weight of "public opinion" would be brought to bear on the dispute. The Liberal government of the day believed this could best be accomplished by publishing the findings of the Board in the Labour Gazette, a monthly publication issued by the Department of Labour.  

The IDIA supposedly established the state as "impartial umpire" in the game of collective bargaining, but electrical workers were already skeptical. BC Tel had relied on the Act during a previous set of negotiations in 1911, when it had convinced the government appointee to agree with its request to deal only with wages, not working conditions.  

No board was actually established in 1913. Instead, the Department of Labour assigned J. D. McNiven, its western representative, to look into the dispute as a "Fair Wages Officer." This decision may have been influenced by Local 213's resolution on March 17 to "oppose the Lemieux Act to the greatest of our extent."  

The workers stayed out and within ten days the strike was over. The union won the desired recognition from BC Tel, an increase in journeyman rates to $4.25 per day (an increase of 6.25%), double time for overtime work, and a maximum ratio of
four apprentices to every one journeyman. No mention was made of the telephone operators, the women not having participated in the walkout and the company proving unwilling to include that section of its work force in a collective agreement again. Moreover, the strike had not been without its difficulties for the men. Local 213 was forced to draw up a trial board for those "that stayed on [the] job with cards in . . . 213." In addition, the electrical workers passed a resolution asking for the names of all strikebreakers not members of the local to "be given to [the] Press Sec[retary]" and sent to The Electrical Worker, with their pictures also to be placed in a BC Federation of Labour "Rogue's gallery." 

Worsening economic conditions led to a third experience with the state another two years later. Severe unemployment permitted the BC Electric Company to take advantage of the local's disarray and win concessions in August, 1915, following the expiration of a three-year collective agreement. The company cut the wages of its line crews by twenty-five cents per day (a reduction of 5.7%), refused to recognize Local 213's right to bargain collectively on behalf of its employees, and laid off "for reasons of economy" (the union claimed they were fired), a number of militant linemen. George Kidd, the company's president, was temporarily successful in by-passing the union, claiming that only 42 out of 115 BC Electric workers claimed by the IBEW were actually members of the union. Further, he charged it was a "Foreign Union . . . consist[ing] to a very large extent
of members who are not and never were employees of the Company."\textsuperscript{54}

Forgetting its previous opposition to the Lemieux Act, Local 213 appealed its case to the federal government under the auspices of the IDIA. It was now the turn of the company to argue against government involvement and boycott conciliation proceedings. A conciliation board was nevertheless established, consisting initially of employee and government representatives only. The Minister of Labour then intervened to appoint Mr. J. A. Harvey, K. C., to represent BC Electric "in default of the company recommending a member of the Board."\textsuperscript{55} In response, Kidd announced that he would have nothing to do with the proceedings and, in a letter to his superiors in London, England, wrote that: "we would not under any circumstances appear voluntarily before the Board of Conciliation . . ."\textsuperscript{56} The unanimous decision handed down on September 11 recommended that the company recognize the IBEW and "not discriminate against any employee because of his connection with same;" that, on the other hand, the union "not in any way interfere with or limit the right of the company to discharge or discipline its employees where sufficient cause can be shown;" and that the company cut wages by a less onerous fifteen cents per day (a 3.4% reduction).\textsuperscript{57} As it was allowed to do under the poorly conceived stipulations of the IDIA, BC Electric simply ignored the proposed agreement, pressing ahead with its original cost-cutting measures.\textsuperscript{58}

The response of the electrical workers came the following year, but this time against a backdrop of a growing shortage of
labour due to the manpower requirements of the First World War. On August 24, 1916, fifty-five linemen and groundmen went on strike, initially in order to force the company to recognize and bargain collectively with Local 213.59 Department of Labour officials were nowhere to be seen, having apparently decided to let the two parties have a go at each other without government interference. When the walkout started, local union officials remarked that until recently the electrical workers had managed to settle their differences on an amicable basis with the company, in particular through the good offices of ex-manager Johannes Buntzen. They complained that there now seemed "to be a disposition on the part of the present officials . . . to look for trouble with their union employees."60 A major stumbling block in the opinion of the union was chief electrical engineer G. Porter, who "forced the issue and courted a fight and will therefore be accommodated."61 Tension mounted with the accusation that BC Electric was preparing a "bull-pen" in which to herd the strikers, had recently booked the services of the "Thiel Detective Agency" for purposes unknown, and had hired four "scabs" to work on fast-deteriorating power lines. This was countered by a warning from officials of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees, also employed by BC Electric, that "our members are extremely restive over the way the company has treated the linemen, and the executive feels that it will be impossible to hold the men if the company puts strikebreakers to work."62 The strike ended on September 19 with a tremendous victory in favour of Local 213: BC Electric was forced to concede
the closed shop for all employees who were members of the local, "except Substation Operators and Trimmers," the right to travel "from storeroom to storeroom and from camp to camp on the company's time," double time for overtime work, and journeyman rates of $4.50 per day (a 3.4% increase).63

Another set of difficult negotiations took place in the summer of 1917, again with the BC Telephone Company. Spiralling inflation and increasing political pressure to avoid work stoppages to support the overseas war effort supplied the background to this particular set of talks. The existing journeyman wage scale was the same as that established in 1913 ($4.25 per day), the local's telephone workers having meanwhile suffered an arbitrary reduction of twenty-five cents per day in September, 1915, recouping the loss in a new collective agreement in September, 1916.64 As wholesale prices had risen approximately seventy-six per cent in Vancouver in the four years leading up to 1917, Local 213 felt it was not "immoderate under the circumstances" to demand a twenty-five per cent boost in wages.65 A second issue of importance was the length of the working day: Vancouver electrical workers had won the eight-hour day in 1902, while those in outlying districts were often forced to work a nine-hour day. A third demand, finally, was that the company grant the security of the closed shop, as had just recently been conceded by BC Electric.66

The BC Telephone Company opportunistically asked for the intervention of a Board of Conciliation and Investigation as it felt unable "to meet [Local 213's] demands and continue to
conduct the business on a profitable basis." The local cooperated with the new Board, but the government appointee concurred with the employer. Despite the fact that BC Telephone could not produce statistical evidence in support of its financial arguments, the government's appointed chairman, Justice Denis Murphy, cast his vote with the company.

Unhappy with the judge's decision, the IBEW's E. H. "Teddy" Morrison submitted a detailed minority report; he was also anxious to demonstrate his leadership capabilities to an increasingly militant rank and file. Angry at the refusal of the company to substantiate its plea of "inability to pay," Morrison argued that BC Telephone was quite able to meet the union's demands, and that the Conciliation Board had been asked to intervene with the sole intention of "avoiding a strike." The eight-hour day, he continued, was a question of principle. At the heart of the issue was the linemen's slogan of "two ways on the company's time." Non-city line crews often had to travel long distances to and from their place of work, and the union felt they should not be penalized the extra hour per day "simply because their work must be done in suburban exchanges." As for the closed shop, Morrison was relentless in attacking the company's support of employees who had "conscientious objections" to having to join the IBEW as a condition of employment. Morrison pointed out that the company's representative, Mr. Halse, had initially offered Local 213 $4.80 per day if it insisted on the closed shop, followed later by an offer of $5.00 if it went without. "This would suggest," Morrison wrote, "that
the company dangled the closed shop in front of the employees to induce them to accept a lower rate of wages, as it does not cost the company a cent to put the condition in force and yet it means a good deal to the employees in safeguarding their interests; on the other hand, Mr. Halse was willing to betray the 'conscientious objectors' and their consciences for the sum of 20 cents per diem."\(^{69}\)

The agreement reached on September 1, 1917, delayed an impending walkout until the following year. The union sacrificed the security of a closed shop in favour of the proffered wage of $5.00 per day (a 17.6\% wage increase), and agreed to the stipulation that for line crews outside Vancouver, "the men shall give one half hour's time extra daily to be utilized by the company in transporting them to and from work."\(^{70}\)

The clearest example of wartime militancy arose when the local began negotiating for a new contract with three of British Columbia's largest privately owned electric utilities—BC Electric, BC Telephone, and Western Canada Power—in June, 1918. The IDIA having been proven "reliable," the three companies quickly applied for a Board of Conciliation. Local 213 sent a representative to the hearings, but came armed with a strike vote and notice of job action against all three utilities to begin on July 1. The militant strategy was coordinated by a Light, Power, and Transportation Council, bringing Local 213 officially together with members of the street railwaymen's union, who agreed to join the Dominion Day walkout. An additional weapon of remarkable importance seemed to be secured when the socialist-led
VTLC proposed a city-wide sympathy strike to help the electrical workers and street railwaymen gain their bargaining objectives. Curiously this tactic was not encouraged by Teddy Morrison, who probably believed that he could win a collective agreement without the red-handed help of Ernest Winch, Jack Kavanaugh, or Victor Midgely. 71

The Conciliation Board hearings began on June 29, 1918. Morrison, however, simply sat as a spectator at the back of the room. The Labour Gazette reported it was "understood that the employees did not desire to take part in the proceedings before the Board." 72 Though the chairman of the meeting, Justice W. A. Macdonald, asked Morrison to communicate to the electrical workers that it was illegal to strike until the Board had made its report, Local 213 voted on June 30 to begin its walk-out the following day, in conjunction with the street railwaymen's union. 73

The BC Telephone Company was the first to crack. Less than twenty-four hours before the strike deadline, the company signed a closed shop agreement with Local 213, the first since 1906, and unique at the time to any telephone company in North America. 74 The agreement provided for a new journeyman wage scale of $6.00 per day (a 20% increase), 75 and included a concession to "recognize" Local 77A, the new telephone operators' union Local 213 had been promoting in the previous months. 76 But the other two utilities remained obstinate in their refusal to sign anything. The BC Federationist reported that BC Electric, in particular, "would not agree to certain working conditions and a
closed shop." Confident that the workers' actions were in clear violation of the IDIA, the two remaining companies simply waited. On the morning of July 1, 1918, 318 electrical workers and 1,348 street railwaymen chose to ignore the law and walked off their jobs. The government's and the employers' bluff was called—no arrests or charges were made, though the city of Vancouver was almost paralyzed. Lasting ten days, the strike represented a first attempt by the electrical workers to bargain collectively on an industry-wide basis. It yielded results that were both immediate and impressive, including, besides an identical $6.00 journeyman wage scale to compensate for the rising cost of living, the closed shop for the remainder of Local 213's utility workers. Though BC Electric workers were forced to walk off the job again during two days in mid-July, due to the company's "alleged discrimination and non-compliance with the agreement," the Board of Conciliation concluded "a settlement was arrived at, in which we understand the demands of the employees were fully conceded."

Militant industrial action was paralleled by growing support for radical organizations in a union never shy about flying its political colours. In 1912, Local 213 had voted to make small, but politically significant, donations to strikes being waged by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Edmonton, Alberta, and Brawley, California. On the outbreak of war in August, 1914, the Vancouver local also conducted a general strike vote at a regular membership meeting in keeping with the Trades and Labour Congress' official anti-war policy. Despite the TLC's
abrupt reversal of its position, never actually contemplating a
general strike against the war, Local 213 found a majority of its
attending members in favour. Less than a year later, another
resolution underlined Local 213's support for the anti-war
Socialist Party of Canada. On March 22, 1915, Local 213 asked
"That the Parliamentary Committee and the Trades & Labour Council
get in touch with the Socialist Party, and see if they cannot
arrange to work together." Resolutions in 1917 and 1918
followed, opposing either military or industrial conscription in
the strongest terms. In August, 1918, after the murder of
British Columbia socialist anti-war leader, Ginger Goodwin, Local
213 took part in the one-day protest strike organized by the
Vancouver Trades and Labour Council.

These events presaged the formation of the One Big Union on
the West Coast, one of the most important events in Local 213's
history. OBU resolutions were originally presented at the
extraordinary Ninth Annual Convention of the BC Federation of
Labour held at Calgary in March, 1919. Present among the eighty-
seven delegates attending were two representatives from Local
213, Teddy Morrison and former local union president, Dan
McDougall. Setting the radical tone of this historic gathering,
the delegates early in the proceedings passed a motion boldly
declaring "full acceptance of the principle [of] 'Proletarian
Dictatorship',' and sent "fraternal greetings to the Russian
soviet government, the Spartacans in Germany and all definite
working class movements in Europe and the world, recognizing they
have won first place in the history of the class struggle".
Neither Morrison nor McDougall spoke on this resolution; it is doubtful if either man could have begun to explain the concept of "proletarian dictatorship." But on resolution number six, presented by Local 170 of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union demanding "a six-hour day, five days a week," Teddy Morrison rose to the occasion with a torrent of suitably militant words:

I am in favor of the resolution, but I do not think it goes far enough. I do not think it covers the situation at all. I said in 1914 I was placed in the position of fighting in Vancouver for half time. Men were working two weeks out of four and then conditions became more acute and it was two weeks out of six, and we finally reached the limit of two weeks out of eight. I may state I see no difficulty in putting the six hour day into force.

Easily the most significant resolution was number seven:

"that this convention recommend to its affiliated membership that they sever affiliation with their international organization, and that steps be taken to form an industrial organization of all workers." In a display of traditional antagonism towards McNulty and the rest of the IBEW's "porkchoppers" at the international office, McDougall took the floor to endorse the resolution on behalf of Local 213:

So far as the electrical workers are concerned, they have severed their connections [with the International] a long time ago, [and maintain them] only so far as per capita tax are concerned. The only trouble we have is keeping the international organization and international officers out of our jurisdiction. We can get along well enough without them, that has been our position since 1912. . . . I believe 213 to be the pioneers of industrial organizations in British Columbia. They have taken in everything in the way of an electrical worker, and they are getting along very nicely. But still with all that I can see there is a chance of helping other organizations out and it is, therefore, for that reason that I am supporting the resolution.
The same resolutions were ratified by the Western Labour Conference. Upon the return of Morrison and McDougall to Vancouver from the Calgary venue of both events, efforts to win over rank and file electrical workers began in earnest. On March 24, 1919, a special meeting was called to hear Vancouver's leading OBU spokesman W. A. Pritchard. Another special meeting on April 11 heard a debate with "E. H. Morrison and the president, D. W. McDougall, [taking] the affirmative for the OBU against two other brothers, E. McB. Smith and Marlow, opposed to the proposition." On April 14, the local resolved to sign no more agreements without a 30-day reopening clause "until the 6-hour day be in force." This was followed by a 170-103 vote in favour of joining the OBU in a referendum sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour. The results of the vote indicated that the rank and file was divided, but that the militants had prevailed. The vote might have suggested the need for caution on the part of the leadership, but activists who supported the OBU were no less determined.

Secession was a formidable task, fraught with contractual and legal difficulties. Compounded by a series of events in the spring and summer of 1919, the probabilities of success were greatly reduced. Initially, however, the OBU activists among the electrical workers had every right to remain optimistic. Although construction activity had not regained its pre-World War I importance, Local 213 had at least stabilized its size with over 600 dues-paying members (see Appendix A: Table 6 and Graph 5). It had managed to win important concessions from major
employers: the eight-hour day, wages that could compare with any of the skilled trades in Vancouver, 94 "recognition" for the female telephone operators in sub-Local 77A, and the closed shop for most of the men working either for the BC Telephone Company, BC Electric, and smaller utilities. The overwhelming victory of 1918 had confirmed the electrical workers' belief in the effectiveness of industrial action and, as with much of organized labour at the time, their militancy and self-confidence was at its peak.
NOTES


3 The Vancouver Daily Province, Nov. 26, 1902, p. 1.

4 Labour Gazette, Jan., 1903, p. 517.


6 Mulcaire, op. cit., p. 28.


8 Labour Gazette, op. cit.


10 Ibid., pp. 30-33.

11 Labour Gazette, March, 1906, p. 1031; and April, 1906, p. 1117.

12 Those that stayed in Local 213 were largely "station wiremen," those electricians responsible for maintenance work inside substations and powerhouses.

13 British Columbia Federationist, May 20, 1912, p. 4.

14 In 1913, when it was reported at a union meeting that a "fight" had taken place "between Bro. Wysong and a negro hanging cluster lights for the B.C. Elec.," the local unashamedly went on record asking the "B.A. [Business Agent] to notify Mr. Sperling and Conway of B.C. Elec. that men will be pulled off job if negroes are caught doing electrical work." Local 213 IBEW, Minute Books, March 24, 1913, p. 170.


16 Bernard, op. cit.

17 This is still the case today according to several electrical workers. Interviews with Les McDonald, Dec. 5, 1984; Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985; and Ernie Fulton, Nov. 24, 1984.

18 Interview with Wes Wooten, Jan. 19, 1983. Also, to Fred Hoppe, who began his career as an inside wireman in 1909, it seemed that he was unemployed in Vancouver "most of my life." Bill Pickett interview with Hoppe, Aug. 21, 1964, Reel SP 28, BC
Federation of Labour Centennial Program, Special Collections, University of British Columbia (UBC).


21 Workmen's Compensation Board, Annual Reports, 1918-1920, (Victoria: King's Printer). See Table A for each year.

22 BC Federationist, op. cit.


25 Ibid.


27 Mulcaire, op. cit., p. 19.

28 The Electrical Worker (publication details not given) p. 563; in IBEW Constitutions and Proceedings, op. cit.

29 Ibid., p. 564.

30 Ibid., p. 563.

31 Proceedings of the Tenth International Convention (Rebel faction), St. Louis, Missouri, 1908, p. 415; in IBEW Constitutions and Proceedings, op. cit.

32 Ibid., p. 352.

33 Ibid., pp. 410-12.

34 Labour Gazette, Feb., 1913, pp. 889-92. This first agreement with Western Canada Power called for journeyman linemen to receive $4.55 per day, while foremen made $5.30. This was an
improvement by over a dollar per day from the rates paid by BC Electric in 1907. *Labour Gazette*, Feb., 1913, p. 892.

35 See letter from J. L. Cook, Secretary-Treasurer of the Pacific District Council, to P. W. Collins, International Secretary of the IBEW (McNulty faction); in Proceedings of the Tenth International Convention (Rebel faction), *op. cit.*., pp. 190-91.


37 Babcock, *op. cit.*.


39 See the announcement of his posting in the *BC Federationist*, Oct. 23, 1914, p. 4.


46 *BC Federationist*, March 21, 1913, p. 1. On the latter point, the local complained that BC Tel had, in one department, "17 journeymen and 16 apprentices. In another department the same month they had 18 journeymen and 9 apprentices. These are the conditions we are striving against."


48 *BC Federationist*, *op. cit.*.

49 *Labour Gazette*, April, 1913, p. 1139.

50 *Minute Books*, March 17, 1913, p. 169.

51 *Labour Gazette*, April, 1913, p. 1072. There is some disparity as to the reports of the final wage settlement agreed to in 1913. However, a *Labour Gazette* report of 1916 states that the journeyman rate finally set three years earlier was indeed $4.25 per day. *Labour Gazette*, Oct., 1916, p. 1664.

52 *Minute Books*, March 24, 1913, p. 164.


56 Kidd to Horne-Payne, Aug., 1915, Box 64, BCER Records, op. cit.


58 See the later story in the BC Federationist, Aug. 25, 1916, p. 1.


64 Ibid., Nov., 1917, p. 906.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., pp. 904.

68 Ibid., pp. 899-903.

69 Ibid., p. 906.

70 Ibid., p. 903.

71 BC Federationist, July 12, 1918, p. 1.

72 Labour Gazette, August, 1918, pp. 588-89.

73 Ibid., p. 589.

74 BC Federationist, July 5, 1918, p. 1.

75 Ibid.
But once again such recognition was granted at the same time as the closed shop was being extended to the men in Local 213. Such a distinction was important, for as Elaine Bernard has shrewdly pointed out, the same error that had been instrumental in the union's 1906 setback was repeated: "it allowed the company to separate the operators from the craft workers." Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

77 BC Federationist, *op. cit.*


79 BC Federationist, July 12, 1918, p. 1.


82 Ibid., July 27, 1914 (no page #). The vote was recorded as being twenty-eight to six in favour of a general strike.


84 In January, 1917, Local 213 passed a motion opposing conscription into the army "until all honorary colonels are sent to the Front, and all profits from munitions are conscripted for the benefit of returned soldiers and their dependents, and the dependents of our fallen heroes." This was followed in the spring of 1918 with another motion stating: "That this local go on record as being heartily in favour of a 'down tools' policy in the event of the government trying to put in force any legislation bringing about industrial conscription, or the introduction of indentured labour in Canada." Cited in the "Live-Wire" Special Edition, IBEW Local 213, Nov. 9, 1951, p. 22. The reason the Minute Books are not quoted directly in this instance, nor for any date between June, 1916, and July, 1921, is that they are missing. Fortunately, the authors of the 1951 account of the local's history saw fit to quote these important resolutions while the Minute Books were still in their possession.


86 BC Federationist, March 28, 1919, p. 6.

87 Ibid., p. 7.

88 Ibid., April 4, 1919, p. 2.

89 Ibid., pp. 6-7.


91 Ibid.
Two years earlier, in 1917, the Labour Gazette reported that the electrical workers had "higher wages than obtains in most skilled trades in Vancouver at the present time." Labour Gazette, Nov., 1917, p. 902.
CHAPTER III--THE DEFEAT OF RADICALISM,

1919 - 1922

Before the One Big Union could be successfully established on a permanent footing, a general strike with important ramifications broke out in Vancouver on June 3, 1919. Part of an international increase in working-class militancy, the general strike was initially called by the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council in support of the embattled workers of Winnipeg. Focussed at one level on demands for collective bargaining and an amelioration in wages and working conditions, it was also representative of growing working-class interest in winning socialist objectives. As in other parts of Canada, the Vancouver General Strike Committee issued a characteristic declaration, stating "there are many problems that face the workers that cannot be solved under capitalism . . ."  

Proceeding cautiously, Local 213 at first rejected participation in the general strike. Under the impulsion both of its activist element and the widely discussed implications of the struggle in Winnipeg, this decision was reversed at a subsequent meeting held less than a week later. Teddy Morrison then accepted membership in the city's General Strike Committee. His acquiescence placed the local under the direction of a radical core of trade unionists, unwittingly fating the electrical workers to a confrontation for which they were ill-prepared.

Vancouver's electrical workers (including telephone operators and even supervisory personnel) were to remain on strike for close to a month. When the Winnipeg General Strike
ended on June 26, so for all intents and purposes did its counterpart in Vancouver. Before the Vancouver strike was officially called off, however, there were negotiations to ensure that employer reprisals would not take place. Most electrical workers did not suffer victimization, but there were exceptions, the telephone workers in particular: BC Telephone announced the demotion of all striking supervisors to the rank of operator, leaving only anti-union strikebreakers in the senior positions. With the promise of continuing moral and financial support from the rest of Local 213's membership, the response of the telephone workers on Wednesday, July 2, was to vote to continue the walkout until BC Telephone dropped its policy of victimization.5

The resolve of the striking telephone workers remained firm, even though the Daily World gave front-page coverage on July 3 to a telegram William Farrell had received from the United States headquarters of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers: "International did not sanction strike in Vancouver. We are trying to assist in reaching settlement."6 During the next few days, Vancouver's Mayor Gale attempted to mediate, but hastily withdrew when he found that "the girls who are in [strikebreakers] will not work under the supervisors who are out, and the girls who are out will not work under the supervisors who are in."7 With no settlement in sight, Local 213 prepared itself for a lengthy battle. The balance of forces then shifted dramatically with the arrival of Ernest Ingles, Canadian vice-president of the IBEW. Ingles had been sent, evidently in response to a petition from several disgruntled members of the Vancouver local,
to enforce international union directives to end the strike without conditions. Acting as the cat's-paw of new international president, James P. Noonan, Ingles handed Local 213's executive board a list of four prepared charges, showing how it had been in violation of the IBEW's constitution. Ingles' intervention brought about the complete collapse of the strike and acceptance of the "terms" imposed by BC Telephone. The men went back to work on July 15, the women on July 16.

The attention of Vancouver's labour movement shifted from the larger issues raised by the general strike to Ingles' controversial and heavy-handed actions in Local 213. On August 4 Ingles presented the IBEW's charges to the membership of the Vancouver local. In accordance with IBEW directives, he also asked that Local 213 withdraw immediately from the existing, OBU-dominated Trades Council, and join with AFL general organizer Alfred Farmilo "in re-organizing the central body" in Vancouver. When, after three weeks, Local 213 had still not moved to affiliate with what quickly became a dual Trades and Labour Council, specifically designed by the AFL to eradicate the policies and outlook of the OBU in British Columbia, Ingles suspended the entire membership from the union on August 25 and announced the IBEW's revocation of the local's charter. The very existence of Local 213 was now in question.

The reaction of Vancouver electrical workers was not long in coming. On August 27 Ingles called a meeting of a "loyal" minority at the Vancouver Labour Temple; what the Daily World called the "OBU faction" convened in the electrical workers' hall
on West Pender Street, only to adjourn early following a decision
to decamp to Ingles' meeting. Within minutes there erupted "a
general mix-up" and "an urgent message" was received at police
headquarters. As the Daily World recounted:

Ingles had only just started his address at labor headquarters when the other faction entered the hall in a body and proceeded to make things lively for the speaker. At first the new arrivals were content to obtain whatever satisfaction they could get in this manner. It was when several jumped up and started for the platform with the evident intention of impressing their views on Ingles in forcible fashion, that the situation took on a really serious aspect. The clash was only averted when one of the audience sitting in the front row, rose and urged the meeting to maintain order and to conduct its business in a parliamentary fashion.

Ignoring Ingles, the now OBU-dominated meeting passed a motion "to carry on business . . . as though no International Officer had given any decision against us." The British Columbia Federationist chose to down-play the near-violent confrontation and simply stated that Ingles was "roundly condemned by the electrical workers." In a more political vein, the socialist and pro-OBU Vancouver labour weekly added:

It seemed to be the consensus of opinion that the charter was taken away with the purpose of cheating the local . . . out of a vote at the international convention which is to be held in New Orleans shortly . . . the whole [IBEW] organization on the Pacific coast here is up in arms against the international . . . The charter of the Seattle local, the largest on the coast, was recently taken away, thus depriving that union of a vote in the convention, and the Vancouver membership expressed their indignation very forcibly at Wednesday night's meeting when these facts were pointed out.

Compounding the internal divisions within the union, Vancouver's inside wiring firms immediately attempted to take advantage of the situation. Beginning in early September, 1919, they
announced a wage freeze for all inside wiremen working in the city. But several leading employers were quickly forced to change their minds when 150 wiremen from both Local 621 and Local 213 "hit the bricks" on September 10. As it was pointed out in the press, the larger firms were forced to back down "because there is quite a lot of work that is being held up on account of the strike." Within a two-week period a new journeyman wage scale of eight dollars per day, a two dollar (or 33.3%) increase, had been won for most of the inside wiremen. The impressive financial result of this latest work stoppage was significant as it demonstrated the rank and file's continuing militancy despite the union's internal divisions and increasing employer resistance. It was the last substantial victory the electrical workers would be able to enjoy for several years.

By the end of 1919 it was already becoming apparent that the OBU was not going to succeed. For a time, IBEW members sympathetic to the OBU carried two union cards, and "as long as they paid their dues it was alright." However, the combined resistance of employers, government, and international unions was proving too formidable for the new industrial organization. Like most other "craft" unions in western Canada faced with a similar choice, Local 213's executive board abandoned secession, a decision that caused much acrimony and debate within the local--and which undoubtedly resulted in additional suspensions and expulsions.

Following the IBEW's constitutional procedures, Local 213 sent two delegates, Teddy Morrison and Jack Dubberly, to plead
for the restoration of the local's charter at the international convention being held in late September, 1919. Under the headline "Machine of Convention Worked Smoothly--Pie for Officials," the BC Federationist related how Morrison and Dubberly had not been allowed to speak to the assembled IBEW delegates. In order to make the work easier for international officers in the future, the convention even "empowered them to revoke charters under the same circumstances as was that of Local 213 . . . and with lies that were not allowed to be refuted and strong arm work by officials, the local was lost." 20

The only avenue left open to Local 213 lay through the courts. Charging that the IBEW had acted unconstitutionally in revoking the charter of the Vancouver local, business agent Teddy Morrison began legal proceedings in the fall of 1919. 21 Vice-president Ingles immediately filed a counter-suit charging certain members of Local 213's executive board with having spirited away the funds of the local to keep them out of the hands of the international office. 22

The complicated and often sorry proceedings that followed led Justice James Macdonald of the Supreme Court of British Columbia to find that Local 213 had indeed taken part in activities sympathetic to the OBU. Reviewing the events leading up to the trial, Macdonald referred to the testimony in Vancouver of James P. Noonan, newly elected international president, in order to make clear the position of the international office on certain key issues. Noonan, argued Macdonald, had testified "that the brotherhood had not at any time sanctioned or approved of strikes
against the government or as part of any political movement."
Noonan had also stated that the IBEW "was naturally opposed" both
to the OBU and to the concept of dictatorship of the
proletariat.23

Justice Macdonald significantly noted that Local 213's
suspension had "been brought about in good faith,"24 but found
that the power vested in the international president by Article
19, Section 1, of the IBEW constitution (precisely that under
which Local 213 had been suspended) did not "include the right to
revoke or even suspend the charter."25 He added his opinion that
an amendment (Article 5, Section 9) retroactively increasing the
power of the international president had been added at the recent
IBEW convention in order to specifically deal with Local 213.26
Macdonald declared that "this provision could not be retroac-
tive," that "an inherent right of revocation did not exist in the
brotherhood," and further, that "the suspension and revocation of
the charter were ... contrary to the laws of the land." He
concluded: "It follows, without a lengthy discussion, that the
action of Ingles ... fails."27 Macdonald ordered the restora-
tion of full IBEW membership rights to Local 213, the return of
any property belonging to the Vancouver local, and issued an
extraordinary injunction restraining vice-president Ingles from
interfering in the affairs of the local.28

Despite this favorable decision, Local 213's troubles were
far from over. A charter for a new Vancouver local (Local 310)
had already been issued by the international office. Most of
Vancouver's electrical workers chose to ignore the new local.29
However, there was one important group that did not. Seeing an opportunity to devote more attention to their own problems through the establishment of an independent telephone local, a sizable proportion of the workers employed by BC Tel abandoned Local 213 in favour of Local 310. The telephone workers were also upset because most of the other electrical workers within Local 213 had urged them to join the general strike, but had returned to work at the end of June, "leaving the telephone workers on their own." Significantly, the new local was quickly granted a six-month collective agreement by the BC Telephone Company.

As could only be expected, the new contract proved completely unacceptable to Local 213, "Local 310" being viewed as yet another unwarranted intrusion by the international office into the affairs of Vancouver electrical workers. Local 213's negotiating committee ignored the agreement and approached BC Telephone in order to secure a contract of their own. But company officials were naturally not about to relinquish their unexpected advantage; neither were they prepared to abandon what appeared as a willing and cooperative labour partner in Local 310.

Teddy Morrison and his friends, however, were tenacious trade unionists. Their confidence renewed after the return of Local 213's charter in early 1920, they presented the members of Local 310 with a plan for amalgamation. The latter's leaders refused these advances; among other things it is clear that Local 213 was in a vindictive mood. As a prerequisite for joining
forces, Local 213 required all members of the new telephone local to sit through an examination "testing their knowledge of electricity." Local 213 felt justified in imposing this measure, as Local 310 had apparently allowed itself to be debased by a flood of company men lacking the unionists' technical expertise.

When the talks for reunification with Local 310 proved unsuccessful, Local 213 applied for government arbitration under the IDIA. But BC Telephone communicated to the Department of Labour its view that Local 310 was the IBEW's official representative body in Vancouver's telephone industry. The company consequently reasserted that it would have nothing further to do with Local 213. BC Tel officials cited their willingness to negotiate in good faith with Local 310, with whose representatives it appeared "quite friendly," and signed a second collective agreement--including the closed shop--with the telephone local on May 26, 1920. The BC Federationist surmised that the new contract was the result of the difference in wage demands made by the two competing locals: Local 310 had signed for journeyman rates of $7.00 per day, while Local 213, in discussions with government officials, had tabled an initial demand of $8.00.

At this point events became noticeably more complex. Following established procedure, Local 310 telegraphed the international president of the IBEW asking for approval of the new agreement. But in a surprising development president Noonan did not immediately ratify the contract. Instead, he ordered
international representative Thomas E. Lee to Vancouver and asked that he renew attempts to bring about the amalgamation of Local 310 with Local 213. 38

The sudden interest of the international office in bringing about the amalgamation of the two rival locals cannot be explained with absolute certainty as specific evidence relating to the matter is unavailable. For reasons that remain unclear, the international office was favouring a new approach in relation to one of its thornier internal problems. The crux of the matter lay in having Local 213 accept all card-carrying members of Local 310, including those newly signed-up BC Tel employees without the necessary "qualifications." In a message telegraphed to Morrison, Noonan stated he thought Local 213's requirement of an examination as a pre-condition to amalgamation "unfair and unwarranted," and further, that "new members admitted to three ten . . . also have constitutional rights that must be respected." 39

Unwilling to take on the international office, Local 310, and BC Telephone all at once, Morrison decided to begin mending fences and agreed to drop the examination as a prerequisite to amalgamation. However, it soon became apparent that the international office was not about to get its way. Ignoring Morrison's olive branch and refusing to work toward amalgamation, Local 310 instead requested the BC Telephone Company to enforce the terms of its closed shop agreement. 40 Such a request meant that only those electrical workers with a paid-up membership card in Local 310 could remain with the company. Animosity between the two
conflicting electrical locals naturally intensified with the enforcement of the closed shop, and approximately 70 telephone workers, still loyal to Local 213, were "paid off" by the BC Telephone Company and forced to find new employment. Realizing that their ambitions were being thwarted, the IBEW's international office intervened in Vancouver for the second time in less than a year. Suddenly alleging that the new collective agreement contained "discriminatory clauses contrary to the constitution . . . and that two local unions of this character, engaged in the same work, could not be authorized by the brotherhood in the same district," international representative Lee, on orders from president Noonan, suspended Local 310's charter on June 28, 1920.

Repeating the pattern of a year before, the matter ended up in court once again in front of Justice Macdonald. But the plaintiff on this occasion was not the suspended local. Instead, it was the BC Telephone Company that began legal proceedings against the IBEW and asked the judge to restore Local 310's charter and the right of its membership to negotiate its own contracts.

In his decision handed down on January 10, 1921, Justice Macdonald found the IBEW's use of "unconstitutionality, so termed, . . . an afterthought." The brotherhood's previous ratification of Local 310's agreement with the BC Telephone Company made it "a party to the agreement and in so far as it could be found in this province, it was required to abide by its terms." He then went on to discuss the problems of dealing with "foreign" organizations on Canadian soil and reasserted that
he felt the agreement signed between Local 310 and BC Telephone was "binding and in full force." Further, he felt there "should be an injunction restraining the brotherhood and its officials from a further repetition, within the province, of such revocation in like manner or under similar circumstances." Justice Macdonald concluded: "Plaintiff is entitled to the judgement in terms indicated with costs against the brotherhood, as well as Noonan and Lee." 45

Morally and financially exhausted from the trials and tribulations caused by the general strike, the court cases resulting from the vote on the OBU, and an on-going post-World War One depression that was to last until 1922, Local 213 understandably required a much needed period of rest and resuscitation. But before the electrical workers could begin to enjoy even a brief respite, a not altogether unforeseen obstacle was placed in their path: the BC Electric Company, through its subsidiaries, the Vancouver Power Company and the Vancouver Island Power Company, rejected the recommendations of a board of conciliation that had quietly been appraising evidence from both sides during the month of November, 1920. Though negotiations with Local 213 and Victoria Local 230 had actually begun seven months previous, 46 BC Electric had delayed the signing of an agreement, undoubtedly waiting to see what the outcome of the court cases, then in progress, would be.

Only eleven days after the rendering of Justice Macdonald's final verdict, W. G. Murrin, assistant general manager of the BC Electric Company, publicly announced that his firm was rejecting
the unanimous recommendations of the Board of Conciliation to maintain existing wage scales at their current level of $7.00 per day for journeymen linemen and inside wiremen. Aiming his fire at Local 213, Murrin claimed "that the present scale of wages was higher than that paid by any other company in Canada for similar work, while the cost of living in Vancouver [is] less than in either Winnipeg or Toronto." He then demanded a reduction in salary of $10.00 per month, or approximately ten percent, "applicable to [power house and substation] operators only." He also presented the company's demand for several modifications to a number of clauses pertaining to working conditions, alluding in particular to the existence of the closed shop, which, he declared, "made the operating of utilities very costly."

Given Local 213's weakened condition, caused in large part by the departure of the telephone workers and their monthly payment of dues, an obedient, if unhappy, response to the demands of the BC Electric Company might well have been expected. But such was not to be the case. Having traditionally engaged BC Electric in joint bargaining with Victoria IBEW Local 230, Local 213's leadership resurrected this common front of electrical workers throughout the Lower Mainland and on southern Vancouver Island. With this alliance firmly in place, the enlarged negotiating committee evidently believed that the electrical workers in the two locals could now effectively resist a reduction in their standard of living and the promotion of the open shop.

Local 213 held a special membership meeting to discuss the collective bargaining impasse on Wednesday, February 16, 1921.
The company's offer was presented to the rank and file but was rejected by a large majority who, following Local 230's lead, also voted for a strike mandate to be used if no further progress with the employer could be made. The meeting then instructed its leadership to continue bargaining in an attempt "to prevent an industrial upheaval in the city."\(^50\) Demonstrating that they suspected the true intent of the BC Electric Company, it was also reported in the **BC Federationist** that the Vancouver electrical workers "do not care to have the onus placed on them of being the cause, through acceptance of the company's terms, of a like policy on other employees."\(^51\)

Attempts were made to reverse the power company's position on the issues of critical importance, but to no avail. Few changes in the situation could be reported by the negotiating committee when Local 213 convened once more on Monday, February 21.\(^52\) The pending walkout thus began the following morning.

Repeating the pattern of 1918, the street railwaymen immediately announced that they were considering a demonstration of solidarity with their union brethren in the electrical trades. However, the threat to join the approximately 200 Vancouver electrical workers on the picket lines was delayed so long as the company continued to negotiate.\(^53\) Understandably concerned lest the strike affect the life of his community, Mayor Gale also inserted himself into the collective bargaining process. But as with the telephone operators in 1919, he was again unable to produce a compromise solution.\(^54\) Talks then dragged on, the strike lasting until March 8, 1921, when the company suddenly
agreed to sign the original award handed down by the Board of Conciliation and Investigation. A compromise settlement to begin with, the agreement preserved the closed shop for the IBEW, but allowed for no increase in wages.

The reasons accounting for BC Electric's about-face were probably two-fold. In the first place, public opinion remained neutral throughout the two-week shutdown, despite growing problems with non-functioning street lights in municipalities serviced by the company. The Vancouver Sun, for instance, reported on February 26 that "many of the outlying districts where carbons [in street lamps] are used find that the service is seriously affected. Chilliwack, Lulu Island, and even parts of Point Grey and South Vancouver have not had the carbons renewed for several days and the lights that are still functioning are the exception rather than the rule." Public neutrality--or at least the neutrality of the local press--may have been caused by the fact that BC Electric was applying for a "new franchise bill at Ottawa" at the time, solely, according to its critics, in order to avoid municipal guidelines as to the future development of public transportation. Further, the union was not asking for a wage increase, while the company was popularly noted for poor service and comparatively high rates.

What may also have forced the BC Electric Company to sign the Conciliation Board agreement was the knowledge that its street railway system could be seriously and expensively damaged if electrical workers were not immediately available to repair any failure in the system. As a young electrical worker on the
picket line, Matt Gerard (Senior) remembered: "For two weeks of the strike, not one piece of trolley or wire fell, but the day we settled several came down. The company gave in just in time." In other words, the cost of winning additional concessions was proving to be more politically and financially expensive to the company than accepting what had already been achieved through the Conciliation Board.

The BC Electric Company was not yet finished with the electrical workers. Less than a month after the end of the strike, the firm decided to contract out its work on several construction projects then underway in the Lower Mainland; three contractors were chosen, Peterson Electric, H. Rumble Electric, and Chilliwack Electric. The Vancouver local declared a strike against the three on April 12, 1921, citing a section of the collective agreement stipulating that "any ... work performed for, or at the intervention of the company, by contractors, subcontractors, or third parties, shall be performed only by members in good standing of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers." It was obvious that BC Electric was not adhering to the spirit of this agreement, as the contractors were openly violating its letter. Local 213 did not succeed in enforcing the closed shop on the three electrical contractors. As late as May 26, 1922, The British Columbia Labor News was still listing the above-mentioned firms on its "Don't Patronize List."  

Four of the most turbulent years in Local 213's history ended with the general wage reduction BC Electric forced IBEW members to accept in 1922. Exhausted, far from united, and
starved for funds since the summer before, another work stoppage was simply too much to ask. In addition, the once-militant street railwaymen had accepted a ten percent wage cut in the preceding month; Local 213's Minute Books for February 22, 1922, therefore faithfully record "that a vote be taken that a cut be accepted." The new agreement nonetheless appeared to preserve the closed shop, thereby averting a complete capitulation to BC Electric's demands. Prior to adjourning, the meeting passed "a vote of confidence in Bro. Morrison," indicating the role that Morrison had played in organizing the union's tactical retreat, but that union activists did not hold their business agent personally responsible for their collective setback. Rather, an urgent need for stability and the concomitant revitalization of Local 213 appeared to be the order of the day.

The repercussions to events that had taken place in the open shop drive since the end of the war were far-reaching. Local 310 continued to obtain agreements from BC Telephone until May, 1926, when the firm suddenly refused to meet with the union's negotiating committee. That company had patiently bided its time, waiting for an opportune moment to dispense with unionism altogether. As Elaine Bernard has remarked: "The Company had never intended to permanently accept the union and was again trying to crush it." BC Tel succeeded on this occasion, despite last-minute "assistance" from a Mr. Noble, international representative for the IBEW. A subsequent conciliation board found it was "most singular" that Noble, and other union repre-
sentatives, did not even know "what the employees . . . . are being paid at the present time."67 By 1930 Local 310 was to disappear altogether.68

Sub-Local 77A befell a similar fate. Poorly paid to begin with, the female telephone operators had also been out on strike the longest in 1919. The funds needed to maintain their organization successfully were sorely lacking. Moreover, isolated from the other electrical workers in a separate local of their own, supervised by hostile personnel who owed their positions to having "scabbed" during the general strike, and neglected because of the infighting between the international office, Local 213 and Local 310, the operators allowed Local 77A formally to go out of existence by the mid-1920s.69

The crushing defeat of the telephone workers was symptomatic of organized labour's general decline throughout the post-war decade. With the failure of the OBU and of industrial unionism, radicals within the trade union movement also lost much of their support. Craft unionism regained its former preponderance and international labour bodies reasserted their authority. Combined with a precarious resurgence in the fortunes of North American capitalism, a conservative reaction set in that was to remain in place until the late 1930s.70

But the 1920s also saw the birth of the Communist Party of Canada. Founded in 1921 as a result of the success of the Russian revolution in 1917, the new party attracted many of the leading lights in the OBU and the Socialist Party of Canada.71 By January, 1922, a significant minority of the left in British
Columbia had decided to align itself "with the revolutionary workers of the Third International." Though it took some years to gain momentum and credibility, the impact of the Communist Party on the trade union life of the province would be of great importance; Local 213, in particular, would be very much affected.

Industrial unionism seemed a dying concern in 1922. Yet, despite its failure as a social and political force at this historical juncture, its appeal to workers had nevertheless been widespread. The electrical workers in Local 213, for one, had been attracted to the concept in order to overcome their numerous conflicts with employers, government, and McNulty's--then Noonan's--IBEW. And because of its explicit challenge to existing norms of social relations, industrial unionism naturally engendered a radical analysis of society. The fact that William F. Dunne had begun his career with Local 213 and later became a noted American communist should, therefore, have been little cause for surprise to knowledgeable observers. As with other electrical workers, he was representative of the leading edge of the radical spirit that infused many of the exponents of pre-1920 industrial unionism, a spirit which Local 213 appeared, for a time, to accept and to encourage. Such advocates left behind a legacy of working-class activism that would reappear in subsequent years, though it would be reconstituted in quite different forms.
NOTES


3 At a special meeting of Local 213 on June 1, 1919, a vote was taken showing only 152 in favour of participation in the general strike, as opposed to 172 against. "Live-Wire" Special Edition, op. cit., p. 24.

4 BC Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 1.

5 Bernard, op. cit., p. 61.


7 Ibid., July 4, 1919, p. 13.


9 These were as follows:

1. That L.U. 213 did by a majority vote express their intention to withdraw from the IBEW. This is a violation of Section 10 of Article 4.

2. That the members of L.U. 213 did go on strike against employers in violation of agreements with those employers. This is in violation of Section 5 of Article 4.

3. That L.U. 213 did order the funds of the Local Union to be spirited away and that the membership as a whole are ignorant of their present whereabouts. This is in violation of Section 10 of Article 4.

4. That L.U. 213 did place a clause in some of their agreements known as a sympathetic strike clause which lends itself to the belief that L.U. 213 intends calling a general strike in the future. This is in violation of Section 9 of Article 4.

Cited in ibid.


12 Ibid.
The Daily World reported that shortly after Ingles had revoked Local 213's charter, the executive board of the local union sought "an injunction to prevent [him] from expelling local members from the brotherhood, and asking for an order for personal reinstatement." Aug. 30, 1919, p. 11.

The new amendment gave special authority to the International President to "either suspend or revoke the charter of any Local Union that refuses to observe the law or decisions rendered by proper authority, subject to appeal to International Executive Council and Convention successfully." Cited in ibid., p. 63.

There is some dispute as to how many telephone workers actually joined Local 310. In his decision of Jan. 10, 1921, Justice Macdonald states that he believed the "greater number . . . were members of 310 though some belonged to 213." However,
he also admits in the next line that this assessment was "repudiated by the defendant Morrison." "British Columbia Telephone Company v. Morrison, The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union No. 213, and Local Union No. 310, of such Brotherhood, et al." British Columbia Supreme Court Trial, Western Weekly Reports, V. 1, Jan. 10, 1921, p. 697. In addition, the BC Federationist reported that Local 310 "cannot be functioning very well, because 90 per cent of the membership of the old local is still paying its dues, corresponding with and attending the weekly meeting of Local 213." BC Federationist, Sept. 26, 1919, p. 1.

31 Bernard, op. cit., p. 63.
33 Cited in telegram reproduced in ibid., p. 700.
34 Ibid.
36 This is the opinion of Justice Macdonald. Ibid., p. 697.
37 BC Federationist, June 18, 1920, p. 1.
38 "BC Tel v. Morrison," op. cit., p. 702.
39 Cited in ibid., p. 700.
40 Ibid., p. 702.
41 BC Federationist, op. cit.
43 Ibid., p. 703.
44 Ibid., p. 701.
46 BC Federationist, Feb. 18, 1921, p. 1.
48 See the commentaries in the BC Federationist, Feb. 18, 1921, p. 1; and Feb. 25, 1921, p. 1.
49 Labour Gazette, op. cit.
50 BC Federationist, Feb. 18, 1921, p. 1.
At this meeting Local 213's negotiating committee also presented arguments that purported to show that though the cost of living had allegedly dropped by three percent since October, 1920, the Vancouver electrical workers still lagged far behind the increase in inflation as compared with the increase in their rates of pay since 1914. The negotiating committee therefore reiterated their rejection of the companies' demand for a cut in wages. It was also pointed out that the BC Electric Company could afford to pay the members of Local 213 more money than electrical workers elsewhere in Canada. This was because the west coast utility charged what was believed to be an onerous 8.5 cents per kilo-watt hour to its customers. In contrast, other companies charged four to five cents in Calgary, three cents in Winnipeg, and from two to five cents in Montreal. Ibid., Feb. 25, 1921, p. 7.

Local 213 did eventually win collective agreements with Peterson Electric and what was known as Hume and Rumble by 1926. The terms of the agreements included the closed shop and were the same as those between the union and the BC Electric Company, "with the exception that wages for all classes of work are 25 cents per day higher." This latter concession made up the difference in travelling costs and other benefits for the construction line crews, as BC Electric employees received free transportation on the Lower Mainland's street railway system, and lower user fees for electrical heat and lighting bills. See the reference to these agreements in the Labour Gazette, March, 1930, p. 237.

On July 4, 1921, it was recorded in Local 213's Minute Books that it had asked "the international office for a remission of the per capita tax for three months." Financial problems were even more evident on August 15, 1921, when it was recorded that "owing to lack of funds in this local [the Business Agent's]
office would be closed after tonight, as it is impossible to continue operations on the present basis of income and expenditure."


63 **Minute Books**, Feb. 22, 1922 (no page #).

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.


68 In fact, the remaining members came back into Local 213 on February 1, 1930. See **Minute Books**, Jan. 31, 1930 (no page #). But it is doubtful that very many of them continued to pay dues to the IBEW, or even attempted to further the goals of trade unionism within the BC Telephone Company, as there are only one or two references in their regard within Local 213 thereafter.


CHAPTER IV--THE MORRISON YEARS,
1922-1939

Local 213 was not exempt from the swing to conservatism that characterized the labour movement in Canada in the decade following 1919. Strikes became less frequent as it rapidly became apparent that the corporate offensive, combined with a gradual stability in the standard of living, had drained the working class of its previous militancy. With a membership of scarcely 455 in 1922 (see Appendix A: Table 6 and Graph 5), there was little doubt that the major concern of Local 213's executive board was simply survival. The remainder of the 1920s, then, represents a lengthy period when the tradition of militant class struggle took a backseat to compromise and a reliance on the use of more orthodox methods of collective bargaining.¹

Yet class conflict persisted in Local 213, three strikes being recorded toward mid-decade (see Appendix A: Table 5).² Moreover, the electrical workers did not completely abandon the attempt to foster economic, social, or political change. On the contrary, a concerted effort was made to promote a more egalitarian society, a society in which working people could be afforded at least some protection from the vagaries of an unstable economic system, and where they would also have a much greater say in the decision-making process affecting their own lives. But, as with other Vancouver unions in the 1920s, this had to be done within a less congenial atmosphere, the employers' offensive and the apparent triumph of business unionism ensuring the creation of a justifiably pragmatic outlook.
With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, the leadership of IBEW Local 213 withdrew even deeper into a defensive shell. No strikes or lockouts were officially recorded throughout the 1930s (see Appendix A: Table 5), the prime objective being the securing of employment rather than an increase in wages. But the Depression ultimately led to the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1935-37; the renewal of industrial unionism shook the AFL leadership and had important repercussions within Local 213. In general, however, the history of Local 213 during the 1920s and 1930s was far less turbulent than it had been in the past. Dominated by Teddy Morrison, business agent until 1939, the local projected a conservative image that was not completely undeserved. Despite the small size of his local, Morrison remained a key figure in Vancouver trade union politics throughout this period; the former One Big Unionist personified the trends of the 1920s and early 1930s and was instrumental in setting the tone for much of the rest of the local trade union movement.

Born in 1875 in Belfast, Ireland, Edmund Henry (Teddy) Morrison moved at an early age with his family to Edinburgh, Scotland, where he attended the highly acclaimed George Heriot School. Among Vancouver electrical workers, Morrison's background was unusual: his father had been a well-to-do Presbyterian minister and young Teddy lived what his eldest son described as a very "gentle middle-class life." Teddy had apparently wanted to become a naval surgeon, but when his father died unexpectedly, the long and expensive studies required for the pursuit of such a
career suddenly became unattainable. Thrust into the world, Morrison went to sea at seventeen or eighteen, his first ship being the "Ballahulish," a windjammer owned by the Highland line of Glasgow. After undergoing several years of harsh experience, what he often described as "the myriad ways by which sailors were exploited," Morrison jumped ship in Vancouver at the end of the 1890s, never returning to his native shores.  

Skilled in the use of ropes and winches, and unafraid of heights, young Morrison would have been familiar with the dangerous tendencies of electricity; the static form of this energy posed a constant hazard to the crews of sailing ships. It was thus not unnatural for him to gravitate towards the electrical trades in Canada. He worked as a lineman in the Vancouver area at the turn of the century and must, by this time or before, have been exposed to the value of trade unionism. Indeed, Morrison's name appears among the seven signatures officially affixed to Local 213's charter in 1901.  

Morrison then worked for several years throughout the Pacific Northwest, living in both Vancouver, and Everett, Washington, before returning to the former city around 1913. Intelligent, though unusually soft-spoken and hesitant in speech, he was elected business agent of Local 213 in 1914 when William F. Dunne resigned the post to become international organizer, part of the agreement that brought the Vancouver local back into McNulty's IBEW following its six-year leave of absence. But the cost of radicalism became clear in the aftermath of the OBU adventure, the Vancouver general strike, and the ensuing court
cases. Thereafter it appears that Morrison decided to throw in his lot with international business unionism, though he did not completely abandon his previous socialist outlook. After a short period of grace he was elected to the executive board of the restructured Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, and was also chairman and member, at various times, of the BC executive of the TLC. He was also president of the Vancouver Building Trades Council (VBTC) for a number of years, and took an active part generally in all trade union affairs. 5

In a photograph first published in The Labor Statesman on August 30, 1929, 6 Morrison as business agent has the look of an eccentric labour aristocrat. Well-dressed, he radiates an air of confidence. His round face and pudgy cheeks are topped by a wavy lock of short blond hair, a single curl rising several inches above his receding hairline. These boyish looks were offset, however, by the glass monocle he wore in his left eye, which lent him, perhaps, more of a Germanic than a Scotch-Irish appearance. His stern, unsmiling presence in the 1920s was easily recalled by Harold Winch, who began his apprenticeship as an inside wireman in 1926. As the former British Columbia socialist leader commented six decades later:

I was subjected to Teddy Morrison's vindictiveness because of his dislike of my father [Ernest Winch, a prominent factionalist in the OBU]. The union was dominated—was run—by what we termed the Morrison machine. Morrison had a number of cronies and they controlled and they ran that union—no question of doubt about that. . . . There was no political activity in the union that I can remember at that time whatsoever. Any progressive thought or anything that ran counter to what the executive board decided was simply steamrollered.
But despite Winch's accurate recollection of Teddy Morrison's personal style, the manner in which he ran roughshod over any perceived opposition, and the conservative climate of opinion then prevalent among the electrical workers, Local 213 under Teddy Morrison cannot be categorically dismissed as reactionary and politically apathetic. Throughout this period, the local's leadership would support, at least in principle, positions espoused by Winch himself at the time of his election as CCF member for Vancouver East to the British Columbia legislature in November, 1933. Possibly too, Harold Winch learned more of his socialist politics from Local 213 than he later cared to admit.

Indicative of the philosophical direction adopted by Morrison and his "cronies" in the 1920s were the editorials written by H. W. "Willy" Watts, 'longtime electrical worker and perennial figure on the edge of Local 213's power structure. 8 Watts was managing editor of The BC Labor News, in existence for over a year between 1921 and 1922, then of The Labor Statesman, which began publication in 1924, supplanting the defunct BC Federationist as the official voice of the VTLC. 9 Watts' first editorial in The BC Labor News grappled with the problem of trade union affiliation, stating its case "on behalf of the International Trade Union movement" even though "the American Federation of Labor is far from being an ideal organization." Outlining the spectacular rise and fall of the OBU, he added that labour could not "and must not be carried away by dogma" lest it "lose its power of resistance to organized capital by adopting visionary,
idealistic schemes which only tend to end up in the division of the workers."

Yet, as with much of the labour movement in British Columbia, Local 213 continued to be attracted to the idea of industrial unionism. On April 17, 1923, only two months after the official re-accrediting of Local 213's delegates to the VTLC,11 a unanimous vote was recorded in the central labour body on a resolution urging the TLC to contact the various international unions, "for the purpose of consolidating the present craft unions into powerful departmentalized industrial organizations, each of which shall cover an industry."12 While industrial unionism was a dead issue to most orthodox trade unionists across Canada,13 Local 213 served notice that it had not completely forsaken the concept when it amalgamated in 1925 with Local 621, a previously separate inside wiremen's local.

The continuing support the electrical workers gave to industrial unionism in the early 1920s was complemented by important financial and personal contributions to the Canadian Labor Party (CLP). Responding to the lead of the street railwaymen and the carpenters, Local 213 affiliated to the new umbrella organization, voting to pay a monthly per capita tax in addition to sending a number of delegates to its founding convention in May, 1924.14 The CLP in British Columbia did not succeed in the attempt to merge a wide variety of component groups—twenty-eight Vancouver unions, the VTLC, three branches of the Federated Labor Party of British Columbia and, most importantly, two branches of the Workers' (Communist) Party of Canada15—into a viable
political unit. Nevertheless, the CLP's provisional program stated, among other objectives, that it desired:

(d) To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof;

(e) Generally to promote the political, social, and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life.

One of the most important personal contributions from Local 213 to the CLP was the decision by Teddy Morrison to accept his nomination as candidate in Vancouver in time for the June, 1924, provincial election. Undoubtedly disillusioned with the lack of progress achieved through the medium of the general strike, Morrison was only the first of several left-wing candidates for political office to issue out of Local 213. But, according to his eldest son, Edmund (Jr.), Teddy Morrison was a terrible choice as candidate as he was definitely "not a glad-hander," and was also a poor public speaker. A political columnist for The Vancouver Daily Province even went so far as to write: "Mr. Morrison speaks with the force and slow irresistibility of a glacier photographed in slow motion." Handily defeated in a Liberal sweep of the five at-large Vancouver seats, the electrical worker nevertheless managed to garner 5,613 votes, finishing just behind future Labour MP Angus McInnes.

Local 213's involvement with the Labour Party continued for four more years, its militant program perhaps a contributing factor to the declaration by Teddy Morrison in 1926 that he was opposed to Labour Day because it "was a day set aside by our kind masters for us." But, regardless of their political convic-
tions on a variety of issues, it soon became clear that the six
delegates from Local 213, among others, could not stomach
apparently growing communist influence in the CLP. Matters began
to deteriorate in September, 1927, when communist delegates,
"there in full strength, were able to outvote the other organiza-
tions, who were poorly represented," on the question of the
number of candidates to run in Vancouver during the next provin-
cial election. So upset were the electrical workers' delegates
by the CLP decision to run a full slate of candidates, when trade
unionists wanted to concentrate their energies in only two
campaigns, that at Local 213's next regular meeting a motion was
passed unanimously, demanding "a referendum vote of the entire
membership affiliated with the Canadian Labor Party on the
question of running six or two candidates."

Such tempestuous disagreement over a tactical, essentially
superficial, issue was characteristic of the climate of division
existing within the CLP. Although all individual political
stripes were allowed and were present within the party, commu-
nists derided established trade union leaders, social democrats,
liberals, and conservatives. But these groups also gave as well
as they took; to make matters worse, they also fought each
other.

The crisis brewing within the CLP peaked at its annual
convention held in March, 1928. Though they were still in a
distinct minority, the communist delegates dominated proceedings
once again, their hard work and superior organization evidently
paying off as the convention adopted a number of resolutions
demanding the release of class war prisoners, sending congratulations to the Soviet Union, and demanding that imperialist nations keep their "Hands off China!"  

Significantly, the attending delegates also passed a resolution favouring voting rights for British Columbia orientals, this hotly contested proposal to be inserted in the CLP's soon-to-be-released electoral platform. 

Such a resolution was all the anti-communist element required to rid itself of the aggressive and increasingly unwanted influence of the reds. Willy Watts, for one, reverted to the anti-oriental prejudices he had exhibited in "The Peril Increases," an article published early in his journalistic career. Tendering his resignation as a delegate from Local 213 to the CLP on April 2, 1928, Watts also prompted a motion asking that the local discontinue the payment of its per capita tax and sever all connections with the CLP. Though the resolution was amended to a call to investigate the local's political ties, there was little doubt of the tactics soon to be adopted by that section of the trade union movement increasingly opposed to working with the communists. In the following month, several unions, most notably the pile drivers and the carpenters, moved to have the VTLC disaffiliate from the CLP. A referendum was also sent out on the issue of oriental enfranchisement, Local 213 being one of thirty-two local unions to vote in opposition, only four smaller unions returning a majority of ballots in favour. Then, at their respective regular meetings on May 14, both the carpenters and the electrical workers passed near-unanimous motions to withdraw from the CLP, and asked the VTLC to do the
same. 31 This was, of course, exactly what happened, the recently formed Independent Labour Party (ILP) also abandoning the fast-sinking political ship of the CLP to the Communist Party. The Labor Statesman breathed a sigh of relief in response to these developments, remarking that organized labour "is now in a position to endorse political candidates whose efforts are along the lines of remedying social legislation, instead of being hampered by a particular group who do not believe in reforms . . ." 32

The departure of the VTLC from the CLP marked the end of Local 213's official involvement in a political organization until the formation of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. However, it did not impede individual electrical workers from running for public office, nor for that matter from being endorsed by the VTLC. Willy Watts and fellow IBEW member J. B. Brown were candidates for the ILP in 1928, Watts repeating his unsuccessful effort in 1930 and 1932. 33 Like the CLP, the ILP was nominally a socialist party, calling for the creation of a municipal bank and the public ownership of all public utilities--including presumably BC Electric--premised on the idea that "the workers produce all the values owned by any one man or set of men." 34 Local 213 posted the ILP's manifesto in the union hall, 35 but it was now apparent that its leadership was no longer willing to undergo what was clearly perceived as the disruptive and ultimately disillusioning experience of affiliating the local to any labour political group or association.
As for the Communist Party, it officially abandoned its attempts made during the 1920s to influence, "by boring from within," either trade unions or working-class political organizations like the CLP. On orders from Moscow in the summer of 1928, the Party turned to a policy of "class against class," whereby socialists, social democrats, or trade union leaders unwilling to subordinate their tactics to those of the communists, were opposed at every turn and castigated as "social fascists." Adopted because leading Soviet analysts believed the period of relative economic stability experienced in the capitalist countries during the post-war era was coming to an end, the new policy was meant to provide leadership to the masses throughout the anticipated revolutionary upheaval. Only partly correct in their assessment of the future, the announcement of this "third period" ensured that communists in Canada who did as they were told would likely be expelled from local trade union bodies, or be marginalized in dual left-wing unions. 36 Within Local 213 the change in tactics made little difference as there did not yet appear to be any communists active among the electrical workers.

During the 1920s other problems had also assailed Local 213. Strikes involving linemen and inside wiremen were reported in the Labour Gazette during 1925, 1926, and 1927, 37 but only the last one was of any real significance, lasting approximately two months and involving Hume and Rumble and CHE Williams, the largest building contractors in the lower mainland 38 (see Appendix A: Table 5). Wages were once again at the heart of the dispute, the contractors maintaining they could not afford the
demand by Local 213 for an increase of $1.00 per day. The inside wiremen finally walked out in July, 1927, effectively crippling the work on sixteen construction sites throughout Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria and Nanaimo. Though there were problems with a number of strikebreakers, those participating in the walkout did succeed in convincing several non-union men to join them on the picket lines and fill out application forms for admission into the IBEW. The two affected firms retaliated by having the other electrical contractors threaten a lockout of all IBEW men in their employ, and also put out a call to every striking electrician asking him to abandon his membership in Local 213. The electrical contracting firms were immediately countered by an angry Teddy Morrison who, as chairman of the VBTC executive, threatened to pull out all the construction trades in response.

The verbal posturing brought about a compromise agreement, a journeyman wage scale of $8.00 per day for a forty-four hour week being accepted by both sides. The employers also ended their demands for the dismemberment of Local 213 and promised to help, if at all possible, in the organization of a number of open shop firms in Vancouver. On the other hand, by accepting a wage scale that had originally been won in 1919, the electrical workers effectively demonstrated that the intervening years had been decidedly barren of any advance in their personal standard of living.

The repercussions of the strike demonstrated the lengths to which Local 213 was now prepared to go in order to appease
employers once a collective agreement was signed. An arrangement was arrived at whereby all the men who had scabbed during the strike would be segregated and placed on a job by themselves. Further, when the CHE Williams Company objected to having one particular electrician return to its employ, Teddy Morrison announced, in a gesture of conciliation, that "the man was removed . . . at [the] request of Mr. Williams." Conditions of employment improved substantially in the next three years, the inside wiremen winning a closed shop agreement with five electrical construction firms at $8.40 per day in 1928, increasing to $9.00 in 1929, then to $9.40 in 1930. Moreover, the increases were all won without having to resort to a strike. Yet all was not sweetness and light, the struggle with employers continuing in less obvious ways. Issues raised at the local's regular meetings reappeared year after year, as in a symphonic variation on a single theme. Attempts were repeatedly made to organize non-union firms, forcing recalcitrant employers to hire electrical workers through the union hall rather than through personal contact, policing the provisions of the collective agreement--in particular as it related to the new three-to-one ratio between apprentices and journeymen--and making sure that Local 213 card men had priority over travelling "permit" men on each and every job.

Safety at the workplace was also an issue of some concern to the local's leadership. Reacting to a study released by the IBEW on the accident rate in the electrical industry, Willy Watts waxed eloquent about "the darkness of the industrial struggle,"
caused by the persevering existence of "class disease."

Indicating that "about 50 per cent of the deaths among union electrical workers are due to the character of the workers' occupation," the IBEW study showed quite conclusively that "electrical workers, like all wage-earners, are ravaged by tuberculosis, and pneumonia, diseases which take their toll among men, where proper food and sanitary conditions are not forthcoming, and where exposure plays an excessive part incident to the job." More spectacular, though perhaps statistically less damaging, was the fact that IBEW members across North America in the years 1922 to 1928 had suffered an average of thirty-five deaths by electrocution each twelve-month period.\textsuperscript{53} Local 213 was definitely not an exception to this inevitable finger of fact, president J. B. Brown succumbing on September 24, 1928, "following an accident he met with at Earl's Road Substation ... through coming in contact with 34,000 volts while cleaning a switch in the performance of his duties."\textsuperscript{54} But it seemed that line work continued to be the most dangerous occupation in the IBEW. Working with live wires at dizzying heights while exposed to wind, rain, sleet, and snow could cause accidents of horrifying proportions. So could the degeneration by these same elements of the wooden poles linemen were forced to climb. Percy Hambly, long-since retired, remembered his accident while working in Vancouver in 1927, and linked it with the inability of Local 213 to consistently enforce safety provisions outlined in the collective agreement:

We'd get agreements signed, conditions on the poles agreed to, and then the companies would change
them. That's what burned me. . . . They had moved the cable on the top cross-arm, and the pot-head was now twelve to fourteen inches below the terminals. You'd have your belt above the cross-arm, and then you'd have about six inches to work with. That's a hot line you were working with too--2,300 volts. I didn't notice this big sun check on the side of the pole. It was cracked, and when I pulled on it I fell off balance and fell right on top of the pot-head. I'd been working at my belt with my hands at the time, and when I fell head-first I put my hands up to protect my eyes. Kicking my right foot, I knocked the left timer out. My own weight broke me loose of the pot-heads and then I passed out. . . . I lost all my hair from the accident and my hands never healed from the shock and copper poisoning. I was in the hospital for a year and a half, and then I was in and out three or four times for a couple of operations afterwards.

Also indicative of the union's weakness in the late 1920s was its diversion away from the struggle for higher wages, better working conditions, and from the effort to build a viable working-class political party. Following on the heels of the destruction of the CLP in 1928, Local 213 became embroiled in an unsuccessful general strike of construction workers. Precipitated by the carpenters, the strike was an attempt to have employers hire only workers belonging to international unions, not those belonging to so-called "dual" unions, affiliated to the nationalist All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL). 56 Local 213 joined the walkout to press its jurisdictional claim over about ten electricians belonging to the ACCL's tiny Electrical Workers Association (ACEWA). 57 But the strike collapsed after a few days, due largely to the apathetic response of some of the unions affiliated to the international unions' Building Trades Council. 58 Strengthened by this outcome, the ACEWA continued to compete against Local 213 for jurisdiction on a number of jobsites in the following years, its membership climbing to a
high of around fifty in 1930. It then succumbed to the ravages of the Great Depression and was reduced to a handful of men working mostly in Burrard Dry Dock in North Vancouver.

The Great Depression had a profound effect on British Columbia's economy, and the electrical workers in Local 213 were not exempt from the ensuing personal frustration and sense of futility that are the by-products of long-term unemployment. Hardest hit was the construction sector, the local losing almost two-thirds of its inside wiremen between 1930 and 1939. For those that continued to pay their union dues, the experience of steady work was usually the exception rather than the rule.

In April, 1932, the construction wiremen were forced to accept an official wage scale of $8.00 per day (a close to 15% wage reduction), with strong indications that several members of the section were arranging to work for even less. What was worse was that the local had to settle for verbal agreements with both line and inside contractors, the major companies refusing to commit themselves to the minimal stipulations of a written contract. Arrangements with employers were increasingly made on a day-to-day basis depending on location, the number of men to be hired, and also on the duration and type of work to be done.

IBEW members employed by the BC Electric Company were much better off, a collective agreement remaining in force with the giant utility. In addition, the pink slips were far less numerous, and the outlook for stability in employment more assured. Though part-time work rapidly became the norm, with rotating shifts of only three or four days' work per week,
(down from the usual five-and-a-half), amicable relations between the company and the local union leadership were maintained. These had been considerably improved since the 1921 strike, a less militant membership and an equally less demanding Teddy Morrison proving an amenable combination for the purposes of the company. Relations became strained anew in March, 1933, when journeyman wages were slashed from $7.75 per day to $6.98 per day, a reduction of approximately ten percent in the rate first established in 1928. In a divisive seventy-six to seventy-three decision against strike action, the majority opposed to a walkout "if it becomes necessary . . . to maintain present conditions," BC Electric workers in Local 213 voted to take the reduction without putting up a fight. The wages accepted were considerably lower than those for the construction wiremen, but this was part of a continuing trade-off for security of employment, free transportation, and lower utility rates. Though ten days holiday with pay were eventually granted by the BC Electric Company in 1939, conditions and hours of work remained disastrously poor throughout the decade for all branches of the electrical trade.

The 1930s also witnessed continued poor relations with the international office of the IBEW, particularly once Vancouver electrical workers began implementing protective measures in response to the economic crisis. On January 20, 1930, international representative J. Scott Milne appeared at a regular meeting of Local 213 and started an impromptu debate with Teddy Morrison. Milne began by deploring what he described as
Morrison's practice of refusing to organize all small contractors who did little work, maintaining that the Vancouver local should sign up as many electrical workers as possible. This included the ACEWA which, according to Milne, could develop into a source of serious trouble for Local 213. He also recommended that the executive board endeavour to cultivate "a better spirit and closer co-operation . . . between the Local & the employers."  

In his rebuttal, Morrison denied that he was not in favour of organizing the smaller shops, but stated that "he did not consider it advisable under present conditions . . . pointing out the fallacy of organizing all & sundry" in a time of rising unemployment. He added that he did not believe the ACEWA should be accepted into the IBEW for this reason, the recent jurisdictional disputes on several jobsites undoubtedly intensifying his suspicions of the nationalist group.

The debate between Teddy Morrison and J. Scott Milne was followed in March of the same year by an attempt to revive the Pacific District Council of the IBEW. Announcing that this was a necessary first step to improve conditions of work on the west coast, Morrison even went so far as to agree to a per capita tax of twenty-five cents per member per month at the founding convention of the reborn regional group. This challenge to the centralizing authority of the international office was, of course, immediately resisted, Local 213 receiving an official circular in September, "instructing [the] Local to withdraw from [the] Nth. W. Conference of Elect. Wkrs, & to pay no further per capita to such organization." The second version of the
Pacific District Council then collapsed, several of the leading locals preferring to withdraw rather than face the wrath of the international office.

Relations between Local 213 and the international office of the IBEW reached another low point only three years later. The Vancouver local had been assessing its working members an extra per capita rate of $1.00 per month beginning in May, 1931, increasing to $2.00 in February, 1931, in order to keep unemployed electrical workers from losing their membership in the IBEW by reason of nonpayment of union dues. The local, unfortunately, received a ruling from international president Broach against using the funds of the union for this purpose.

However, on May 12, 1933, Local 213's executive board decided to ignore the ruling, recommending instead, "that [the] Local pay per capita tax on cards of unemployed members, & [another] assessment be levied the following month to recover monies so expended."

Once again the international office intervened in Vancouver. International vice-president Ingles was sent to investigate Local 213's financial affairs in November, 1933, and also to act as referee in deciding on charges laid against the officers on the executive board. Realizing the error of their ways, the officers must have quickly withdrawn their recommendation to oppose the ruling by international president Broach, Ingles finding that they were "exonerated of [all] charges preferred against them."

The only exception appears to have been local president William Fraser who, because of his "non-cooperation" with Ingles, was suspended both from his post and from attending local union
meetings. Within a few days he was joined by rank and file members Whittol and Baker who had also been suspended. Local 213 then appears to have changed its previous financial support of unemployed members to the status of loans, and to reassure everyone concerned, also passed a resolution to rescind "all previous motions relating to relief funds." As for the three suspended members, they were eventually reinstated in August, 1934, following the sending of a petition to Daniel J. Tracy, newly elected international president of the IBEW.

In the meantime, Local 213 had also been busy on other fronts. Willy Watts had come full circle and was now writing in The Labor Statesman that "capitalism is incurable as it is utterly ill-fitted to present needs" and since "reform is impossible," workers needed to discuss "practical means of securing socialism in our time, a co-operative commonwealth, production for use rather than for profit." (see Appendix B: Document 7). Teddy Morrison, in contrast, did believe in the possibility of bringing about reforms within capitalism, returning repeatedly to his favourite subject--first enunciated in 1918--on the necessity to reduce the hours of work so as to bring down the level of unemployment. He even once advised the assembled members of Local 213 to consider the radical notion of "four hours per week at a wage which allow workers to live respectably & enjoy life." He later moderated his demand as chairman of an official delegation from the VTLC to the provincial government in October, 1937, requesting an hours of work act covering all workers in British Columbia, yet clearly reaffirming the old OBU
demand for "the six-hour day and five-day week, or maximum of thirty hours in any one week." The Morrison-led officials from the VTLC also requested the Liberal majority in Victoria to consider establishing a minimum wage act, holidays with pay, health insurance, and an improved workmen's compensation act. They also stated that the government should put more money in circulation through the medium of wages and salaries, and hence increase "the purchasing power of the masses," because it was necessary "to maintain a balance between production and consumption in order to meet modern production methods."85

But though Watts may have called for the abolition of capitalism and Morrison for significant reforms, neither of them proved willing to establish a serious, working relationship with the Communist Party, an organization that was becoming increasingly important in the trade union life of the province. The Labor Statesman lashed out time and again at these "self-appointed trouble makers," declaring that "we don't want any foreign dictatorship, nor a Canadian dictatorship,"86 while Morrison supported the 1932 expulsion from the VTLC of the carpenters' communist delegate, Arthur "Slim" Evans.87 Two years later, he also helped author a well-publicized resolution (see Appendix B: Document 8) aimed principally at Charles Stewart, another well-known Vancouver communist, and in this case a delegate for the street railwaymen's union. The resolution called for the VTLC to begin a process "that will expedite the entry of all citizens of this Dominion who sincerely believe in the Soviet form of Government into the U.S.S.R."88 Interestingly
enough, it was recorded that "following considerable discussion the resolution was non-concurred in, 30 voting for and 32 against." 89

Yet, antagonism toward the Communist Party did not necessarily imply support for its rival, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. In the same year the electrical local was presenting the motion to send all Canadian communists to the Soviet Union, it also refused officially to support the CCF, the socialist party Harold Winch was representing in the provincial legislature. It was a close call, but on March 19, 1934, Local 213 passed a resolution by a mere one vote majority, demanding a withdrawal of its delegates from the VTLC's parliamentary unit, due to that body's recent tentative affiliation with the CCF. 90

There was, moreover, at least one personal confrontation, Winch showing up in March, 1937, at a regular meeting of the electrical workers, and speaking on the question of an on-going strike at a packinghouse owned by the Burns Meat Company. Following Winch's request that the electrical workers respect the packinghouse workers' picket line, Teddy Morrison rose to reply that since Burns "had employed union Electrical Workers for 25 years or more . . . he refused to withdraw Bro. J. Campbell, the Burns Electrician, from the job and there was nothing else he could do but supply a helper when asked for one." 91

The practical conservatism of the electrical workers was again demonstrated almost exactly a year later, when Morrison had to answer a question at a meeting demanding to know why certain jobsites did not even have a single shop steward. He stated that
"shop stewards generally were afraid they would be discriminated against by their employers, and it was [therefore] very difficult to get men to act as shop stewards, & when they are appointed they do not act." Then, on May 2, 1938, Local 213 rejected by a vote of fifty to twenty-four the idea "of forming and affiliating with [a new] British Columbia Federation of Labor," which had been dismantled by the international unions in 1920 because of its radical affiliations. This was followed in June by the refusal to support a motion calling for the organization of electrical workers in the interior of the province, a project that was undoubtedly considered impractical in view of the prevailing high levels of unemployment.

If events appeared to indicate a persistent shift to the right in Local 213, there was, nevertheless, a significant undercurrent headed in the opposite direction. Willy Watts' articles and editorials in The Labor Statesman were one aspect of this development. Another were the resolutions periodically presented from the floor of union meetings asking that the regular order of business be suspended while any number of "community" delegates be allowed to speak. Left-led popular front organizations regularly made their appearance, their requests to be heard and solicit donations often moved or seconded by Len LaBarge, Jim Jackson, or Jack Samuels. The electrical workers were thus exposed to the arguments of a wide diversity of working-class groups, including the Canadian Labor Defence League, the Vancouver Anti-War Committee, the Relief Camp Workers' Union, the Single Unemployed Protective Association, the
Vancouver Citizens' Defence Committee, the Blubber Bay Strike Relief and Defence Committee, or the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. 95

The activities of many of these organizations were symptomatic of two closely related events in the latter half of the 1930s. Firstly, the Communist Party of Canada adopted a new series of tactics in August, 1935. Disturbed by the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, Soviet foreign policy now decreed that there was an urgent need for cooperation among anti-fascist groups, including communists, socialists, social democrats, liberals--even religious organizations--in order to preserve "socialism in one country." The slogan "class against class" was replaced by the call for a "popular front" of all anti-fascists in the capitalist countries. Part of the result was the creation or expansion of the above-mentioned community groups, in which communists agitated on behalf of the unemployed, striking workers, or for the republican side in the Spanish Civil War. 96

Secondly, the staid conservatism of AFL officials was rocked by the rapid success of the CIO. Perceiving encouragement for unionization under Roosevelt's much-publicized New Deal, United Mineworkers' leader and former anti-communist, John L. Lewis, founded the original Committee for Industrial Organization in 1935. He was immediately successful in signing up an unprecedented number of industrial workers south of the border. The CIO's success hastened the dismantling of the Workers Unity League (WUL) in Canada, a small left-wing industrial union movement built up by the communists since 1929, and the affilia-
tion of its members to the mainstream of organized labour across the country. The result was that nascent CIO unions in British Columbia were often being organized by communists who had eagerly flocked into the new industrial organization as part of the popular front strategy. Under the prestigious aegis of the CIO, organizers succeeded in attracting new groups of workers who were seeking entry, or re-entry, into the labour movement. 97

This combination of events undermined Teddy Morrison's leadership of Local 213. Increasingly he was challenged on the question of picketing (the Burns Meat strike was led by the CIO's packinghouse affiliate), asked to account for the lack of shop stewards on important jobsites, and pressured to organize electrical workers in the interior of the province. Underlining Vancouver electrical workers' loss of confidence in Teddy Morrison was the election of Jack Noble Ross to Local 213's executive board in 1937. A lineman and at that time a covert member of the Communist Party, Ross remembered that he was "the only one to get in that year," confirming the recent establishment of a left-wing opposition group within the local. 98

Jack Noble Ross was born in Invermere, Scotland, on Christmas Day, 1905. Emigrating with his parents when he was fourteen years old to North Battleford, Saskatchewan, he quickly managed to land a job as a bank teller in the small prairie town. Fed up with counting other people's money after three or four years, he migrated west toward British Columbia. While in the province he was first employed in unskilled seasonal work, until he took up an opportunity to become a lineman in Cranbrook during
the early 1920s. Never undergoing any formal apprenticeship, Ross learned the rudiments of his trade from older, more experienced workmates, and did "anything, whether it was telephone work or light work." He then "boomed" around the Pacific Northwest wherever line work was available, wintering on a regular basis in Vancouver. Thrown out of work at the start of the Great Depression, Ross, like so many others, began questioning the inequities of the capitalist system. His queries and discussions with similarly unemployed workers led to an interest in socialism. In 1934, he was "signed up" into the Communist Party by Bob Kerr of the WUL, future political commissar of the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion and organizing secretary of the Communist Party in British Columbia. A longtime friend and associate of Jack Ross, Teddy Knight (Jr.), recalled that it was well known that "Ross went to the communist school in town." In Local 213 Ross linked up with a small coterie of other electrical workers willing to work with, or actually belonging to the Communist Party in the late 1930s: former Wobbly Len LaBarge, George Gee, Cec McEwen, Pete Rost, Jim Jackson and Merv Shoebottom. Even Willy Watts seemed, on occasion, to be sympathetic.*

Jack Ross' successful challenge to Teddy Morrison for the post of business agent in Local 213 was accomplished with the

* According to Fell Dorland, Watts was to become a good friend of her husband, Alex, a leading communist in Local 213 during the 1940s and early 1950s. Dining together the odd time, she remembered the two of them discussing labour history and marxist dialectics. Watts, however, was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the affairs of the Vancouver Building Trades Council, of which he was elected business agent in 1947.
diligent help of his hard-working comrades, and by advocating the need for open and accountable trade union government. Continuing during a month-long campaign on this liberal tack, Ross zeroed in on an issue that had dogged Teddy Morrison throughout much of the 1930s: in his rasping, gravelly voice, Ross repeatedly demanded to know why there was such a large number of "permit men" working in Vancouver, while bona-fide members of Local 213 remained unemployed.

This issue focused attention on travelling IBEW members who, in order to continue working under an IBEW agreement when abroad, must first obtain a permit from the local union in whose jurisdiction they wish to secure employment. Permits are normally issued during periods of economic buoyancy when the home local can no longer procure enough workers for employers. Permits, when issued, cost a certain sum per month over and above normal payment of union dues. But instead of being sent to the international office, the extra money stays with the local which has issued the permit. It can then do with this money whatever it pleases, including, of course, ensure the payment of a regular salary to the business agent in tough economic times. Under normal circumstances, permit men are also accepted into the home local after a six-month period of work in its jurisdiction. According to Ross, however, Morrison kept some permit men out of Local 213 for much longer than what was stipulated in the IBEW constitution. Moreover, permit men are not allowed to participate in the internal affairs of the home local. The implications of all this were obvious, and led Ross to believe that Morrison
may very well have had political as well as financial motives in keeping certain men out of Local 213.104

The union election in June, 1939, was close, but Morrison could no longer rally the troops as well as he once did; he had not led the electrical workers in a major strike since 1921, and the most recent wage hike had taken place in 1930. He was also clearly in poor physical health, having undergone two major operations in the last three years, and in fact was to die the following summer.105 Defeat for Morrison was assured when five other nominees (including Harold Winch) declined to stand in favour of Ross.106 With the opposition vote no longer split, Ross won by 105 votes to 91.107 The victor remembered "old-man Morrison" as "a very peculiar individual":

He'd been in there for so long that he considered 213 as his local, his baby. You see, he did alot of things his own way, not according to the constitution. For him, it was "to hell with the constitution!" He wrote his own constitution. You know, he didn't have much use for the international. He also had men on permit, for as long as twenty years in some cases. Never gave them a membership. And the books were closed of course. Wouldn't let anyone take a look at them.

Morrison and his supporters were anything but gracious in defeat, petitioning the international office to investigate allegedly "irregular" voting procedures.109 Vice-president Ingles came out from Toronto and agreed to supervise new elections, and at the same time begin an investigation of the local's financial records. The petitioners were hoist upon their own petard when Ingles uncovered a minor financial scandal which he immediately pounced upon, finally able to get back at the man who had successfully stood up to his authority in 1919. Ingles
found that Morrison had kept an unusually large number of apprentices on the books, when many of them were in fact fully qualified journeymen, and paying dues as such. This did not mean that Morrison was involved in any kind of personal graft. Commented Ross:

Morrison never stole a dime. But he had his own receipts which helped to build up the treasury. That meant the international never got their correct portion of the dues. You see, the international would get dues money every month, but not for the difference between an apprentice and a journeyman.

Ingles' revelation of the irregular bookkeeping raised suspicions as to Morrison's financial integrity, sealing his electoral fate. In the second vote held on August 9, 1939, Ross won with an increased majority, 166 to 60.

The election of Jack Ross as business agent symbolized the end of an era in the leadership of Local 213, but it is easy to exaggerate its significance. As revolutionary heirs to the radical tradition of 1919, the Communist Party had ostensibly very specific views as to the kind of militant leadership the working class required. Yet it rapidly became apparent that under Ross there was to be more continuity than change for Local 213's approximately 600 members. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which may have been his party's moderate popular front tactics, the recently elected business agent made little attempt to bring about any real substantive changes. These would have to wait until after the Second World War. About the only noteworthy measure immediately adopted was the acceptance of George Gee as a full-fledged member of the Vancouver local at the very first meeting of the new executive board. On permit at
the time from Seattle Local 77, lineman Gee was another communist
comrade of Jack Ross. The two men were also close friends,
having once worked together as partners for BC Electric. It was
a friendship that was to end in bitter acrimony, the ensuing
tension providing a vital focus in tracing the renewal and rise
to power of the left among the electrical workers.
Notes

1 There is some controversy among historians as to the extent of working-class militancy in Canada throughout the 1920s. Recent interpretations have accentuated the continuities in militancy, in contrast to the political conservatism of the era. See in particular, Palmer, op. cit., pp. 185-211; and John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985) pp. 138-157.

2 In respect to organized labour across the country, Thompson and Seager found much the same thing. Strikes persistently broke out in Canada throughout much of the 1920s, particularly in the resource hinterland areas. See Thompson and Seager, op. cit., p. 141.

3 This description of Teddy Morrison's life is based on two interviews, one with his eldest son Edmund (Jr.), Jan. 21, 1983, the other with his younger son Malcolm "Cal" Morrison, Jan. 14, 1983.

4 The charter is reproduced on the front cover of the "Live Wire" Special Edition, op. cit.


6 Ibid., Aug. 30, 1929, p. 10.

7 Interview with Harold Winch, Jan. 10, 1983. Jack McVicar, an old-time electrician who first came to Vancouver in 1910, remembered, for his part, that: "Morrison was a very, very strong labour man, but you couldn't call Morrison a communist or even a strong socialist. He was just a straight trades union labour man." Bill Pickett interview, op. cit., Aug. 26, 1964. That Morrison could sometimes approach the unethical in maintaining his post as business agent was also hinted at in The Labor Statesman, when election results were published along with an aside purporting that the voting had taken place at a regular meeting even though most "of the membership was not notified of the election of officers." The Labor Statesman, Dec. 29, 1929, p. 1.

8 Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Watts was intermittently one of Local 213's delegates to the Canadian Labour Party or to the VTLC.

9 The BC Federationist disappeared in 1923. For a more detailed account see Phillips, op. cit., p. 94.


11 Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labour Council Minutes (hereafter noted as VTLC Minutes), Feb.
20, 1923, p. 443. It appears that Local 213 had observers present in the months and years between 1920 and 1923, but it wasn't until the per capita rate of affiliation was substantially lowered that the local officially sent accredited delegates to the restructured labour council. See VTLC Minutes, Feb. 6, 1923, p. 442.

12 Ibid., April 17, 1923, p. 463. This resolution may have had a lot to do with the fact that Victor Midgely, well-known radical, was officially re-admitted to the VTLC only two weeks prior to the presentation of the motion. See VTLC Minutes, April 3, 1923, p. 457.

13 Phillips, op. cit.

14 The Labor Statesman, April 25, 1924, p. 2.


16 Ibid., May 2, 1924, p. 12.

17 Interview with Edmund Morrison, op. cit.

18 This is Edmund Morrison's memory of what was written.


22 Ibid.


24 Ibid., March 2, 1928, p. 4.

25 Ibid.

26 In this article Watts stated that "[Chinese] labor is not only undermining the standard of living of the Canadian worker, but is also tending to again increase the number of hours a day labor will be required to work." BC Labor News, Aug. 5, 1921, p. 2. See also article entitled "Asiatics Crowding Out White Race in Province," Sept. 30, 1921, p. 1.

27 Minute Books, April 2, 1928 (no page #). That anti-orientalism held at least some appeal for the electrical workers had also been indicated the previous year, when it was resolved that a "copy of resolutions passed by a mass meeting held under the auspices of the K.K.K. dealing with Orientals now in Canada,
and advocating their deportation, be filed." Feb. 14, 1927 (no page #).

28 Minute Books, April 2, 1928 (no page #).


30 Ibid. The four local unions voting in favour of oriental enfranchisement were the Bookbinders, Japanese Camp and Mill Workers, Mental Hospital Attendants, and the Port Mann Railway Carmen.

31 Ibid., May 18, 1928, p. 3. At Local 213's regular meeting of May 28, 1928, it was recorded that "Brother Watts as delegate to the C.L.P. stated that he and the committee appointed to investigate the actions of the C.L.P. had gone into the matter, and recommended that this Local sever their connections with the C.L.P. and also that this Local recommend to the T. and L.C. [Trades and Labour Congress] that they also sever their connections with the C.L.P." Minute Books, May 28, 1928 (no page #).


33 On Watts, see The Labor Statesman, Oct. 25, 1928, p. 1; Nov. 28, 1930, p. 2; and Dec., 1932, p./4. On Brown, see Minute Books, Sept. 17 1928, (no page #). Brown, of course, never made it to election day, being killed in a horrific accident in the BC Electric's Earl Road substation on September 24, 1928.

34 The Labor Statesman, Nov. 21, 1930, p. 2.

35 Minute Books, July 3, 1928 (no page #). Local 213 also went so far as to donate fifty dollars to the ILP in July, 1928, and twenty-five dollars in September. See Minute Books, July 3, 1928 (no page #) and Sept. 27, 1928 (no page #).

36 Avakumovic, op. cit., pp. 54-95.


38 About thirty unionized electrical workers were involved in this strike, giving an indication of the small size of those taking place in 1925 and 1926. See Minute Books, July 25, 1927 (no page #).


40 Ibid.

41 Minute Books, Sept. 12, 1927 (no page #).

Unfortunately, no reasons were given as to why the contractors had asked the inside men to abandon their memberships in Local 213.

See chart on union salaries in Vancouver in *The Labor Statesman*, Oct. 7, 1927, p. 6. The forty-four hour week is inferred by the campaign Teddy Morrison led, as head of the VBTC in 1929, to obtain the forty hour week. See *The Labor Statesman*, Oct. 25, 1929, p. 1; and also the chart on May 11, 1928, p. 1, giving the hours of work per week of the affiliated local unions of the VBTC.

Four of the five inside contractors were C. C. Carter, Hume and Rumble, Jenkins Electric, and CHE Williams. The fifth is not mentioned by name. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1928 (no page #). For the $8.40 per day see July 9, 1928 (no page #).

On organizing non-union firms, for example, see *ibid.*, July 12, 1929 (no page #) (Morrison had a running battle trying to organize Mott Electric of New Westminster all throughout the 1930s). For examples of the other problems, see entries on Feb. 18, 1929 (no page #); Dec. 28, 1931, p. 398; April 27, 1932, p. 424; Feb. 3, 1936, p. 263; July 6, 1936, p. 322; or Feb. 7, 1938, p. 62.

It appears that the international office of the IBEW was partly to blame for the collapse of the strike. International representative Lee arrived on the scene and "advised [the inside men] to stay on the job, pending further developments." *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1928 (no page #). See also entry on Nov. 2, 1928 (no page #). The same was true for the plumbers. It was recorded
"The International Officer of the plumbers had stated that the plumbers union would not support the carpenters by withdrawing their men." Nov. 5, 1928 (no page #).

59 Ibid., Jan. 20, 1930 (no page #).

60 International representative Milne once stated in 1930 that he deplored the fact that Local 213 had only ninety-two inside wiremen. Ibid., Jan. 20, 1930 (no page #). Then, when Jack Ross took office as business agent in the summer of 1939, he discovered that there were only thirty-seven inside wiremen left. Interview with Jack Ross, Jan. 19, 1983.

61 Interview with Hambly, op. cit.

62 Minute Books, April 18, 1932, p. 421.


64 Ibid., April 18, 1932, p. 421.

65 For example, a thirty-day contract was arranged with Hume and Rumble in June, 1938. Ibid., June 6, 1938 (no page #).

66 Interview with Hambly, op. cit.

67 Labour Gazette, Nov. 1933, p. 1126.


69 Ibid., March 15, 1933, p. 473.

70 Ibid., March 10, 1939, p. 187.

71 Ibid., Jan. 20, 1930 (no page #).

72 Ibid. Though it was not explicitly recorded, Morrison had undoubtedly also referred to the problems faced by a local union when electrical workers in small shops were offered union memberships at the beginning of a downward cycle in the economy. Since these new members often became unemployed within a few weeks, they only added to the competition within the local for an equally decreasing number of union jobs. The international office, on the other hand, would benefit from the extra per capita it would receive from the new members without having to share in the inevitable responsibility of providing work, this function being the sole responsibility of the local union.

73 Ibid., March 3, 1930 (no page #).

74 Ibid., Sept. 12, 1930, p. 315.

75 Ibid., May 18, 1931, p. 356; and Feb. 15, 1932, p. 407.
Ibid., May 12, 1933, p. 488.

Ibid.

Ibid., Nov. 6, 1933, p. 24.

Ibid., Nov. 17, 1933, p. 27; see also The Labor Statesman, Jan., 1934, p. 4.

Minute Books, Dec. 4, 1933, p. 32.

Ibid. One of the immediate repercussions of Ingles' investigation was the small entry in the Minute Books just a few weeks later, announcing that nineteen electrical workers had been dropped from the membership rolls because of non-payment of dues. Feb. 12, 1934, p. 48.

Ibid., Aug. 29, 1934, p. 108.


Minute Books, April 4, 1932, p. 417.

The Labor Statesman, Nov., 1937, p. 1. What is interesting to note is that Charles Stewart, the well-known Vancouver communist and member of the street railwaymen’s union, was also part of the five-man delegation. Visibly, Morrison had begun to accept the idea of cooperating and working with communists in the late 1930s.

The Labor Statesman, April, 1934, p. 2.


VTLC Minutes, Aug. 21, 1934, pp. 45-46. Presented by Morrison and George Neill (the other delegate from Local 213 to the VTLC), the motion reflected the former’s eclectic background rather well, and offered a vivid commentary on his perception of communist practices. The motion read in full:

Whereas a considerable number of Canadian citizens are dissatisfied with the land of their nativity or adoption, as the case may be, and are of the opinion that this world’s problem has been solved by the U.S.S.R., and

Whereas these dissatisfied citizens have organized themselves into societies such as "Friends of the Soviet Republic", "Young Communists", etc. etc. for the purpose of spreading the gospel of the U.S.S.R. in this Dominion, and

Whereas so far as our information goes, no similar organizations are permitted to exist under the benevolent and enlightened dictatorship of Moscow. Certainly we have not heard of societies masquerading under the titles of "Friends of the Capitalist
Dominion of Canada'', "Young Capitalist'' in that most modern Utopia, and

Whereas it is apparent that the great majority of the citizens of this Dominion prefer to work out their own salvation and not leave their destinies in the hands of the "Friends of the Soviet Republic'', "Young Communist'', and kindred organizations, and

Whereas the delegates to the Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labor Council, have taken an obligation to uphold the principles of Trades Unionism above all other forms of endeavor for the emancipation of the workers, yet we are not bigoted and adopt a liberal attitude toward the activities and theories of other organizations to the desired end for we do not claim that we hold the key to the riddle of the Universe but desire to assist by every means within our power, those who are engaged in this struggle, and

Whereas in our opinion the efforts of our dissatisfied brothers will prove abortive and lead only to further disruption in the ranks of Organized Labor, and

Whereas while we concede that every individual has a right to his own opinion we do not concede that this confers the right to force these opinions on all and sundry without let or hindrance

Whereas we believe that these citizens are sincere in their convictions and should receive every assistance to attain their Mecca,

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labor Council, submit a suitable resolution requesting the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada to approach the Government of this Dominion with a petition to enter into such arrangements with the U.S.S.R. that will expedite the entry of all citizens of this Dominion who sincerely believe in the Soviet form of Government into the U.S.S.R. and if necessary that the Dominion Government furnish the transportation.

89 Ibid.
90 Minute Books, March 19, 1934, p. 60. Though it is not recorded, Willy Watts undoubtedly had something to do with the affiliation.
91 Ibid., March 1, 1937, p. 414.
92 Ibid., March 2, 1938, p. 79.
93 Ibid., May 2, 1938, p. 93. Morrison also spoke on the CIO question, and despite his previous sympathies with industrial
unionism, was recorded as having talked of "the trouble the CIO had caused in the United States." March 2, 1938, p. 79.

94 Ibid., June 17, 1938, p. 109.

95 Ibid., Sept. 19, 1932, p. 436; Feb. 19, 1934, p. 52; Nov. 19, 1934, p. 129; Feb. 17, 1936, p. 268; Aug. 3, 1936, p. 333; Aug. 12, 1938, p. 130; and March 6, 1939, p. 184. What is worthwhile noting is that while the rank and file in Local 213 voted to endorse a communication from the "Relief Camp Workers' Union in March, 1935, "Bro. Morrison & Bro. Neill wished to have their vote recorded against the motion" March 18, 1935, pp. 167-68.

96 Avakumovic, op. cit. pp. 96-138.


98 Interview with Ross, Nov. 15, 1982.

99 Linemen, like loggers, believe their trade requires a good deal of physical strength and mental toughness. As an example, Ross remembers going down to the Legion in Cranbrook one night when he was nineteen years old. He was working at the time "bucking the spareboard" on the railway, and got into a heated argument after drinking several beers. The inevitable then took place:

Well, he got up off his chair and took a swing at me, but I was lucky, and I connected with him. He ended up on the floor, but his brother was there and he jumped up, so I let him have it too. He ended up on the floor as well. So I'm standing there, when this tall man, an elderly sort of a fellow, comes out of his chair at the back and he says: "Geez kid, that was all right. You'd make a good lineman." I didn't even know what a lineman was . . . so I went and asked him. "Well," he says, "you know, it's those guys that climb poles and string wires. We're building a line from Cranbrook to Kimberley and I know the foreman. Come on, I'll get you started if you want." Since it was better than bucking the spareboard, I agreed.

Ibid.

100 Interview with Teddy Knight (Jr.), Dec. 6, 1982.


102 Interview with Gee, Nov. 6, 1982.

103 Interview with Ross, op. cit.

104 Interview with Ross, op. cit.
What "irregularities" they were referring to remains unclear to this day.

On the other hand, Ross argued the following point:

You have to remember that old man Morrison had come to Vancouver by jumping ship, and his office was all portholes. You paid your dues through a wicket and you never actually could get into the office. I did away with that as soon as I got in.

Interview with Ross, op. cit.
CHAPTER V--RADICALISM RENEWED,
1939-1953

From 1939 to 1953 the history of Local 213 revolves increasingly around the activities of the Communist Party. This was particularly apparent during the early years of the Cold War when the local quietly procured jobs in British Columbia's booming electrical industry for scores of unemployed or blacklisted communists. Local 213's left-wing leadership also appointed individual communists to local staff positions. However, closely watched by the international office, local adversaries, and the companies with which Local 213 had collective agreements, the communist faction was greatly hindered in its freedom of movement and operation. But, because of its influence on the the local executive, especially the office of business agent held initially by Jack Ross, the party nevertheless functioned with some effectiveness. Individual communists played a vital role in achieving impressive gains made by Vancouver electrical workers. They also contributed to the establishment of a local union newspaper and helped promote widely successful cultural and recreational activities. By 1953 Local 213 was as vibrant as it had ever been, and was once again considered, by friend and foe alike, to be a militant left-wing organization.

Following his surprising electoral victory, problems of a serious nature began almost immediately to assail Jack Ross. The first problem was international in scope. In August, 1939, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. This was followed on September 1 by the German invasion of Poland.
from the west and the start of the Second World War. Even more serious was the Soviet Union's participation in this opening salvo of the war when, from the east, it sent the red army into Poland on September 17. The Soviet-German "peace" pact lasted until June, 1941, when Hitler decided to attack the trusting Russians and press ahead with Operation Barbarossa.

The Communist Party of Canada initially described the Second World War as an "anti-fascist" conflict, but soon changed its tune when it appeared that the Soviet Union was going to attempt to remain neutral in the growing world conflagration. The war was then denounced as an "imperialist" struggle between capitalist nations, with the Communist Party calling on Canadians "to make it abundantly clear to the King Government that the Canadian people are more interested in an early peace than in the prosecution of the war." To Jack Ross, a strong supporter of the attempt to defeat fascism in Spain during the late 1930s, such a change of policy was unacceptable; as he said himself, "I just couldn't buy it," and so began to divorce himself from party proceedings.

The opposition of the Communist Party in respect to Canada's participation in the Second World War also proved completely unacceptable to the federal government. Having followed Britain's lead and declared war on Germany at the outset of hostilities, the government in mid-1940 banned the Communist Party and arrested most of the central committee. Canada's leading communists were sent to internment camps where they shared the premises with small groups of Germans, Italians,
fascist supporters, and a smattering of French Canadians also opposed to the country's participation in the war against fascism. Forced to go underground, the party temporarily was in disarray.  

As these events were unfolding, Charles Hughes, a high-ranking official from the AFL, decided to visit Vancouver. Attending a meeting of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council in May, 1940, he proposed a strongly-worded motion to unseat "the members of the Communist Party and active sympathizers thereof." But, indicative of the continuing anti-AFL bias of labour in Vancouver, the grudging respect garnered by the Communist Party during the Great Depression, and the desire of the VTLC not to embark upon a divisive witch-hunt of questionable value, the delegates soundly defeated the motion. Outraged, Hughes immediately suspended Local 213 and sixteen other local unions affiliated to the central labour council. He may have viewed the electrical local with particular suspicion as a recent referendum showed that rank and file members favoured allowing communist delegates the right to participate in the affairs of the VTLC. Ross, however, chose to sidestep the issue, claiming that the local's delegates had not been present at the controversial meeting attended by the other suspended unions. He stated to the press that he believed the suspension was the result of a "misunderstanding," and because "we're not interested in politics, we didn't see how it would be possible to say who was a Communist and who wasn't."
Reinstated within a couple of weeks to the VTLC, Local 213 was then faced with the problem of a strike by forty-four garagemen of the BC Motor Transportation Company. These garagemen were members of the street railwaymen's union and serviced BC Electric line trucks. In turn, the line trucks were manned by maintenance line crews belonging to Local 213. Confronted by picket lines when arriving for work on March 31, 1941, the linemen naturally refused to cross. An impromptu meeting then took place between picketers, line crews, and Jack Ross, and an arrangement was agreed to whereby the linemen would remove the trucks, go to work, but not return to the BC Motor Transportation garage until the strike was over. Ross was relieved by the arrangement, Local 213 having just received a notice from the international office "that refusing to go through a picket line would be illegal." But he was criticized by the normally conservative R. K. Gervin, business agent for the street railwaymen. At a special meeting of the VTLC, Gervin accused Ross of having found an easy "way out" of the situation. Ross retorted that "I don't think it is the right thing to put any union affiliated with this Council on the spot." Public attention then focussed solely on the street railwaymen's union as rumours circulated of a walkout of the entire membership of 1800 workers. The strike ended on April 3, both BC Motor Transportation and their garagemen agreeing to the binding arbitration proposed by W. G. Murrin, president of a suddenly very concerned BC Electric Company.
Once these problematic issues were resolved, Jack Ross as business agent gradually began to change the conservative approach Teddy Morrison had adopted during the 1930s. A campaign was started to have the IBEW organize BC Power Commission and BC Electric operations in the interior of the province. Signed agreements were re-instituted with the construction contractors, the labour shortage caused by the Second World War allowing Ross to negotiate some important wage increases, back up to $9.00 per day for the inside wiremen in a contract signed in the spring of 1941. These were followed by promises for yet more money, if the local "made satisfactory progress towards stabilizing the labour situation in Vancouver." During the early stages of the war, a contract was also signed with the Electrical Panel Company, an important manufacturer and installer of neon signs, reflecting Local 213's continuing basis as an industrial rather than a strict craft union.

In June, 1941, the character of the Second World War was drastically altered. Nazi Germany shifted the focus of its attack from the Battle of Britain then being fought in the skies over London, to an invasion of the Soviet Union. The communist parties in the capitalist countries accordingly altered their perception of the war. What had been described as an "imperialist" conflict, overnight became "a just war, a people's war of national freedom and liberation." Given the new line, increasing political pressure from sympathetic public figures, and the growing prestige of the red army, the Canadian government freed the imprisoned leaders of the Communist Party of Canada in
October, 1942. However, it continued its ban on the existence and activities of the party. In order to circumvent the ban, communist delegates held a convention in August, 1943, and re-emerged under a new name, the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP). The priority of the "new" party was to defeat Nazi Germany and its axis allies, Italy and Japan. For communist trade unionists this meant a policy of "unity" between CIO and AFL unions, and among the various classes in Canadian society (see Appendix B: Document 9). The struggle for social and political reform was reduced, as was the struggle to improve wages and working conditions. Strikes were viewed as harmful to the war effort and workers in Canada were encouraged either to join the armed forces or to increase production at their place of work. Some CIO unions where the communists had a great deal of influence, such as the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE), even went so far as to adopt a no-strike pledge for the remainder of the war. Anything that stood in the way of the defeat of fascism was publicly criticized and privately discouraged.

Ignoring the appeals of the re-constituted Communist Party of Canada, record numbers of workers across the country in 1943 took advantage of the shortage of labour caused by the war. Strikes erupted in the forest, mining, textile, and steel industries, with thousands of workers--often ironically led by rank and file communists--demanding union recognition and long-denied increases in wages. In contrast, Local 213 was uncharacteristically quiet, negotiating but minor changes in working conditions, and losing an appeal to the National War Labour
Board in 1944 for a small increase in wages. Established to mitigate against work-stoppages throughout the duration of the war, the Board nevertheless noted that "the union has prepared a very careful and thorough brief," a consolation of sorts for George Gee, one of the local's chief representatives at the hearing and fast becoming the rising star among a new generation of electrical workers.

Moreover, under the impulsion of communist militants, in particular once again of George Gee, Local 213 had bought $40,000 in victory bonds midway through the war, making it one of the largest bond purchasers among trade unions in British Columbia. Ross agreed to the purchase, but had most likely already been expelled from the Communist Party. In addition to his differences with the party between 1939 and 1941, Ross also found that it was "a different proposition . . . when you have the responsibility of people's livelihoods." Practically all other observers, however, communist and non-communist alike, remember that there was a marked change in Ross' behaviour once he had gained access to union office, and that he soon developed a horrendous drinking problem. Alleged Gee:

As a matter of fact, I worked with Jack Ross in full partnership for many years at BC Electric. At that time he was a member of the Communist Party, and I worked like hell to elect the son-of-a-bitch. But he no sooner got in there and sat his ass in the [business agent's] seat that he started bugging around with the stenographer and he ended up with a divorce. Turned out to be, well, just a drunk--and a reactionary one at that!

The situation changed markedly in the fall of 1946. At the IBEW's convention held in San Francisco, two communist delegates
from Local 213, George Gee and Cec McEwen, actively supported a "rebel" slate to run against the incumbent administration of international president Edward J. Brown. Brown had originally succeeded Daniel J. Tracy in 1940 when the latter was named assistant secretary of labour in the United States. After the war Tracy came back to challenge Brown for the IBEW presidency. Having "neglected to keep his political fences mended within the union," Brown went down to defeat after a "bruising struggle." But caught up in the anti-communist climate of opinion following the Second World War, Tracy's administration "repaid" its British Columbia supporters by appointing Jack Ross to the post of international representative for western Canada with headquarters in Vancouver. The choice proved to be judicious. Ross was becoming increasingly conservative, and because of his left-wing background during the 1930s, would know exactly what to look for when reporting on the electrical workers. His loyalty was now to the international office, not to Local 213. As one critical observer put it: "When Ross became international representative, his trade unionism sunk. The constitution became his bible." Following Jack Ross' appointment to the post of international representative in April, 1947, Local 213's executive board voted to appoint George Gee interim business agent until full elections involving the rank and file could be held in June. Gee remembers that the reason for this important decision was simply that he was the better of the two competing candidates, Jack Nichol being "a nice kind of guy," but having "no experience, no moxie." Well-known within the local as a member of the
Communist Party, Gee was then asked by the executive board if, as business agent, he would be following directives from the party in relation to the local's affairs. Gee's reply was that he would "take orders from the executive board, the membership, and ... from nobody else."  

The reasons for the concern of the executive board as to Gee's allegiance were related to important post-war developments. As relations soured between the Soviet Union and the United States, a strident two-pronged campaign began in North America, linking perceived Soviet plans for "world revolution" to trade union militancy. Events such as work stoppages or organizing drives were increasingly branded as communist-inspired or, if not, as being in the objective interest of communism. That leading American capitalists in the electrical industry were promoting this campaign was succinctly expressed in 1946 by Charles E. Wilson, a member of the board of directors for the General Electric Company: "The problem of the United States can be captiously summed up in two words: 'Russia abroad, Labor at home'."  

North of the forty-ninth parallel the Cold War ostensibly began on September 5, 1945, when a cipher clerk from the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, Igor Gouzenko, sought political asylum in Canada. Though he brought with him a number of documents indicating that a communist spy ring was operating inside the country, the RCMP took some time to act on the evidence. The federal police eventually arrested Fred Rose, LPP MP from Montreal, and Sam Carr, a member of the party's central
committee. A royal commission on espionage was then established by Ottawa, the ensuing publicity and the six-year prison sentence handed out to Rose in the spring of 1946 proving highly embarrassing to the Communist Party. Right-wing accusations of "communist subversion" in Canada became increasingly believable.  

Yet anti-communism apparently did not have much of an effect on Vancouver electrical workers. In the at-large elections held in June, 1947, George Gee was easily elected business agent by Local 213's rank and file. It was the first of four elections in which he was to repeatedly win roughly eighty percent of the votes cast.

George Gee's personal history reflected the hardships of growing up poor in Canada. Born in 1908 in Virden, Manitoba, Gee was the youngest of ten children whose father died when he was only nine months old. The family hung on until the early 1920s when, unable to meet rising mortgage payments, the small farm they had homesteaded was foreclosed. In the family breakup that followed, brothers and sisters scattered across Canada, while George went to work at any job he could find. After a stint as a labourer for the Manitoba Power Commission in 1926 and 1927, he became a lineman, repairing wires and climbing poles. The stock-market crash of 1929 then cast George into the growing ranks of the unemployed. Having two brothers living in Princeton, B.C., he set out with a friend to rejoin them in 1930. He was to call Princeton home during the next five years, occasionally joining
the thousands then riding the rails across the country in search of work.

While in Princeton, George increasingly came under the influence of one of his older brothers, Bill Gee, who had joined the Communist Party in 1932. He was also exposed to the dynamic leadership of well-known communist organizer, Arthur "Slim" Evans, when asked to help in the Tulameen coal miners' strike of 1933. In 1935, the younger Gee left Princeton when a sleet storm knocked power lines down all along the Fraser Valley. Rushing into Vancouver with his lineman's tools, George found temporary employment with Peterson Electric. Laid off again, and fed up with the Depression and the way the country was being run, he joined the Communist Party later that same year. In 1936 he headed south of the border to get another lineman's job in Seattle, Washington. Gee worked steadily in Seattle for about a year and joined IBEW Local 77. He then returned to Vancouver in 1937 as he had heard that work was picking up again with the BC Electric Company and its major subcontractors. That's when he started his career in Local 213, working first on permit alongside Jack Ross, then being officially inducted as a member on August 4, 1939.34

Just under six feet in height, George Gee was a handsome, athletic-looking man. With his good looks, contagious grin, and affable personality, he seemed more suited for the movie screen than for the rough-and-tumble of collective bargaining and trade union politics. His friendly, easy-going manner made him a personal favourite of just about everyone he had ever worked
with. Wes Wooten, a long-time groundman for Peterson Electric, remembered Gee in affectionate, non-political terms: "He was one of the best as far as I was concerned. You couldn't beat ol' Gee, he seemed to get along with everybody—even the company [Peterson's] seemed to appreciate Gee." A reporter in the early 1950s described Gee as "an effective, intelligent person with a likeable way about him. He conducts himself in a suave manner, if with somewhat ungrammatical language, and is a genius at meeting technique. He is never caught mouthing the tiresome phrases of the Marxist front-man." On the other hand, it was clear that Gee had not forgotten his experiences during the dirty thirties. The same reporter wrote that Gee was "an interesting example of depression-born radicalism . . . a hard-hitting ex-lineman [who] has a long memory of bitter days."

Gee was fortunate that his election took place just prior to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in the United States. In large measure a backlash both to the New Deal and to a huge wave of strikes in 1946, Taft-Hartley curbed labour's right to strike, established a network of legal impediments to prevent the spread of trade unionism, and outlawed the closed shop, secondary boycotts, and mass picketing. Most importantly the act demanded that each and every union official, from international president to local executive board member, file a sworn affidavit "disclaiming Communist membership or proscribed beliefs." If even one union official refused to file an affidavit, the entire union lost its right to represent workers in collective bargaining.
Though certain aspects of Taft-Hartley were thoroughly criticized by IBEW officials, the international executive board had no compunction against signing the anti-communist affidavits. Investigations into local union administration followed, even in Canada, where American law supposedly did not apply. The accusation that George Gee was still a member, and hence taking orders from the Communist Party, surfaced in October, 1948, little more than a year after his election as business agent. The incident occurred when Gee was told that international representative J. Scott Milne was in Vancouver visiting Jack Ross. Having learned ahead of time that Milne intended to ask him if he was still a member of the Communist Party, the newly elected business agent went to seek the advice of Nigel Morgan, then leader of the party in British Columbia. Morgan advised him that he should tell Milne he was not a member. Gee's response was that: "If I'm going to tell Scott Milne that I'm not a member of the Communist Party, then I'm going to resign." Ignoring the problematic issue of whether, in fact, one can "resign" from the Communist Party, Gee wrote a letter to this effect (see Appendix B: Document 10) and handed it to Milne when they met shortly after. The letter read, in part: "It is my opinion that my membership in the Labor-Progressive Party whilst holding the position of Business Manager can only serve to provide the enemies of the trade union movement with ammunition to divide the membership of our union on the issue of red-baiting, when what is needed at this time is a united union to win much-needed wage increases, and to protect our hard-won
working conditions. But although Gee "officially resigned" from the Communist Party, by his own admission he did not behave any differently than in the past: "Now I never worked any different when I was in the party or when I was out of the party, or whether I was climbing poles. A communist is not something different from the bloody working class--they [sic] are the working class!"

Gee inherited a local that was in full expansion, a direct result of the post-Second World War construction and manufacturing boom. From a membership of about 700 in 1946, still focussed largely on BC Electric, Local 213 grew to number over 2,000 by 1953 (see Appendix A: Table 6 and Graph 5), with newly acquired members coming in on a regular basis. Traditional employers called for workers almost weekly, while other companies, if not already organized, also called the union in order to procure qualified electrical workers. Furthermore, the agreements signed under George Gee contained substantial benefits for Local 213's rank and file. Wages for journeyman wiremen jumped to $18.40 per day by 1953, with new provisions made to have "the ratio of apprentices to journeymen [not] exceed one apprentice . . . to 2 journeymen." The same improvements were also visible for those employed by other firms. Wages at the BC Electric Company increased to $17.52 per day, while the line contractors were forced to pay the full cost of an employee welfare plan, an historic first among IBEW locals in North America. Even Angus MacDonald, eventually to become a leading opponent of Gee's, had to admit that the electrical workers
thrived under the ex-lineman's leadership: "It was right after the war and the world was open for good contracts. And George was a good business manager and won good contracts."\(^{46}\)

MacDonald was undoubtedly correct in asserting that the progress of the electrical workers was due in large part to the buoyancy of the economy. But it was also the result of increasing militancy within the union, spearheaded by the aggressive new business agent and a number of other union officials. Such a change in attitude could be statistically observed. Between 1921 and 1946 Local 213 experienced a total of only five official strikes or positive strike votes.\(^{47}\) From 1947 to 1953 there were another five,\(^{48}\) and newspaper articles headlined "Strike May Black Out City Power"\(^{49}\) became much more common. But it was evident in the Gee period that the union's leadership was not intent on disrupting the electrical industry, the local's neon light workers being the only section ever forced to man the picket lines in a legal strike.\(^{50}\)

The militancy of the electrical workers was easy to understand. Pent-up economic demands needed to be satisfied, while there also persisted the age-old concerns about periodic lay-offs and safety while on the job.\(^{51}\) However, the militancy exhibited between 1947 and 1953 was by no means completely spontaneous. In the first place, Local 213 began the publication of the Live Wire in December, 1948. Appearing on a monthly basis, the local's newspaper carried several columns written by identifiably communist or left-wing electrical workers.\(^{52}\) Edited by Tom Forkin, an ex-communist, though still very much a committed
socialist, the *Live Wire* highlighted Local 213's success in promoting working-class cultural activities. Tremendously popular soccer, softball, and bowling teams were established, the local also organizing impressive turnouts at annual May Day and Labour Day parades. Speakers' workshops were also successfully promoted under Gee, to the extent that some of those who wished to participate were refused, being written that "attendance in these is at the maximum number allowed." Covering everything from the signing of new agreements to the latest results of the local's newly founded sport and recreation clubs, the *Live Wire* provided a healthy combination of political commentary, historical analysis, and personal anecdotes—the lot interlaced with Forkin's wry sense of humour. It went without saying that the newspaper continually warned the electrical workers to be on their guard, because even "if a bit of give and take on the job is always necessary ... if you start giving away on clauses in your agreement, pretty soon you're doing all the giving and the boss is doing all the taking."

Secondly, militancy among the electrical workers was developed by the appointment of shop stewards and assistant business agents George Gee knew he could rely on. Such authoritarian practices were entirely within his privilege as business agent according to the IBEW constitution. But given his personal background and close ties to the Communist Party, it was perhaps only to be expected that Gee's appointees would be either communists or, if not, that they would be individuals sympathetic to the militant brand of trade unionism he was trying to promote.
One of Gee's earliest appointees was Don Wilson, who was to remain his principal assistant business agent and right-hand man throughout this period. Unlike other of Gee's assistants, such as Alex Dorland and Jack Cody, Wilson claimed that he "was not and never had been" a member of the Communist Party. Yet he had a deserved reputation with employers as a tough customer and was well-known for his strict enforcement, while on the job, of union rules and regulations. The reason Gee felt it necessary to appoint such an uncompromising militant became abundantly clear in a tour Don Wilson made in October, 1950, of the recently organized BC Power Commission operations. In a written report to Local 213's executive board, the assistant business agent contended that all was not well on the north coast and in the interior of the province "because of ignorance of Union policy and Union principle amongst members of these outlying areas."

Such militants were also required as organizers covertly sent to work by the union in order to place added pressure on companies that refused to live up to the stipulations of the collective agreement. If these organizers were communists, as many of them were, they could often be spectacularly effective in carrying out their assignments. During the early 1950s Don Wilson remembers sending Jack Gillett, Al Sowerby, and Herbie Welch to Wallace Neon Products in Vancouver in order to force the company to comply with a recent arbitration award favouring Local 213. To Wilson's surprise and on-going admiration, the three longtime party members "had the workers out on strike the very next day," a feat that he considered nothing short of a record.
With the continuing ideological onslaught of the Cold War, however, communists in Canada were increasingly attacked, isolated, and forced onto the defensive. In 1948 the so-called 'red block' of the IWA in British Columbia was successfully driven into the Woodworkers Industrial Union of Canada (WIUC), leading to its eventual collapse. This was followed a year later by the expulsion of the left-led Canadian Seaman's Union (CSU) from the TLC and to its destruction by the gangster-ridden Seafarers' International Union (SIU). In 1949 the CCL expelled UE in addition to the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union (IUMMSW). The Canadian state also got into the act. As an echo of the destruction of the CSU, the Canadian Labour Relations Board in 1950 declared that being "Communist controlled and directed," the union was "no longer within the meaning of the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act." In 1951 the CCL expelled the International Leather and Fur Workers Union (ILFWU) on the grounds "that it was following Communist principles and policies." Finally, the TLC expelled the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU) in 1954 for largely the same reasons. By the early 1950s most of the industrial unions that had been influenced--indeed organized--by the Communist Party, had been driven from the two national houses of labour. Non-communist affiliates were then encouraged to "raid" the membership of the communist-led unions. The effect of this right-wing campaign in British Columbia was to oust the members of the Communist Party from the commanding
heights of their "personal fiefdom," the reconstituted BC Federation of Labour.  

Within Local 213 the role of rank and file militants, in particular that of the communists, was to a great extent affected by these events. Dave Clark, a former party member and a retired serviceman for BC Electric, recalled:

The top shop stewards, the good shop stewards, were all party people. But at that time it was getting so that there was too much pressure on anybody that was a left-winger. So the party people would not always take the lead. They would organize, set it up, and let the other guys get the cream. They did this by telling them how to go about it. Then no one could nail that guy for being a communist because he wasn't. . . . But we still got condemnation from everybody. We still got accused of being "god-damn left-wingers" and stuff like this you know.

Yet not all communists were as reserved or as reticent as those described by Dave Clark, suggesting important subtleties and differences of opinion within 'red unionism'. Several notable exceptions refused to compromise their behaviour in the anti-communist climate of opinion then prevalent in Canada. One such man was Sid Sheard, an inside wireman originally from Birmingham, England. Gee occasionally had problems with communists like Sheard. In March, 1953, after Sheard and his good friend and comrade, Jack Gillett, were sent to work on a $30 million dam-building project at Waneta, near Trail, the two comrades were accused of pushing "communist literature on the job and in the electrical shop." More importantly, they also managed to help stage an impressive 800-man wobble in sympathy with striking Cominco workers at Kimberley. Warned ahead of time, Gee remembers doing "everything in my power to convince
that man [Sheard] that we shouldn't pull that job." But Sheard ignored Gee and "in spite of everybody . . . pulled her out."

This upset the business agent no end:

That time I went to Tom McEwen [a member of the Communist Party's central committee]. I told him what the problem was and asked him what I could do with that bloody guy. I couldn't get through to him. McEwen said he'd send him a wire. But a bunch of us decided to go up there, some of the business agents, to straighten out the thing ourselves. We finally did . . . But Sid was a very leftist guy. He'd go off the deep end. You'd never find Sid on the side of the capitalists, that's for damn sure.67

The communists also played a significant role at union meetings, but there was often little to distinguish their behaviour at this level from other groups and individuals. True, from time to time Local 213 contributed anywhere from $5.00 to $25.00 to the Pacific Tribune, the Communist Party's newspaper in Vancouver. The local also passed the odd resolution voicing its support for political views often propounded by the Communist Party. These included such progressive policies as support for the Stockholm appeal for peace, allowing Paul Robeson entry into Canada, demanding that the United States government free the "framed-up" Rosenbergs, or that the CSU and UFAWU be reinstated to the TLC. No debates ever arose surrounding the need for public ownership of the means of production, or for the need to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism, ostensibly the primary objectives of communist parties around the world. The Minute Books indicate that most, if not all, the local's business was transacted in much the same manner as it had been under Jack Ross and Teddy Morrison. While communist electrical workers were definitely militant while on the job and at union meetings, most
were visibly cautious in advocating identifiably socialist policies. In other words, the reality of Cold War politics had forced the communists in Canada to burrow deep into the organizations to which they belonged. In Local 213 most of them burrowed so deep as to appear to have abandoned communism.

This is not to deny that the communists were never active during local union meetings. On the contrary, they often dominated proceedings. Fred Allison, who at one time had been elected shop steward at BC Electric's dam project on Bridge River, recalls that a close analysis of the local's internal functioning brought to light what he believed were extremely disturbing practices:

Local 213 was a very well run organization. It was run by the Communist Party, no question of doubt about that. If you went to a meeting, everything was sort of programmed. They had an Electrical Club that used to hold pre-meetings before they had the union meeting to decide on policy and what was going to be debated, what was going to be talked about. If you were a maverick, or a lone wolf, they had everything covered. If you got up to speak, three would get up to speak behind you, maybe four. You know, it doesn't take very many people to dominate a local union. It takes only a fairly small group who are all willing to talk and to contribute.

Allison's evaluation of the role of the Communist Party may be exaggerated. However, the communists were without question a force to be reckoned with. They were organized into an Electrical Club which, as Allison pointed out, met on a regular basis to discuss matters and map out strategy relating to Vancouver electrical workers. Fell Dorland expanded on these views. An armature winder in Burrard Dry Dock during the Second World War, Dorland was the first woman ever to have belonged to
the Electrical Club of the Communist Party. During the late 1940s, before she moved on to become business and circulation manager at the Pacific Tribune, she remembered that "there was anywhere from fifteen to twenty members." According to Dorland, still a party supporter, the club "played a very positive role." It took up issues confronting workers in the electrical trades, because the communists "knew them like nobody else." Yet the climate of fear permeating attitudes toward the left in Canada prompted the Electrical Club, in time-honoured AFL fashion, to seek primarily "to get the best contract for the people who were working in the industry."69

Members of the Communist Party contributed to Local 213 in a variety of ways. When a central strike committee was formed in the spring of 1950, four of fourteen elected representatives belonged to the party's Electrical Club.70 They could also be found writing for the Live Wire, acting as assistants to George Gee, heading liaison committees for the annual May Day and Labour Day parades, elected as delegates to the VTLC, the TLC, or the IBEW's convention, and taking part in a variety of athletic and cultural activities.71 As in other unions across Canada, the amount of influence exerted by the communists was far out of proportion to their actual size within the local.

The success of individual communists in being elected to such positions could be attributed to at least three interrelated factors: first, to their proven willingness to fight employers during jobsite disputes; second, to the leadership they often provided in advancing appropriate tactics during contract negoti-
ations; and third, to their accumulative impact over the years on issues being debated, either within the columns of the Live Wire or at union meetings. The popularity of individual communists thus did not lie so much in their visionary attempts to replace capitalism with socialism, or in their presentation of marxist theories of society. This may account for Wes Wooten's belief that George Gee was simply "one of the best," and that it did not strike him, as it did the critical Allison, that the Communist Party might have had a consistently recognizable strategy affecting the direction of Local 213.

The amount of influence the communists were able to exert was directly related to their ability to provide a militant, yet practical and intelligent, response to the collective needs of Local 213's membership. In his proven and well-known proficiency at the bargaining table, George Gee undeniably met the most important requirement necessary for his personal success. He also had the support of the Electrical Club, an electoral machine of considerable efficiency, willing and able to work around the clock in order to have him elected. Others, such as Ed Simpson, relied more on their hockey coaching skills and on their powers of verbal persuasion to highlight the contributions they could make to the local union. One rank and file lineman remembered Simpson in positively glowing terms:

"Ed Simpson was the greatest orator you've ever seen in your life. Boy, he could just roll it out there! He had the best command of the English language you ever heard. It would just roll out of him as if it was honey and it was a real pleasure just to listen to him speak. Everybody in the hall could hear him and he never got confused or jumbled like some other fellers did."
But it was also evident that such individual success was not the sole prerogative of those on the "left." The repeated election to the executive board of people such as John Waplington, Art O'Keeffe, and Angus MacDonald, demonstrated that those who later declared their opposition to communists and communism, also had intelligent and talented representatives. Up until 1953 all elected representatives cooperated and worked reasonably well together. Art O'Keeffe even went so far one year as to attack the leadership of the TLC for being "more content in red-baiting, and efforts to dominate the Congress," than in paying attention "to the primary needs of the workers: adequate housing, stabilized wages, health measures, peace, and security." In addition, the party itself never polarized union politics if it could be avoided. During Local 213's biennial elections in June, 1953, there were no organized slates and only three of twenty-five candidates can be identified as bona-fide communists.

Notwithstanding the ambiguous nature of party influence and the origin of its support, there can be little doubt but that the communists were making growing inroads in conducting Local 213's internal affairs. This created a noticeable current of unease--leading eventually to open antagonism--among traditional opponents of the left in the electrical industry. As early as March 4, 1949, it was apparent that John Raymond, the new Canadian vice-president of the IBEW, and Jack Ross, were already conspiring to reduce the local's jurisdiction. At a meeting of the executive board, George Gee took Raymond to task
for stalling on the democratic expressions of a small group of electrical workers in Vernon: "Bro. Gee took up with Bro. Raymond the conditions in the Interior, re Jurisdiction of men working in the Interior for the B.C.P.C. [British Columbia Power Commis-
sion], and having all these men come under the Jurisdiction of Local 213, Vernon local having already voted to come over to 213. Bro. Raymond stated these questions were in the hands of the Int. President. . . . Would make no further comments."76

Gee was perceptive in his suspicion of the international officers. Throughout the following months and years Jack Ross sent a regular stream of letters to IBEW headquarters, warning the international office of increasing activity among Local 213's communist element. A letter sent on November 14, 1949, to J. Scott Milne, international secretary of the IBEW, hinted at the problems Ross believed were beginning to assail the Vancouver local:

Local Union 213 has presented me with a problem which has left me wondering how to handle it diplomati-
cally. I frankly admit I don't know how to bring it out in the open without jeopardizing my chances of being able to walk into the Union Office and keep abreast of what is going on behind the scenes. Gee realizes that I have no authority, and consequently in order to do my job here, I cannot appear hostile to their [the communists'] actions, as it is a matter, more or less, of "snooping around" in order to get any information at the office. I am therefore, once again turning to you for guidance and advice, both of which you have so generously given in the past.

A second surviving letter was sent on February 17, 1950, again to J. Scott Milne. This letter speculated on the repercus-
sions of recently published articles in the News-Herald, one of three daily newspapers in Vancouver, linking Local 213 to the
One front-page article from February 8, 1950, detailed how George Gee had been refused nomination rights at the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, because TLC policy allegedly did "not permit any known members of the Labor-Progressive Party to run for council office." Gee responded by telling a reporter from the Province that he was "a paid servant of the members of my union." It followed, he claimed, that: "Neither in my own union nor in the trades council do the members wish me or any other member to expound personal political views. This policy of the local is scrupulously followed."

Given the historic role of international representatives, the contents of this letter from Jack Ross were not the least bit surprising. But what was more than a little unsettling was the source that first alerted the IBEW watchdog to the latest developments in the communist issue. Ross explained to J. Scott Milne that he had not been at the VTLC nomination meeting, and had been unaware of Gee's disqualification as a candidate for the council's executive board, "until advised by the employers with whom ... I was negotiating an agreement." He warned: "It's an unhealthy basis on which to transact business, Scott, and from where I'm sitting I can see the 'handwriting on the wall' for Local 213, unless some action is taken to prevent it."

A third letter was sent to Washington, D.C., on September 25, 1950, following on the heels of the annual TLC convention. On this occasion Ross informed his superiors of the voting pattern of some of Local 213's elected delegates on specific issues of interest. He wrote that "all 213 delegates were
opposed to the Congress policy on the barring of Communists from trade unions." But on the question of the Korean war, whereas "both Brother Dorland and Brother Simpson were opposed to the recommendation of the Trades and Labor Congress Executive," it appeared that "Brothers Clark and Forkin were in accord with the recommendation of the Executive." 82

Other letters followed, the tone of each of them becoming increasingly strident as the Communist Party extended its influence in Local 213. Ross was aware that the communists were both winning support from among new, or previously apathetic electrical workers, and were also encouraging unemployed party stalwarts to take out memberships in the booming IBEW. 83 His fears were confirmed when he received a letter on February 1, 1951, from Henry Ayling, personnel manager for BC Bridge and Dredging. Ayling was worried because there "seems to be a definite Communistic trend" in Local 213, and complained about a recent clearance given to Al Parkin, formerly active in the red bloc of the IWA. Well aware of Parkin's militant reputation and political preferences, Ayling "sent him back to the Local and informed them that I could not possibly hire a man with such a record as he has." 84

Ross' reaction to this piece of information was immediate and now almost predictable. In a letter written shortly after receiving Ayling's message, sent again to J. Scott Milne, he bitterly expressed his feelings about this turn of events:

I would like to say this to you Scott, that if I had known into what hands the affairs of 213 would fall, I would never have given up the Business Manager's job, no matter how badly I wanted the one I
now have. Day after day, they and their party members are gaining complete control of this once conservative and respected organization. To-day, the I.B.E.W. name is treated with justifiable suspicion. From every quarter I run into open hostility when endeavouring to carry out I.B.E.W. business.

... If I put in print what I am really thinking about this situation I guess I would be on the breadline tomorrow. However, I hope that someone will have the "guts" to do something about this rotten state of affairs. Rats breed damn fast when they are in a warm protected nest, and if the breeding is allowed to go on much longer, it will be a big job for even a Pied Piper from Washington.

By the summer of 1951, Ross' anti-communist campaign was directly affecting the economic interests of Local 213's membership. When construction on a giant aluminum smelting plant and a connective hydro-electric dam being built by the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan) at Kitimat was begun, tiny Prince Rupert Local 344 was given jurisdiction of the jobsite, not Local 213. Even more upsetting to Vancouver electrical workers was that Ross appeared to facilitate the granting of permits to travelling wiremen from around the rest of the country, ignoring demands for employment from his old home local. Feeling it was self-evident that Ross was instructing Les Crampton, Local 344's business agent, on whose travelling cards to accept or not to accept, Local 213's inside wiremen lashed out on August 13, 1951, resolving to "protest the actions of Bro. J. N. Ross in the handling of the Alcan job, this protest to be forwarded to international office; also we ask for thorough investigation of Bro. Ross on same job." But the discriminatory hiring practices continued unabated. A special meeting of the executive board was therefore called on November 15 to clear up
what Local 213's president, John Waplington, called "a sort of shadow . . . hanging over the Local." John Raymond was present at the meeting, but the Canadian vice-president was his usual evasive self, replying that "he would be seeing Bro. Scott Milne in [the] near future, & he would take [the] matter up with him in view of having this question cleared up."

In August, 1952, events took another twist. Following the advice of Jack Ross, three inside wiremen--John Spargo, Miles Spargo, and Angus McInnes--made an official protest to the international office about the way in which the local's affairs were being handled. First, they declared that "all Business Agents were linemen," an allegation that was patently false. Secondly, in what surely must have sounded bells of alarm south of the border, they said that "Brother Dorland [Fell's husband and an assistant to Gee] had stated at a meeting of wiremen that he wanted them to break away from the I.B.E.W. and form a Building Trades Local and elect their own representatives, [so] they would not have to stick to the Constitution." Third, they also complained that there were "permit men working while the real card men are out of work," adding, in a revealing statement, that:

The [Business] Agents have about 40 or 50 wiremen on their side who are good speakers and who dominate every meeting. For example, at one meeting a few days ago, they tried to force what they call rotation of work amongst the wiremen. They want us on every job we complete, be it big or small, to report back to the Union and be placed at the bottom of the unemployed list and the first in line to replace that member. The majority of us wiremen do not want this system, as it means we lose all seniority we have with the shops we have worked for, some of us for over 20 years."
After a long investigative delay, a special meeting of the executive board was held on December 4, 1952, to further air these complaints. Chaired by John Raymond and attended by Jack Ross, the executive board heard the three unhappy electricians call on "Brothers Boomer and Metzger as witnesses to these statements." It also heard John Spargo contend that the "majority of the wiremen . . . were not getting proper representation in the Local and would like to be able to elect their own representative." But Raymond immediately interrupted to remind him that it "was contrary to the Constitution" to have such elections. Yet this was exactly how Alex Dorland had originally become assistant business agent in 1949, the constitution being neatly circumvented as the democratic choice of the wiremen had then been 'appointed' by George Gee. Citing his 'ill health', Dorland had resigned from the post in January, 1951, only to be re-elected shortly afterwards, this time by an electoral process involving only the members of the executive board. It was precisely this latest, and admittedly restrictive electoral process, that Spargo was protesting. He was naturally reluctant to accept the ruling of John Raymond on the constitutionality of electing assistant business agents, and retorted that "if the inside wiremen could not get their own representative they would write to President Tracy . . . asking that a secret ballot be allowed of inside wiremen on the question of forming a local of their own and appointing their own representative." The hearing then ended, Raymond deciding that it was necessary to hold a special meeting
of all inside wiremen on December 29 so that these contentious issues could be completely resolved.

News of the meeting stirred up a great deal of interest. On the appointed day, Local 213's executive board presented the Dorland case to an overflowing membership at the larger Pender Auditorium. Jack Ross began by reading a letter he had received from Raymond asking him "to further investigate the supposed statements, said to have been made at a Wireman's meeting by Brother Alex Dorland." He announced that any interested member could come to his office "and sign affidavits that they heard Brother Dorland make these statements." Gee then took the platform and defended the accused, citing Dorland's "Union principles" as the main reason why he knew his assistant could "not make any such statements." Several motions were then passed, including two that resolved, on the one hand, that "The Wiremen wish to go on record by wanting to stay in and be part of Local 213"--carried unanimously--and, on the other hand, "That we endorse the existing hiring policy of Local 213"--carried with only two votes dissenting. Dorland finally got a chance to speak. He explained that he had taken on the job of assistant business agent for the wiremen "at the request of the Members of the Executive Board." He added that he had refused to take the post on a permanent basis "because of his Political beliefs . . . which he makes no apologies for." But he had taken on the responsibility as he thought he "could do a good job at this time for the Wiremen, and had always had the best interests of Local 213 at heart." He then denied having made statements encouraging
the wiremen to break away from Local 213, and demanded that the "accusations against him [be] cleared . . . for the best interest of the Local." 

Dorland was lucky. Raymond let the whole matter slide, in large part due to the strong demonstration of support the wiremen had given the assistant business agent at the special meeting. Undeniably popular with the rank and file, Dorland was then elected to the local's executive board the following year with an impressive total of 800 votes. But a more important reason for the caution of the international office may have been that it was still unsure as to how to rid Local 213 of its communist presence. Several years before, Robert E. Noonan, assistant to the international president, had requested Jack Ross to forward any information he could find on the two court cases the international office had been forced to wage in Vancouver—and had lost—in 1919 and 1921. As for Ross, between intermittent bouts with the bottle and his meddling in various construction projects around the province, he continued to gather whatever evidence came his way, eventually compiling an impressive array of newspaper articles, complaints from other locals about Local 213's "radical" behaviour, and letters from concerned company officials "that the relations of the inside wiremen and the contractors have been somewhat strained . . ." Individual electrical workers, such as Charles E. Sumpton, were also unhappy with the perception that "there are too many 'Reds' . . . in key positions with 'Red' ideas."
By 1953 the Communist Party was an established force in Local 213. Writing in the columns of the *Live Wire*, conscientiously fulfilling their duties as organizers, shop stewards, assistant business agents, and as executive board members, the communists under George Gee were effective contributors to a general rejuvenation of the electrical workers' organization. Combined with the buoyancy of the economy, the result was a major improvement in collective agreements, a thriving recreational and cultural environment, and a basically united union. Yet, despite their political and economic liberalism, the militancy and increasing influence of the communists created a noticeable cross-current of unease among opponents of the left in the electrical industry. An unholy oppositional alliance was in the process of being forged, the consequence of which was the highly-publicized breakup of the communist "family" a few years later.
Ross was becoming increasingly cynical about politics. In later years he became notorious for the following oft-used phrase: "When you buy the
meat, you buy the bones; when you buy the field, you buy the stones."

25 Interview with Gee, op. cit.
26 Interview with Gee, op. cit.
27 Gannon, op. cit., p. 108.
28 Interview with Don Wilson, Jan. 26, 1983.
29 Interview with Gee, op. cit. Local 213's Jack Nichol is no relation to the current head of the UFAWU.
33 The details of the vote in 1947 are, unfortunately, unavailable. However see comments in George Gee, In Defence of My Right to Work. Pamphlet (Burnaby, George Gee, no date).
34 Interview with Gee, Nov. 6, 1982.
35 Interview with Wooten, op. cit.
37 Green, op. cit., pp. 34-36.
39 There is some disagreement as to the actual date of Milne's investigation of Gee. Gee claims it was 1948, while his opponents claim it was 1949. See Gee, To All Members of Local 213. Pamphlet (Burnaby, George Gee, 1955).
41 Letter from George Gee to the provincial executive of the LPP, Oct. 15, 1948. Gee also made sure the international office of the IBEW was fully aware of his resignation. See the later acknowledgment of this letter from the international office, Oct. 10, 1950. Both letters from the files of George Gee.
42 Interview with Gee, Nov. 11, 1982.
One of the first orders of business at the local's meetings was the induction of new members into the IBEW. The number coming in every month was staggering as compared to the Morrison or Ross years, and is recorded faithfully throughout the Minute Books.


Interview with MacDonald, op. cit.

Three strikes involving the electrical workers were noted in the Labour Gazette, with the Vancouver local also taking part in the disastrous general strike of construction workers in 1928. See previous chapter for details. The fifth occasion was when Local 213 threatened a strike against the building contractors in early January, 1945. See the Sun, Jan. 3, 1945, p. 3.


Sun, Feb. 18, 1948, p. 21.

Live Wire, op. cit.

See Bruce Young article, op. cit. As for the continuing necessity of safety while on the job, this was illustrated by the death in 1947 of H. J. Astbury, president of Local 213, who "was electrocuted . . . while changing over high tension wires in Vancouver." The Labor Statesman, Nov., 1947, p. 3. A more graphic illustration was provided by John Kapalka, a lineman who suffered a serious accident in 1949 while stringing a new line "ninety degrees to an existing line that had sixty k.v. on top and a 2300 line about ten feet or so below it." With his partner, Jack, Kapalka spent several days "decorating" the poles, preparing them for the new wire. He then recalled:

A couple of days later we went back to finish the job, but things were wet--it had rained--and we strung this wire through. We had gone about a mile north of span or so, pulling this wire. We were at the reel end and we were sagging it up . . . My partner and I were then told to go up a pole and put the snubbing chains on. Those were chains with grips on them. Then the truck pulled the line up. Anyway, we snubbed a hole in there to keep it all sagged with the three wires. So . . . I don't know whether it was the first, second, or third phase--I think it was the first that we pulled up. It was up almost to snub, but not
far enough. But the cable we were pulling it with got that far. . . . I came down the pole, my partner stayed up, and he put the chains on. But Jack and I knew there was danger down there because it was too close to the sixty. We needed about five or six feet and we had none at all. I don't think we had a foot. . . . As we pulled it up (it was number four bare copper--pretty heavy stuff) the truck started to slide. I was standing there and the foreman hollered at me to put a block under the wheel. So I reached up onto the back of the truck, got the wooden block, stuck it under the wheels so it wouldn't pull back as the winch drew the tension up, and after that I leaned up against the truck. Well, at that moment the wire had become hot. . . . In an instant there was a mass of flames, it burned my shoulder, and I was stuck there. Of course I was knocked unconscious. The foreman, I was told later, threw a rope around my legs and jerked my feet out from under me. Well, as I came down, my head came back and it hit the truck. . . . It took the bone and everything off the top of my skull. That's when there was a second flash . . .

The next time I woke up it was four weeks later, and it was another couple of weeks more before I started to realize and identify different objects. I was in the hospital for two and a half years . . . Anyways, the lawyers got together and realized that the foreman had been in the wrong. The Compensation Board had also just passed a directive that there was to be no steel cables used on line trucks for the simple reason that if they got hot, the whole truck got hot. They had to use rope. And Hume and Rumble neglected to do that. The foreman figured it was just too much trouble to put on rope for their winches, so he left the cables on and nobody enforced the new regulation.


52 These included Alex Dorland, George Gee, Ed Simpson, Matt Gerrard (Senior), and Tom and Stan Forkin. The last two belonged to the well-known radical family from Winnipeg, and Tom, at least, had actually taken out a membership in the Communist Party in the 1930s. It should also be noted that he was editor of the Live Wire throughout the Gee era.

53 See the impressive front-page picture in the September, 1953 (Vol. 4, No. 9), edition of the Live Wire. It represents the local's participation in that year's Vancouver Labour Day parade. An accompanying article by Ed Simpson states that 400 electrical workers paraded that day, and to Local 213 "must go the orchids for the largest and most spectacular turnout."

54 Letter from Bert Marcuse to unidentified electrical worker, Nov. 17, 1954. From the files of Bert Marcuse.

55 Live Wire, V. 2, No. 14, Jan., 1950, p. 6 (Dorland's column).
Wilson nevertheless had a loose relationship with the Communist Party, as he could often be counted on to support their policies. He also, on occasion, gave it money when asked to do so on a personal level. Interview with Wilson, op. cit.

Wilson had been the recipient of several medals for his bravery and exemplary performance during the Second World War.

Letter from Wilson to Local 213's executive board, Oct. 12, 1950. From the files of Don Wilson. The most revealing, if ungrammatical paragraph, read as follows:

I might say, that definitely conditions throughout the Power Commission operations are not too good. In fact, they are very poor. These conditions exist because of ignorance of Union policy and Union principle amongst members in these outlying areas. Discrimination has been rife amongst the members and also some Commission Officials, I believe, are definitely carrying on an anti-union policy. By this I mean that some officials of the Commission are doing everything in their power to keep the four Local Unions of the I.B.E.W. involved, from joining and being able to present a united front to the Commission. . . . [But] I don't believe I need go into detail as to conditions and as to the breaking of the Agreement now in existence between the I.B.E.W. and the Power Commission. These conditions that are broken, although major in nature and numerous in number will, I believe, be straightened out.

Interview with Wilson, op. cit.


Cited in Abella, op. cit., p. 162.

Avakumovic, op. cit., p. 196.

These are Abella's words, op. cit., p. 111.

Interview with Dave Clark, Sept. 29, 1984.


See details of the strike in the Sun, March 12, 1953, p. 15; and March 16, 1953, p. 17.

Interview with Gee, Nov. 11, 1982. Another "very leftist guy," according to Gee, was Alex Dorland. Formerly known as Alex Tooth, Dorland, to Gee's on-going annoyance, once announced at a union meeting that he was conducting seminars on Marxism-Leninism, and any electrical worker interested in the matter was welcome to attend.


See Minutes of special meeting of Local 213, May 6, 1950--Ed Simpson in chair. The central strike committee was to negotiate with the line contractors. Of fourteen members, four were recognizable communists, namely: Ed Simpson, Jimmy Hall, Norm Thomas and Robbie Robson. In addition, Matt Gerard (Junior) was probably very close to the core group of left-wing representatives from the line section.

Ed Simpson was the perennial choice to head the annual May Day and Labour Day liaison committees, while either Simpson, George Gee, Alex Dorland, Stewart Houston, or George Black could occasionally be elected as delegates to conventions and wider labour organizations. See Local 213's list of delegates and committees for 1951 in the Minute Books, June 19, 1951, pp. 128-29. On Simpson, see same, Sept. 8, 1953, p. 392.


Live Wire, V. 1, No. 11, Oct., 1949, p. 4.

These were George Gee, Alex Dorland, and Cec McEwen. All three were easily elected. See election results in the Live Wire, June, 1953, p. 1.

Raymond had been on international president Tracy's slate in 1946 and had defeated Ernest Ingles, who had supported Brown. Ingles must have subsequently retired. See The Labour Statesman, Sept., 1946, p. 2.


See article in the News-Herald, June 3, 1949, p. 4.


Province, Feb. 10, 1950, p. 3.


Ross to Robert E. Noonan (assistant to the international president), Sept. 25, 1950. Ross files.

Well-known communists from other industries inducted into Local 213 under George Gee included: Ed Simpson, Carl Rush (Maurice's brother), Alex Dorland, Al Parkin, John McCuish, D. B. "Dustie" Greenwell, as well as members of Gee's own family, namely Bill Gee and Ed Gee.

86 Interview with Jimmy Hall, December 20, 1982.
88 See references in Minute Books, May 11, 1953, p. 296; and June 8, 1953, p. 325.
90 Ibid.
91 See letter from Spargo, Spargo and McInnes to John Raymond, Aug. 9, 1952. Ross files.
92 Minute Books, Dec. 4, 1952 (no page #).
93 Ibid.
94 Spargo, Spargo, and McInnes, to Raymond, op. cit.
95 All above quotes from Minute Books, op. cit.
96 Dorland's letter of resignation was subsequently read at a union meeting. Minute Books, Feb. 5, 1951, p. 468.
98 Ibid., Dec. 29, 1952 (no page #).
99 Ibid.
100 Raymond admitted as such in presenting his findings to the local. See Minute Books, April 17, 1953, p. 278.
101 Dorland's total was comfortably near the middle of the pack of those elected to the executive board. Live Wire, V. 4, No. 6, June, 1953, p. 1.
103 See, for example, later letters from Charles A. Peck, business agent for Victoria Local 230, to Jack Ross, Jan. 20, 1955; and Jan. 31, 1955. See also letter from L. G. Sewell, head of the Building and Construction Exchange, to George Gee, March 26, 1952. See, finally, the letter from Charles E. Sumpton to Jack Ross, Jan. 10, 1953. All letters from Ross files. In the last-cited letter, Sumpton also complained that some of the left-wing electrical workers "are of such poor calibre that they depend entirely upon the friendliness that they can acquire with our Assistant Business Mgr. [Dorland] to keep getting sent out to
jobs, so as to make a living, and are continually being sent back as soon as the foreman sees, either, that he can't do the work, or won't give a reasonable 8 hrs work for a day's pay." Such an assessment was probably accurate, and reflected the pressure the Communist Party put on George Gee to accept unqualified party members in need of a job.
CHAPTER VI--UNHOLY ALLIANCE,
1953-1955

In the mid-1950s, those few Canadians who had access to television were treated to the sinister spectacle of Senator Joseph McCarthy weaving his theory of communist infiltration over the political corpses of his enemies. These years were also to see a successful, multi-pronged attack against the leadership of Local 213. Business agent George Gee, among others, would be ruthlessly purged on the grounds of "a long record of association with Communists and Communist activities."¹ The anti-communist alliance brought together divergent elements: a major employer, BC Electric, the international office of the IBEW, and, as the situation deteriorated, the non-communist members of Local 213's executive board.

The first salvo in this concerted campaign was apparently set off by the BC Electric Company. In an article ironically titled "Is Dal Grauer a Communist?", sent to the Live Wire on May 28, 1953, George Gee contended that several high-ranking officials from the company, including president A. E. "Dal" Grauer, had recently been heard "speaking to various members of Local 213 and stating that Local 213 is getting to be too big; that there should be a separate union for BC Electric employees; and finally, that George Gee is a Communist."² The business agent's immediate reaction was to accuse Grauer of scurrilously manipulating one of the smear tactics of McCarthyism, "which consists of labelling your enemy--any enemy, or for that matter, anybody who disagrees with you--a Communist."³ But the name-
calling was ironic, even laughable, Gee maintained, because "four or five years back [Social Credit MP] Reverend E. G. Hansell made a speech in Parliament in which he named a list of prominent people he said were Communists, fellow-travellers, or dupes of the Communists, and high on his list was none other than Dr. A. E. 'Dal' Grauer, President of the B.C. Electric." Gee then went on to point out that it was undoubtedly no accident that the BC Electric Company's whispering campaign was taking place just prior to Local 213's biennial executive board elections, concluding: "It will be a sorry day for the electrical workers of British Columbia when, if ever, we start running to the president of the B.C. Electric for advice as to how we should run our Union, who should be our officers, or to what political parties we may belong." 

The second salvo in this concerted campaign to rid Local 213 of its communist influence was fired by a magazine entitled Western Business and Industry. Beginning in June, 1953, the now defunct financial monthly published what was described as a series of seven "informative articles on present-day Communist influences in B.C. unions." Under the heading "Red is for Danger!", reporter Lawrence G. Ecroyd claimed that despite the death of Karl Marx in the nineteenth century, "Communism is still a healthy looking spectre haunting the British Columbia scene." He believed that "the whole dismal story of Communist infiltration" could only lead to "the overthrow of the Canadian democratic way of life." Ecroyd was right about the health of the spectre, of course, but whether it led inexorably to the
"overthrow [of] our present system by violence"\textsuperscript{10} was another question altogether.

The last of Ecroyd's seven articles dealt with Local 213 of the IBEW. If the invective about communist "subversion" and "guerrilla strike" tactics can be ignored, it contained a surprisingly accurate description of George Gee's history, character, and important role within the local.\textsuperscript{11} The problem, in Ecroyd's opinion, was that this experience had led the business agent toward the far left of the political spectrum, and to his well-known friendship with such notorious 'self-admitted' communists as Harvey Murphy, the western regional director of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Posing as a sort of counterweight to Jack Ross and Les Crampton, the two union leaders in fact had their offices in the same building and could often be seen in each other's company.

There were also at least four other clues that Ecroyd believed were clear evidence of George Gee's close relationship with the Communist Party: Gee had once been chairman of the civic and industrial branch of the Labor Progressive Party; he had been a member of the guard of honour at William Bennett's funeral; he had "backed the transparent red-hued Stockholm Peace Appeal"; and had been "prevented from entering the USA by US Immigration authorities."\textsuperscript{12} But the business agent had kept a fairly low profile as compared to other communists. The reason, Ecroyd surmised, was that "the Party was anxious to keep a red-stockinged foot in the TLC door,"\textsuperscript{13} following the well-advertised expulsions of communist-led unions.
Ecroyd warned his readers that Gee would not "easily be dislodged." He stated that unless there was a "wholesale change in membership attitude," Gee and his communist associates were very likely to stay in power. The reasons were straightforward: "Gee has managed to provide the Union with very skillful leadership, whatever else one might say. His case is so plausible and his organization technique so perfected that even the gas workers in [the employ of BC Electric] have voted overwhelmingly to join [the] IBEW." Prophetically, Ecroyd concluded that: "Unless charges were laid against him by the membership--an exceedingly difficult matter to do, if not impossible because of his good record of work--external means would be needed to make any desirable changes."¹⁵

The third salvo fired at George Gee was in the form of a public denunciation by the BC Electric Company. Following on the heels of the earlier whispering campaign, the company's action was extremely significant as it was the direct result of a year-and-a-half of bitter wrangling as to who should be allowed to bargain on behalf of approximately 250 employees of the firm's natural gas division. Originally belonging to Gas Workers' Federal Union, Local 225, British Columbia's gas workers had voted as early as 1952 to join the IBEW.¹⁶ But BC Electric refused to recognize Local 213 as their legitimate bargaining agent. Larry Jack, formerly director of labour relations with BC Electric, recalled that it was all "very simple." The small size of Local 225 meant that the gas workers "just didn't have the resources to bargain as effectively as the IBEW."
were so few of them paying dues that they couldn't afford the required help. They managed to reach settlements that, comparatively speaking, were advantageous to the company for quite a long time."¹⁷

Complicating matters once again was that the electrical union was repeatedly denied jurisdiction over the gas workers by the BC Labour Relations Board, since 1945 the new state arbiter for much of labour relations in the province. On the third occasion, Local 213 was refused on the grounds "that the applicant union has not shown that the majority of employees are members in good standing for the purposes of the [Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration] Act."¹⁸ On June 4, 1953, an indignant George Gee declared that the provincial government was "interfering in the right of a worker to join the union of his or her choice. It does not tell the employer what organization he must join, but assumes this right over the workers."¹⁹ With the continuing refusal of BC Electric to recognize Local 213 as their legitimate bargaining agent, the frustrated gas workers voted on December 21, 1953, by a massive ninety-seven percent majority, to take strike action beginning the last week in January in order to enforce their choice of representatives.²⁰

On January 14, 1954, The Vancouver Sun published a front-page story on the impending showdown. H. L. Purdy, a vice-president of the BC Electric Company, charged that "the threatened strike of the company's gas workers is being spearheaded by a union leader whose tactics 'closely follow the Communist line'." Purdy added: "Mr. Gee has been closely
connected with Communist organizations and it has been the company's sad experience that, since he became Business Agent... of the local which represents the company's electrical workers, our relations with those workers have deteriorated." Denying that he was a member of the Communist Party, Gee, in turn, charged that Purdy's allegations were a "smoke screen" aimed at keeping the lid on the wages of gas and electrical workers. According to the Sun, Gee maintained that "laborers in the gas department received $1.30 an hour and [labourers in the] electrical workers' [union] $1.57. ... Until two years ago when they came into the electrical workers' union [the gas workers] were isolated, and the company kept their wages down. Now they are members of the [electrical] union and getting support from the union and Purdy is trying to end that." But the Sun gave Purdy the last word. He declared that Local 213, into which "Gee seeks to lead our gas workers," also contained a large number of workers not employed by the BC Electric Company. Accusing Local 213 of behaving more like an industrial rather than a strict craft union, Purdy let it be known that he did "not think it desirable that [non-BC Electric workers] should take part in decisions of the local that affect us directly, or that our employees should, by being members of the same local, become involved in any disputes which those other members may have with their own employers."23

Similar accusations against Gee were made the following day, on January 15, 1954. In a speech to the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, another BC Electric vice-president, E. W. Arnott,
stated that the possibility of a gas workers' strike "was being organized by the IBEW, led by George Gee, who follows very closely the Communistic line in matters of this kind." He then reiterated that the official bargaining agent of the gas workers was the "Gas Workers' Federal Union No. 225." The agreement between the company and that particular union remained in force, Arnott maintained, "because neither signatory has given [the] required 60-day notice of re-opening."24

The argument surrounding the gas workers was compounded when Local 213's executive board decided not to sign the latest collective agreement with the BC Electric Company. Though it had previously agreed to do so, the Vancouver local suddenly announced that it was refusing to sign anything unless specific issues dealing not only with the gas workers, but also having to do with early retirement, pension rights, and negotiations with the line contractors, were also completely resolved.25 Such a last minute change of heart did little but inflame an already tense situation, provoking BC Electric into retaliating with a new tactic of its own. In the February 25, 1954, Minutes of the board of directors' meeting of the British Columbia Power Corporation, BC Electric's parent company, it was reported that Dal Grauer, the chairman of the board, had recently made a special trip to Washington, D.C., with the express purpose of discussing with IBEW officials Local 213's refusal to sign the verbally approved collective agreement.26 Grauer was also concerned about Gee's alleged communist affiliation. Some of Larry Jack's more distasteful memories while employed at BC
Electric were related to those occasions when "Mr. Grauer instructed me to find out if Gee was in fact a communist." A meeting of the minds occurred in Washington and an understanding on affairs pertaining to Local 213 was reached. Upon Grauer's return to Vancouver, Gee was forced to sign the collective agreement, in return for the immediate cessation of BC Electric's red-baiting campaign. But this facile compromise did not satisfy Grauer's belief that his labour relations problems would be solved, if only "the left-wing leadership of Local 213, which has been the company's main objection all along," could be completely eradicated. It rapidly became apparent that Grauer wanted Gee and his communist assistants removed before he would willingly allow the gas workers, and the payment of their per capita dues, to belong to the IBEW. BC Electric therefore continued to stall in facilitating the union's desire to take in the 250 extra members.

The concern with Local 213 continued to be reflected in the Minutes of the BC Power Corporation well into the fall of 1954. But on October 28 of that year, it seemed, to the relief of the board of directors, that a resolution to the thorny issue was close at hand. It was reported that "there are now strong indications" that Gee and his assistants were "in the process of being replaced by men of more stable and responsible calibre." It was also reported that since "leadership of the kind desired ... in Local 213 is now coming into office," BC Electric had finally signed a contract with the IBEW on October 22 covering the company's gas workers.
Dal Grauer received official notification as to the impending ouster of Local 213's "left-wing leadership" in a letter dated December 21 from J. Scott Milne, international president of the IBEW: "This is to inform you that Mr. Al Terry, one of our International Representatives, will be in Vancouver in the early part of January in connection with the subject matter which we have discussed on several occasions." Milne went on to write: "As I told you, we will put our house in order about the first of the year. Mr. Terry will have full authority from this office." The evidence shows that BC Electric may not have been alone in this conspiracy. Dishonouring his own office and his reputation for "fair" dealing with the men, Vancouver mayor Fred Hume, semi-retired president of Hume and Rumble, was a third party to this correspondence. Writing to his "Dear Friend Fred," Milne advised the mayor that his personal strong-armed enforcer, Terry, would "make whatever corrections are necessary in this situation."33

There can be little doubt at this point that the concerted attack on Local 213 was a simple case of class collaboration between the BC Electric Company and the international office of the IBEW, with the added implication of the mayor's office in Vancouver. However, other events had transpired to ensure that it did not appear as such to outside observers. The plot thickened with the unveiling of a seemingly separate intrigue that had been underway since at least the beginning of September, 1954,34 and that also had as its aim the eradication of the communist influence in Local 213. Genuinely fearful that the
noticeable influx of new electrical workers belonging to the Communist Party might come to dominate the local completely, a small, but extremely influential group composed initially of five individual executive board members, decided that something had to be done quickly in order to reverse this alarming trend, one which former vice-president Art O'Keeffe simply described as George Gee's policy of admitting "lots of people . . . that were quite vocal." Well aware that they could not defeat the ever-popular business agent in an electoral confrontation, the anti-communist group agreed that a different approach was necessarily required.

A golden opportunity to put together a plan of attack was presented to the executive board members at the IBEW's twenty-fifth convention held in Chicago, Illinois, from August 30 to September 4, 1954. The circumstances were ideal, as the five had all been elected as delegates to represent Local 213. In contrast, the only leftists also elected to attend the Chicago convention, George Gee and Don Wilson, were conspicuous by their absence, as they had both been refused entry into the United States by American border officials. Moreover, as if on cue, the IBEW passed a highly-publicized resolution in Chicago declaring, in part, that "We will find and expel from our midst any who might attempt to destroy, by subversion, all that we stand for." It also read: "This Brotherhood will continue to oppose Communism, Nazism or any other subversive 'Ism'" (see Appendix B: Document 12). As if to lend credence to its warning, the international executive board then revealed to the convention
delegates that between 1950 and 1954 alone, the IBEW had been forced to suspend thirty-four individual locals. Angus MacDonald remembers that when the convention ended, of nine attending delegates from Local 213, the five concerned executive board members, John Waplington, Bill Daley, Art O'Keeffe, Jack McSorley, and himself, "finally asked for an audience with the great one, Scott Milne," the international president of the IBEW. Their reasons were simple enough:

We were an innocent group of people that wanted to clean up 213 in the best way we could and the best way we thought. We knew we couldn't beat George in an election because George was a good business manager. So we decided we would have to root him out. And the best way we could do that was to build up the case against him that he was a communist trying to destroy the actual democratic process in 213.

The desired audience with Milne was quickly accorded, with both Andrew Johnson and Lewis Sherman (the former was an international representative, the latter the IBEW's legal counsel) also present, but without Jack Ross, as the delegates from Vancouver did not want anyone in attendance "affected by ol' John Barleycorn." Yet, even without Ross' personal testimony the meeting proceeded smoothly, perhaps a little too smoothly, as to this day MacDonald still believes that "I may have been an innocent victim of a master plan." He went on to say:

So we sat down with Scott Milne and we discussed George and the affairs of 213 in a very thorough and uncluttered manner. There was no flag waving, it was quiet, clear, and what I would consider a very mature meeting. We discussed whether we should do this or whether we shouldn't, because none of us really wanted to do what we did, but we couldn't see any other way of stopping what we considered the communist tide coming into 213. . . . Looking back on it now, we were reacting to George being too loyal to people we thought
were not doing him or 213 any good, people like Alex Dorland, Don Wilson, Sid Sheard, and Harvey Murphy.

Milne agreed to support the plan of the five Canadian delegates, but warned them before leaving that "you better make sure you have it chapter and verse on George Gee's activities, because I'm not going to send my men up there unless I'm sure there's a case against him." 

The attacks on the Communist Party--and by insinuation George Gee--started shortly after the return of the five delegates to Vancouver. With the support of the other three conspiring executive board members, John Waplington and Art O'Keeffe let it be known that their convention reports contained serious indictments of the "adverse publicity Local 213 was receiving," and stated they thought it was the result of "Communism domination [sic]." 

Gee responded by expressing his concern about maintaining "the unity of the union," but with only Don Wilson and Alex Dorland willing to speak on his behalf, there was little the out-maneuvered business agent could do to convince Waplington and O'Keeffe to change the critical nature of their reports. Realizing that they were in trouble, Local 213's communists attempted to appease the sudden aggression of those who, for the first time, now publicly appeared as their adversaries. At the regular membership meeting on October 4, 1954, Alex Dorland asked for permission to speak before the reports of the convention delegates were to be heard. Granted this permission, Dorland then rose to tender his resignation as a member of the executive board. He explained that he was doing so in the belief that his gesture "would help to solve some of the troubles
the union is now beset with," stating, as he had a year earlier, that his actions "would always be for the good of Local 213." But Dorland's resignation did little to alter the determination of the now openly anti-communist executive board members. Reading their reports in sequential order, John Waplington and Art O'Keeffe both presented and defended the IBEW's position on the communist issue. Waplington spoke first, announcing that:

It is my belief that the President, Bro. Scott Milne, means to enforce the Constitution. I base my statements on a meeting your delegates had with Bro. Milne on Saturday, September 5th, 1954. We have, all of us, in the past heard rumors of action against Local Union 213 if we did not take action to clear ourselves of the "Red" name our Union has been labelled with across Canada, on the Pacific Coast and to the International. We found the President of the I.B.E.W. was concerned about it. Very concerned. While we were given no indication of any plan to take action against this Union, I for one, could not help but feel that some action was in the offing.

O'Keeffe followed shortly after, and though his report was not as direct in its condemnation, he nevertheless told the assembled electrical workers that the IBEW convention had been upset by the "alleged claims of communist leadership and influence," and the way it "reflected unfavourably toward the membership" of Local 213. Gee, of course, took exception to these thinly-veiled criticisms of his leadership, claiming that "he would stand on his record, and any time the Local does not want him, he [would be] willing to resign."

The red-baiting quickly prodded the Communist Party and its supporters into action. At the next regular meeting held on October 18, a motion was presented from the floor not to publish the two controversial accounts of the convention proceedings in
the *Live Wire*. The justification was that the reports "would give encouragement and aid to the employers." In defending the motion, Tom Forkin, the newspaper's editor, even went so far as to say that neither report had been signed and that John Waplington's had been delivered to him by a third person. Though he was long since an ex-communist, Forkin supported the action again at a subsequent meeting, stating that publication decisions "are made by [the] whole editorial board & they do what they think is . . . best [for the] interests of [the] union." Later, he also wrote that: "As a general policy the [Editorial] Board feels that contentious questions concerning inner-local business or policy should be discussed and settled in our Local meetings and not in the columns of the Live Wire."

The exchange between left and right continued until the end of the year. One notable exchange took place in the December, 1954, issue of the *Live Wire*, despite the recent disclaimer by its editor. Two articles appeared side by side in the newspaper, one by George Gee maintaining that improvements in wages and working conditions "were only made through the united efforts of the Union itself;" the other, much longer article, was by Art O'Keeffe and claimed that "unity" was not the issue. "Differences with the employers and opposite views with various members of the union," he wrote, "must be differentiated and leave no possibility of interpretation of company and union." Momentarily adopting a tone of sneering contempt, he declared that Canadians in "democratic institutions such as unions," were very unlike "the tub thumping claquing clique of parroting proletariats
eagerly ready to adopt every stereotyped formula proffered by those countries or people who espouse communist doctrines." In a more scholarly vein, O'Keeffe asserted that there was "a vast difference between disagreement and disunity and any differences incorrectly interpreted should be rectified."54

The trap that had been set for George Gee and the Communist Party began to spring shut on December 31, 1954. That something serious was going to take place during the incoming New Year became evident when international president J. Scott Milne sent a letter to every one of Local 213's approximately 2,400 members. Overturning the recent October 18 decision by the local's membership not to publish the two reports presented by John Waplington and Art O'Keeffe, Milne wrote: "I find nothing in the reports that could give the slightest encouragement or aid to any employer." On the contrary, he found "information . . . that should not be denied any member." He therefore enclosed the two controversial reports for all to read, adding, in a foretaste of what was to come, that he had "received various complaints from members about conditions in Local 213 . . . [and was] now assigning a Representative--on special assignment--to conduct an investigation and report direct to me."55

The action began on January 4, 1955, when international representative Alfred Terry arrived in Vancouver to start his "investigation." One of the first people he went to see was John Waplington, who informed him that "he had been drafting charges against Gee and was ready to lay them before the Executive of the Union."56 Terry arranged a series of "interviews," often using a
threatening and physically intimidating demeanor in an attempt to obtain the kind of information he needed to prosecute his case. He probably also conferred with the other four executive board members who had been present in Chicago.

Then, on January 11, Terry made a surprise visit to see assistant business agent Don Wilson. The point of his visit was to ask point-blank if Wilson was aware of any communist activity within Local 213. The assistant business agent cagily replied that he thought this might indeed be the case, but could not be absolutely sure as he did not belong to the Electrical Club of the Communist Party. Such evasiveness naturally did little to satisfy the obtuse and bullheaded Terry. In a letter written the following day, he specifically demanded that Wilson "address a communication to International president J. Scott Milne and incorporate in this communication all the names of members of Local 213 you suspect [Terry's underline] are in any way connected with the Labor Progressive Party." Terry also asked that a copy of this letter be in his possession no later than January 14, in time for the next regular meeting of Local 213's executive board. But Wilson refused to rat on anyone, least of all his friends in the Communist Party. In the required response sent only two days later, Gee's assistant stated: "I will not be a party to giving anyone unproven assumptions on suspicions I might have regarding members of this union which might subject them to the same type of questioning that I have gone through myself which is based on rumor and supposition. I trust I don't have to hold my job or improve my position within the I.B.E.W. by
running to anyone with suspicions (which have no status) whenever directed to do so."  

In the intervening day, Terry had also made contact with George Gee. On January 13 he wrote to the business agent to let him know he would relieve him immediately of his duties unless he agreed to fire Don Wilson. Gee had previously been advised by John Raymond in November, 1954, that he should carry out this very same action, because if he did not "your house may fall down on you." The Canadian vice-president had told Gee at the time that "the employers did not like Wilson," but his real motive in wanting the assistant dismissed, as he in fact later admitted, was because he thought "Wilson . . . was a communist." By all accounts, only the first of these two charges was substantially correct, and was directly related to Don Wilson's hard-nosed and militant character. But Gee remembers that when he finally got to talk to Alfred Terry, the international representative was also upset about a speech Wilson had made at the August, 1954, TLC convention in Regina as a delegate from Local 213. Gee recalls:

Don blasted away there at the international and their role in regards to the telephone workers. They'd sat on their backside, doing absolutely nothing, and we'd spent quite a bit of money trying to organize the telephone workers. They were in a company union at the time. So Don blasted the IBEW for signing yellow dog contracts and what have you. That was the main reason they wanted him dumped.

On top of that he threatened to pull a strike at Revelstoke that I needed like a hole in the head. I didn't know the bloody thing was almost out until I received a phone call from the mayor [of Revelstoke] one morning. Don hadn't told me that he was thinking of pulling the guys off the job. Anyway, they wanted me to fire him and I said no bloody way. When he did something I didn't agree with, then I might.
As with Wilson, Terry also asked Gee for information as to his suspicions of communist affiliation among members of Local 213. But as could only be expected, he received an equally negative response. Gee's reply was: "(1) That he could not furnish the information; and (2) That he would not if he could, that it was none of his business." 67

On the evening of January 14, Local 213's executive board met in Gee's office to discuss Terry's recent investigation. The international representative first asked Don Wilson if he was ready to change the answers stated in his letter. Once again the reply was negative, so Wilson was asked to leave the room. Terry then repeated his earlier requests that George Gee fire his assistant and furnish him with information relating to communist activity in Local 213. As Gee also declined to change his reply, he too was asked to leave the room. Once Gee was no longer present, John Waplington produced his set of charges against the business agent, charges which were already signed by the four executive board members who had also been to Chicago. Intimidated by Terry's presence, an acquiescent majority, and undoubtedly fearing for the loss of their jobs, Harold Stubbins and Al McDiarmid also signed. 68 Bob Woodward was initially the only one to refuse to do so, but later an absent Cec McEwen (a member of the Communist Party since the 1930s) would also refuse to affix his signature. 69

After the six extra names had been affixed to the charges, Gee was called back into the room, given a copy of the document and told to listen carefully as the innuendo and guilt-by-
association that purported to prove his culpability was read out loud. Much of what was cited was probably true, though to this day Gee maintains he played no formal role within the Communist Party following his resignation in 1948. Typical of the thirteen pieces of evidence used to sustain the charges were the following:

(4) Brother Gee, Murphy and Tom Uphill* did undertake the formation of a Left-Wing Communist front organization known as the Union Party to contest the B.C. Provincial Election as further proof of their association. Brother Gee also solicited funds from the Local Union to cover the expenses of this "party".

(11) He has consistently attacked Tom Alsbury** on the floor of the Union--referring to him as a "Red-Baiter"--a rabid anti-Communist . . . and using his Leftist given nickname of "Fearless Fosdick" which is discrediting [to] the President of the [VTLC] for daring to uphold his official position as outlined by the Constitution of the T.L.C. He has also criticized R. K. Gervin, Secretary of the Local Council on several occasions in a similar manner. Brother Gee as delegate to this council had also taken the same oath to uphold the T.L.C. Constitution as all delegates do.

(13) Brother Gee and Brother Waplington were delegated by Local 213, I.B.E.W. to attend the regular Meeting of Local 230, I.B.E.W. in Victoria, B.C. held following the signing of the I.B.E.W.--B.C.E. Co. Ltd. Agreement, 1953 to 1955 to criticize Local 230 for so doing. After attending this Meeting and travelling back to Vancouver . . . Brother Gee asked Brother Waplington: "If those boys in Washington do try to move against

* Tom Uphill was an independent labour MLA from Fernie thought to be close to the communist-led miners' unions in the Crowsnest Pass.

** Tom Alsbury had been a leading force in the creation of the so-called "white bloc" in the IWA during the late 1940s. As evident in paragraph (11), he later rose to the presidency of the VTLC.
me, would you come with me out of the I.B.E.W.? I could take 75% of the members with me."
Brother Waplington's reply was that he was staying with the I.B.E.W. and that Gee's percentage estimate should include a decimal between the 7 and 7.5 of his percentage estimate (or 7.5%).

The four pages of "evidence" ended with the statement that: "In view of the above it seems very apparent to us that George Gee is quite likely the 'Underground' and secret director of the Electrical section of the Labor Progressive Party which we consider works in the interest and direction of Soviet Russia and against the interest of the workers of Canada and also against the interest and welfare of all members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers throughout Canada."

Following this lengthy oral reading, Alfred Terry called J. Scott Milne over the phone and was authorized to suspend the business agent "temporarily" from attending to the business of Local 213. Gee also talked to Milne and was given the identical message. Just before adjourning, the executive board "appointed" President Waplington to be Acting Business Manager and to assume the duties of Business Manager pending the outcome of the hearings on the charges against Brother George Gee.

The next day, January 15, a special meeting of the executive board was called to begin a thorough cleansing process of those suspected of communist affiliation. A telegram from J. Scott Milne was received confirming Gee's suspension, and was signed immediately by Alfred Terry to give it yet more authority. The board members then proceeded to suspend Don Wilson, Art Goy (the latest assistant business agent representing the wiremen), and
Bert Marcuse, the recently hired research specialist, suspect because his previous employment had been with the Trade Union Research Bureau, headed by Emil Bjarnason, a well-known Vancouver communist. A copy of a letter that George Gee had been ordered to write by Alfred Terry was also read and filed for future reference; only a few sentences long, it requested Harvey Murphy to vacate the premises at 111 Dunsmuir Street. The executive board then quickly adjourned, hoping that all would go well when they presented the charges and suspensions to the membership.\footnote{74}

On the appointed day, Monday, January 17, 1955, over 1,200 electrical workers convened in their union hall to learn more of what they had read in the weekend's newspapers: these had carried front page headlines announcing the suspension of George Gee by the international office of the IBEW for "working in behalf of Communist causes."\footnote{75} The meeting buzzed with anticipation when the executive board filed in to take its place on the platform at the front of the hall. Missing from their usual places were business agent George Gee, and his assistants Don Wilson and Art Goy. Seemingly replacing the three were a pair of strangers, large and tough looking individuals both, one of whom had a noticeable bulge under the left side of his overcoat.

Acting chairman Art O'Keeffe started the meeting by taking a roll call of the executive board. The assembly thus learned that the two strangers were none other than Alfred Terry and Andrew Johnson, international representatives for the IBEW, that Bob Woodward and Cec McEwen had both resigned, and that Bert Marcuse had been fired from his job. O'Keeffe then granted the
traditional opening motion, duly seconded and carried unani-
 mously, that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as read. 76

Events then occurred in rapid succession. Assistant
business agent Don Wilson was asked to come up to the platform
from the back of the hall and was told by Alfred Terry that "as
he, Bro. Wilson, was suspended he could not attend this
meeting." 77 Wilson responded by demanding that Terry show his
credentials from the IBEW. When the official had complied,
Wilson spoke up and read to the packed throng the letter from
Terry suspending him "from attendance at Local Union meetings or
representing Local 213 in any official capacity pending the
completion of [a] hearing and [a] decision on . . . charges." 78
He cited that he had been suspended "in accordance with Article
4, Section 4 of the I.B.E.W. Constitution," 79 and informed the
meeting that George Gee had been suspended under identical
charges. He then left the hall, a rising tide of applause and
shouts of encouragement ringing in his ears.

Following Wilson's departure, O'Keeffe attempted to proceed
with regular business and announced that a meeting of unemployed
brothers would be held at 7 p.m. the following night. 80 Other
union members, however, had different ideas. Someone angrily
presented a motion, quickly seconded, of nonconcurrence in a yet-
to-be-read report from the executive board detailing the changes
in the union's personnel. 81 O'Keeffe would not accept the motion
and ruled it out of order amid much hooting and hollering. John
Waplington, president of Local 213, then stood up to address the
angry throng. He stated he was doing so "in the temporary position of Business Manager, maybe for two weeks, until the Bro. Gee case is cleared up." But he was shouted down, and again nonconcurrence was moved and seconded only to be ruled out of order once more by O'Keeffe. Conscious of the vehemence that was building up against those sitting on the platform, brother Vern Shuttleworth then announced he was resigning from his appointed position on the executive board. Loud cheers greeted his decision, turning to jeers when brother Edward Moore was appointed to take his place temporarily.

At long last international representative Alfred Terry got up to address the crowd. He was met by a swelling chorus of boos and shouts of "Go back to the States, you McCarthyites" and "Yankee go home!", but brazenly stood his ground and told the electrical workers that "he had been assigned to come to Vancouver by International President J. Scott Milne to clear up the situation that existed in Local 213 of the IBEW." He added that president Milne had "great affection for . . . and is anxious to do everything possible to assist our Bros. in Canada. [But] he is presently very much concerned [about] Local 213." Before introducing his assistant, Andrew Johnson (the one with the bulge), Terry assured the meeting that the two of them would "do a good job in clearing up the situation . . . and nobody would be unfairly dealt with." Johnson then attempted to make a short speech, repeating much of what Terry had said. But someone shouted "Let's take the meeting over!" and several electrical workers started toward the stage area to take control
of the microphone. Brother Vern Bigelow then got into a shoving
match at the back of the platform, and other scuffles also
broke out in the aisles between the seats. Present in the union
hall that night was Tom Forkin. The Live Wire's editor remem-
bered what happened quite vividly:

Suffering cats! It came as close as anything to a
bloody insurrection at that meeting. But we
advised the men on the floor who were ready to fight to
keep their god-damn shirts on and to attack this thing
in a mature and moderate fashion. Of course the
backbone of this unruly element was the line depart-
ment. They were ready to fight, and they were gonna
clean the clocks of the international representa-
tives.

However, saner heads prevailed and a sense of order was
momentarily re-established, particularly once the stage was
cleared of rank and file electrical workers. Brother Bill Turner
then jumped up and loudly proclaimed from the floor that he was a
member of the Labour-Progressive Party. Others quickly
followed. Amid attempts by O'Keeffe to pursue another line of
business and filibuster the time remaining, the turmoil spread
again. Brothers Jack Gillett and Herbie Welch then announced
that they, too, were members of the LPP, the first-named adding,
"and proud of it!" In an atmosphere of bedlam, just before
adjourning at 11 p.m., the executive board suspended another
twenty-two members in addition to Wilson, Gee, and Goy. But
they agreed; in a show of apparent clemency and understanding,
"that nothing will be released to the press that will be detri-
mental, or harmful to the Bros. cases." Then, apart from Terry
and Johnson who walked in measured paces (the latter's bulge
becoming ever more noticeable), those present on the platform
hurriedly made their way to a back door leading to the comparative safety of the union offices.

John Waplington's belief that the Gee case would take only two weeks to clear up proved to be wishful thinking. Local 213 was placed in trusteeship for five long years, with all executive board members, office staff, and delegates representing the local to city, provincial, or national trade union bodies, to be approved beforehand by the international office of the IBEW. In addition, though its individual trade units could meet separately, Local 213's general meetings were also suspended during the same period.

The resulting personal hardships were even more devastating. George Gee was expelled from the IBEW, and, because of the organization's closed shop agreements, could no longer work at the only trade he possessed, that of a union lineman. He consequently lost nineteen years of accumulated seniority with the BC Electric Company and all rights to claim either his company or union pension. Don Wilson, in turn, was suspended from the IBEW for fifteen years and was excluded from participation in all union affairs, the center-point of his social life. Though he could also, in theory, continue to work as a union lineman, he claimed he was blacklisted by both the local and the companies and forced to find alternative employment. Bert Marcuse, fired from his post as Local 213's research director, later underwent a disturbing screening process when he enrolled as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia's School of Social Work. Fifteen other members of Local 213 eventually received
suspensions ranging from ten to fifteen years in duration, Vern Bigelow being fined $100 to boot. At subsequent meetings, scores of other electrical workers were also handed temporary suspensions of ninety days each to allow them to "cool off." Further, four out of thirteen members of the executive board resigned rather than serve under the dictatorial rule of the international office, and, in addition to Marcuse, seven of the local's office staff were either fired or quit. In short, McCarthyism in the west coast electrical trades marked the beginning of bitter divisions that were to last for decades.
NOTES


2 "Is 'Dal' Grauer a Communist?", May 28, 1953, p. 2. Gee files.

3 Ibid., p. 1.

4 Ibid., p. 2.

5 These took place on June 15, 1953. Gee was opposed by Malcolm "Cal" Morrison, the son of Teddy Morrison, but defeated the challenger easily, by 1,246 votes to 356. See "Results" in Live Wire, op. cit.

6 "Is 'Dal' Grauer a Communist?", op. cit., p. 3.

7 Ecroyd, op. cit., Part 1 (June, 1953) vol. 27, no. 6, p. 32.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., Part VII, (Sept., 1953) p. 16.

10 Ibid., Part 1, p. 33.

11 Ibid., Part VII, p. 12.


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 16.

15 Ibid.


17 Interview with Larry Jack, Feb. 16, 1983.

18 Cited in the Province, May 26, 1953, p. 8. Certification over the gas workers was in fact refused the IBEW on five different occasions. It was eventually granted on July 22, 1954. See the Financial Post, Nov. 27, 1954, p. 28.

19 Province, June 4, 1953, p. 5.


Ibid.

Ibid., p. 2.


A resolution on Dec. 4, 1953, read as follows:

The Executive Board endorses the position taken by the Business Manager, in the matters listed as

(1) The action the B. Manager is taking to have included in our agreement, the matters dealing with having the award of the Conciliation Board, re the early retirement written into the current agreement.

(2) The action the B. Manager is taking in regard to the contractors' negotiations and the setting up of a Board which shall establish an agreement, which shall include Pension Rights and the Executive Board recommend endorsement by the membership.

(3) The Executive Board endorses the position taken by the Gas Workers, and the Business Manager to force negotiations between the B.C. E. Co. and Local 213 I.B.E.W. as the Bargaining Agent.

Minute Books, Dec. 4, 1953, p. 471. At the regular meeting of the membership that followed, it was also resolved that: "The actions taken by Bro. Gee re the signing of the agreement with the B.C. E. Co. be endorsed." Ibid., Dec. 7, 1953, p. 474.

Board of Directors' Meetings, British Columbia Power Corporation (BCPC), Minutes, Vol. 12, Feb. 25, 1954, p. 2683. Special Collections, UBC.

Interview with Larry Jack, op. cit.

Minutes of the BCPC, op. cit. The red-baiting campaign in the newspapers ended almost as quickly as it had began upon Grauer's return from Washington.


Though it was probably put together well before the event, the IBEW convention in September, 1954, was the first real indication of the existence of an anti-communist coalition within Local 213's executive board. In the August edition of the Live Wire, John Waplington could still write, that:

As President of Local 213, I.B.E.W., I do not consider myself Leftist or Rightist but a Trade Unionist, elected as are the other Officers of our Union to carry out the will of the membership. I deplore that Mr. Grauer resorts to the statements and insinuations made to influence public opinion against Local 213, I.B.E.W. I know of the effect of "McCarthyism" on freedom. Mr. Grauer's statement is not accurate.


Interview with Art O'Keeffe, Dec. 4, 1982.


Ibid., p. 177.

Rightly or wrongly, the delegates felt a close affinity to Milne as the newly elected president of the IBEW was Vancouver-born, and had been friends in his youth with Jack Ross. Milne had then moved south and become business agent of the Portland, Oregon, local of the IBEW.

Interview with MacDonald, op. cit.

Ibid.

Ibid.

This is MacDonald's memory of what Milne said. Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid., p. 160.

John Waplington, "Report on the IBEW's Twenty-fifth Convention" (no date) p. 2. Gee files.

Art O'Keeffe, "Report on the IBEW's Twenty-fifth Convention" (no date) p. 2. Gee files.

That this was said at Local 213's Regular Meeting was alleged in a letter from J. Scott Milne to each of the local's electrical workers. Dec. 31, 1954. Gee files.


Ibid., Nov. 1, 1954, p. 179.


Ibid.

Forkin's reply to these assertions included the following statement:

May I assure you that in this matter, as in all others, the Editorial Board has no "private axe" to grind. Since the paper was started the Board has consistently tried to steer a fair and unbiased course in the best interests of our membership and the IBEW generally. I think that you will agree that an editor's lot is not always a happy one, but somebody has to do the job and we are doing the best we can.

Letter from Forkin to Milne, op. cit.

Justice Wilson's words, "Gee v. Freeman et al.," British Columbia Supreme Court Trial, April 14, 1958, Western Weekly Reports, p. 549.

Justice Wilson wrote that: "Terry did conduct investigations and parts of his conduct in doing so leave much to be desired, particularly his threats to the witness Houston [one of 213's delegates to the VTLC] in an effort to have him give evidence against Gee." Ibid.

See letter from Alfred Terry to Don Wilson for an account of this exchange, Jan. 12, 1955. Wilson files.


Reference to this letter is made in the Minute Books, Jan. 14, 1955, p. 237.

Cited in "Gee v. Freeman et al.," op. cit.

Justice Wilson's words, ibid.

Ibid., pp. 548-49.
However, in an earlier letter to Jack Ross, John Raymond stated that: "[his underline] anti-subversive files show Don Wilson as being a paid-up member of the party for 1951. We have not been able to get anything in the way of definite proof that he has paid dues since that time. This should be sufficient for your needs." Raymond to Ross, Oct. 12, 1954. Ross files.

Interview with Gee, Nov. 11, 1982.

Cited in "Gee v. Freeman et al.," op. cit., p. 549.

See account of these events in ibid., pp. 549-50. See also Minute Books, Jan. 14, 1955, pp. 236-37.

Ibid.

See pamphlet from Gee, To All Members of Local 213, op. cit. containing the official charges drawn up by Waplington. Gee files.

Ibid., pp. 4-5.


Ibid., pp. 238-39.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Minute Books, op. cit.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 245.


Minute Books, op. cit., p. 246.

Ibid.
Norm Wilson, Don's brother, was accused of having shouted this statement. Cited in letter from Andrew Johnson to Norman Wilson, Feb. 7, 1955. Gee files.


Interview with Forkin, op. cit.

Minute Books, op. cit.

Ibid., p. 247.


Ibid.

Interview with Wilson, op. cit.

Interview with Bert Marcuse, June 17, 1983.

Those electrical workers who received fifteen year suspensions were as follows: Alex Dorland, Bill Gee, W. J. Turner, Robbie Robson, Jimmy Duff, Ed Simpson, H. Wainwright, Herbie Welch, Jack Gillett, Sid Sheard, P. C. Nichols, Dustie Greenwell, and Don Wilson. Those who received ten year suspensions included Vern Bigelow and Norm Wilson. See "Report on Charges and Trials" (no date), Wilson files.

Johnson to Bigelow, op. cit.

See Bulletin #5 (no date), one of a series of bulletins issued by Don Wilson for the purpose of informing any interested electrical worker as to what was taking place regarding the local in the weeks and months following the trusteeship.
CHAPTER VII--TOWARDS MILITANCY
AT LENKURT

The reaction of the electrical workers to the intervention in Local 213's internal affairs was undoubtedly not what its instigators had initially hoped for. Persistent support for George Gee and the other suspended members became evident in some of the events that followed, though all hopes of immediate reinstatement were dashed following the defeat of Gee's appeal in a British Columbia Supreme Court trial. In addition, while it became evident that the Communist Party was enjoying a significant measure of success in recruiting a new cadre of left-wing electrical workers, the local's executive board was acutely aware that any perceived concession to employers might be interpreted as the real reason for George Gee's ouster as business agent. The ironic result was a measurable increase in the electrical workers' militancy, a number of important strikes breaking out over the next five years. Later, an illegal work-stoppage at Lenkurt Electric was to erupt in violence, leading once again to internal upheaval within the local, and provoking yet another intervention by the international office of the IBEW.

Deepest anger was the initial response of the electrical workers to the events that had taken place at the wild meeting of January 17, 1955. In writing to a friend, the recently fired research director, Bert Marcuse, stated that "90% of our membership are furious," and were looking to the suspended members for some kind of effective leadership to oppose the trusteeship of the international office: "All of us have been receiving endless
phone calls--many from people one would scarcely expect to hear from. I myself have had indignant calls from people who are completely right-wing . . . all of them very resentful of such undemocratic interference."¹ Though they thoroughly discussed all the available options, the suspended members felt that because they had been charged on the issue of actual or suspected communist affiliation, there was very little they could do.

Commented Don Wilson:

The only way our opponents could tackle the union was with the communist bogey. And we knew we couldn't fight that. Because if we had fought back, there would have been hundreds of guys who would have lost their jobs, been expelled, and got their heads beaten in. We had the example of the SIU, CSU, and IWA. There was just no way we could win that fight. Not at that time anyway.²

The anger of the electrical workers was to dissipate but little in the following three months. In February, 1955, John Raymond appointed international representative Naughton to act as referee in an investigation of the charges against George Gee, and ordered that he hold hearings, take testimony, and report back to him in Toronto.³ After his arrival in Vancouver, Naughton not only heard the original charges drawn up by John Waplington, but also a second, more detailed set of charges. After the hearings the international representative reported back to Raymond, sending him a transcript of the recorded testimony to which were affixed his personal recommendations. Raymond looked over the transcript, adopted Naughton's 'impartial' recommendations, and on April 7, 1955, expelled George Gee from the IBEW for life.⁴
News of Gee's expulsion and of his subsequent firing by the BC Electric Company (where he had temporarily gone back to work) resulted in a spontaneous wobble on the morning of April 13, 1955. Protesting the loss of livelihood of their former business agent, close to 300 electrical workers from around Vancouver spontaneously laid down their tools and walked off the job. They then proceeded to the union hall at 111 Dunsmuir Street and, "over the objection of the local's executive board," and in the presence of a "Vancouver police officer ... on duty in the union office," held a two-and-a-half hour discussion on any action that could be taken in order to force the IBEW and the companies to allow Gee at least the right to earn a living at the electrical trade. The assembled electrical workers decided that the best course of action lay in having the former business agent pursue the appeal process outlined at length in the IBEW's constitution. The meeting then adjourned, having successfully demonstrated that despite the anti-communist smear campaign mounted against him, George Gee still had a significant following within Local 213.

The issue of local union democracy was then kept alive by former assistant business agent Don Wilson. Editing a number of monthly bulletins in the name of what was called the "Union Defence Committee," the ever-aggressive Wilson attacked the international office of the IBEW in relentless fashion, and also those he described as "a couple of job seekers and weak-kneed individuals [who] have instituted a dictatorship under the cloak of anti-communism ... it is their intention to kill the voice
of the members And Thus Our Union [his emphasis] in order to render it ineffective and more easy to control from the top."^7

In particular, Wilson castigated Art O'Keeffe due to the latter's role as chairman of the January 17 meeting. In a hand-drawn caricatural scene inserted in one bulletin, Wilson compared O'Keeffe to Adolf Hitler, haranguing the electrical workers and hungry for the power proffered to him by the international office. This power was in the form of a carrot, tied to a string controlled by a smug-looking, gun-packing Andrew Johnson, while a police officer waited in the wings in case trouble began on the floor of the meeting. In a limerick attached to the drawing, Wilson wrote:

There was a young man called O'Keeffe
Who always aspired to be chief
When the men wouldn't elect him
He had Scott Milne select him
To suspend any who dare raise a beef. 8

Despite the fact that Wilson was completely mistaken in charging that Art O'Keeffe had never been elected, his bulletins were widely read and kept the electrical workers informed as to the opinions of the suspended members on current matters of interest; the bulletins also served to promote George Gee's reinstatement to the IBEW.

The campaign on Gee's behalf took on a more serious orientation when John McCuish was suspended in early January, 1956. The longtime communist supporter and former pilot for the IWA's famed Loggers' Navy had managed to avoid the first purge of the local's leading activists. McCuish was suspended for ten years because as chairman of the line contracting unit he had allowed a debate
There was a young man called O'Keefe
Who always aspired to be chief.
When the men wouldn't select him,
He had Scott Milne select him,
To suspend any who here raise a beef.
to take place on a motion "to put George Gee back to work at the
B.C. Electric." The executive board felt that such talk was
unacceptable and so found McCuish guilty of "creating or
attempting to create dissatisfaction or disservice among the
members" (see Appendix B: Document 15). What undoubtedly did
not help his case was the four-page article that subsequently
appeared in the Pacific Tribune on January 20, 1956, in which was
reproduced a lengthy affidavit (see Appendix B: Document 16).
Signed by McCuish, the affidavit told of a visit to his home by
two members of the RCMP on the evening of December 10, 1955, who,
in the course of a short conversation, asked: "how did they
manage to miss you?" As he was suspended only three weeks
later, McCuish felt there was strong evidence of collusion
between the RCMP and either the local executive board or the
international office of the IBEW. News of his suspension
resulted in a hastily adjourned meeting of the line contracting
unit on February 20, 1956, due to a successful challenge to the
authority of the chair from rank and file members.

In the meantime, in keeping with the decisions reached at
the impromptu gathering of the 300 striking electrical workers,
and also on the advice of his lawyers, George Gee decided to
appeal his expulsion, first to the international president, then,
if necessary, to the international executive committee. Both his
appeals were predictably turned down. The final step in the
appeal process was to appear at the next convention of the IBEW
and to plead personally before the attending delegates. However,
as the next scheduled convention was to be held a distant three
years hence, Gee decided not to wait and took the decision, instead, to file for immediate redress through the Canadian courts.

Charging that he had been the victim of a "conspiracy," Gee filed suit against "certain union members for damages, for reinstatement, and for an injunction restraining the defendants from interfering with his rights as a union member." Represented by a young left-wing graduate from law school, Thomas Berger, Gee's case eventually reached the Supreme Court of British Columbia, where it was pleaded in front of Justice James Wilson. Berger argued that: "(1) the expulsion was malicious; (2) there was lack of evidence to support the charges; (3) there was a conspiracy to injure the plaintiff; and (4) the expulsion proceedings were conducted contrary to rules of natural justice." But the future BC leader of the NDP could prove substantially little as he did not have access to the material indicating collusion between J. Scott Milne, Dal Grauer, and perhaps also mayor Fred Hume. With only circumstantial evidence to support his arguments, Berger nevertheless took a stab in the dark, accusing Milne, Raymond, and Waplington of conspiring to rid Local 213 of its allegedly communist business agent.

Justice Wilson rejected all four of Berger's charges, but not without first admitting "that despite the denials made by Raymond and Waplington of any sort of co-operation and co-ordination this set of circumstances could support an inference that there was some joint plan." He then advanced his own interpretation of the evidence: "That Milne, Raymond and
Waplington, each concerned about the situation in local 213, each pursued his constitutional function in dealing with it without prior consultation with the other.\textsuperscript{17}

Justice Wilson also declared that he believed communist societies were fundamentally opposed to the function and operation of free trade unions, citing events in East Germany in 1954 to back up his assertion.\textsuperscript{18} It logically followed that Gee's "underlying [communist] beliefs must . . . make him ultimately inimical to free trade unions which flourish most luxuriantly in the atmosphere of capitalism." The judge thus had "no difficulty in finding that the domestic tribunal [of the IBEW] might . . . fairly find that when Gee worked within the union, in the interests of communism he was working in the interest of an organization or cause detrimental to the union."\textsuperscript{19} Wilson then dismissed the action with costs, but not without first pointing out to the court that he had the "heartiest sympathy" for George Gee in his desire to work again at his trade, because "he is ironically the victim of [closed shop] agreements which he negotiated. If it lay in my power to give him the right to work he would have it today. But it does not lie in my power."\textsuperscript{20}

Adding to the turmoil within Local 213 was the leadership crisis among those who remained on the executive board. John Waplington was the local's business agent until November, 1955, when the international office decided that it might be better to have someone in that position who could not in any way be connected with George Gee's expulsion. Jack Ross advised the international office to choose Malcolm "Cal" Morrison, Teddy
Morrison's youngest son. An inside wireman, Cal Morrison had been working since before the Second World War for the BC Electric Company at Bridge River, then at Kitimat, where he headed the Allied Aluminum Workers Council in 1955. Morrison stayed on as business agent of Local 213 during two crisis-ridden years, in the process antagonizing almost everyone he had occasion to work with, including his sponsor, Jack Ross. He was then replaced by John Waplington in December, 1957, the very man he had previously succeeded.21

Cal Morrison's regime was so strife-torn that Art O'Keeffe was motivated to record in writing some of the events and personal conflicts that characterized Local 213 during this hectic two-year period. As assistant business agent for the wiremen, O'Keeffe was privy to the ins and outs of the local's executive board, and as such he made clear throughout his thirty-odd pages of notes his personal dislike for Morrison and the way the latter handled the local's affairs. In particular, he believed Morrison's "attitude was secretive, cunning and at times decisions with employers appeared bad and underhanded."22 What is even more intriguing is O'Keeffe's revelation of the four-cornered fight that developed between Morrison, Ross, Waplington, and himself, as to how Local 213 should be run and as to who would occupy the post of business agent. The secret plots, back-stabbing, and machiavellian maneuverings of this group are so numerous as to border on the extreme. Suffice it to say that words like "deceit," "disunity," "confusion," and "disruption"
Art O'Keeffe
Max Issue Livewire

"The local officers have a firm grip on the wheel of destiny of this local and will not ditch or wreck your vehicle regardless of the bank of that yelping pack on the outside.

This way for continued progress of Local 213"

Illustration 2
are typical of the vocabulary that appears repeatedly throughout O'Keeffe's personal journal. Compounding the trite personality conflicts increasingly engulfing Local 213's executive board was the attempt by the Communist Party to retain some form of influence among the electrical workers. William (Electrical Bill) Stewart came out to Vancouver from Toronto in 1956, obtained a job on permit as a journeyman wiremen in Burrard Dry Dock's marine electrical department, and was inducted into Local 213 following the mandatory six-month waiting period. A militant rank and file communist, Stewart's effective and charismatic leadership abilities proved an explosive mixture when planted in the fertile ground of a suspended local union. With a rising rate of inflation, increasing unemployment, and a predictable offensive campaign by employers, the rejuvenated Communist Party played a significant role in promoting three important strikes that broke out in 1957 and 1958 (see Appendix A: Table 5). This sudden increase in the number of strikes, in addition to the emergence of a new generation of left-wingers gravitating around Bill Stewart, made it abundantly clear that more fundamental and deep-seated structural reforms would have to take place before labour peace and cooperation could be fully guaranteed in the electrical industry.

* He was given the name "Electrical Bill" Stewart so as not to confuse him with "Boilermaker Bill" Stewart, the flamboyant representative for the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Union of Canada, and also a well-known member of the Communist Party.
Even more important in explaining the surprising persistence of Local 213's militant behaviour in the post-Gee era was the precarious position of the appointed executive board. In order not to be perpetually condemned as mere puppets of employers and the international office, and also to ensure success when elections were once more to be allowed, the new executive board ironically had to make every effort to appear more successful than the previous administration in winning concessions from employers. On the other hand, with Gee and his communist supporters apparently neutralized, the employers undoubtedly expected Local 213 to submit passively to whatever offer they chose to make.

A first dispute in the summer of 1957 involved seventy wiremen employed by the city of Vancouver. Primarily responsible for maintaining city streetlights, traffic signals, and fire alarms in good operating condition, the workers were initially offered a 9.2% per hour wage increase by the municipality, which was also the majority award of a conciliation board. Local 213 countered with a militant demand for a twenty percent increase, ostensibly in order to bring municipal wages in line with recent settlements in the private sector. Neither side proved willing to compromise during the early stages of negotiations, with the result that the electrical workers walked out on June 6. During the days and weeks that followed, the Sun reported progressively deteriorating conditions in Vancouver, as "thousands of street lamps were out," and traffic signals "at about two-thirds of the 143 controlled intersections in the city [have] been affected by
burned-out bulbs or electrical troubles." Local 213's strike committee had a twenty-four hour emergency crew standing by but reserved the right to define an "emergency." Vancouver magistrate Alex McDonald was outraged that the strikers felt they could take the "safety of citizens" into their own hands. In an interview with the Sun he declared: "It is fantastic--a disgrace, that these men should have the power to decide what is an emergency situation . . . who do these union leaders think they are? What do they know about safety?" To make matters worse, Vancouver's right-wing council of the day made threats to fire the "striking electricians after the strike is settled . . . if forced to meet the wage demands." But the strike was proving expensive. By July 25 the police department had been forced to hire seventeen auxiliary policemen to direct traffic "at inter-sections where signals are out," the bill at that point totalling $1,700 in extra wages. Concerned with mounting traffic tie-ups and a well-publicized increase in car accidents, city council voted to settle with the union. On July 26, 1957, a subdued and much-chastened mayor Fred Hume was forced to cast the tie-breaking ballot in favour of signing a collective agreement. The new two-year contract granted a twenty-one percent wage increase (to $23.20 per day), the municipality also providing assurances that "no attempt will be made to disband the electrical department and hand the job over to private contractors."

Demanding a forty percent per hour wage hike over a two-year period in lieu of the nineteen percent offered by another government conciliation board—and agreed to again by the employers—the three-week strike was the first against the public utility since 1921, while the line contractors had not been officially struck since 1926. In defending the local's demands, president Art O'Keeffe told attending delegates at a packed meeting of the VTLC, that "we won't crawl like Lazarus to get crumbs from Grauer's table." Tension during the strike was high, as engineers and supervisory personnel attempted to keep BC Electric's power grid from falling into disrepair. It was reported in the Sun that an engineer at Abbotsford "was dragged down a short flight of stairs by a picketer." In another incident, a group of picketers yelled "erroneous advice" to engineers repairing a broken-down power line. The Pacific Tribune also got into the act. In support of the strike, the communist weekly pointed out that though the hourly earnings of electrical workers appeared high on first impressions, linemen were "risking their lives," and "have to make it in nine months" due to the "seasonal" nature of work in the electrical industry. It also made a jab at the international office and Cal Morrison's two-year appointed stint in office, citing John Waplington to the effect that Local 213 would "not be satisfied with peanuts this time." Not much more was made of Local 213's trusteeship and of George Gee's expulsion, perhaps in the interests of unity and the fact that the former business agent's case was then being decided in the courts.
The strike grew in intensity on March 19 when the electrical workers made the traditional threat to join forces with the street railwaymen's union, and shut down all facets of BC Electric's operations. However, Charles Stewart, communist business agent for what was by then a predominantly bus drivers' organization, counselled moderation. As he thoughtfully observed: "No strike has ever been settled without a session around the bargaining table." The strike ended on March 28, both company and union agreeing that the only contentious item to be resolved—wages—should be decided by binding arbitration. A victory was claimed by the union when Justice Harold W. McInnes was chosen arbitrator, on the condition that his eventual decision use nineteen percent as a "base" in handing down a settlement.

A third strike under the leadership of the appointed trustees was much more defensive in character and began on May 30, 1958. It involved 331 inside wiremen locked out by electrical contractors in the building construction industry. The contractors sought to impose a new collective agreement at the previous year's rate of $23.92 per day, their action following a similar lockout imposed on the plumbers' union on April 31. R. K. Gervin, the contractors' spokesman (and a long way from his World War II stint as business agent for the street railwaymen) stated, in characteristic employer language, that the industry "must keep down prices at the present level and . . . cannot condone another round of wage increases." Art O'Keeffe described Gervin's announcement as a "stab in the back [and] . . . a
treacherous breach of faith," as it had earlier been agreed to by both sides that "no lockout or strike would take place while talks continued." With growing unemployment in the construction trades, Local 213 felt the companies were trying to take advantage of the situation and force a wage freeze on workers employed in the industry. After a collective bargaining impasse lasting several weeks and halting work on $52 million worth of construction projects in British Columbia, the provincial government appointed Carl H. Goldenberg, a Montreal lawyer, to head a special industrial inquiry commission made up of labour and employer representatives. Nominated by the inside wiremen to represent them on the commission was none other than George Gee. The Pacific Tribune reported that the international office threatened to take punitive action immediately if Gee's name was allowed to stand. Such talk, according to the Tribune, "incensed union members, who recognize that contractors had counted heavily on being able to provoke international intervention and so break their militant stand." 

In the end, the contending parties ignored the Goldenberg commission and signed a collective agreement on their own accord. The employers' decision may have been hastened by a court ruling that found two major Vancouver electrical firms, Hume and Rumble and J. H. McRae, guilty of "having illegally locked out their ... electricians." On August 30, Local 213 signed a new contract for an eleven cent per hour increase, to $24.80 per day (or a 3.68% increase), making the inside wiremen for the first time the top wage earning group in the construction industry.
The Sun also reported that "the pace-setting electricians have won fringe benefits that are the envy of the other trades--like coffee breaks twice a day."44

Undoubtedly hoping that the appointed executive board was in the process of proving its worth to the rank and file in negotiations with employers, the international office called for elections to be held in Local 213 in July, 1958. These saw electoral slates representing left and right run against each other, the tumultuous events of the recent past having succeeded, if nothing else, in polarizing the electrical workers. The balloting, taking place towards the end of the employers' lockout of the inside wiremen, saw the hoped-for right-wing majority returned. Yet with Jack Cody elected business agent, and with three or four others also elected as representatives for their respective trade units,45 it was obvious to all concerned that the left-wing current within the local was still very much alive.

The election of Jack Cody (formerly known as John "Curly" Wilson), a veteran of the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion, an unassuming former communist, and popular representative of the BC Electric gas workers,46 reflected the new political reality within Local 213. A majority, composed largely of workers employed by the BC Electric Company, retained a conservative trade union outlook, as they enjoyed both good benefits and year-round employment. The left, meanwhile, found that most of its support came from the line contracting and inside wiring sections, where physically arduous working conditions and periodic unemployment were constant reminders of the need for a
strong and militant leadership. Cody proved temporarily capable of winning votes from both these groups, as he was from the BC Electric Company and also on the left of the political spectrum.

However, Cody could do little once elected. Though extremely personable, his low-key approach was unlikely to inspire the membership, and he was also closely watched by Jack Ross and the international office. Any attempt to appoint communist assistants and shop stewards, as Gee had done, might have resulted in Cody's removal from his newly elected position. On the other hand, the international office had to handle Cody with care, for if he was mistreated he was quite capable of leading the gas workers into another union. He was thus somewhat of a compromise figurehead, someone both sides had to learn to live with.

The right-wing victory in 1958 was due largely to the militancy exhibited by the appointed executive board in the post-Gee era. Contrary perhaps to the expectations of the Communist Party, O'Keeffe, Waplington, MacDonald, and the others, proved to be tough negotiators in the opinion of a discerning rank and file. Control over union membership mailing lists, always a contentious issue, also helped. In addition, to hundreds of new members accepted into Local 213 after 1955, it was the existing executive board, dominated by conservative elements, that appeared responsible for providing an increasingly scarce number of jobs. As in the Gee era, the electoral allegiance of these in-coming new members was prejudiced in favour of those who ran the hiring hall, and fought on their behalf for higher wages and
better working conditions during official negotiations with employers. Similarly, this allegiance would occasionally gravi-
tate toward the rejuvenated left-wing minority, whose militants, in contrast, periodically exposed them to the effectiveness of the wobble, and to the ideas of class struggle and union democ-
racy. But whereas those on the left had been extended at least a minimum of protection under Gee and some of his assistants, during, and after the trusteeship, they most certainly were not. Alerted to the radicals lurking among rank and file electrical workers, employers, the international office, and a conservative executive board would effectively stifle any resurgence of this threat to their hegemony.

Ineffectual as business agent, Cody was defeated in a right-wing sweep of the executive board in 1960, beaten by Angus Macdonald in a bid to become president of Local 213. The notori-
ous glad-handing and bulldog-like approach to collective bargain-
ning of Art O'Keeffe won him Cody's old position, while Fred Allison became vice-president. Believing that the rank and file had once and for all repudiated the arguments of left-wing electrical workers, one unidentified spokesman reported: "Now we have a mandate from the members showing they want us to run a trade union and not a political party like the Reds try to make it." Though they often squabbled, the right-wing members on Local 213's executive board publicly presented a united front until a violent and technically illegal strike erupted at Lenkurt Electric in 1966. The resulting alliance between the company and
the international office of the IBEW was too much for Art O'Keeffe. Throwing in his lot with what was quickly becoming a left-led battle against the legal injunction to picket, O'Keeffe turned much of his executive board against him and provoked the international office into intervening in Vancouver once again. On orders from Washington, the troublesome local was completely restructured and its jurisdiction permanently reduced: Local 213's manufacturing unit became Local 264 and, most importantly, BC Electric workers became Local 258. Events had turned full circle. Suspended from holding office and barred from attending IBEW meetings for forty years, O'Keeffe would further redeem himself in the eyes of union activists by serving four months in Oakalla prison for his defiance of a court injunction ordering the cessation of all picketing at the Lenkurt plant in Burnaby. Indeed, as he was being escorted by the police through a crowd of supporters down the courthouse steps, a comradely George Gee was heard to mutter, in melodramatic tones: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."52

Much more needs to be known both about the events surrounding the strike at Lenkurt Electric, and the enigmatic character of Art O'Keeffe. But that is another time and another story.
NOTES

1 Letter from Bert Marcuse to Jack Scott, Jan. 21, 1955, p. 2. Marcuse files. Jack Scott was a well-known Vancouver Sun columnist, and had asked Marcuse to explain to him what had happened in Local 213, as he was preparing a series of articles on trade unionism in British Columbia. In this same letter, Marcuse also wrote that:

Communism--and "alleged communist sympathies"--are not the real concern of the International (I firmly believe). For one thing they fear that elements like Gee . . . are planning to break away from the International. However, this I can assure you is actually the contrary of the fact as we (Gee et al.) have consistently striven for unity (it may be we were wrong). Also the International is worried about Kitimat where the Steelworkers, and now the Mine Mill are threatening to move in. Also the International are playing footsie with the big employers and their bodies. . . . See Sun Jan. 15 when the story broke and Purdy of the B.C.E. was quoted about Gee being a Red. But then are we not always reds at negotiation time[?]

2 Interview with Wilson, op. cit.


4 Ibid.


6 Interview with Kapalka, op. cit.


8 No publication data. O'Keeffe files.


11 Ibid.


13 "Gee v. Freeman et al.," op. cit.

14 Cited in "Gee v. Freeman et al.," Canadian Labour Law Reports, Case 15, 179 (first page).

15 Ibid.
16 "Gee v. Freeman et al.," Western Weekly Reports, op. cit. p. 553.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 558.
19 Ibid., pp. 558-59.
20 Ibid., p. 560.
22 Ibid., p. 4.
23 See, in particular, pp. 23-24.
24 Interview with Les McDonald, Dec. 5, 1984. McDonald was closely associated with Bill Stewart at Burrard Dry Dock and in the ten years that followed elsewhere in the electrical construction industry.
26 Sun, June 6, 1957, p. 2.
33 Sun, March 10, 1958, p. 1.

36 The most the Tribune made of the affair was a small paragraph appearing in the March 28, 1958, edition (p. 1): "IBEW Local 213 has been under administration since 1955. No general membership meetings have been held during this period and the authority of the local is vested in an appointed executive. All strike committees were appointed."


38 Victoria Times, April 2, 1958, p. 4.

40 See the analysis in the Pacific Tribune, June 6, 1958, p. 12.


44 See quote in important article with comparison of wage rates in the Sun, Aug. 30, 1958, p. 1.

45 Those elected on the left-wing slate included Cody, John Kapalka, Ben Margolese, and David Caverly.

46 See eulogy in the Live Wire, May, 1979, V. LXXVIII, No. 2, p. 1; and interview with Terry Simpson, op. cit.

47 Interviews with Simpson and McDonald, op. cit.

48 Ibid.

49 A 1958 combination of slow-down and wobble led by Bill Stewart at Hooker Chemical in North Vancouver was particularly effective. Interview with McDonald, op. cit.


51 See, for example, letter from Raymond to O'Keeffe, Feb. 22, 1963, outlining the reasons why the latter was found not guilty of a number of charges brought against him by Angus Macdonald, President of Local 213. O'Keeffe files.

52 Interview with Ernie Fulton, Nov. 24, 1984.
CONCLUSION

The history of Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has been characterized by three overlapping themes: by conflict between workers and employers, by conflict between the local membership and the international office of the IBEW, and by internal political tension between competing trade union factions. Dangerous working conditions and lack of continuous employment provide an essential backdrop to each. In addition, Local 213 behaved more like an industrial rather than a craft union, attempting to unite all workers in the electrical industry. This organizational outlook was influenced by the political orientation of the trade union left in British Columbia, Local 213, in turn, playing an important role in shaping Vancouver labour politics. Such interaction led to some remarkable events, from those surrounding the rise and fall of the One Big Union in 1919, to the Cold War 'progressive' tendencies of George Gee's administration. These activist trends have been characteristic of the electrical workers' organization since its inception in British Columbia.

What also appears to be characteristic is the inability of Local 213 to sustain a permanent break with business union practices as exemplified by the 'model' AFL leadership of the IBEW. Any significant deviation from the conservative path, as defined both by employers and the international office, resulted in severe assaults on the local leadership. Notable assaults occurred following the vote to join the OBU and participation in the 1919 general strike, the decision to finance unemployed
members' per capita dues in 1933, and the persistent election of a business agent with a 'communist' reputation following the Second World War. However, despite repeated efforts by the international office, corporate authorities, and even, on occasion, conservative local union members, left and militant activists could not be completely expunged. With the conflict between capital and labour persisting, the activists won new adherents among the electrical workers. The result was the creation of internal political turmoil as competing trade union factions subsequently vied for control of Local 213. The Gee affair exemplified a protracted episode in this struggle. As Lembcke and Tattam observed, "both communism and anti-communism were rooted in B.C. class relations."¹

The crisis surrounding the strike at Lenkurt Electric in 1966 re-affirmed Vancouver electrical workers' long-standing tradition of class struggle and political factionalism. With a quixotic Art O'Keeffe finding himself opposed to the international office and on the side of the strikers, it also demonstrated, as Marx and Engels once pointed out, "that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."²

The state of the union in 1986 is remarkably similar to that which has often existed in the past. On the one hand, employers are demanding a substantial reduction in wages and benefits in order, they claim, to compete with an expanding non-union sector. On the other hand, a new "rank and file" slate has recently swept a number of positions, including that of president, on the local's executive board.³ Cliff Rundgren managed to retain the
post of business agent, but the ex-communist now finds himself increasingly being criticized by his outspoken activist opponents. Some of these, in particular Terry Simpson and Les McDonald, had previously been suspended by the international office for their leading role in conflicts with employers. While the influence of the Communist Party has, in recent years, been completely dissipated, the tradition of class struggle and political factionalism very evidently has not. To informed observers, it appears that a new chapter in Local 213's long and convoluted history is preparing to unfold.
NOTES

1. Lembcke and Tattam, _op. cit._, p. 113.


4. For more on McDonald's red-tinted past, see front-page story in the *Sun*, Dec. 14, 1985, pp. 1, 12.

5. Interviews with Simpson, McDonald and Fulton, _op. cit._
APPENDIX A

TABLES AND GRAPHS
# TABLE 1

Canada Census, 1911-1961—Census Enumeration of Construction Workers
In British Columbia and Vancouver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayers</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders and contractors</td>
<td>2,066</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>3,048</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>8,102</td>
<td>2,991</td>
<td>4,582</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>3,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement finishers</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete builders</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranemen, derrickmen &amp; hoistmen</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1,544</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers, stationary</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons and stone-cutters</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters and decorators</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>1,931</td>
<td>1,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterers and laters</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofers and slaters</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbers and pipe fitters</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet metal workers</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural iron workers</td>
<td>1,675</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers, construction</td>
<td>6,188</td>
<td>1,802</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers, general</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office employees</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foremen</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspectors</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other construction occupations</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Building Trades)</td>
<td>24,098</td>
<td>8,916</td>
<td>14,018</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>14,832</td>
<td>6,626</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 2**
Canada Census, 1911-1961—Census Enumeration of Electrical Workers
In British Columbia and Vancouver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in construction</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1,417</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,588</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>2,798</td>
<td>1,329</td>
<td>4,174</td>
<td>2,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity and gas works</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electrical appliance repairmen</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electrical and electronics workers</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street and electric railway employees</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>1,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric light and power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- power station operators</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- production &amp; distribution workers</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ferrous metal products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electrical apparatus</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraph and telephone workers</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3,769</td>
<td>1,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- operators</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1,784</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- linemen and servicemen</td>
<td>9,745</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others: Electricians</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,930</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>3,267</td>
<td>1,094</td>
<td>9,353</td>
<td>5,217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes power production sector in 1961.
### TABLE 3

All Accident Claims Caused by Electricity, 1917-1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1917-1921</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1922-1926</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1927-1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
<td>Amount Paid</td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>$40,453.79</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric motors and dynamos</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$240.69</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity and heat</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>$40,694.48</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: British Columbia Workmen's Compensation Board, Annual Reports.

Table E--'Causes of All Accidents'--discontinued after 1931.
GRAPH 1

Number of Claims as a Result of Causes in All Accidents, 1917-1931

- Electric Motors and Dynamos
- Electricity
GRAPH 2

Cost of Causes in All Accident Claims, 1917-1931

Electric Motors and Dynamos

Electric

Amount
Paid
(dollars)

1400
1200

1000

800

600

400

200

1917-1921 1922-1926 1927-1931

Amount
Paid
(dollars)

120000

100000

80000

60000

40000

20000

0

1917-1921 1922-1926 1927-1931

Years

Years
### Table 4

Number of Accident Claims and Total Amount of Compensation Paid in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1917-1921</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1922-1926</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1927-1931</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1932-1936</th>
<th>Quinquennial Totals 1937-1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
<td>Amount Paid</td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
<td>Amount Paid</td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 7(11)</td>
<td>Electric wiring or building</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>$1,276.55</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>$16,701.34</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring &amp; armature winding</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring &amp; armature winding; manufacture &amp; installation of neon signs</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8(1)</td>
<td>Electric light &amp; power plants, lines &amp; appliances, construction &amp; operation</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$4,779.44</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>$96,407.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of electric light &amp; power plants &amp; transmission lines; installation &amp; maintenance of cable television</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8(11)</td>
<td>Electric railways, operation, maintenance &amp; construction</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>$37,196.06</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8(3)</td>
<td>Electric railways, operation, maintenance &amp; construction</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>$113,917.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric railways (operation &amp; maintenance)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric railway construction</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8(5)</td>
<td>Gasworks, construction &amp; operation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of gasworks</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8(11)</td>
<td>Bus lines &amp; electric railway, operation and maintenance</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Kootenay Power &amp; Light Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$604.47</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>$16,013.90</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power plants</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light and power plant operation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>$43,856.52</td>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>$243,039.80</td>
<td>2,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1924: Category "West Kootenay Power & Light Co. Ltd." changed to "Electric Light & Power Plants."
### TABLE 4 (continued)

Number of Accident Claims and Total Amount of Compensation Paid in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
<td>Amount Paid</td>
<td>No. of Claims</td>
<td>Amount Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(11) Electric wiring or building</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>$68,231.52</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring &amp; armature winding</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>$15,690.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric wiring &amp; armature winding; manufacture &amp; installation of neon signs</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(1) Electric light &amp; power plants, lines &amp; appliances, construction &amp; operation</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>$112,631.46</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>$579,095.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of electric light &amp; power plants &amp; transmission lines; installation &amp; maintenance of cable television</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(3) &amp; Electric railways, operation, maintenance &amp; construction</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(3) Electric railways, operation, maintenance &amp; construction</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>$280,724.78</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>$385,128.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric railways (operation &amp; maintenance)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric railway construction</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>$37,885.42</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(5) Gasworks, construction &amp; operation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of gasworks</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(11) Bus lines &amp; electric railway, operation and maintenance</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(4) West Kootenay Power &amp; Light Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power plants</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>$6,353.97</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>$84,561.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light and power plant operation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,028</td>
<td>$513,477.13</td>
<td>2,509</td>
<td>$1,044,385.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1945: Category "Electric wiring" changed to "Electric wiring & armature winding."
1946: Title "Number of Accident Claims and Total Amount of Compensation Paid" changed to "Number of Accident Claims and Total Amount Charged to each Industry."
1950: Category "Power Plants" changed to "Light and power plant operation."
1953: Category "Operation of bus lines, & electric-railway operation & maintenance" changed to "Bus lines & electric railway, operation and maintenance."
1956: Category "Electric light & power plants, lines & appliances, construction & operation" changed to "Construction & operation of electric light & power plants and transmission lines."
1957: Category "Electric wiring & armature winding" changed to "Electric wiring & armature winding: manufacture & installation of neon signs."
1960: Category "Operation of electric light & power plants & transmission lines; installation & maintenance of cable television" changed to "Operation of electric light & power plants and transmission lines; installation & maintenance of cable television."
GRAPH 3

Number of Accident Claims in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia
(Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961

* 1952-1956: Data unavailable for Class 8(3) & 8(11) and Class 10(4).
* 1957-1961: Data available only for Class 7(11).
GRAPH 4

Total Compensation Paid (Charged) in the Electrical Industry of British Columbia (Excluding Telegraph and Telephones), 1917-1961

Thousands of Dollars

Class 7(11)  Class 8(1)
Class 8(3) & 8(11)  Class 10(4)

Years

249
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Alleged Cause or Object</th>
<th>Approx. No</th>
<th>Date of</th>
<th>Date of</th>
<th>Time Loss</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of Workers</td>
<td>Commencement</td>
<td>Termination</td>
<td>in Working Days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Affected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Operators, linemen and repairers</td>
<td>BC Telephone Co.</td>
<td>Demand of operators, according to class, for increased wages, shorter hours and recognition of the union.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Union recognized and an increase in wages granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Vancouver &amp; New Westminster &amp; electrical workers</td>
<td>Telephone operators</td>
<td>BC Telephone Co.</td>
<td>Demand for employment of union labour only.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No settlement reported, but places of strikers were filled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Building trades</td>
<td>5A contractors</td>
<td>In sympathy with striking carpenters and against alleged violation of agreement.</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>July 25</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Individual settlements made by separate trade unions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Vancouver &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>Telephone employees</td>
<td>BC Telephone Co.</td>
<td>Failure to reach agreement.</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Demands partly granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>New Westminster</td>
<td>Electrical workers</td>
<td>1 contractor</td>
<td>Increased wages.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Strike ineffective. Settled in favour of employers; employment conditions not affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Linemen</td>
<td>BC Electric Co.</td>
<td>Increased wages and recognition of union.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Aug. 24</td>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Negotiations settled in favour of employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Vancouver &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>Electrical workers</td>
<td>BC Electric Co., BC Telephone Co. &amp; Western Canada Power Co.</td>
<td>For increased wages and other working conditions.</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>July 2</td>
<td>July 11</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>Settled by arbitration; increase granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Electrical workers</td>
<td>BC Electric Co.</td>
<td>Discrimination and non-compliance with working agreement.</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>Negotiations settled in favour of employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Miscellaneous trades</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>In sympathy with general strike at Winnipeg.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>July 2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Strike ineffective. Settled in favour of employers; employment conditions not affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Telephone workers</td>
<td>BC Telephone Co.</td>
<td>Discrimination against striking telephone workers.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>July 2</td>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Strike ineffective. Settled in favour of employers; employment conditions not affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Inside wiremen</td>
<td>Associated electrical contractors</td>
<td>Announcement of wage freeze.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Negotiations settled in favour of employers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mostly Local 621 members, but some from Local 213.
** Members of New Westminster Local 558.
TABLE 5 (continued)
Official Strikes and Lockouts Affecting Electrical Workers
In Local 213's Jurisdiction, 1901-1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Alleged Cause or Object</th>
<th>Approx. No of Workers Affected</th>
<th>Date of Commencement</th>
<th>Date of Termination</th>
<th>Time Loss in Working Days</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>New Westminster Miscellaneous trades</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>In sympathy with general strike at Winnipeg.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Strike ineffective. Settled in favour of employers; conditions not affected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Vancouver, Electrical New Westminster workers &amp; Victoria</td>
<td>BC Electric Co., Western Canada Power Co., Vancouver Power Co.</td>
<td>Due to refusal of Railway Company to accept award of board of conciliation.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>Original arbitration award granted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Vancouver Electrical workers</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>For increased wages.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Information received in the Department [of Labour] indicated conditions no longer affected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Vancouver Electrical workers</td>
<td>Electrical lines &amp; works</td>
<td>For union wages and working conditions.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>Compromise agreement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Vancouver Inside wiremen</td>
<td>Hume &amp; Rumble Co. &amp; CHE Williams Co.</td>
<td>For increase in wages and shorter hours.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>Compromise agreement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Vancouver Neon sign factory workers</td>
<td>Neon Products Co.</td>
<td>For a new agreement providing for increased wages, two-week vacations with pay instead of one, and pay for statutory holidays.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>Following reference to conciliation board, negotiations; compromise agreement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Vancouver Inside wiremen</td>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
<td>Wages.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>June 6</td>
<td>July 27</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>In favour of employees. New two-year agreement signed with 2% wage increase granted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Vancouver Inside wiremen</td>
<td>Associated Electrical Contractors represented by Construction Industrial Relations</td>
<td>Wages.</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Aug. 21</td>
<td>18,885</td>
<td>Wage increase of 88 cents per day (3.88%).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Labour Gazette, British Columbia Federationist, The Labour Statesman, The Vancouver Sun, The Vancouver Daily Province
TABLE 6
Estimated Membership of Local 213, 1901-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1922</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>(A) 455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(B) 120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1955</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:

1913--Local 213, Minute Books, April 7, 1913, p. 179.
1922--(A) Local 213, Minute Books, Sept. 23, 1927; Dec. 17, 1929, p. 235; and personal deductions. This estimate of the number of members of Local 213 was calculated by subtracting 120 (number of members in Local 310) from 600. To account for attrition of workers during depression years, 25 was also subtracted from this subtotal, leaving a net figure of 455.
(B) Number of telephone workers cited in Local 310, Local 213, Minute Books, Sept. 23, 1927 (no page #) and Dec. 17, 1929, p. 235.
1940--The Vancouver Daily Province, May 23, 1940, p. 7.
GRAPH 5

Estimated Membership of Local 213, 1901-1960

Number of telephone workers cited in Local 310.
TABLE 7
Local 213's Business Agents and Presidents, 1901-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Business Agent</th>
<th>President</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>George Cowling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1904 | --             | George Cowling  
          | J. Dillabough |
| 1905 | --             | A. Sellars |
| 1906 | --             | Wm. Manning  
          | J. C. M. Cauley |
| 1907 | --             | --        |
| 1908 | --             | --        |
| 1909 | --             | H. M. Abercrombie  
          | H. E. Ellis  
          | H. H. Frie |
| 1910 | F. Payne       | A. C. Parker |
| 1911 | F. Payne  
          | E. L. McMillan | E. C. Knight |
|      |                | E. F. Fenton |
| 1912 | E. L. McMillan  
          | H. A. Jones | H. E. Durant |
|      |                | E. C. Knight |
| 1913 | H. A. Jones  
          | W. F. Dunne | Fred Fuller |
|      |                | Dave Fink |
| 1914 | W. F. Dunne  
<pre><code>      | E. H. Morrison | Sam Cawker |
</code></pre>
<p>| 1915 | E. H. Morrison | Dan McDougall |
| 1916 | E. H. Morrison | Dan McDougall |
| 1917 | &quot;              | --        |
| 1918 | &quot;              | E. H. Woodside |
| 1919 | &quot;              | E. H. Woodside |
| 1920 | &quot;              | E. H. Woodside |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Business Agent</th>
<th>President</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. G. Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>J. H. Northrop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>A. W. Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. B. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>J. B. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Dan McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>J. M. Bezer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>J. M. Bezer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
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<td>1937</td>
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<td>J. M. Bezer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H. J. Astbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
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<td>H. J. Astbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>E. H. Morrison</td>
<td>H. J. Astbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack N. Ross</td>
<td>J. M. Bezer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Jack N. Ross</td>
<td>J. M. Bezer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Jack N. Ross</td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E. A. Knight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Business Agent</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Wm. Fraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Jack N. Ross George Gee</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>George Gee</td>
<td>Wm. Fraser T. B. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>George Gee</td>
<td>T. B. Smith E. Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>E. Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>E. Moore George Tolhurst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>George Tolhurst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>George Tolhurst John Waplington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>John Waplington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>George Gee John Waplington</td>
<td>John Waplington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malcolm (Cal) Morrison</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Cal Morrison</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Cal Morrison John Waplington</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>John Waplington Jack Cody</td>
<td>John Waplington Angus MacDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Jack Cody</td>
<td>Angus MacDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Jack Cody Art O'Keeffe</td>
<td>Angus MacDonald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS
Proceedings, Tenth Convention of the IBEW (rebel faction), St. Louis, Missouri, 1908.

Correspondence, pp. 190-191.
Letter from Sec. Treasurer of Pacific District Council to P. W. Collins, May 26, 1908 (p. 191).

Fruitvale, Cal.,
May 26, 1908.

P. W. Collins, G. P.,
Springfield, Ill.

Dear Sir and Brother:

Your of the 21st inst., detailing the issuing of the charter 621 for the inside Local at Vancouver, B.C., is at hand.

I am sorry to see that your past promises to me about not issuing any charters without consulting the District Council is being ignored. That is not saying that we would have opposed the issuing of the charter to the inside men at Vancouver or at any other place. I should think that your experience with the Rhyolite Local and other Locals which have been chartered without consulting the District Council or letting them even know of their existence would have taught you to at least give us a chance to get in communication with them after their charters are issued.

I understand that there is a charter at San Rafael in Marion County and another at San Mateo in San Mateo County. I have no numbers, dates, names or addresses, or any other data as to either of these Locals, yet I believe I am reliably informed that both have been chartered. While I knew that the Grand Officers were hostile to the District Council plan, I did not presume that they would absolutely ignore us when every effort that has been made in the past as regard to new Locals by this District Council has been in the line of getting them to attend to their correspondence, pay up their per capita, and be good Locals of the I.B.E.W. I presume it is absolutely useless to refer to this matter any more or try to tell you what I think is the right thing in the matter as you promise and then ignore. I will therefore in the future get such data as I can and will endeavor to get in touch with the Locals that have been chartered and do the best I can as I apparently cannot depend upon you either to keep your word or help us in these matters.

Fraternally yours,

Secretary-Treasurer
Pacific Council, I.B.E.W.
Monjeau, No. 114: I do want to go down on the record that Canada is not out for the honor. We want somebody in Canada who is capable of speaking two languages. I am not saying this because I am capable of speaking these two languages. No, for I am personally disinterested as to who shall represent Canada, but we want a man to go down to the Province of Quebec who is capable of organizing these people working in our trade. It is not honor we want. We have been neglected from the time this organization was made international, regularly neglected until this last administration. We have not seen anybody in Canada since the time the G.V.P. was there, and what the organization has done has been accomplished by the individual members of that district. It is a mistaken idea, this honor is. We want somebody that is going to work and to attend to business. Further I want to state that there is a national organization in Quebec which is gaining strength, and it is only a question of time, if we do not get in there, that it will be an international organization through the Province of Quebec. The western part is international and will continue international, but in the Province of Quebec we must act immediately, or we will lose it.

Cunningham No. 45: I would like to say that there is work in Canada for a V.P. to more than double the expenses. Regarding the conditions in Canada, I know myself I went to the city of Toronto and I went to the city of Montreal and also to Quebec and found deplorable conditions throughout 63 towns. I asked every union man and inside man in the city of Quebec why they gave up their charter in the International Brotherhood. They claimed that they could get no results from the International Brotherhood, because, they stated to me that there is no international or national organization of electrical workers. I made inquiry and found that was the fact. But I met union line men and inside men that said they would give us a square deal; that they would renew their old charter which they had given up for several years. There is no organization of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and I want to say that the city of Montreal is on the verge now of considering and deciding that the national organization is the only organization for the interest of the people. I would like to go on record as saying that I believe if we get the right man in Canada, who can speak two languages fluently, that our international brotherhood will be greatly benefited. We can accomplish a great deal. I do not want to say any more, Mr. Chairman.

Brother Sullivan: I will state Brother Chairman that the word "organization" has a wide meaning, and the methods of all men in organizing are not alike. I will state that I consider that I have put in more than two-thirds of my time in organizing. I will also state that this is an old question that was brought
up before the last convention, a report of this nature recommending that a G.V.P. be put in Canada; for the reason that a man going from this city over the line was not in a position to do business properly if he could not speak both languages.

Chairman: You have voted to close debate, and the recommendation of the Committee on Constitution carried.

**DOCUMENT 3**

**RESOLUTION**, pp. 514-515

We, the Committee on Investigation and Charges, have been appointed by the Convention of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, to take up charges preferred against Grand Officers and ascertain the needs of the organization, which occasioned the calling of this special convention, hereby make the following report, and say that we have duly investigated special charges made against Peter W. Collins, Grand Secretary of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; F. J. McNulty, Grand President of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and the Executive Board; and we have carefully considered all the charges.

We find that Peter W. Collins has been guilty of gross negligence in the conduct of his office; that he has failed to perform his duty as an officer; that he has refused to submit to Local Unions the call for referendum as to the question of a special international convention; we find that he has assumed the roll of a dictator, and not an officer; we find that he has impaired the credit of the Brotherhood, and works to the irreparable injury of it.

We find that F. J. McNulty has grossly neglected the duties of his office by permitting said intolerable actions of the Grand Secretary, and we charge that the said McNulty and Peter W. Collins have been in collusion and have worked together and in secret, and have run the office entirely to suit themselves.

We further find that they have been in collusion to hinder and prevent an honest investigation of their conduct as officers. We find that they have done all in their power to prevent an investigation and to prevent the calling of a special convention for fear of the disclosures in their offices.

We find that the said McNulty and Collins have used the "Electrical Worker" of our organization for their own personal aggrandizement, and have prejudiced every honest effort that has been made by the Local Unions in the matter of procuring an honest hearing or investigation or legislation.
That they have used the said "Worker" as an instrument of defense of their conduct and of their acts, and have not given correct disclosures of the manner of their conduct of the offices or courtesy towards other members of the Brotherhood, and have circulated false and misleading statements to the prejudice of the Brotherhood, and thereby have also caused an investigation of our office and methods by their conduct in the post office department at Springfield, Illinois.

We further find that certain members of the said Executive Board, to wit: J. E. O'Connor, W. S. Godshall, J. J. McLaughlin, H. M. Scott, George King, have also been in collusion with the two said Grand Officers in the matter of refusing to allow the members of the organization to have full information of all the acts and doings as to their conduct in their office.

We find that the said above-named parties have had due and ample notice of the serious charges preferred against them, and that we have so notified them, and that they knew, and each of them, the nature of the charges preferred against them respectively.

We find that each of the above-named parties had due and ample notice of this convention and of the time and place of the hearing of the said charges preferred against them.

We find that they failed to and refused to attend this convention of our said brotherhood, and wholly refused to perform their duty as Grand President and Grand Secretary, in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of said Brotherhood, as provided by Section 10, Article XVIII of the Constitution; and we hereby recommend that their impeachment and discharge, as wholly unqualified, incapacitated and unfit for Grand Officers of this, our beloved Brotherhood. And be it

RESOLVED, WHEREAS, The following members of the Executive Board have failed to be present at this convention, to wit: J. E. O'Connor, W. S. Godshall, J. J. McLaughlin, H. M. Scott and George King, on which they, or a major portion, voted favorably; and

WHEREAS, Their failure in this respect also to comply with provisions of their motion, which prevailed, by which they agreed to meet in St. Louis, Mo., September 12, 1908, to make provisions for this convention; and

WHEREAS, The Grand President, F. J. McNulty, and Grand Secretary, Peter W. Collins, and Grand Vice-President, James P. Noonan, have failed to appear before this convention to answer the charges against them; and
WHEREAS, This convention has, since convening, notified the aforesaid Grand President F. J. McNulty and Grand Secretary P. W. Collins that they were about to be tried on charges; and

WHEREAS, The evidence produced before this convention established the unfortunate fact that the Grand President, F. J. McNulty, and the Grand Secretary, P. W. Collins, are woefully incompetent and have been guilty of acts of omission and commission at direct variance with the Constitution of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the fundamental principles of trades unionism; and

WHEREAS, Grand Vice-President James P. Noonan appeared before this Committee and refused to make any statement with reference to the various charges, giving no reasons for his defiant attitude; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we elect new officers in compliance with the Constitution as soon as it is adopted by this convention; and be it further

RESOLVED, That our newly-elected officers be empowered to take such lawful and legal measures as they deem best to secure possession of all property of this International Brotherhood and to have an audit made by a reputable audit company of the books of the Grand Office, and to take such further legal measures as are necessary to bring any irregularities that may be found to the attention of the bonding company; and be it further

RESOLVED, That our newly-elected Grand President and Grand Secretary immediately notify all Local Unions of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers of the essential facts as brought out at this convention, and to advise all Local Unions to send all moneys due the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to our newly-elected officers.

Witness our hands and seals this eighteenth day of September, 1908.

(Signed.)

H. W. Sherman,
H. W. Sanborn,
E. E. Harmon,
Thos. L. Stafford,
H. W. Potter,
Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
J. W. Murphy,
Convention Secretary.

This report was adopted on a roll-call vote, 170 in favor, 2 opposed.
DOCUMENT 4

Proceedings, Twelfth Convention of the IBEW (rebel faction), Denver, Colorado, 1913, as reprinted in The Electrical Worker (publication details not given), p. 564.

Any L.U. may accept, in lieu of initiation fee, the paid up membership card of a member of any recognized labour union or organization, and upon admission of the applicant to the L.U. the F.S. of the L.U. shall forward his card to the G.S., who shall retain the same for his files.

ARTICLE II--OBJECTS, p. 565

Section 1. The objects of the I.B.E.W. are namely: to establish an apprentice system, to maintain a higher standard of skill, to encourage the formation of schools of instruction in local unions for the teaching of practical application of electricity and trade education generally and for the advancement of the working class through political action in securing legislation for the protection of our members, in the enactment of labor laws for the general betterment of labor, the establishment of free employment bureaus under the supervision of the State Labor Commission. The National, State and Municipal ownership of all public utilities. The co-operation with the most progressive organization in the election to office of those who will give us the best results.

ARTICLE III--JURISDICTION, p. 564

The I.B.E.W. claims jurisdiction over all wage workers employed in the electrical industry, including employers of all crafts, trades or occupations employed in the electric light and power, telephone and telegraph and electrical transportation industries: Also all employees or persons engaged in the above industries, or in the manufacture, installation or maintenance of electrical apparatus, wiring and equipment.

Comments on the proceedings in The Electrical Worker, p. 563.

Organizer J. L. Donnelly of the Brotherhood of Metal Workers extended the right hand of fellowship to the Brotherhood and in telling words concluded with the offer that his organization and the Brotherhood recognize their mutual interests and exchange cards universally, and thereby proceed to eliminate the working-man's complaint over being compelled to pay "another big initial fee" every time that he is compelled to go on another union job. Had he remained in the convention he could not have urged it to do much better than was done, as throughout all the deliberations the abused practiced by "unions" in this respect was the foremost thing considered, and at the conclusion Any Employee in The Electrical Industry of 16 Years [or over] was qualified for membership in the Brotherhood; the aristocracy of the "unions"
was eliminated from the constitution wherever it seemed to appear; and in its stead the idea prevailed that if union men cannot take a "chance" on fellow workers, who then?

No stone walls will be tolerated in the future, nor will any electrical worker be denied membership in the Brotherhood by reason of not having "$300.00 initiation fee" because the maximum fee for entrance is now placed at $10.00 subject to dispensation of the General Executive Board . . .

P. 564 The Constitutional Committee had their work well prepared, still they were busy in the convention every day for the eight days following the initial ones, during which the convention was organizing and receiving officers' reports. The issue that they presented was whether the Brotherhood proposed to stand at the same old moorings which have held her back for twenty-two years of craft unionism--and its jurisdictional disputes, or recognize the changes in the industrial world and adjust herself to them by joining in the procession with the progressive organizations, such as the Miners; the Brewers; and practically every craft union, which under the pretense of arbitration awards is attempting to steal another's "claims" to cover the whole industry.

While this was the situation in Denver--everybody ready and anxious to see peace and amity in the electrical trade and a successful industrial organization which would assure its permanency--there was a different condition in the McNulty camp at Boston: The "leaders" were libeling the union men of the west by declaring that "secession was rife"; that it was not that the union men of the west wanted industrialism, but the destruction of the A. F. of L. movement; that industrial unionism was a failure, as demonstrated by the decline of the Knights of Labor; And many other vagaries which came into McNulty's head, or stomach, for use in argument--not against union men of the west--but against the resolutions for industrial unionism presented by his men of the General Electric plant at Schenectady, who for several years past have had a pestilence of "international officers" and interference always to prevent the establishment of the eight-hour workday in that plant. McNulty "had to get out of the chair" to make his argument against the insistent demands of the men who are his chief source of per capita supply, and the politics were getting so badly mixed up that his "convention" did not have the time to answer a telegram [from the rebels in Denver].

**DOCUMENT 5**

RESOLUTION NO. 3

Whereas, The present form of craft organization and the principles underlying the same are the foundation upon which the American Federation of Labor is built; and,

Whereas, These principles seem to be inadequate for the best results to the constituent membership of the American Federation of Labor; now therefore be it

Resolved, By the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in convention assembled that we do hereby instruct our delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor to be held in the city of San Francisco in the month of November 1915, to present resolutions to that body, the purpose of which shall be to appoint a committee of members to that convention to report at the next convention of the American Federation of Labor to be held in 1916, the purpose of which shall be to devise a plan to amalgamate the different international organizations which have been members in the same industry.


Referred to Committee on Resolutions.

[Nonconcurrence]

RESOLUTION NO. 4

Whereas, In the struggle for existence men of various crafts have organized themselves into trades unions of these crafts to better secure more nearly the full product of their toil through the medium of collective bargaining; and

Whereas, The underlying principles of the various craft unions are identically the same; and

Whereas, Members of these various craft unions have in numerous instances manifested themselves as being true trades unionists, going so far at times as to sacrifice their jobs for the interest of other craft unions and thereby being unable to secure work at their own trades; and

Whereas, These trades unionists aforesaid have at times been required to take up other trades, professions or callings in order that they may be able to exist, and by so doing have been obliged to pay another initiation fee to the craft union whose trade they have adopted; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in convention assembled do hereby instruct the principal officers of our Brotherhood to meet with officers of other
International trades unions, with a view to entering into an agreement, with the idea in view of creating a free interchange of cards between these International craft unions.


Referred to Committee on Resolutions.

[Nonconcurrence]

**DOCUMENT 6**

LOCAL 213 RESOLUTION,
Minute Books, Jan. 10, 1916, p. 272

That the recommendations of the Committee on amendments to the Int. Constitution be concurred in, and we endorse and forward to Int. Sec. Hord the propositions submitted by the P.D.C. (1) to cut the Int. Per. Cap. to 25 cents (2) Re formation of District Councils (3) Bring in female members on equal per. cap. vote with male members and adjusting per. cap. to conform thereto.

**DOCUMENT 7**

"Production For Use," editorial in The Labor Statesman by Willy Watts, July 2, 1931, p. 4

Capitalism is incurable as it is utterly ill-fitted to present needs. In an age of which the very center of gravity is exchange, a system which to date has allocated seven-eighths of its wealth to one-eighth of its population is palpably wrong and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few is ever being increased. Reform is impossible. Cause ever functions and the effects of a system of which profit is the end-all and goal cannot be sidetracked by bandages or court plaster or minor operations. Under capitalism based on the profit motive, the spoils always fall to the so-called fit or strong. Of course, commodity money composed of gold, silver and copper no longer functions in volume. The credit instrument composed of notes and checks of our own making does 95 per cent of the world's business.

Space and time prevent a full discussion of interest on the medium of exchange. Henry George's contention that if you exchange land or other useful means of production which could create increment or increase for money which is convenient, instantly transferable and indispensable for executing and facilitating exchange, then as that money or exchange medium can
acquire or move these agencies of production, it is inconceivable that money can properly function unless it is also acknowledged as at a parity in production with that for which it is exchanged. To me, stupid perhaps, the experiences since the war in countries where inflation was tried and abandoned, seem to have proved this viewpoint sound and unalterable within the confines of our present social system.

There is an escape from this blind alley or dilemma, but it is not to be found in a social system of capitalism and profit seeking and taking, battening on the exploitation of natural resources, markets and humanity.

Plans for reform under present conditions are a futile waste of time and in the last analysis impractical. New value yardsticks must be found. These values must be based on social values and contribution and not, as at present, on wealth secured by inheritance or the exploitation of markets or natural resources.

Our first attack constitutionally, lawfully, educationally, quietly and along the true lines of social advancement, which are evolutionary rather than revolutionary, slow of attainment but sound and solid, must be by the passing of a sharply graduated inheritance tax which would at death take back to society all large estates and huge fortunes except a living competency to the widow and an educational allowance to the millionaire's children. By this method humanity as family groups could not seek or secure individual security through individual wealth, but the good of the whole of society would be the concern of all its members. Of course, equality of ability and attainment would be partly as at present, but all adults could enter on life's large highway with an equal chance insofar as that equal chance can be constructed by society as a whole. This drastic inheritance tax would cut off and eliminate the profit motive at its best and noblest source and broaden humanity's interest in the level of society tremendously.

The medium of exchange in a society where production is for use rather than profit would be labor checks for useful service rendered. As the consumption of goods is a social and even now a mercantile necessity, the lands, mines, herds, factories, etc., agencies of distribution, etc., will have to be socially owned and socially operated. Let's discuss practical means of securing socialism in our time, a co-operative commonwealth, production for use rather than for profit. We shall probably evolve a social order better suited to our needs or we shall, as the ancient Romans did, sink into greater servitude to our autocracy of wealth and privilege and degenerate. Shall we patch up the decrepit old car of capitalism and get a few more worried miles out of it, or shall we put our best efforts into the fabrication of a system of socialism which shall always visualize the good of the many rather than as now, the good of the strong and rapacious?
Resolution presented to VTLC by E. H. Morrison and George Neill (Local 213 delegates), VTLC Minutes, Aug. 21, 1934, pp. 45-46.

Whereas a considerable number of Canadian citizens are dissatisfied with the land of their nativity or adoption, as the case may be, and are of the opinion that this world's problem has been solved by the U.S.S.R., and

Whereas these dissatisfied citizens have organized themselves into societies such as "Friends of the Soviet Republic", "Young Communists", etc. etc. for the purpose of spreading the gospel of the U.S.S.R. in this Dominion, and

Whereas so far as our information goes, no similar organizations are permitted to exist under the benevolent and enlightened dictatorship of Moscow. Certainly we have not heard of societies masquerading under the titles of "Friends of the Capitalist Dominion of Canada", "Young Capitalist" in that most modern Utopia, and

Whereas it is apparent that the great majority of the citizens of this Dominion prefer to work out their own salvation and not leave their destinies in the hands of the "Friends of the Soviet Republic", "Young Communist", and kindred organizations, and

Whereas the delegates to the Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labor Council, have taken an obligation to uphold the principles of Trades Unionism above all other forms of endeavor for the emancipation of the workers, yet we are not bigoted and adopt a liberal attitude toward the activities and theories of other organizations to the desired end for we do not claim that we hold the key to the riddle of the Universe but desire to assist by every means within our power, those who are engaged in this struggle, and

Whereas in our opinion the efforts of our dissatisfied brothers will prove abortive and lead only to further disruption in the ranks of Organized Labor, and

Whereas while we concede that every individual has a right to his own opinion we do not concede that this confers the right to force these opinions on all and sundry without let or hindrance

Whereas we believe that these citizens are sincere in their convictions and should receive every assistance to attain their Mecca,

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labor Council, submit a suitable resolution requesting the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada to
approach the Government of this Dominion with a petition to enter into such arrangements with the U.S.S.R. that will expedite the entry of all citizens of this Dominion who sincerely believe in the Soviet form of Government into the U.S.S.R. and if necessary that the Dominion Government furnish the transportation.

Resolution defeated by vote of 32 to 30.

DOCUMENT 9

"Trade Union Unity Vital To War Effort," excerpts from an article in The People by Tom McEwen, February 13, 1943, Vol. II, No. 6, p. 4

The extent of British Columbia's contribution to the nation's war effort depends in a large measure upon the unity and strength of the trade union movement. This axiom of course applies to Canada as a whole—and for that matter to every country in the Allied Nations fighting the black scourge of German fascism. But in the provinces, in the locality and on the spot, we have the responsibility of keeping our end up, of building the unity and strength of the trade unions.

Two mighty factors will be resolved upon how well or how badly we do this job. First, the all-out job of administering to Hitler and his dupes a decisive total defeat. Second, the job of reconstructing our country upon a prosperous peace-time social basis, and assisting as we can those of our Allies who need help along the same difficult road. The one job is complementary to the other.

The first is the all-important, for without the first being completed it is idle prattle to talk of the second.

Without a strong united trade union movement, taking its place and its full share of the first and all essential job—that of smashing Hitler, all speculation and planning regarding the second task is just so much day-dreaming, unrelated to reality.

Thus any analysis of trade union development and tasks at the moment can only be made on the basis of their relations, contribution, and policy towards victory in 1943.

In British Columbia, as in other parts of the Dominion, the law draws fine lines of demarcation between the "employees" of an industrial enterprise and the trade union of such employees. In the B.C. lumber and sawmill industry this legal skullduggery is developed to a high degree. Without question the whole weakness stems directly from governmental policies that as yet do not take labor on trust as a vital element of total war.
Labor-management cooperation in solving production problems, in eliminating production bottlenecks and attaining the highest objectives of war production, is still largely a farcical relationship. What little success in this regard has been achieved merely shows what could be accomplished if the trade unions were fully integrated in this vital machinery of our national effort. The fact of the matter is that big industrial and corporate capital does not wish or desire to have labor in partnership to defeat Hitler. Many of the big concerns, plugged to the neck with war contracts, would rather see a Hitler victory, than share with labor what they allege to be their god-given right of management.

For the invasion of Europe and the stepping up of the country's war effort, all of these weaknesses must be overcome. Unity of the trade unions is, and must remain, the springboard of victory.

**DOCUMENT 10**

Letter from Gee to the Provincial Executive of the Labor Progressive Party.

Oct. 1, 1948

Dear Sirs:

I am requesting that you accept this letter as my resignation from the Labor-Progressive Party.

In doing so I believe I am acting in the best interests of the Union of which I am a member, and in which I hold a very responsible position, namely, Business Manager.

It is my opinion that my membership in the Labor-Progressive Party whilst holding the position of Business Manager can only serve to provide the enemies of the trade union movement with ammunition to divide the membership of our union on the issue of red-baiting, when what is needed at this time is a united union to win much-needed wage increases, and to protect our hard-won working conditions.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) George Gee
**DOCUMENT 11**

Interim Statement on Local Elections  
*Live Wire* Vol. 4 No. 6, June 1953

**Vice-President**

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<tr>
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<td>724</td>
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**Treasurer**

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<tr>
<td>A. MacDonald</td>
<td>809</td>
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<td>E. A. Knight</td>
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**Financial Secy. and Business Manager**

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<td>George Gee</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. M. Morrison</td>
<td>356</td>
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A. O'Keeffe elected vice-president. A. MacDonald elected treasurer. George Gee elected financial secretary and business manager. Spoiled ballots, 43.

**Executive Board** (* indicates Communist candidates)

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<tr>
<td>J. McSorley</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. McDiarmid</td>
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<td>* A. Dorland</td>
<td>800</td>
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<td>R. Woodward</td>
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<tr>
<td>* C. McEwen</td>
<td>585</td>
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<td>A. Clark</td>
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<td>G. Hammersmark</td>
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<td>H. P. Patterson</td>
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<td>J. Lanoway</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. H. Shorting</td>
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<td>J. Slingerland</td>
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**Examining Board**

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<tr>
<td>H. Stubbins</td>
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<td>R. C. Nelless</td>
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<td>B. Clark</td>
<td>943</td>
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<td>D. McLean</td>
<td>929</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Stepney</td>
<td>549</td>
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52 spoiled ballots. 1602 votes counted according to voters' list. Total spoiled ballots, 109.
Ballots not counted for following reason: No name on return envelope, 24. Received in mail too late, 24. Unreadable name, 1. Cancelled, not opened, at request of voter and another ballot issued, 1. Total, 50.

Respectfully submitted,

E. F. Key, Judge of Election,
L.U. 213, I.B. of E.W.
Vancouver, B.C.

DOCUMENT 12

DECLARATION OF THE I.B.E.W.
1954 CONVENTION

Our cause is the cause of human justice, human rights, human security.

We refuse, and will always refuse, to condone or tolerate dictatorship or oppression of any kind.

We will find and expel from our midst any who might attempt to destroy, by subversion, all that we stand for.

This Brotherhood will continue to oppose Communism, Nazism, or any other subversive "Ism." We will support our God, our Nation, our Union.

Committee recommendation adopted, see p. 405.

DOCUMENT 13
RESOLUTION, pp. 248-249

Whereas, the Canadian Government continues to recognize the Communist Party in Canada, commonly known as Labor Progressive Party,

And Whereas, the feeling of the Membership of this Local Union is that the obligation taken by Members and the Oath taken by Executive Officers being installed in any Local Union should contain Allegiance to Flag and Country, in that Country in which the Obligation and Oath is administered.

Resolved, that this International Convention of the I.B.E.W. go on record to include the following in the Oath of the Officers
and Obligation to Members, that they should swear allegiance to the Flag and Country, in that Country in which the Obligation and Oath is administered.

Submitted by
Local Union 105
Hamilton, Ont., Canada

STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE

Under Article III your Committee recommended that a Declaration be adopted by this Convention and placed in the Constitution. The last paragraph of the Declaration stated:

"This Brotherhood will continue to oppose Communism, Nazism or any other subversive 'Ism'. We will support our God, our Nation, our Union."

Your Committee believes that Declaration is sufficient. Therefore, we Nonconcur.

Committee recommendation adopted, see p. 532.

DOCUMENT 14

RESOLUTION, p. 396

Whereas, Local 213, I.B.E.W. has been endeavouring to obtain certification for gas workers in British Columbia for over two and one-half years, and

Whereas, under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of the Province of British Columbia we were denied certification by that Government Board because they ruled our Constitution did not cover gas workers, and

Whereas, we have conducted a campaign over the last year and a half to have the Provincial Act changed to guarantee a worker the right to join an organization of his choice, and

Whereas, we have accomplished that end, and now under the Labour Relations Act of the Province of British Columbia a worker has been given the right to join an organization of his choice and having done so his union has the right to be certified, and

Whereas, at the time of writing this Resolution we are awaiting a decision from the Labour Relations Board on our application for certification under the new Labour Relations Act, and
Whereas, as explained in the covering letter of our Solicitors, it is quite possible that this matter is still open to the courts because of the wording of our Constitution, and

Whereas, the I.B.E.W. Constitution should be changed so that it would be impossible for Provincial, State or Federal Governments to enact legislation which would leave the matter of jurisdiction of the I.B.E.W. open to the interpretation of the courts,

Resolved, that the Constitution be amended as per the enclosed letter from our Solicitor which is self-explanatory and sets out the reasons for these changes.

Submitted by
L.U. 213, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
L.U. 921, Fernie, B.C., Canada

STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE, p. 397

Your Committee recognizes Canada has a problem. We face a similar problem in the States. This is because we believe that all employees of public utilities and of plants manufacturing electrical products--regardless of job classification--should come under our jurisdiction.

Our Brotherhood now represents all such employees in many cases. But our Constitution does not state that we cover them. This has caused problems for us in both Canada and the States, especially in our organizing efforts. These employees do not want to be divided up into different unions.

Your Committee has studied the correspondence submitted by Local Union 213. We do not agree, however, there is need to identify or name any particular group of employees.

Therefore, we recommend that our Constitution be amended by merely adding the words "and all workers in public utilities and electric manufacturing plants"--or similar wording--wherever necessary.

Your Committee wishes to emphasize that this does not affect, or change, jurisdiction between our local unions in any manner whatever. Nor can our recommendation, if adopted, cause any disputes in our organization or with employers. We merely wish our Constitution to state what is an accomplished fact.

President Milne: You have heard the recommendation of the Committee which constitutes a motion to concur. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, are you ready for the question?
All those in favor of supporting the recommendation of the Committee say aye; those to the contrary.

The recommendation of the Committee is carried and so ordered.

DOCUMENT 15

Nov. 30, 1955

Mr. W. C. Daley,
Recording Secretary,
Local 213, I.B.E.W.
111 Dunsmuir St.,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir and Brother,

I hereby charge J. McCuish with violation of the I.B.E.W. Constitution under Article XXVII Section 2 Paragraph (3) Having knowledge of the violation of any provision of this constitution, or the bylaws or rules of a local union, yet failing to file charges against the offender or to notify the proper officers of the Local Union; also:

Under Article XXVII Sec 2 Paragraph (8) Creating or attempting to create dissatisfaction or dissension among any of the members or among Local Unions of the I.B.E.W., also:

Under Article XXVII Sec 2 Paragraph (12) Disturbing the peace or harmony of any Local Union Meeting or meeting of its Executive Board, using abusive language, creating or participate in any disturbance, drinking intoxicants, or being intoxicated, in or around the office of headquarters of a Local Union.

Bro. J. McCuish attended, and acted as chairman of the Line Contractors Union meeting Monday, November 21st 1955.

Bro. J. McCuish as chairman allowed Bro. J. Jackson to repeatedly interrupt the meeting with unwarranted remarks about the International and the state of Local 213 affairs.

Bro. J. McCuish was requested repeatedly to rule Bro. J. Jackson out of order; This request was made by myself from the platform and I suggested that the chairman ask Bro. J. Jackson to leave the meeting; Bro. J. McCuish answered "I will not ask him to leave."

This action by the chairman created further dissatisfaction by allowing Bro. J. Jackson to continue to disrupt the meeting.
Finally the members assembled adopted a motion that effected Bro. J. Jackson's ejection from the meeting.

Bro. J. McCuish failed to exercise his authority as chairman, and further failed to file charges or acquaint the officers of the Local Union of Bro. J. Jackson's conduct--as per I.B.E.W. Constitution.

Bro. J. McCuish attended and acted as chairman of the Local Union Line Contractors meeting on Monday October 17, 1955.

Bro. J. McCuish allowed a motion presented by J. McNeil concerning instructions to the Executive Board about the George Gee Case.

Bro. J. McCuish was told many times the case was out of the hands of Local 213 members and officers, and was in the hands of the International Office. He was told that a communication to this effect was received by the local and read out at the meetings.

He allowed the motion to stand and insisted on being shown this communication from the International Office.

He allowed Bro. Tom Forkin to discuss at great length matters relative to the George Gee Court Case.

I submit this action was allowed by the chairman to create further dissatisfaction and dissension, and failed to make proper rulings as chairman.

Art O'Keeffe
Assistant Business Manager
Local 213--I.B.E.W.

DOCUMENT 16

DOMINION OF CANADA ) IN THE MATTER OF a conversation
 ) between John McCuish and two
Province of British Columbia ) officers of the Royal Canadian
 ) Mounted Police.

I, John McCuish, of 1805 East 8th Avenue, in the City of Vancouver, in the Province of British Columbia,
DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE THAT:-

1. I am a Canadian citizen, of fifty-seven years of age, and reside at the above address; and I have personal knowledge of
all matters herein deposed to, save where otherwise expressly stated.

2. On the evening of December 10, 1955, two men called at my home, and identified themselves as officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They told me they wanted to "talk" with me.

3. I asked them what they wanted to talk about, and what was the nature of their visit.

4. They then told me "It is for your own good. In case of war we have got to know who are loyal Canadians." They then informed me that "We know your record since 1928 and that you are now working for Hume & Rumble. We know you were a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers which has a closed shop contract in the industry, and we know you were dropped from membership in the Labor-Progressive Party in 1951." They then asked me the following question: "How did they happen to miss you?". By that question I understood them to refer to the recent suspension and victimization of numerous members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213, on trumped-up charges of having been members or supporters of the Labor-Progressive Party, on the grounds that such membership or association is a violation of the Union's constitution.

5. During the course of my discussion with these police officers, I told them that they must have had some disreputable stool-pigeon in their service, to which suggestion they replied that they call such people "loyal Canadians." I told them that in the opinion of honest trade union members, such persons were regarded as stool-pigeons, or worse.

6. Further in the course of my discussion with these officers, they used the word "subversives" extensively, and in this connection I told them that I well knew who the real subversives were, and further informed them, as my opinion is, that the prime movers in sowing discord and disruption in the Union were the employers and their agents.

7. I thereupon informed the officers that there would be no further discussion between myself and them, and asked them to get out, which they reluctantly did.

9. I am informed by my wife, Verna McCuish, that several months ago she was visited by officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at my home, under similar circumstances to those described above, and in the course of their inquiries, the officers asked her concerning my whereabouts and concerning my union and political activities and I verily believe the information given to me by my wife is true.
10. I consider that the invasion of my home without warrant or excuse by Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, for the purpose of questioning myself and my wife concerning my trade union activities and my political, religious or other beliefs, is a crude form of intimidation and a flagrant violation of my rights as a Canadian citizen; and I strongly resent this form of police intimidation.

11. I have been informed by those who are friends of mine, and verily believe, that similar visits by officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have been made to their homes, for purposes of intimidation and to gather information on the ideas and activities of those questioned.

12. I have also been informed by persons who are friends of mine and verily believe that officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police visited offices of companies by whom my friends are employed, for the purpose of discussing those persons and checking with their employers on their political beliefs and activities, whether on or off the job.

13. Approximately three weeks after the visit of December 10, 1955, charges were laid against me by the executive of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213, acting on the instructions, as I verily believe, of certain international officers.

14. The said charges are similar to those which were previously preferred against numerous other members of the said Local.

15. I have been reliably informed and verily believe that during the trial of Mr. George Gee, former business agent of the said Local, an international representative of the Brotherhood, Mr. Terry, stated that he had received the fullest cooperation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in "uncovering Communists" in the Union, and my experience and that of my wife and friends, as above related, leads me to believe that the said statement by Terry was and is the literal truth.

16. I am making this statutory declaration voluntarily because I am convinced that unless an end is put to such activities on the part of the police, the normal rights and liberties, not only of myself but of other citizens, are threatened.
AND I MAKE THIS SOLEMN DECLARATION conscientiously believing the same to be true, and knowing that it is of the same force and effect as if made under oath and by virtue of the "Canada Evidence Act."

DECLARED BEFORE ME at the City of Vancouver, in the Province of British Columbia, this 12th day of January, A.D. 1956. 

"John McCuish"

"John Stanton"
A Commissioner for taking affidavits within British Columbia.
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