

THROUGH THE LENSE OF SYNDICALISM: FRAGMENTATION ON THE VANCOUVER
AND BRITISH COLUMBIA LEFT BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

by

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THROUGH THE LENSE OF SYNDICALISM: FRAGMENTATION
ON THE VANCOUVER AND BRITISH COLUMBIA LEFT
BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the Industrial Workers of the World and its relations with capital, organized labour, and the socialist movement in British Columbia before the First World War. Unlike most studies of the IWW, the paper argues that the union's syndicalism was not merely a response to bad conditions created in a climate peculiar to the west. Instead, it argues that the IWW was a response to monopoly capitalism in North America. More specifically, the call for workers' control of industry arose from the efforts of capital to de-skill the work process and remove what control workers had in the work place. The reaction of the American Federation of Labor was quite different. The leaders of the AFL embraced conservatism, and in place of the IWW's call to organize the unorganized, they excluded unskilled and immigrant workers from their ranks. Between these poles of syndicalism and labourism, the rest of the B.C. labour movement worked out a range of responses. These different responses were rooted in different class experiences, and often led to conflicts between the syndicalists, socialists, and trades unionists. Several incidences of this conflict are examined, and some preliminary work outlining the different class backgrounds of the three groups is presented.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Jim and Margaret, and my brother, Ben

QUOTATION

The liberty of the ballot is the greatest comedy of the century.

Anonymous Wobbly, 1909

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PREFACE

The Industrial Workers of the World has not been treated well by modern historians. This is a surprising claim to make in light of the extensive works on the union published in the last twenty-five years. Several historians, among them Melvyn Dubofsky, Philip Foner, and Joseph Conlin, have examined the IWW in great detail. Its story has been charted from northern B.C. to Australia, from the founding convention of 1905 to the failures of the 1970s. The histories of Wobbly martyrs have been well-documented, while even the "songs to fan the flames of discontent" are well-known.

Yet in spite of the meticulous attention paid to the historical record, the beliefs which inspired the songs and urged on the martyrs have been treated with condescension. Historians have been quick to judge the ideology of the IWW and find it wanting. Nurtured on the Wagner Act and the post-war settlement, most historians view the anarcho-syndicalism, or, more properly, the revolutionary industrial unionism, of the Wobblies as quixotic. Liberal historians prefer the parliamentary shadow-boxing of social democracy to the direct action of the IWW, while Marxist-Leninists attack the critique of the vanguard and the state it posed. Historians friendly to the labour movement prefer the class collaboration of the AFL-CIO to the class warfare of the Wobblies. Since the IWW and anarcho-syndicalism were effectively beaten by competing ideologies by the end of the Second World War, most historians assume they must have been truncated lines of evolution. The IWW is often considered quaint but hopelessly utopian and irrelevant to the history of the modern world.

But this assumption deprives us of many valuable insights. If we abandon it and see the IWW as a realistic historical alternative, we view the development of class relations in North America from a very different perspective. We gain a new understanding of the specific role of monopoly capitalism in re-defining the work process and work relations. We appreciate how different strata in the working class responded to new pressure in different

ways; we see how socialist and labour leaders preferred to abandon syndicalism in order to seek compromises with capital and the state. These compromises may have initially benefitted segments of the working class, but ultimately they strengthened the dominance of capital, for they made the trade union movement and social democracy the agents of the reforms necessary to continue essential class relations.

This thesis, then, will attempt to take a new look at the vaunted radicalism of British Columbia through an analysis of the IWW. Using the IWW as a yardstick, it will be easier to see the twists and turns of the labour and socialist movements as they try to reach an accord with capital and the state in the years before World War One. The first chapter examines the American historiography and the tenets of the IWW to show what was distinctive about the Wobbly ideology and to show how this has been treated by historians. The second chapter explores the Canadian writing on the union, and gives an overview of the IWW in British Columbia. The third chapter is a detailed examination of the free speech fights of Vancouver in 1909 and 1912. These fights show that the ideological differences between the IWW, the labour movement, and the Socialist Party of Canada led to strategical and tactical differences. In order to explain the base of the ideological differences, the fourth chapter looks at the class differences between the three groups. The thesis is an attempt to compensate for the liberal and social democratic histories that are too quick to write off the IWW; while it is not a polemic, it does try to treat syndicalism as a powerful and plausible alternative to capitalism and state socialism. By doing so, it sheds light on working-class solidarity and fragmentation in the B.C. labour movement before the First World War.

CHAPTER I

SYNDICALISM AND THE RISE OF MONOPOLY CAPITALISM

By the early years of the twentieth century, many American and Canadian workers were keenly aware that craft unions could not deal with the new threat of monopoly capitalism. Prompted by the Western Federation of Miners and the left-wing of the Socialist Party, unionists and radicals tried to create a new organization that would be able to unite all workers and place revolution on labour's agenda. Late in 1904, workers from the American Labor Union, the United Railway Workers, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and the Brewery Workers met to begin the formation of "a labor organization that would correspond to modern industrial conditions." In January, 1905, several delegates drew up a manifesto which would lay the foundation for a revolutionary industrial union. The manifesto decried the power of monopoly capitalism and outlined the fundamental changes in the labour process which accompanied it. As machines replaced skilled workers, the tradesman was "sunk in the uniform mass of wage slaves....Laborers are no longer classified by differences in trade skill, but the employer assorts them according to the machines to which they are attached." Trades unions could not address this problem; at best, they could offer "only a perpetual struggle for slight relief within wage slavery." The manifesto ended with a call for unionists and radicals to assemble in Chicago in June to create a new labour organization.¹

By early morning on 27 June 1905, Brand's Hall in Chicago was filled with tobacco smoke and people. More than two hundred delegates had shown up in response to the January manifesto.

¹Melvyn Dubofsky, We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World. New York: Quadrangle The New York Times Book Company, 1969, pp.74-76; Paul Brissenden, The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism. 1919. Reprint. New York: Russell and Russell Inc. 1957, pp.59-67.

The platform attracted most of the famous radicals of the era. Eugene Debs of the Socialist Party of America, Daniel DeLeon of the Socialist Labor Party, Thomas Hagerty, Mother Jones, and Lucy Parsons, were all in attendance. Four Canadians had also made their way to Chicago: R.J. Kerrigan and W.F. Leach from Montreal, John Riordan and James Baker from the mining districts of British Columbia.²

At 10:00 a.m., William Dudley Haywood, secretary of the Western Federation of Miners, picked up a short board and pounded this makeshift gavel to silence the crowd. He chose his opening salutation with care, for this new organization wanted no memento mori from other radical groups. Haywood wanted to avoid the "brothers and sisters" so redolent of the American Federation of Labor, while "fellow citizens," the address of the French Communards, hardly fit the polyglot and multi-national gathering. He brushed aside the "comrades" that had been appropriated by the Socialist Party, and decided on his opening:

Fellow workers!...This is the Continental Congress of the working class. We are here to confederate the workers of this country into a working class movement that shall have for its purpose the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism. There is no organization, or there seems to be no labor organization, that has for its purpose the same object as that for which you are called together today. The aims and objects of this organization should be to put the working class in possession of the economic power, the means of life, in control of the machinery of production and distribution, without regard to capitalist masters.³

With this speech the Industrial Workers of the World came into being. It was created to do what the AFL could not, or would not: organize unskilled, immigrant workers to fight not just for "more, more, more," but for a revolution that would destroy capitalism and the state. Certainly, the union argued, conditions had to be changed in the short term, and it fought for higher wages at Lawrence, Massachusetts, for sanitary conditions in the Fraser

²The Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Proceedings, 1905. New York: Merit Publishers, 1969, pp.1-6.

³William D. Haywood, Bill Haywood's Book: the Autobiography of William D. Haywood, 1929. Reprint. New York: International Publishers, 1977, p.181; Founding Convention, p.1; Ray Ginger, The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene V. Debs. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1949, p.238.

River Valley, and for shorter hours in Vancouver.⁴ But the Wobblies simultaneously insisted that

Strikes are mere incidents in the class war; they are tests of strength, periodic drills in course of which the workers train themselves for concerted action. This training is most necessary to prepare the masses for the final "catastrophe," the general strike which will complete the expropriation of the employers.⁵

The radicalism of the IWW was different from that of its contemporaries, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party. Most socialists had come to see the state as the potential liberator of the working class, but the IWW instead argued for a cooperative commonwealth that would eliminate "such things as the State or States. The industries will take the place of what are now existing States."⁶ Many socialists believed the fundamental contradiction of capitalism was its inability to produce and distribute goods efficiently. Even Lenin claimed that socialism required Taylorism and that "the people unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of labour." But the IWW held that workers' control was the sine qua non of socialism.⁷ Its belief in the necessity of working class control over production led one commentator to suggest that the union represented a "new kind of revolution," one beside which "socialism was respectable—even reactionary—by comparison."⁸

This new radicalism is the key towards understanding why a revolutionary syndicalist union was created in 1905. It is a concept too often mishandled by historians. Joseph Conlin,

⁴Brissenden, pp.368-369.

⁵Andre Tridon, The New Unionism, cited in Joyce L. Kornbluh, editor, Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology. 1964. Reprint. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972. p.36.

⁶Bill Haywood, cited in Dubofsky p.167.

⁷V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 27. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965 p.269. For a brief outline of this argument on the changing focus of socialism, see Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, pp.3-41. For Lenin's changing ideas on Taylorism, see Rainier Traub, "Lenin and Taylor: the Fate of 'Scientific Management' in the (Early) Soviet Union," Telos 37 (Fall, 1978).

⁸Brissenden, p.293.

for example, has gone so far as to argue that "the fundamental error is that history has too neatly categorized the IWW as 'revolutionary studies,' forgetting that it was founded as a labor union and that it functioned rather well as a labor union during the years before the World War."⁹ To defend his position, Conlin points out that Thomas Hagerty's design for the structure of the union stated that the first function of a labor organization must be to combine the workers to help them in their struggles for wages and conditions. But he ignores Hagerty's second function, which was to "offer a final solution of the labor problem....[and] burst the shell of capitalist government and be the agency by which the working people will operate the industries, and appropriate the products to themselves."¹⁰ Conlin seeks to counter earlier work that saw the IWW merely as an imported revolutionary aberration, but in playing up the bread and butter side of the union, he over-corrects. Further, it is misleading to make too much of the practical policies of the Wobblies and argue that they therefore "evinced a commitment to traditional American liberties more edifying than their enemies'." Such a claim obscures the nature of both American liberalism and the syndicalist critique.¹¹

Philip Foner, in his well-documented volume on the IWW, takes a position contrary to Conlin's and argues that the union was too radical. He believes that its opposition to political action was "a basic error," while the attempt to combine industrial unionism and revolutionary activity constituted a "fundamental mistake." It is a well-taken point, for, as

⁹Joseph R. Conlin, Bread and Roses Too: Studies of the Wobblies, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1969, p.82. For a critique of Conlin, see William Preston, "Shall This Be All? U.S. Historians Versus William D. Haywood, et al.," Labor History, Volume 12 Number 3 (Spring, 1971).

¹⁰Founding Convention, p.7.

¹¹Conlin, p.90. This argument may also obscure some very real differences between AFL leaders and the rank and file. David Montgomery has argued, if a little too optimistically, that the IWW in fact represented part of swing towards radicalism among many workers in this period. See David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles, 1979. Reprint. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Foner outlines, measures that would have ensured the growth and stability of the union were often rejected in favour of revolutionary principles. For example, the refusal to sign contracts allowed employers to re-group and eliminate conditions that had been won once the initial enthusiasm and militancy died away. Renouncing the dues check-off, that staple of the AFL, meant the IWW could not generate a stable income and long-term union membership. The universal transfer system, which made all Wobblies members of any local, tended to give locals a "here today, gone tomorrow" quality, while the refusal to create long-term strike funds hurt the union's endurance in strike actions. Finally, the decision to avoid providing unemployment and sick benefits meant the IWW could not attract members by supplying specific services.¹²

The IWW did not eschew conventional trade union practice through oversight; each of these measures, it argued, had a harmful aspect. Signing contracts meant formal acceptance of the employers' legal right to the factory and production, a principle the IWW denied. Contracts limited the right to strike during the agreement, but did not limit the employers' ability to prepare for strikes through stock-piling, speed-ups, and lay-offs. At the same time, actions by the workers to resist stock-piling and speed-ups, or to hamper production in order to strengthen the union's position, were illegal. Thus the contract acted as an Armistice in the class war, but its terms constituted a Treaty of Versailles imposed upon the workers.

Collective agreements could even turn the union against its members. In a wild-cat strike or job action, the union could be sued and its leaders jailed if they did not order the strikers back to work. In this way, contracts turned the union bureaucracy into policemen for the company and divided the work force. Unions could even be pitted against each other by contracts, for they would force one union to keep working on a site struck by another. Solidarity and militancy would be replaced with acquiescence and placidity, for the court and

¹²Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 4, The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917. New York: International Publishers, 1965, pp.470-472.

lawyers would replace the collective action of the workers to enforce conditions and wage rates.¹³

Similarly, the IWW argued that the dues check-off stripped the workers of autonomy and responsibility for their own affairs. As one Wobbly put it, the union "expected grown-up men to be big enough to pay their own dues without a check-off."¹⁴ Automatic check-offs also tended to separate the union from its members, for the job steward was freed of the task of going to each worker and collecting complaints and suggestions along with the dues.

The low initiation fees of the IWW did make it difficult to built a war chest, but they also made it possible for unskilled, unemployed, and under-paid workers to join the union, while the high fees of the AFL often acted as a barrier to workers.¹⁵ Large strike funds could be seized by the state if the union engaged in illegal activity, and workers could never rely on union officials to issue the money. More importantly, large strike funds encouraged conservatism in the class war, for union leaders often preferred to keep the money intact. Furthermore, money invested to aid union veterans represented money diverted from the organization and education needed to bring in new workers; it benefited the "home guard" and labour officials while hurting unionism in the long term. Finally, attracting workers by offering them sick and death benefits did nothing to make them class conscious, or even job conscious. This had the effect of turning working class organizations into "coffin societies,"¹⁶ and made the workers collectively responsible for problems caused directly by the

¹³See Dubofsky, pp.164-164; Foner, The IWW, pp.378, 470-472; John G. Brooks, American Syndicalism: the IWW, 1913. Reprint. New York: Arno and The New York Times, 1969, pp.87-88, 130; Barbara Garson, All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work, New York: Doubleday, 1975. Reprint. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977, pp.74-75; Founding Convention, pp. 111-112, 577, 589; Brissenden, pp.85-86.

¹⁴Cited in Frederick W. Thompson and Patrick Murfin, The IWW: Its First Seventy Years. 1905-1975, Chicago: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1976, p.154.

¹⁵The Founding Convention, pp.125, 278-279, 576; Foner, The IWW, p.121; Dubofsky, pp.7-8, 71-73, 86-87.

¹⁶Foner, The IWW p.471; Dubofsky, p.150. For a contemporary attack on this policy, see

employers.¹⁷

The IWW's programme resulted from a reasoned process that included a radical critique of society and the American Federation of Labor. An organizer for the IWW summed up its position concisely:

Can there be any dispute that if the IWW struck bargains with employers, compromised its principles, signed protocols, contracts, had the employers collect the dues and acted as "good boys" generally, we should have a half million members?...But rather than sacrifice our principles, kow-tow to all sorts of freak notions, declare a practical truce with the enemy, and have a large number of dues-payers, we have preferred to be true to our own purpose in spite of all opposition. Our men have sweated blood in carrying on the propaganda for a revolutionary labor body — revolutionary in methods as well as final purpose.¹⁸

Foner's next charge, that industrial unionism was fundamentally incompatible with revolutionary activity, must still be dealt with. If history has tended to prove Foner right, this is the result of hindsight, not acuity of perception. For in 1905, the attempt to combine the two seemed logical and correct. The AFL showed quite clearly what would happen to a new union that did not inscribe revolution on its banner. Capitalism would again be legitimized by the workers' organization, struggles would be fought only for the slight amelioration of conditions, and labour leaders would remain little more than lieutenants for the captains of industry. The basic fact of class conflict would be steadfastly ignored.¹⁹

On the other side, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance showed the futility of creating yet another incestuous revolutionary society. Well might Daniel DeLeon rail that "you could not first take the men into the union under the false pretense that you were going to raise their wages, and afterward indoctrinate them. No, you had to indoctrinate them first,

¹⁶(cont'd) Eric Mann, "Unions Absent on Sunday Are Dead on Monday," New York Times, 1 September 1986, p.15. Note especially the new twist of offering low-interest credit cards.

¹⁷Founding Convention, pp.117-118.

¹⁸Joseph Ettor, Proceedings of the Tenth Convention of the IWW, cited in Foner, The IWW, pp.471-472.

¹⁹Founding Convention, pp.117-118.

and then bring them in."²⁰ But the STLA never became much more than a splinter group, largely because it could offer workers nothing save rhetoric.²¹

The IWW effort to combine industrial unionism with revolution then made a great deal of sense, for it avoided the Charybdis of opportunism and the Scylla of sectarianism. The failure of the Wobblies can hardly be ascribed to this fusion. The Socialist Party advocated and used political action and came no closer to achieving its goals, while the growing conservatism of the Western Federation of Miners did not save it from extinction after 1905. Both Conlin's attempt to picture the IWW as a conventional trade union and Foner's criticism of its syndicalism distort the reality of the organization and block our understanding of the union and the historical conditions that led to it. Their analyses also overlook the fact that the IWW's two-pronged approach—unionism and revolution—was a way out of an old dilemma that has often vitiated radical groups. Put simply, holding to a pure revolutionary line meant abandoning immediate reforms, for slight improvements would ease the need for revolution; the purist argument held workers should suffer short-term pain for long-term gain. On the other side, those who were less "pure" argued that such a policy forced worse conditions than were necessary on those living in the present. Further, a pure approach to revolution risked alienating workers who could be won to a program that promised immediate aid and future freedom. In her autobiography, Emma Goldman relates an episode that highlights the dilemma acutely. Sent by Johann Most, the leading American anarchist of the nineteenth century, to agitate against the movement for the eight hour day in favour of the revolution, she was forced to re-think the position in Cleveland:

The gist of my talk was the same as in Buffalo, but the form was different. It was a sarcastic arraignment, not of the system or of the capitalist, but of the workers themselves—their readiness to give up a great future for some small temporary gains....

²⁰Founding Convention, p.151.

²¹Foner, The History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 3, The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1909. New York: International Publishers, 1964, p.27; Brissenden, p.52.

A man in the front row who had attracted my attention by his white hair and lean, haggard face rose to speak. He said that he understood my impatience with such small demands as a few hours less a day, or a few dollars more a week. It was legitimate for young people to take time lightly. But what were men of his age to do? They were not likely to live to see the ultimate overthrow of the capitalist system. Were they also to forgo the release of perhaps two hours a day from the hated work? That was all they could hope to see realized in their lifetime. Should they deny themselves even that small achievement? Should they never have a little more time for reading or being out in the open? Why not be fair to those chained to the block?

The man's earnestness, his clear analysis of the principle involved in the eight-hour struggle, brought home to me the falsity of Most's position. I realized I was committing a crime against myself and the workers by serving as a parrot repeating Most's views. I understood why I had failed to reach my audience.²²

Combining unionism and revolutionary work then made a great deal of tactical sense. Equally important, it illustrates the commitment the IWW had to being a working class organization that represented workers as they were, while educating them to what they could become. Ignoring the day-to-day struggles would set the union apart from its members; the union would become another millenarian scheme, even another boss. And this concern reflects the historical context in which the IWW operated, conditions to which Foner pays little attention.

Unlike Foner, Melvyn Dubofsky in We Shall Be All does struggle to put the union in historical context. He is careful to assert that material conditions, not the character or personality of the worker, were the cause of radicalism. Specifically, he argues that the development of monopoly capitalism in the latter part of the nineteenth century changed the nature of work and society. Rapid industrialization in the west and technological innovations which displaced large segments of the working class in turn created the objective structural conditions for fundamental conflict. Most important for Dubofsky, small-scale, local capital was replaced by the corporations. These new national corporations had no ties to the community and no knowledge of, or interest in, local customs, traditions, and conditions. Their size and

²²Emma Goldman, Living My Life. Reprint. 1931. New York: Dover Publications, 1970, Volume 1, p.52.

dominant place in the economy made them almost invulnerable to small localized protest; their policies of centralized control meant that western managers had little power to intervene and act as buffers. Dubofsky suggests that "this divorce between ownership and local management, this geographical gulf between the worker and his ultimate employer, led to violent industrial conflict..."²³

But Dubofsky's analysis, though a helpful starting point, raises serious methodological questions. His casual acceptance of western exceptionalism leaves much to be explained. Radicalism in this period was not confined to the west, and such a picture is especially difficult to use as an explanation of the IWW. Many of the delegates to the founding convention came from the eastern United States; half of the Canadian delegates came from Montreal. The first General Secretary-Treasurer of the union, William Trautman, was from Cincinnati.²⁴ And the IWW fought several of its most important battles in the east: Lawrence, Paterson, McKees Rocks, and Akron are only a few of the major eastern strikes that undermine the validity of western exceptionalism as an explanation of the IWW.

Dubofsky's framework of industrialization, corporatization, and technological change is also inadequate. Industrialization and technological change were hardly unique to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, the substitution of machine labour for human labour is an essential part of industrial capitalism, for making labour more productive through changes in the work process increases the relative surplus value that workers produce.²⁵ Why would this process suddenly push workers towards syndicalism in 1905? Pure and simple industrial unions would provide the stronger framework needed to fight the same battles with stronger

²³Dubofsky, pp.19-36; the quote is from p.23.

²⁴Founding Convention, pp.22-24, 538, 595-597.

²⁵See Karl Marx, Capital. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954. In Volume 1, part IV, chapter 12, Marx argues that "The technical and social conditions of the process and consequently the very mode of production must be revolutionised, before the productiveness of labour can be increased." See also Marx, Wage, Labour and Capital. This argument and the appreciation of Brissenden which follows are outlined in Preston, "Shall This Be All?"

employers. They might even be better equipped to protect their members than a radical organization, as Foner implies. The logical response to bad conditions or abuses is reform, not revolution; the desire for revolution surely suggests deep dissatisfaction with fundamental aspects of society. The IWW insisted on a radical transformation of society, and a very specific transformation at that. This is precisely the point Dubofsky does not adequately explain, Conlin seeks to ignore, and Foner, from a perspective more sympathetic to the Communist movement, attempts to denigrate.

In his 1919 study of the IWW, Paul Brissenden made a similar appraisal of the contemporary liberal treatments of the union. His conclusions are compelling and applicable to the modern historiography:

The writer is bound to say, however that he considers the liberal interpretation entirely inadequate. The liberal attitude is expressed and judgement pronounced when it has been said that the IWW is a social sore caused by, let us say, bad housing. It must be evident...that any organization which purposes a rearrangement of the status quo...is much more than that. The improvement of working conditions in the mines and lumber camps would tend to eliminate the cruder and less fundamental IWW activities, but it would not kill IWWism....We can only completely and fairly handle the IWW problem by dealing with its more fundamental tenets on their merits....²⁶

These "fundamental tenets" include the organization of the unskilled, industrial unionism, and "the question of the sufficiency of political democracy." The most important, in Brissenden's view, was the demand that "some of our democracy...be extended from political into economic life. [The Wobblies] ask that industry be democratized by giving the workers — all grades of workers — exclusive control in its management."²⁷

The primary question for the historian then becomes, what prompted this specific drive for workers' control? It is fair, if not too helpful, to argue that capitalism in any form carries with it all that is necessary to create all types of resistance. And the IWW was the

²⁶Brissenden, pp.18-19.

²⁷Brissenden, pp.19-20.

third mass movement in thirty years to challenge industrial capitalism in America, as it followed in the wake of Populism and the Knights of Labor. But the radicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World was different from that of the Populists and the Knights: it reflected the changes in the nature of capital and the lessons learned from the victories and defeats of those movements. Most important was the change from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism. The change brought with it revolutionary changes in the organization and management of the workplace. Aware of their new strength, corporations launched attacks on several fronts in order to break the power skilled workers had obtained on the shop floor through craft organizations and knowledge of the work process. The open shop movement was launched, and the increased application of machinery made many skills obsolete. Machinery production enabled management to control production more precisely, and made it possible to replace skilled workers with semi- and unskilled labour. These were not new tactics though their strength and intensity were. But having reached the limits of expansion, the new large corporate enterprises of the late nineteenth century were forced to turn inward. Unable to find major new markets, blocked from mergers and acquisitions through the elimination of smaller concerns, and unwilling to compete with other corporations that were equally large and ambitious, capital sought ways to increase profits through the intensification of labour. But at this point, it was stymied by the resistance of craft workers. New managerial principles and techniques were created to break their control. These new methods, loosely gathered together under the rubrics "scientific management," "de-skilling," and "efficiency," were possible only with the advent of monopoly capitalism, and were part and parcel of it.

The "father" of scientific management, Frederick Winslow Taylor, saw clearly that the chief impediment to intensifying labour and increasing profits in large enterprises was the monopoly of skill held by the work force. Management could not force more productivity from workers if they controlled production - it could only "induce" workers to apply their

"initiative" to yield the largest possible return.²⁸

The solution to the problem of this informal workers' control over the work process was obvious to Taylor: managers would gather in all the traditional knowledge of the workers, and reduce this to a set of "rules, laws, and formulae." All of the planning formerly done by workers would now be done by management.²⁹

Taylor recognized that his scheme "of a planning department to do the thinking for the men" hindered "independence, self-reliance, and originality in the individual." His answer highlights the entire thrust of capital in this era. Those who attacked Taylorism, he wrote, also "must take exception to the whole trend of modern industrial development."³⁰

Other measures were combined with scientific management to break the power of skilled workers and intensify the exploitation of the unskilled. The open shop campaign, while not a new tactic, flourished in this period. The drive system, which combined the re-organization of work under the principles of scientific management with a move to larger factories and the use of supervisors to make sure workers met high quotas, was created. Corporate welfare schemes were devised to take the edge off union organizing drives. These schemes included profit sharing plans, cafeterias, and workers' committees. Managers were professionalized and better trained to handle labour problems; together with sophisticated personnel departments, they strove to select suitable and acquiescent workers—the old hiring practices, often based on the informal networks of employees, simply left too much to chance. Company unions were established to circumvent real unions and foster an illusion of progressivism and class cooperation. Piecework, an old system condemned by Taylor as

²⁸Frederick W. Taylor, "The Principles of Scientific Management," in Scientific Management, Reprint. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972, pp.32-33. For a more detailed analysis of this process and its implications, see Braverman, especially pp.3-139.

²⁹Taylor, "Principles," pp.36-37.

³⁰Taylor, "Shop Management," in Scientific Management, p.146.

inefficient, was nonetheless joined with the new techniques to pressure workers to produce more. In their efforts to drive wages down, corporations went so far as to lobby the state for increased immigration, in order to swamp the market for unskilled labour. The newly created power of monopoly capitalism allowed business to embark on these fundamental changes to its relations with labour, changes Brissenden labelled the "Prussian method" of running industry.³¹ Contrary to Dubofsky's argument, this method was hardly confined to the west; its scope was marked off by the lines of class, not geography.

Organized labour reacted to this threat in two ways. Many of the conservative leaders of the American Federation of Labor and the Canadian Trades and Labour Congresses chose simply to re-trench. Narrow battles to retain craft control were fought, as unions tried to protect their dwindling memberships from de-skilling and unemployment. Unskilled and immigrant workers were often viewed with alarm as competitors instead of potential allies,

³¹For the drive system, see David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, Segmented Work, Divided Workers: the Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.128-135. Brissenden, p.20. See Preston for a similar observation. For descriptions of the measures taken to intensify work and break unions, see Foner, History of the Labor Movement, Volume 3, The AFL, 1900-1909, especially chapters 2 and 7; Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, pp.32-47, 91-112; Braverman, especially part 1. See Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967, pp.133-163, for the "revolution in values" that urbanization and industrialization spawned and which helped to establish a social context for the changes in industry. For similar analyses in the Canadian context, see Bryan D. Palmer, Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980. Toronto: Butterworth and Company, 1983, pp.141-157; G.S. Kealey, "The Structures of Canadian Working-Class History," Lectures in Canadian Working-Class History. Toronto: Committee on Canadian Labour History and New Hogtown Press, 1985, pp.28-31, edited by W.J.C. Cherwinski and G.S. Kealey; Craig Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century." Labour/Le Travailleur 6 (Autumn 1980); Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979, especially chapter 7. For Canadian immigration policy, see Donald Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980. For more on skilled and unskilled labour, see Ian McKay, "Class Struggle and Merchant Capital: Craftsmen and Labourers on the Halifax Waterfront 1850-1902," and Craig Heron, "Hamilton Steelworkers and the Rise of Mass Production," both in The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985. Bryan D. Palmer, editor. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986. See also Palmer's introduction. For the development of Canadian monopoly capitalism, see R.J. Naylor, The History of Canadian Business, 1867-1914. Two volumes. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975. See especially Volume 2, chapter 14.

and a number of methods were used to keep them out of craft unions. Samuel Gompers symbolized and led a move away from any sort of radicalism or socialism and towards a new respectability gained through class collaboration. This move implied an acceptance of the ground rules set by capitalism in a competition that increasingly turned labour into an also-ran. But labour developed another response as well. Rank and file AFL-TLC members, immigrants, women, the de-skilled, the unskilled—in short, those unable to find comfortable niches in craft union constituencies—often turned to radicalism and industrial unionism.³²

It is, therefore, the confluence of several trends that explains the creation of the IWW in 1905. The AFL-TLC craft union structure was too weak to counter the new assaults of monopoly capitalism: only by uniting workers by industry could resistance be made effective. The base of the labour movement had to be expanded by organizing the unorganized and those thought unorganizable, not shrunk by excluding them and concentrating on a smaller number of craft veterans. Real changes, it appeared, could not be made through bargaining with the employers or lobbying the state; revolution was the only way to break their allied power. And since a mass movement was needed, radical groups had to seek a mass following among the working class or be doomed to impotence. If the "search for order"³³ which characterized this period meant the imposition of a hierarchical industrial capitalist order, then it had to be opposed with complete political and economic democracy. Despite the specific grievances which triggered specific strikes, the explicit syndicalism of the IWW was caused by the advent of monopoly capital, the accompanying attack on labour, and the need felt for new forms of organization and new strategies.

It may be true that the model of "Prussianized industry" offered by Brissenden is inappropriate to the resource industries of western Canada and the United States, though research into the actual work process is largely lacking. The mines, logging camps, and

³²See above footnote.

³³Wiebe, The Search for Order.

railway construction work that provided the impetus for development in the west could hardly be turned into modern factories complete with time-motion experts. And the theory of de-skilling, difficult to apply to miners and loggers, seems absurd when applied to section gangs, for pick and shovel work is virtually the definition of unskilled labour.

But the essence of the new system of production was not time-motion study, mechanization, or de-skilling. Its essence was in increasing the division of labour and in reducing the initiative of the workers over the work process. New research into the reorganization of work has shown that though the techniques were often different, similar efforts to destroy workers' control and replace it with managerial control were in fact used in lumber camps, mining districts, and railway construction sites.

Logan Hovis has demonstrated that the monopolization of mining and the depletion of resources forced companies to mine lower-grade ores. This meant higher volumes of ore had to be processed in order to sustain profits. It meant also that labour costs had to be reduced and the productivity of miners raised; in hardrock mining in B.C., from 1900 to 1930, productivity per worker increased by a factor of 500 percent. The contract system and piece work were adopted, but more importantly, "skill levels in hard-rock mining were diluted...through the fragmentation of the work into tightly defined and controlled components." In his unpublished paper, Hovis cites the Engineering and Mining Journal, which observed in 1913 that "the itinerant, self-reliant miner, jack of all trades, and master of several' was a disappearing breed," and that:

The new type of miner is not so intelligent, but he is more obedient and more industrious. He works generally for less than the scale established at such camps as Butte and Goldfield. By himself he is far less efficient, but as part of a system employing a multitude of bosses, he probably delivers a lower labor cost per ton. To many companies he is a more desirable employee than a skilled miner, even when the latter will work for the same wages.³⁴

³⁴Logan W. Hovis, "The Origins of 'Modern Mining' in the Western Cordillera, 1880-1930." Paper presented at B.C. Studies Convention, Victoria, November, 1986, pp.20-21; B.C. Mines Report, 1947.

In his study of west coast logging, Richard Rajala has argued that a similar process took place in the lumber industry. He demonstrates that west coast logging came to be dominated by a few large firms which adopted three approaches to increase "efficiency." First was the use of new power sources, especially electricity, and new systems of logging. Of these, the most important was over-head yarding, which allowed machinery to replace chokermen and rigging slingers. As one Wobbly pointed out, the use of these "flying machines" had a disastrous effect on the workers, as they allowed production to double without increasing the number of men employed. The second approach was the creation of logging engineering programs at universities. This provided management with employees who were separate from the work process and outside the union movement to control and oversee production. Finally, a variety of labour practices were used to "enhance labour stability and convince loggers of the reality of industrial partnership." These policies combined the carrot of reform with the stick of repression. They included the blacklist, piecework, improved conditions, insurance plans, and efforts to make logging communities more stable.³⁵

The evidence of efforts to control unskilled work is much less focused; indeed, we scarcely know how the railways were actually built. But despite the lack of research in this area, it is apparent that strenuous efforts were made to tightly control the work of muckers, navvies, and labourers. Taylor devoted a great deal of time to studying unskilled labour. His famous experiments with "Schmidt the Ox-man," for example, found ways to increase the loading of pig iron by hand from 12 1/2 tons per worker per day to 47 1/2 tons. Taylor was determined that "every single act of every workman can be reduced to a science....there was such thing as the science of shoveling." He demonstrated that shovelling could be improved by supplying shovels of different designs and sizes to ensure each worker hoisted the ideal weight of 27 pounds per shovel-full. Foremen would insist the proper shovel be

³⁵Richard Rajala, "The Rude Science: Technology and Management in the West Coast Logging Industry, 1890-1930." Paper presented at B.C. Studies Convention, Victoria, November, 1986, pp.3, 17-18. Industrial Worker, 11 June 1910.

used and would ensure workers use the "exact methods which should be employed to use their strength to the very best advantage...." Covington Hall, a Wobbly writer, pointed out that while "Schmidt's" work load increased by nearly 400 per cent, his daily wage was raised by only about 60 per cent; if his wages were figured on a price per ton, they actually fell 60 per cent under Taylorism. Hall also noted that "the next set of Ox Men to be 'scientifically educated' will be the highly skilled and superior Ox Men on the railroads...."³⁶

Frank Gilbreth, the founder of motion study made famous by the book and the Clifton Webb movie Cheaper by the Dozen, applied his principles to brick-laying and unskilled labour. Two hundred and thirty-one rules were devised for the relatively uncomplicated task of mixing concrete. Rule 198 suggests how far the quest for managerial control would go: "When men shovel against a plank always use a square pointed shovel. Use a round pointed shovel at all other times." The ideas of Gilbreth and Taylor travelled far from home: in 1912, a writer in the Spokane paper of the IWW observed,

The "shovel stiffs" in New Westminster, B.C., are being treated to a dose of Taylor's "scientific management." They have to swing their shovels in a certain way, with a specified amount of sand therein, and fill the wagons within a set time. If Christian Science can now be invoked to cause the slaves to keep their minds from such things as food, clothes, and shelter, the plutes will have succeeded in securing perfect profit producers.³⁷

On the railway, where, as Industrial Canada rhapsodized, "the air resounds with the grinding of steamshovels, the blasting of rock, and all the uproar attending such a colossal task," the system of sub-contracting and station men constituted a virtual piecework system in the construction of the grade and the laying of track.³⁸ Edmund Bradwin, in his early study of railway construction, concluded that "the whole contract system is top-heavy and lop-sided—it gives good pickings to the sub-contractors, but it begrudges conditions and a

³⁶Taylor, "Principles," pp.64-66, 68-69; Solidarity, 18 March, 1911.

³⁷Gilbreth cited in Harold R. Pollard, Developments in Managerial Thought. London: William Heineman, 1974, p.20; Industrial Worker, 29 August, 1912.

³⁸Industrial Canada, October 1911, pp.361-362.

human wage to the navvy who handles the barrow and shovel.³⁹ In this respect, the piece-work and quota system of the railways resembled that of the factory.

Railway engineers also began to figure ways to make construction more efficient. W.M. Camp, a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and an editor of The Railway and Engineering Review, echoed Taylor and Gilbreth in his 1904 handbook, Notes on Track:

In these days when so much of industry is dependent upon the activities of corporations, and when labor is becoming more and more divided, men in general will take less and less interest in that which they engage to do, except in what may appear to promise them more or less direct returns in higher compensation or in reputation. Obviously, then, there will be a larger demand for men whose occupation it shall be to maintain a close watch on details, with a view to turn aside all the undirected and misdirected tendencies which might lead to extravagance, inefficiency, or whatever in the end might operate depressingly upon dividends, which constitute the ultimate aim of the projectors of railroads.⁴⁰

In words reminiscent of Taylor's admonition that the workers "possess [the] mass of traditional knowledge, a large part of which is not in the possession of the management," Camp writes,

I consider that there are many roadmasters and section foremen who have more to do with track engineering than some men commonly known as civil engineers....The experience necessary to teach such knowledge must be had by actual contact with the work....There are men who have never so much as sweat a drop in any kind of service...eager to propose what they think to be some track improvement; and as a rule their ideas on improvements amount to about as much as their services have.⁴¹

But the well-trained supervisor, one in whom the theoretical knowledge of the engineer and practical experience of the worker were combined, would "find opportunity to reduce the expenses of his department without curtailing its effectiveness. By such supervision it is often possible to increase the output of labor in such a way that the laborer is unconscious of

³⁹Edmund Bradwin, The Bunkhouse Man: A Study of Work and Pay in the Camps of Canada, 1903-1914. 1928. Reprint. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, p.201.

⁴⁰W.M. Camp, Notes on Track, Construction and Maintenance. 1903. Second revised edition, Chicago: Published by author, 1904, pp.1-2.

⁴¹Camp, p.3.

Just as Taylor and Gilbreth held that the supervisor and not the worker should make the decisions concerning which tool to use for which job, so does Camp outline for engineers ways to organize tools and their use. He suggests, for example, that just as many tools as necessary should be placed at each section, "for an over-abundance of tools has a tendency to make foremen careless of them." This small note implies a great deal. The engineer, responsible for a number of sections, will determine the type and number of tools each is to use in the course of a day's work; he will know how to organize the work better than the men on the section. It also points out the special role of the engineer: even more than the foreman, he is assumed to have allied himself with the company and is pledged to look after its best interests.

The engineer is also charged with ensuring that each tool operates at peak efficiency. This seems an odd requirement with tools such as picks and shovels, but Camp observes that a "shovel blade worn off to less than 9 ins. length becomes...unprofitable. Every day's work with such a shovel will...lose to the company at least one third of the price of a new shovel." Double-bitted axes are preferable to single-bitted, for the latter "comes in so handy for a wedge that the head is usually found badly battered from hammer blows."⁴³

The shovel is to be of specific dimensions, in order to provide the most efficient use:

The proper size of the blade is about 12 ins. long and 9 1/2 or 10 ins. wide at the working edge or "point." The handle should be about 27 ins. long (direct measurement), from the top of the blade, and so crooked that when the blade is in position for filling, on a level surface, the end of the handle is 18 ins. above the ground. This is the hight [sic] of the knee of a man of ordinary size when the leg is bent as in the act of shoving the blade forward to fill it...The weight should not exceed 6 1/2 lbs....The thickness of the blade for light work is 1/16 in. but for railroad service it should be at least 3/32 in....⁴⁴

⁴²Camp, p.637.

⁴³Camp, pp.638, 641, 689.

⁴⁴Camp, p.639.

Foremen, Camp suggests, should teach the men under them to shovel properly, for "one would naturally suppose that any man could learn to shovel dirt without instructions; but such is not the case...." The foreman must also make sure that the proper-shaped pick is used for specific tasks, and that an eight pound hammer is used for general section work, while one of nine or ten pounds is used for laying track.⁴⁵ While Camp recognizes that all men are not equal in their ability to work, he nonetheless gives estimates of the amount of work that crews should be capable of. A man should be able to load twenty cubic yards of gravel onto a flat car in ten hours; a standard crew of fifty-six men should be able to lay a mile of track in the same period.⁴⁶

Foremen had the responsibility of assigning workers to specific tasks in order to make them "specialists" and thereby reduce labour costs through an increased division of labour. Camp observes that though section labour was considered "the most ordinary type of labor, in fact, men cannot become expert at all kinds of track labor in a few months. A good, bright man would do as well if he gained the necessary experience in two years." But the railroad companies preferred to use cheap immigrant labour and "the low rate of wages paid has bid for nothing better than common labour"; in these circumstances, it was necessary to define closely the job of each worker and train foremen and engineers to teach and watch them.⁴⁷

While much more research needs to be done in this field, it is apparent that railway construction was, like mining and lumbering, subject to the same changes of the work process that affected skilled labour. To meet these unprecedented inroads, workers tried to use old tactics and struggled to develop new ones.

⁴⁵Camp, pp.639-644.

⁴⁶Camp, pp.732,188.

⁴⁷Camp, p.1080.

CHAPTER II

RALLYING 'ROUND THE STANDARD IN CANADA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canadian historians have been less inclined to use this theoretical framework to discuss labour and radicalism than their American counterparts. This is largely because Canadian labour history has been written by two "generations" of historians. The second generation, typified by the work of Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, has taken its lead from the work of British Marxist historians—notably E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm—and Americans such as Herbert Gutman and David Montgomery. Their work has focused on the skilled artisans of eastern Canada in the early years of industrialization. While they have on occasion extended their theories to the age of monopoly capitalism which followed, their research and interest has remained firmly rooted in the nineteenth century.

The history of the early twentieth century has become the province of the so-called first generation. This set of historians has rejected Marxism and uses instead the theoretical framework of liberalism and social democracy. Among other things, this framework means radicalism is viewed as an aberration; it owes a great deal to the structural-functionalism of Talcott Parsons and N.J. Smelser. As E.P. Thompson has pointed out, this school regards unrest and class consciousness as "a bad thing...since everything which disturbs the harmonious coexistence of groups performing different 'social roles' (and which thereby retards economic growth) is to be deplored as an 'unjustified disturbance symptom.'" Rejecting radicalism as an appropriate response, these historians are forced to turn to the "social sore" theory dismissed by Brissenden. Thus David Bercuson, in his study of the One Big Union, ironically cites William Pritchard to assure readers that "only fools make revolutions, wise men conform to them." He then argues that radicalism was a western phenomenon caused by specific, easily correctable abuses, notably coal mines that "were among the most dangerous in the world." In a final effort to make radicalism into an individual, pathological reaction instead of a

logical, rational response to an alienating system, Bercuson suggests that revolt grew because thwarted ambitions and frustrated sex lives created a climate in which outside agitators could flourish.¹

Clearly, Bercuson's explanations suffer from the same flaws as other liberal versions. They are unable to explain the particular syndicalism of the IWW; they do not explain eastern radicalism, or even the antecedents and descendents of the IWW; they make no serious effort to fit the union into the historical context in which it operated. Preferring to see radicalism as an extreme protest to conditions that could easily be rectified by a liberal state, Bercuson, unlike Dubofsky, explicitly denies any role to monopoly capitalism. He asserts that the western Canadian coal industry, for example, was composed of a mass of small producers employing a few men, and argues that these small mines could not make use of new techniques. But as Allen Seager has pointed out, "the coal industry in B.C. was completely dominated by two or three large firms who held extraordinary concessions."² If

¹I share G.S. Kealey's reservations over the characterization of the historiographical debate as "generational," but use the concept here as a convenient shorthand. Kealey's point is in "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s," Labour/Le Travailleur 7 (Spring 1981), p.93. Bryan Palmer formulated the argument in "Working-Class Canada: Recent Historical Writing," Queen's Quarterly Volume 86, Number 4 (Winter 79/80), pp.594-616. For the debate between the generations, see, for example, Palmer's introduction to A Culture in Conflict; Robert Sweeny, "Theory Method, and Sources: the Search for Historical Logic," paper presented at the Workshop on Regional History, Victoria, February, 1986; Terry Morley, "Canada and the Romantic Left," Queen's Quarterly Volume 86, Number 1 (Spring 1979); Kenneth McNaught, "E.P. Thompson vs Harold Logan: Writing About Labour and the Left in the 1970s," Canadian Historical Review, Volume 62, Number 2 (June 1981); David Bercuson, "Through the Looking Glass of Culture," Labour/Le Travailleur 7 (Spring 1981); Palmer, "Modernizing History," Bulletin of the Committee on Canadian Labour History 2 (Autumn 1976) and Michael Katz, "Reply," *ibid.*; Daniel Drache, "The Formation and Fragmentation of the Canadian Working Class: 1820-1920," Studies in Political Economy 15 (Fall 1984); Palmer, "Listening to History Rather Than Historians: Reflections on Working Class History," Studies in Political Economy 20 (Summer 1986). The E.P. Thompson quote on the Parsons/Smelser school is in The Making of the English Working Class. Middlesex: Penguin Books, revised edition 1968, p.11. Pritchard is cited in Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: the Rise and Fall of the One Big Union. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978, p.xix. His statement regarding mining safety appears in Fools and Wise Men, p.2; see also Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier, 1897-1919," in B.C. Historical Readings. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981, W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald, editors, pp.451-473.

²Allen Seager, "Socialists and Workers: the Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21,"

western mines were indeed among the most dangerous in the world surely they were so, in large part, because of the concern for sustained production and the ability of monopoly capital to fight unions effectively. Furthermore, the links between the state and capital in British Columbia have been drawn by writers as diverse as Margaret Ormsby and Martin Robin. The close ties between the two suggest that the state was unable or unwilling to enact reforms precisely because of the dominance of monopoly capital.³

Bercuson also fails to differentiate between the different responses of the left and labour movements within the region. This doubtless strengthens his claim of western exceptionalism, at the cost of obscuring the real nature of the working class in the west as it tried to find effective ways to fight capital. Robert McDonald makes a similar mistake, albeit for opposite reasons, in his analysis of Vancouver workers. Posing an over-simplified dichotomy between city and country, he suggests that "urbanism" somehow created a less radical, monolithic working class that was markedly different from the working class of the hinterland. But this position is only tenable if the differences and splits in the Vancouver labour movement are ignored.⁴

Ross McCormack, in the best account of western radicalism to date, has presented a model of three responses to capital: reform, rebellion, and revolution. While his argument that each was a reaction to the boom conditions of the western frontier relies too heavily on the assumption of western exceptionalism, it is not necessarily in opposition to the theory of monopoly capitalism described above.

²(cont'd) Labour/Le Travail 16 (Fall, 1985) p.25.

³See, for example, Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: a Century of Labour in B.C. Vancouver: B.C. Federation of Labour, Boag Foundation, 1967; Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972; Phillips, "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement," in Prairie Perspective 2. Toronto: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1973, A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, editors; Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: A History. Toronto: Macmillan, 1958, pp.327-372.

⁴Robert A.J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia." B.C. Studies 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986) pp.33-69.

His careful attempt to isolate separate strands of the workers' movement is not without difficulties. McCormack is well-aware of the problems, pointing out that,

Reformers and revolutionaries employed the same tactics. Revolutionaries and rebels subscribed to one ideology. And from time to time men and women blurred distinctions even further by enlisting with two or more of these tendencies at the same time, however contradictory such behaviour might appear.⁵

Despite this warning, the picture of conflicting and competing responses is more accurate than Bercuson's portrait of regional unity, or McDonald's Vancouver/hinterland dichotomy. The British Columbia labour movement was in flux in the pre-war years, turning sometimes to labourism, sometimes to syndicalism, sometimes to socialism, as it attempted to find solutions to the new problems presented by monopoly capitalism. Labour had a variety of options open to it, and had not yet decided on or been structured into either a moderate and reformist course or a revolutionary one.

McCormack does run into more serious problems when he analyzes the ideology of the three tendencies of the labour movement. Unlike the United States, Canadian political culture has had stronger traditions of "red" Toryism and social democracy. Anarchism and its variants have never had the impact they have had in American historiography. For a number of reasons, American historians have had an affection for anarchism, hoboes, and syndicalism—that is, a strong anti-state sentiment—that is not apparent in the Canadian literature. McCormack is part of this statist Canadian tradition, and as such brings a particular bias to the historical record.

This bias is seen most clearly in his analysis of the radical movements. McCormack notes that unlike the "rebels" of the IWW, the "revolutionaries" of the Socialist Party of Canada

perceived the state as the principal means by which the working class was kept in subjugation [and] considered it the vehicle whereby the means of production would be socialized and, thus, the exploitation of the proletariat [sic] would be

⁵McCormack, p.17.

ended. They relied on political action to achieve the revolution.⁶

McCormack concludes from this that the socialists were "the most radical tendency" in the B.C. labour movement.⁷ This claim, however, can be disputed on theoretical and historical grounds. While the state has a great deal of relative autonomy, it is still "primarily and inevitably the guardian of the economic interests which are dominant. Its 'real' purpose and mission is to ensure their continued existence, not to prevent it."⁸ In order to achieve this purpose, the state is often able—indeed, willing—to make reforms that placate working class protest. These reforms, however, hardly create a workers' state. In deciding to capture rather than destroy the state, radical movements become channelled into struggles that do not eliminate the base of capitalist society, that is, the extraction of surplus value from workers. Indeed, often in taking up struggles directed by the capitalist state, radical movements help legitimize the status quo, as their reforms help obscure the real nature of capital and the state.

The decision to seek state power implies compromise, for it means accepting the rules of parliamentary democracy, a parliamentary democracy which was, as C.B. Macpherson reminds us, "not an attempt by the lower class to overthrow the liberal state or the competitive market economy; it was an attempt by the lower class to take their fully and fairly competitive place within those institutions and that system of society."⁹ Even though the SPC took an "impossibilist" position and argued against reformism, its insistence that "striking at the ballot box" was the "ultimate revolutionary action" implies the party had already

⁶McCormack, p.17.

⁷McCormack, p.17.

⁸Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society: the Analysis of the Western System of Power, 1969. Reprint. London: Quartet Books, 1973, p.238.

⁹C.B. Macpherson, The Real World of Democracy, Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1965, p.10.

placed its faith in electoral politics instead of the action of the working class.¹⁰ It further implies the workers could not make the revolution by themselves but would need the guidance of leaders acting in their name. This in turn points to an elitism and hierarchy that is antithetical to socialism. Though the SPC was reluctant to discuss the shape of society after the revolution, its belief that collectivization and workers' control would first require "a short spell of working class autocracy" suggests that the socialists, like the Bolsheviks, would have held power in the name of the working class.¹¹ All of this is a far cry from the IWW and its insistence on direct action and the ability of the workers to control production.

Finally, the SPC's commitment to electoral politics excluded unskilled and migrant workers who were unable to meet residency and property requirements. One IWW newspaper commented on the SPC's call for electoral support by pointing out acidly that of the 5,000 in the area, only 75 were eligible to register and vote.¹² Though the SPC claimed to be the party of the working class, it consistently took positions and adopted tactics that cut out significant numbers of workers from taking effective action. Only the IWW fought for the "rough" workers of British Columbia, workers who truly had nothing to lose.

Historically, the politics of the SPC were far from revolutionary. Its flaming rhetoric and vaunted "impossibilism" camouflaged a moderate program and a pragmatic approach to the very unionism it condemned as reformist. As one historian has approvingly remarked, "the radical Marxism of the SPC coexisted with its practice of democratic socialism."¹³ The more skeptical Martin Robin has argued that the SPC MLAs supported the Tory government of Richard McBride "from considerations of expediency," the result of which was "a mild

¹⁰McCormack, pp.54, 58.

¹¹Cited in McCormack, p.59.

¹²Industrial Worker, (hereinafter abbreviated to IW) 8 July, 1909, p.2.

¹³Seager, "Socialists and Workers," p.35.

flow of labour legislation principally lacking in teeth."¹⁴ An SPC program in 1905 included such demands as the abolition of the election deposit, the eight hour day in smelters and logging camps, an anti-lobbying law, a tax exemption for settlers who had improved their lots, and a law to force joint stock companies to publish annual returns.¹⁵ Whatever its role in other provinces, the nascent social democracy of the SPC on the West Coast was not the most radical tendency in British Columbia's labour movement. That distinction must be given to the IWW. While many Wobblies, including Bill Haywood, supported the SPA and the SPC, this "two-gun" strategy was denounced at the founding convention; in 1908 the IWW eliminated the political action clause from its constitution. Instead, it staked its future on direct, industrial action, a move which angered the "slowcialists." By 1913, the difference between the social democrats and the IWW were so great the SPA recalled Haywood from its National Executive Committee.¹⁶ In B.C., IWW members sided with the syndicalists in the faction fights between 1906 and 1908,¹⁷ and the union's position on political action was summed up in a column in the Industrial Union Bulletin:

The freedom of the workers from the slavery of capitalism will never be accomplished by the jealousies, ambitions, and intrigues of politicians—even of politicians of that stripe calling themselves Socialists, and the movement is full of them.¹⁸

If instead of the SPC the IWW is used as the benchmark of radicalism, B.C. political life is seen more clearly. By analyzing the IWW and the reactions of the SPC and labour movement towards it, we can see the concrete choices that were made to take the left-wing movement away from a radical, anti-statist position to one more closely approximating that of modern social democracy.

¹⁴Robin, The Rush for Spoils, p.94.

¹⁵Western Clarion, 16 December, 1905.

¹⁶Brissenden, p.282.

¹⁷McCormack, p.100.

¹⁸Industrial Union Bulletin, 17 August, 1907.(hereinafter abbreviated to IUB)

But Canadian historians have been loath to look at the IWW. The union is ignored in the survey texts of Kenneth McNaught and J.L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague, while Ralph Allen's popular history, Ordeal by Fire, claims the IWW became the One Big Union in 1918, while the Social Democratic Party of Canada served as its "political arm." Twentieth Century Canada, the collective work of J.L. Granatstein, Craig Brown, Blair Neatby, and the labour historians Irving Abella and David Bercuson, makes only passing references to the IWW in the text, and refers to it as the International Workers of the World in the index. Desmond Morton, in the labour history survey text Working People, concludes with more than a little Whiggery that the "Wobblies survived chiefly to give organized labour a healthy job of respectability." He goes so far as to cite the aggressively pro-business Canadian Annual Review to suggest that the IWW's platform was merely a "pestilent body of undefined anarchist principles from the United States." In his account of B.C. unionism, Paul Phillips claims the union was "spawned" by "wretched conditions," and "left almost no permanent mark on the B.C. labour movement," despite his own observation that it was at one time the largest union in the province, and despite the obvious legacy taken up by the OBU, the Communist Party, and the left-led CIO unions in the province. The only monograph on the IWW in Canada is Jack Scott's colourful celebration Plunderbund and Proletariat, which serves as a popular introduction to the history of the union's famous free speech fights and major strikes. To date, the most complete scholarly work on the IWW is the twenty pages given to it in McCormack's Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries.¹⁹

¹⁹Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976; J.L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague, The Structure of Canadian History. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, second edition, 1984; J.L. Granatstein, et. al., Twentieth Century Canada. Toronto: McGraw, Hill, Ryerson, 1983; Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement. Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1984, revised edition, p.96; A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: the Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979, pp.98-117; Ralph Allen, Ordeal By Fire: Canada 1910-1945. Garden City: Doubleday, 1961, pp.175-177. Phillips, No Power Greater, pp.158, 52; Jack Scott, Plunderbund and Proletariat: A History of the IWW in B.C. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1975

But the union played an important part in the B.C. labour movement. Within six months of its founding convention, the IWW had a local of miners at Phoenix; by the end of 1906, other locals were established in Greenwood, Victoria, Moyie, and Vancouver. By 1907, there were five locals in the Kootenay region, and at least three in Vancouver.²⁰ Following Big Bill Haywood's enjoiner that the IWW was "going down in the gutter to get at the mass of workers and bring them up to a decent plane of living," Wobblies organized miners, loggers, farm workers, longshoremen, and road and railway construction workers. Unlike many AFL unions, the IWW organized among all ethnic groups, including Asians. As one member put it, "all this anti-Japanese talk comes from the employing class. Which is better: to have the Japanese in the Union with you, or to force him to scab on the outside?" The word "Wobbly," a nickname for IWW members, humourously illustrates the union's efforts to combat racism. A Chinese restaurant keeper in Vancouver in 1911 supported the union and would extend credit to members. Unable to pronounce the letter "w," he would ask if a man was in the "I Wobble Wobble." Local members jokingly referred to themselves as part of the "I Wobbly Wobbly," and by the time of the Wheatland strike of 1913, "Wobbly" had become a permanent moniker for workers who carried the red card. Mortimer Downing, a Wobbly who first explained the etymology, noted that the nickname "hints of a fine, practical internationalism, a human brotherhood based on a community of interests and of understanding."²¹

²⁰McCormack, p.99; Phillips, No Power Greater, p.46; IUB, 10 August, 20 April, 10 October, 1907.

²¹IW, 8 April 1909. For the etymology of the word "Wobbly," see The Nation, 5 September 1923, p.242. Stewart Holbrook, in American Mercury, Volume 7, January 1926, p.62, claims the term was similarly coined in Saskatchewan in 1914 during the construction of the CN. H.L. Mencken, in The American Language, suggests that this etymology is "unlikely," but offers no other. In fact, no other explanation has ever been offered. Webster's Third International Dictionary states that the origin is "unknown," while Eric Partridge, in A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, dates the word circa 1910, but gives no etymology.

In Vancouver, the Lumber Handlers' Local 526 and Mixed Local 322 had organized nearly two hundred workers by March 1907. The locals sent telegrams of support during the famous Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone murder trial in Idaho, and condemned the "proceeding of the capitalist class as perpetrating a worse condition than exists in barbarous Russia." In April of the same year, the locals supported a Vancouver strike of AFL painters and carpenters, and resolved that no IWW member would work in the building trades industry. The locals went so far as to expel one member who refused to join the boycott.²² Later in the year, two Wobbly organizers who would later figure importantly in the union came to Vancouver. Joseph Ettor, who would help organize the famous Lawrence textile strike of 1912, organized an Italian local and applied for a charter for a general teamsters' local. He skirmished with the local AFL and SPC as well. A report in the Industrial Union Bulletin noted that

One of the characteristic methods of the A.F. of L. in organizing is to try and take advantage of the work done by the IWW and reap where this organization has sown. This was attempted at Vancouver, B.C., by one Pettipiece, a counterfeit wearing the buttons of the S.P. and A.F. of L. on his coat collar. The vigilance of Organizer Ettor and other IWW men, however, spoiled the game. Pettipiece has been challenged to debate the "difference," but it is a safe bet that he'll never show up.²³

In the fall of 1907, John H. Walsh helped organize a strike of lumber handlers in Vancouver. Walsh would later lead the famous "overalls brigade" from Spokane to the 1908 IWW convention in Chicago to help orchestrate the purging of Daniel DeLeon and the political faction from the union. He was also the first to use songs as an organizing tool, and was the pioneer behind the Wobblies' little red song book. The local of lumber handlers was composed of men from eighteen nationalities, and had already won two small strikes, one a protest against the use of deepwater sailors on the docks, the other a fight to increase wages and decrease hours. On 1 October 1907, the local was locked out by

²²IUB, 23 March, 20 April, 27 April, 4 May, 1907.

²³IUB, 17 August 1907.

stevedores in an attempt to cut wages from forty cents an hour to thirty-five and increase the hours of work from nine to ten. The union held out for a month, but when police prevented picketing and allowed scabs to cross, the members voted to return to work at forty cents an hour and a ten hour day. Though the first was viewed as a loss, Walsh pointed out proudly that "all our boys stood steadfast," and that the decision to return to work to keep the union intact for a winter organizing drive was made by the entire local unanimously.²⁴ In November, a Russian language branch was organized in the city; one of its members was a former member of the Imperial Duma. The locals shared a headquarters that consisted of a meeting hall, a smoking and "rag-chewing room," and a large reading room. Weekly propaganda meetings were held, and the union had a small library in which "nearly every Socialist and revolutionary paper of the world" could be found.²⁵

The union was active in the hinterlands of the province as well. John Riordan, a Canadian delegate to the founding convention who had insisted the union be named the Industrial Workers of the World (instead of the original Industrial Workers of America) continued to organize in the Boundary area and served on the General Executive Board of the IWW during its first year. He was instrumental in opposing the conservative and corrupt administration of the union's first and last president, C.O. Sherman, and helped to clean up the organization. This action, however, put B.C. Wobblies in opposition to the leadership of the Western Federation of Miners and the two unions competed for the allegiance of miners in the province. The Phoenix local, for example, first sided with the Sherman faction, but later applied to be reinstated in the IWW. Other locals of British Columbia District stayed with the Federation, but supported the IWW position. Greenwood, for example, sent Fred Heslewood to the 1906 IWW convention, where he joined with Riordan and other to challenge WFM conservatives. In 1907, the local supported the Goldfield, Nevada Wobblies,

²⁴IUB, 2 November, 9 November 1907; 2 May 1908.

²⁵IUB, 7 December 1907.

Joe Smith and Morrie Preston, who were being framed for the murder of a restaurant owner during a gold miners' strike.²⁶

The IWW exerted an influence in the Boundary area that far exceeded the number of miners on the union's rolls. Militants in the WFM as well as the United Mine Workers of America were often sympathetic to the IWW and syndicalism, and working class solidarity usually cut across lines of trade union jurisdiction in the mining communities. In September 1907, miners from Grand Forks, Greenwood, Phoenix, Motherlode, Summit, and Boundary Falls met for a joint picnic at Curlew Lake. The festivities including the stoning of effigies of the Pinkerton spies James McParland and Harry Orchard, principal villains in the Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone case. In 1909, the Wobbly organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn made a speaking tour of the district, while the Grand Forks local of the WFM enlisted the IWW's help to shut down labour "sharks" who were flooding the area with unemployed workers.²⁷

Support for the IWW increased when other unions, like the UMWA in the progressive era, turned in more conservative directions. As early as 1907, B.C. miners organized into the UMWA's District 18 announced they were "ready to start the propaganda for the IWW." This agitation culminated in the attempt in 1912 to break away from the United Mine Workers. Led by Wobbly miners, this serious rank and file movement was defeated by an alliance of socialists and UMWA loyalists in the more conservative union, but the IWW managed to exact some changes and concessions. In the dramatic coal miners' strikes on Vancouver Island in 1912-1914, the Miners' Liberation League was influenced greatly by the IWW. Wobblies helped guide the strikes, and IWW tactics such as parades and direct action were used, while the union's call for a general strike was greeted enthusiastically. Only the refusal of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council to support such a strike prevented it

²⁶Brissenden, p.137; Foner, The IWW, p.71; McCormack, p.100; IUB, 30 March, 13 July, 5 October, 30 November, 1907. For the recent pardon of Smith and Preston, see IW, June 1987.

²⁷IUB, 5 October 1907; IW, 12 August 1909, 7 October 1909.

from taking place.²⁸

The IWW's drives in the logging industry ran a parallel course to those in mining. Late in 1909, IWW Lumber Workers' Local 45 was established in Vancouver, and its members went throughout the province organizing and working in the camps. Conditions in the lumber industry were uniformly dreadful, and one Wobbly's report described them with anger and humour:

The Canadian Western Lumber Co., camp 7, Courtenay. The conditions of the camp: the oats are bum; plenty of slave drivers; in fact, the collar of your shirt is worn out in a few days, the stares from the drivers are so piercing. "Whoop her up boys, or hike." Bunk house fair. Monthly payment discount on checks; 50 cents for the use of stable for grst [sic] month; wages from \$3 to \$6.50. Hospital fee \$1.00. This entitles the slaves to the slaughter house and the services of a second-class butcher. For further information, I will refer you to a cock-eyed, caloused-brained stick of bobo, the bull cook second in command. Yours for Industrial Unionism, C. Nelson.²⁹

Wobbly organizing drives went from Port Alberni to the Lower Mainland to the Kootenays. In Phoenix, John Riordan penned a poem for the timber beasts:

When you chance to hit a strange burg,
And you're absolutely broke,
You're feeling rather hungry
And there's nothing in your poke;
You don't look up a preacher,
And the police you're sure to shun,
For no matter how you've rustled
They will spot you for a bum.

Your belt is getting very slack,
And you're about all in;
With the togs that you're arrayed in
Your chance is mighty thin.
For all to you are strangers,
And you've travelled from afar,
So in you drop to interview
The man behind the bar.

You take a glance around the room,
Some familiar face to see;
A gang of husky lumber jacks

²⁸IUB, 23 November 1907; McCormack, pp.113-115; Phillips, No Power Greater, p.60.

²⁹McCormack, p.101; IW, 30 April, 2 November, 1910.

Are out upon a spree.
They seem to understand your plight
As you saunter from the street,
And after asking you to drink,
They invite you out to eat.

You're welcome to your share with them
While a single dime they've got,
So in the morning bright and early
With the gang you've cast your lot.
Back to the lumber woods once more
With the bunch you're on the tramp,
Till you've landed near the river
In a horrid lumber camp.

You make great resolutions
When your labor there begins.
Never again to taste or handle
Whiskey, beer or gin.
But labor all the winter long,
Until the good old summer-time,
Then hoist your bundle on your back
And hike it down the line.³⁰

The loggers' union was small but militant. In Port Alberni, camp workers led by Wobbly organizer Henry Frenette went on strike in 1911 to protest the McNamara trial in the United States. In Vancouver, the local helped raise money for the New Bedford, Massachusetts textile strike and sent support to the McNamaras.³¹

The union opposed attempts of employers to buy off workers with small reforms. It bitterly denounced a provincial bill that called for health inspections of camps, pointing out that the bill was unopposed by bosses because they knew "they could get more work out of the men if better sanitary conditions were had. If the master ever discovers that more work can be accomplished with dirt, the same reasoning will apply and a 'BILL' will pass allowing lots of dirt." The writer concluded that the workers should instead fight for the eight hour

³⁰IW, 29 December 1910.

³¹Gordon Hak, "On the Fringes: Capital and Labour in the Forest Economies of the Port Alberni and Prince George Districts, British Columbia, 1910-1939." Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1986, pp.172-173; IW, 25 June 1910, 6 July, 26 October, 2 November, 1911.

day, for then they would have "lots of time to keep nice and clean." Similarly, the local railed against a proposal from the Pacific Coast Loggers' Association, an "industrial union of slave drivers," to establish a government home for retired loggers. The union maintained that the welfare of the loggers should not depend on the state, for if the robbery by the bosses was ended, workers would "not need to be an object of charity." Instead, it reasoned, the One Big Union would "put overalls on every capitalist in the country. To hell with their gifts."³²

But attempts to organize loggers were largely unsuccessful; indeed, the woods would not be organized until the 1940s. However, as Gordon Hak has pointed out in his Ph.D. dissertation, while the organizational structure of the IWW disappeared in the 1910s, IWW delegates continued to "haunt logging camps, and with the revival of union organization in 1919, individual 'Wobblies' were prominent in the Lumber Workers Industrial Union."³³ IWW members continually challenged more conservative leaders of the LWIU and pushed them to more militant positions. At the 1920 convention of the LWIU, Ernest Winch fought off a challenge from the syndicalists, and, as one historian has noted, was forced to "tacitly adopt IWW positions."³⁴ When the LWIU finally fell apart, IWW locals were created to fill the hole. The union established a lumber workers' union in Prince George, and led strikes in the Kootenays in the 1920s.³⁵

In cities and towns, where most of B.C. workers lived, the IWW formed mixed locals of general labourers. In Vancouver in 1910, Wobblies help lead a strike of Italian excavators for an eight hour day and engineered a short strike of labourers who were constructing the city's race track. The locals supported the AFL's general strike in the building trades in

³²IW, 2 February, 13 July, 1911.

³³Hak, p.156.

³⁴Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp.165-166.

³⁵Hak, p.270.

1911, and held meetings and raised money for the effort. Several Wobblies left town rather than add to the growing army of unemployed. One member, George Drogowicz, had been a member for only eight days when he rode the rails to the United States. His body was found outside Seattle on 25 June, hit by a train on the North Pacific tracks. Meanwhile, AFL bricklayers refused to join the strike and kept working.³⁶

In Victoria, Transportation Workers' Union Local No. 249 was formed in 1911. The branch raised one hundred dollars for the Lawrence strike of 1912, and later that year led two hundred street labourers out on strike.³⁷

The Prince Rupert labourers' local was the most successful. In April 1909, Patrick Daly, a former WFM member, helped organize railway construction workers into an IWW branch, and immediately launched a strike against the Grand Trunk Pacific railway. The strike did little to increase wages or better conditions, but over four hundred men joined the union and the IWW was established as a force to be reckoned with. In June, 123 men walked off a sewer construction site and appealed to the union for help. The contractor was forced out of business, and when the municipality took over the job, it was compelled to pay the union rate. The IWW office became the hiring hall for most of Prince Rupert's contractors, and by October IWW longshoremen controlled the local waterfront.³⁸ In 1911, the local helped establish the Prince Rupert Industrial Association, a broadly-based union of construction workers. The association soon raised the going rate from \$3.00 per eight hour day to \$3.60, but some private contractors refused to raise wages. On 1 March, the association voted to strike to win the higher rate for all workers. At first the strike was limited to private contractors, but as scabs were imported from Vancouver, city workers joined in. On 6 April,

³⁶IW, 30 July, 21 May, 1910; 8 June, 15 June, 22 June, 29 June, 6 July, 13 July, 20 July 1911.

³⁷IW, 4 April, 18 April, 9 May, 1912.

³⁸IW, 15 April, 20 May, 24 June, 8 June, 15 June, 22 June, 29 June, 6 July, 17 October, 1909.

a parade of several hundred workers marched through Prince Rupert to Kelly's Cut. Special police hired by the contractors shot four of the strikers and ransacked the union hall. More than fifty workers were arrested on charges ranging from unlawful assembly to attempted murder, and craft union workers were hired to build a bull pen to hold the men. Fifteen men were later tried in Victoria: while some were acquitted, one was sentenced to three years, five to two years, three to one year, and one to six months, though all were released in less than a year. The members of the PRIA voted to join the Wobblies en masse, and over one thousand men were issued red cards. One union activist wrote "The Battle of Kelly's Cut" to commemorate the strike:

Come all you workers if you want to hear,
I will tell you a story of a great pioneer.
Prince Rupert is the pioneer's name;
The way she started she won her fame.

Her streets were of plank, her people of pluck,
Who had gathered on the townsite
To try their luck.

The railroad was coming and that we knew.
Our hopes were many, but our dollars few.
A port was to open to world wide trade.
A lot then held was a fortune made.

Some had not lot, and had no coin;
So a pick and shovel they had to join.
Wages were small and the rain did pour;
To feed our families we had to get more.

In a little Church up on the hill,
A union was formed that is remembered still.
Prince Rupert Industrial Association was the union's name:
At the Kelly Cut Battle it won its fame.

Some members were from Sweden and some came from Spain.
Others came from Serbia and the State of Maine;
Ireland had her quota, England had a few;
Scotland had her number and Italy too.

In that union we had some men,
Who could coin you a nickel from an old hair pin.
All went well that day
When from a parade a few did stray
To a Scabby Spot along the way.

Within a minute a battle did start
And as a union, all took part.
Some threw rocks, others had a gun;
Believe me or not, it was no fun.

All nations were at war; police came running
And arrested quite a few.
A bullpen was built; our boys placed inside.
A court then was held and many took a ride.
To the pen they were sentenced—up to seven years;
If you had a heart it would drive you to tears.

The result of that battle never will die,
In the hearts of Oldtimers it still does lie.
A wage scale was established and there did remain,
Until the workers moved and revised it again.
A boycott was established and soon put on the bum
Was the many who had the store and was handy with the gun.

So Boys, keep up your courage,
Though it is no fun;
You will never win the battle
If you turn and run.³⁹

But the IWW's greatest successes were among the upwards of 8,000 railway navvies who worked on the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific lines and electrified the province with their strike. The drives to organize the construction workers meant that the Wobblies were able to move from the periphery to the very heart of the province's economy. Organizers were active on the western end of the GTP in 1909, and reports came in from other areas in the province. One such report, from Keremeos on the Great Northern line, was typical:

The sharks are shipping to Keremeos, B.C. This is station work by small gunny-sack contractors. Fee \$1, and you must take the stage from 5 to 10 miles after arriving at Keremeos Valley. Wages \$2.25 to \$2.50. Discount, and hard to beat back on the railroad. The sharks ask \$1.50 for a division. Everybody says this is a rotten lay-out. Keep away.⁴⁰

³⁹IW, 6 April, 20 April, 27 April, 25 May, 29 June, 1911; "Fighting for Labour: Four Decades of Work in British Columbia, 1910-1950." Sound Heritage, Volume 4, Number 4. Compiled by Patricia Wejr and Howie Smith, 1978, pp.8-11.

⁴⁰IW, 16 September 1901.

Organizing began in earnest in the summer of 1911. By August, Carl Berglund had put together a "propaganda club" of eight hundred men at Spence's Bridge on the CN line and reported that the men were waiting for an IWW organizer so a union local could be formally established. Organizers were busy at Lytton, a few miles south, as well. J.S. Biscay was sent from Vancouver to bring in the workers to the IWW, and signed up over six hundred in his first few weeks on the job. The organizer was excited by the progress, and wrote that the "bunch here are so enthusiastic that they won't stand for a non-union man around the camps....I never saw a finer example of solidarity than has been manifest here. The boys simply won't stand for any foolishness." By October, Biscay had lined up over 1500 in the union, and plans were made to build a headquarters in Lytton. Despite initial interference from the police, regular meetings were held in the town and the agitation continued.⁴¹

Contractors were first skeptical about the prospects for the union's success. But the efforts of Biscay and others soon started them into action. On 22 September, at a camp fifteen miles from Savona, police and company thugs beat and kidnapped Biscay. When his valise was later searched, a gun was found, and the Wobbly was charged with "being a dangerous character and a menace to public safety." Held in the Kamloops jail for over a month, Biscay was finally found not guilty by a jury and released. By this time, the union had grown to over three thousand members.⁴²

The Wobbly penchant for poetry continued during the drive. An allegory entitled "It Pays to Kick," was written by "A Jobite on the Canadian Northern":

There lived two frogs, so I am told,
In a quiet wayside pool;
One of those frogs was darn big frog;
The other frog was a fool.

⁴¹IW, 17 August, 31 August, 14 September, 28 September, 1911.

⁴²IW, 5 October, 12 October, 19 October, 2 November 1911.

Now a farmer man with a big milk can,
Was wont to pass that way;
And he used to stop and add a drop
Of the Agua, so they say.

It happened one morn in the early dawn,
When the farmer's sight was dim,
He scooped those frogs in the water he dipped,
Which same was a joke on him.

The fool frog sank in the swishing tank,
As the farmer bumped to town.
But the smart frog flew like a tugboat screw,
And swore he'd never go down.

So he kicked and splashed and spluttered and thrashed,
He kept on top through all.
And he churned that milk in first class shape,
Into a nice large butter ball.

Now when the farmer got into town
And opened the can, there lay
The fool frog drowned.
But hale and sound; the KICKER, he flopped away.

Moral:

Don't waste your life in endless strife,
But let this teaching stick.
You'll find old man, in the world's big can
It sometimes pays to KICK.⁴³

On 27 March 1912, the workers on the CN line did kick. IWW members at Nelson and Benson's camp number four, a few miles from Lytton, walked out to protest wages and sanitary conditions. A meeting was held in the town to draw up a list of demands and elect strike committees. Soon over four thousand men from Hope and Kamloops were out on strike. The men built their own camps, started commissaries, and set up "courts" to police the camps. Infractions of the rules were punished by sentences such as "go and cut ten big armsful of firewood," "carry ten coal-oil cans full of water for the camp cooks," or "help the cooks for one day." The men were restricted to two drinks of liquor a day, and local saloon keepers were warned that all liquor would be thrown out if the rule was broken. One newspaper reporter observed that the "strike seems to have acted like a wave of

⁴³IW, 4 January, 1912.

reform," and that the Yale camp resembled a "miniature republic run on Socialistic lines, and it must be admitted that so far it has been run successfully..."⁴⁴

The IWW at first had trouble securing support from other unions. The Vancouver Trades and Labor Council had gone so far as to send a delegate into the IWW camps to try to convince the men to return to work. This half-hearted effort failed, and as the strike grew, the council was forced to take action. In May, the VTLC received an appeal for help from the workers, but before sending aid, the council had a member investigate the conditions. He reported that they were as bad as the Wobblies had alleged:

The men live in shacks without floor or windows...Owing to the overcrowding and lack of ventilation, the air became so foul nights that it was not an uncommon occurrence for the men to arise in the morning too sick to work...[I]n one camp, a toilet was placed that the refuse was discharged in the river immediately upstream from the place where water was drawn for cooking purposes.

The report encouraged the VTLC to give some financial support to the strikers, and the council issued a call to its affiliates for money. In June, its paper, the B.C. Federationist, became the official strike bulletin for the tie-up.⁴⁵

In the camps, the strike committees arranged talks on industrial unionism "and other working class matters, not only from the view point of the immediate strike, but also as to the future."⁴⁶ Joe Hill, the famous IWW songwriter and martyr, arrived in Yale ten days after the strike broke out and wrote several songs. The only one which has survived intact is "Where the Fraser River Flows," written to the tune of "Where the River Shannon Flows":

Fellow workers, pay attention to what I'm going to mention,
For it is the fixed intention of the Workers of the World,
And I hope you'll all be ready, true-hearted, brave and steady,
To gather round our standard when the Red Flag is unfurled.

⁴⁴IW, 4 April, 11 April 1912; Vancouver Province, 3 April 1912.

⁴⁵IW, 11 April, 1912; B.C. Federationist, 22 June 1912; Phillips, No Power Greater, p.53.

⁴⁶IW, 18 April 1912.

Chorus:

Where the Fraser River Flows, each fellow worker knows
They have bullied and oppressed us, but still our union grows;
And we're going to find a way boys, for shorter hours and better pay, boys,
We're going to win the day boys, where the River Fraser flows.

Now these gunny sack contractors have all been dirty actors;
They're not our benefactors, each fellow workers knows.
So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty weather,
And we will show no white feather where the Fraser River flows.

Now the boss the law is stretching, bulls and pimps he's fetching,
And they are a fine collection, as Jesus only knows.
But why their mother reared them, and why the devil spared them,
Are questions we can't answer where the Fraser River flows.⁴⁷

Louis Moreau, who had been a camp delegate during the strike, later remembered the effect the songs had:

The Wobblies drove those contractors nuts. One day Martin [a contractor] came by our camp at Yale annex and started to talk to a bunch of Swedes that were sitting alongside of the road. When the groaning brigade, our singing sextet, started to sing the song Joe had made for him, Martin tore his hair and swore he'd get us.⁴⁸

The IWW made Martin and other contractors do more than just pull their hair. By 2 April, they had met with Premier McBride and asked for militia troops to end the strike; while the premier demurred on the question of military aid, he did dispatch special constables and allowed the companies to swear in an arm foreman as constables. The men were sent on the pretext that order needed to be restored, in spite of police reports that the level of violence and disorderly conduct had actually gone down during the strike. Provincial health inspectors were sent to close the workers' camps, even though they were cleaner than the CN camps. Strikers were harassed by police and company thugs: one man was shot in the leg by a company constable, while another was run down by a train.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Gibbs M. Smith, Joe Hill. 1969. Reprint. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984, pp.24-26; IW, 9 May 1912.

⁴⁸Smith, p. 25.

⁴⁹Vancouver Sun, 3 April, 16 April, 1912; Province, 2 April, 3 April, 1912; McCormack,

During the third week of April, the police intensified their campaign against the strike. The men were ordered to return to work, and when they refused, armed constables entered the camps and ousted them at gunpoint. Several camps were destroyed and sweeping arrests were made. By June, nearly three hundred men were imprisoned on charges ranging from vagrancy to inciting to murder, and many more were driven from the area. Immigration authorities kept IWW men from entering the area, but they eased restrictions for men willing to scab. Donald Mann, one of the magnates of the CN, used his influence to change immigration regulations to facilitate the importation of navvies from the United States and it became more difficult to keep scabs out. The Wobblies' "1,000 mile picket line," which had union members picketing employment offices in Vancouver, Seattle, Tacoma, Minneapolis, and San Francisco in order to curtail the hiring of scabs, began to falter. A surprising IWW request for arbitration under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act was refused by the federal government and the railways as further proof of the Wobbly contention that the state was not a friend to labour.⁵⁰

On 20 July, workers on the Grand Trunk Pacific line from Prince Rupert to Edmonton struck for demands similar to those of the CN workers. The strike bulletin published a grim joke which reflected the conditions:

Undertaker: I've advertised for an assistant. Have you any experience at funerals?
Applicant: I should say so! I was doctor in a railroad construction camp for three years.⁵¹

Though both strikes continued into the winter, work had resumed on the CN line by July and the GTP line by September. The CN strike was never officially called off, but in January 1913, the Prince Rupert local declared the GTP strike over. The local noted that the

⁴⁹(cont'd) p.109; IW, 18 April 1912.

⁵⁰Sun, 16 April, 17 April 1912; IW, 25 April, 1 May 1912; Solidarity, 4 May 1912; IW, 9 May, 16 May, 23 May, 30 May 1912; Thompson and Murfin, The IWW: Its First Seventy Years, pp.65-66. Avery, Dangerous Foreigners, p.55.

⁵¹IW, 25 July, 5 September, 1912.

strikers had forced the federal government to promise to enforce sanitary regulations and that the strike "really gained more than the strikers had hoped for."⁵²

Organizers continued their work on the railways. In February 1913, several men struck the Kettle Valley line near Naramata in a short-lived attempt to improve conditions. Workers struck again in April, and in May four hundred navvies went out. But it was too difficult to feed and house the men, and the strike was called off a week later, though some concessions were granted.⁵³

Railway contractors had learned from the earlier strikes and organizers found it increasingly difficult to agitate. Wobblies were run out of town, arrested, and beaten. Joseph Ettor was deported, and other IWW men were driven out of camps. One writer described the lengths to which contractors would go:

To show how scared the thieving railroad contractors are, we mention the fact that a crippled man, who was unable to work, went up to Tuohey's camp on the North Thompson to beg a few dimes and was run out of the place because the gunnysackers thought he was an IWW organizer in disguise. Just wait until we really get into action!⁵⁴

Despite the bold challenge, the IWW as an organization was unable to repeat the success of 1912. Chief among the reasons for its failure was the repression by government and business. Even in the allegedly law-abiding Canadian frontier, Wobbly organizers were brutally murdered: two in Nelson during the winter of 1911-12; one at Tete Jaune Cache in May 1913; and another near Edmonton in July 1914. Two IWW men were arrested in an attempt to frame them for the Alberta killing; though he was eventually discharged, organizer James Rowan spent six months in jail prior to his release.⁵⁵ The outbreak of war in 1914

⁵²Phillips, No Power Greater, p.54; McCormack, p.109; IW, 23 January 1913.

⁵³IW, 6 March, 24 April, 8 May 1913.

⁵⁴IW, 6 March, 27 March, 3 April, 13 March, 1913; Solidarity, 15 March, 1913; IW, 15 May 1913; Solidarity, 10 January 1914.

⁵⁵IW, 4 January 1912; 15 May, 1913; Solidarity, 15 August 1914; McCormack, p.111.

would give the government more leverage to use against the IWW. So-called "enemy aliens" were forced to register with the government, and many were interned. Government regulations prevented many strikes in industry, while in 1918, cabinet orders-in-council finally outlawed the IWW.⁵⁶

At the same time, the depression which began in 1911 hurt the IWW. As the railway boom ended, much of the union's constituency became unemployed. Though the IWW tried to organize the unemployed men, as one historian has pointed out in another context, "a union of the unemployed is composed of members who want to get out."⁵⁷

In order to remain a sound organization, the IWW had to recruit a stable membership, and this it was unable to do. Government repression, employer hostility, and conflicts with other labour bodies prevented this from happening. An examination of the Vancouver free speech fights indicates how labour and government were unwitting allies against the IWW in this period.

⁵⁶Avery, Dangerous Foreigners, pp.66, 73-75.

⁵⁷Morton, Working People, p.150.

CHAPTER III

WOBBLIES, SOCIALISTS, UNIONISTS, AND FREE SPEECH

Like many of the policies and tactics of the IWW, the battles for free speech have been interpreted, debated, and reinterpreted. Joseph Conlin, while admitting that the Wobblies were clearly not "Jeffersonian libertarians," has nonetheless maintained that the fights "were joined to preserve...a right with a Constitutional Article and a century of tradition behind it"; he suggests that the battles were essentially not "hostile or irrelevant to American values."¹ Patrick Renshaw concluded that the fights were waged "not so much to defend a constitutional principle...but to make the world more fully aware of the miserable conditions in which migratory workers lived and labored."² Both explanations are much too idealistic.

Brissenden presciently countered Conlin's position in 1919, writing that

The trouble always seems to begin because the local authorities are revolted by—or at least nervously apprehensive about—either the substance of the IWW speeches or the language in which their ideas are conveyed, or both. The remarks are alleged to be seditious, incendiary, unpatriotic, immoral, etc., or, whether they are any or all these or none of them, they are alleged to be profane or vulgar beyond the limits of forbearance.³

These remarks hardly suggest a congruence of values. Renshaw's contention is also flawed, for the point of the free speech fights was to educate not the world, but the unorganized; the IWW maintained that freedom could only be won by the working class alone. Robert Tyler has correctly argued that the fights were "practical defenses of [the] right to organize openly," as well as attempts to recruit and "educate the unorganized and watching workers...." Dubofsky has demonstrated that the fights were the only way to organize workers who would soon be shipped to distant camps, where spies and stoolies

¹Conlin, p. 74.

²Patrick Renshaw, The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States. New York: Anchor Books, 1968, p.84

³Brissenden, p.263.

could quickly spot and eliminate agitators. As one Wobbly wrote, for the migrant workers, "the street corner was their only hall, and if denied the right to agitate there, then they must be silent." Ralph Chaplin, the Wobbly poet who wrote "Solidarity Forever," had this to say about the struggles in a 1960 recollection: "Free speech for what? For a man to get up and try to organize a union. They weren't keeping free speech out—they were keeping unionism out." Ross McCormack cites Henry Frenette, an IWW organizer in Washington and Vancouver Island who wrote that "nearly all the men I have spoken to have heard of the IWW from speakers on the street." Frenette was in a particularly good position to judge the value of the free speech fights: his sister-in-law Edith was a close friend of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and had taken part in the first important free speech fight, that of Missoula, Montana in 1909, and in the events of the Everett massacre of 1916.⁴

Those who have touched on the free speech fight of 1912 suggest that it shows the solidarity and radicalism of Vancouver's workers. This conclusion, however, is inaccurate and romanticized. Events show how the labour movement conflicted over tactics, strategy, and leadership. The first significant Vancouver free speech fight actually occurred in 1909, a prosperous year during which organized labour was increasingly active. The VTLC was busy with plans for a new Labor Temple, and had recently started a monthly paper, the Western Wage-Earner. But prices were rising, and events in Vancouver were cause for concern. April saw the end of a bitter longshoreman's strike led by the IWW against the CPR, a strike which was finally broken by the importation of scabs from as far away as Winnipeg. The newly elected city council, headed by an American real estate developer named C.S. Douglas, increasingly took on an anti-labour cant. Mayor Douglas refused to implement the eight-hour

⁴Robert L. Tyler, Rebels of the Woods: the IWW in the Pacific Northwest Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967, p.33; Dubofsky, pp. 174-175; cited in Foner, "Fellow Workers and Friends": IWW Free-Speech Fights as Told by Participants, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981, p. 12; Joe Glazier, Songs for Woodworkers, Portland, Oregon: Collector Records, 1977; Frenette cited in McCormack, pp.105-106. For details on Edith Frenette, see Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, The Rebel Girl-An Autobiography-My First Life-(1906-1926). New York: International Publishers, revised edition, 1973, pp. 104, 108, 221, and Foner, The IWW, pp. 525, 527, 529.

day for civic workers, though the measure had been approved in a recent plebiscite. In May, he was to abandon the neutrality of his chairman's role to ensure the passing of a motion to replace city day labourers with contracting out.⁵

The council was also concerned with an influx of migrants from the United States. The increased number of men seeking to enter Vancouver was the result of a clean-up push by the city of Seattle as it prepared for its upcoming Alaska-Yukon-Pacific exposition. On a single April day, Vancouver police prevented nineteen "undesirables" from landing off the Seattle ferry. Migrants who did arrive were tagged with vagrancy or otherwise harassed by police. To justify these actions, the Vancouver police chief maintained that "these men have to be handled firmly right from the start or Vancouver will be overrun with them."⁶ This is the context, then, in which the police campaign against free speech took place.

The section of Carrall street between Cordova and Hastings streets had long been established as a place for street speakers.⁷ It was the logical place to speak for those who wished to reach a working class audience, for it was in the middle of the workers' community of Vancouver's skid road. A large number of hotels and boarding houses catered to migrants, timber beasts, and the marginally employed. Several unions had offices in the surrounding blocks. The IWW headquarters was at 61 West Cordova, while the SPC was

⁵Phillips, No Power Greater, p.55, implies that the three organizations—the IWW, the VTLC, and the SPC—worked together to defeat the ban on speaking; McCormack does give the IWW the leading role in the battle, but makes no mention of the deep divisions among the groups; Foner The IWW, likewise assumes a high degree of unity. Scott does point out the splits in the labour movement, but attributes them to "craft internationals" and ignores deeper political motives, pp.41-51. Phillips, p.49, No Power Greater, for general conditions. For the longshoremen's strike, see Province, 5 April, 1909; For the eight hour day and Mayor Douglas's role, see World, 17 April, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, April and May, 1909. For contracting out, see World, 11 May, 1909; Province, 11 May, 1909. Strictly speaking, the 1909 battle was not the first in Vancouver. In 1907, the VTLC and SPC formed a Free Speech League to combat harassment and arrests. Little came of it; as Phillips notes, "Before a serious situation could develop, a new wave of investment brought another period of prosperity to the province," Phillips, p.48.

⁶World, 5 April, 1909.

⁷Western Clarion, 22 May, 1909; World, 13 April, 1909.

located a few blocks away at 163 West Hastings; in addition, the party maintained a reading room at the Royal Theatre at 124 East Hastings. The Labor Hall, home to several unions as well as the VTLC, was not in the core area, but at 585 Homer, was still close to the action.

On Sunday, 4 April 1909, the IWW and the SPC addressed a crowd at the corner of Carrall and Hastings. It was no different from the scores of earlier meetings on the site; even the competition, the Salvation Army, was in its regular place on the opposite corner. This time, however, Vancouver city police ordered the speakers to disperse. When the men refused, they were handed summonses and ordered to appear before the police magistrate two days later.⁸ The police contended that the "streets are for people to walk on and people anxious to air their views should hire a hall."⁹ The Salvation Army, however, was not asked to disperse. As a writer in the Western WageEarner remarked pointedly,

Because workingmen should hold a meeting on a practically deserted thoroughfare and appoint pickets to see that traffic is not impeded, even though a large crowd should gather, will never be accepted as sufficient reason why they should be fined, when at the same time the Salvation Army hold meetings on busy thoroughfares and cause traffic to be blocked, and horses to take fright at the sound of their brass horns and are not molested.¹⁰

The two sides of the fight were clearly drawn, with the daily press siding with the police. Even the Vancouver World, which supported the campaign for the eight-hour day and published the socialist Pettipiece in a weekly "Page for the Wage Earner," took the opportunity to denounce the speakers, arguing that "the blocking of traffic on the streets is a dangerous nuisance," and that the "Socialists" should find "some other space where they could spout to their hearts' content without annoying anyone."¹¹

⁸World, 5 April, 1909; Vancouver Police Court Calendar, Volume 11, 6 April, 1909.

⁹World, 5 April, 1909.

¹⁰Western Wage-Earner, May 1909.

¹¹World, 6 April, 1909.

The left swung into action. A well-known socialist attorney, J.E. Bird, represented the arrested men, and on the day of the trial, SPC and IWW members packed the courtroom, only to find that the case was adjourned for a week. To the magistrate's hope that "the offenders would undertake not to repeat the offence in the meantime," Bird retorted that they "would undertake no such thing," and an open air meeting was held on Carrall street the next evening.¹² The SPC set up a fund for the legal defence and vowed "to take the offensive on the street every evening....Somebody will eventually have to lie down, and we don't know how." The Industrial Worker in Spokane noted that "the fight is on," and that "the slaves are preparing for action....There will be a 'hot time in the old town' before long-police or no police!"¹³ The VTLC organized a rally at city hall and though the meeting was primarily concerned with the struggle for the eight hour day, it expressed its "sympathy and pledges its support in maintaining the right of free speech on the streets of Vancouver."¹⁴

On 13 April the trial of the six men resumed. Again the court was "filled with a strong revolutionary element long before his royal nibs representative took the bench." But the socialists argued that they had not obstructed the street: they were twelve feet away from the street line, and had put wardens out to maintain order and prevent obstructions. One SPC member, not among the accused, testified on the precautions that had been taken, and even produced a map to show that the thoroughfare had not been obstructed. The defence held that it was clearly discriminatory for a constable to arrest leftists and ignore equally disruptive religionists because they preached a creed more acceptable to the police.

This legalistic defence was juxtaposed with a spirit of resistance among the Wobblies. William Taylor, exemplifying the kind of erudition of many IWW members, took objection to

¹²Western Clarion, 10 April, 1909; Province 7 April, 1909.

¹³Western Clarion, 10 April 1909; IW, 22 April, 1909.

¹⁴Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 15 April 1909.

swearing on the bible, complaining that it could harbour germs. He argued that he had not been ordered to disperse, but only to stop speaking. Armed with a dictionary, he contended that the verb "to disperse" meant "to cause to break up or to scatter." This being the case, it was obviously grammatically and anatomically impossible for him to accede to the alleged police demand that he disperse himself!¹⁵ The case was again adjourned, this time until the following Wednesday. The defense attorney hinted that his clients would take jail sentences rather than pay fines, and warned that "the game would be kept up until the jail was packed."¹⁶

The battle on the street continued. On the nineteenth of April, the magistrate finally rendered judgement. Taylor was found guilty and ordered to pay either a fine of \$5 and costs of \$2.50, or serve ten days in jail with hard labour, double the usual sentence for being drunk and disorderly. The magistrate advised that if Taylor's conviction did not put an end to the IWW meetings, "the punishment will be much more heavier next time." Tempering mercy with justice, the crown withdrew the charges against the other defendants.¹⁷

But the magistrate's leniency went unappreciated. The Vancouver Province, with a cavalier rendering of the Industrial Workers of the World, reported on 2 May that

A mass meeting was held last night in the front of City Hall under the auspices of the United Workmen of the World. There was a fair attendance, and Mr. J. Jenkins [Arthur Jenkins of Vancouver local 322] was in the chair. There were several speakers, who advocated most strongly the principles and ideas of the revolutionists.¹⁸

The failure of Bird's subsequent appeal¹⁹ had little effect on the militants. Indeed, it

¹⁵Western Clarion, 17 April, 1909.

¹⁶World, 13 April, 1909; Western Clarion, 17 April, 1909.

¹⁷World, 19 April, 1909; Daily News-Advertiser, 20 April, 1909.

¹⁸Province, 2 May, 1909; IW, 13 May, 1909.

¹⁹World, 7 May, 8 May, 1909; IW, 13 May, 1909.

hardly came as a surprise to the IWW. The secretary of local 322 wrote before the B.C. Supreme Court judgement that,

It matters not to us which way the decision is handed down: whether for or against us, we shall still uphold our constitutional right of free speech and the right to peaceably assemble for the purpose of discussing our views on this great social problem.²⁰

On 13 May, "local Anarchists and Socialists" gathered to listen to Lucy Parsons, widow of Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons. The daily newspapers were unimpressed with her "recitation [of] the unjust murder of her husband," but the vists of Parsons, a founding member of the IWW, provided a rallying point for the Vancouver activists. William Taylor addressed the crowd despite the warnings of the police magistrate, and demanded the restoration of free speech.²¹ Two days later, the SPC called for another mass meeting at the city hall, and noted that the fiery Comrade James Hawthornthwaite had been invited to come from Nanaimo and take part in the fray. The Western Clarion also reminded readers that it was the duty of those who did not go to jail to help raise money for those who did.²²

That same day, police arrested T.M. Beamish, a Socialist real estate broker, and charged him with obstructing the thoroughfare. This time, the police magistrate sentenced Beamish to pay a fine of one hundred dollars or serve thirty days with hard labour. Beamish, copying Taylor's courtroom tactics, argued that he had climbed up on a water trough to address the crowd. This meant that the order to disperse himself implied that he should drop to the ground and splatter on the pavement, which he was reluctant to do.²³

To protest the outrageous fine, the SPC organized a meeting at the city hall for 17 May. The large crowd was addressed by Beamish; J.H. McVety, a machinist who was

²⁰IW, 13 May, 1909.

²¹World, 14 May, 1909.

²²Western Clarion, 15 May, 1909.

²³Daily News-Advertiser, 16 May, 1909; World, 17 May, 1909.

president of the VTLC, manager of the Western Wage-Earner, and a member of the SPC; E.T. Kingsley, the proprietor of a print shop and a prominent socialist; and L.T. English, a printer who belonged to the International Typographical Union and the SPC.²⁴ The following night, upwards of one thousand people gathered on the traditional battlefield of Carrall and Hastings. The speaker refused to give his name to the police, and at this point, a sergeant and four constables "moved off like the whipped curs they always are when they run up against a person who has the manhood or womanhood to stand true to their own convictions," as the Industrial Worker put it. The Western Clarion contented itself with noting that the five "waddled solemnly up the street like a flock of fat ducks."²⁵

The following day one case brought before the court was dismissed, while later that night, the IWW-led meeting at Hastings and Carrall was observed but not disrupted by the police. They attempted to take the name of one speaker, but when he refused to give it, the police simply moved on.²⁶

This signified the end of overt police harassment. The Crown did not press the arrests to the full extent of the law, the police backed down quickly, and the progressive forces could claim a clear-cut victory.²⁷ It even appeared that solidarity in the face of a common enemy was possible, that the labour movement, the SPC, and the IWW could forget their ideological differences and work together. But the solidarity was more imagined than real. The socialists, trade unionists, and Wobblies differed greatly on ends and means, and the three groups reacted in conflicting ways. In examining these tactical differences, we learn

²⁴World, 18 May, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, July, 1909; Western Clarion, 22 May, 1909; IW, 24 June, 1909.

²⁵IW, 24 June, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, July, 1909; Western Clarion, 22 May, 1909; IW, 24 June, 1909.

²⁶World, 19 May, 1909; IW, 24 June, 1909; Police Court Calendar, Volume 11, 19 May, 1909.

²⁷VTLC Minutes, 20 May, 1909; World, 21 May, 1909; Western Clarion, 29 May, 1909, World, 28 May, 1909; Police Court Calendar, Volume 11, 28 May 1909

more about each group and the strands that made up the B.C. labour and left movements.

The reaction of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council was by far the most restrained. The minutes of its bi-weekly meetings reveal that the free speech issue was far down on the council's list of priorities. The public meeting held by the trade unionists on 10 April was primarily aimed not at securing free speech, but rather the eight-hour day for civic workers. Much was made of the Laurier government's proposed naval bill, and the pages of the minutes are filled with stirring speeches, many made by the council secretary, Parm Pettipiece. The upcoming May Day celebrations were of vital concern, but even these were overshadowed by another event. Nearly a third of one meeting that took place during the free speech campaign was devoted to a discussion of a football that had been lost by or stolen from a visiting union team. Free speech was mentioned only once in the VTLC minutes: as noted above, the issue was tacked on to a resolution condemning the actions of Magistrate Williams. This resolution took place on 20 May—one week after the arrests had stopped and the battle won save for the withdrawal of the charge against English.

The monthly paper of the VTLC, the Western Wage-Earner, likewise paid little attention to the events on the city streets. The April issue made no mention of the fight, while an article in May gave only the sketchiest of details. It contained no hard facts and gave no names of those arrested; it mentioned neither the SPC nor the IWW. Instead of a call for action or a plea for funds, the May issue weakly expressed the "hope that the case will be fought to the last ditch...." It made no suggestion as to who should fight to the last ditch or how labour should contribute.²⁸

An article in the June edition of the Western Wage-Earner tied the campaign for free speech to the dismissal of unpopular police Magistrate Williams, just as the VTLC resolution of 20 May had. The magistrate certainly did need a reprimand: men who had slept in a

²⁸VTLC Minutes, 15 April, 6 May, 20 May, 1909.

CPR box car were sentenced to six months with double leg irons, while a strike breaker who assaulted a seventy-year old man with a hammer received only thirty days. But it is clear that the VTLC saw the free speech agitation largely as another way to discredit the official. The Western Wage-Earner was unequivocal:

The feeling against the police magistrate has at last taken definite form, thanks to the men who use the streets of [sic] a forum, and probably had such unjust punishment not been inflicted on street speakers the juvenile offenders might have been subject to the caprice of Mr. Williams for years to come. The mass meeting in the city hall decided in no uncertain manner the course necessary to remedy matters....²⁹

The manner, of course, was the circulation of the meeting's resolution to other unions and city officials.

A study of the minutes of the Vancouver city council reveals another interesting facet. During the free speech fight, the VTLC sent two communications to city council, one which was presented at the meeting of 10 May, the other at the meeting of 25 May. The first was a communication "re 8 hour day and entertainment of Japanese squadron," the latter point stemming from city outlays to wine and dine officers of visiting Japanese naval ships. The second letter concerned the establishment of a juvenile court, and was part of the agitation against Magistrate Williams. Neither communication mentioned the free speech fight.³⁰

The VTLC was only marginally interested in the free speech issue. The trades union movement had already established its political program, and stuck doggedly to it during the battle; it continued to prefer footballs to soapboxes. Some members, especially those connected to the SPC, did address public meetings, but the council as a body did little to confront the city officials or support the men who did. Instead, the VTLC preferred to privately petition the mayor. The council meeting of 3 June heard a report from James McVety in which he

²⁹VTLC Minutes, 15 April, 6 May, 20 May, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, April, May, June, 1909; World, 17 April, 1909; quote from Western Wage-Earner, June, 1909.

³⁰Vancouver City Council Minutes, 10 May, 25 May, 1909.

stated that the joint VTLC/SPC committee had met with Mayor Douglas and had alleged that the police were discriminating against the workers. The committee had made it known that "no objection would be taken if everyone was prevented from speaking," but that strong objections would continue until equal privileges were given to all.³¹

The wording of this report is revealing. It outlines a unity between the trades union movement and the SPC that is not apparent from a reading of the newspapers, including the Wage-Earner and the Western Clarion. It further suggests that the VTLC/SPC committee was prepared to accept a total ban on public speaking, that it sought only equitable treatment before the law. This was a much more moderate position than the demand for free speech.. It also implies an acceptance of the right of the state to ban public speaking, an argument that the IWW and other elements of the SPC were not willing to grant. The joint committee's threat to the mayor is likewise illuminating. The promise to continue "strong objections" in the face of police harassment pales beside the Western Clarion's vow to fight in the streets and the IWW's call to fill the jail with agitators. The threat implies a reluctance on the part of the trades union bureaucrats and the professional politicians of the SPC to maintain a campaign of direct action. The haste with which the free speech issue was tied to the council's own program of the eight-hour day and judicial reform further suggests that on this occasion the most influential labour leaders were happy to use the IWW agitation for their own ends. It is noteworthy that McVety claimed that the VTLC's quiet diplomacy with the mayor was more important than the IWW's resistance in the streets and courtroom theatrics. He reported that the VTLC/SPC joint committee had conferred with Mayor Douglas, who had "taken action and no further trouble had resulted."³²

A further notice in the Western Wage-Earner is equally inflated. In the July issue, the paper reported that the

³¹VTLC Minutes, 3 June, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, July, 1909.

³²VTLC Minutes, 3 June, 1909; Western Wage-Earner, July, 1909.

prompt action on the part of the Trades and Labor Council and the Socialist Party saved a lot of trouble over the question of street speaking. The two bodies appointed a committee who waited upon the chairman of the Police Commission and alleged that the police were discriminating against the workers and in favour of the Salvation Army. The matter has been investigated and police have apparently been instructed not to allow their personal feelings to influence them in the matter.³³

From the experience of the Vancouver free speech fight and the scores of free speech fights waged across North America, it is unreasonable to assume that these labour statesmen had the power attributed to them by the Wage-Earner. It is more likely that the police were acting on their own initiative rather than on orders from the city council, probably as part of the campaign against American migrants. But the rank and file of the Socialist Party and the IWW were able to mount a rapid counter-attack; both groups quickly organized defence committees and staged large open-air meetings. In this respect they were far superior to the trades unionists. In the face of this spontaneous reaction, the police, without the explicit backing of the council and the courts, were reluctant to proceed.³⁴

The role of the SPC in the free speech fight is more confused and contradictory. Despite the party's propaganda against trades unionism, leaders were quick to join with their trades council counterparts and were willing to seek the same compromises as the VTLC. There is also a suggestion that the leadership of the SPC was more than willing to cut a deal with the city fathers in order to allow both sides to retreat gracefully. The Vancouver World reported on 28 May that a charge against Socialist Party member Leo English was withdrawn because "the Socialists have agreed to conduct their meetings in the future so that

³³Western Wage-Earner, July, 1909.

³⁴That the police were operating on their own initiative is further supported by a comparison of arrests for vagrancy in April and May 1909 and 1910. If the police had been acting on the orders of council, it is reasonable to assume that arrests for vagrancy would have escalated in 1909, as they did during the free speech fight of 1912. This would have been an effective tactic to break up the crowds, but would have required the city council's approval, as it would place a great strain on the jail and city resources. But in fact the number of arrests in 1909 is similar to that of 1908 and is markedly less than that of 1910.

the street will not be blocked." The Western Clarion denied this charge a week later, but the denial is interesting:

...the police Prosecutor stated he would withdraw the case as the Socialists had agreed to so conduct their meetings as not to block the traffic. As the Socialists had agreed to do nothing of the kind, though they do make a practice of conducting their meetings with a little decency, it may be presumed that this is a graceful way for the police to climb down.³⁵

It is hard to know just what to make of this argument. But the willingness of the SPC to join with trades union leadership in order to seek a compromise with city officials, even after the fight had been won in the streets, suggests that the leadership of the SPC was uneasy with the rough and tumble approach taken by the IWW.

The free speech fight of 1909 brought out a range of responses from the left-wing and labour organizations of the city. The migrant, disenfranchised members of the IWW had little recourse other than direct action, and they were prepared to face imprisonment. The skilled workers of the trades unions had less reason to vigorously oppose the harassment of police, and they preferred to avoid jail and fight back with entreaties and letters of protest. Socialists were torn between those such as Pettipiece, who sided with the labour organization, and others who were prepared to back up radical rhetoric with militancy in the streets.

The events of the 1912 free speech fight show the different reactions of the three organizations even more dramatically. The context of this next and better-known round of the struggle was markedly different.

The winter of 1911-12 signalled the beginning of the end of the pre-war boom. Unemployment reached critical levels as laid-off workers from railway construction and logging camps made their way to Vancouver. Meanwhile the Salvation Army, government officials, and civic "boosters" encouraged migrant workers to head to the province to ensure a cheap labour supply for the planned spring railway construction. One contractor observed that, "in

³⁵World, 28 May, 1909; Western Clarion, 5 June, 1909.

all my experience in railway construction, I never saw the supply of labor so ample as it is this winter. For several weeks I have been turning down over 100 applicants daily."³⁶ The city was responsible for the existing primitive forms of welfare, but it did little to alleviate the situation. The civic labour bureau was swamped with more than five hundred applicants, but could find only temporary, part-time work for fewer than a hundred. The IWW held street meetings to organize the unemployed, and several protest meetings were held. The response of the city was to crack down on vagrants and transients. Twenty-three men were "vagged" on a single day, and the chief of police complained that "the city is at present over-run with undesirables."³⁷ But the street protests increased, and alarmed citizens elected James Findlay, a law-and-order candidate and former head of the Vancouver Conservative machine, to the mayor's office.

Findlay was regarded as a pro-business candidate, and he did not disappoint his backers. He called for an "iron hand" to deal with the protests on the streets, and city council passed a bylaw forbidding all outdoor meetings. On 20 January, the IWW held a meeting at the corner of Cordova and Carrall. At this meeting, four men were arrested; three were charged with vagrancy and one with assaulting a police officer. The following day, six were arrested during a meeting on Powell and Carrall.³⁸

The arrests galvanized the unionists and leftists of Vancouver. The IWW and the SPC called another meeting for the following Sunday. The VTLC decided to support the move to prove that "freedom of speech in the British Empire is guaranteed by higher authority than any city administration."³⁹ On 28 January, a crowd of several thousand gathered to hear R.P.

³⁶World, 20 February, 1912; B.C. Federationist, 20 January, 1912; McCormack, p. 106; Western Clarion, 27 January, 1912.

³⁷World, 10 January, 22 January, 1912.

³⁸World, 22 January, 1912.

³⁹Cited in Foner, The IWW, p. 206. This refutes McCormack's curious assertion that the battles for free speech had a "peculiarly American construction," McCormack, p.106.

Pettipiece report on his meeting with the provincial government on the issue of unemployment. Both the Western Clarion and the B.C. Federationist noted that the meeting was called largely to test the city bylaw. The deputy chief of police declared the meeting illegal, and arrested Pettipiece. When protests were made, the deputy chief signalled to a waiting line of mounted and foot patrolmen who waded into the crowd, swinging clubs and horsewhips. The Province reporter noted that "those not fortunate enough to get out of the way went down like ten-pins before the irresistible onslaught of the officers....The Powell Street Grounds looked something like a battlefield...."⁴⁰ Nearly thirty people were arrested, and bail was set at five hundred dollars apiece. While James McVety and J.W. Wilkinson, president of the VTLC, bailed out Pettipiece, the outrageous bond kept many others in jail—fourteen were still imprisoned three days later.⁴¹ Authorities moved to seal the border to keep Wobblies from flooding the city, and even the B.C. Electric Railway was carefully watched to prevent the feared onslaught.⁴²

Subsequent meetings were broken up by the police. Arrests for vagrancy increased markedly as authorities used the vague wording of the criminal code to harass the workers. In one attempt to evade police, Wobblies and SPC members rented boats off of Stanley Park and spoke to the crowds through a huge megaphone. But the strong currents and police worked together to break up the armada: the megaphone was scuttled and the protestors were arrested when they finally docked.⁴³

On 12 February, a delegation met with Mayor Findlay and the police commission to discuss the problem. Headed by James Hawthornwaite, the delegation received assurances from the mayor that free speech would be allowed in public squares when the present unrest

⁴⁰Province, 29 January, 1912.

⁴¹World, 29 January, 1912; Daily News-Advertiser, 29 January 1912; World, 1 February, 1912.

⁴²Province, 2 February, 1912.

⁴³IW, 22 February, 1912; Province, 12 February, 1912.

ended.⁴⁴ Soon after, Wilkinson and McVety met in Victoria with Premier McBride and his cabinet to bring about an end to the free speech fight.⁴⁵ The closed meeting apparently reached a satisfactory conclusion, for the next open air meeting, on 18 February, was unmolested by police. On 21 February, Findlay met with IWW, SPC, and VTLC delegates to announce the end of the police campaign against public speaking.⁴⁶

As with the 1909 episode, the free speech fight of 1912 can be interpreted as a victory for the left/labour movement, as an example of the need for and desire of the organizations to forget sectarian politics to face a common enemy. Indeed, at the 1 February meeting of the VTLC, Pettipiece himself told delegates that "it was up to them to associate themselves with the IWW, as a large number of the members of this organization were coming to the city for the purpose of compelling the authorities to show their hand."⁴⁷ Later in the meeting, a committee was named to "co-operate with [the] committee from [the] Socialist Party and the IWW in [the] fight for free speech and work for the unemployed."⁴⁸

But the willingness of the VTLC/SPC alliance to separate itself from the IWW was evident from the start. The two organizations had done little to organize the first protests among the unemployed, preferring to petition the local and provincial governments. These governments were quite prepared to ignore the requests of the respectable groups, as Pettipiece himself acknowledged during his speech of 28 January, but neither the trades union movement nor the leaders of the SPC were prepared to organized the unorganized in the manner of the IWW.⁴⁹

⁴⁴World, 12 February, 1912; Province, 12 February, 1912; Scott, p.47.

⁴⁵World, 16 February, 1912.

⁴⁶World, 23 February, 1912.

⁴⁷World, 2 February, 1912.

⁴⁸B.C. Federationist, 5 February, 1912.

⁴⁹Phillips, No Power Greater, p. 55

Only four days after Pettipiece's call for unity, the B.C. Federationist, cautiously sought to deny the importance of street meetings:

The edict goes forth that no more street meetings are to be held. As this has evidently applied to all organizations which have been in the habit of using the streets for such purposes, there is no reasonable ground for complaint. Street meetings, of whatever character, have always been a nuisance, and it is more than doubtful that enough good ever accrued to any cause through such meetings....If the edict clearing the streets is made permanent and enforced against all alike, there should be no complaint from anyone.

Further in the editorial, the paper began to separate the respectable, resident labour leaders from the IWW members who had begun the fight:

The speakers who were to address the gathering [of 28 January] mostly belonged to Vancouver, some of them being officials of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, and among the most widely known men in the labor movement in Canada. In spite of all this, however, it was ordained by the government that this gathering must not be allowed....⁵⁰

The editorial makes clear the trades union contention that the issue was equal treatment before the law, not the right to organize. By emphasizing that the speakers of 28 January were local union officials rather than foreign agitators, the article hints that a campaign against the IWW should not be strongly protested, but that the harassment of respectable leaders would not go unnoticed. This stands in stark contrast to the Industrial Worker's editorial of 1 February, which heralds the apparent solidarity among the union and socialist movement:

The Trades and Labor Assembly [sic] has gone on record as being in favor of free speech and assemblage and as being willing to back up that right. The SP of C are also backing the men, and this co-operation of forces regardless of differences, means that Vancouver will be in receipt of the dose that made other cities sit up and take notice.⁵¹

The IWW called for men and money to come to Vancouver to join the battle. It hinted at rumours of a general strike, and opined that "that such a strike would be

⁵⁰B.C. Federationist, 5 February, 1912.

⁵¹IW, 1 February, 1912.

accompanied with the workers' weapon—SABOTAGE—there is but little doubt."⁵² J.S. Biscay, an organizer for the union who would play a large role in the Canadian Northern strike later in the year, declared at meetings and in the press that "if they want to down free speech in Vancouver they will have to bury us with it." Another Wobbly declared that "we will have free speech in Vancouver or else make the grass grow in the streets." The IWW's response to the repression was direct action and confrontation through intensifying the pressure on the civic authorities, typified by its threat to have members "keep travelling to Vancouver until the city gets enough and is willing to say so."⁵³

The response of the SPC was varied, as it had been in 1909. Some members, such as William Watts, made it clear that "when the real fighting takes place, there you will find us striking out, shoulder to shoulder for a common cause." Another writer drew parallels with the Russian nihilists and proclaimed that "every Cossack's whip that makes a mark on any part of my anatomy will be avenged by me if life is left in my body to avenge it."⁵⁴

But another writer decried violence, and in an editorial entitled "Get the Power," remarked, "What can you do? Just one thing: Be the State."⁵⁵ On 11 February, Hawthornthwaite moved to take the battle off the streets by announcing that the SPC and VTLC would send a deputation to the mayor. In doing so, he argued, the SPC

was following along the lines of reasonable political action. They would ask for the right which was being denied them of meeting, not on the crowded thoroughfares of the city, but in some square or park. If those rights were refused, they would consider what other steps to take. As far as the Socialist Party of Canada was concerned, it would do its level best to win that right.⁵⁶

⁵²IW, 8 February, 1912.

⁵³IW, 15 February, 1912.

⁵⁴Western Clarion, 10 February, 1912.

⁵⁵Western Clarion, 3 February, 1912.

⁵⁶Western Clarion, 17 February, 1912; World, 12 February, 1912.

At the same meeting, Wilfred Gribble, a writer and organizer for the SPC, advised the audience "to become interested in the question of organization...and to send members of their own class to parliament."⁵⁷

Thus the leaders of the SPC and the VTLC agreed that direct action was not appropriate. They further agreed to forego the right to speak on the streets, unlike the IWW, in favour of the right to speak only on designated sites. The Trades and Labor Council resolution passed at its 1 February meeting was strong in its condemnation of the police riots, but weak in its call for action: the meeting resolved that council delegates were to bring the matter before their unions and ask that the unions help by purchasing post cards of the police charge. It further resolved that the council ask the provincial government to select a commission to investigate the administration of the city police.⁵⁸

By channelling the protests away from the streets and into government chambers, the trades unions leaders and SPC sought to restore peace quickly and deprive the IWW of its leadership role. It is clear from the historical record that solidarity was extended to the IWW only when it controlled the street action and had to be included. When the time came to hammer out a peace accord, the leadership of the two groups used the threats of anarchism and an IWW "invasion" as a club. To make the strategy work, the SPC and VTLC had first to replace the IWW as the leader in the free speech campaign. It could best do this by shifting the battleground. When they had taken control of the fight, the two groups could then jettison the IWW and make a deal.

Labour leaders and socialist politicians moved to change the venue of the free speech battle. On the week-end of 10-11 February, both Pettipiece and Hawthornthwaite cancelled scheduled appearances at the street meetings. They preferred instead to work on plans for

⁵⁷World, 12 February, 1912; Western Clarion, 17 February, 1912.

⁵⁸B.C. Federationist, 5 February, 1912.

the meeting with the mayor. When questioned about his absence, Pettipiece replied, "it isn't good warfare to put the generals in the front of the battle."⁵⁹ Apart from raising speculation over Pettipiece's self-appointment to the general staff of the working class, the remark also brings to mind the observation of Charles Yale Harrison: generals die in bed.

On the morning of 12 February, the long-anticipated meeting with the mayor and police commissioners took place. The representatives of the VTLC and SPC were Hawthornthwaite, Wilkinson, J. McMillan, a vice-president of the VTLC, James McVety, and Victor Midgeley. No rank and file members were included, and the IWW was explicitly excluded from the meeting. Two Wobblies representing the union went to the city hall at the time of the meeting and demanded to be included in the conference. Stopped by city council aides, the men sent a note to the delegation. Wilkinson came out and attempted to pacify the men by telling them that "I told them [the police commissioners] that the trades and labor people wanted to interview them, and so they do not want to have you in just now." He promised to try to have the commissioners meet with them later, and returned to the meeting. But it quickly became apparent that the VTLC and SPC leaders in fact wanted to cut out the IWW from the rest of the movement. When the commissioners were questioned by the press on the steps of the city hall after the meeting, the mayor outlined the arguments presented by the delegation. He reiterated the city's determination to "rid the city of the 'lawless element,'" and bluntly stated that "the unions had nothing in common with the men who were waging the fight for free speech." The VTLC and SPC decision to eliminate the IWW was made even clearer by one of the commissioners. Asked if they would meet with the IWW, the commissioner replied that

The Trades and Labor delegation repudiated the two Industrial Workers so that was why they were not permitted to join the conference. When the Workers tried to get in the labor men said they were not on the delegation, and had no rightful part in the morning's session. Therefore we told them that we could not

⁵⁹Province, 12 February, 1912.

see them.⁶⁰

A story in the Vancouver Sun the following day suggests that the commissioner's account was correct, and that the exclusion of the IWW was at least as much the idea of the delegation as of the civic authorities. The report noted that in contrast to the rough stance of the IWW, the delegates had "pointed out that if tact and sagacity were used there would be no disturbance of the peace on the part of the labor or socialist party."⁶¹ Finally, a curious statement made by Victor Midgeley hints at the plan to separate the Trades and Labor Council and the Socialist Party from the IWW. Denying that the delegation had repudiated the Wobblies, Midgeley asserted that "the real reason the IWW was not admitted was because they [sic] did not figure on the committee."⁶² This Jesuitical logic is further proof that the delegation wanted to discredit the IWW and make a separate peace.

The delegates were prepared to be eminently reasonable and to seek a compromise. Wilkinson stated later that the meeting had been called "in order that the labor men might present a formal application for free speech rights on public squares." The Province noted that Wilkinson "carefully pointed out 'public squares,' not 'public streets.'"⁶³ Despite the unassuming request of the delegation, the authorities were not prepared to compromise. The commission expressed a desire to allow free speech on the Powell street grounds "just as soon as conditions in this city became normal again," but would not give assurances that the meetings planned for 18 February would be unmolested. This could not be accepted even by the less militant representatives, and they prepared to go to Victoria.⁶⁴ They planned to use

⁶⁰Province, 12 February 1912; World, 12 February, 1912; Sun, 13 February, 1912.

⁶¹Sun, 13 February, 1912.

⁶²World, 16 February, 1912.

⁶³Province, 12 February, 1912;

⁶⁴Province, 12 February, 1912. Jack Scott has suggested that in fact the VTLC/SPC delegation had asked only for free speech at some future date. Indeed, one of the police commissioners told reporters that this was the case. Scott then suggests that the moderates subsequently

the threat of a rabid IWW as the main bargaining chip to effect a compromise. In a statement to the press, the delegates indicated that

If the dictates of the labor body are carried out the momentous question will be fought to the last ditch by all the legal machinery available, and not by the more drastic measures urged by other organizations outside the labor party.... [Pettipiece] contended that the truth of the matter was Canada had been made the dumping ground of the world....⁶⁵

On 17 February, Wilkinson and McVety met with McBride and his cabinet. They argued that the repression had only strengthened the IWW, that,

granting that the IWW men were all that their most persistent maligners made them out to be, the proclamation prohibiting open-air meetings was most ill-advised and inexpedient since it had simply been recognized by troublemakers the continent over as an invitation to come to Vancouver. The man in the street, they averred, had scarcely heard of the IWW until Mayor Findlay entered into a conflict with the people who wanted to hold open-air meetings.⁶⁶

Thus the delegation, the mayor, and premier were agreed that the IWW must go; the difference was really only over tactics. The subtleties of the social democrats and senior government were more effective than the ham-handed reaction of the municipal Tories, if they were less satisfactory viscerally.

On 18 February, another mass meeting was held in the streets. This time, however, it was peaceful. A police commissioner explained that the "objection heretofore at Powell street

⁶⁴(cont'd) realized that this could not be sold to the membership, and then decided to deny that they had asked for so little. While this would strengthen my argument, it seems unlikely. The denial of the VTLC/SPC came immediately after the commissioner's statement; if the delegates knew then that their members would not accept such a vague promise, undoubtedly they knew that before the meeting. And if the delegation had asked for free speech in the future, why didn't it accept when it was offered by the mayor? Furthermore, the delegates had begun to arrange a meeting with Premier McBride before the meeting with the commissioners, precisely in the event that a suitable compromise could not be reached. Scott is too quick to paint the VTLC/SPC leaders as traitors. They did seek a peace treaty, but not at any cost. They knew beforehand that immediate restoration of limited free speech was the minimal acceptable demand, and they offered that. When it was rejected by Findlay and the police commission, they were prepared to go over his head, and they did so.

⁶⁵World, 16 February, 1912.

⁶⁶World, 17 February, 1912.

had been the use of seditious and obscene language. This was absent yesterday and accordingly the police did not interfere."⁶⁷ This was obviously untrue, and was nothing more than a transparent attempt to save face. The newspapers revealed a more convincing explanation. The premier, about to introduce controversial bills in the legislature, had his own reason for forcing a settlement. The bills called for the creation of the Pacific Great Eastern railway, and the loans for construction, guaranteed by the province, would have to be raised on foreign markets. The latest provincial budget called for a deficit of six million dollars, while the city of Vancouver was preparing to issue three million dollars worth of stocks: all of this money would have to be supplied by international lenders. British papers were already carrying reports of four thousand rioters in the streets of British Columbia and men killed in the tumult, and this publicity hardly presented a picture of stability and peace for investors. Furthermore, a provincial election had just been called, and though the Conservative government had no fear of losing the election, riots and police brutality would not help the Tories.⁶⁸

If Premier McBride wanted a quick, peaceful end to the free speech fights, so too did the socialists and trades unionists. Both groups had high hopes for the election, and their tactics during the free speech campaign were geared to aid the political struggle. The socialists and their trades union allies needed to whip up emotions to strengthen their support, but needed to channel those emotions away from the streets and towards the ballot box. Throughout the free speech battle, the VTLC and SPC plumped for political action and organization. At the meeting of 18 February, socialist speakers urged the crowd to "go to the ballot, that is the remedy. Get on the voters' list." The attempt to take over the free speech fight appeared to work. The Vancouver Sun noted that the 18 February meeting "served to demonstrate that the battle for the privilege of street speaking is not led solely

⁶⁷Province, 19 February.

⁶⁸World, 19 February; Sun, 20 February; World, 23 February, 24 February 1912.

by the Industrial Workers of the World."⁶⁹ The following day, the Sun outlined the reasons Hawthornthwaite had for seeking a political resolution to the struggle:

...the alliance formed between Mr. Hawthornthwaite and Premier McBride some years ago, when the government of which Mr. McBride is the head was compelled to depend upon Socialistic support for its existence, has never been entirely dissolved....An election is to take place very soon and Mr. McBride and Mr. Hawthornthwaite both wish to capture all the votes they can. Mr. Hawthornthwaite will of course, be a candidate for Nanaimo and his election will depend upon the Socialists of that constituency....Mr. Hawthornthwaite will receive from the Socialists of Nanaimo credit for his attack upon the Vancouver police and he will have it spread...that it was owing to his intervention that free-speech of the soap-box variety is allowed here.⁷⁰

Committed to electoral politics, the SPC and VTLC sought a compromise, and needed one, as proof of the effectiveness of their strategy. In order to shift the fight to the provincial election, and afterwards perhaps to treat with the Conservatives, the two groups had to disown the IWW and discredit its strategy of direct action. The B.C. Federationist sets out the socialist line clearly:

Provincial general elections set for early date in April. What can we do about it? There is only one thing we can do just now. Educate and organize the working class to the end that they may seize the powers of the State and get behind the guns instead of in front of them. To meet the violence of the police with violence would be the most foolish and suicidal policy possible.⁷¹

No doubt meeting violence with violence would have been suicidal. But no one, save a lone writer in the Western Clarion, had advocated violence. Equating the direct action tactic of flooding the jails with the use of violence was simply another way of repudiating the IWW. The VTLC/SPC argument was clear—direct action and violence were interchangeable; violence was a doomed tactic, therefore direct action was doomed.

On 21 February, after his own trip to Victoria, Mayor Findlay met with the free speech delegation. This time, IWW leaders were included and presented with a fait accompli.

⁶⁹Sun, 19 February, 1912.

⁷⁰Sun, 20 February, 1912.

⁷¹B.C. Federationist, 20 February, 1912.

The terms of the peace treaty were outlined. No meetings were to be held on public streets, but public squares were free for open-air meetings. The mayor would move to quash the indictments against the arrested men, and the prisoners would be released. In return, the defendants were to promise not to take legal proceedings against the city.⁷² But the city authorities reneged even on this watered-down resolution. While free speech was allowed, the charges were not dropped and the prisoners were not released. Only the IWW protested the betrayal, vowing to continue the fight until the promises had been met.⁷³ While there is some evidence that they did protest, the local became involved in conflicts it acknowledged to be more important—the Lawrence strike and the San Diego free speech fight.

A later incident gives some insight into the differences between the IWW and the SPC and VTLC, and suggests the lengths to which the socialist and labour leaders would go to separate themselves from the revolutionaries. On 1 March, five of the men arrested on 28 January, who decided to take a quick trial by judge rather than wait until May for a trial by jury, were sentenced. Another, John Taylor, had his case dismissed. Taylor and William Love denied that they belonged to the IWW; the other four admitted that they were Wobblies. Love was sentenced to three months from the date of his arrest, while the IWW members were given three months from the date of sentencing. Part of the evidence used against the men was a telegram sent on 12–13 February by Vincent St. John, the IWW general-secretary, to Mayor Findlay. The telegram, widely regarded as an inflammatory intervention by a foreigner, stated,

The entire organization supports Vancouver Workers in their efforts to maintain free speech. The rights of the members of this organization will be enforced in spite of all the corporation lice holding political jobs in the Dominion of Canada. Free speech will be established and maintained in Vancouver, if it takes twenty years. Hold you personally responsible for any injury inflicted upon members of this organization by Cossacks under your control.⁷⁴

⁷²World, 23 February, 1912.

⁷³IW, 7 March, 1912.

⁷⁴IW, 22 February, 1912.

Both McVety and Pettipiece were called to testify at the trial. Presumably called by the defence, their testimony was carefully weighted to remove the "respectable" leaders from the "rough" members of the IWW. McVety stated that

I believe in free speech, but I do not believe that force will avail against the constituted authorities. I believe that free speech is now established in this province. It is still further my belief that Vincent St. John's telegram sent to the mayor from Chicago will have a bad effect upon the membership of the IWW in Canada.

This statement implies that the IWW had in fact advocated violence, and it could not have helped the men on trial. Pettipiece was even more forceful, claiming, in spite of his early appeal for solidarity, that "the organization known as the IWW is a product of existing social conditions. I do not approve of them, and I am most certainly opposed to the St. John telegram." Asked if he approved of the IWW's existence, he replied, "No; but they are like the trusts and other big aggregations. I don't approve of those, but I have to take them."⁷⁵

An examination of the arrested men shows that it was in fact the IWW and the rank and file of the SPC who mounted the campaign for free speech and were the main targets of repression. The names of forty-two men arrested for violations of the street bylaw, unlawful assembly, obstruction of police officers, or vagrancy in connection with the fight for free speech can be gleaned from the newspapers of the day. Of this number, eleven cannot be identified with any political organization. It is likely, however, that most of them belonged to or were sympathetic to the IWW. Newspaper accounts state that the men arrested on 28 January were Wobblies or SPC members, and the Western Clarion identified only eight of the men as Socialist Party members. This strongly suggests that the other men, including many of those who cannot be placed in a particular political group, were in fact connected to the IWW.

⁷⁵World, 2 March, 1912; Province, 2 March, 1912.

Seventeen of the men can be positively identified as IWW members. Two others denied that they were Wobblies at their trials. Nine are identified as SPC members, while two others are named as "Socialists." Only two trade union officials were among the arrested men: Parm Pettipiece and George Nicholl, identified as a delegate to the Laborers' Union and an officer of the Civic Employees' Union. It is possible that this is the same George Nicholl arrested in 1909, as the IWW had worked to organize both labourers and civic workers; furthermore, Nicholls called William Coombs, an IWW cook, to give testimony at his trial.⁷⁶

This cataloguing of the arrested men suggests that while VTLC and SPC leaders were prepared to give fiery speeches and serve on delegations, they were not prepared to face arrest and jail. Pettipiece himself gives strength to this argument through his actions at the earlier trial of the IWW men, and his statement at his own trial on 19 May 1912. Despite the fact that the Western Clarion and the B.C. Federationist, which he edited, had claimed that the 28 January meeting had been called primarily to test the free-speech ban, Pettipiece announced that when he attended the meeting, "I did not know anything about it being a free speech fight."⁷⁷

The leaders of the labour movement and the SPC chose to occupy a very different position in the struggle than the militants of the SPC and the IWW. Opposed to direct action, they placed their faith in the upcoming election, for the return of a healthy socialist slate by workers who had heeded their admonition that "the weapon wherein lies your salvation is your pen...use this peaceful weapon at the ballot box."⁷⁸ The Conservatives, to no one's surprise, swept into power on 28 March; the Liberals were eliminated from the

⁷⁶World, 9 February, 10 February, 1912. McCormack, p.112 also suggests that the rank and file of the SPC and the IWW may have cooperated more fully than their party leaders may have liked.

⁷⁷Province, 29 May, 1912.

⁷⁸Western Clarion, 23 March, 1912.

provincial parliament, but the socialists returned only two deputies. Most of the eighteen SPC candidates did not poll enough voters to reclaim their deposits.⁷⁹ In deciding to abandon a common front in favour of parliamentary politics, the trades unions and the SPC ensured that the IWW would be weakened and that rank and file militancy would be hampered. In return, the labour and socialist leaders proved unable to achieve anything on their chosen battleground. Chances for a real solidarity and organization of the unemployed were squandered on the chimera of social democracy.

⁷⁹Robin, Rush for Spoils, p.123.

CHAPTER IV
CLASS AND IDEOLOGY IN VANCOUVER

If the free speech fights are the most dramatic examples of splits in the socialist and labour movements, they are not the only ones. During the CN/GTP strikes, C.O. Young, the AFL's international organizer, deplored the labour council's support to the strikers, claiming the Wobblies were nothing more than a "band of lawless brigands."¹ The Socialist Party, while commending the British Columbian local of the IWW for its conduct of the strike, nonetheless went on to argue that the union was "so anarchistic, and therefore reactionary, as to clearly stamp it as an enemy of the peaceful and orderly process of the labor movement towards the overthrow of capital and the ending of wage servitude." Another article pointed out that while the strike had cost the IWW thirty thousand dollars, the "strikers had nothing but sore heads to show for it." The writer suggested that the money would have been better spent on the nomination fees of fifty socialist candidates and used to "smother British Columbia with Socialist literature, and the results would be 10 or 15 working class representatives in Victoria."² Coming in the middle of the strike, such editorials hardly suggest a high degree of solidarity.

The Socialist Party and the trades union movement frequently launched paper wars against the IWW. Less than two weeks after the founding convention of the IWW, the Western Clarion assailed the new organization as a "living picture of a mental vacuity on the part of its parents...." A week later, the paper denounced the Wobblies as "ignorant asses" and "gabblers," and suggested the the "Chicago affair will go down in history as the

¹For Young's work in Vancouver, see Western Wage-Earner, September 1909; B.C. Federationist, 14 November 1913; IW 23 September 1909, 11 June 1910, 19 June 1913; Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1979, pp.138-139. The quote is in Foner, The IWW, p.231.

²Western Clarion, 6 July, 8 June 1912.

most ridiculous and impotent fiasco that ever happened in the name of labour."³ Attacks on the union, ranging from bitter personal attacks to more reasoned attacks on its aims and tactics, appeared regularly in the paper. A few months after the 1912 free speech fight in Vancouver, the Clarion re-printed an article from the Los Angeles Citizen, that forcefully attacked the IWW, claiming that "the time is 'ripe and rotten ripe' for a complete showing up of the traitors who are exploiting the struggles of the workers and undermining the institutions erected at infinite sacrifice for their protection and advancement." In a later issue, the Clarion argued against direct action, claiming that only political action could free the working class. Decrying the IWW as an anarchist organization, the writer concluded that "if the IWW is not financed by the capitalist class, it ought to be!"⁴

The organs of the trades union movement engaged less often in such polemics, preferring to ignore the IWW whenever possible. When writers were moved to consider the union, they generally did so in negative tones. An article in the Western Wage-Earner, for example, attacked the IWW as disruptive and anarchistic:

In nearly every instance where the unorganized revolt against existing conditions and secure even a semblance of victory, a number of organizations appear on the scene in time to claim a victory for the Industrial Workers of the World, allegedly an Industrial union, but in reality nothing but a number of sharp fakirs who are able to temporarily enthuse the half-starved incredulous workers, thereby securing per-capita tax for a brief period....Unlike the craft and industrial unions, this aggregation, better known as the Infant Wonder Workers, has no real mission, except the disruption of existing organizations, both industrial and political....

Rejecting direct action, the editorial argued that only through political action could labour free itself. The writer charged that direct action would

appeal only to those who through lack of intelligence, imagine that the powers given the capitalist class by the ballot can be summarily transferred to the working class by way of the general strike or by allowing their heads to be

³Western Clarion, 15 July, 22 July 1905.

⁴Western Clarion, 6 July, 31 August 1912.

battered by the armed minions of the law....⁵

In 1913, the B.C. Federationist suggested that the IWW's logging unions were little more than a remnant, and insinuated that all the monies raised by the IWW went to pay organizers. The Industrial Worker icily pointed out that the IWW had at least six times more loggers signed up than the AFL had, despite the fact the AFL had been making half-hearted attempts to organize the timber beasts for thirty years. The paper noted too that "the lowest wage paid to an AF of L organizer is as large and generally much larger than the highest wage paid to the IWW organizers."⁶

Unlike many AFL locals, B.C. unions were not opposed to industrial unionism. Indeed, the premier issue of the Western Wage-Earner called for increased solidarity and the federation of craft unions. At the 1911 AFL convention, the VTLC sponsored a resolution that called for the body to "go on record as favoring industrial unionism and proceed to organize all employes [sic] working for one company into one central body...." The motion was defeated, but western delegates to the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress of 1911 managed to pass a resolution calling for industrial unionism. In August 1912, the VTLC voted to endorse industrial unions, and Parm Pettipiece announced that "workers must get wise to the fact that what was needed is bigger unions and less unions." Members of the regular trades unions joined with the IWW in attacking Samuel Gompers during his visit to the city: in a much-quoted passage of his memoirs, the AFL president noted that they had "denounced me in the vilest language I have ever heard."⁷

⁵Western Wage-Earner, February 1910.

⁶Industrial Worker, 29 May 1913.

⁷Western Wage-Earner, February 1909; B.C. Federationist, 23 December 1911; Phillips, No Power Greater, pp.46-51; McCormack, p. 114; IW, 29 August 1912; Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor. 1925. Reprint. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967, pp.425-426.

But if the labour body was moving to the left, it objected strongly to the radicalism and tactics of the IWW. Leaders of the VTLC and the B.C. Federation of Labor wanted instead to move their members towards parliamentary socialism. The Western Wage-Earner noted in 1909 that "workers who disregard and belittle the value of the franchise are neglecting the only thing of value [my emphasis] the workers possess." Later in the year, the VTLC passed unanimously a resolution to confer with the SPC "with regard to taking common action at the forthcoming elections." The work to bring together the two organizations culminated in February 1912 when the B.C. Federation of Labor voted to endorse the Socialist Party as the political party of the working class. In February 1912, a symbolic gesture illustrated the alliance clearly—the offices of the SPC were transferred to the new Labor Temple. The move reflected the fact that at least sixty percent of the SPC membership belonged to trade unions.⁸ The de facto alliance between the two organizations, despite the SPC's impossibilist rhetoric and theoretical critique of trades unionism, meant that the labour movement would eventually be pulled away from considerations of direct action and syndicalism in favour of social democracy.

Why did labour and socialist leaders reject syndicalism and the IWW? More specifically, why did ideological differences keep the organizations apart, even in the face of state repression? Here ideological differences should not have been that important in the face of a common enemy. But the different ideologies sprang from different class locations, and this helps explain the lack of solidarity among the left-wing groups in B.C.

The concept of specific class locations among the working class is not much favoured by modern labour historians. Often the differences are glossed over in favour of a historical solidarity rooted in culture. In many cases, this is appropriate and accurate, and is a needed

⁸Western Wage-Earner, March 1909, August 1909; Western Clarion, 17 February 1912. For the SPC membership figures, see McCormack, p.56. who suggests the number may have been as high as ninety percent. Palmer, in Working-Class Experience, suggest the numbers were between forty and sixty percent, but see the Western Wage-Earner, July 1909, which considers sixty percent a conservative estimate.

corrective to approaches that stress individualism in history. But divisions were clearly felt in B.C. in the years before World War One, and they strongly influenced tactics and strategies.

The most obvious intra-class division is that between migrant and settled workers. Frederick Niven, in his autobiographical novel of hoboeing adventures in B.C., observed that the miners in the Boundary country "do not merely hope they may never come to beggary; they go further. They do not merely despise the man who is adverse to toil; they hate him."⁹ The Western Wage-Earner, newspaper for the skilled trade unionist, often printed articles denouncing the hobo. In July 1909, it printed an article which asked, "What shall we do with the tramp?" The answer was plain: "Let him continue to hit the grit. It is more healthful for him to tramp all over the country than to loaf in one town, and better for the town."¹⁰ Another issue noted that New Westminster bartenders were being licensed and charged two dollars for the privilege, but that

not a few of the men affected believe that if a license is to be imposed it should be a large one, say \$25. With a higher license, they say, it would have a tendency to keep out travelling "tramps," as they designate transients in the trade and improve the class of men in the business. It would also, they claim protect local men who live in the city and have their homes and property here.¹¹

The trade union paper also printed anecdotes that took swipes at transient workers. In one, the "Tramp" goes up to a house and speaks with the lady: "'Good morning, mum! Nice dog you have, mum! What d'ye call him?' Lady of the House—'There's no need to mention his name. He'll go to you without calling as soon as I loose his chain.'"¹²

In another, "Plodding Pete" asked, "'Is it true dat yous is offering work to anybody that comes along?' 'Yep,' replied farmer Corntassel, 'jes' take off your coat an'—' 'Not me,

⁹Frederick Niven, Wild Honey. Binghampton: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927. p. 225.

¹⁰Western Wage-Earner, July 1909.

¹¹Western Wage-Earner, February, 1910.

¹²Western Wage-Earner, April 1910

I'm jes' a scout sent ahead by de other fellers to verify a terrible rumour."¹³

Thus a great deal of antipathy often separated the migrant workers of the IWW from the "home guard" of the established trades unionists. This made solidarity difficult at best.

Other class differences are less obvious, but are more important. In order to document these intra-class differences, 278 names of members of the IWW, the SPC, and the trades union movement were combed from the radical and Vancouver daily press from 1909 to 1914. These names were then researched in city directories for this six year period. This is not what quantifiers would call a random sampling, and one need not be a skilled cliometrician to point out potential problems with the methodology. But the purpose is not to create a hypothetical "average" member of the organizations. Rather, the investigation is a preliminary attempt to determine if a segment of the membership of the Socialist Party and the trades union movement occupied a markedly different class location than members of the IWW.

Of the 278 names found, 134 (48 percent) were those of trades unionists, eighty-seven (31 percent) of the IWW members, and fifty-seven (21 percent) of activists in the Socialist Party. Only one was that of a woman, Minnie Scimmell, of the Cooks and Waiters Union. Members of the trades union movement were by far the easiest to find. Each issue of the Western Wage-Earner and the B.C. Federationist from 1909 onwards listed the delegates who had attended the month's meetings of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. In addition, the Vancouver World published a list of union business agents in 1912, and these names were added to the list. This is not a list of trade union members in Vancouver. It is instead a list of men who were active in the union movement, most commonly those who were elected to represent their unions at the trades and labour council. Along with the business agents, they were the officers of the labour movement, the leaders and spokesmen who came together to shape collective policy.

¹³Western Wage-Earner, October 1910.

Members of the IWW were somewhat more difficult to find. But the Industrial Worker, which started publication in Spokane in 1909, was aimed at informing Wobblies the continent over of strikes, free speech fights, general conditions, and jobs. To fulfill this function, it actively solicited reports and letters from members and delegates. Thus the names of many Vancouver members are in its pages.

Finding the members of the SPC proved to be the most difficult. The pages of the Western Clarion were, in the main, devoted to large philosophical questions, but there are reports of the work and members of the Vancouver local which can be supplemented by those in the daily press (for example, the free speech fights). In addition, the Clarion published a remarkable list of campaign contributors in 1912, and names from the list were selectively included in this survey. In an attempt to avoid skewing the statistics by counting nickel and dime supporters of the campaign, only those people who donated two dollars or more in 1912 were used.

The first hint of different compositions of the organizations is the ethnicity of their members inferred from surnames. Admittedly this is difficult to establish. Immigrants often changed their names, or had them changed by customs officials; often the most obvious "ethnic" name hides decades of residency in another country. Nonetheless, a comparison between the IWW, the SPC, and the trades unions is possible.

Less than 70 percent of the IWW members had British surnames. In contrast, over 80 percent of the SPC names were British, while nearly 90 percent of trades unionists' were. This suggests that the IWW in fact represented recent immigrants and non-British workers in a way the Socialist Party and the AFL unions in the province would not. The numbers also suggest that the leadership of the trades union movement was British.

The mobility of the membership of the three organizations is difficult to ascertain. It is particularly hard to identify members of the IWW and the SPC in the directories, for often

several identical names appear in a given year. Without more information, it is impossible to determine which, if any, of the William Taylors is the correct one. Nearly 32 percent of the SPC members, and 27 percent of the Wobblies, therefore, cannot be identified. Only 7 percent of the union members cannot be identified, largely because their trade union affiliation is known and thus they can be positively identified by name and occupation. In calculating the percentages which follow, the total numbers, that is, those including names which could not be positively identified, have been used.

The members of the IWW were the most mobile. Fifty-three percent were never listed in the city directories of 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, or 1914. Among the SPC, 23 percent were never enumerated, but only 13.5 percent of the union delegates fail to show up in the directories. None of the Wobblies was listed for all six years. But nearly 11 percent of the Socialists were listed in the Vancouver directory every year, while 16 percent of the trades union members were so listed from 1909 to 1914. Nearly half (42.5 percent) of the unionists are listed in four or more of the six years. While the same exercise nets a significant 14 percent of the Socialists, only one of the IWW members (1.2 percent) was in the directories for four years or more.¹⁴ This strongly suggests that members of the IWW were much more likely to be migratory, while both the SPC and the trades union movement had a sizable contingent of more secure, stable workers.

The addresses of the men are also suggestive. Only one Wobbly is listed as the renter or owner of a house, and he lived there only a single year. The remainder of the IWW members lived in hotels, rooming houses, or as tenants in a house owned by another. Most lived in the downtown core, with addresses such as 15, 232 East Pender, or the Waldorf Rooms, at 116 West Hastings. A few lived in better parts of town for a time—Arthur Jenkins, for example, is listed at the Maple Leaf Boarding House at 1327 Granville for one year, but later lived with a carpenter at 200 18th avenue. Many of the SPC members are

¹⁴See Tables for the complete statistical breakdown.

also found in the downtown core, but men such as Pettipiece and McVety lived in outlying areas. Pettipiece owned his own home at 2349 St. Catherine's street, while McVety lived at 1876 West 11th Avenue. Delegates to the VTLC were even less likely to live in the downtown area, and were much more likely to live in single family dwellings. Over 16 percent of the VTLC delegates who lived in Vancouver for four or more years stayed in the same house the entire time. This indicates that a segment of the SPC and an even larger segment of the VTLC were geographically distinct from the IWW. These men were able to move to better parts of the city, away from the railways, and the docks and the skidroad. They were able to afford better housing, even able to purchase homes, instead of being forced to endure the flophouses, cheap hotels, and boarding houses of the city core. Even representatives of the Builders' Laborers' Union, which organized among much the same constituency as IWW did, were more likely to live outside the city centre. Of the four delegates from the union who can be identified in the directories, only one lived in the downtown area. The other three lived in their own homes in different parts of the city, two of them for the entire six year period.

The occupations of the members of the three organizations also show different trends. Not surprisingly, most members of the trades unions were skilled workers: machinists, carpenters, cigar makers, and printers figure largely in the rolls. Of the twenty-four SPC members whose occupations are known, eight were skilled workers and four are labourers. In fact, it is likely that more SPC members were skilled workers, but the Vancouver group seems heavily weighed towards members of the middle class. The few Wobblies whose occupations are listed are split evenly between skilled and unskilled workers, though one was a clerk and another a prospector. Census figures for 1911 show that labourers made only 70 percent of the annual income of carpenters and street railway employees, and about 61 percent of the income of electricians; transient labourers could expect to make even less.¹⁵

¹⁵Figures cited in McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver."

This disparity of income between skilled and unskilled hints at very real splits in the labour movement.

Nine of the union delegates and eight of the SPC members listed their occupation for at least one year as that of an official of either organization. Nearly 7 percent of trades unionists and 14 percent of Socialists held paid positions as functionaries whose interest may have been rather different from those of the rank and file. Wilfred Gribble of the SPC, for example, listed his occupation as "lecturer," while Donald McKenzie gave his as secretary of the SPC. Both men were prominent impossibilists. Parm Pettipiece is listed as the general secretary of the VTLC from 1910 to 1912; thereafter, his occupation is editor of the B.C. Federationist. These officials form a grouping of "brain workers" who were certainly of the working class, but who occupied a significantly different niche than industrial or migrant workers.

Even more illuminating is the number of SPC and VTLC members who might be described as petit bourgeois. Nearly 11 percent of the SPC and 7.5 of the VTLC names were men who owned businesses. These ranged from the real estate agent Beamish to W.J. Nagle, a delegate to the VTLC who owned a painting contracting firm. Ernest Chapman and Alexander Fenton, both delegates from the machinists' union, had formed the Central Machine Shop by 1909. Frederick Perry, a secretary of the SPC, ran his own tailor shop, eventually plying his trade in the Labor Temple. John Schagat, a secretary of the Lettish local of the SPC in Vancouver, joined with a boardinghouse owner to start a grocery store on Cordova street in 1911-1912, while E.T. Kingsley was the proprietor of a print shop. Together, the officials and businessmen account for nearly a quarter of the socialist and labor activists. This sizable group contained most of the leaders of the two organizations: Pettipiece, McVety, Midgeley, Wilkinson, McKenzie, Kingsley, and others fall into either or both categories.

While none of the analytical fragments is conclusive by itself, together they form a pattern that indicates that these men were separated from other workers, from skilled workers, but especially from those of the IWW, by ethnicity, occupation, income, culture, and even geography. It is hardly surprising that they actively sought to disassociate themselves from the Wobblies in times of labour peace and struggle, for their class positions, indeed, their very lives, bore little resemblance to those of the migrant workers and unskilled navvies.

The concept of a labour "aristocracy" need not imply, as Henry Pelling suggests, that skilled workers were conservative. Nor does it mean, as Robert McDonald has written, that "workers expressed class feeling more through moderate labourism than doctrinaire socialism."¹⁶ One would be hard-pressed to describe the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, the B.C. Federation of Labour, and the Socialist Party of Canada as particularly conservative or labourist. As Eric Hobsbawm observed, the labour aristocrats created working class institutions and a "whole system of the ethics of militancy." They maintained a strong sense of occupational and class identification: "when the pickets were out against the boss, [they] knew what to do."¹⁷ But unlike their earlier counterparts in England, the labour aristocrats in B.C. were pressured from below by a more radical group that truly had nothing to lose—the unskilled workers organized into the IWW. The labour aristocrats were caught between their sense of class identification and their objective position as a markedly better-off stratum. While their rhetoric remained radical, their actions increasingly reflected their superior income and status. These leaders were not "liberals in a hurry"; it is more accurate to describe them as socialists who could afford to wait. As one Wobbly put it,

If you are in the woods and find three men camped, one of whom has a good bed roll, one has one blanket, and the last has no blanket at all, you don't need to stop and ask who will tend fire. The blanketless man will likely set fire

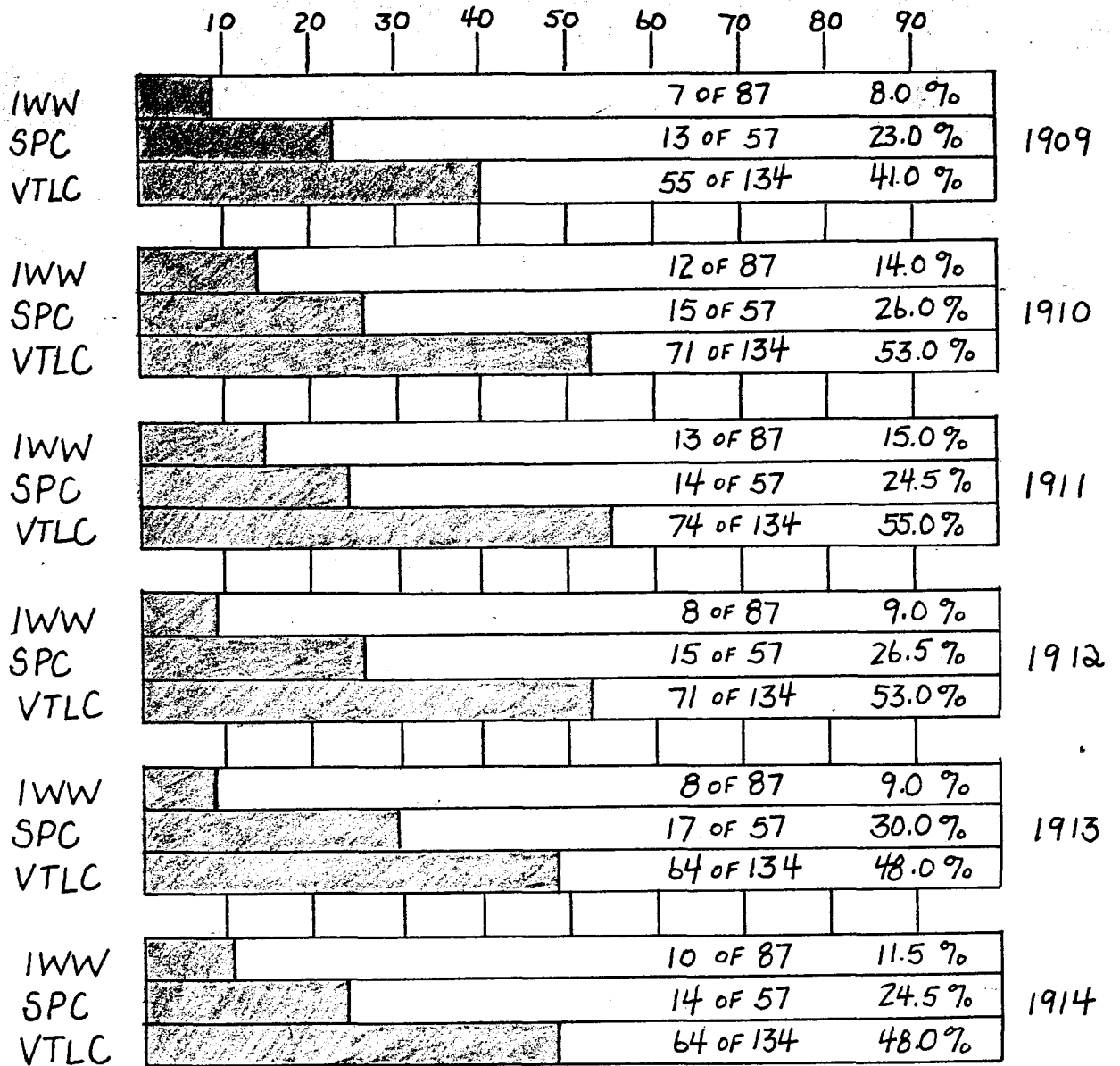
¹⁶Henry Pelling, "The Concept of Labour Aristocracy," in Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain. London: Macmillan, 1968, p.55-57.

¹⁷Hobsbawm, "Trends in the British Labour Movement Since 1850," in Labouring Men. New York: Basic Books, 1964, p.323. See also Hobsbawm's "Debating the Labour Aristocrats," and "The Aristocracy of Labour Re-considered" in Worlds of Labour.

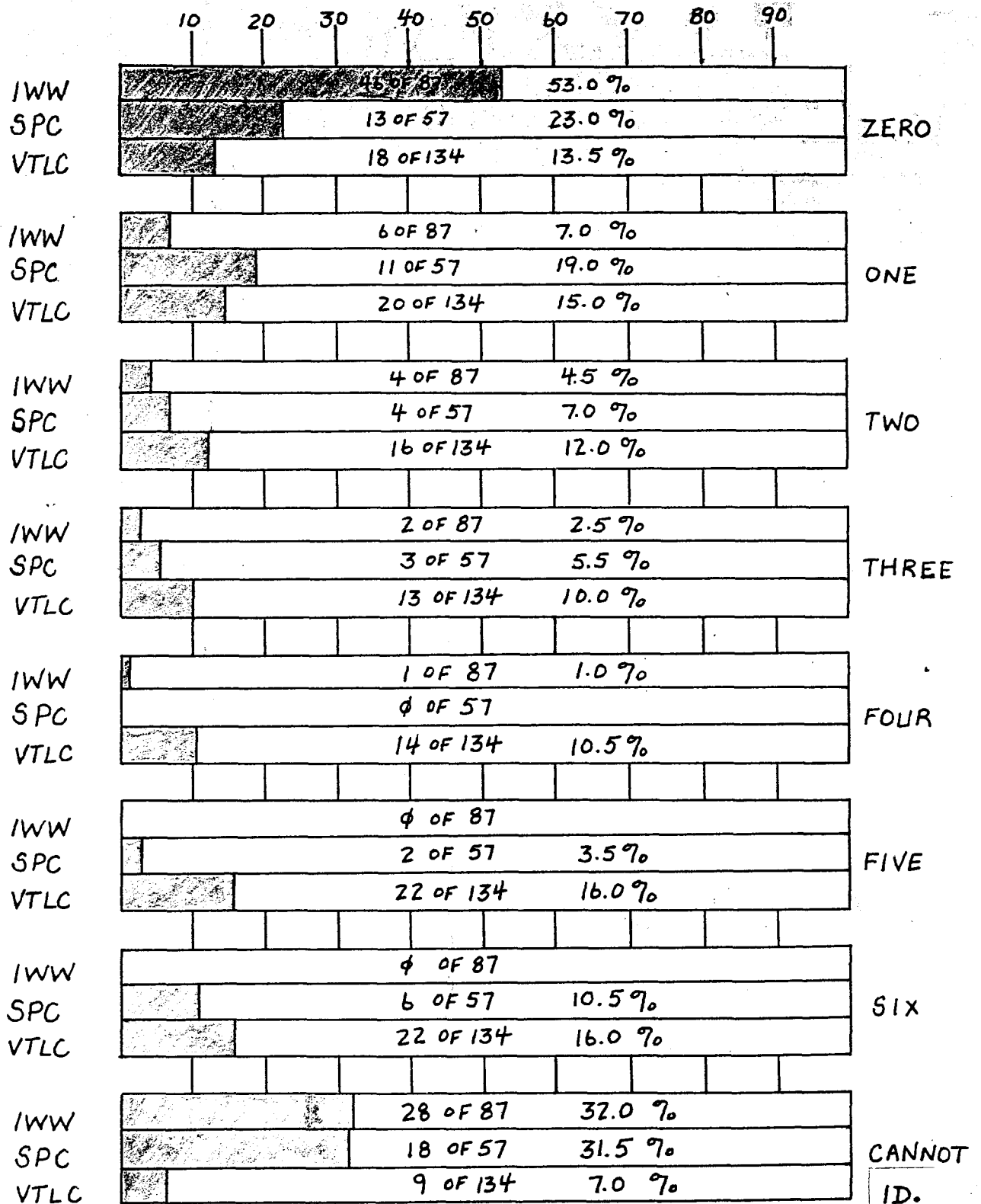
to a dead tree and before morning the other two will be complaining about sparks in their blankets as the act is "too radical." It is the propertyless worker who must keep the fire of revolt burning, let the sparks fall where they may.¹⁸

¹⁸IW, 22 May 1913.

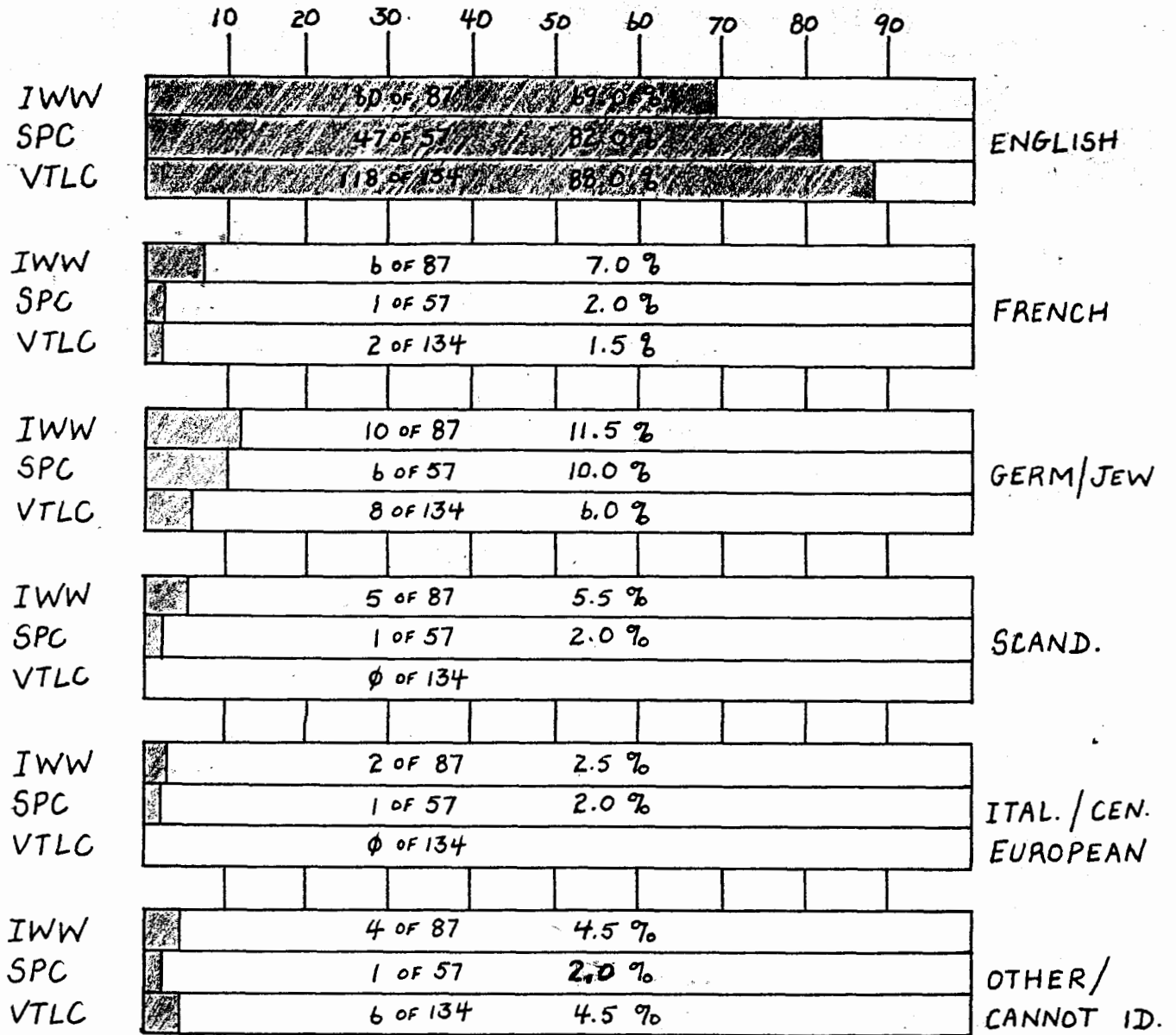
TRANSIENCY AND STABILITY BY GROUP AND YEAR



TRANSIENCY AND STABILITY: APPEARANCES IN THE CITY DIRECTORIES, 1909-1914



ETHNICITY OF IWW, SPC AND VTLC



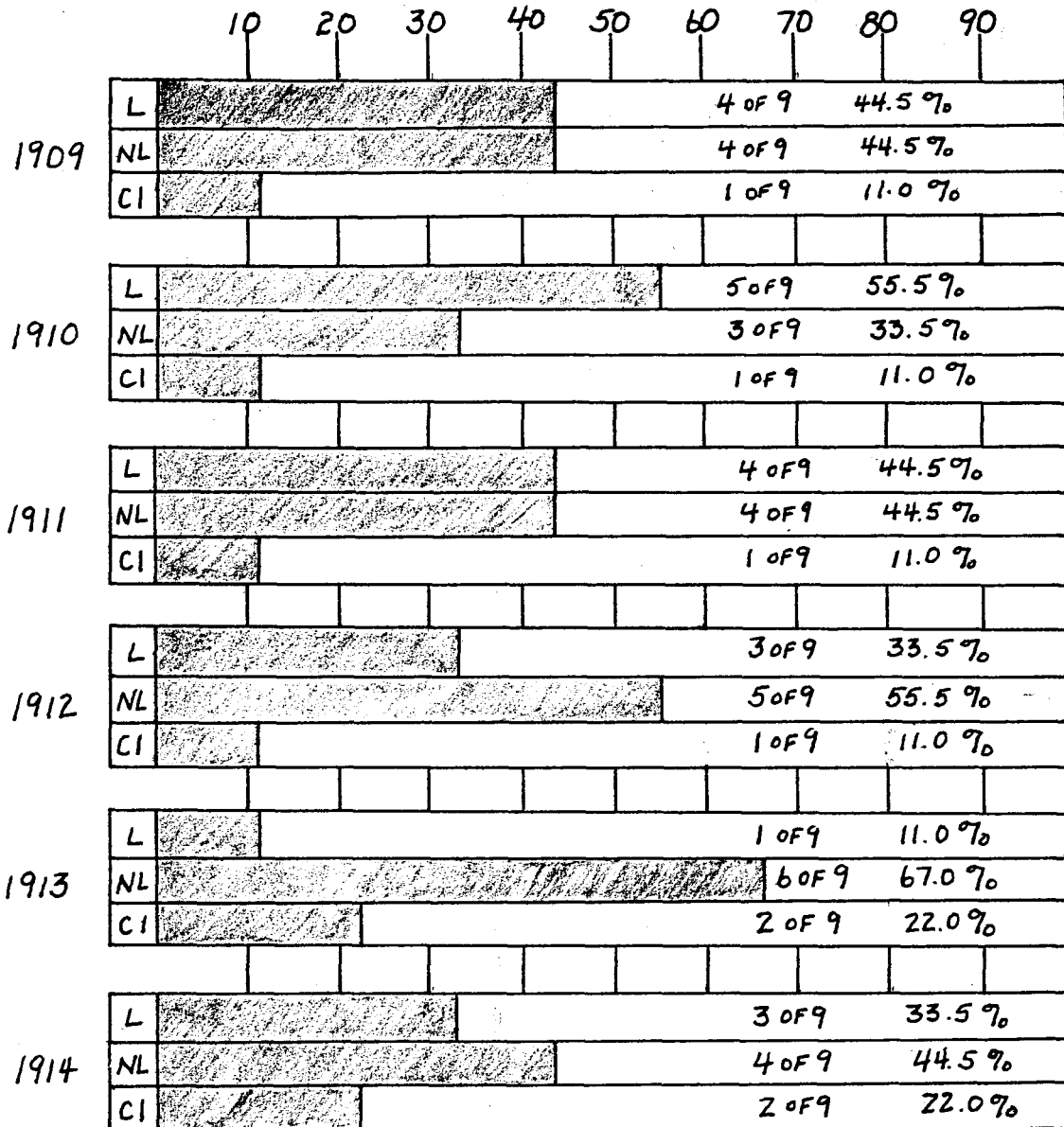
FREE SPEECH FIGHT, 1909 ARRESTS

		1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914
BEACH, WILLIAM		NL	L	NL	NL	NL	NL
BEAMISH, T.M.	SPC	L	L	L	L	L	L
ENGLISH, L.T.	SPC	NL	L	NL	NL	NL	NL
FRANKLIN, JOHN		NL	L	L	NL	NL	NL
JENKINS, ARTHUR	IWW	L	L	L	L	NL	NL
NICHOLS, GEORGE		L	NL	L	NL	NL	L
NORMAN, HENRY		L	NL	NL	L	CI	CI
RIGWAY, WILLIAM		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
TAYLOR WILLIAM	IWW	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI

L	LISTED
NL	NOT LISTED
CI	CANNOT IDENTIFY

PERCENTAGES OF ARRESTS

PERCENTAGE OF MEN ARRESTED IN THE VANCOUVER FREE SPEECH FIGHT OF 1909 AND LISTED IN THE CITY DIRECTORIES, 1909-1914



FREE SPEECH FIGHT, 1912, ARRESTS

LOVE, WILLIAM		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
McAULIFFE, PATRICK	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
McCLINTON, THOMAS		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
McDOWELL, WILLIAM	SPC	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
MORRIS, JOHN	IWW	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
NICHOLLS, GEORGE	VTL	L	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
O'BRIEN, WILLIAM	IWW	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
OXLEY, FRED	SPC	NL	NL	L	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
PARKER, GORDON	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
PARM, ALBERT	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
PETTIPiece, P.	SPC	NL	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
PICKEN, ARTHUR	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
READ, WALTER	SPC	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
ROBERTS, WILLIAM		CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
SCHULTZ, PAUL		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
SIMPSON, JOHN	SPC	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
SMITH, ALEXANDER		CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
SOBERMAN, SAM		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
TAYLOR, JOHN			CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
WATTS, WILLIAM	SPC	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	L
WILSON, CHARLES	SPC	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI

1909 1910 1911 1912 1913 1914

MEN ARRESTED IN THE VANCOUVER FREE SPEECH FIGHT OF 1912 AND LISTED IN THE CITY DIRECTORIES, 1909-1914

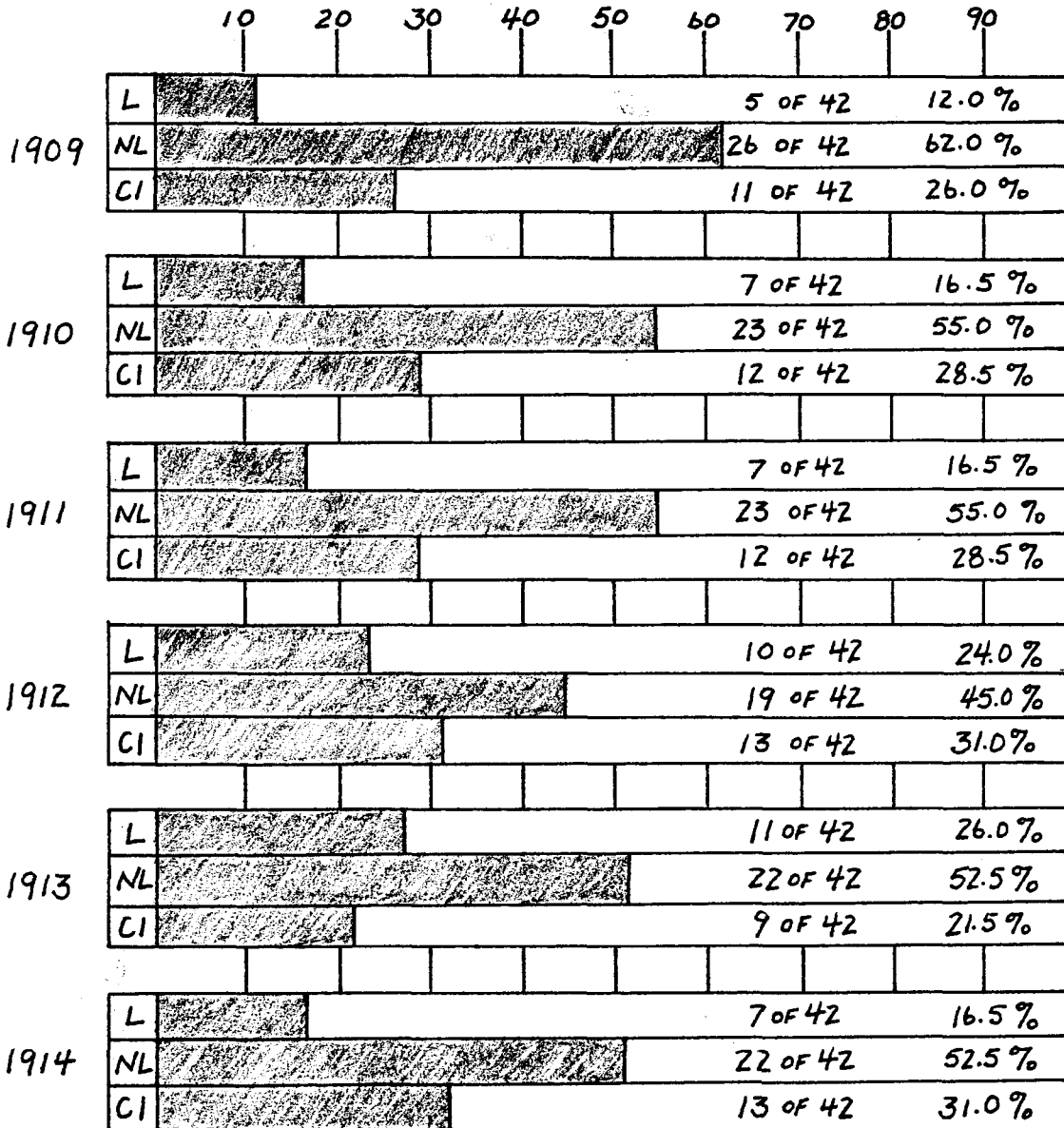
BODNAR, MARK	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
BROWN, JOHN	IWW	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
CARRAS, JOHN		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
CARSON, JOHN		CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
COATES, JOHN		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
COOMBS, W.H.	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
CORMIER, JOHN	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
DANAVITCH, M.		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
DICKSON, SAM	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
DOYLE, MICHAEL	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
FISHER, JAMES H.	SPC	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI	CI
FLOOD, GEORGE	IWW	NL	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
HAYES, DENNIS		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
HORNE, WILLIAM	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
HUDSON, FRANK W.	IWW	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
HURST, PERCY		NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
JENKINS, ARTHUR	IWW	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
JOHNSON, PETER	IWW	NL	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
LEAH, ALFRED	SPC	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
LESTER, CHARLES	SPC	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL
LOTZAR, LEON	SPC	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL	NL

1909 1910 1911 1912 1913 1914

L	LISTED
NL	NOT LISTED
CI	CANNOT IDENTIFY

PERCENTAGES OF ARRESTS

PERCENTAGE OF MEN ARRESTED IN THE VANCOUVER FREE SPEECH FIGHT OF 1912 AND LISTED IN THE CITY DIRECTORIES, 1909-1914



CONCLUSION

Monopoly capitalism launched powerful attacks against workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The attacks took place on the traditional battlegrounds of wages and conditions, but unlike past struggles, they were also waged in the arena of workers' control. These fights for control, while often only implicit, were in fact the fundamental issues of the day.

In British Columbia and elsewhere, workers developed a number of strategies and responses. Often they moved to the left, to develop industrial unions and to support socialist parties. The most radical of these responses was the syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World. The founding of the IWW in 1905 meant that the skilled workers of the socialist and labour movements were no longer the advance guard of the working class. The unskilled, the de-skilled, and the migrant workers—those hardest-hit by monopoly capitalism and denied access to the political system—took the lead. The syndicalist critique went beyond the arguments over increased productivity and rationalized industry that occupied many socialists. Furthermore, it rejected the political action that placed parliamentary socialists in the ironic position of working to save the state in order to destroy it.

The radicalism of the IWW helped shape the political debate in British Columbia and Vancouver. Wobblies exerted a leftward pull on unions and parties in the province, while the influence of syndicalism and the drives to organize the unorganized had effects that went far beyond the number of workers who took out a red card. But their radicalism put IWW members in conflict with other sections of the socialist and labour movements. In Vancouver, trades union leaders and Socialist Party of Canada members sided against the IWW on numerous occasions. Isolated and under attack, the IWW found it impossible to establish a permanent, stable position in the province; by the end of the First World War, it represented a movement rather than a formal, structured force.

The virtual segregation of the IWW had important consequences for the rest of the labour movement. The rejection of syndicalism, often on the seemingly irrefutable grounds of pragmatism, set the workers' movement on a very different course. Even during the great upheaval which followed the war, syndicalism was not on the agenda of the mainstream labour leaders and socialists. It was replaced with a weaker and less thorough-going socialism, a socialism which could be more easily assimilated into liberal reformism. The IWW's ideology was not politically expedient or "practical," but its critique of both capitalism and socialism remains trenchant today. In judging the successes and failures of the union, it may be helpful to remember the warning of a Vancouver Wobbly who, paraphrasing Eugene Debs, remarked that "it is better to fight for what you want, and take longer to get it, than to fight for what you don't want and get stuck with that."¹

¹Alex Ferguson. Interview with author. Vancouver, B.C., February, 1976.

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