

ORGANIZED LABOUR VS. THE STATE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:
THE POLITICAL LIMITATIONS OF TRADE UNIONS

by

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Organized Labour vs. the State in British Columbia: The

Political Limitations of Trade Unions

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the British Columbia labour movement's reaction to the Social Credit government 'restraint' program of 1983. It considers why organized labour temporarily assumed a major political role to challenge the power, authority and policy of the state and why, despite the largest labour/community coalition in the province's history, labour abandoned this role, and sought accomodation with the state.

The thesis attempts to demonstrate the degree to which organized labour can form alliances with community and political groups under given conditions. It also furnishes information on the labour movement's ability to resist state policy and the state's ability to exert political control over the labour movement.

The theoretical framework is based on Lenin's argument that trade unions are largely economically oriented, that they have only a limited ability to organize and execute major political struggles, and that they are politically disoriented in the absence of a political party.

Sources of evidence include a combination of published and unpublished materials and personal interviews primarily with those representing various levels of the labour movement and secondarily with those who were closely associated with the coalition groups. Information from the interviews was

synthesized with the pertinent literature in an attempt to recreate an accurate account of the factors and conditions that influenced the labour movement during the period in question.

It is concluded that the British Columbia labour movement entered the political sphere primarily in defence of its own economic interests. Yet because of organized labour's economic orientation, it was unable to challenge government policy successfully. Labour was restricted ideologically and materially by a well-defined bureaucratic and legalistic framework which limited its potential power. Organized labour was divided and weakened by ideological, sectional, and jurisdictional disputes. Many trade union leaders who are usually preoccupied with collective bargaining issues and tactics felt uncomfortable and maladroit leading a political movement. In the absence of a party capable of providing political guidance, the union leadership was unable and unwilling to continue the struggle.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Organized labour can be one of the major countervailing forces to state and business power in Western industrial society. Trade unions are not only the largest working class organizations, they are also the most common. Because of the ability to withdraw their labour, and thereby paralyze industry and many government functions, labour unions theoretically have the power to influence government policy significantly. Yet there are fundamental limitations to the political power of labour unions - both internal and external to the movement itself.

The *raison d'être* of trade unions is basically economic in nature; that is, the collective bargaining process normally consumes most of their time, energy, and resources. The objective of collective bargaining is the economic well-being of the union membership. Political activities are important but secondary to this process and often restricted to supporting the unions' economic functions or the general viability of the union movement. Only rarely does the union movement attempt to transcend its economic sphere and take on an overtly political role, directly challenging the power, policy, and authority of the state through militant political action. This unusual

phenomenon recently occurred in British Columbia when organized labour formed a political coalition (Solidarity) with a diversity of community groups. The temporary transition of the B.C. labour movement from the economic realm to the political realm' and its ability to function therein, is the subject of this thesis.

Shortly after their 1983 re-election to office in British Columbia, the Social Credit government introduced a highly controversial 'restraint' program which effectively reduced human rights protection, made significant cuts to social spending, eliminated a wide range of social services and public sector jobs, and launched an assault against established trade union rights.² Reaction to the government initiative was swift. Organized labour assumed a major political role forming a province wide coalition with community groups - a coalition that was quickly dominated by the more powerful labour component. After several months of militant action during which the Coalition became the principle opposition to the elected government, the labour component reached a controversial settlement with the government. The accord that was reached did little to address the overall concerns of the Coalition but it did allow the union leadership to withdraw from the political

¹Chapter two delineates the economic and political activities, methods, and objectives of trade unions. While the separation of the political and economic spheres may appear artificial because of their tendencies to overlap or even become integrated, this distinction is nevertheless critical for analytical purposes.

²For highlights of this legislative package, see Addendum to this chapter.

sphere and to concentrate its activities in the familiar collective bargaining arena.

Statement of Research Problem

This series of events suggests that the union movement has only a very limited ability to transcend its traditional economic collective bargaining role in order to function successfully as a political entity. This has led to the formulation of the following research questions. Why did the B.C. labour movement (which like other labour organizations is largely motivated by economic objectives) temporarily assume a major political role and confront the state? Moreover, despite significant public and rank and file union support, what prompted the British Columbia labour movement to abandon its newly assumed political role, seek accomodation with the state, and accept an accord that was less than satisfactory to a number of its community allies and to many components within the labour movement itself?

It will be argued that trade unions are sometimes drawn into major political confrontations in order to defend their interests and viability. However, trade unions are economic entities primarily concerned with various aspects of the collective bargaining process. They are organized and structured primarily to protect and/or advance the economic well-being of their members. They are restricted to (and generally operate

within) a well defined bureaucratic and legalistic framework which shackles and mediates their political power. As economic entities, unions have few short term or long term political programs and limited political objectives - in part because, unlike members of a political party, union members are united in defense of immediate economic interests and not by a common political philosophy.³ Moreover, most union leaders are neither experienced nor trained to think or act as political leaders, therefore it is difficult for them to function as such. Most union leaders are guided by an ideology that has defined their role largely within the economic sphere. Union leaders are trained to negotiate, compromise and settle labour disputes with a minimum of confrontation and within a legally defined framework - not escalate disputes for political purposes. Thus, while the labour movement may occasionally be drawn into direct political conflict with the state due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., an attack on established trade union rights), in the absence of a party capable of providing political leadership and a credible political alternative, it is unlikely to function well as a political entity or sustain a political struggle.

³Note for example, U.B.C. professor Donald Blake's study of voting preferences of B.C. union members. Blake found that while union membership increases the likelihood of N.D.P. voting, a significant percentage of trade unionists vote for the traditional business parties - Social Credit, Liberal, or Conservative (Blake, 1985:46,100).

Significance of Research

This study examines the unusual sociological phenomenon where trade unions temporarily transcend their traditional economic role in order to lead a political struggle against state power and authority. While major political confrontations between the union movement and the state do occur,⁴ their incidence in Canada are not common.

The thesis helps to demonstrate that, in the context of British Columbia: 1/ unions are largely oriented toward collective bargaining and economic objectives, 2/ the union movement has only a limited capacity to act as a political entity, 3/ union leaders, while closely aligned with New Democratic Party politics, are hesitant to lead a major political struggle, and 4/ extra-parliamentary activity may be a more successful way than electoral politics to challenge state authority.

By providing an analysis of trade union reaction to government restraint policy in B.C., the thesis helps to demonstrate the present effectiveness of organized labour as a power broker in struggles for or against social change in this province. It demonstrates the degree to which organized labour

⁴For example, Lenin (1970) has described political strikes that spread across Russia in 1905; Gramsci (1968) observed the confrontation between Italian unions and the state in 1920; Symons (1957) has examined the British general strike of 1926; and Brennan (1967) has analyzed anarcho-syndicalism in the Spanish Civil War. Notable Canadian examples are the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 and the Quebec 'Common Front' in 1972.

can form alliances with community and political groups under given conditions. It also furnishes information on the ability of the labour movement to resist state policy as well as the manner in which the state is able to exert political control over the labour movement.

On the wider level, the thesis adds to our understanding of the behaviour and role of organized labour when faced with repressive government legislation during periods of rapid technological change and a severely depressed provincial economy. Since the B.C. labour movement is one of the strongest and most militant in Canada, the outcome of this conflict could influence future actions of governments and organized labour across the country.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical structure of this thesis draws heavily from the works of Lenin (1967, 1970) and to a lesser degree from C. Wright Mills (1948). The thesis supports Lenin's argument that the normal activities of trade unions posed no threat to capitalism. Trade union activities were concentrated on short term economic reforms (economism) which could generally be achieved within the capitalist system. According to Lenin, the labour movement (of its own initiative) could develop only a trade union consciousness, a consciousness that did not transcend the hegemonic bourgeois ideology. A trade union

consciousness simply allowed "the sellers of labour-power" to sell their "commodity" on "better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal" (Lenin 1967:56). For Lenin, the development of a political consciousness would promote not only:

...better terms for the sale of labour-power, but ...the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich... (Lenin 1967:57)

Central to Lenin's thesis is that the "class political consciousness" necessary to execute major political struggles would have to come from without, that is, "from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers" (Lenin 1967:79). A revolutionary communist party was needed to develop a program and tactics capable of furthering working class interests (Lenin 1967:85). In this manner, the "economic struggle" of trade unions could develop a "political character".

Mills' sociological study of American labour leaders and the union movement complements Lenin's work; his study is significant to this thesis because of its North American context, its more recent time frame and the illumination of the important role in the labour process played by the union leadership. In New Men of Power, Mills illustrates empirically what Lenin has argued more theoretically in What is to be Done?

Both Lenin and Mills stress the economic character of trade unions, their limited ability to organize and execute major political struggles, and their political disorientation in the

absence of a political party.

I am not for a moment suggesting that social, political, economic, or ideological conditions in British Columbia in 1983 were conducive to revolutionary social change. However, in concurrence with Lenin's and Mills' analysis, I will argue that the problems faced by the B.C. trade union movement during its 1983 confrontation with the state emanated from the economic nature of the movement and the lack of a party capable of providing political leadership and credible alternatives to the existing government.

This thesis is primarily concerned with the activity of the trade union movement. However, this element cannot be examined in isolation. Critical to this thesis is the role played by the state in the labour process and in the process of capital accumulation. The state has created and increasingly structured the framework within which the conflicting interests of labour and management are contended. The regulation of the labour process through legislative and judicial means may benefit not only private employers but also the state which is the largest employer. The thesis also examines the emergence of the community/labour alliance which challenged the Social Credit legislation; it traces the changing relationship between organized labour and the community coalitions which was critical to the final outcome of this conflict.

In order to place this study in an overall theoretical context, I will argue that shrinking tax revenues in British Columbia (due to the international recession of the early 1980's and a subsequent slumping resource economy) exacerbated the state's financial problems. In an effort to aid the private sector, the provincial government increased spending in the areas of highways, industry, and mega-projects while simultaneously cutting the budgets for various social expenditures. Part of the government's strategy included attacks against the labour movement which were intended not only to weaken labour's collective bargaining power and thereby attract more capital to B.C. and increase accumulation, but also to improve the ability of the government to regulate its provincial employees. It was this attack against labour and the shift in spending priorities of the B.C. government that aggravated the social contradictions within capitalism. The result was an escalation of class conflict manifest in the creation of the Solidarity movement within which organized labour played a major role. Labour's reaction to state policy and legislation can be seen as part of a class struggle over the allocation of state expenditures during a period of economic decline.

Methodology

Sources of evidence include a combination of published and unpublished materials and personal interviews. The interviews help to determine: trade union preoccupation with various

aspects of the collective bargaining process, the leaders' limited determination and capacity to operate outside the institutionalized framework laid down by the state, the degree to which the union leadership supported and felt comfortable with the aims of the Solidarity movement, the actions and objectives of the union movement during the period in question, the leadership's commitment to the labour movement's transformation to a political entity, the existence of political programs, objectives and activities of trade unions, and the labour movement's commitment to the New Democratic Party.

The interviews were partially structured in order to address the research questions, but flexible enough to allow participants to contribute pertinent information and to express their own perspective. Interview participants fit into two broad categories - those representing various levels of the trade union movement (with particular emphasis on those leaders who comprised the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee) and secondly, various individuals who represented or were closely associated with the coalition groupings. The emphasis on the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee (TUSSC) is germane since it was this group that made most of the critical decisions on behalf of the labour movement.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the information was synthesized with the pertinent literature in an attempt to recreate an accurate account of the factors and conditions that influenced the labour movement during the period in question. In

the course of this research, I have attempted to rely on multiple data sources combined with a focus on underlying causal factors and repeated patterns in order to compensate for the possible subjective bias of the interview subjects.

Addendum

The 1983 Legislative Package

In order to put the conflict between the B.C. labour movement and the provincial government into a wider perspective, it is necessary to outline briefly the B.C. government's legislation which provoked unprecedented community reaction.

The legislative package introduced by the Social Credit government, in the name of fiscal restraint, had a significant social, economic, and political impact on the lives of British Columbians. Apart from the Bills affecting organized labour, government legislation provoked the indignation of a wide cross-section of the populace by attacking human rights protection and rent controls, reducing and more tightly restricting educational funding, further centralizing power in cabinet or government agencies, and reducing the level and quality of social services.

Following is a list of the most contentious Bills, their key

features and their implications.

- Bill 2 (Public Service Labour Relations Amendment Act)
This Bill restricted the scope of government employees collective bargaining to items of wages and benefits. It was intended to limit the power and potential of public sector unions to defend their memberships.
- Bill 3 (Public Sector Restraint Act)
This Bill enabled public sector employers to fire without cause. It stripped the seniority clauses from existing collective agreements.
- Bill 5 (Residential Tenancy Act)
This Bill abolished the Rentalsman's Office and rent controls raising the prospects of higher rents for lower and middle income earners.
- Bill 6 (Education Interim Finance Amendment Act)
This Bill deprived school boards of the right to levy taxes over non-residential property and gave the education ministry control over the size of local school board budgets. It further concentrated the provincial government's control over education.
- Bill 8 (Alcohol and Drug Commission Repeal Act)
This Bill eliminated the Alcohol and Drug Commission, an agency responsible for rehabilitation and research in B.C.
- Bill 9 (Municipal Amendment Act)
This Bill effectively removed the regional district's right to regional planning thereby reducing local autonomy.
- Bill 11 (Compensation Stabilization Amendment Act)
This Bill indefinitely extended wage controls in the public sector while making the employer's ability to pay paramount.
- Bill 20 (College and Institute Amendment Act)
This Bill gave the Minister of Education control over courses and budgets of colleges, while abolishing local representation on college boards.
- Bill 23 (Motor Vehicle Amendment Act)
This Bill eliminated mandatory vehicle testing and closed provincial vehicle testing branches. Besides resulting in the lay off of many provincial employees, it raised the question of vehicle safety.

- Bill 24 (Medical Services Act)
This Bill would have enabled doctors to opt out of the Medical Services Plan thereby allowing for the potential of two tier health care in B.C.
- Bill 26 (Employment Standards Amendment Act)
This Bill eliminated the Employment Standards Board and allowed for unions to sign collective agreements with less protection than province-wide minimum standards.
- Bill 27 (Human Rights Act)
This Bill repealed the Human Rights Code and abolished the Human Rights Branch and Commission. Numerous staff members were fired immediately and were to be replaced by a 5 member appointed council. The onus for proof of discrimination was transferred to the complainant and grounds for discrimination charges were narrowed. Compensation was limited. (While this Bill died on the order paper, it was replaced by Bill 19, in 1984, which was essentially the same).

(Source: This list was compiled from Magnusson et al. 1984; BCFL 1983; and Nelson 1985).

Besides the legislation, the government reduced funding for social services in many areas which resulted in the elimination of child care counsellors and family support workers, youth workers and child abuse teams; cutbacks were also made to legal aid and to income maintenance programs (Callahan 1984:227-228).

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRADE UNIONS

Before considering the temporary transition of the B.C. trade union movement from the economic to the political sphere, it is necessary to analyze briefly the economic and political nature of the union movement itself. This can be done by examining the *raison d'être*, the methods and activities, and long term objectives of trade unions. It will be shown that in the Canadian context, trade unions are indeed entities primarily concerned with the collective bargaining process, yet they also have a distinct political character. That is, economic activity in the form of collective bargaining faces certain limitations, not the least of which can be restrictive labour legislation or hostile government policies that may eliminate gains made through collective bargaining. Therefore, trade unions have long recognized that economic activities must be supplemented by political activities if their objectives are to be met. They are deeply involved in party politics and often support political and social causes to the degree that their economic character will permit.

Economic and Political Functions of Trade Unions

Over a century ago, Marx and Engels recognized the dual economic and political character of trade unions. They noted

that trades' unions sprang up from spontaneous attempts of workmen to lessen competition amongst themselves. Moreover, the immediate objective of these organizations:

...was therefore confined to everyday necessities, to expediencies for the obstruction of incessant encroachments of capital, in one word, to questions of wages and time of labour. (Marx and Engels, 1966, Vol.2:82)

However, while the union movement's demands were largely economic and reform oriented, Marx and Engels insisted that trade unions possessed within them, the seed for revolutionary struggle. That is, the collective organization of workers, which was adopted to defend wages, could also serve to generate a class unity among workers. Their potential to organize workers in defense of class interests caused Engels to suggest that they could become organizing centres - schools of solidarity or schools of socialism (Lozovsky 1935:15).

Yet, the radical political potential in the British trade union movement did not develop, as noted by Engels in a letter to E. Bernstein in 1879:

The British labour movement is to-day and for many years has been working in a narrow circle of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours without finding a solution; besides, these strikes are not looked upon as an expedient and not as a means of propaganda and organization but as an ultimate aim. (Hyman 1971:10)

At the turn of the century, V.I. Lenin attempted to define the relationship between the economic struggle and the political struggle in order to address the problem of trade unions "sinking into a quagmire of spontaneous reformism" (Lenin 1970:13). Lenin used the term economic struggle to describe

trade union activities that centred on the struggle of "the workers against the employers for better terms in the sale of their labour power", as well as the "economic struggle against the government" (for improved working and social conditions) which Lenin describes as "precisely trade union politics" (Lenin 1967:65). Lenin felt that the revolutionary movement must subordinate "the struggle for reforms to the revolutionary struggle for liberty and socialism" (Lenin 1967:62). For Lenin, the political struggle constituted basic changes to the structure and functioning of government (Lenin 1970:50,51). These were considered crucial for revolutionary social change - a socialist transformation of society. Thus, when speaking about the political struggle of trade unions, Lenin is referring more to trade union objectives rather than to methods or activities (Hammond 1957:15).

The economic tendencies of trade unions as well as their propensity towards bureaucratic structures and a leadership that was increasingly committed to legalistic solutions to class conflict have been noted by Luxemburg (1971), Gramsci (1968), and Trotsky (1975). Yet even though the economic aspects of trade unionism were understood to be dominant, the political elements were seen as crucial to working class struggle. Lenin (1970) recognized that within the collective economic struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour power, for better living and working conditions, there is a political element he termed legislative

and administrative (Lenin 1970:100). In fact, Lenin points to the history of the British trade unionists' who:

...have long been fighting for the right to strike, for the removal of all legal hinderances to the co-operative and trade union movements,... for laws to protect women and children, for the improvement of labour conditions by means of health and factory legislation... (Lenin 1970:101)

Implicit in Lenin's work is the realization that the aforementioned political aspects of trade unionism have served not to alter the structure of society radically but rather to enhance the economic well-being of trade unionists within capitalism. In fact, Lenin points to the exceptionally favourable conditions for capitalist development in both Britain and the United States that tended to produce a working class "aristocracy" in the early twentieth century (Lenin 1970:231).

In modern American capitalism, collective bargaining is still the core function of American unions with political action simply being an auxillary activity according to Harbison (1954). He notes that the more union leaders concentrate on the collective bargaining process, the more conservative they become - the simple logic being that the more time, energy, and resources devoted to collective bargaining, the more chance that 'successful contracts' will be negotiated, and therefore the less time and effort will be spent or indeed needed in the political arena (Harbison 1954:277).

'Lenin credits Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1965, 1920) for much of the early research done on the history and nature of the trade union movement in Britain. Of course, while Lenin concurred with most of the Webb's empirical research, he disagreed with their Fabian orientation.

American labour unions as organizations and memberships are "oriented only in the economic sphere" notes C. Wright Mills (1948). They have no political program or objectives and no long term answers to major political problems (Mills 1948:236). Much of the American tradition of trade unionism reflects the ideas of Samuel Gompers who rejected politics for 'business unionism' - a philosophy of 'more, more, more' (Reed 1966). Mills states that because of this economic tradition and the increasing bureaucratic and institutionalized character of the movement, unions and union leaders seem poor bets as far as political action is concerned (Mills 1948:236). In fact, political action by American unions has been primarily confined to political lobbying (Mills 1948:162).

Political lobbying has also been used by Canadian unions to achieve political goals such as favourable labour legislation and a wide range of social services. The method here is simply to act as a political lobby group to influence the party in power. Obviously this method has severe limitations if the government in power has a political philosophy not in keeping with the trade union movement. Unlike its American counterpart, the Canadian union movement has been much more inclined to participate directly in the activity of a political party. This aspect will be examined later in this chapter.

Within the Canadian trade union movement, political activities can be divided into three broad categories: 1/ those that directly support or contribute to the welfare of the

movement itself, 2/ those that benefit the union membership as well as the wider community, and 3/ those that may be beneficial to wider society yet may not directly benefit the union membership.²

Political activity directed at improving the collective bargaining abilities of unions needs little elaboration. It is extremely important for the trade union movement; efforts to continuously improve labour legislation are well documented (e.g., see Morton 1980; and Panitch and Swartz 1985).

Second, trade unions in Canada have historically sought the implementation of legislation totally unrelated to collective bargaining but beneficial to trade unionists and members of the wider community. For example, social legislation such as unemployment insurance, medicare and pensions are to some degree the result of ongoing struggles by trade unions and others.

Where traditional strike tactics have proven less effective, some unions have recently begun to politically organize within the community. Bill Clark, President of the Telecommunication Workers' Union (TWU) states that his union now spends more time, energy, and resources on political activities than on collective bargaining.³ Automated technology introduced by the TWU's main

²It should be recognized that these categories are obviously not mutually exclusive. For example, hard won labour legislation may benefit the unorganized workforce while changes to government programs or services may affect members of organized labour.

³Of course, it could be argued that much of this political activity is directed towards economic ends (satisfactory labour contracts). Nevertheless, the TWU is forming alliances with

employer, B.C. Telephone, has made traditional strike activity largely ineffective. The TWU has recently begun to organize political support in the community by demonstrating that the needs of organized labour and the needs of the community are not contradictory. That is, reduced levels of employment due to technological change can increase welfare and unemployment insurance roles thereby deleteriously affecting local economies by reducing local purchasing power.

Finally, trade unions (to varying degrees) are committed to political causes generally unrelated to the economic welfare of union members but beneficial to the wider society. Union activity which does not directly benefit the union membership has received little attention in the past and deserves some recognition. My research has indicated a significant amount of this type of activity at the local, regional, provincial, national and international levels. This political activity was increasing in the B.C. labour movement long before the introduction of the 1983 legislation.

This increasing activity appears to be the result of numerous elements. There has been a continuing struggle within the movement between the left-wing and the right-wing, and also between those who want to see organized labour become more politically active and those who do not. This struggle has resulted in some former 'non-political' unions becoming very

³(cont'd) consumer groups and community allies which may provide benefits far beyond the immediate interests of the union.

politically active. For example, a significant transition has taken place over the past twenty-five years in the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). At one time, political activists in the union did not have enough support even to get social issues on their convention agenda. More recently the BCTF has passed motions and financially supported international projects like the Nicaragua Literacy Campaign and the repressed Central America Teachers' Federation,⁴ and is currently funding the Vancouver based organization 'End Legislated Poverty' (ELP) (interview with ELP coordinator Jean Swanson, 1986). As Al Blakey, past President of the BCTF points out, this transition was in part due to an internal struggle by more "progressive" elements who achieved credibility by first tackling trade union issues. This 'grass roots' educational work within the organization gradually raised the consciousness of teachers and indeed brought about a radical change in the BCTF's political philosophy (personal interview with Al Blakey, 1986).

Similar examples of political activity generally unrelated to the economic well-being of the membership can be given for most unions. Over 285 separate Canadian labour organizations have sent financial contributions to support the South African Congress of Trade Unions' (SACTU) underground struggles in South

⁴For an insight into the BCTF's commitment in this area see the January/February 1987 edition of B.C. Teacher which is completely devoted to the BCTF's involvement in international education projects and support for foreign teachers' unions. It details the expenditure of over one million dollars in BCTF funding since 1961 - most of which was spent in the 1970's and 1980's.

Africa; many support SACTU on a sustaining basis (SACTU Solidarity Bulletin 86/#2, April). Moreover, the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) is in the process of sending a researcher to Nicaragua in order to ascertain how CCU unions can help to improve the standard of living that has deteriorated since the onset of contra attacks (personal interview with Jesse Succamore, 1986). The Canadian Paperworkers' Union (CPU) has recently promoted meetings to establish how the trade union movement can support native land claims (personal interview with Art Gruntman, 1986). The list is endless and suggests a philosophy in keeping with a more egalitarian society. Indeed, this type of activity can only be explained in terms of a wider trade union philosophy that extends far beyond the immediate economic interests of its membership.

These examples would suggest that there is an increasing realization that labour must adapt to new economic and political realities. There is an awareness in the B.C. labour leadership that the increasing demise and irrelevance of the U.S. labour movement stems from its inability to address 'non-economic' issues as well as its passive acceptance of the concessionary demands of capital. In other words, unlike the mainstream of the American labour movement, the majority (but certainly not all) of the B.C. labour leadership realize the contradictory nature of the interests of labour and capital.⁵ A typical answer to the

⁵This message came out clearly from my interviews with many of the top labour leaders. What was unclear, however, was how the labour movement should proceed to defend these interests. Generally speaking, however, the consensus was to pursue a mixed

question of 'whether labour and business had compatible objectives' was given by Cliff Andstein:

No, not at all... that's been a conflict we've been in for the last two and a half centuries... (personal interview with Cliff Andstein, Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL, 1986)

Collective Bargaining: the Core Element?

It must be stressed however, that despite considerable participation in party politics, political lobbying and other political activities, the Canadian labour movement rotates primarily on an economic axis. Unions are formed to protect the workers' economic interests and not to promote a political philosophy or to radically alter the structure of society. Therefore, the conviction that trade union activity can (or should) become an adjunct to a political struggle intent on the formation of a worker's state does not automatically emerge from trade union experience.

Most normal trade union activities in Canada are oriented toward some aspect of the collective bargaining process. That is, most of the time, energy, and resources of trade unions are used for union organizing, collective bargaining, and maintenance of the collective agreement.⁶ An excerpt from an

⁵(cont'd) economy with strict controls on capitalist enterprise combined with an expanded welfare system. Scandinavian countries were most commonly cited examples.

⁶This contention was almost unanimously confirmed by B.C. trade union leaders during my research. However, most leaders stated that the time and resources devoted to political issues (both

exhaustive study by Williams (1969) on trade union philosophy and practice for the Privy Council Office notes:

Canadian trade union philosophy is extremely self-centred with little interest in some elements of philosophy which one might expect of organizations of this type... While the movement professes to champion the cause of the situation of the industrial labour force caught up in the complexities of industrialism, its interests really go little further than its members self-interest at the bargaining table. (p.215)

While I believe this assessment does not give adequate consideration to aspects of trade union activity unrelated to economic 'bargaining table' issues, the priority that the Canadian movement puts on collective bargaining has been documented by numerous studies including Logan (1948, 1956); Canadian Industrial Relations (Wood Report, 1965); Crispo (1967); Williams (1971); Howard and Scott (1972); and Palmer (1984). This economic activity is pursued in order to achieve union objectives which include improved wages, better working conditions, job security, etc. An indepth study of the Canadian trade union movement found that:

...in Canada... the primary function of the union has been the pursuit of sectional interest, the attainment of maximum gain for its constituents... the Canadian movement is a bread and butter institution, and its strength is based on the achievements of sectional bargaining gains... (Woods and Ostry 1962:504)

Methods used include strikes against the employer, other job-related activity, secondary picketing, and occasionally boycotts. The aforementioned activities, objectives, and methods all fall under the economic sphere because they are largely

⁶(cont'd) related and unrelated to collective bargaining) had increased quite dramatically over the past ten years.

related to the enhanced economic well-being of union members. Indeed, it has been suggested that North American unionism exemplifies "the quintessence of economism" (Mann 1973:21; Huxley 1979:225).

In British Columbia, as in the rest of North America, collective bargaining is the core element of trade union activity. Indeed, the economic focus of the B.C. labour movement can be documented in a number of ways. I shall describe three characteristics which, I believe, will adequately demonstrate this point: 1/ preoccupation with collective bargaining, 2/ the nature of strike objectives, and 3/ the nature of 'political strikes'. By showing its economic character, the reasons for its inability to successfully lead a major political struggle become clearer.

The priority that collective bargaining issues, maintenance of the collective agreement, and in some cases organizing, takes over other issues was evident from my research. For example, nearly all union leaders stated that most of the time, energy, and resources of their unions was spent in this area. Owen Dykstra, past President of the B.C. division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and member of the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee (TUSSC) estimates that:

...more than 90% of our money is used for servicing the membership or organizing... (personal interview with Owen Dykstra, 1986)

The primacy of the collective bargaining role was supported by Geoff Holter, spokesperson for the Professional Employees

Association, and member of the TUSSC, who stated:

...we are here as agents of our members... our most important function is to represent them in a particular economic system and to play a role in that system, and to bargain as effectively and aggressively as we can on their behalf... I don't happen to feel the trade union's primary role is a role that has a social agenda... (personal interview with Geoff Holter, 1986)

Other leaders such as Cliff Andstein, presently Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL, formerly with the BCGEU, noted that it was difficult for his union (BCGEU) to spend a significant amount of time, energy, and resources outside of bargaining and maintenance of the collective agreement because of the uncompromising nature of their employer (the provincial government) and the bureaucratic nature of the grievance procedure:

...when I was running the bargaining/arbitration department... we usually had a backlog... [of] about 1,500 grievances pending for hearings. There shouldn't be that many which is one of the reasons we conducted a series of wobbles [illegal strikes] around the grievance procedure... (personal interview with Cliff Andstein, 1986)

The precedence that collective bargaining takes is equally evident in private sector unions. As Cliff Rundgren, member of the TUSSC from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers states:

...the first function of a trade union is to negotiate collective agreements and to maintain them during their life... (personal interview with Cliff Rundgren, 1986)

This commitment to the collective bargaining process is not simply an ideological one. Jesse Succamore, National Secretary of the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers, and President of the Confederation of Canadian Unions

states that unions have a legal obligation in the economic area:

...the one thing a union has to do by law... its obligation to its membership and its primary responsibility is in the area of collective bargaining and servicing of the contract once its won... that's the way the union movement has evolved here... (personal interview with Jesse Succamore, 1986)

As Succamore suggests, the first obligation of trade unions is to their membership. This process is accomplished through collective bargaining. Thus, successful collective bargaining may be seen as a prerequisite for political action. The inability of a union to service the economic needs of its membership will eventually lead to the demise of the union itself since this is the union's *raison d'être*.

Having shown examples of the commitment of the B.C. labour movement to various aspects of the collective bargaining process, it cannot be overemphasized that virtually every union leader interviewed during my research stressed the importance of moral and financial commitment to political action in defence of trade union rights and also social rights and welfare. This was not simply an ideological commitment but a commitment supported by concrete political action in many diverse areas. Political action was generally carried out to the degree that the economic nature of the movement allowed and according to peculiar circumstances of individual unions. The primacy of economic activity (i.e., collective bargaining and maintenance of the contract) however, was nearly always acknowledged in my research by the labour leaders themselves.⁷

⁷Where various aspects of collective bargaining were not

The economic focus of the union movement can also be seen in the nature of strike objectives. The strike is the ultimate and most powerful weapon of trade unions. It is only used as a last resort when all other methods to resolve a contradiction of interests fail.

From the embryonic beginnings of the labour movement in Canada, the issue of wages was the most prominent objective of labour strikes (Palmer 1983b:316-320). Phillips' (1967) study of the B.C. labour movement shows that over the decades, the overwhelming majority of strikes have been over wages, hours of work, or union recognition. A classical study into "labour unrest and industrial conflict" was conducted by Stuart Jamieson in 1968. He found that whether strikes were legal or illegal, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they occurred:

...in already unionized industries, over the negotiation of new agreements, or over disputes about the interpretation or application of agreements already in force... Unions have tended... to focus their energies on achieving economic gains for their existing memberships... (Jamieson 1968:465)

Most strike objectives fall into the following economic categories: union recognition, wages and hours of work, job security, occupational health and safety, and conditions of work. While most of these categories can be easily recognized as economic, the latter two should be seen in a like manner since

7(cont'd) consuming most of the time, energy, and resources of unions (e.g., Telecommunication Workers Union), this was because traditional collective bargaining methods had become ineffective and unions were beginning to resort to other methods in support of their economic objectives.

proper and safe conditions are a prerequisite for the economic well-being of the worker.

More recently, technological change and capitalist restructuring have contributed to high unemployment and increasing job insecurity. The Employer's Council of B.C. stated in 1983 that "the conflict between productivity improvement and employment protection will be one of the ... most perplexing issues in collective bargaining" (Employer's Council of B.C. 1983, p.16). In fact, job security has become the major issue of collective bargaining in the 1980's. In 1986, the IWA struck for 20 weeks over the issue of contracting out of union jobs. This was a strike of gigantic proportions with over 2,000,000 lost person days and an estimated loss to the economy of \$2.8 billion (The Sun, Dec.6, 1986:1). The important point here is that while the focus of strike objectives has changed over the decades from wages and hours of work to union recognition and more recently to job security, these elements are all related to the economic well-being of the union membership.

Finally, it can be demonstrated that when strikes take on political overtones, they usually reflect economic objectives. The possible exception to this rule was in a historical context when the trade union movement was led by a left-wing leadership. For example, the Vancouver Labour Council voted in favour of a general strike to protest conscription in World War I (Phillips 1967:68). Two years later, a 24 hour general strike was successfully called to protest the exoneration of the special

constable who shot and killed labour activist 'Ginger' Goodwin (Phillips 1967:73). A general strike took place in major B.C. centres in 1919 to support the Winnipeg general strike. However, even the Winnipeg general strike began over wages and union recognition (Penner 1975:ix). Thus, strike action over non-economic issues is rare and would appear to be restricted to periods when socialist influence within the movement is strong.

In recent history, 'political strikes' or threats of 'political strikes' have been motivated by economic factors. A general strike was threatened by the BCFL in 1965 to support striking oil refinery members. The main contention underlying this dispute was the union's demand for considerable wage increases and for job security against technological change (Jamieson 1968:419). The national day of protest in 1976 was a massive strike supported by over one million Canadian workers including a large B.C. contingent. This campaign was motivated by the government's attempt to limit wage increases (Morton 1980:305).

The BCFL orchestrated a 24 hour strike in the city of Nanaimo in 1981 to support the Telecommunication Workers' Union's bid for a new contract. Following the workers' five day occupation of B.C. Telephone's exchanges across the province, most unionized work sites in Nanaimo were successfully struck (Bernard 1984:27). Once again this strike action can be traced to economic objectives - in this case, job security which was in jeopardy due to advanced technological innovations within the

workplace (Bernard 1984:23).

This then has been a brief outline of the normal economic and political activities and methods of the Canadian trade union movement. For the most part, they are related, directly or indirectly, to collective bargaining with the employer. While political activities are important to trade unions, they are not the core function in capitalist society.

Beyond the Norm: Solidarity 1983

When analyzing the B.C. trade union movement at the height of the 1983 Solidarity struggle we find that a significantly greater proportion of the time, energy, and resources of the union movement was directed towards its conflict with the state. The trade union movement organized a massive defensive campaign in alliance with numerous community and political organizations in order to prevent legislative changes that were seen to be detrimental to labour and the community at large.

Through radio and newspaper ads, sit-ins, demonstrations, marches, petitions and escalating strike action involving 85,000 public sector workers, this alliance for a short time became the unofficial political opposition to the provincial government. It is important to realize that organized labour's activities and methods changed much more dramatically during this period than did its objectives or overall philosophy.⁸ That is, while a

⁸I have attempted to illustrate this point graphically in Appendix E which shows the normal sphere of trade union activity in B.C. and the abnormal situation in the summer and fall of

tremendous effort went into building alliances (inside and outside the labour movement), demonstrations and marches became the order of the day, and tens of thousands of workers became involved in a political strike, union objectives did not significantly change - they were primarily directed toward preventing legislation that was deemed restrictive and damaging to collective bargaining, and only secondarily toward opposing the wider regressive social legislation. For the labour movement, the right to recover inflationary losses to real wages was refused, and union security clauses were nullified. In an interview, past Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL, Mike Kramer, suggested that this was indeed the issue that motivated labour:

...social issues caused a lot of concern within the ranks of the activists in the organization and our union [CUPE]... but that wasn't of paramount concern to the trade union movement at the time... Bill 3, Bill 6, Bill 22, Bill 11... would just destroy trade union rights in the public sector. We weren't prepared to sit by and just see that... happen. (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

This was in keeping with normal union objectives of sustaining favourable labour legislation in order to maintain and/or improve wage levels and working conditions within the union movement; and secondly, it was in keeping with a broader trade union philosophy that seeks to maintain and/or improve social conditions in the wider community. However, what was extremely significant was the type of trade union activity and the degree that it deviated from its normal economic orbit.

8 (cont'd) 1983.

In order to fully understand the activities of the B.C. trade union movement during the period in question, it is necessary to examine briefly trade union philosophy.

Political Orientation and Ideology of Trade Unions

As Lenin has indicated, the fact that unions have followed an economistic direction (concentrating largely on economic interests directly related to their membership) is closely related to the level of class consciousness and the prevailing ideology. While trade union activity and an emerging trade union consciousness is a spontaneous reaction to the emergence of capitalism and the bitter competition between workers, this emerging trade union consciousness takes place within the dominant bourgeois ideology. As previously noted by Marx:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it...(Marx and Engels 1966, Vol.1:47)

For Lenin, revolutionary socialist consciousness was not a spontaneous development on the shop floor. Lenin insists that the revolutionary socialist consciousness needed to transcend the dominant bourgeois ideology must be brought to the workers from without (Lenin 1967:78). In other words, workers cannot develop a political consciousness necessary to challenge bourgeois power within a narrow economic trade union framework. As Lenin notes:

... people who are immersed ninety-nine per cent in the economic struggle against the employers and the government ... will never during the entire course of their activity... be impelled to think of the need for a more complex organization... (Lenin 1967:110)

The more complex organization that Lenin refers to is the revolutionary party that would provide revolutionary theory and a positive program of action, while organizing "an all-round political struggle" (Lenin 1967:85). Thus, the revolutionary political party plays a critical role in the development of revolutionary class consciousness in the union movement.

This revolutionary class consciousness, with the possible exception of French and Italian trade union organizations, has not been a significant part of the post-war development of organized labour in most Western industrialised countries (Mann 1973:34). It is not coincidental that the Western European countries with the largest and most vibrant communist parties also have communist led trade union federations (the CGT in France and the CGIL in Italy) which profess to be committed to revolutionary ends (Mann 1973:34).

In contrast with the Italian and French labour movements, the development of the Canadian trade union movement has taken place very much within the dominant bourgeois ideology which has restricted the vision as well as the scope of its activity. That is not to say that radical revolutionary thought has been completely absent from the trade union scene. Varying degrees of socialist influence have existed within the Canadian labour movement over the decades (Robin 1968; Palmer 1983b; Philips

1967; Laxer 1976). Yet it must be stressed that socialist consciousness has certainly not been dominant in the movement. At no time in Canadian history has a prominent revolutionary party emerged that was capable of helping to develop revolutionary socialist consciousness within a significant section of the Canadian movement.

By examining the role of organized labour, its objectives, the means and methods used, and finally the structure adopted in order to advance the role and method, Williams (1969) notes that historically two distinct schools of trade union philosophy have existed in Canada - class collaboration philosophy and class conscious philosophy. Williams ties the former to international trade unionism (i.e., Canada and the U.S.) where the philosophy has been "pure and simple business unionism" or "Gomperism" with a concentration on collective bargaining and an acceptance of the capitalist system as well as the prevailing form of government (Williams 1969:22). On the other hand, class conscious philosophy rejected the existing economic and political systems in favour of some form of worker's control. Class conscious philosophy favoured greater emphasis on solidarity and unity regardless of trade, greater emphasis on political action and less on collective bargaining. Williams concludes that by the end of the 1960's, class collaboration philosophy reflected all but a very small section of organized labour in Canada (Williams 1969:24).

Party Politics

The Canadian union movement, while greatly influenced by Gompers and the "almost exclusive economic orientations of the American labour movement" (Scotton, circa 1967:1), nevertheless embraced a character and philosophy quite distinguishable from its American counterpart (Robin 1968:287). After years of acrimonious debate and despite the strength of business unionism in Canada, the Canadian movement has rejected Gompers's philosophy of separating union activity from party politics. Indeed, influenced by "the dual economic and political development of trade unions in Great Britain and some parts of Western Europe" (Scotton, circa 1967:1), it continuously flirted with socialist philosophy and the idea of an independent labour party. As Laxer (1976) points out:

...the idea of a labour party has always remained alive in Canada. This has been an important difference over the last hundred years between the Canadian and the American movements. (p.259)

Tracing the history of organized labour in Canada, we see strong influences from, and association with the Communist Party of Canada, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and various other political parties. Like its British counterpart, the Canadian movement has become closely aligned with a 'labour' party. Between 1938 and 1956, a number of significant Canadian labour organizations became directly affiliated to the CCF (Scotton, circa 1967:30; Horowitz 1968:Chapter 2). In 1961 representatives of organized labour were among the accredited

delegates at the founding convention of the New Democratic Party (NDP). Today many national and international unions in Canada endorse the NDP, commonly referred to as 'the party'. Since the founding of 'labour's party', trade unionists have occupied numerous positions at all levels of the party structure (Scotton, circa 1967:40). Labour's alliance with the NDP includes financial support for the party, direct participation in electoral campaigns, political education within the trade union movement and a cross fertilization of party and union personnel. Organized labour's objectives are straight-forward - the election of an NDP government that will advance labour and social legislation consistent with organized labour's social democratic philosophy.

The political philosophy of the NDP, while reformist in nature, is significantly different from the business parties - Liberal, Progressive Conservative, or Social Credit. That is, their platform and policies reflect a working class bias in social, economic and labour areas. As one might expect, there is a striking resemblance between the philosophy of organized labour in Canada and its political arm, the NDP.⁹ This classical social democratic philosophy has often been characterized as 'trying to put a human face on capitalism'. In other words, it has attempted to influence and moderate capitalist development while providing a 'social safety net' to ward off the negative

⁹For example, NDP and trade union policies adopted at conventions display remarkable similarities in political, economic, and social areas.

effects of this development.

The close philosophical relationship between 'the party' and labour is at times further enmeshed by the overlapping commitments of many union and NDP representatives. For example, Joy Langan (presently NDP Provincial President) sat on the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee (TUSSC), as did Gerry Stoney and David Rice, two other trade unionists who are prominent in the NDP. Gerry Scott,¹⁰ former executive assistant to then NDP leader, David Barrett, travelled to Kelowna with Operation Solidarity representative, Jack Munro where the final accord was reached (Garr 1985:121). This close relationship has proven problematic to labour on numerous occasions and it will be argued that consideration for the welfare of the NDP during the Solidarity struggle significantly influenced the actions of organized labour at this time. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from an interview with Bill Clark, 6th Vice-President of the BCFL and member of the TUSSC.

PP You knew about the settlement a couple of days before it was announced publicly. After the settlement was reached on the Friday, I suppose there was no threat of the strike escalating?

BC No. I think most of us were really, really concerned about the thing going much further - another 50,000 or 60,000 public sector workers out, ferries and shit like that. We'd have really been into it.

PP What kind of things could you envision happening at that stage?

¹⁰Gerry Scott is currently Provincial Secretary for the B.C. New Democratic Party.

BC About 2 New Democrats left in the Legislative Assembly [after the next election].

PP So you felt it would backfire if you took it further.

BC Yeah. I'm not one who thinks that you should put things on the back burner in the trade union movement and constantly worry about getting the New Democrats elected, but I must say... I'm very very concerned about if the Socreds get elected again after what they pulled off. I mean, what's in store for us? Oh my God! That's very worrisome.

(personal interview with Bill Clark, 1986)

That is not to say that organized labour and the NDP do not differ on certain policies or strategy - each, after all, is responsible to its own constituency. Most labour leaders recognize the independent functions involved and the necessity to maintain independent but complementary actions. The actions of the NDP, being committed to electoral politics, are carefully designed not to alienate present or potential voter support. Organized labour, on the other hand, must not act in a manner that will compromise its ability to represent the interests of its rank and file. This rather tenuous relationship becomes even more complicated at times when differences of opinion arise within one of the organizations. For example, divisions occurred within the Executive Council of the British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL) at the 1985 convention over the type of alliance or accord that should exist between labour and the NDP. This followed the trip to Australia by top representatives of the BCFL and the B.C. NDP party leader, Bob Skelly to look at the accord that had been developed between the Australian Labour

Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. To the dismay of the NDP, it was decided that the tripartite¹¹ Australian agreement would not act as a model for BC, nor would any potential accord include wage restraint (Pacific Tribune , Nov. 27, 1985:15; Coe 1986:10). Thus, while the philosophy of the trade union movement is similar to that of its political arm - the NDP - and certainly much wider than immediate collective bargaining issues, it is still largely oriented in the economic sphere.

Trade Unions: Limitations to Political Actions

Limitations to the political actions of trade unions can be placed in two broad categories. The first category includes elements internal to the structure and function of trade unions; the second category includes external elements which are beyond the direct control of trade unions.

The common thread running through the internal elements is their relationship to the economic raison d'être of trade unions. That is, economism, union bureaucracy, foreign influence over Canadian unions, lack of internal political consensus, and the limited political programs and objectives stem from the economic function and experiences of the union movement itself.

¹¹While defenders of the Australian accord see the agreement as bipartite, critics have stressed its tripartite nature because of five tripartite commissions and the establishment of tripartite councils in 11 separate industries (Griffin, Pacific Tribune, Oct. 16, 23, Nov. 20, 1985).

Workers formed unions in order to improve their bargaining power vis-à-vis their employer. The workers' orientation to trade unions is essentially instrumental (Allen 1954); that is, they see unions simply as a means to gain economic benefits.

Moreover trade unionism:

...is not based on theoretical concepts prior to it, that is on some concept of democracy, but on the end it serves... the end of trade union activity is to protect and improve the general living standards of its members and not to provide its members with an exercise in self government. (Allen 1954:15)

Unions that neglect this prime function or perform it in a perfidious manner do so at their own peril and face the prospect of being replaced by another union more willing to respond to the challenge. For example, the United Steelworkers of America was replaced at the Aluminum Company of Canada works in Kitimat by the newly formed Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers for precisely this reason (Knox 1974).

Trade union bureaucracy has often been cited as a major obstruction to political action (Palmer 1984:32; Mills 1948). Michels' (1962) theory of the "iron law of oligarchy" (i.e., oligarchical control by an inert but powerful leadership over the mass of apathetic rank and file) has a certain degree of validity, yet it raises as many questions as it answers. This type of approach tends to be shallow and static and does not account for successful struggles within trade unions that have led to significant changes in their democratic structure and political activities. For example, the successful fight by many

Canadian trade unionists¹² to break away from their international (and often business oriented) unions tends to disprove Michels' contention that grass roots "revolts are always suppressed" (Michels 1962:168). In other words, if bureaucracy is the result of a certain type of organizational development created by human action, then human action is also capable of creating a less hierarchical structure and a more democratic decision making process under the right conditions. I am not suggesting here that bureaucratic tendencies within trade unions do not limit political action. This process has been well documented by Mills (1948), Allen (1954), and Pfeffer (1979). What I am suggesting however, is that these tendencies are not inherent and can be overcome. Thus, they do not pose an irreversible obstruction to political action.

American domination of the Canadian trade union movement has also been noted as an element hampering political action. For example, certain clauses in international constitutions prohibit participation in partisan politics, financial support of political parties, or even discussion of party politics at local meetings (Horowitz 1968:234). Moreover, some constitutions even deny initiation to potential members who belong to a communist party.¹³ As Laxer (1976) points out, the more business oriented

¹²See, for example, Scott (1974); Knox (1974); and Resnick (1974) for the dynamics involved in these internal labour struggles and the emergent union structures, that while not eliminating bureaucratic tendencies has certainly limited them and created more democratic organizations.

¹³See, for example, the preamble to the constitution of the

international unions have on numerous occasions been involved with the expulsion of left-wing leaders and activists in Canada. In some cases, they have conspired to destroy entire left-wing unions such as the Canadian Seamen's Union (Stanton 1978).

Another obstacle to political action is often the lack of internal consensus. Obviously, the movement can not be seen as monolithic in structure. Like any organization with a political character, the labour movement has left, centre, and right-wing elements. While the overwhelming majority of the leadership appears to line up somewhere in the social democratic camp, they nevertheless often disagree on political principles and procedure.

An even greater disparity may exist between the political consciousness of the leadership and that of the rank and file. While virtually all the union leadership support the NDP, (which in itself shows some degree of class consciousness), a significant number of the rank and file do not.¹⁴ Political action will necessarily be weakened by this lack of political consensus. As Bill Clark, President of the Telecommunication Workers' Union (TWU) notes:

¹³(cont'd) international Glass and Ceramic Workers' Union which denied membership to anyone belonging to a 'communist party'. This union was still operative in Canada in the early 1980's.

¹⁴For example, Horowitz (1968:261) and Laxer (1976) cite lack of union support for the NDP in Gallup polls. Mike Kramer states that polls taken within the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) have shown the same thing (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986). See also, Blake (1985) for an analysis of B.C. voting trends.

I don't think, I know that you would not get the TWU membership involved in a long general strike over social issues because there is not always agreement. There's trade unionists who are very conservative who will strike over another twenty cents an hour - who the day after they go back to work are playing the stock market. (personal interview with Bill Clark, 1986)

In fact, some union members are not fully supportive of organized labour's economic activities let alone activities that may be construed as political. There are some people who are not union members by choice or conviction but as a condition of employment. The fact that union certification votes are often won by slim margins indicates significant opposition to union organization and philosophy. Once again, we are reminded that trade unionists are united by their employee status and not by their political philosophy. In terms of political activity, this economic orientation obviously puts trade unions at a disadvantage when compared with political parties which organize around a political ideology, put forward a political program, and have the attainment of political power as one of their most important objectives.

The emergence of the NDP as a major political force has itself been a factor limiting trade union political activity. Many trade unionists are convinced that beneficial labour legislation and social reforms can be achieved through the electoral process. Post-war labour and social reforms, both federally and provincially, have contributed significantly to improved living standards and security for organized labour. As Engels noted well over a hundred years ago, successful trade

union actions resulting in improved standards tend to encourage complacency (Marx and Engels, Selected Works Vol.3: 448). Ironically, then, the relative success of the trade union movement in the economic sphere coupled with their close party affiliation may contribute to the perception that extra-parliamentary political activity is less necessary, or in some cases undesirable. In other words, as long as continued progress can be made in areas of social reform and labour legislation through the electoral process, organized labour can leave many political initiatives to party politics. Labour's primary political task, then, in B.C. as elsewhere in Canada has become the election of the NDP. As Laxer (1976) notes:

For top union leaders in English Canada, political action has often meant the avoidance of militant action. Instead of organizing mass demonstrations or work stoppages against legislation attacking labour, for example, they have called for the election of an NDP government. (Laxer 1976:273)

The external elements that limit political activity are mostly related to state policy or regulation. The state has played a significant part in the process of containing union activity to the economic realm by gradually enshrining certain collective bargaining rights within a legal and penal structure - a process that has also tended to bureaucratize trade unions (Huxley 1979; Palmer 1984:32).

Gramsci (1968) felt that the concentration of union activities in the collective bargaining arena restricted the union movement to legalistic solutions, thereby limiting their

ability to transcend the economic role they played. The institutionalization of trade unions increasingly regulated trade union activity. The power and actions of unions became dependent on and patterned by government framework (Mills 1948). Bargaining and handling of grievances became more the domain of an increasing number of professional staff representatives oriented to legalistic resolutions and dependent on the state apparatus (Palmer 1984:32; Calvert 1983:26).

This institutionalization has had the effect of increasingly defining the role, both ideologically and legislatively, of the labour movement as economic and not political. These ideological blinkers often determine the role of the union leadership, their words, and their actions and would prove critical during the 1983 Solidarity struggle. Consider, for example, the following statement made by a Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee member which demonstrates a self-imposed limitation to political action within her union:

...we're certified under the Labour Code, we're given certain powers that relate to our own membership and that's their legal basis... they strike on the collective agreement, not on a wider social issue. I can't see a union going out on strike because there's a piece of legislation that says that... they are going to cut the welfare rates in half... unions have got to be careful on what their mandate is. (personal interview with Nora Paton, Nurses Union, 1986)

The source of this ideological perception - the institutionalization of the B.C. labour movement - long predates the Solidarity conflict of 1983. Following World War II, the B.C. government moved quickly into the field of labour

legislation. While labour in the private sector was given the right to collective bargaining, a number of restrictive amendments in this and in subsequent legislation severely limited union actions. Unions began to respond to an increasingly complex labour law that forced them to change their structure and operating style. Collective bargaining and the handling of grievances and arbitrations were increasingly handled by hired experts who could deal with the technical nature of the new system. This procedure fostered a legalistic practice and way of thinking among trade union leaders and bureaucrats (Calvert 1983:26). Labour Relations Boards were established to regulate union activity; for example, union strike votes were now legally supervised by the government. Trade unions became 'legal entities' subject to law suits and costly court battles (Phillips 1967:146; Jamieson 1968:384). There can be little doubt that this legislation had a significant effect on limiting trade union activity:

The legislative regulation of strikes also opened the door to the increasing use of injunctions, which greatly compromised the right to picket and to strike... Between 1946 and 1955, sixty-nine injunctions were applied for in BC, and all but two were granted... (Phillips 1967:146)

Further legislation outlawing sympathy strikes, secondary boycotts, and picketing except during a legal strike was implemented by the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett in 1959. This was followed two years later by Bill 42 which prohibited the contribution of union dues to political parties (Phillips 1967:156,157) - an obvious attempt to limit the

involvement of trade unions in partisan politics.

The coercive power of the state in the form of fines and jail terms increasingly threatened union leaders who defied labour legislation. Recently, some union treasuries have been subjected to enormous court fines.¹⁵ As a consequence of such legal actions, the trade union movement must consider the legal ramifications carefully before contravening court orders or legislation. Panitch and Swartz (1985) and Palmer (1984) have stressed the degree to which the Canadian labour movement is committed to that legal framework even where legislation may be abrogating previous union rights. The fear of heavy fines and the decimation of the union movement through actions similar to those used against the air traffic controllers in the U.S. were frequently cited by union leaders as one of the reasons that the Solidarity strike was not further escalated.¹⁶

That is not to suggest that non-parliamentary political activity disappeared with the post-war social contract or with the institutionalization of collective bargaining. As Phillips' (1967)¹⁷ study of the B.C. labour movement demonstrates, at no time has:

¹⁵For example, the small Canadian union, Pulp and Paper Workers of Canada (PPWC) was fined \$240,000 plus \$30,000 interest in 1985 in an arbitration award (personal interview with Stan Shewaga, PPWC, Local#8 President).

¹⁶This element is examined in Chapter Six.

¹⁷Of course, this study was conducted before the three year interlude of the NDP government between 1972 and 1975.

...B.C. labour ever faced a truly sympathetic government that would balance the scales between the great industrial empires of the Dunsmuir, of the C.P.R., of the lumber, pulp and paper, smelting and shipping magnates or of the many other employers, and the unions. Thus labour took political action early and continues to do so. (p.158)

Examples are numerous and seem to suggest (as Phillips does) that regressive labour legislation is one of the elements that tends to trigger political action and unite the labour movement. Bill 28 in 1954 brought warring labour factions within the province together. In 1965, a two-day general strike was only narrowly averted when the government met the demands of the BCFL by arranging for a settlement formula in a specific labour/management dispute (Phillips 1967:155). The B.C. labour movement played a prominent role in the 'day of protest' strike against the imposition of wage controls in the mid 1970's.

A picture emerges then, of a trade union movement that has become highly integrated within the capitalist system and regulated by state mechanisms. Economic activity supercedes political activity by the very *raison d'être* of the movement. As economic institutions, unions have no clear overall political programs and no long term answers to political questions. Indeed, they largely react to the political initiative of others.

CHAPTER III

THE STATE

The State and Capital Accumulation

The role and nature of the state in relation to capital accumulation and the labour process are important to this thesis. It was, after all, an attack on established trade union rights by a government promoting 'free enterprise' philosophy and solutions, that drew the labour movement out of its traditional economic role and thrust it directly into the political arena.

One hundred and forty years ago, in The German Ideology, Marx and Engels exclaimed that "The state is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests..." Since that time, various 'Marxist' interpretations of the state have emerged. Implicit in all of them is the importance of the state in the process of capital accumulation - certainly one of the most important interests of the capitalist class. The state, after all, comprises many of the economic, political, and ideological apparatuses which not only directly stimulate or maintain the private production process, but also serve as the medium through which conflict is dissipated and cohesion is maintained (Jessop 1982:19). At the very basis of state objectives are the contribution to the maintenance of economic growth (and therefore high profit levels), and equally

as important - the perpetuation of the capitalist system of production.

Various Marxist approaches to analysis of the state have appeared in recent years - beginning with Miliband (The State in Capitalist Society 1969) and Poulantzas (Political Power and Social Classes 1973), and soon after, O'Connor (The Fiscal Crisis of the State 1973). While all can provide a useful framework for analysis, O'Connor's work, which explains the state according to function, has had a greater influence on the development of this thesis.

O'Connor has put forward two main theses: 1/ "the growth of the state sector is indispensable to the expansion of private industry, particularly monopoly industry" and 2/ "the accumulation of social capital and social expenses is a contrary process, which creates tendencies toward economic, social and political crises" (O'Connor 1973:9, and Chapter 2). O'Connor is suggesting here that the growth of the state is related to both the cause and effect of the expansion of monopoly capital. Moreover, the growth of state expenditures and expenses has resulted not only in a financial crisis (that is, a structural gap between state expenditures and state revenues), but also in numerous social and political problems.

O'Connor's thesis rests on the basic premise that the modern capitalist state must try to fulfill two basic, but often contradictory functions - accumulation and legitimation. To

begin with, the accumulation function of the state includes providing the necessary infrastructure for industry, creating favourable tax incentives, regulating the labour process, etc. for "profitable private accumulation"(O'Connor 1973:6). In other words, capital accumulation is enhanced when the state assumes a substantial proportion of costs for roads, port facilities, railways, electrification, subsidized postal service or the construction of industrial parks. Favourable tax incentives may include deferred or reduced corporate taxes, direct subsidies to private industry, etc. Regulation of the labour process includes state policies and legislation intended to promote labour/management harmony while tightly restricting the labour process.

On the other hand, the state must bear significant costs associated with the legitimation process in order to promote social harmony and mollify the negative social effects of capitalist development. These 'social expenses' include such items as policing and penal costs, and the cost of administering the modern welfare state (O'Connor 1973:Chapter 6).

Deaton (1973) has identified a similar process of state involvement in Canada asserting that the growth of the public sector has been necessary for the expansion of the private sector since it compensates for inadequacies of the private economy. Indeed, the Canadian state has assumed a particularly active role in facilitating capitalist development from the beginning (Mahon 1977; Pratt 1977; Wolfe 1977; Gonick 1981).

Panitch (1977) notes that in terms of fulfilling its capital accumulation function, the Canadian state has undertaken four main tasks: 1/ provided a favourable fiscal climate for private economic growth, 2/ guaranteed the risks of production at public expense through grants, subsidies, depreciation allowances, write-offs, etc., 3/ controlled land policy and immigration policies while absorbing the social costs of production (unemployment insurance, medicare, educational facilities, etc.), and 4/ provided much of the technical infrastructure (through the state ownership of railroads, public utilities, ports, etc.). These measures were not employed with the simple intention of managing or controlling the economy but expressly for the ends of facilitating capital accumulation (Panitch 1977; Deaton 1972).

Of particular interest to this thesis is the manner in which the state has attempted to regulate the labour process and the consequences that have arisen from this regulation.

The Role of the State in the Labour Process

The role of the state in capitalist society is closely tied to the capitalist production process and therefore to the interests of the capitalist class; labour unions, on the other hand, are basically working class organizations representing and defending the interests of their members.

Capital and labour have conflicting interests in the production process. In order to remain competitive and maximize profits,¹ the capitalist must attempt to control all aspects of the production process completely. That is, it is in the interests of the individual capitalist to minimize wage costs, to maintain a flexible workforce, to manage and control the production process on the job site, and to replace labour, where economically feasible, by technology. It is in the best interests of labour, however, to keep wages as high as possible, to improve working conditions continuously, to maintain job security, and to struggle for the ultimate control of the work process itself.²

Since capital and labour have these conflicting interests, the state must devise methods to moderate and contain the conflict arising from these interests - a function that is most difficult with trade unions, the organized and often militant elements of the labour force.

State regulation of the labour process must consider various factors and interests if it is to successfully contribute

¹I will subscribe to traditional economic theory that profit maximization is the guiding principle of the business enterprise. The concept is not only logical but has been supported by empirical study. See, for example, Mason (1958); Earley (1956), (1957); and Baron and Sweezy (1966) for both the logical and empirical defense of this principle.

²From a Marxist perspective, the contradiction between labour and capital which results in the exploitation and alienation of labour can only be removed by the elimination of private property, the capitalist mode of production, and the wage system.

towards labour/management harmony and thereby enhance capital accumulation. Changing economic and technological circumstances within the capitalist mode of production demand ongoing attention and commitment from the state.

To begin with, the state as well as state regulatory bodies, must appear neutral in their transactions with labour, business, or individuals (in line with the pluralist theory that sees "the state as a neutral arbiter between competing groups or classes") (Panitch 1977:3). The state must also consider its own interests³, as well as responding to pressure from non-dominant classes. To show obvious and continuous favour toward any particular class at the expense of other classes would expose the class nature of the state and sooner or later invite challenges to its 'neutrality' and therefore to its legitimation.

The state's position is made more difficult by the varying interests and demands of the capitalist class which comprise competing interests and needs. For example, certain labour legislation forcing an end to a particular strike (e.g., in the forest industry) may be encouraged by some employers but discouraged by others depending upon economic conditions, competitive market position, and stockpile of goods, etc.

³Being the largest employer in the country, the state has an essential interest in regulating its own employees, especially in view of the militant trade union activity that has developed in this sector over recent years.

Present state involvement in the labour process can be better understood by briefly sketching its history. Three distinct eras have been identified in Panitch and Swartz' (1985) study of trade unions and the Canadian state - early repressive state policy designed to discourage trade union activity, liberalization and reforms designed to promote and control 'free collective bargaining', and finally an increasing tendency to limit if not end free collective bargaining in an era of "permanent exceptionalism".

As Panitch and Swartz point out, early state intervention in the labour process was often overtly coercive and designed to limit or discourage union organizing. Indeed, prior to 1872, trade unions and strikes were legally considered "criminal conspiracies in restraint of trade" (Scotton circa 1967:6).

Even the Trade Unions Act of 1872 granted no positive rights to unions. Yet as Palmer (1983b) and Robin (1968) have noted, trade unions and strikes were common across the Dominion of Canada by the turn of the century. Unable to halt the increasing tendency of labour to become organized, the state attempted instead to control the activities of unions through bureaucratic regulations, labour laws and ideological persuasion. In fact, the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital in 1889, the establishment of the Department of Labour in 1900, and the implementation of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act in 1907:

...were all indicative of the state's attempts to moderate and contain class conflict. (Panitch and Swartz 1985:16,17)

As Panitch and Swartz note, this early state intervention was "filled with coercive implications and restrictions on freedom of association" (p.17). Not surprisingly, this coercive nature and approach provoked many confrontations between labour and the state. For example, the Winnipeg General Strike, Nova Scotia mineworkers' and steelworkers' strikes in the early decades of this century, Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union activity in the 1930's and 40's in Northern Ontario, International Woodworkers of America organizing in B.C., and the 1945 Ford strike in Windsor, all encountered an overt coercive militant response from the state (Penner 1975; MacEachern 1979; Stevenson 1979; Bergren 1966; Burt 1979).

An abrupt change in the approach to labour legislation can be identified in the 1940's when the government began to recognize the rights to organize and collectively bargain (Palmer 1984:31). State policy followed a universal pattern which has been eloquently stated by Draper (1977):

It is the pattern in all countries that, as soon as the bourgeoisie reconciles itself to the fact that trade unionism is here to stay, it ceases to denounce the institution as a subversive evil that has to be rooted out with fire and sword in order to defend God, country and motherhood, and turns instead to the next line of defence: domesticating the unions, housebreaking them, and fitting them into the national family as one of the tame cats. (p.108)

Thus, as Draper has recognized, since the state cannot control the formation of unions, its next strategy is to 'manage' them

and make them directly responsible for the actions of their members.

In the Canadian context, the state was attempting to counter a growing working class mobilization, politicization and militancy during World War II. Union membership had doubled in the 1940-44 period thus encompassing over 30% of the non-agricultural workforce (Labour Organization in Canada, Ottawa 1975:28-29). One in every three trade unionists was engaged in strike action in 1943 (Sefton-MacDowell, 1978:175-196). Moreover, the CCF made a dramatic rise in the 1943 opinion polls as well as capturing numerous seats in federal by-elections.

Clearly, a different approach was needed that would promote social peace and stem the tide of militancy. As Swartz (1977) has suggested regarding this period of Canadian history:

...where industrial unrest is widespread, and where socialist ideology threatens to take root among workers, the need for state reform becomes apparent. (p.317)

Reforms materialized in two distinct areas - labour legislation and welfare programs, both of which were intended to deactivate worker militancy and encourage labour cooperation in the workplace (Whitaker 1977; Mahon 1977; Finkel 1977; Swartz 1977).

The Industrial Relations Disputes Investigations Act of 1948 (I.R.D.I.A.) gave legal recognition to private sector workers to organize, collectively bargain, and strike (Palmer 1984:31). During the 1940's, procedures were established for union

certification, unfair labour practice complaints, and requirements that unions and employers bargain in good faith. The intention was to establish trade union rights legally within a framework of capitalist relations that would encourage labour/management consensus thereby promoting industrial peace. Unions could no longer engage in recognition strikes nor could they strike during a collective agreement. More importantly, "they agreed in effect to management's right to control the productive process" (Andstein 1986:14).

As a corollary to the labour legislation, the government became committed to a 'full employment' policy as well as an expanding welfare program which provided unemployment insurance, pensions, social assistance and other social services (also known as the social wage). This combination of union rights and the extended social welfare program was the beginning of what many people have referred to as the social contract (Andstein 1986:14).

The social contract should not be seen as a 'gift' from the state or capitalist class. Rather it was gained through working class struggle and the realization by the state that changes in approach to labour relations and class antagonisms had to be made. As the Report of the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in British Columbia stated:

...it is better that they [the workers] be encouraged to establish legitimate unions which will be clothed with the responsibility for the exercise of power, and which will therefore, be more readily recognized and dealt with by employers, than that they should join secret

organizations, some of which are nothing more than a conspiracy against society in general and employers in particular. (cited in Mahon 1977:186)

This new era of post-war labour relations that was ushered in with the federal government's I.R.D.I.A. of 1948 was accompanied by similar provincial legislation. Shortly to follow was the Rand formula designed to increase harmony in "the interests of capital, labour and the public" (Rand 1958:1252). Moreover there was a gradual extension of collective bargaining rights to most public sector workers. These gains were made by labour during a period of economic expansion and an increasingly affluent society. The labour movement expected these reforms to be permanent or even liberalized (Panitch and Swartz 1985:22) but in the dialectic of class struggle there are limits to reforms. The state continuously made changes in relation to economic, political, and social circumstances and according to the needs of capital.

By the 1970's, the post-war boom had come to an end. Capital increasingly demanded concessions in order to combat stagnant markets, greater foreign competition, increasing resource prices and rampant inflation. Labour, through the industrial militancy of the sixties and early seventies, demonstrated its determination to defend its interests and protect its share of the economic pie. Governments faced ballooning deficits as their expenditures on corporate subsidies, social programs and public sector wages dramatically increased. One of the responses by the state to this culminating crisis was an attempt to restrict the

bargaining power of organized labour - first by 'voluntary agreements' and then by more coercive methods. This ushers in the most recent era in Canadian labour relations where the:

...ad hoc, selective, "temporary" use of coercion is not merely directed at particular groups of workers affected, or at the particular issue or emergency at hand, but rather it is designed to set an example for what is considered to be appropriate behaviour throughout the industrial relations system. (Panitch and Swartz 1985:36)

Examples of this practice are numerous - the Anti-inflation Program of 1975-78, the federal government's '6 and 5' restraint program of 1982 (Public Sector Compensation Act - Bill C124) or British Columbia's Public Sector Restraint Act of 1983, just to mention a few.⁴ This era of "permanent exceptionalism" suggests the state has reneged on post-war reforms which gave organized labour some semblance of free collective bargaining, by increasingly reverting to coercive measures designed to undermine union strength and militancy and to depress wages (Panitch and Swartz 1985:Chapter III; Palmer 1984:33).

At least three major elements can be identified in the state's approach to regulating the labour process - labour legislation, regulatory bodies and ideological means.

Numerous broad legislative measures that the state has used to regulate inflation and limit public and private sector wage

⁴An exhaustive list of the temporary and permanent restrictive legislative measures enacted by the federal and provincial governments between June 1982 and August 1984 appears in Panitch and Swartz (1985) From Consent to Coercion: the Assault on Trade Union Freedoms.

demands have already been mentioned. Of equal importance, labour legislation combined with regulatory bodies establish a number of conciliatory and arbitrary measures that are designed to directly curtail, prevent or limit work stoppages - (measures which have increasingly tended to bureaucratize the union movement) (Huxley 1979:232; Mills 1948:229). State regulatory bodies such as Labour Relations Boards attempt to regulate and settle four types of industrial disputes (Woods 1955:447, 448): recognition disputes, interest disputes, rights disputes, and jurisdictional disputes. Regarding the limited right to strike, Woods notes:

Only in the case of disputes over the terms of an agreement in the making have we retained for the parties the role of ultimate decision-making. Here only is the right to resort to a work stoppage preserved and even that is seriously restrained by the compulsory conciliation requirements of the law. (Woods 1955:451, 452)

Even once labour unions have cleared the numerous hurdles permitting them to strike, the coercive power of the state is still used to regulate, limit, or restrict strike activity.⁵

Of equal or even greater importance in the regulation of the labour process is the role of ideology - a method that lacks the

⁵For example, in the province of British Columbia, ex parte injunctions have often taken the form of 'cease and desist' orders to prevent picketing. In Alberta, unprecedented restrictions on picketing at the Gainers' meat packing plant in Edmonton were ordered by court injunctions. For instance, strikers were not allowed to picket closer than eighty feet from the plant gate, nor were they allowed to use loudspeakers. The injunctions enforced 'stationary picketing' which required numbered picketers to stand in front of an identical number on a wall (United Electrical Workers News, Aug.7, 1986). Moreover, in September 1986, the union involved in the strike at Gainers was fined \$12,000.00 for disobeying a court order limiting the number of workers at the struck work site.

overt coercive trappings of legislation or regulatory bodies.

In capitalist society, trade unions have the contradictory character of supporting workers interests against those of capital, while simultaneously playing a role in the domination of the workers (Porter 1965:312; Mills 1948:365; Mahon 1977:183). Trade union leaders play a critical role in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the rank and file - a fact that has long been recognized by the state and employers:

The existing union leadership was thus viewed as a crucial mediating force which needed to be supported by both the employers and the state if industrial conflict was to be contained within institutionalized channels. (Huxley 1979:235)

As Mills (1948) notes, most union leaders operate within a liberal ideology that does not see the relationship between business and labour in terms of class or class interests. Identifying with the well-being of capital can obviously be detrimental to the interests of labour. On the ideological level, state policies are often designed to win labour's commitment to the developmental strategy of the hegemonic faction (Mahon 1977:172). This developmental strategy is often couched in terms of 'national interest' or 'common good'. In pursuit of the 'national interest', the state has often attempted to integrate Canadian unions into some form of tripartism (Panitch 1977; Wolfe 1977, Black 1983, and Gandall 1985). Yet as Panitch (1985) notes, this attempt to form a social consensus has met with rather limited success in Canada. Hesitation on behalf of labour is due in part to repressive

policies and legislation the state has directed towards labour over the years, and also to the fact that the state has nothing tangible to offer the labour movement.

Thus, while the state has attempted in various ways to regulate the labour process in order to reduce industrial conflict, certain structural problems are difficult if not impossible to overcome. These arise from the contradictory interests of capital and labour. In order to implement policies aimed at creating favourable conditions for capital accumulation, an assault must be made against the strength of organized labour. On the other hand, in order to appease labour, the state must operate in a manner that will have a negative effect on capital accumulation, thereby alienating the capitalist class. In times of acute economic crisis, this contradiction will become more apparent. The state has less room to manoeuvre and its labour relations policies become more easily identified with the general interests of the capitalist class and therefore antagonistic to labour. Perhaps nowhere in Canada has this been more evident than in recent developments in the province of British Columbia.

Of course, in B.C. or elsewhere, the ability of the state to introduce policy changes unfavourable to the labour movement and the working class are somewhat dependent on the level of organized reaction to it. This point was not lost on Michael Walker, director of the right-wing Fraser Institute, who suggests that:

The failure of the Solidarity Coalition to make a fundamental dent in the policy position of the B.C. government makes it highly unlikely that such activities would be successful elsewhere. It is doubtful that in any other jurisdiction, the reaction could be as concentrated or successfully mounted. In that sense the B.C. scene was a laboratory in policy change. The experiment decisively demonstrated the power of government to accomplish large changes in the environment if that is their desire.⁶ (Walker 1984:9)

As Walker suggests, B.C. was seen as a laboratory for curtailing labour's rights. The outcome of this experiment was to be closely analyzed by other right-wing governments intent on implementing policies and legislation beneficial to business interests. That is, governments intent on establishing similar legislation would know what kind of reaction to expect from organized labour and its allies, and can thereby attempt to neutralize this opposition. The results of this struggle are also of fundamental interest to individuals and groups intent on defending and promoting working class interests and established social programs and who wish to reverse the tide of right-wing politics so evident in British Columbia.

⁶Michael Walker's statement is perhaps an oversimplification. For example, it could also be argued that the very size and intensity of the Solidarity campaign may have the effect of deterring or at least moderating future government actions.

CHAPTER IV

BRITISH COLUMBIA: THE STATE IN CRISIS

It has been recognized that the state must continuously attempt to balance the processes of capital accumulation and legitimation. This function is made problematic by chaotic capitalist economic cycles which often force governments to make choices between stimulating capital accumulation and maintaining costly social services. When faced by shrinking revenues and a faltering economy, governments may shift their spending priorities significantly in favour of capital accumulation. In the case of British Columbia, recent government policy took the form of substantial state expenditures intended to stimulate the private sector while commitment to social spending was reduced. Concurrent labour legislation was designed to further restrict the bargaining power and established rights of trade unions thereby benefitting capital while easing the pressure on the state's public sector wage bill.

The international recession of the early 1980's severely affected B.C.'s resource-based economy. Slumping demand for primary resources resulted in decreasing commodity prices and the subsequent closing of numerous resource-related industries. For the government, this economic downturn meant a significant loss in tax revenues and a worsening deficit position. State workers, attempting to recover from the effects of unprecedented inflation, further challenged the provincial treasury with

significant wage demands. This culminated when the Social Credit government was required to renew its electoral mandate. As part of a re-election ploy, the government skillfully created an 'ideology of restraint'. While this ideology stressed the reality of the province's serious economic decline, it obfuscated the increased provincial budget and large state expenditures on megaproject construction. The ideology of restraint insinuated that the economic direction of the new Social Credit budget and legislative package was simply dictated by economic necessity. However, I will attempt to show that government priorities were strongly influenced by the right-wing Fraser Institute.¹

Economic Crisis? The Ideology of Restraint

British Columbia has been described as a vast hinterland region serving as a source of raw resources for Eastern Canada, the United States, Europe and Japan (Resnick 1974). Indeed, the economic history of B.C. has been structured around the

¹It is important to realize that while the Fraser Institute is noted for its neo-conservative stance in political, social, and economic affairs, it is supported by and represents most of the major corporations in B.C. For example, membership includes "the owners of 24 of B.C.'s largest operating mines" as well as the province's top ten forestry companies (Malcolmson 1984:85). Moreover in 1982 and 1983, there were 53 different directors and permanent members of the Institute that simultaneously held 237 corporate directorships in many of the largest financial, manufacturing, and resource institutions in Canada (Stainsby and Malcolmson 1983:3). Indeed, 22 of the top corporations affiliated to the Institute had total assets of \$248 billion (Stainsby and Malcolmson 1983:3). We have a picture then of an ideological 'think tank' that is financed by and speaks with some authority on behalf of the interests of Canada's corporate elite.

development of a succession of staples - furs, gold, fish, hard rock minerals, and forest products (Innis 1967; Ormsby 1958; and Caves and Holton 1976). Dependence on the resource industry, (in particular forestry) has created a boom/bust economy in B.C. contingent on the world demand for resources. Social Credit governments that have ruled B.C. for 31 of the last 34 years have helped sponsor one resource project after another thereby fostering continuing dependence on the volatile export market for raw materials. Little attempt has been made to diversify the economy by providing infrastructure for manufacturing or secondary industry. As noted in Magnusson et al (1984):

Our resources have been mined for corporate profit at huge public expense, and we are left with a depleted fishery, depleted forest products, and huge surpluses of coal and hydro electricity,... the only nod towards something new is Expo 86: an extravaganza we may enjoy enough to forget that it does nothing to overcome the basic deficiencies of the B.C. economy. (p.273)

The collapse of the resource sector in the early 1980's was reflected in the overall economy. Reduced demand for lumber, pulp and paper, and minerals resulted in drastically reduced prices and profitability. Numerous mines and mills closed while others operated far below capacity (Globe and Mail, July 11, 1983:1). Factory shipments fell dramatically, new capital investment was reduced, while construction and housing starts slumped. Retail sales fell from \$12 billion between January and April of 1981 to under \$4 billion for a similar period in 1983; new motor vehicle sales plummeted from 148,000 to 30,000 over the same period. Business failures doubled between January and

May of 1982 over the same period for 1981 (Globe and Mail, July 11, 1983:1).

A shrinking export market for resource commodities, especially forest products and minerals, resulted in a significant increase in unemployment. Official unemployment figures grew from 6.8% in 1980 to 15.6% in 1984 (Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada).

In 1982 alone, the gross provincial product dropped by about 7%; it recovered less than half this amount the following year (Globe and Mail, July 11, 1983:1). The effect on government finances was severe:

By 1982/83, provincial natural resource revenues had fallen catastrophically, to an estimated \$544 million from the 1979/80 level of \$1,319 million... At the same time, reduced levels of economic activity in general, together with the accompanying reduction in incomes, led to lower revenues than in previous years from income taxes and the retail sales tax. (Schofield 1984:44)

Major concerns to the government were purported to be not only the deficits on operating expenditures but also the rapidly increasing provincial debt; it had been \$4.5 billion in 1976, \$8.5 billion in 1981, and was projected to be \$16 billion for 1983/84 (B.C. Credit Union, Economic Analysis:4). The rising debt and faltering economy were a significant factor in the downgrading of the government's credit rating and the subsequent increase in interest charges from major lending institutions (B.C. Credit Union, Economic Analysis:4).

It was within this faltering economic climate that the B.C. government introduced its 'restraint program'. However, while the recession has been characterized as one of the worst to affect B.C. since the 1930's (Schofield 1984; Malcolmson 1984), Rosenbluth and Schworm (1984) have stressed that there were no critical economic reasons for the 'restraint policy'. That is, unlike many provinces, B.C. did not have a structural deficit and therefore no long term economic problems. The implication is that the 'restraint policy' was a decision related more to spending priorities and re-election strategy than to economic necessity (Rosenbluth and Schworm 1984; Schofield 1984; Dobell 1983). Government savings from cuts in the areas of education, child and family services, motor vehicle inspection, and consumer and human rights protection totalled about \$100 million, a meagre 1.2% of the total 1983 budget (Kesselman 1984). Yet there was continued commitment to mega-project construction and an increased provincial budget. It could be argued that the cancellation of one mega-project such as Expo 86 would have provided several hundred million dollars (i.e., the projected deficit) for the continued support of education, health care, and social services.

An important factor here is the relationship between the newly created 'restraint policy' and the 1983 provincial election. In this climate of severe economic slump and record unemployment, the government sought re-election. Stressing the need to combat the economic crisis, they campaigned on a

platform of private sector job creation and public sector spending restraint - a strategy that reportedly won the election on May 5th (Province, May 8, 1983:B3).

A critical component of the re-election strategy was the creation of an ideology of restraint. Reminiscent of the neo-conservative Reagan and Thatcher rhetoric, Premier Bennett repeatedly stressed the 'new economic reality'. Terms such as 'restraint', 'downsizing', 'privatization', 'cost effectiveness', 'productivity', and 'international competitive position' were linked with free enterprise solutions to the economic crisis (Marchak 1984). Promoting 'recovery through restraint', Bennett rejected post-war Keynesian economics by declaring "no government can spend its way to prosperity" (Macleans, Oct.17, 1983:27). The declared goal of the 'restraint program' was to create business confidence by limiting government intervention in the economy and creating a favoured climate for investment (Schofield 1984:44, 45). The 'restraint' ideology can be readily seen in a speech by Bennett in March of 1984:

Two years ago, British Columbia was facing a major economic crisis caused by a shift in the world economic environment. No longer could we increase wage levels and public expenditures, while expecting the world to go on buying our products. We had to recognize our place in a changing world economy and adapt to circumstances beyond our control... employees must continue to be flexible, seeking wages and working conditions that reflect their shared interest in productive and competitive enterprises. [We must] ...respond to the demands of the world marketplace and become more and more productive at doing what we do best... (quoted from Marchak 1984:37,38)

The Social Credit leader is promoting the myth of competition

and free markets. This ideology masks the fact that the so called competitive free market in B.C. is dependent on government intervention. Private enterprise is sustained by a variety of government measures ranging from tax incentives to subsidization of new development to the provision of developmental infrastructure and the prevention of corporate bankruptcies.² In fact, although the Social Credit government promised to reduce government intervention in the marketplace, the 1983 budget actually:

...accelerated projects and funding from the Employment Development Account [to] assist the private sector to provide employment opportunities during the transition to full recovery. (B.C. Budget 1983:26)

The ideology created by the Social Credit government bears a remarkable resemblance to the ideology of its mentor - the right-wing Fraser Institute. Indeed, the Social Credit budget and legislative package were strongly influenced by this Vancouver based 'think tank'.

²Despite government declarations to the contrary, even government publications at the height of the 'restraint program' demonstrate the depth of government involvement in the economy and the continued support for huge capital intensive projects. For example, Expo 86 was approved after the beginning of the 'restraint program' and absorbed several hundred million dollars of government subsidies. The government owned British Columbia Rail built a \$455 million spur line into the privately owned North East coal project; the government subsequently paid off the railways \$470 million debt (B.C. Government News, Feb. 1984). More recently, B.C. Minister of Industry and Small Business, Don Phillips, arranged government subsidies in the form of reduced electric and water rates to "troubled industries" in order to improve their viability. These examples show the contradiction between government rhetoric and actual practice.

Since its inception in 1974, the Institute has promoted business interests while simultaneously attacking various aspects of the current welfare state. More specifically, the Institute has called for less government regulation of the market place, the sale of public corporations to the private sector, a reduction in social services, and further limitations to the power of labour unions.

Of course, it is one thing to promote certain economic policies in the public and private arena and still another thing to have them adopted in the form of government policy or legislation. Continued lobbying by the Institute however, eventually paid off:

Following the re-election of the Social Credit government on May 5, 1983, Premier W.R. Bennett invited Institute Director, Doctor Michael Walker to present to the cabinet the Institute's views on the appropriate structure of public policy for its administration.
(Fraser Currents, Fall, 1983:4)

The private meeting between Walker and the Social Credit cabinet occurred on May 29th,³ just six weeks before the presentation of the 'restraint budget' (Tafler 1983). Bennett suggested to cabinet that Walker would present "an independent overview" of the current state of affairs and would "challenge the cabinet" with his perspective (Tafler 1983).

³Michael Walker had met with the Premier and various members of the cabinet on numerous occasions before May 29, 1983. He was also the major speaker at the 1982 Social Credit convention. As Tafler (1983) notes, many ideas and policy directions developed and popularized by the Fraser Institute have already been transformed into government policy and legislation.

The cabinet was indeed "challenged" as can be demonstrated by the remarkable degree of similarity between the Fraser Institute's suggestions and the 1983 provincial budget and legislative program. For example, the Institute called for reduced funding to many areas of social welfare, the abolition of rent controls, cuts to education (both in staff and funding), a reduction in the size of government operations (i.e., in employees and salary expenses), and limitations to public sector unions (Stainsby and Malcolmson 1983:1-3).

The Institute was deeply gratified to learn that:

...the government of British Columbia adopted a budgetary and legislative program which conforms, more or less, to the policy outlook which has emerged from [sic] the decade long program of research at the Fraser Institute... (Fraser Institute Annual Report, 1983:3)

It would seem then, that the Fraser Institute has had a strong influence on the ideological transformation of the Social Credit government. As Malcolmson (1984) states:

The Institute has... played the role of transmission belt for the social ideas and economic perspectives of the New Right and as such has played an integral part in the rightward orientation of Social Credit. (Malcolmson 1984:85)

Intent and Impact of the Restraint Policy on Organized Labour

The Social Credit's 'restraint program' had a profound effect on the labour movement of B.C. The legislation has been described as "the most sustained assault on trade union rights in Canada" (Panitch and Swartz 1985:47). The intent and impact

of this program as it relates to organized labour should be understood within the context of the overall 'restraint policy'.

The policy, legislative package, and accompanying free enterprise ideology not only fulfilled the government's function of promoting capital accumulation but was also designed to benefit the role of government as employer. The overall intention of the labour legislation was to weaken the power of organized labour vis-à-vis the employer (public and private). A weakened labour movement does not have the same capacity to make significant demands on the employer nor does it have the power to resist changes to the organization of work. Thus, not only would hefty wage increases be avoided, but employers would be freer to reduce their workforce, initiate technological change, and structure work in a more profitable manner.

Part of the government's strategy involved a significant reduction in the size of public sector employment and programs. Many of these operations, especially those capable of producing a profit, were transferred to the private sector. Where private operation of services was not feasible for financial reasons, subsidies to private companies often replaced government administration (Persky and Beckman 1984:195).

The state sent a clear message to the private sector - a message intended to encourage new investment. Government is limiting its involvement in areas of the economy profitable to capital. Less restrictions will be placed on private investment

and operations. Moreover, the state will 'control' B.C.'s 'labour problem'!

The 1983 restraint legislation which was directed specifically at organized labour was part of a wider labour policy. The early initiative in 1982 (Compensation Stabilization Program) was augmented by the legislative package of 1983 and by changes to the Labour Code in 1984. While the confrontation between the state and the labour movement climaxed as a result of the 1983 legislation, there was lingering indignation over the previous year's Compensation Stabilization Program and anxiety over the anticipated changes to the Labour Code.

The Bennett government began its 'restraint policies' in earnest early in 1982 with restricted ministerial budgets, a hiring freeze in the civil service, and its Compensation Stabilization Program which was designed to restrict public sector wages.⁴

The implementation of the Compensation Stabilization Program (CSP) included the following measures: a ceiling on spending increases for the entire public sector, a two year program limiting public sector pay increases to between 8% and 14%, and a salary freeze for 700 senior public sector managers (Ruff 1984:155). According to the guidelines, the program was intended to restrain and stabilize public sector wages in order to

⁴One of the principle architects of this program was the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Relations, James Matkin, who left the government employ to become head of the B.C. Employer's Council in 1983 (Ruff 1984:155).

enhance job security and preserve social services within the government's "ability to pay" (Ruff 1984:56). However, the fickle and contradictory nature of the policy soon became apparent. Within weeks of the introduction of the Compensation Stabilization Act (CSA), Premier Bennett intimated that public employees may be asked to accept a pay freeze to avoid public sector lay-offs. Moreover, following the introduction of the Federal government's '6 and 5' program limiting federal employee wage increases in June of 1982, the B.C. government lowered the ceiling of the CSA to between 0% and 10% in the first year and to between 0% and 9% in the second (Ruff 1984:156). A compensation stabilization commissioner was installed to ensure that all public sector collective bargaining agreements fell within the provincial guidelines. Yet as Malcolmson (1984) points out, these early measures were haphazard in nature lacking any overall design, or coherence. They were simply "crisis management" reflecting the government's realization of the impending recession (p.79,80).

Once the 'restraint program' became more structured, several strategies can be identified: 1/the centralization of fiscal and administrative power in the cabinet or government bodies (e.g., the power of cabinet to set local school board budgets), 2/ the removal of institutions and processes designed to provide an individual forum for appeal or opposition to provincial government policy (e.g., removal of the Human Rights Commission and Rentalsman's Office), 3/ deregulation of private economic

activity (e.g., removal of rent controls) coupled with legislation further regulating trade union activity and 4/ the limitation to government spending in the areas of health care, social services, and education while redeploying money in private sector economic development (e.g., public service staffing was cut by 25% while a \$470 million debt repayment grant was made on behalf of B.C. Rail) (Malcolmson 1984).

Perhaps the best example of the government's intention to reduce the size and power of public sector unions can be seen in its dealings with the British Columbia Government Employees' Union (BCGEU). Prior to the imposition of the 'restraint program', the BCGEU had been preparing to recuperate the loss in real wages due to inflation over the previous three years. In the summer of 1982, the BCGEU was confronted with a contract offer of no wage increases and 98 'givebacks' or concessions from their current agreement (Malcolmson 1984:156). After several months of bitter negotiations and concessions on both sides, an agreement was reached that allowed for moderate wage increases and assurances by the Premier that "his government was the best guarantor of job security" (Malcolmson 1984:157).

Despite promises of job security, the government shortly announced its intention to reduce the civil service by 25% - a figure that was realized early in 1984 according to Provincial Secretary, James Chabot (Globe and Mail, March 19, 1984:1). The magnitude of this reduction can be seen in the declining membership of the BCGEU. From over 50,000 in 1983, the

membership shrank to 41,081 in 1985 (B.C. Labour Directory 1983, p.13; and B.C. Labour Directory 1985, p.12).

However, the impact of this policy cannot simply be measured in terms of smaller unions or a smaller labour movement. As Persky and Beckman (1984) note:

...the extensive firings have increased job insecurity throughout the workforce, thus tending to create a situation in which it is more possible to extract worker obedience. (p.205, 206)

In the midst of a severely depressed economy, workers had little opportunity to seek other work and because of smaller and weaker unions were less able to resist detrimental contract changes proposed by their employers.

The government attack against organized labour took a quantitative leap with the introduction of the July 1983 budget and Bills 2, 3, 11, and 26. The general intention of this round of legislation was to weaken the collective bargaining strength of trade unions, especially in the public sector. The government realized that legislation directed specifically at public sector unions would cause greater concern and reaction from this sector and a mixed response from private sector trade unions - thereby lessening the possibility of a united labour movement. While later amendments to the Labour Code would be directed at the entire labour movement, these amendments were not introduced with the 1983 package. In this manner, the government simply had to deal with the labour movement without having to worry about opposition from the non-unionized populace.

Bill 2, Public Sector Labour Relations Act, which was subsequently dropped by the government as part of the Kelowna Accord, was designed to remove the right of government employees to negotiate such items as hours of work, job reclassifications and transfers, job security, and working conditions (Magnusson et al 1984:28).⁵ Had this Bill been passed into legislation, it would have dramatically expanded managerial rights while limiting employees to collective bargaining for little more than issues directly related to wages. As Ruff (1984) states:

Bill 2 was an attempt by the employer - government - to gain through legislative power what they had been unable to achieve at the bargaining table in 1982. (Ruff 1984:159,160)

This Bill was seen as particularly damaging to the strength of the BCGEU that had only just won collective bargaining rights ten years previously and was not about to relinquish them.

Bill 3, Public Sector Restraint Act, represented an attempt to circumvent security clauses in existing public sector collective agreements. In its original form, the Bill would have given the employer the power to terminate employees "without cause" and under whatever terms the employer desired. While the "without cause" phrase was later removed, subsequent amendments

⁵Some of this labour legislation (e.g., Bills 2 and 3) was so draconian as to suggest that it may have simply been a bargaining ploy. Wilson (1984) insinuates that the government could have intentionally written some of the legislation in extreme terms so that it would have a "big stick" at the bargaining table and more "capital" to bargain with. Yet Bill 3 was passed into law and the government showed no intention of relinquishing Bill 2 before the Kelowna Accord. Therefore, it should be assumed that the government had the intention of proceeding with all of its proposed legislation where possible.

to the Bill were perhaps even more stringent citing the following conditions for termination - insufficient work, insufficient program funding, changes to organizational structure, discontinuation of programs, activities or services, or a reduction in the level of activities or services; moreover, the amendment was broadened to include lay-offs (Ruff 1984:160).

Bill 3 was designed to restrict the seniority rights of public sector trade unionists thereby allowing the government to reduce staff (union positions) in any manner and time frame it deemed appropriate. This was in line with the government's promise to trim the number of direct provincial employees by 25% or from a level of 46,806 in 1983/84 to 35,410 by 1984/85 (Ruff 1984:296n, original source, B.C. Ministry of Finance Estimates 1983-84, Schedule E, and; 1984-85 Schedule D). Plans to reduce the public sector are clearly spelled out in the following budget statement:

Public employees now make up about one quarter of the provincial labour force. The provincial government is determined to reduce this trend for the portion of the public sector under its jurisdiction... (B.C. Budget 1983, p.62)

According to Social Credit ideology, the reduction in public sector employment was part of the "downsizing" of government and the transition of jobs to the private sector which would lead to economic recovery:

Growth of government is being reversed, and the private sector is encouraged to increase employment... (B.C. Budget 1983, p.26)

Examples of this transition are many - government motor vehicle

inspection was discontinued, certain aspects of forestry, government computer services, a bus line, and tourist magazines were sold to private enterprise. Various other operations such as park facilities, court clerks, prison chaplain services, and homes for battered women and children were let for tender. In many of these areas union members were fired and replaced by other workers or firms that had competitively bid for the job (Persky and Beckman 1984:205).

Bill 11, Compensation Stabilization Amendment Act, was another important piece of legislation directed at public sector trade unions. It raised the ire of trade unionists by extending wage controls indefinitely; new guidelines of between minus 5% and plus 5% were established. This measure limited trade unions to securing wage increases well below the rate of inflation and sent a message to the business community that the government was committed to "Continue restraint in wage settlements, in government and in the private sector,..." (B.C. Budget 1983, p.6).

Bill 26, Employment Standards Amendment Act, abolished the Employment Standards Board thereby affecting the entire labour movement. Basically, it was intended to undermine established labour standards in areas such as safety in the work-place and pregnancy leave by removing minimum employment standards from all collective agreements (Magnusson et al 1984:282). Weaker unions were threatened by the fact that under the new regulations employees were able to negotiate working conditions

that did not even conform to the minimum requirements of the law (Lord 1984:182). Bill 26 suggests that certain benefits negotiated in better economic times have become too expensive and restrictive to capitalist enterprise. Therefore the state has provided an avenue whereby many of these contract provisions may be eradicated.

Finally, one more aspect of the 'restraint program' must be discussed - the new Labour Code. While Bill 28, Labour Code Amendment Act, did not become law until May of 1984, it is certainly part of the overall Social Credit strategy designed to tilt the balance of power in industrial relations further in favour of the employer. The Act prohibits secondary picketing, allows the cabinet to determine the regulations for all voting procedures (i.e., certifications, decertifications, strikes or lockouts). It also limits the power of unions to discipline members in internal union matters. Cabinet is empowered to designate 'Economic Development Projects' (Free Trade Zones) where trade unions, if allowed, may be subject to stringent regulations and prohibited from striking. Perhaps the most important element of the Act is the change which outlaws political protest involving strikes or other job action. The irony of this restrictive government manoeuvre and the complicity of the labour movement has been summed up thusly:

In the "new reality" of 1984, the thousands of protesters who took job action a year earlier to halt the government's reactionary course would be subject to fines of \$1,000 each and \$10,000 per day per union. The irony of this should not be lost: "ministerial consultation", which came about as a result of Operation

Solidarity's job action in 1983, seems to have led to a Labour Code that outlaws the very action that forced the government to consult. (Carroll 1984:107)

In many ways, the Labour Code presents more of a challenge to organized labour than did the anti-labour legislation of 1983. Through the amended Labour Code, the state has legally restricted the right of the labour movement to challenge state policy through strike action. Ramifications for organized labour are clear - the avenues for 'legal' dissent have been further narrowed. Moreover, labour's ability to challenge the power of private employers through strike action is also lessened.

The amended Code closely resembled the leaked draft obtained by Operation Solidarity in the summer of 1983. However, while the entire labour movement was apprehensive about proposed changes to the Labour Code, its immediate concern was to address the legislation introduced with the 1983 budget. This legislation, especially Bills 2 and 3, violated established seniority and collective bargaining rights of trade unions in the public sector. The legislation challenged the very *raison d'être* of these unions. Not to have responded to such a challenge in a significant manner would have brought the credibility of the affected unions into question. Indeed, the public sector unions perceived the immediate threat of the 1983 legislation to their interests and formed the nucleus of the movement that began the escalating strike action across the province of British Columbia.

CHAPTER V
SOLIDARITY IS BORN

At this conjecture, it is useful to examine overall reaction to the Social Credit budget and legislation - reaction manifest in the birth of 'Solidarity' or the 'Solidarity movement'. The movement comprised Operation Solidarity (the trade union component) and the Solidarity Coalition (the community component). Each of these components had: its own constituency, a different structure and process, different power potentials and different objectives. While the stated objective of both the Solidarity Coalition and Operation Solidarity was to force the repeal of all the offensive legislation, the Coalition was much more committed to this objective than was organized labour. The power relationship between these two components would allow Operation Solidarity to gradually take effective control of the organization and use it to address the concerns of the labour movement without satisfactorily addressing the concerns of the Solidarity Coalition.

Immediate Response to the Legislation

The magnitude and severity of the government legislation (outlined in Chapter 1), which attacked previously won rights and services, triggered an immediate response from a diversity of groups and individuals that would be directly affected - organized labour, women, civil servants, tenants, students,

teachers, users of health and social services, and recipients and proponents of Human Rights Commission services. Father Jim Roberts, who became one of the three co-chairpersons of the Solidarity Coalition describes the dimension of this emerging coalition:

...it was the broadest social movement, not just the largest but also the broadest that the province has ever known. Groups of people, categories of people who had never spoken to one another, who had never wanted to speak to each other found themselves cheek to jowl with each other, brought together by common concern... Not so much that they were personally hurt in all cases but... the body of society itself was being wounded by many of these inhuman Acts and undemocratic Acts... (personal interview with Jim Roberts, 1986)

Numerous organizations such as Women Against the Budget, Disabled People Against the Budget, Defend Educational Services Coalition and CIP Fightback were formed literally overnight to fight the proposed legislation. Dozens of previously formed groups, such as the B.C. Committee to Fight Racism, the Vancouver Status of Women, REACH Medical Clinic, and the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, perceiving the significance of the legislation to their members quickly committed their organizations to the struggle.

Emergence of the Coalitions

The collectivity of groups and individuals united against the proposed legislation eventually formed 65 coalitions in B.C. at the regional or local level (Nelson 1985:39). However, it should be recognized that many of them were not 'spontaneous'

community reactions. That is, where these regional coalitions did not form spontaneously, the process was encouraged or initiated by the B.C. Federation of Labour through its network of local labour councils. As a BCFL publication notes:

The Federation took a major leadership role in the formation of Solidarity Coalition. Federation staff and those seconded to it spent long hours contacting a multitude of community groups, inviting them to attend a formative meeting on August 3rd... A suggested structure was developed and an agenda worked out at that initial meeting... We must commend those trade unionists who took the Ten Point Operation Solidarity Program back to their communities and started to implement it. Many of these local Coalitions were developed solely on the initiative of local labour people... (BCFL 1983:32)

In this manner and because Operation Solidarity would heavily finance the Solidarity Coalitions, the BCFL and the labour movement at the local level gained significant influence in the structure and the operation of the local coalitions. As Nelson (1985) argues, "power was fluid and more widely shared at the outset of the Coalition, but with the passage of time, it hardened and became vested in the labour sector" (p.45).

One coalition that formed spontaneously was the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition (LMBC). The LMBC (later to become the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition and officially part of the provincial Coalition network) was an assemblage of over 120 organizations of diverse political, economic and social natures (LMSC 1983). For example, member organizations included the Trotskyist oriented Socialist Challenge, the Green Party, the Community Business and Professional Association of Canada, the Lesbian Information Line, the United Nations Association and the

Unitarian Church of Vancouver (LMSC 1983). The LMSC has been likened to the 'Little Parliament of the Left'. Left-wing elements from various political groupings and with significant political experience worked together avoiding usual philosophical divisions. Many moderates uncomfortable in this left-wing arena eventually dropped out. This group differed markedly from many of the other coalitions throughout the province which were influenced, if not formed by the direct initiative of the BCFL. Much of the political activity in the lower mainland was inspired if not executed by the LMSC.

Trade Union Reaction

Early 'grass roots' reaction to the Social Credit budget was so swift and vehement that the BCFL was temporarily caught off guard. On July 4, George Hewison, Secretary of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, chairman of the Vancouver and District Labour Council's Unemployed Action Committee, and Communist Party member called a meeting in anticipation of a negative budget. The meeting which took place July 11 involved representatives from a wide cross section of the community including teachers, women's groups, churches, senior citizens, tenants, and trade unionists (Garr 1985:117). This diverse assemblage was similar to the strategy proposed by the Communist Party in its July 1st edition of the Pacific Tribune which called for:

...the formation of a broad coalition throughout B.C. of labor, people's organizations, church and community groups, the NDP and Communist Party, to mount a united fightback campaign. (Pacific Tribune July 1, 1983:3)

No doubt, this early organizing spurred the BCFL to action:

Talk of the communists scooping the social democrats running the B.C. Fed was everywhere... The boys at the B.C. Fed weren't sure where all this activity was going, but they wanted to run the operation; and they certainly didn't want to follow a communist agenda. (Garr 1985:117)

BCFL's Public Sector Committee met on July 13th followed by the BCFL Executive Council two days later. Also on July 15th Operation Solidarity was established by representatives of virtually all unions in the province (BCFL 1983:20). The ten point program proposed by BCFL's Executive Council called for a united labour and community "fight-back campaign" across B.C. against the "vicious attack of government on the social, economic, human and trade union rights" (BCFL 1983:16).

The legislation brought down by the Social Credit government has been credited for bringing together various warring factions of the fragmented B.C. labour movement. For example, non-affiliates to the BCFL such as the Hospital Employees Union, Nurses Union, the B.C. Teachers' Federation, and the B.C. and Yukon Building Trades Council became part of Operation Solidarity. The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), a traditional and bitter rival of the BCFL, supported the "fight-back" campaign of Operation Solidarity in general, but declined to fully endorse the 10 point program. A number of reasons have been given for this including the fact that while

the program called for a no-raiding pact, BCFL affiliates were currently in the process of raiding CCU affiliates (personal interview with Jesse Succamore, 1986). Moreover, the CCU was reluctant to turn over funding and become part of a structure that it considered less democratic and less politically progressive than itself. Operation Solidarity would later exclude the CCU affiliates from formal deliberations because of their refusal to fully endorse the 10 point program. While infighting such as this was problematic for Operation Solidarity, the CCU with only 20,000 members in B.C. was too small to significantly alter the outcome of the struggle. The structure of Operation Solidarity built as it was by the bureaucratic and institutionalized trade union movement made it very difficult for all but a few union leaders to determine the level and nature of union activity.

Operation Solidarity was organized at the local level through the regional labour councils that were responsible for mobilization and coordination on a regular basis (BCFL 1983:32). The provincial counterpart of Operation Solidarity was the Trade Union Solidarity Committee which was composed of the 12 Executive Officers of the BCFL, the BCFL's 20 member Executive Council, and 22 representatives of non-BCFL affiliated unions (BCFL 1983:31). However, from this group a steering committee of 24 members was struck and "met on a regular basis to plan strategy and approve Operation Solidarity policy" (BCFL 1983:31). The nature of the conflict would be used by BCFL to

defend this bureaucratic endeavour:

The crisis nature of the past several months has led to many hurried meetings and many of the decisions have been made by the Steering Committee. (BCFL 1983:31)

The Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee (TUSSC) became the all powerful clique that would determine the fate of the Solidarity movement with little or no input from either the union rank and file or the Solidarity Coalitions. In part this was possible because of the power relationship between the Solidarity Coalitions and Operation Solidarity.

Relationship Between the Solidarity Coalition and Operation Solidarity

The community based coalitions became both a source of strength and concern to the leaders of organized labour.¹ On one hand, the groups broadened the scope of opposition far beyond the realm of the labour movement adding 'respectable' community elements to the struggle. On the other hand, the spontaneous democratic and non-institutionalized nature of some coalitions such as the LMSC challenged the bureaucratic leadership and institutionalized behaviour of the trade union movement.

As Father Jim Roberts relates, even before organized labour began to form Solidarity, the BCFL was uncomfortable with both the left-wing leadership of the emerging LMBC and with the

¹The 'Organization Chart' (Appendix A) shows graphically the structural relationships between Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition.

militancy of its actions (which the leadership of the BCFL thought would harm the opposition's credibility):

...we decided we would have a rally at the Stadium. Then we communicated that to the BCFL... there was no Solidarity existing yet... there [was] an emergency meeting... requested by Art Kube, President of the B.C. Fed... the burden of Art's communication to us was that he would much prefer, and the B.C. Federation of Labour would much prefer that we not hold the rally at B.C. Place. That we would wait for... a week or two and there would be a B.C. Fed led rally over in Victoria. Well, we were quite nonplussed by this. Why, what's the problem? We didn't understand that. We felt we were going along quite well, you know. We didn't need to be led, or unled, so to speak, by the B.C. Federation of Labour... [The B.C. Fed was concerned] that if this growing movement were seen in the public eye and particularly in the Sacred eye to be led by unions which were affiliated with the so called far left, and especially with communists, that this would be used as an attack against the movement itself... (personal interview with Father Jim Roberts, 1986)

In the early stages of the struggle, the leadership of Operation Solidarity often found themselves reluctantly agreeing to support certain LMBC activities so as not to be usurped by these left-wing activists - many of whom were also part of the labour movement. However, this became less problematic for the labour leadership once the LMBC had been brought under the wing of Operation Solidarity.

The BCFL was able to gain significant influence over Coalition activity in a number of ways. First, the BCFL encouraged all its affiliate unions to join the regional Solidarity Coalitions thus giving labour a degree of direct influence in the decision making process. For example, within the LMSC, over 40% of the member groups were trade unions (LMSC 1983).

Second, in August, the largest and most militant independent coalition (LMBC) became part of the province wide Solidarity Coalition network which was largely controlled by Operation Solidarity. This affiliation came about after an emotional debate within the LMBC. Some LMBC delegates such as Stuart Rush of the B.C. Law Union joined forces with representatives from the Confederation of Canadian Unions; this grouping feared that an amalgamation with the provincial network controlled by the leaders of the BCFL would mean losing effective control of the organization to less progressive forces (personal interview with Stuart Rush, 1986). On the other hand, a slim majority of delegates supported the motion to become part of the province wide Solidarity network being developed by Operation Solidarity. This group included not only representatives from the BCFL and affiliated unions but also members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) who represented several member organizations. Representatives favouring a closer relationship with the Solidarity Coalitions cited the benefits of a greater access to funding and personnel, the limited usefulness of parallel unco-ordinated movements, and the need for a united front (the latter two elements being instrumental to CPC philosophy) (personal interview with Fred Wilson, then Labour Secretary of the CPC, 1986).

Palmer (1987) has characterized the transition of the LMBC from an independent to an affiliate of the provincial Coalition network as a consolidation of the "grip of B.C. Fed. bureaucracy

over the burgeoning protest movement" which limited the radicalism and spontaneity of the LMBC (p.36). It should be noted however that Operation Solidarity was never able to gain complete control of the organization or eliminate its spontaneous and more radical behaviour.

Within local coalitions, member organizations had a certain degree of autonomy. On more than one occasion, they took independent action that caused consternation within the leadership of Operation Solidarity and the provincial Solidarity Coalition. In one case, women's groups organized a protest in front of the home of Human Resources Minister, Grace McCarthy in order to demonstrate the hardship being caused to women by the budget. Another independent action was orchestrated by groups frustrated by the lack of militant action by the BCFL. It involved an occupation of the Provincial Government offices in Vancouver and was organized by representatives from local coalitions as well as left-wing trade unionists belonging to Operation Solidarity (Nelson 1985:39, 40). Neither Operation Solidarity nor the Solidarity Coalition were able to sanction these group and individual actions. This type of 'unsanctioned' action was a source of irritation to labour bureaucrats such as Mike Kramer, then Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL, who had problems with:

...some of the loose loose setups in the coalition, in the community groups, with absolutely no rules of order... and no real agenda, no discipline, completely ad hoc formation. It was contrary to everything that we were accustomed to and used to... a lot of people couldn't and wouldn't accept it... (personal interview

with Mike Kramer, 1986)

Unencumbered by bureaucratic and legal restrictions, many ad hoc groupings within the Solidarity Coalition challenged Operation Solidarity to confront the state more aggressively. While the general strike initiative was not favoured by the union leadership, it was continuously encouraged by leftists and left-wing groups as the only meaningful strategy left open to labour. For example, the Trotskyist oriented Socialist Challenge pushed for a general strike throughout the month of October. In a ten page position paper, this group stated:

All attempts at partial strategies have failed - whether by rallies, petitions, lobbying or parliamentary manoeuvres. We in Socialist Challenge are convinced that the only practical step left for us to take is a full, unlimited general strike. (Socialist Challenge)

The 'Committee for a General Strike' was also formed in October. Comprised of a diverse group of organizations and individuals, its stated objectives were the withdrawal of all offensive legislation and the full restoration of discontinued services and programs. This group comprised several members of the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee and at least one member of the Provincial Coalition Steering Committee.²

Left-wing activists within organizations like the LMSC were continuously proposing strategy and objectives that the mainstream trade union movement found itself unable or unwilling to support.

²Information from a pamphlet called 'Unite for a General Strike' distributed by the Committee for a General Strike in mid-October 1983.

The third element of control that the labour leadership maintained over the Solidarity Coalition was through the structure of the Coalition itself. At the provincial level of organization the Coalition was known as the Provincial Solidarity Coalition (Assembly). It had ultimate responsibility for Coalition activities. Since this group was so large and unwieldy, most of the Coalition's activities were performed by a 27 person steering committee, mostly from the lower mainland (Nelson 1985:39). However, in actual fact, the day to day affairs of the Coalition were managed by "the administration committee". As Nelson points out:

Renate Shearer, Father Roberts, and Art Kube, who were appointed as co-chairpersons of the Coalition functioned, in concert, as this committee. Their responsibilities included: supervising implementation of policy; making public statements on behalf of the Coalition; and administering funds and staff. Shearer reported that she was largely responsible for organization, Father Roberts for public speaking; and Kube for dealing with Operation Solidarity, and, basically approving everything (p.39).

What Nelson does not point out is that it was Kube who was responsible for literally appointing both Shearer and Roberts (Palmer 1986:188). Thus, Kube, who was the acknowledged head of Operation Solidarity, was also not only a co-chair of the Solidarity Coalition but "the only direct link between Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition" (Palmer 1986:188). Moreover, the three handpicked Coalition organizers were all affiliated to or familiar with the labour movement - Clay Perry from the IWA, the HEU's Jean Swanson and Gerry Scott of the BCFL and NDP (Palmer 1986:188). Besides the organizers, three

clerical personnel were also seconded from the labour movement to work in the Provincial Coalition Office. Operation Solidarity committed \$20,000 per month to pay salaries and operating expenses of the Coalition (Nelson 1985:24). Thus, because of the structure of the Coalition, the financial arrangements, and the number of labour personnel in senior positions, the labour movement was able to gain inordinate influence and control over the Provincial Solidarity Coalition. Within this unequal power relationship Operation Solidarity dictated many of the decisions of the movement as a whole and became the major voice of the organization.

Yet it would be remiss to suggest that the actions of the Coalition were limited simply by the influence of organized labour. The fundamental limitation to the power of the Coalition stemmed from its inability to precipitate or even significantly influence strike action. The Coalition was largely limited to mustering support for demonstrations, rallies, marches, petitions, and of course, support for strike activities once they commenced. The ultimate power and potential action that could be launched against the government, then, was in the hands of the bureaucratic trade union leadership.

CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS THE KELOWNA ACCORD: THE LIMITATIONS TO THE POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF TRADE UNIONS

This chapter will attempt to show why the trade union movement of British Columbia was temporarily drawn out of its economic orbit and how it became engaged in a major political confrontation with the state. It will also show what led organized labour to abandon that political role, seek accomodation with the state, and accept an accord that was less than satisfactory to most of its community allies and even to some components within the labour movement itself.

It will be shown that labour was acting primarily in defense of trade union rights and only secondarily in defense of wider community issues. Once a solution was found to trade union problems, the labour leadership voted to abandon its political role, seeking instead to concentrate its activities in the familiar collective bargaining sphere and planning to challenge the government in the electoral arena in the next provincial election.

In Defense of Trade Union Rights

With few exceptions, organized labour in B.C. assumed a major political role confronting state policy and challenging the government primarily in order to defend established trade

union rights and secondarily in order to contest regressive social legislation that was deemed detrimental to its members and to the wider community.

Many trade union leaders have suggested that the labour movement was responding to the breaking of the social contract and that labour was equally concerned with wider social issues' (personal interviews with A. Kube, President BCFL, 1986; and Cliff Andstein, Secretary Treasurer of BCFL, 1986). However the fact that Operation Solidarity did not strike over social issues nor see most of the Solidarity Coalition's concerns through to a satisfactory resolution shows the obvious priorities in labour's commitment.

The alliance with the wider community gave obvious benefits to organized labour; that is, an alliance with community, church groups, and human rights organizations gave labour the 'respectability', 'legitimacy', and 'prestige' that comes with spokespersons such as Father Jim Roberts, Dr. Charles Paris, and Renate Shearer. Moreover, by September, the Solidarity movement would claim to represent 950,000 people - double the number that was part of the labour movement (The Sun, Sept.28, 1983:B1). Labour realised that in order to challenge state authority, it must have the support of the wider community. The pragmatic approach by labour is suggested in the following statement by

'In fact, the majority of TUSSC members stated that the labour movement was responding equally to the regressive trade union and social legislation (personal interviews with Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee members, 1986).

Clay Perry, an IWA spokesperson, seconded to the Solidarity Coalition as a staff officer:

We exercised little moral authority unless we were able to acquire support and work with community groups;... if we just objected to labour issues, then we would be isolated, and the other folks would be isolated, and (the Government) would pick us off one at a time.
(Nelson 1985:18)

Yet there were certain reservations about the nature of this alliance right from the beginning. Bill Clark, President of the Telecommunications Workers' Union and member of the TUSSC stated that the Coalition groupings should have set their own goals and agenda so that they would not get "left out or left behind" by labour. Clark felt it was an error for the President of the BCFL to co-chair the Solidarity Coalition because

...the trade union movement was in this thing as a result, initially, of an industrial relations dispute...
(personal interview with Bill Clark, 1986)

A similar view was given by Jack Adams, BCGEU representative and PSSC member:

...in the immediate first days, our first concern was the attack on the trade union movement - particularly the public sector. As we became more aware, we realized they were attacking the whole social structure... The major provocation for the labour movement, of course, was Bills 2 and 3. It was obvious to us in the public sector that were the government successful in what they were attempting to do, that collective bargaining in the public sector would for all intents and purposes be eliminated. We were concerned about all the other issues but our major concern was our own bailiwick, the trade union movement... (personal interview with Jack Adams, 1986)

It becomes clear that the trade union leadership was reacting primarily to legislation which it perceived to be harmful to its respective membership (especially the public sector unions).

Regarding the degree of involvement and commitment to the struggle by the private and public sector unions, Kramer notes:

...it was the public sector committee that pretty well took that over. There was a lot of interest and input by the other unions, private sector unions, - but it was more or less a public sector show because it was our jurisdiction that was being threatened. (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

The priority shown to labour's concerns did not mean that Operation Solidarity leaders were insensitive to the legislation affecting the wider community. Indeed because of the nature of many public sector occupations in areas of education, health and social welfare, union members dealt directly with problems caused by government cutbacks. In the words of Mike Kramer:

...the public sector... [deals] with the legislation that is enacted at various levels of government - and we deal with the services that are provided by government... we see how bad those services are, how woefully underfunded they are, understaffed they are... we deal with human misery and the human condition at its worst... (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on behalf of the Solidarity Coalitions or turned over directly to them (BCFL, 1983:3). On paper, Operation Solidarity committed itself "to the principle that all legislation affecting the Coalition partners must be withdrawn."² However there were obviously limitations to that commitment - many of which were self-imposed. At no time, did the Operation Solidarity leadership (with the possible exception of the BCTF executive) intend to use strike action to pursue the objectives of Operation Solidarity's Coalition

²This wording forms part of the "Ten Point Program for Further Action" adopted by Operation Solidarity on August 18, 1983 (B.C.F.L., 1983:22).

partners. In other words, the strongest possible action that trade unions could take was reserved to protect their immediate interests. Despite protests from the Coalition partners and some left-wing trade union activists that wider social issues should be part of any agreement, the top BCFL officials (Kube, Kramer, and Munro) repeatedly insisted that any strike would be over trade union issues. For example, at a province-wide meeting of the Solidarity Coalition, October 22/23 1983, Kube stated that if a general strike comes about, it will be over trade union issues, that is, Bills 2 and 3.³ Subsequent press releases by Operation Solidarity announced that escalating strike action would begin with the 'legal' BCGEU strike on midnight of October 31 if no agreement had been reached on fundamental issues affecting public sector workers (BCFL, 1983:27).

As Jack Adams, Chairperson of the Planning and Tactics Committee and TUSSC states:

...many of the unions that were out on strike were out legally over issues dealing with their collective bargaining, etc... that's what their members were dealing with at the time... concerned with social issues but the votes etc. were taken on the basis of collective bargaining... (personal interview with Jack Adams, 1986)

Thus, it is clear to see that many trade union leaders consciously or unconsciously separated and prioritized labour and social issues. BCFL, Secretary Treasurer, Mike Kramer fought

³Questions and comments from the floor of the assembly underscored the need for a general strike to force the withdrawal of the complete legislative package but this was rejected by Kube (personal notes from Provincial Solidarity Coalition meeting on October 22/23 1983).

bitterly to retain the original wording of a support resolution drawn up by the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee. The original wording called for "unqualified support to Operation Solidarity in its battles against Bills 2 and 3 up to and including a general strike". The motion was amended over Kramer's vehement objections by radical LMSC delegates to read that the LMSC "Pledges full and unqualified support to job actions by Operation Solidarity up to and including a general strike, in our joint battle against the entire legislative package and for full restoration of social services" (personal notes from LMSC meeting on October 17, 1983).

These actions show the BCFL's repeated attempts to limit job action to labour issues. It was only shortly before the strike deadline that BCFL officials suggested that if no resolution was reached over legislation threatening public sector unions that the goals of the Coalition would go on the table (Garr, 1985:144). In itself this strategy suggests a certain disregard for the Coalition's goals; that is, if the government backed down on the labour legislation, then organized labour would not strike on behalf of the Coalition's objectives.

The limited intentions of Operation Solidarity can also be seen in a statement made by Art Kube after the Kelowna Accord at the 1983 BCFL convention:

...there were certain dynamics last time through no specific fault of anyone, that created the impression social issues were going to be negotiated... As a result there was a letdown among many of the community groups in the Solidarity Coalition when the strike ended. (The

Province, Dec. 5, 1983:4)

One of the few labour organizations that appeared to be determined to struggle equally against both the labour and social legislation was the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). The BCTF Executive Committee voted 523 to 5 a month before the beginning of the escalating strikes to conduct a total membership vote on a province-wide strike in response to the government's budget and legislation (BCTF Newsletter, October 5, 1983:1). A commitment to 'social issues' can be seen in the Federation's literature.⁴

The wider perspective of the BCTF may be attributed to a number of factors. The BCTF has never really been part of the labour movement, seeing itself as more of a 'professional organization'. Teachers are not covered by the Labour Code;

⁴For example, a letter from Larry Kuehn, BCTF President, to all teachers on Nov. 1, 1983 states:

We are not initiating strike action lightly. ...What are our objectives for the solution of the strike? An agreement which achieves satisfactory solution of the following:

1. A limit is placed on the arbitrary powers granted school boards by Bill 3...
 2. The provincial government commits itself to a level of funding that is adequate to at least maintain the current levels of educational service...
 3. Restoration of collective bargaining rights for all teachers.
 4. A halt to the centralization of decision making in education.
 5. Access to post secondary education for all qualified students.
 6. Removing the limitations on human rights and democratic and social rights created by other parts of the government's current legislative package and budget.
- (Larry Kuehn, 1983)

their collective bargaining process has not become institutionalized to the same degree as the rest of organized labour. Moreover, in recent years a left-wing leadership has emerged and the BCTF has developed a strong social consciousness.

Outside the BCTF, militant opposition by key trade unions and trade union leaders against the wider social legislation appears to be quite limited. Colin Kelly, President of the Independent Canadian Transit Union (a CCU affiliate) was critical of the limited support given to the Solidarity Coalitions, claiming that his union members were "appalled" by the regressive social legislation and prepared to strike over this issue as well (personal interview with Colin Kelly, 1986). Several other unions outside the BCFL were strongly critical of Operation Solidarity's leadership and direction during this period - among them the CCU affiliates (personal interviews with Jesse Succamore, Jef Keighley, Stan Shewaga, 1986). However, these unions were isolated pockets within the labour movement, incapable of leading the struggle or fighting the government alone. Unions affiliated to the Confederation of Canadian Unions represented only about 20,000 B.C. workers as opposed to overall union membership of 484,000 in 1983. Moreover, the BCTF which demonstrated a will to defeat the wider social legislation was itself part of Operation Solidarity and therefore part of the decision making process dominated by the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Left-wing opposition to the limited trade union struggle was also apparent within some of the Solidarity Coalitions. This is where many labour activists devoted their time and effort. Yet because of their small numbers and the bureaucratic control exercised by the labour leadership, most of these left-wing activists had little influence within their respective unions. While they could and did give considerable direction within their respective Coalitions, the Coalitions themselves had relatively little influence over Operation Solidarity because of the unequal power relationship.

Organized Labour as a Political Entity

From the very beginning of the formation of the Solidarity movement, organized labour found it difficult to make the transition from an economic to a political entity. Most political entities such as political parties are organized around a certain political philosophy. The formation of political policies and the attainment of political power as an ultimate objective give political parties a sense of political direction.

However, as a trade union movement, Operation Solidarity had no overall political philosophy and its ultimate objectives were unclear. Several Operation Solidarity leaders including BCFL President Art Kube noted that there were considerable differences of opinion with regard to the movement's

objectives.⁵ Other leaders within the steering committee stated either that they lacked common objectives or that they were unsure of what the movement's objectives were. For example, David Rice stated:

I don't think anyone ever knew. I can be rather critical. It was one of the problems of the whole thing... everybody had a different set of goals for long periods of time... if there was one objective that most people had it was to somehow or other mitigate the effect of the legislation... (personal interview with David Rice, 1986)

Lack of political direction arose from the economic nature of trade unions. As economic entities, trade unions tend to react to the political initiatives of others. Trade unions have few political policies or long term goals generally leaving this problem for 'the party'. As Anderson (1967) notes, no trade union was ever formed for the purpose of challenging state power. When the question of long or short term political policies was raised during the course of my research, the most common response by union leaders was that their union was working toward the election of an NDP government. But, even here, as has been previously noted, rank and file trade unionists are anything but unanimous in their support of the New Democratic Party.

As Lenin has suggested, the sectional nature of the trade union struggle emphasizes occupational divisions rather than promoting working class unity. The lack of working class unity

⁵From my interviews, it became clear that there was a lack of common objectives and strategy not only within the steering committee but throughout the entire labour movement.

obviously lessens the ability of the working class to defend their collective interests. Within the B.C. labour movement itself, serious divisions exist. Far from being a homogeneous entity, the movement encompasses varied political philosophies, differing attitudes towards political action, and sometimes even competing and contradictory interests. While rifts within the trade union movement were suppressed or downplayed during labour's 1983 conflict with the provincial government, they were nevertheless still quite evident.

One indication of the divisions within the movement is demonstrated by the limited membership in the main trade union central body - the British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL). In 1983, only slightly more than half of the trade unionists in B.C. were affiliated to the BCFL through their unions; moreover, only five of the ten largest unions were affiliated to the Federation (B.C. Labour Directory 1983:13, 14). An examination of the reasons behind the lack of affiliation to the BCFL is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say, in most cases they are related to different internal union structures, varying political philosophies, jurisdictional disputes, and/or inter-union rivalries.

Neither are the interests of public and private sector unions always parallel; on occasion they even conflict with each other. This is especially true in times of recession when private sector unemployment is high and certain levels of taxation are required to maintain public sector employment or

pay for public sector wage increases (Shields 1986:25-29; Deaton 1973:49).

The contrast between the new style of professional sophisticated leadership of the BCGEU which has cultivated an improved public image for itself and the labour movement, and the old style of 'rough and tumble' leadership of the IWA's Jack Munro has been noted by Shields (1986). He suggests that the BCGEU had little difficulty with Operation Solidarity's attempt to form community alliances; however, the "Jack Munros of the labour movement" felt ill at ease and out of place with this new labour/community alignment (p.28). Consider for example the following cynical remarks made by Munro regarding a Solidarity Coalition meeting he attended:

...The Bennett government created the climate to put together a whole raft of groups of people who never, ever really had the ability to get together before. These groups of people all of a sudden find this fantastic power where people are talking about strikes in the public sector and strikes in the private sector and all this. Shit, they thought, this is fuckin' great. The same people who never ever in their goddamned life... ever thought that they would sit down at an executive board and make these kinds of decisions. Like, where the hell would you ever get enough people to attend the Rural Lesbian's Association meeting... sitting next to the Gay Alliance, sitting next to the Urban fuckin' Lesbians, and all this horseshit that goes on in this fuckin' world these days, making a decision to shut the province down. It was great. Trade unionists... we were the turkeys in the goddamned thing. Chicken-shit trade unionists. You could feel that we were the goddamned moderates, for Christ's sake. I should have been for all these causes, a lot of causes that I don't goddamned well agree with. I should have been asking our people, who maybe were going into a strike situation of our own, to come off the job. Well, that isn't the way the real world works. (Garr 1985:141, 142)

Trade unions in the private sector (especially forestry, construction and mining) have recently suffered large membership declines due to the recession and technological change. Therefore, their influence inside and outside the BCFL has decreased. On the other hand, the 'white collar' sector of the union movement (representing mainly government employees) has grown significantly in B.C. By 1983, six of the ten largest unions in the province represented government workers and the British Columbia Government Employees Union had surpassed the International Woodworkers' Union as the largest in the province (Garr 1985:13). Hence, a large segment of the trade union movement is dependent on the government directly as an employer; their existence is contingent upon the maintenance of the welfare state.

It was this increasingly powerful sector of the trade union movement whose interests were most threatened by the labour legislation and cutbacks to social services. Moreover, it was this segment of organized labour that responded most vehemently in defense of those interests.

The response by most unions in the private sector was generally more reserved and in some cases limited and tenuous. One private sector union leader indicated a lack of support within his union:

We found that about 55% of our membership really wasn't interested in Solidarity. They were interested to the social point of discussions but not of getting behind it and finding themselves on the picket line. (personal interview with Ralph Steeves, 1986)

TUSSC member, Roy Gautier admits that "some private sector unions didn't really support the public sector unions" (personal interview with Roy Gautier, 1986). As fellow Steering Committee member, Owen Dykstra states: "The IWA was starting to tell us quite clear that their membership was not ready to go out [on strike] at that time" (personal interview with Owen Dykstra, 1986). Some unions, such as the IWA had lost more than 35% of their membership between 1981 and 1983 (B.C. Labour Directory, 1981 and 1983), thus were understandably more concerned with their own economic welfare and the restoration of the failing forest industry.

The BCFL took a high profile in the struggle. The BCFL itself is not required to spend much time or resources directly on collective bargaining issues and therefore can devote more attention to political problems. As a central labour body, it was required to defend the interests of its constituents - the public sector unions comprising an important segment. Many leaders from the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) also played a prominent role in the Solidarity movement. However because of philosophical and procedural differences between the BCFL and the CCU, CCU delegate to the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee, Jesse Succamore was told in August 1983 that the CCU was no longer welcome at Operation Solidarity committee meetings. This action effectively removed the CCU from the central strategy meetings (personal interviews with Jesse Succamore and Jef Keighly, 1986). While Succamore was ostensibly

removed because of the CCU's refusal to endorse Operation Solidarity's July 15th Ten Point Program, underlying this division was the CCU's more militant approach and their concern for the Coalition's objectives. Succamore angrily voiced the following statement to Art Kube and Mike Kramer at a Solidarity Coalition meeting the day after the Accord:

The whole mobilization was basically a fight to have the government move on these social issues. It appears now that... the fears that the labour movement would look out for itself and turn its back on the old people, the poor people, the handicapped and the sick, have come to pass. (The Sun, Nov.15:A2)

Here again, the fractional nature of the labour movement limited its political unity and strength.

Organized labour's alliance with its Coalition partners did contribute to the overall strength of the movement. Yet this alliance and the individual Coalition groupings were not without their weaknesses and contradictions which limited organized labour's political viability.

Numerous trade union leaders cited labour's inability to interact and communicate with the Coalition groupings both on a structural and organizational level. For example, Nora Paton, TUSSC representative from the Nurses' Union stated:

...with the Coalition... there were too many agendas. With the unions we had an agenda and that agenda was to get rid of legislation that interfered with our collective bargaining rights. The Coalition side though, and the social legislation was not nearly as clear cut and everybody had their agenda... I never really did get a handle on the Coalition... (personal interview with Nora Paton, 1986)

Moreover, within the Coalition itself there were incredible differences in political philosophy. Obviously, when diverse groups such as the Trotskyist oriented Socialist Challenge and the Community, Business and Professional Association of Canada⁶ sit down at the same table, there will be little agreement on political philosophy, strategy, or long term objectives.

Even within certain groups belonging to the Coalition, major philosophical differences existed. For example, while Steven Howard, the representative for the Canadian Federation of Students to the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee is on record actively supporting a general strike,⁷ large numbers (probably the majority) of university students crossed picket lines set up at Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

To the degree that the Solidarity movement was united, it was in opposition to certain legislation that affected particular jurisdictions and not in pursuit of a positive overall platform. Even here, as has been shown, support from some groups was tenuous. Generally speaking, the different components of the labour movement reacted according to the

⁶Both these organizations belonged to the Solidarity Coalition and were present at the Provincial Solidarity Coalition strategy meeting on October 22 and 23, 1983 in Vancouver (personal notes from Provincial Solidarity Coalition conference, Oct.22/23, 1983).

⁷Leaflet prepared by the "Committee for a General Strike", circa Oct.15, 1983, Vancouver.

degree that they felt threatened by the proposed legislation. These differing interests were exploited by Premier Bennett who tried to drive a wedge between the private and public sector trade unionists; he suggested it was time public sector workers take some of the burden of restraint off the shoulders of private sector workers. The government, through deputy minister, Norman Spector also tried unsuccessfully on various occasions to separate labour from its Coalition partners (Garr 1985:143). These attempts were strongly resisted by Art Kube and both labour and community leaders. As a result the movement was held together quite successfully for a considerable period of time.

Liberal Ideology

Besides external and internal pressures which threatened to divide and weaken the movement, another factor which prevented the development of a strong sense of political direction was the pervasiveness of liberal ideology.

Williams (1969) noted that a "class collaboration philosophy" reflected all but a small section of organized labour in Canada. Especially since the post-war social contract, organized labour has concentrated most of its efforts in the collective bargaining arena.

While the trade union movement is certainly not oblivious to the problems created by capitalism, it does seek to alleviate them within the framework of the economic system. It generally

rejects the notion of a radical worker controlled economy and government in favour of a social democratic government that will hopefully create social and labour reforms amenable to organized labour. This liberal ideology is easily identified in 'A Declaration of Rights of the People of British Columbia' (Appendix B). This document was prepared by Solidarity Coalition council David Yorke and assisted by Clay Perry and was widely distributed after October 15, 1983. During the document's preparation, B.C. Law Union lawyer, Stuart Rush suggested numerous changes that would 'strengthen' the document and give it a more socialist character; however, in the final draft, Rush's more fundamental amendments were not acknowledged by the Coalition's council. For example, while one of Rush's amendments called for "a full employment society", the final document declares that every British Columbian must have the "right to freedom from arbitrary or unjustified termination of employment". While Operation Solidarity's charter calls for "the right of all employees to negotiate freely and collectively", it does not spell out the "right to strike" as did Rush's amendment. Moreover, the final document made no mention of Rush's amendment of "the right to the full enjoyment of the product of one's labour". (B.C. Law Union, Memo to David Yorke and Clay Perry, October 6, 1983).

The result of this liberal ideology⁸ is that organized

⁸Liberal also in the sense that it supports private enterprise and the profit motive as the basis of the economy (albeit with a guaranteed welfare state and certain controls over capital investment and operation).

labour does not analyze issues in 'class terms' but rather from within a trade union consciousness and according to how certain events are perceived to affect union members or the union movement. Union leaders tend to identify problems on an individual level and react on a short term basis.

Years of economically oriented trade union experience limit the thoughts and actions of trade unionists. The day-to-day experience of these people is negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, and the maintenance of the collective agreement. Not surprisingly then, leaders that have concentrated their careers in the area of collective bargaining largely define the role of trade unions around the economic needs or perceived aspirations of their membership.

During the Solidarity struggle, there is no doubt that a strong trade union consciousness existed. Organized labour realized the seriousness of the government's attack against its interests and formed a united front with community groups. Labour raised over \$1,500,000 within three weeks (Palmer 1986:185) in order to defend its interests, and to a lesser extent the interests of the wider community.

Yet many union leaders because of their economic orientation separated the 'social' and 'labour' issues rather than seeing them as a single working class issue. They separated what they saw as the attack against 'trade unions' from the attack against 'social rights and benefits'. The liberal ideology that caused

many of the trade union leaders to separate these issues also led them to the conclusion that organized labour could not strike over 'social issues'. That is not to say that social issues did not concern the leadership of organized labour at this time. Obviously they were concerned since the labour movement devoted a lot of time, energy, and resources in the struggle against the implementation of the social legislation. Most leaders noted that this legislation would directly affect their membership. However, because of their liberal ideology that has defined the role of trade unions largely in the economic realm, they were convinced that strikes could/should only be used to settle collective bargaining issues. The following comments from a cross section of the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee indicate the perceived inability of trade union leaders to strike over 'social issues':⁹

...we had many many affiliates... and their agreements were expired and we had the legal rights to withdraw our labour... you had to have legal rights to withdraw your labour with the issues that were under your present collective agreements. Social issues are not on the bargaining table. I think we were trying to say we can't strike, our membership will not rally behind something that is not on the table, that is not in their agreement, is not there to bargain on, grieve on, and withdraw your labour on... (personal interview with Len Ruel, CLC, 1986)

...the labour movement in British Columbia or in Canada, on a broader basis, has not been accustomed to dealing with social issues. It's been the traditional bread and butter kind of issues that relate directly to the union

⁹In the course of my research the overwhelming majority of the TUSSC members indicated that organized labour could not or should not strike over 'social issues'. The most common explanations were that unions did not have the legal right, that it was beyond the unions' mandate, or that rank and file members would not support such a strike.

member. (personal interview with Leif Hansen, United Food and Allied Workers, 1986)

One TUSSC member suggested that social issues could be defended by trade unions but only if negotiations also included trade union issues. The inference here is that since the major trade union contentions were to some degree alleviated, the trade union movement had no alternative but to downgrade the 'social issues'.

The social issues, yes with other issues, yes by all means. If all other [trade union] issues are removed from the table and only social issues are left... It would be very difficult... (personal interview with Owen Dykstra, CUPE, 1986)

Some TUSSC members did question the limited economic function of trade union activity.

I think the view expressed by Kramer and Munro and Kube is a part of that post-war consensus that nobody really stopped to question and that's one of the real limitations, one of the real problems we had with Solidarity that... none of us really examined... what those traditions meant!¹⁰ (personal interview with Larry Kuehn, BCTF, 1986)

Kuehn went on to decry trade unions that were unwilling to challenge those of authority in political institutions, suggesting that:

...we are the people and sometimes political power gets exercised in different ways. Sometimes its at the ballot box, sometimes its by using our collective strength as workers to take action. (personal interview with Larry Kuehn, BCTF, 1986)

Cliff Andstein, present Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL takes a

¹⁰The three top ranking officers of the BCFL in 1983 (Kube, Kramer, and Munro) are all on record saying that organized labour cannot strike over social issues.

similar view:¹¹

...I think striking over social issues is much more difficult than striking over collective bargaining issues. But, then in some cases, you can't restrict them. It's a question of expanding collective bargaining issues to include social issues. (personal interview with Cliff Andstein, 1986)

However, Art Kube more typically represents the mainstream of the labour leadership on this issue. Following the settlement at Kelowna, he defended the labour movement's decision not to escalate the strikes in support of 'non-union' issues. Kube stated that social issues were not on the bargaining table because "we didn't think we could fight for social issues. I don't think we had the right to continue the strike. Operation Solidarity made that decision" (personal notes from LMSC meeting, Nov.14, 1983, Fishermen's Hall, Vancouver).

When severe problems arise, union leaders tend to question the management of the capitalist system rather than the system itself. For most leaders, the ultimate political solution is the election of an NDP government. Most trade union leaders actively support or are members of the New Democratic Party. Considered by most union leaders to be labour's party, the NDP when elected is expected to improve labour legislation and establish social legislation in keeping with labour's wider social philosophy. As Mike Kramer of CUPE states:

¹¹While Cliff Andstein was not actually a member of the TUSSC, he played an influential role in the Solidarity struggle as head of the BCGEU bargaining committee.

Our union is committed by convention to a social democratic form of government and we work towards that end. We have no reservation or hesitation to identify the NDP as the legislative arm of the labour community... (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

Ideologically convinced of the separation between the economic role of organized labour and the political role of 'the party', union leaders felt uncomfortable when they found themselves at the head of a political struggle.

...It was very very awkward... for us as well as for our party... we were speaking as politicians rather than as trade unionists... there were... [leaders with] a lot of sweaty palms in the back room... there were a lot of hats we were wearing that we certainly weren't comfortable with... (personal interview with Len Ruel, TUSSC, 1986)

Bureaucratic and Legalistic Restrictions

It is perhaps an understatement to say that the actions of the trade union movement are shaped and tempered by bureaucratic and legalistic restrictions. The degree to which labour has become institutionalized and operates within a tightly circumscribed government framework has been described in Chapter Two. It will be argued that the bureaucratic nature of the labour movement as well as state regulatory bodies also contributed to the inability of labour to confront the government successfully during the summer and fall of 1983.

It has been shown that the main and constant function of trade unions is to contract labour to the employer and negotiate the terms of the contract. The establishment of the post-war

social contract gave collective bargaining rights to unions within a bureaucratic framework of government restrictions. Through the post-war pact, the state intended to harmonize and stabilize labour/management relations within the structural framework of government regulations.

Within this all encompassing bureaucratic structure, success as a trade union professional or leader came to be defined in terms of successful labour contracts. That is, contracts that provided acceptable wage increases with the minimum of strikes or 'labour unrest' became the order of the day. Consider, for example, the following statement by an Operation Solidarity trade union leader that gives an indication of how some union leaders have come to view the most militant action that organized labour can take:

...And strikes, I've been through them. I kid you not. Strikes mean problems. Workers have problems at home. They have problems with their marriages, with their families, with booze... Everything comes undone. There's no money. The people, the wives get despondent; the families get upset... And strikes are problems. My, my, my, they're problems. (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

A myriad of lawyers, researchers, and other professionals have been hired to look after the day-to-day business affairs of the union in the rapidly expanding technical structure of business/union/state relations. This bureaucratic trade union personnel is often far removed from every day shop floor problems and often not directly responsible to the rank and file as elected officials. Much of their work is conducted within

state institutions designed specifically to circumscribe union activity. The following description of the scene at the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB) during the second week of the Solidarity strike describes the activity in just one of these bureaucratic institutions:

The Labour Relations Board was a three-ring circus. The BCGEU negotiations were going on at one end of the second floor. The meeting rooms at the other end of the second floor were full of community college management and their lawyers trying to get injunctions to stop picketing by the union types... and their lawyers sitting across the table from them. On the third floor there were the secret meetings... (Garr 1985:150)

Acting as legal council for unions in the educational sector during this period, Leo McGrady describes lawyers for all sides:

...descending into this dark tunnel [LRB] on Monday afternoon at about one o'clock and we lived at the Labour Relations Board until the following Sunday... Nobody won anything... (personal interview with Leo McGrady, 1986)

It is germane that the very institutions (such as the LRB) that regulated labour/management relations during the social contract were also used by the state to mitigate trade union reaction to the breaking of that social contract. The provincial government's decision to change the rules - to break the social contract - was seen as a betrayal by union leaders who had come to see the post-war gains as cumulative and irreversible. The powerful union bureaucracy responded in a manner consistent with its post-war tradition of negotiation, conciliation, and compromise. Yet negotiation and conciliation require the willing participation of both adversaries. Repeated pleas by the union movement for meaningful amendments to the legislated package

were rejected by Premier Bennett who vowed that "We will never back down on the policies we advocate" (The Sun, Oct. 14, 1983:2). Neither would the intransigent government respond to labour's political party nor to the normal channels of trade union dissent (lobbying, petitions, and demonstrations).

Steeped in the tradition of collective bargaining, the union leadership was reluctant to adopt a militant strategy even when regular channels of dissent were closed by the government. BCFL President, Art Kube, stated ad nauseam that the Federation did not want a general strike. In fact, from the beginning, the leadership was even hesitant to discuss the possibility of a general strike. A general strike was seen as a foreign concept and feared by the majority of the union leadership. This stems from the fact that the labour leadership did not feel comfortable taking on a major political role and confronting the state.¹² The following statement by Kube, the acknowledged head of the Solidarity movement clearly shows the philosophical commitment of organized labour to the institutionalized bureaucratic process of collective bargaining and its preference to let the NDP fight for labour's legislative needs:

...generally it should be said that the trade union movement felt uncomfortable with that particular role [leading the Solidarity movement] because the trade union movement's main line of thinking was let's go and negotiate a collective agreement... let's engage ourselves in combat with the employers to achieve the best possible deal for workers through the process of collective bargaining, and then on the second instance, let's support a political party to do our fighting on

¹²My interviews confirmed that a large number of the TUSSC felt very uncomfortable leading the Solidarity movement.

the legislative front... (personal interview with Art Kube, 1986)

It was only after several months of government intransigence to labour's concerns that the general strike alternative was seriously considered. At this point, the general strike, in some form, was literally the only option left open to organized labour. The fact that organized labour did reluctantly and cautiously proceed with a plan for an escalating public sector strike was due more to the uncompromising position of the government than militancy within the labour leadership.

State Coercion

While the leadership of Operation Solidarity was restricted by union bureaucracy and post-war practices, they were also encumbered by coercive legal structures and processes. The effect that court injunctions and LRB rulings had on the final outcome of the B.C. Solidarity strike cannot be underestimated. The post-war social contract that permitted free collective bargaining did so within the framework of restrictive government legislation intended to closely regulate trade union actions. Unions became regulated by Labour Codes and bureaucratic institutions that had both an ideological and material effect on trade unionists. Unions that violate state guidelines are subject to a host of sanctions. The power of the Canadian state is manifest in any number of coercive institutions - Labour Relations Boards, courts, police, army and penal institutions - all of which have been used to regulate union activity and

punish violators (see, for example, Panitch and Swartz (1985); Palmer (1983); Charbonneau (1979); and Stevens (1979)).

On the ideological level, people are taught to believe that a certain legitimacy accrues to elected government officials and legal institutions regardless of class relations or particular circumstances. With the post-war consensus and declining left-wing influence, there was a tendency to accept a hierarchy of power. Most workers have come to believe that they could not or should not question basic power relationships or the legal authority that supports them. A similar view is held by representatives of the trade union leadership as demonstrated in the following comments:

...when the injunctions started coming down that was pretty well the end of it... British Columbia, for whatever reason, is basically a law-abiding community. The courts have power and people respect that power and obey it, subscribe to it. (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

...the vast majority of people - its just inbred that you obey the law... (personal interview with Nora Paton, 1986)

The leadership of the Solidarity struggle in British Columbia showed a certain respect for and deference to the Labour Relations Board and the courts. Coupled with limited labour unity, reluctance to promulgate a general strike, and lack of an overall political analysis, this acceptance of legal authority made it very difficult if not impossible to successfully confront the state.

Where organized labour through ideological rejection of these 'laws' or through their militancy have chosen to challenge the authority of the state, penalties have often been harsh. For example, more than fifty trade unionists who took part in the activities of the 'Quebec common front' were given sentences of up to one year in jail (Charbonneau 1979:220). In British Columbia, Homer Stevens and another United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union official were incarcerated for one year for alleged contempt of court actions in 1966 (Stevens 1979:174). Failure to comply with the Federal statutory incomes policy of 1975-78 provided penalties of up to five years in prison and unlimited fines. In response to threatened retaliation by organized labour Prime Minister Trudeau cynically remarked "We'll put a few union leaders in jail for 3 years and others will get the message" (Panitch 1976:1, 18).

Fear of such state retaliation and the possible repercussions on the labour movement influenced the decisions made by the Operation Solidarity leadership.

...Were people prepared to go to jail? ...were the rank and file prepared to go to jail? Were unions prepared to pay out hundreds of thousands, conceivably millions of dollars in fines? Were they prepared to have their economic war chests totally depleted by that one confrontation when, in fact, the major agenda items in terms of the trade union agenda were to some extent at least satisfactorily adjourned? (personal interview with Geoff Holter, 1986)

...there were some concerns in the trade union movement that they would be bled dry with legal costs, wrapped up in the courts... with the power of the government and the treasury of the government. (personal interview with Monty Alton 1986)

There were also concerns regarding the personal safety and property of the trade union leadership as can be seen in the following statement:

...as officers of the Federation, at one point [we] were talking about injunctions. We all discussed what we would do with our own personal properties. It was done in a joking manner but there was that element of truth to it... We were numbered as Vice-Presidents, First Secretary, and I was tenth... We said "Well, Art [Kube] goes to jail first, you know, and then Jack Munro", and we went on down the list... Art Gruntman looked at me and he was eighth Vice-President [actually he was ninth] at the time and he said, "Do you want to trade places, Alice?" He said, "I'm not ready to give up my home" and I said "No, I'll take my chances at tenth". I suppose it was a bit of morbid humour but there is an element of truth in it. We were quite concerned as to what would be happening to our own personal lives.¹³ (personal interview with Alice West, 1986)

Lacking commitment to a militant struggle can be seen in the labour movement's reluctance to seriously contest the LRB injunctions to see whether they would be sustained in court. For example, once teachers were ordered to cease picketing, they never went back to the line to contest the threat of a contempt violation.¹⁴ This was in part due to the fact that a collective decision was made by the Steering Committee of Operation Solidarity that they would not recommend defying court injunctions (personal interview with Larry Kuehn, 1986). Obviously then, without the support of the wider labour

¹³There was also the possibility of physical danger to union officials at this time. The family of Cliff Andstein, chief negotiator for the BCGEU was under police protection after repeated death threats and several BCGEU offices in the Cariboo region had been "shot up" (Garr 1985:149).

¹⁴It was at this point that hundreds of volunteers from the Solidarity Coalition and other unions began to picket the schools (Palmer 1986:190).

movement, the BCTF leadership could not advise their own rank and file membership to disregard court injunctions and face the court system alone.

It has been argued that the pattern was set regarding obedience of court injunctions on the first day of the strike when the BCGEU dutifully obeyed an order by Chief Justice, Allen McEachern¹⁵ to remove pickets from Vancouver law courts (Quine 1985).

If Operation Solidarity reacted so meekly to an order signed by one man on his own authority... it would never be so bold as to challenge government authority. (p.17)

Lack of overall strategy to deal with court injunctions has also been cited as a fundamental problem for Operation Solidarity. Yet it should not have been so since injunctions are nothing new to the labour movement in B.C. Little effort was made to co-ordinate legal activity by Operation Solidarity. Offers of free legal assistance by several experienced labour lawyers belonging to the left-wing B.C. Law Union were not accepted. The union leadership did not see the legal encumbrances outside the normal trade union experience. The BCFL:

...couldn't break from their traditional relationship with the law [it was seen as] a standard legal fight... and fought within the confines of the legal norms. (personal interview with labour lawyer and Solidarity activist Stuart Rush, 1986)

¹⁵It is noteworthy that this order was issued despite Section 32(3) of the Labour Code which states "no court shall order an injunction to restrain picketing on an ex parte application" (The Province, Nov.2, 1983:4). This suggests that the order itself was illegal.

Leo McGrady, who was council to some public sector unions during this period states that there was:

...no planning or strategy around how you would resist the court orders and there was tremendous confusion once the cease and desist orders came down. (personal interview with Leo McGrady, 1986)

McGrady stated that when the Labour Relations Board issued a declaratory order (something that until that point in time, it was thought they didn't have the jurisdiction to do), "...a lot of unions went back just on the basis of that order".¹⁶ As McGrady observed regarding the legal preparedness of Operation Solidarity:

...basically there was no province-wide planning - no sophisticated approach - no discussion about what would happen. That was a fundamental flaw that could easily have been predicted. (personal interview with Leo McGrady, 1986)

The lack of preparedness raises the question of union commitment to a general strike. As McGrady notes:

They would have been a lot more successful in beating back the legislation by defying the court orders. It's so elemental a judgement that its absence makes you wonder about just how far the people in the leadership positions planned this thing to go. (personal interview with Leo McGrady, 1986)

¹⁶McGrady notes that if a union seriously intended to resist the order (as did a CUPE local at the University of Victoria) then implementation could be delayed for several days by forcing the LRB to issue a cease and desist order and then of having to register it in the Supreme Court.

Return to the Economic Sphere

To a trade union leadership steeped in a post-war tradition of institutionalized collective bargaining, leading a political movement that fundamentally challenged state authority was not a comfortable nor enviable position. Divided philosophically and by particular union interests, the Solidarity leadership found it difficult to agree on the movement's objectives and tactics.

From the beginning, most of the top trade union leadership (e.g., Kube, Kramer and Munro) were steadfastly opposed to any form of a general strike. Only when the state demonstrated total intransigence to the union movement's concerns about the proposed labour legislation did the Solidarity leadership reluctantly agree to escalating strike action. However, once the state signalled it would accommodate labour's concerns regarding this labour legislation, the leadership quickly came to terms leaving its Coalition partners in the lurch. Unable to successfully operate in the political realm, organized labour eagerly agreed to an accord allowing it to return to the familiar and more comfortable collective bargaining arena.

Strike Strategy

An examination of the strike strategy and actions of the cautious Operation Solidarity leadership suggests that they never intended a full-scale confrontation to take place; rather they wished to apply pressure to force the government to

negotiate. Negotiations are, after all, the process by which labour settles disputes with capital. This avenue was consistent with trade union practice and the logical method chosen to settle labour's contradiction with the state. Had the leadership intended an all out confrontation with the state, a full scale general strike would have been called (and at a much earlier date). Instead, the strike was planned in a haphazard fashion that ultimately blunted the possibilities for its success.

To begin with, several months elapsed between the time the government announced its proposed legislation and the labour movement reluctantly agreed to engage in strike action. Admittedly, some time was necessary to mobilize rank and file members and plan strategy. Yet, a great deal of time and effort was spent in dubious events such as securing signatures in a mass petition drive and holding candlelight vigils which ultimately "de-escalated the pace of opposition" (Palmer 1986:188).

The reluctance of the trade union leadership to participate in illegal or quasi-legal actions can be seen in the decision to begin the escalating strike action with the BCGEU which would be in a legal strike position on November 1st. The intention was that the BCGEU would attempt to negotiate exemptions from some of the most contentious labour legislation as part of their new collective agreement. Once the precedent was set, then all unions would theoretically be able to negotiate an exemption

from this legislation.¹⁷

The fact that the strike plans had included only the public sector unions reflected both the impact that the labour legislation would have on public sector workers as well as the lack of support for a strike by some unions in the private sector.¹⁸ Limiting the strike to public sector unions obviously limited the size and power of the strike. This strategy had little effect on the economy since the shutdown of government services usually does not directly affect industrial production. Indeed, during the escalating strikes, the government, crown corporations, and school boards actually saved about \$3.5 million a day in wages not paid to striking workers (Palmer 1987:65).

The choice of an escalating strike instead of a general strike reflected three main elements - flagging support from many private sector unions that were not prepared to take strike action, unwillingness to foster wide scale illegal strike activity, and fear of triggering an unwanted provincial election.

¹⁷This strategy has since proven questionable because it put unions in the position of having to trade something else for the exemption. It has proven particularly difficult for smaller and less powerful unions that have little bargaining power.

¹⁸Personal interviews with TUSSC members Larry Kuehn, Mike Kramer, Jack Adams, Roy Gautier, Monty Alton, and Art Gruntman indicated that while some of the private sector unions (such as the building trades, Canadian Paperworkers' Union, Longshoremen, and some of the CCU unions) provided strong support, others were less than enthusiastic.

From a strategical perspective, the choice of an escalating strike was dubious because of its potential to cause divisions within the movement by putting some trade unionists at risk while others sat on the sidelines. That is, it isolated certain unions by allowing courts to serve injunctions on some unionists and not others. The greatest burden was on those who were among the first to strike illegally or quasi-legally. For example, teachers faced Labour Relations Board rulings, court injunctions, government reprisal threats, and continual media harrassment.

Not only was there a reluctance by the leadership to promote a full-scale general strike, the escalating strike was never intended to last very long. In the words of Mike Kramer:

...it was my position early on that we shouldn't be getting into any kind of long thing [sustained full scale strike]... because you couldn't keep them out forever... That was just asking too much of workers to sacrifice their paycheques. It just wouldn't work.
(personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

Fellow TUSSC member, Jack Adams notes that "a lot of the private sector unions were reluctant to allow things to go as far as they did" (personal interview with Jack Adams, 1986). Anxiety arose within the Operation Solidarity leadership prior to the quasi-legal walkout of the teachers on November 8th. The teachers had based their strike on the quality of education and human rights issues as well as immediate occupational concerns; the leadership of the BCTF had spent a lot of time and effort discussing these issues with rank and file members. However, realizing that the introduction of 'social' issues would

complicate the settlement, some top leaders such as Jack Munro balked. In the words of Larry Kuehn:

...[Munro] could not understand and accept the kinds of things that [teachers] were talking about because his experience is in a particular tradition and it doesn't include the whole range of social issues that are part of the working life of a teacher... (personal interview with Larry Kuehn, 1986)

Thus:

[Munro] worked very hard at stopping the strike before teachers got into it... by attempting to resolve the seniority issue which was the issue that he could understand... He worked very hard at it... He wanted to bring it to a halt then... He, in fact, used the capital he had of favours owed and so on with a whole variety of people in this province to try and get that solution. (personal interview with Larry Kuehn, 1986)

At no point did the Operation Solidarity leadership ever plan or make provisions for a full scale general strike. As Mike Kramer states, a private sector walkout:

...wasn't our game plan. The leadership, we weren't looking at that... That meant there was going to be a general strike, an absolute total shutdown of everything in this province and we weren't prepared for that. We weren't aiming for that at all. We wanted the government to back down early on, as was our plan, to back down on that attack on public sector union rights... That was what we wanted out of it. (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

While the leadership of Operation Solidarity had no intention of escalating the strike into the private sector, they did threaten this action on a number of occasions in order to force the government to the bargaining table. As TUSSC member, Clive Lytle intimates, there is the rhetorical and the reality in trade union tactics and you must be able to separate the two. The rhetoric isn't necessarily going to translate into specific

action. Where does rhetoric and reality diverge and how did this apply to Solidarity?

[The] rhetorical peak is always much higher than the action peak... the peak of action was when the teachers went out... I personally did not expect much beyond that peak of action... (personal interview with Clive Lytle, 1986)

It was, in fact, the surprising strength of the teachers' strike that helped to bring the government to the bargaining table. Prior to the teachers' strike, the government had intervened to ensure that the North Vancouver School Board did not ratify an agreement with North Vancouver teachers that would have given teachers an exemption from Bill 3. The government was working on the assumption that because of the teachers' mere 59% strike vote, the BCTF would not successfully carry out its part of the strike - thus the strike would collapse (Kuehn 1984:10). When close to 90% of teachers and a majority of school principals joined the escalating strike, the government as well as many Solidarity leaders were anxious to reach a compromise. There is little doubt that the next group of workers slated to join the strike (municipal employees and bus drivers) would have followed through with their threat. These unions had voted strongly in favour of strike action (personal interviews with David Cadman, past President of the Vancouver Regional and Municipal Employees Union, and Colin Kelly, President of Local 1 of the Independent Canadian Transit Union, 1986).

Shortly following the teachers' walkout, Art Kube, who had been in almost daily contact with the Coalition's co-chairperson

Renate Shearer, became ill. The next two ranking officers of the BCFL took effective charge - Secretary Treasurer, Mike Kramer, and 1st Vice-President, Jack Munro. Thus, for the Solidarity Coalition "all communication with the trade union movement ceased" (personal interview with Renate Shearer, 1986). While Kube had spent several months building alliances with Coalition groups and attempted to understand their concerns, Kramer and Munro were much more interested in what they considered traditional trade union issues. With Kube effectively sidelined, it was easier for the Solidarity leadership to ignore its commitment to the Coalition. Shearer, co-chair of the Solidarity Coalition relates her surprise when she learned of the agreement struck between Operation Solidarity and the government:

On Friday evening, well it must have been about six or seven o'clock, I was told by both Clay Perry and Gerry Scott that there was no bloody way that they were going to be able to settle for another week... So it [the settlement] came out of the blue or at least it was leaked in the newspaper...(personal interview with Renate Shearer, 1986)

Acquiescence

In the absence of Kube, (but with his acknowledgement) the steering committee formulated a basis for settlement of the strike. It included satisfactory agreement on Bills 2 and 3, maintenance of educational services at 1983 levels, no reprisals against strikers, changes to the proposed Labour Code, and public consultation on human rights, social and tenants legislation (Palmer 1986:195; Kuehn 1984:11).

Mike Kramer and Jack Munro were then delegated by the steering committee to seek a process for negotiation (Kuehn 1984:11). Munro through his connections with Jim Matkin, head of the Employers' Council set up a meeting with the Premier's Deputy, Norman Spector (Kuehn 1984:11). Tentative agreement was reached on a package similar to the earlier proposal made by the TUSSC. The finalization of the Accord which was to take place in Kelowna was held up until the BCGEU (that had initiated the escalating strike) reached a new collective agreement with the government.

The settlement met many of the concerns of the trade union component of Solidarity but it promised little more than consultation in the areas of social service cutbacks, changes to the Human Rights Act, and the Residential Tenancy Act. In fact, the settlement was consistent with the union movement's professed inability to negotiate 'social issues'. While some TUSSC members such as Kuehn fought hard to have the educational issues addressed in the settlement, there was little support for concerted action on behalf of the other 'social issues'.

To attempt to get an agreement that satisfied the Solidarity Coalition's concerns, a further escalation of strike action would have been necessary. Clearly, this was never a serious consideration for the majority of the steering committee especially after major trade union concerns had been addressed. TUSSC member Jack Adams candidly states:

...none of us were ecstatic [about the tentative agreement] but the alternative was a general strike... to be frank with you we did not want a general strike. (personal interview with Jack Adams, 1986)

Reasoning of the Leadership

Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee members gave a variety of reasons why the strike was not escalated beyond the second week (an escalation that could have forced a solution to the crisis more favourable to their Coalition partners and to some components within the labour movement itself).¹⁹ Even taken at face value, nearly all these factors are related directly or indirectly to the economic orientation of trade unions and their lack of political guidance.

To begin with, the TUSSC felt they were unable to negotiate a better deal. As one TUSSC member suggests, the labour leaders' experience at the bargaining table helped determine the hour of compromise:

...it was time to start making some deals... When you go through your own collective [bargaining], you kind of identify [when] its time... you've got to do it now. (personal interview with Nora Paton, 1986)

Even some of the more militant members of the TUSSC have shown their reluctance to escalate the strike beyond the teachers' walkout:

The last possible moment of accomodation had been arrived at, where both the labor movement and the government could compromise and agree to live together in an uneasy truce. And that opportunity was grabbed by the leadership of the labor movement... (Kuehn 1984:11)

¹⁹These were the most frequently cited reasons given by TUSSC respondents during the course of my research.

The post-war tradition of contract negotiations has reflected a concerted attempt by labour to avoid confrontation. Circumscribed by bureaucratic regulations, conflicting interests are negotiated in a manner conducive to compromise and peaceful settlement.

Agreement had been reached on trade union issues concurrent with the settlement of the BCGEU contract. They believed the withdrawal of the objectionable social legislation was beyond their mandate to negotiate. Lack of commitment by Operation Solidarity to satisfactorily settle the social issues is demonstrated by Kramer who discusses the possibility of continuing the strike:

...the problem with the strike was that it was our members pay cheques that were going in and there was nothing for them. Right? There was nothing for them once the deal was made that Bill 3 and Bill 6 and whatever the other one was... Once those things were taken away then there was nothing left for us. There was no - what were we to do? You can't be out on the street carrying a placard forever because tenants rights are in jeopardy. It doesn't make sense! (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

TUSSC member Alice West cites constitutional restrictions:

...you'd like to be able to strike on social issues but we really couldn't because of the constitution of the Federation, the constitutions of the unions that were involved. (personal interview with Alice West, 1986)

This is an indication of the ideological separation of 'labour issues' from 'social issues' - the former lying within the economic sphere of their own jurisdiction and the latter within the political sphere of 'the party'.

The leadership also felt pressured by court injunctions and punitive measures that may have been brought against the movement and/or the leadership. The acknowledged head of Operation Solidarity, Art Kube, states that:

There was a tremendous amount of pressure to settle. The majority of school boards had injunctions... I think the courts had a negative effect on the settlement and the continuance of the dispute. (personal interview with Art Kube, 1986)

Mike Kramer demonstrates a fear of possible state reprisal should the strike escalate much further:

...I'm convinced there were people who thought there were going to be troops in the street... It was talked about. Would they call the army in? In Ottawa we had the NDP critic for defense getting an assurance from the minister that they weren't going to be using people from Chilliwack [an army base] and bring them in here. (Palmer 1986:176)

The perceived inability to defy court injunctions and punitive measures indicates a respect for and deference to bourgeois authority and adjudication. Numerous leaders were apprehensive about possible further damage to their respective unions, to the trade union movement as a whole and to the current collective bargaining system.

Some of the leadership cited a lack of support by some private sector unions such as the IWA for further escalation of strike action. This shows rifts within the movement which, as Lenin has noted, is divided by sectional trade interests and not united by common cause. That is, the weight of the labour legislation was directed mainly against public sector unions; therefore some of the larger private sector unions were not

inclined to see themselves as part of that struggle.

TUSSC members also cited the lack of public support for the strike and they were concerned about inconveniencing the public.

The lack of public support, in part, stems from a common perception that trade unions can or should only deal with immediate work related issues. Public reaction was also swayed by the hysteria created by the media once the strike had begun. For example, 'liberal press' writers such as Marjorie Nichol turned viciously on the Solidarity movement with the headline "Solidarity Goons Perpetrating Terrorism" (The Sun, Nov.9, 1983). A similar article by Denny Boyd likened Solidarity to Castro's "strange and left-wing guerrilla army" (The Sun, Nov.4, 1983). There is no doubt that a public sector strike causes certain inconveniences. However, since the wider professed aim of Operation Solidarity was to protect social services, education, and human rights threatened by government legislation, it's ironic that Solidarity's chief spokesperson, Art Kube should suggest that the strike was terminated, in part, because of temporary inconvenience to the public (personal interview with Art Kube, 1986).

Several labour leaders indicated fear that further escalation would 'damage' the NDP or provoke an unwanted provincial election. Labour's affiliation with the social democratic NDP indicates support for and willingness to work within the capitalist system, implicit is the division of responsibilities with organized labour responsible for

collective bargaining and work related issues, and 'the party' dealing with wider 'social issues'.

Trade Union leaders expressed fear and confusion regarding the direction of a growing movement that was potentially uncontrollable.

It was like you had this big monster growing and you didn't know where it would end up. (personal interview with Nora Paton, 1986)

In the words of Jack Munro:

...when it came to people drunk with this stance that we were going to shut the province down and overthrow the government or have this general strike, I don't know what they thought was at the end of it if it wasn't to overthrow the government. That's when I started to get pretty goddamned nervous about what was happening. (Garr 1985:142)

TUSSC member, Len Ruel, echos the same fear of losing control:

We might have lost control of it... We were really confused because I believe none of us ever reached the brink. It was almost like - what would be next? Could we indeed do it? I guess maybe we were intimidated or afraid with the power we may have wound up with not knowing what to do with it... we started to look... at an avenue to find some resolve. (personal interview with Len Ruel, 1986)

Clearly the movement intimidated many within the leadership who had neither the experience, nor the foresight or political will to lead a general strike: Mike Kramer states:

We put Operation Solidarity together to protect our own interests, particularly public sector unions. Then we got caught up in the momentum of what was happening. We did not appreciate the dimension of what was coming together... Some of us were even talking about revolution. But sanity set in eventually. We were not going to have a revolution... In the final analysis, we are responsible to our members who pay our salaries and pay for the cars we drive around in... (The Province, Feb.8, 1984:22)

Finally, a TUSSC member expresses the relief felt by the leadership when the confrontation ended and they could return to their familiar role:

...I think we were sort of pleased that it was all over so that we could sort of regroup and see where we were going. (personal interview with Ralph Steeves, 1986)

There are certain similarities between the conclusion of the 1983 Solidarity strike in B.C. and the 1926 British General Strike. Both strikes were 'solid' in the sense that few members crossed picket lines. There was little danger of either strike collapsing internally. In both cases, unwritten agreements were made between the union leadership and the government which were far from satisfactory to many within their respective movements. Both leaderships, however, were afraid of the uncertainties of continuing the strike. There was a real concern that the strike would get out of hand causing the leadership to lose control. Consider the resemblance between the remarks made by the leaders of the 1983 Solidarity strike and J.H. Thomas of the British General Council in 1926:

What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this: if by chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. (Symons 1957:211)

TUSSC members did not recognize the dearth of political party analysis, program and leadership in their conflict with the state. It was this absence that contributed toward the fear and confusion of the labour leadership. In fact, they encouraged their own party (NDP) to remove itself from the conflict while

failing to identify the trade union movement itself as a political force.

A compromise with the government allowed the leadership to re-enter the more familiar economic arena of collective bargaining. In this manner, the leadership abdicated its commitment to a satisfactory settlement of 'social issues'. These 'non-economic' issues would once again become the prime responsibility of 'the party'. Moreover, the settlement between organized labour and the state would re-establish the union movement's commitment to the electoral process. In the words of Mike Kramer:

...I'm a strong proponent of political action. The only way to do it is at the ballot box. We've got to do it. We've got to spend our money there instead of shoe leather [strikes] - and... pay cheques disappearing on the picket line... (personal interview with Mike Kramer, 1986)

A Question of Leadership?

The decision to terminate the struggle and seek accomodation with the state was made by a small number of union leaders. This points to the bureaucratic character and oligarchical control within trade unions. In order to understand how such decisions can be made without consultation with the rank and file, it is necessary to look briefly at the hierarchical structure of trade unions.

As in most bureaucratic organizations, authority and the decision making process in unions is largely centralized and hierarchical.²⁰ While structures exist within the BCFL and individual unions to encourage maximum rank and file participation, to involve the rank and file in the decision making process, and to elect representative officials democratically at various levels of office, such is not always the practice. For example, regular monthly union meetings where many of a Local's decisions are made seldom attract more than a small percentage of the overall membership. Upper level decisions of the union are often made in a centralized office by bureaucratic personnel that are far removed from the every day 'shop floor' problems and only indirectly responsible to the rank and file workers for their actions. Moreover, delegates to BCFL conventions from many unions are expected (and sometimes coerced) to vote according to decisions that have previously been made by an executive body.²¹ Also consider the fact that the entire 32 member official slate of the BCFL executive (which was so prominent in the Solidarity struggle) was unopposed at the 1982 convention election (Palmer 1987:26).

Thus, often a small number of elected or even appointed officials are able to make critical decisions often with little

²⁰Bureaucracy and centralization of control are certainly not specific to Canada. For example, see studies by Gramsci (1968) in Italy; Mills (1948) in the U.S.; and Allen (1954) in Britain.

²¹Personal interviews with Philip Lyons, John McCormack, and Geraldine Sayers who suffered verbal and/or physical abuse as three 'dissenting' BCGEU delegates to the 1980 BCFL convention.

input from the rank and file or lower level leadership. The power of the labour leadership to limit and control strike actions of the rank and file membership has been examined by numerous authors including Mills (1948), Pfeffer (1979), Allen (1954), and Symons (1957). It has been noted that union leaders often assume the role of "policemen" encouraging an end to quasi-legal or illegal strikes (Pfeffer 1979).

A classic example of this bureaucratic and hierarchical practice was the decision by the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee (TUSSC) to settle differences with the state through the Kelowna Accord without consultation with, or ratification from their rank and file memberships. While it can be argued that most rank and file members voted on the decision to withdraw their labour in the escalating strikes, virtually all other major decisions were made by either the Public Sector Steering Committee (PSSC) or the TUSSC²² - both of which were part of the Operation Solidarity structure.

Because of this concentration of power in the upper echelons, there has been a tendency to place much of the 'blame' for the outcome of the Solidarity struggle and the Kelowna Accord on Jack Munro or individuals within the trade union

²²Even within the TUSSC, many members have stated that they did not play a very active role. Don Garcia, Second Vice-President of the BCFL, has stated that the Friday decision not to further escalate strike action "wasn't arrived at with the full knowledge of a lot of people on the committee [TUSSC]". This suggests that many of the major decisions were made by a handful of the more powerful and prominent members and then later ratified by the entire committee (personal interviews with Ralph Steeves and Don Garcia, 1986).

leadership. Palmer (1986) states:

The failure of Solidarity was not a failure of unions and unionists... Rather Solidarity's failure was a failure of leadership. (p.199)

Yet the inability of the Solidarity movement to resolve satisfactorily its dispute with the government goes far beyond the failings of the union leadership. This approach overlooks the inherent structural limitations posed by the unions' economic raison d'être, the trade union consciousness of both the leadership and the rank and file, and the absence of a political party capable of providing leadership and a political alternative.

Similar to Palmer (1986), Quine (1985) suggests that militant rank and file trade unionists in British Columbia were restrained by little more than a bureaucratic conservative leadership. He states:

Solidarity could have only succeeded if it were led by rank and file workers in opposition to the established trade union leadership. (p.19)

Yet even for this state of affairs to come about, it would require a trade union rank and file with a philosophy substantially different from the present leadership. There is little evidence to suggest that the mainstream rank and file of the labour movement hold more radical views than those of their leadership. In fact, it has been noted that many rank and file Canadian trade unionists support traditional business parties. Therefore, it is more logical to suggest as Stevens (1979) does, that in many countries the union leadership is "often to the

left of the membership and almost always to the left of the electorate". To some degree the leadership of the labour movement should be seen as a reflection of the rank and file at any given point in time. The rank and file have, after all, elected the leadership to represent their interests.

Perhaps a more pertinent question is whether the TUSSC's accord with the state reflected the mood of rank and file union members on the picket lines. This is a difficult question to answer since the rank and file membership were never given an opportunity to vote on the pact. Newspaper articles following the Accord suggested that most workers were anxious to return to work (The Sun, Nov.14, 1983). If true, this is understandable since all strikes involve a loss in pay; moreover, the concept of political strikes is foreign to most Canadian workers. In the case of the teachers, less than 60% had voted to take part in the strike in the first place. On the other hand, the overwhelming feeling among leftists and within many Coalition groupings was that the wider goals of the movement had been 'sold out' or 'sold short'.

While there was a cry of discontent from some organizations and individuals within the Solidarity movement, it is important to note that there was no organized resistance from trade unionists. There was no significant demand from rank and file unionists that the strike be maintained until a satisfactory agreement could be reached on the Coalition's demands. No lower level of union leadership seriously challenged the Accord in a

sustained manner. Perhaps, most importantly, there were no examples of union members in any region of the province attempting to carry on the strike. This development suggests either rank and file agreement with the leadership's decision or an inability to do anything about the decision once it was made.

CHAPTER VII

OPERATION SOLIDARITY AND THE ROLE OF THE PARTY

It has been noted that because of their sectional differences and preoccupation with collective bargaining, trade unions face major difficulties when fighting political struggles. As Lenin has argued, the political orientation needed to transcend a limited trade union consciousness would have to come from without - from a political party. This political party would have to be capable of and willing to provide leadership as well as real alternatives to the existing power structure.

The party needed to provide these crucial elements was obviously missing from Operation Solidarity. Only two 'left of centre' parties could have played a significant role in the Solidarity struggle - the NDP and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). The NDP, the party which presently commands the loyalty of labour and provides labour's political vision purposely distanced itself from the conflict. The CPC which also vies for labour support was capable of showing ideological leadership, yet was organizationally weak and lacked credibility within the power structure of Operation Solidarity.

The Role of the NDP

The close philosophical relationship between organized labour and the NDP has already been mentioned as have the

overlapping commitments of NDP party functionaries and union officials. Dalby (1984) states that over two-thirds of the Operation Solidarity leadership were card carrying NDP members. My research demonstrated that virtually all of the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee were, or claimed to be, committed NDP members or supporters. Many have run as candidates for 'the party' in provincial or federal elections or sat on the NDP provincial executive. What emerges from this somewhat incestuous relationship is a trade union leadership whose allegiance lies not only with their rank and file membership but also with 'the party'. It is ironic then, that this close allegiance helped to distance rather than meld 'the party' and the labour movement together during the Solidarity conflict.

In what must be viewed as a major dysfunction of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia, the real challenge to the government's program and authority in the summer and fall of 1983 came not from the duly elected opposition party (NDP) but from Solidarity activists in the streets and on the picket lines. The unwillingness or perhaps the inability of the NDP (as an organization) to embrace the spontaneous 'grass roots' activism so evident in the Solidarity movement caused one observer to suggest that Solidarity did not supplant the NDP, it simply filled a vacuum (Yandle 1984:5). However, it would be inaccurate to state simply that the NDP was not involved in the Solidarity struggle. In reality, the degree of commitment and participation varied remarkably and according to the level of

party status and occupation. For example, there is ample evidence of participation by the 'grass roots' NDP whose banners were manifest in demonstrations and marches. Moreover, eight NDP constituency associations became members of the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition (LMSC Contact List, October 1983). The NDP's Provincial Council is also on record supporting Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition by urging groups to join these organizations at the community level (Advocate, Fall 1983). However, beyond motions of support for Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition, most of the party executive and leadership were highly sceptical of the 'grass roots' activism and extra-parliamentary activity practised by these organizations. Consequently, there was a very low level of participation in various events by both the NDP leadership and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Lack of participation by party functionaries and limited upper level organizational support can be attributed to a number of factors. Extra-parliamentary activity, especially of a radical nature, has not been traditional practice for the NDP. Rather, the party is highly geared to electoral politics and institutionalized parliamentary procedure. Preoccupation with electoral success has led to a bureaucratized party that is guided more by public opinion than by political philosophy or a party program. Party image and perceived public reaction have become the main determinants of party behaviour or action.

The social democratic NDP is demonstrative of what Claus Offe has characterized as "catch-all parties" of liberal democracy (Offe 1983:57). Competition for office within the electoral system has led to a deradicalization of party ideology in order to appeal to the widest possible number of voters. Moreover, as ongoing competitive electoral machines these parties have developed a highly centralized and bureaucratic organizational structure which shapes their actions (Offe 1983:56). Typical of these modern-day mass parties, the NDP is dominated by a group of professionals who collect funding, disseminate propaganda, identify issues, monitor public opinion, and manage internal conflict (Offe 1983:56). The party then becomes a permanent electoral machine and internal debate is kept to a minimum to protect the party's image and election chances.

Under Barrett's leadership:

...the NDP has steered systematically away from involvement in non-electoral matters... the NDP methodically dismantled the avenues of activism within its own ranks and disheartened and demoralized the activists themselves...' (Yandle 1984:8)

It is not surprising, then, that the leadership of the NDP viewed the mobilization of thousands of 'grass roots' activists with some trepidation and suspicion. A federal NDP member of parliament Ian Waddell, has even suggested that the Solidarity

'For example, in an attempt to lessen internal criticism and centralize the power structure, the militant left-wing Vancouver Area Council of the NDP came under attack and was voted out of existence by the Provincial Council. In a similar vein, funding for a Women's Committee's radical feminist publication was severed in an attempt to stifle local activism.

movement was "dangerous" because it discredited parliamentary process (Quine 1985:22). Yet it has been argued that Solidarity actually deepened democracy by allowing people to become directly involved in the political process (Carroll 1984:111, 112). Carroll, of course, is describing a mass mobilization of people engaged in a form of 'participatory democracy' that goes far beyond the narrow bounds of electoral politics.

During the 1983 conflict between organized labour and the state, the NDP avoided any actions that may have reflected negatively on its image. It basically adhered to the legislative assembly and in marathon sessions attempted to fight the Social Credit legislation through procedural debates and filibustering. The NDP party leader, Dave Barrett, and many NDP MLAs made every effort to dissociate themselves from most of the extra-parliamentary activities. For example, Barrett only reluctantly spoke to 20,000 angry demonstrators in Victoria - the largest demonstration in the city's history:

...when Barrett spoke, there was no passion, nothing to match the anger of the demonstrators. He spoke of parliamentary solutions. He told them that they had come in peace and that they should go in peace. (Garr 1985:123)

Neither would the NDP condone the occupation of the government's Vancouver cabinet offices by Solidarity activists. Moreover, a reporter noted that every NDP MLA that he interviewed agreed that a general strike was a dangerous tactic and that the government must be defeated at the ballot box (Solidarity Times, Oct.26, 1983:6). So devoted was Barrett to the democratic parliamentary system that he even offered to meet the Premier to

"work out a program to get the legislation through"; his immediate stated objective was "to get calmness to return to the province" (The Sun, Oct.7, 1983:1).

Thus, while the Social Credit government had introduced a myriad of anti-working class legislation, Barrett's remarks suggest that for the party, the most objectionable element was not the legislation itself but the absence of protocol and the lack of proper democratic parliamentary procedure. The refusal of the Social Credit government to seriously debate their proposed legislation or accept any meaningful amendments, meant of course that the NDP's position as parliamentary opposition was largely redundant. Steeped in the tradition of parliamentary debate and procedure, and unwilling or unable to function in the extra-parliamentary arena, the NDP became totally irrelevant as an opposition force once the legislature was adjourned.

Another factor which limited NDP participation and support for the extra-parliamentary activity was pressure from the union movement itself. A united labour/NDP front to defeat the regressive legislation was actually discouraged by organized labour who feared the consequences of such a formation on the NDP.

Following the NDP's unexpected loss in the 1983 provincial election and the resignation of its leader, the party was stunned and demoralized. Hence, labour avoided any action that may have forced the government to call for a new mandate. It

also attempted to make the Solidarity movement appear as non-partisan as possible. Gerry Scott, current Provincial Secretary of 'the party' reported various attempts to have NDP speakers appear at Coalition functions² (Nelson 1985:28). These were denied however because it was thought that the negative public reaction to labour's extra-parliamentary activity may harm the NDP in the long term. Art Kube asked NDP leader, Dave Barrett to help keep a distance between 'the party' and Solidarity (Nelson 1985:28). As TUSSC member, Bill Clark states:³

...the majority of us... asked the NDP to stay out of it... they did what we asked them to do and that was to debate the issues and keep it tied up in the legislative assembly... Most of us thought that to have the party and the leaders of the party and the caucus speaking in favour of, quote, illegal job action, unquote, would not accomplish anything and would do irreparable damage in the long run... There were many of us that felt that if we got into that kind of a major confrontation that we'd set the NDP back 50 years and all the social gains that were made along with it... (personal interview with Bill Clark, 1986)

Even a planned story by the Solidarity Times about some crude responses made by the NDP caucus regarding Solidarity strike action was 'watered down' after pressure from Operation Solidarity because of its perceived negative reflection on the NDP (Garr 1985:145).

²This suggests that some NDP officials were willing to show support for the Coalition in the early stages of the conflict. However, few NDP leaders attended the large demonstrations and none openly supported a general strike.

³I have only quoted from one interview here but numerous TUSSC respondents suggested that consideration for the welfare and the image of the NDP was a significant factor in the course of events.

Being part of the 'democratic' electoral process obviously means accepting the rule of the majority in the legislature. Therefore, the NDP as parliamentary opposition was forced sooner or later to bow to the Social Credit parliamentary majority. It was only the extra-parliamentary action of Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition that was able to finally force the government to make some amendments to its legislation. Solidarity's action was significant to the NDP since it relegated the party to the sidelines. To 'the party' at an organizational level, and also to like minded labour bureaucrats, the highly activated 'grass roots' dynamic became an aberration - an aberration that challenged the bureaucracy of the labour leadership and the very relevance of the NDP and the parliamentary system. For many party and labour bureaucrats, the problem became how to deactivate Solidarity as a movement and channel that energy into the election of the NDP at the next provincial election. This state of affairs would allow the union leadership to return to their familiar role in the collective bargaining arena while allowing the New Democratic Party to regain its traditional position as labour's party in the legislative realm. In fact, this strategy can be identified at the 1983 BCFL convention. Barely two weeks after the Kelowna Accord, the convention adopted a 12 point program beginning with the preamble:

...Our only true victory in this battle... will be accomplished at the ballot box, when the Bennett Socreds are voted out of office and [are] replaced by a progressive New Democratic Party government, responsive to social needs and concerns... (Democrat, Dec.

1983/Jan. 1984:2)

The Role of the Communist Party of Canada

Although the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) is very limited in size and strength, it played a prominent role in the Solidarity conflict. The CPC is an established left-wing party in B.C. with a long history of labour involvement.

In recent years, the CPC has shown significant influence in trade unions, popular movements, community organizations and municipal politics. Party members hold prominent positions in a number of labour organizations such as the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, and the Vancouver and District Labour Council (Palmer 1987:29). The CPC also has considerable influence within organizations like End the Arms Race Coalition which mobilizes tens of thousands of peace marchers every April in Vancouver. Moreover, the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE) is a CPC/social democratic alliance which has at times controlled municipal politics in Vancouver (Palmer 1987:29). The party has also been viable enough to publish its own provincial newspaper for a considerable period of time.

The CPC has major organizational weaknesses, however, which limit its political potential. Not only is the party very small in numbers, but most of its provincial strength is concentrated

in the greater Vancouver area. For the CPC, Lenin's strategy of a united front has become especially crucial to their relative success in labour and community organizations. That is, the success of organizations like COPE are the result of ongoing CPC alliances with other groups and individuals. Consequently, the CPC has gained an influence and credibility far in excess of its limited membership.

The long term program of the CPC is to work within community and labour organizations encouraging the widest possible unified action against right-wing governments with the eventual goal of establishing a workers' state. To accomplish this task both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action is deemed necessary. The short term strategy of the CPC is demonstrated in a 1984 draft resolution to the B.C. Provincial CPC convention:

B.C. is in need of a new alignment of labour, democratic, NDP, and communist forces to bring about a united democratic alternative movement which would offer the strongest possible opportunity to oust the Socreds and change the direction of B.C. politics... (Communist Party of Canada 1984:8)

The strategy of working within various organizations allowed the CPC (and members such as George Hewison) to play a significant role in the formation of the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition (Rush 1984:12; Dalby 1984:38). In fact, members of the CPC with non-aligned left-wing activists organized many of the early demonstrations and anti-government rallies opposing the proposed budget. They also played a significant role in picketing the Vancouver schools after the courts issued

injunctions preventing such action by teachers (personal interview with Fred Wilson, 1986).

The Communist Party was not only prominent in the formation of the LMBC, it also supported the August motion within the Coalition to become affiliated to the provincial Solidarity Coalition which was dominated by the social democratic leadership of the BCFL. This deed in particular was likened by Palmer (1987) to a Stalinist "exercise in subordinating and limiting revolutionary practice" (p.30). Palmer suggests that after 40 years of being red-baited within the B.C. labour movement, the CPC:

...had no intention, in a period of right-wing ascendancy threatening a new McCarthyism, of leading a mass struggle of the proportions that the budget fightback promised... (p.30)

In itself, it is ludicrous to suggest that the CPC even had the potential to challenge the BCFL for the leadership of the Solidarity movement. At best the CPC would have very limited support inside or outside the labour movement. There is no doubt that the CPC deliberately supported the transition of the LMBC to the Provincial Solidarity network. This action was in line with their policy of a united front. It was generally felt within the CPC that there was only a limited value to parallel unco-ordinated organizations (i.e., LMBC and the Solidarity Coalition network being organized by the BCFL). Therefore since the LMBC was unable to expand the volume of its local activities or have any significant influence beyond greater Vancouver, it was better to unite the organization under the umbrella of the

provincial Coalition.

Fred Wilson, who was Labour Secretary of the CPC in 1983 defends his party's actions arguing that:

...the only group capable of giving the leadership that was necessary was the trade union movement... it was that group of people that had the power, the experience and the resources to unite broad groups of people... no other group had the ability to be the pivot that would hold everything together - the consistency and the analysis that was required. (personal interview with Fred Wilson, 1984)

Wilson was certainly cognizent of the relative weakness of his party in relation to the task at hand. The leadership of the CPC knew that they had neither the organizational strength nor the numbers or province-wide network capable of unifying and leading an opposition which could force the withdrawal of the government's legislation. Moreover, the CPC did not have a single member within the BCFL executive council or among the 24 member TUSSC - therefore had no direct input to these groups (personal interview with Fred Wilson, 1984).

Palmer (1987) acrimoniously criticizes the "Stalinist" tendencies of the CPC for attempting to promote unity "with the labour movement, regardless of cost" and also for marginalizing the left-wing activists within the LMBC which, according to Palmer, greatly restricted the movement's potential⁴ (pp.30, 36). In doing this Palmer overestimates the organizational strength and importance of both the LMBC and of the CPC. Many

⁴On the other hand, the CPC claims 'credit' for isolating certain 'ultra-left' elements which it felt would divide and weaken the movement's potential (CPC, 1984:13).

LMBC delegates were not affiliated to the union movement. Others represented unions that were not affiliated to the BCFL and therefore highly unlikely to take strike action on their own. Still others, which represented BCFL affiliates such as Mike Kramer from CUPE were never part of the 'independent' initiative of the LMBC. While the Coalitions were important in the early stages of the campaign, they became of secondary importance as time went on. That is, even if the LMBC were to stay an independent body, it lacked the potential power of the labour movement. It could help to organize demonstrations and rallies but would never be able to organize strike action; therefore its continued independence was not a significant factor.

The CPC was perhaps naive to think that they would be able to pressure the Solidarity leadership or encourage them to take a more radical path. The social democratic leaders of Operation Solidarity, as we have seen, were closely aligned to the NDP, which itself was keeping arms length from the struggle. The CPC's strategy of unity with social democratic forces was not tactically wrong since all the left-wing forces combined (including the CPC) were insignificant in leadership positions and therefore had little influence in the evolving struggle. The chances of influencing the leadership of Operation Solidarity would have been much greater if the Communist Party had had a number of members within the executive of the BCFL (as they do today).

In response to the Social Credit 'restraint program' the CPC did distribute 100,000 copies of an alternative program (CPC, 1984) calling for policies which would promote employment and working class benefits. The party also proposed that since the government had no mandate for its restraint program that it withdraw the budget and 26 Bills and call an election on the issue (Rush 1984:12). Yet this was the last thing that the labour movement or the NDP wanted. Not only did the 'restraint program' appear to have considerable support in the polls, the NDP had a leader who had already announced his resignation. Therefore in the event of a new election, the NDP may well have been defeated again.

In the final analysis, the CPC, which could provide ideological guidance, was not able to lead the Solidarity movement; it lacked organizational strength, numbers, and credibility both inside and outside the labour movement. The movement floundered, therefore, under a leadership which could not properly analyze the power relationship in the class struggle nor recognize its place within it.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This thesis has traced the unusual phenomenon of a trade union movement acting outside its normal institutionalized channels of operation. It has investigated the activity of the British Columbia labour movement which for a few months in 1983 interrupted its preoccupation with collective bargaining to challenge the power, policy and authority of the state. The thesis has addressed the transition of this labour movement from the economic to the political realm - its inability to function therein - and its return to its traditional economic ambit.

The conflict between the labour movement and the government of B.C. in 1983 was a classical manifestation of a contradiction of interests between organized labour and a right-wing government representing the interests of the business community. The outcome of this conflict is to a large degree reflective of the balance of class forces and the tactical ability of either side; it was, in a manner of speaking, a test of strength in the dialectics of class struggle.

The outcome has certain implications for the labour movement and the entire working class specifically in the areas of labour relations and social programs. Michael Walker (1984) was essentially correct when he suggested that B.C. was a laboratory for policy change in North America. The rationale being that if one of the strongest and most militant labour/community

alliances in the history of B.C. was unable to resist legislative changes deemed detrimental to itself and the wider community, then governments could proceed to make significant policy and legislative changes virtually at will.

While Walker has claimed a clear victory for the government, some spokespersons from organized labour such as Art Kube, (and even the Communist Party) have characterized the Kelowna Accord as a "limited victory" for the trade union movement (The Sun, Nov.14 1983:A3; Fred Wilson in Pacific Tribune, Nov.16, 1983). However, it would seem more accurate to characterize the settlement as a limited defeat for labour. Not only did the negative elements outweigh the positive ones, but an example was set which continues to affect events significantly.

On the positive side, the B.C. Government Employees Union was able to negotiate a new collective agreement without concessions. Solidarity was able to force the government to abandon Bill 2 and agree to negotiated exemptions to Bill 3, the two most potentially damaging pieces of labour legislation. It is also significant that some of the regressive social legislation such as the Human Rights Act and the Residential Tenancy Act died on the order paper as a direct or indirect result of Solidarity's actions.

Furthermore, during the fight against the legislation, tens of thousands of trade unionists and community participants became actively involved in a political struggle of a magnitude

never before experienced in their lifetime. They learned that extra-parliamentary activity, at times, is not only necessary but can be more advantageous than parliamentary politics. It was, after all, the Solidarity movement and not the NDP that was able to force the withdrawal of some of the contentious legislation. Many of these new activists realized for the first time the potential power that exists within the labour movement and within a labour/community coalition.

While many community leaders and activists were appalled at the content of labour's accord with the state, and the manner in which it was reached, there are signs that both the labour leadership and community leaders realized the importance of working more closely together to accomplish their objectives. Community and labour leaders alike attest to an improved understanding of each other and the need for a better working relationship.¹

On the other hand, serious negative elements emerged from this conflict. Organized labour did not achieve one of its stated objectives - the withdrawal of "all legislation affecting the Coalition partners" (BCFL 1983:22). Organized labour showed that it was not prepared to defend social legislation and previously won standards that benefitted the entire community.

¹Several community activists including Father Jim Roberts, Renate Shearer, Jean Swanson, and Shane Simpson suggested that a much closer working relationship between organized labour and community organizations has in fact, emerged from the Solidarity struggle (personal interviews with Father Jim Roberts, Renate Shearer, Jean Swanson, and Shane Simpson, 1986).

This caused a certain amount of disappointment, bitterness and demoralization among some labour activists and many within the Solidarity Coalitions making it more difficult to realize the mutual trust and understanding necessary to build future working class alliances (Larkin 1987).

Recognizing labour's lack of commitment in this area, the Social Credit government reintroduced the tabled Human Rights Act and the Residential Tenancy Act in substantially the same form the following year (Magnusson et al 1984). They were quickly passed into law with little resistance from the labour movement.

The trade union movement's reluctance to unite and militantly defend itself against the government's pervasive assault signalled labour's weakness to the Social Credit government; indeed, the right-wing government responded by introducing legislation further restricting and limiting trade union rights. Bill 28, the new Labour Code, (which has been described in Chapter IV) became law in May of 1984 (Magnusson et al 1984). The B.C. trade union movement was either unable or unwilling to seriously challenge this continued assault by the government. Instead of preparing a united front and taking a militant stand to stop passage and implementation of the new Labour Code, the remnants of Operation Solidarity avoided mobilization purportedly because of pressure from the right-wing of the labour movement (Pacific Tribune, June 20, 1984:12).

A recent initiative by the trade union leadership to avoid the confrontation manifest in the Solidarity struggle demonstrates its ideological confusion and lack of class analysis. In 1987, the BCFL's new President, Ken Georgetti appealed for a closer dialogue and working relationship with the Vancouver Board of Trade and the Business Council of B.C. (Pacific Tribune, March 11, 1987:12) This overture toward the business community indicated a failure to recognize that labour's fundamental problems stem from this business establishment and not simply from the political party that represents it. Immediately following Georgetti's initiative, the government introduced and subsequently passed Bills 19 and 20 which are directed against both the union movement and the B.C. Teachers' Federation. The final outcome of the conflict arising from this action is as yet uncertain; however, if the government is successful in the implementation of this legislation, it will further weaken trade union rights while strengthening the hand of the employer.²

If the labour movement wishes to win major struggles in the future, it must analyze rapidly changing social, political, and economic realities and learn from its experiences. Organized labour will always have to defend past achievements and rights. Yet these defensive reactions by labour do little to address the long term problems of both trade unions and the working class.

²For an analysis of Bills 19 and 20 see, "Bill 19: It's worse than you think" by the Confederation of Canadian Unions and "Why Don't Teachers want a College of Teachers?" by the BCTF.

For example, chronic unemployment and lack of democracy in the workplace are reflective of the capitalist system. Restricting the struggle to immediate problems and seeking short term answers within capitalism can only provide marginal and temporary solutions at best.

Trade unions by their very raison d'être must first fulfill their primary economic function within capitalism. However, as Lenin suggests, under certain ideological and material conditions, they may even become part of a wider struggle for basic political, economic, and social change. To do so, trade unionists must rise above the limited trade union consciousness that ultimately restricts union behaviour and objectives. Even in its militant form (Operation Solidarity), this trade union consciousness was restricted to seeking solutions to its problems within the capitalist system. Limited by a trade union consciousness, there is a tendency to simply see unions as a method of promoting employee interests against the power of individual employers instead of also seeing them as a possible component of a wider movement intent on removing the collectivity of employers as a ruling class.

It becomes clear that trade unions cannot win major confrontations without both ideological and material guidance from outside the union movement. Trade unions are forced to fight for their rights both inside and outside the electoral arena. This necessitates an affiliation with a political party. Yet, the NDP which presently commands the loyalty of the trade

union leadership and provides labour's political vision could do little more than urge the labour movement in 1983 to wait for the next provincial election. Organized labour, in turn, demonstrated that its actions were partially determined and limited by its consideration for the welfare of the NDP - a situation which in itself has profound implications for the future actions and potential power of the trade union movement.

Rather than attempting to give leadership to an extra-parliamentary opposition, the social democratic philosophy and parliamentary tradition of the NDP led the party to actually distance itself from the conflict and to attempt to de-escalate the struggle. Like the labour leadership it too was guilty of separating the 'economic' (trade union) and 'political' (party) issues instead of seeing the conflict as a single struggle to defend working class interests. The NDP, after all, is fundamentally supportive of the capitalist system; it operates within the economic and political boundaries of liberal democracy and encourages adherence to its norms, rules, and laws. It was impossible, then, for the NDP to provide the ideological guidance necessary to show that the capitalist system itself was the ultimate problem for trade unionists and the working class.

According to Lenin, what was needed in the union movement was a revolutionary consciousness that would demonstrate to the workers "the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system" (Lenin

1967:31). As Lenin states "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (Lenin 1967:25). This revolutionary consciousness would have to come from a revolutionary party that could provide not only a revolutionary socialist philosophy but also the tactics of class struggle. For Lenin, what was needed was a party that would seek to put economic and political power in the hands of the workers. While trade unions can become an important component in a major power struggle, they can never take power themselves or fill the role of a political party. In and of themselves, trade unions can only bargain within the capitalist system, not transform it.

The revolutionary consciousness and party needed to provide direction were obviously missing from Operation Solidarity as was a socialist leadership. The socialist presence within the B.C. trade union movement is weak, isolated and organizationally ineffective.

The absence of socialist leadership and a strong political party within the trade union movement suggests the 'chicken or the egg' syndrome. Like most of North America, British Columbia does not have a prominent socialist party capable of helping to radicalize the labour movement. Moreover, without a socialist leadership, who will educate and raise the consciousness of the rank and file? Without an educated class conscious rank and file, it is difficult if not impossible to elect socialist leaders.

Organized labour has for too long operated within relative economic isolation which tends to restrict its vision. Trade unions must widen their objectives and demands to include the welfare and needs of all the working class (i.e., unorganized, unemployed, and marginalized) if it is to become a truly comprehensive working class movement.³

The Solidarity struggle of 1983 in B.C. provided some indication of the tremendous potential for working class unity. However, if working class unity is to exist in more than name, it can not result in community organizations being used simply to promote trade union interests. It should involve a unity of tactics, objectives and purpose between labour and community. In the short term, in conjunction with a comprehensive socialist party, it could develop a program which is practical and appealing to the general populace while providing political and economic alternatives to the present government.

The program could address problems such as unemployment, equality for women and minority groups, increased democratic control of the workplace and the community, and provision for expanded social programs which improve and equalize the standard of living.

If there is to be any fundamental change, this coalition of trade unions, party and community will need to recognize the

³As shown in Chapter 2, there are indications that trade union activity is beginning to encompass some of these wider objectives.

limited benefits that reforms can provide within capitalism. Sooner or later, it will have to devise a strategy to challenge the structures of capitalism that limit democratic working class participation in the workplace and democratic control of society.

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Other

personal notes from Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition meeting,
BCGEU Hall, Burnaby, Oct.17, 1983.

personal notes from Provincial Solidarity Coalition Conference,
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Oct.22, 23, 1986.

personal notes from Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition meeting,
Fishermens' Hall, Vancouver, Nov.14, 1983.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED DURING THE PREPARATION OF THIS

THESIS

Indicated after the name is the position held during the summer and fall of 1983 followed by the date of the interview. The asterisk indicates that the individual was a member of the Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee.

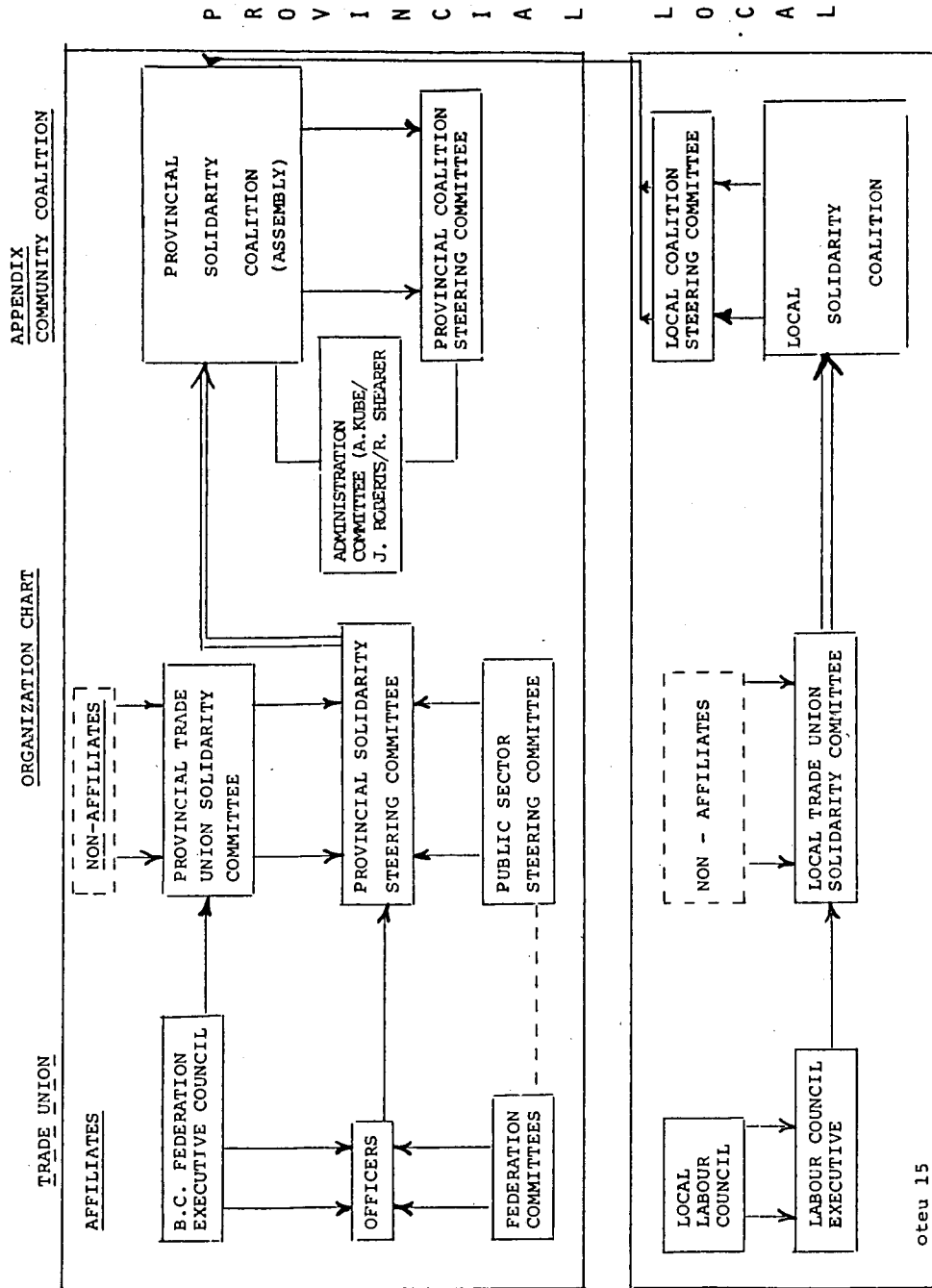
- *Adams, Jack. Director, British Columbia Government Employees Union, Executive Council member of the BCFL, July 7, 1986.
- *Alton, Monty. Assistant Director in Western Canada, United Steelworkers of America, 5th Vice-President BCFL, June 15, 1986.
- Andstein, Cliff. Director, British Columbia Government Employees' Union (BCGEU), Executive Council member of BCFL, Negotiating Committee Chairman BCGEU, June 4, 1986.
- Bartlett, Jon. Recording Secretary, Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee, Spokesperson, Cultural Coalition Against the Budget, June 19, 1986.
- Blakey, Al. Co-chairperson, Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition, executive member, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, ex-President BCTF, July 1, 1986.
- Cadman, David. President, Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employees Union, public sector representative to LMSC, July 7, 1986.
- Chouhan, Raj. President, Canadian Farmworkers' Union, member of LMSC Steering Committee, June 23, 1986.
- *Clark, Bill. President, Telecommunication Workers' Union, 6th Vice-President BCFL, April 2, 11, 1986.
- *Dykstra, Owen. President, B.C. division Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), general Vice-President of national CUPE, Executive Council member of BCFL, June 17, 1986.
- Errington, Jean. Research representative for CUPE, July 15, 1986.
- *Garcia, Don. President (Canadian area), International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, 2nd Vice-President BCFL, June 27, 1986.
- *Gautier, Roy. President, British Columbia and Yukon Building Trades Council, July 11, 1986.

- *Gruntman, Art. Vice-President, Canadian PaperWorkers' Union, 9th Vice-President BCFL, July 2, 1986.
- *Hansen, Leif. Assistant Secretary Manager, Local 212A United Food and Commercial Workers' International Union, 7th Vice-President BCFL, July 17th 1986.
- *Holter, Geoff. Chief Representative, Professional Employees Association, June 13, 1986.
- Keighley, Jef. Staff Representative, Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers, Secretary Treasurer, Lower Mainland Budget Coalition, July 8, 1986.
- Kelly, Colin. President, Local 1 Independent Canadian Transit Workers' Union, Secretary, Lower Mainland Budget Coalition, June 20, 1986.
- *Kramer, Mike. Secretary Treasurer BCFL, July 3, 1986.
- *Kube, Art. President BCFL, chief spokesperson for Operation Solidarity, Co-chairperson of Solidarity Coalition, April 1, 1986.
- *Kuehn, Larry. President, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, September 2, 1986.
- Lavalle, Ed. Corresponding Secretary, Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee, table officer, College Institute Educators Association, July 1, 1986.
- *Lytle, Clive. Director of Communications and Education, B.C. and Yukon Building Trades Council, July 8, 1986.
- MacDonald, Bill. President, Hospital Employees Union, July 15, 1986.
- McGrady, Leo. legal council for some public sector unions, July 17, 1986.
- *Paton, Nora. Chief Executive Officer, B.C. Nurses' Union, June 17, 1986.
- *Rice, David. Director of Research and Legislation (Administrative Director), BCFL, June 27, 1986.
- Roberts, Father Jim. Co-chairperson, Solidarity Coalition, Instructor in Religious Studies, Langara Community College, July 14, 1986.
- *Ruel, Len. Director of Organization, Canadian Labour Congress, June 13, 1986.

- *Rungren, Cliff. Business Manager and Financial Secretary, Local 213 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, July 10, 1986.
- Rush, Stuart. member of the B.C. Law Union and representative to LMSC, July 14, 1986.
- Shearer, Renate. Co-chairperson, Provincial Solidarity Coalition, former Human Rights Commissioner, July 28, 1986.
- Shewaga, Stan. President Local 8, Pulp Paper and Wood Workers of Canada, July 16, 1986.
- Simpson, Shane. Representative for LMSC on the Provincial Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee, staff worker with LMSC, July 4, 1986.
- Smith, Marty. Elected business agent, Local 452 Carpenters' Union, July 18, 1986.
- *Steeves, Ralph. President, B.C. Council of Machinists, (International Association of Machinist and Aerospace Workers), 8th Vice-President BCFL, June 30, 1986.
- Succamore, Jesse. National Secretary Treasurer, Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers, 1st Vice-President Confederation of Canadian Unions, July 2, 1986.
- Swanson, Jean. Staffperson, Provincial Solidarity Coalition, June 18, 1986.
- Wasserlein, Frances. Spokesperson, Women Against the Budget, June 23, 1986.
- *West, Alice. Executive Officer, Public Service Alliance of Canada, 10th Vice-President BCFL, June 23, 1986.
- Wilson, Fred. Chairman of the Labour Committee for Communist Party of Canada (CPC), Provincial Organizational Secretary for CPC, campaign manager for Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), COPE delegate to LMBC and LMSC, Feb.15, 1984 and July 7, 1986.

APPENDIX A

Solidarity Structural Organization Chart



(British Columbia Federation of Labour, 1983)

APPENDIX B

A Declaration of Rights of the People of British Columbia

A Declaration of Rights of the People of British Columbia

We believe that the measure of a society's humanity is the degree to which it provides rights that protect all its participants, its minorities no less than its majorities;

We believe that the substance of justice in a society is the degree to which rights are accorded to the poor and the powerless, and not simply to the rich and the strong;

And we believe that the test of a society's commitment to democracy is its resolve to guarantee those rights even in the face of hardship and adversity;

Therefore we declare that in a democratic, just and humane British Columbia every person has these fundamental rights which no government may justifiably extinguish:

- The right to protection from all forms of unreasonable discrimination, by legislation that ensures human rights and programs that confront prejudice.
- The right to freedom of expression and opinion without fear of reprisal.
- The right to universally accessible, comprehensive and confidential medical care.
- The right to a public school system that allows all children to develop to the full extent of their potential, and to post-secondary education that is accessible to all.
- The right of senior citizens, disabled persons and visible minorities to participate fully and equally in society.
- The right of every woman, in fact as well as in principle, to a full and equal place in society.
- The right to receive adequate social services and assistance.
- The right to freedom from arbitrary or unjustified eviction or increase in rents.
- The right to universal accessibility of necessary legal assistance.
- The right to local powers of decision-making about the provision of social services, and effective regional planning of the development of our communities.
- The right of all employees to negotiate freely and collectively with their employer all the terms and conditions under which they work.
- The right to freedom from arbitrary or unjustified termination of employment.
- The right to open and democratic government, scrutiny of government actions, due process of law, full parliamentary debate and consultation with affected groups on all legislative proposals, and express submission of fundamental changes in law or rights to the electors.

This declaration is made in the face of an unprecedented legislative assault that seeks to eliminate or subvert existing rights and protections. This cannot be allowed. We also assert, therefore, that the people of this province have the right and the responsibility to resist. We shall do so with all of our strength.

(Solidarity Coalition)

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APPENDIX C

List of Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labour
B.C.	British Columbia
BCFL	British Columbia Federation of Labour
BCGEU	British Columbia Government Employees' Union
BCTF	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CCL	Canadian Congress of Labour
CCU	Confederation of Canadian Unions
CGT	Confédération Général des Travailleurs
CGIL	Italian Communist-Socialist Trade Union Confederation
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CPU	Canadian Paperworkers' Union
CSA	Compensation Stabilization Act
CSP	Compensation Stabilization Program
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
ELP	End Legislated Poverty
FLP	Federated Labour Party
IDIA	Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907
IRDIA	Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act, 1948
IWA	International Woodworkers' of America
IWW	International Workers of the World

LMBC Lower Mainland Budget Coalition
LMSC Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition
LRB Labour Relations Board
MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly
NDP New Democratic Party
PPWC Pulp Paper and Woodworkers of Canada
PSSC Public Sector Steering Committee
SACTU South African Congress of Trade Unions
TLC Trades and Labour Congress
TUSSC Trade Union Solidarity Steering Committee
TWU Telecommunication Workers' Union
UBC University of British Columbia
U.S. United States
WUL Workers' Unity League

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions Directed to Trade Unionists During the Preparation of this Thesis

1. What was the major element that provoked the B.C. trade union movement to confront the government in the summer of 1983?
2. What aspect of the Social Credit budget and 'restraint program' was seen as most threatening to trade unions?
3. What were the objectives of Operation Solidarity? Which of these objectives was most important to Operation Solidarity?
4. Was there unanimous agreement on these objectives? If not, what were the major differences of opinion?
5. It is highly unusual in Canada for trade unions to take on a major political role and confront the government through a political strike. Was the union leadership comfortable in its role leading a political movement?
6. What were the major obstacles facing Operation Solidarity during its confrontation with the Social Credit government?
7. Did the threat or implementation of court injunctions and legal actions have any bearing on the final settlement?
8. At what point did the labour leadership decide that no more escalations of strike action were advisable?
9. How did the steering committee go about seeking a settlement?
10. Were you fully supportive of the settlement that was finalized at Kelowna?
11. Operation Solidarity formed a coalition with various community groupings, yet representatives of organized labour stated on numerous occasions that trade unions could not strike over 'social issues'. Does this mean that the labour movement feels that it is unable to take direct political action on behalf of wider 'social issues'? If so, why?
12. If a similar confrontation to the 1983 struggle arises in the future, should the trade union reaction be different?
13. What role do trade unions play in society? What is their

most important function?

14. To what area of activity does your union devote most of its time, energy, and resources?
15. Is it possible for your union to concentrate a significant amount of its time, energy, and resources outside of the various aspects of the collective bargaining process? Does your union do this now? Why/why not?
16. Does your union have any short or long term political policies?
17. What should the objectives of trade unions and the trade union movement be? Are those objectives compatible with those of business? Why/why not?
18. To what degree would the election of an NDP government eliminate the major problems faced by the labour movement and the working class (i.e., problems of repressive labour legislation, unemployment, reduced social services, poverty, etc.)?
19. Do you believe that the workers' best interests would be served by eliminating capitalism completely? (i.e., in order to eliminate unemployment, poverty, social inequalities, etc.)? If yes, how can the labour movement best proceed in this direction?

Interview Questions Directed to Solidarity Coalition Activists

During the Preparation of this Thesis

1. What part of the 1983 Social Credit budget and legislation most affected and angered the group you represented?
2. How much community support was there for the group you represented or for the Coalition in general?
3. Were the objectives of the Solidarity Coalition and Operation Solidarity the same?
4. Did the tactics of these two organizations differ?
5. Did there appear to be much disagreement amongst the trade union leadership regarding the type of alliance that should be built with the community groups?
6. Was the alliance with organized labour beneficial to the Solidarity Coalition?

7. How do you feel about the trade union leadership stating on numerous occasions that the union movement could not strike over social issues?
8. In your dealings with the trade union leadership what appeared to be the most important elements that limited their support for the Solidarity Coalition (limited rank and file support for coalition objectives, bureaucracy, different objectives of the leadership, unfamiliarity dealing with community groups, unwillingness to disobey legal sanctions, other)?
9. To what degree did the Coalition partners actively support the escalating strikes?
10. Was it the trade unions or the Coalition groupings that initiated much of the political action in 1983?
11. Were you supportive of the settlement that was finalized at Kelowna?
12. Was the manner in which the settlement was reached (without consultation with the coalition partners) fair to the Coalition?
13. Did the settlement cause damage to the alliance between community groups and organized labour?
14. Is there presently a closer alliance between organized labour and community groups than before the 1983 conflict? What forms of alliances are taking place now? What is the present status of the Solidarity Coalition?
15. What types of projects are the Solidarity Coalition/your organization presently working on with organized labour?
16. How can the actions and objectives of organized labour be made more responsive to community needs?
17. To what degree would the election of an NDP government eliminate the major problems facing the Coalition/your organization? What are the limitations of the NDP?
18. Do you believe that the interests of the community would be best served by eliminating capitalism completely? If so, how can community organizations and organized labour proceed in this direction?

APPENDIX E

B.C. Trade Union Spheres: Normal Vs. Solidarity/1983

NORMAL B.C. TRADE UNION SPHERE

OBJECTIVES

Economic

- improved wages/benefits (primary)
- better working conditions - election of an NDP Government
- job safety - general improvement of social conditions
- job security
- appropriate labour legislation in order to pursue the above

Political

- (secondary)
- general improvement of social conditions

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

Economic

- collective bargaining
- maintenance of the collective agreement
- union organizing
- strikes against employers
- secondary picketing
- other job related activity
- boycotts

Political

- political lobbying
- funding for NDP
- participation in NDP activities
- inter-union rivalry
- trade union education
- political education
- community projects

(objectives are primarily economic)

(methods/activities are largely related, directly or indirectly, to collective bargaining with the employer, therefore are economic)

B.C. TRADE UNION SPHERE: SOLIDARITY/1983

OBJECTIVES

Economic

- (primary)
- prevention of regressive trade union legislation
- maintenance of traditional layoff procedures
- maintenance of free collective bargaining
- maintenance of wage rates and conditions of work

Political

- (secondary)
- prevention of regressive social legislation

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

Economic

- traditional economic activities become less significant
- some collective bargaining is postponed
- closer labour alliance
- formation of labour/community coalition
- formation of newspaper
- demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, petitions

Political

- substantial commitment of time, energy, and resources against state legislation

(note: objectives are still primarily economic)

- escalating strike involving over 80,000 workers

(note: methods/activities are largely related to labour's conflict with the state)

APPENDIX F

Chronology of Events May - December 1983

1983

- May 5 Social Credit government re-elected with 49% of popular vote compared to 45% for NDP.
- May 29 Fraser Institute Director, Michael Walker, meets with newly appointed Social Credit cabinet.
- June 15 Art Kube elected President of British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL).
- June 15 BCFL officers approve a one day conference to discuss proposed legislative changes.
- June 23 Throne speech signifies cuts to public sector jobs and services, and an attack on labour rights.
- July 1 Communist Party of Canada (CPC) calls for a broad 'fightback campaign' against proposed legislation.
- July 4 George Hewison, CP member and labour activist calls meeting for July 11 in anticipation of a regressive budget.
- July 7 Social Credit government introduces budget and 26 Bills including radical changes to government bodies, regulations, and operations.
- July 8 Government gives 400 provincial employees layoff notices effective Oct.31, 1983.
- July 8 BCFL announces previously scheduled conference to take place July 15. All unions in province are invited.
- July 11 90 people representing various groups attend meeting called by Hewison, and Lower Mainland Budget Coalition is formed.
- July 13 BCFL Public Sector Committee (16 unions) meet and formulate recommendations for Executive Council.
- July 14 Government announces elimination of Human Rights Branch and its staff.

- July 14 Kube asks Hewison to call off demonstration planned by LMBC because he is afraid it will 'flop'. Hewison tells Kube that plans are already in motion and to talk to LMBC steering committee. They refuse.
- July 15 BCGEU members picket various work sites throughout province to protest layoffs/firings.
- July 15 BCFL executive formulate 10 point program for presentation to all BC unions. Operation Solidarity, a labour alliance involving over 400,000 union members, is formed. CCU unions fail to endorse 10 point program (in principle) but approve in general.
- July 15 Kube contacts Renate Shearer, Father Jim Roberts, Clay Perry, and Jean Swanson to form core group of Solidarity Coalition. Operation Solidarity begins funding the Solidarity Coalition.
- July 18 BCFL calls for support for July 23 rally organized by LMBC and announces July 27 Operation Solidarity rally in Victoria.
- July 18 Second LMBC meeting attracts over 400 people. Motions calling for NDP speakers at July 23 rally are defeated.
- July 19 600 BCGEU members begin occupation of Tranquille institution in order to keep it open. Psych nurses join occupation 2 days later.
- July 19 Women Against the Budget (WAB) group is formed. Wab meeting 2 days later draws 200 women.
- July 19 6,000 people attend Victoria rally against budget. Kramer states general strike will be the last resort.
- July 23 March to B.C. Place draws between 20,000 and 35,000 (depending on estimate). LMBC expected 5,000.
- July 27 25,000 protesters rally in front of the provincial legislature (largest political demonstration in Victoria's history). NDP leader, Barrett, tells people that solutions must be parliamentary.
- July 28 Trade Union Solidarity (TUS) meets for the first time and forms a smaller steering committee (TUSSC). TUS approves petition and ad campaign, Empire Stadium rally on Aug.10, and organization of component Solidarity Coalition structure across B.C.
- Aug. 3 First meeting of Solidarity Coalition (steering committee comprises A. Kube, R. Shearer, J. Roberts).

- Aug. 10 40,000 rally at Vancouver's Empire Stadium. CCU unions call for stronger action.
- mid-Aug. LMBC becomes LMSC (and comes under indirect control of Operation Solidarity).
- Aug. 17 4,000 people rally in Kelowna.
- Aug. 18 Operation Solidarity releases leaked draft of proposed Labour Code amendments which represented a massive attack on trade union rights. Kube warns of unprecedented labour chaos if amendments become law.
- Aug. 18 Operation Solidarity adopts 10 point program for further action which includes commitment to the principle that all legislation affecting the coalition partners must be withdrawn.
- Aug. 27 Women Against the Budget organize 'stone soup rally' outside home of Human Resources Minister, Grace McCarthy. Solidarity Coalition does not sanction the protest.
- Aug. 30 Solidarity Coalition adopts 6 week petition and public education campaign.
- Sept. 6 Socialist Challenge puts forward position paper calling for a general strike.
- Sept. 16 80 trade union and Coalition activists occupy the cabinet's Vancouver offices for 27 hours and install a 'people's government'. Occupation is not officially sanctioned by Operation Solidarity or the Solidarity Coalition.
- Sept. 19 Government begins all-night sittings of the legislature to force through its legislation.
- Sept. 20 Public Sector Committee of Operation Solidarity recommends job action against Bill 3.
- Sept. 22 Closure is used for first time in the B.C. legislature.*
- Sept. 28 Solidarity movement claims to speak on behalf of 950,000 people across B.C.
- Oct. 1 BCTF executive calls for membership strike vote against the legislation and budget.
- Oct. 3 Solidarity Coalition co-chairpersons Kube, Shearer, and Roberts meet with Premier Bennett to discuss a consultation process. Meeting provides no solutions.

- Oct. 4 Operation Solidarity commits \$45,000.00 to launch an 'independent' weekly newspaper (Solidarity Times).
- Oct. 5 Opposition leader, Barrett, is forcibly ejected from legislature and banned for the rest of the session. *
- Oct. 7 Barrett calls for calm and for cautious action combined with consultation between the NDP and the government. *
- Oct. 12 Solidarity Coalitions have been established in over 40 centres across B.C.
- Oct. 13 Kube, Shearer, and Roberts agree with Premier Bennett to go through consultative process (i.e., various Coalition components to meet with individual cabinet ministers).
- Oct. 15 Massive protest and march past Social Credit convention at Hotel Vancouver (estimates vary between 50,000 and 65,000 people.) **
- Oct. 17 LMSC passes motion in support of general strike if necessary to defeat entire legislative package.
- Oct. 18 Delegates to Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) call for general strike, if necessary, to support Operation Solidarity's demands. VDLC calls for province wide mobilization of shop stewards and rank and file.
- Oct. 19 Socialist Challenge sponsors meeting to discuss and encourage general strike. 35 people in attendance.
- Oct. 20 In television speech, Bennett announces adjournment of legislature for a "cooling off" period.
- Oct. 21 Opposition leader Barrett in television reply stresses lack of democratic process.
- Oct. 22 2 day Provincial Solidarity Coalition conference begins and pledges support for strike action.
- Oct. 26 Solidarity Coalition begins arranging individual consultations with government ministers.
- Oct. 27 BCGEU votes 87% in favour of strike if new contract is not in place by Nov.1.
- Oct. 28 Operation Solidarity announces escalating strike action to begin with BCGEU strike (if no agreement has been reached on fundamental issues affecting public sector workers).

- Nov. 1 BCGEU strike commences.
- Nov. 1 B.C. Supreme Court judge, Allan McEachern issues ex parte injunction banning picketing of all courts throughout the province. BCGEU complies.
- Nov. 4 30,000 teachers receive letter from Education Minister Heinrich threatening mass firings and removal of teaching certificates if teachers proceed with planned strike. *
- Nov. 4 Barrett refuses to either support or condemn Solidarity strike action. *
- Nov. 7 North Vancouver School Board reaches tentative agreement with BCTF on exemption from Bill 3. Deputy Education Minister Carter intervenes to stop School Board ratification.
- Nov. 8 90% of school teachers across B.C. go on strike. Injunctions in Victoria and Vancouver forbid teachers to picket schools. Secondary pickets are immediately set up by Solidarity Coalition and some elements of organized labour. *
- Nov. 8 Kube is overcome by the flu and a "breakdown". *
- Nov. 9 Kramer and Munro take effective control of BCFL. A 5 point settlement program to offer Bennett is drafted by top labour leaders in a 5 hour Burnaby meeting.
- Nov. 9 Munro contacts Jim Matkin, head of the Employer's Council, to set up a meeting for the following day.
- Nov. 10 Victoria teachers return to work (as advised by BCTF) following a court injunction.
- Nov. 10 Crown corporation employees join strike bringing total number of strikers to over 80,000.
- Nov. 10 School Boards apply for cease and desist orders to stop all secondary picketing of schools.
- Nov. 10 Munro and Kramer suggest 5 point program for settlement to Matkin. Matkin passes it to Norman Spector, the Premier's aid, (who is in negotiations with BCGEU).
- Nov. 11 18 leaders representing private sector unions threaten to bring their unions into the strike unless government demonstrates flexibility.
- Nov. 11 2 days of secret meetings start at the Labour Relations Board between Munro, Kramer, Kelleher and Spector.

- Nov. 11 Munro pressures BCGEU to reach a settlement.
- Nov. 12 Kube briefed by Munro and Kramer about settlement plan and meeting with Spector.
- Nov. 13 Press leaks of secret talks prompt LMSC Steering Committee to demand representation at meetings.
- Nov. 13 BCGEU settles contract. Munro flies to Kelowna to meet Bennett in order to finalize and officially announce deal previously made with Spector. Bennett refuses to make official announcement and controversy arises over the content of the accord. Operation Solidarity agrees to less than it thought was originally offered and ends escalating strike action. *
- Nov. 14 LMSC and Solidarity Coalition Steering Committee voice strong disapproval of the settlement.
- Nov. 15 Operation Solidarity leadership suggests strike action has only been suspended (pending government commitment to the agreement).
- Nov. 23 Munro responds favourably to government proposal re: tripartite commission to change Labour Code.
- Dec. 1 BCFL convention pledges continued support for Solidarity Coalition and commitment to NDP.
- Dec. 1 BCFL leadership accuse government of doublecross re: educational funding item which was perceived to be part of the Kelowna Accord.
- Dec. 13 BCFL discontinues funding for Solidarity Times citing prohibitive cost.

Afterword

1984

- May 16 Labour Code Amendment Act becomes law. The Act prohibits 'political protest strikes', bans secondary picketing, and allows cabinet to more tightly regulate internal union matters. Act receives only a muted response from organized labour.

1986

Spring Solidarity Coalition is formally folded. Organized labour gears up for expected provincial election.

Fall NDP loses provincial election to Social Credit.

1987

Spring Social Credit government introduces Bills 19 and 20 into the B.C. legislature. These Bills are designed to further limit and regulate the activities of organized labour and the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

June 1 In protest of Bills 19 and 20 a one day province-wide general strike involving 300,000 unionists takes place.

July Bills 19 and 20 have been proclaimed law and the union movement threatens non-compliance.

This chronology has been compiled by the writer and drawn from numerous sources including books, articles, newspapers, pamphlets, interviews, and personal accounts.