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PROBLEMS OF PACIFICATION:
VETERANS' GROUPS IN VANCOUVER, 1919-1922.

By

Elizabeth Anne Lees

B.A. Simon Fraser University, 1983.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

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ABSTRACT

As the Great War ended Canada's returning soldiers had high hopes for social change. Many envisioned a united veterans' movement, calling on the Federal Government to reorganize the economy in order to serve the needs of the many rather than the interests of the few. The dream quickly faded as veterans faced the General Strikes of 1919 and the unemployment crisis of 1920-1922. Meanwhile the economy continued on its familiar boom and bust course, offering its unfortunate human victims only the barest minumum of social programmes. This thesis describes those veterans' groups active in Vancouver during the 1919-1922 period. The focus is on the politics of early veterans' organizations and their interaction with the labour movement. Among other sources, the study relies on information from the official documents of the associations, military intelligence reports and newspapers.

Returned servicemen were far from united. The largest Vancouver group, the Great War Veterans' Association, was only one of many organizations. Several large pro-labour veterans' groups were also active in the city. The GWVA, controlled by a conservative faction, opposed the Vancouver General Strike. Other groups supported it. Most of the rank and file seem to have beem ambivalent. After the strike veterans were further fragmented as the GWVA lost many of its members to the Grand Army of United Veterans, a more

politically oriented group, which demanded a cash bonus for ex-servicemen. By December 1920, the first time that the veterans were able to take part in a British Columbia provincial election, it was clear that the lobbying tactics of the GWVA had failed. The GAUV made several attempts to form soldier/labour/farmer political alliances, but the few that were formed were unsuccessful at the polls. In the unemployment crisis of 1920-22 the absence of a united veterans' movement allowed all levels of government to avoid responsibility for the jobless ex-serviceman. Some of the unemployed, disillusioned by their treatment, turned to radical organizations such as the Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen, which used confrontation to draw attention to their plight. By this time the idea of a broadly based veterans' movement had become just a memory.

In shot and shell
I have been free
'Tis peace that's Hell
Oh God! Help Me.

Anonymous[1]

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GLOSSARY/ABBREVIATIONS

A&N	The Army and Navy Veterans.
BCRSAC	British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission. (The provincial government body in charge of soldiers' re-establishment)
Campaigners	The Campaigners of the Great War.
Comrades	The Comrades of the Great War.
"Comrade"	In the post WWl era this term was used by ex-service men to refer to other ex-servicemen -- their former comrades in arms. It did not have exclusively trade union and socialist connotations.
CNUX	The Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen.
GAUV	The Grand Army of United Veterans.
GWVA	The Great War Veterans' Association.
OBU	One Big Union.
SCR	Soldiers' Civilian Re-Establishment. (The federal government department in charge of soldiers' repatriation and re-establishment)
VTLC	Vancouver Trades and Labour Council.

INTRODUCTION.

Christmas 1921 - approximately seven hundred men are crowded into a camp in the city of Vancouver. It is not a prison, though it might well be. Each inmate has an identification card issued by the chief of police; each has been subjected to a medical check for body vermin and venereal disease. Each man spends two days a week clearing a golf course which will eventually be used by the city's wealthy inhabitants. The men are paid 20 cents an hour, and from this sum deductions are made of 20 cents per meal and 50 cents per night's accommodation; this leaves 50 cents per week for spending money. The men sleep on two tiers of bunks in one large room. The camp is plastered with signs that forbid entertaining, speechmaking and alcohol. Camp discipline is harsh, and authoritarian: the committee that the men form is ignored by the camp's director. That so many men will undergo these humiliating procedures is a measure of their desperation and destitution. It is the only way they can survive the winter. While the city authorities give relief to married men, single men can only receive aid if they report to the Hastings Park Camp. Almost half of the camp's inmates are ex-servicemen. Two years earlier, on their return from the Great War they had been greeted by cheering, flag waving crowds - and empty promises of a land fit for heroes. Now they are

merely a nuisance, an embarrasment to all levels of government, and to many of their former comrades.[2]

How could it be that so many men who had risked their lives for their country could be so soon forgotten? This thesis is an attempt to answer the question. It examines the actions and ideologies of ex-servicemen's organizations in the city of Vancouver and its surrounding area from the 1918 armistice to the spring of 1922 -- a time of confronation and social unrest when the city experienced a General Strike and the unemployment crisis which led to establishment of the Hastings Park Camp.

From 1914 to 1918 over half a million Canadians had fought the "war to end all wars". Four hundred thousand had been posted overseas; 60,661 had died. The physical and psychological wounds received during military service were severe enough to qualify 69,583 survivors for a government disability pension. British Columbia had one of the highest provincial rates of voluntary enlistment: 43,652 or 9.5 per cent of the nation's total. It also had one of the highest casualty rates: over 14 per cent of those who went overseas were killed.[3]

During the war men of different military rank and from widely differing social backgrounds found themselves comrades in adversity as they faced the horrors of the trenches. Many felt that their shared experience created a permanent bond between ex-soldiers, one which set them apart from civilians. The survivors of the ordeal hoped to return to a "home fit for

heroes". Veterans had remarkably similar ideas as to what this entailed. It was to be a land that would not merely provide support for disabled veterans, it would provide social justice in the form of pensions, unemployment insurance, medical care and progressive taxation. This vision assumed that government would continue to direct the economy and that industrial production that had fuelled the war machine would be redirected to serve human needs.

But there was no agreement among veterans as to how this vision of a better Canada was to be achieved. Some joined forces with the union movement in the industrial rebellion of 1919, some tried to form an effective veterans' lobby, and others organized politically. As veterans resumed, or attempted to resume their civilian roles, their perception of comradeship faded along with the vision of a better Canada. In the face of the 1920-1922 depression, a basic division between the "haves" and the "have nots" reasserted itself. The potential power of the veterans' movement was never translated into effective action, leaving a legacy of fragmentation and disillusion as the movement became a footnote in history. Chapter 1 of this thesis describes the local and national context of these developments. Chapter 2 identifies Vancouver's most important veterans' organizations and their ideologies. Chapter 3 examines the role of veterans in the Vancouver General Strike and its aftermath. Chapter 4 investigates veterans' participation in the provincial election of 1920. Chapter 5 is an account of the post-war unemployment

crisis and its effects on veterans. The short conclusion includes a list of unanswered questions.

Notes

1. C. P. Gilmam and H. M. Sinclair, Unemployment: Canada's Problem (Winnipeg, 1937), p. 32.

2. City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), City Council Minutes, Special Report on Winter Employment, Employment and Industries Committee, 8 September 1921; CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, File 13-F-7, Notices for Relief Camp; B.C. Federationist, 16 December 1921, pp. 1 & 4; Vancouver Sun, 2 December 1921, p.14, 6th December 1921, p. 18, 18th January 1922, p. 2; Vancouver World, 9 January 1922, p. 3.

3. C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918: A Regional Analysis", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol 18, No. 4 (Winter 1983-84), pp. 15-29; Desmond Morton, "Noblest and Best: Retraining Canada's War Disabled, 1916-23", Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol 16, Nos 3 & 4, (Fall/Winter 1981), pp. 75-85.

CHAPTER 1

Return from the Wars.

> The government and the country will consider it their first duty to see that a proper appreciation of your effort and of your courage is brought to the notice the people at home, and it will always be our endeavour to so guide the attitude of public opinion that the country will support the government to prove to the returned man its just and due appreciation of the inestimable value of the service rendered to the country and Empire; and that no man whether he goes back or whether he remains in Flanders, will have just cause to reproach the Government for having broken faith with the men who won and the men who died.
>
> Prime Minister Borden to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1917, before the Battle of Vimy. 1

The veterans who returned from the Great War found a Vancouver that appeared to be very different from the city they had left, but beneath the outward appearance many of its characteristics were unchanged. Fuelled by the economic boom of the early years of the century, the city had become Canada's fourth largest with a 1919 population of 123,050. Its economy, like that of the province it served as a metropolitan centre, was heavily dependent on resource extraction. The products of the provincial hinterland were exported through the Port of Vancouver. Apart from the preliminary processing of these raw materials (for example, saw milling), and production

of consumer goods for a small domestic market, manufacturing was not well developed. The provincial market was too small for the city's industries to be able to manufacture sophisticated machinery competitively. In contrast the city's commercial institutions were well developed: in 1914 it was the headquarters of the great majority of the companies doing business in the province.[2]

In 1913 the "Laurier" boom came to an abrupt halt, and the nation entered a period of acute depression. Rumours of war exacerbated the situation. The slump, which affected all of Canada, hit the western provinces particularly hard. In British Columbia mining and logging companies shut down and railway contruction ceased. The outbreak of war gave rise to financial chaos symbolized by the collapse of Dominion Trust and the Bank of Vancouver. Tax arrears, vacant housing and unemployed people were prominent features of the Vancouver scene. An influx of unemployed from outlying districts made a bad situation even worse: in the spring of 1915 there were riots on the streets when civic authorities attempted to cut the unemployed off relief. Enlistment in the armed services became a solution of sorts for the unemployed workers, for municipal authorities and employers. Men who were laid off received a slip in their final pay packets that read "Your King and Country need you -- we don't". Despite the war hysteria which engulfed much of Canada's daily press, and the patriotism of many workers, it appears that hunger was often the reason for "voluntary" enlistment. John Brodie, a union activist who testified at the 1919 Royal Commisssion on Industrial

Relations, maintained that "...a large percentage of our men who shouldered the gun to fight for democracy and freedom were practically forced at the point of starvation".[3]

It was not until 1916 that the city itself experienced the effects of war production; the province's mineral and lumber exports were in strong demand and port facilities were improved to meet the increased traffic. But the most important wartime Vancouver industry was maritime construction. For a few years this form of manufacturing changed both the city's economic character and its workforce. Seventeen new shipyards opened on the British Columbia coast during the war years. Coughlan's in Vancouver, with a payroll of 7,000 became the city's largest employer. Others in the area included the Wallace, Western Canada, Northern Construction and B.C. Marine shipyards. The Imperial Munitions' Board placed orders for both steel and wooden ships. Other orders came from Britain's allies. Shipbuilding created a demand for related production: boilers, internal combustion engines, propellors and ship's fittings were all manufactured within the area. This led to a demand for skills and a concentration of labour that were new to the city. In these conditions unions rapidly gained strength. Membership in British Columbia's unions rose from 13,017 in 1914 to 27,034 in 1918 (from 7.1 per cent to 14.6 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce). Much of this strength was concentrated in the shipbuilding and allied industries.[4]

But all was not well. The outward appearance of prosperity and full employment masked social inequality and increasing confrontation between worker and employer.

Increases in wages were outdistanced by rapidly increasing prices; "real" wage rates actually decreased between 1913 and 1918. In comparison business and the wealthy layers of the middle class had done very well. Federal taxes on personal and corporate incomes in 1917 were minimal. The much touted excess profits tax was enacted only when the government feared a confrontation with labour over conscription, and, as R.T. Naylor has shown, it had a negligible effect. The effects of the new taxes were further reduced by the introduction of Victory Bonds which provided a convenient tax shelter for the rich.[5]

In contrast the poor remained unprotected by any "safety net". Widows, orphans, invalids and old people were largely dependent on private charities. When charitable funds were inadequate they were left to the less than tender mercies of the civic relief department whose primary commitment was to keep taxes low by paring expenses to the bone. Both the federal and the provincial governments denied any responsibility for the jobless. Vancouver's tax base, which was just adequate to provide relief for its own population in normal times was hopelessly inadequate in times of depression. Soldier's wives and families were among the most shamefully treated. Even if a private in the Canadian Expeditionary Force sent all of his $1.10 per day home to add to the $20 his wife recived from the federal government as a separation payment. It was patently insufficient to keep a wife and family. In many cases the only thing that kept his dependents from starving was the Canadian Patriotic Fund, a

private charity. The price of a husband's patriotism was often humiliation for his wife. The Canadian Patriotic Fund called for a thorough investigation of each applicant in order to determine "whether a family, by its method of living, is worthy of assistance from public moneys". Soldier's wives were subject to continuing scrutiny by visiting committees and paid investigators who checked to see that they raised their children "suitably", remained sexually continent and paid their bills. Despite these demeaning conditions many soldier's wives had no choice: in 1917 the Fund assisted 3,743 of Vancouver's families.[6]

Women, children and old people were in no position to fight for an improvement in their circumstances. Workers could and did fight for better conditions. Their unions became increasingly militant, and as Martin Robin writes: "there was manifest a strong resistance to the war regimentation, a resistance which culminated in fierce opposition to conscription". Labour received more recognition than it had previously enjoyed, but not enough to prevent continuing conflict. The unions were particularly upset by the prospect of the draft. They felt that the worker was already being made to shoulder an unfair portion of the sacrifices of war. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC), which was vehemently opposed to the introduction of the draft, nominated anti-conscription candidates in the 1917 Federal election. Its president, Victor Midgely, was a candidate in Vancouver Burrard and J.P. McVety, a union activist, contested Vancouver South. But wartime patriotism, the appeals of the Union

Government and the gerrymandering of the Wartime Elections Act led to their defeat at the polls. The Labour movement was still smarting from this loss in 1918, when Vancouver reached a peak of wartime conflict between unions and employers. Orders-in-Council outlawing membership in fourteen radical associations (including the Industrial Workers of the World and the Social Democratic Party) were further irritants. Strikes themselves were made illegal during October and November of 1918. In 1913 there had been twenty-five strikes in the province, in 1918 there were forty-six. The latter included walk-outs by Vancouver's electrical workers, carpenters, painters, millmen, warehousemen, street railwaymen, bakers and shipyard employees.[7]

The most violent confrontation of the year was sparked by the death of a former Vice-President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, Ginger Goodwin, who was shot in the back as a draft evader. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council called a twenty-four hour strike to protest the killing. The walkout, which took place on the second of August, was an impressive show of labour strength which angered the city's businessmen and their allies. A crowd of more than 300 veterans ransacked the Labour Temple and attempted to throw VTLC President Midgely out of a second storey window. Failing in this, they forced him to kneel and repeatedly kiss the Union Jack. The enraged mob would not even allow verbal opposition; Delegate Thomas of the Longshoremen was beaten when he went to the rescue of one spectator who had dared to voice dissent. Contemporary newspaper accounts of the rioting suggest that the

action was instigated by business leaders. P.G. Shallcross, President of the Board of Trade was pleased with the mob's actions. He publicly thanked the veterans for what he described as "restraint" in the face of the "provocation" they had received. He told them that the loyal men of the province did not give expression to their thoughts often enough and urged them to "kill the German element" and "locate the German cash". Others had different reactions to the violence. Labour lawyer Wallace Lefeaux claimed that the rioters were returned officers rather than enlisted men, while ex-Private Tom Barnard called the businessmen who encouraged the violence "flag flapping patriots" identifying profiteers and rack renters as the "real traitors". [8]

No doubt the events of August 1918 led many Vancouver businessmen to hope that they would be able to use ex-servicemen as tools to break the union movement when the war was over. On the other hand the authorities feared that veterans would make common cause with labour. RNWMP Commissioner Perry was disturbed by the spread of "pernicious propaganda" among veterans in Vancouver. The "loyalty" of veterans was a constant theme of the intelligence reports of the RNWMP and the Department of Militia. Contacts between organized labour and veterans' groups were under constant scrutiny and secret agents attended veterans' meetings. Even while they were abroad, Canadian soldiers had shown they were a force to be reckoned with. The government had planned to ship them home slowly, priority being given to skilled tradesmen. But the soldiers were impatient: those waiting in

England rioted in protests that led to five deaths. After this demobilization was speeded up. In Canada itself the situation had to be handled carefully in order to prevent social unrest.[9]

Demobilization and re-establishment were massive undertakings. The Canadian Government boasted that its provision of pensions and retraining for the war-disabled was more generous than that of its war allies. But the government's re-establishment plan had one major flaw -- it assumed that the economic climate would allow able-bodied ex-servicemen to find suitable employment in a matter of months. There were other problems. Many of the schemes grew out of earlier developments and lacked the overall coherence to deal with a problem of this scale. Federal-provincial squabbling often made it difficult to implement programmes. The structure of Canadian Government, with its division of Federal and Provincial powers, allowed politicians to shirk their responsibilities to those who had fought for King and Country.

At the Federal level the first priority was pensions for the disabled, their dependents, war widows and orphans. During the war pension regulations updating earlier provisions were passed by Order-in-Council. They were consolidated in the Pensions Act in 1919. At that time a totally disabled single veteran received $60 per month, whereas the wages of a labourer in Vancouver were about $80 per month. Widows received $48 per month. Allowances were made for dependent

children and dependent parents of dead or disabled soldiers.[10]

Very few soldiers were considered totally disabled. In 1924 only 2,380 out of a total of 43,263 pensions were for total disability. Eighty per cent of pensioners received between a quarter and half of the allowable maximum. Even so Canada's pension bill was enormous as was the bureaucracy that administered the plan, and administrators proved their frugality on more than one occasion. Two examples illustrate this. A discharged soldier aged 43 had a spinal injury that caused partial paralysis of his right shoulder. He was unable to raise his right arm to shoulder height and could write only with great difficulty. For this permanent injury he was awarded a pension of $15 per month. In reply to his protest the Director of the Pensions Board informed him "If you can feed yourself the highest pension we can give you is 30 per cent". A widow who lost her son overseas was awarded a pension of $48 per month. In order to pay the heavy mortgage on her property she fitted up a small building on her lot and rented it out for $15 per month. When they heard about this the Pensions Board reduced her pension by $15.[11]

Throughout the post-war era the conduct and decisions of the Pensions Board were a constant irritant to veterans and the groups that represented them. The retraining programme of the Department of Soldiers' Civilian Re-Establishment (SCR) was less unpopular. Formed in 1918, one of its functions was to take over the rehabilitation services which had been

developed during the war by the Military Hospitals Commission. The SCR arranged for retraining in skills such as tailoring, motor mechanics, dental mechanics and movie projection. Local educational institutions were utilized for this purpose. In 1918 the University of British Columbia was training veterans in automobile repairs, practical engineering and agricultural pursuits.[12]

Ex-servicemen retrained under SCR programmes were remarkably successful in finding work: 61,278 out of its 68,673 first year trainees found more or less permanent positions. This was not, of course, a philanthropic endeavor. Desmond Morton describes it as a "shrewd and often imaginative business venture". The men were carefully selected for a training that was aimed at making them self sufficient. This would reduce the long term pension bill. "As an investment of $27 million, most of it in training pay and allowances it probably achieved its purpose". The benefits of the SCR's retraining programme were, after a great deal of pressure, extended to those who had joined up under the age of eighteen, but at no time were they made available to able-bodied veterans.[13]

Granting land to soldiers as a reward for military service was an old tradition in Canada; soldiers who had fought on the British side during the American Revolution had been given land. The tradition was continued by the Federal Soldiers' Settlement Board which provided one of the few benefits available to men who had been discharged as medically fit. A

soldier could apply for a grant of free land plus a loan of $3,000 for livestock and improvements. The Settlement Board also loaned up to $4,500 for the purchase of agricultural land in addition to a loan for livestock and improvements. Loans were repayable at five per cent per annum over twenty-five years. These benefits were not necessarily available to every veteran. The Board's advertisements stated: "In the selection of candidates...the board is careful to ensure that the veteran who secures the loan is in every way fitted for the calling of agriculture." In practice this meant that the scheme was restricted to those with farming experience who could come up with a downpayment of 10 per cent.[14]

Premier Oliver of British Columbia, an ex-farmer and a proponent of the rural ideal, was an enthusiastic supporter of this plan. In 1918, under his leadership, the Province passed a Soldiers' Land Act before the federal legislation was passed. Farm settlement benefited politicians by keeping veterans away from the city where they were a potential source of social disruption. It proved less helpful to veterans. In British Columbia a combination of federal-provincial squabbling, poor selection of land, and a lack of access to suitable markets, ruined any hope of success the scheme might have had. Settlement schemes elsewhere in Canada had a similar lack of success.[15]

Many able-bodied veterans were trained to industrial disciplines. For these city dwellers farming was neither suitable nor desirable. A federal government response to

veterans' need for employment was the creation of the Employment Service of Canada, which worked in co-operation with the Information and Service Branch of the SCR and Provincial employment offices. In British Columbia the service, which began in December 1918, established Labour bureaus in Vancouver, Victoria, Prince Rupert, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Cranbrook, Fernie, Kamloops and Kelowna. It made 55,000 job placements during its first year, though many clients were placed more than once. Though the scheme provided a useful service in directing workers to available jobs, it could not create jobs in times of depression. The supply of seasonal labour to farmers became one of its main functions. Agrarian interests, however, preferred bringing in cheap labour from Eastern Europe to paying Canadian workers a living wage. In response to their pressure the scheme was phased out in the early years of the King administration.[16]

The most useful provision for the majority of able bodied veterans took the form of cash. Under an Order-in-Council passed a month after the war ended they were given "post discharge payments". A private who had survived three years of overseas service received pay for 193 days after demobilization. On the other end of a sliding scale of payments was 31 days pay for a private who had served in Canada for one year. Allowances were given for wives and dependent children. Like pensions, post-discharge pay rose according to military rank, but even at the lowest level a private's allowance was double the $1.10 he had been paid while

in the army.[17]

The Province saw it as an attempt to ease the veteran's transistion into the civilian economy:

> This [post discharge pay] will be paid not in a lump sum, but monthly. It is figured that this amount will carry the soldiers over the first six months after discharge and, even if they are unemployed, will be sufficient to carry on. By paying monthly it is hoped to prevent the soldiers from dissipating their whole discharge pay. It is admitted that this will mean an increased cost to the country of approximately fifty million dollars. However it is felt that this is only justice to the soldiers and will help tide the country over a difficult period of reconstruction.[18]

It was, however, possible for veterans to obtain their post-discharge pay in one lump sum. The British Columbia Returned Soldiers Aid Commission (BCRSAC) which had been established in 1915 as a Provincial agency to assist veterans, made advance payments on gratuities. A returned soldier who could prove that he needed to buy tools in order to resume his former trade, who wanted to start a business, who needed furnishings or help with medical bills, could apply to the BCRSAC. The Commission was the provincial agency that co-operated with the Federal Employment Service, the SCR and the Canadian Patriotic Fund. Its other activites included financial support for returned soldiers' associations and insititutions such as the Returned Soldiers' Club of Vancouver.[19]

The civic authorities' attempts to assist returned soldiers were more notable for rhetoric than for content. The city administered the Better Housing Scheme, which attempted to provide houses and jobs for ex-servicemen. In order to help

people in the low to middle-income brackets, including war widows and the disabled, eligibility was limited to those with incomes less than $3,000 a year. It provided loans for housing construction to maximum of $3,500. Wherever possible, builders were required to employ veterans on the construction work. The plan was funded, under the Better Housing Act of 1919, by a $300,000 loan from the provincial government, which in its turn was funded by the federal government. By November 1920 over eighty houses had been constructed under the scheme, which in practice was restricted to the middle class. Eighty per cent of those that took advantage it owned their own land. The 2.5 per cent down payment was beyond the means of many veterans. Prospective builders had to fulfil many bureaucratic requirements, such as getting plans approved, which limited accessibility to those with some financial resources who were reasonably well educated. Requirements that an applicant have six months residence in the city before applying under the scheme, and live in the completed residence for ten years, were presumably made in order to discourage speculators; unfortunately they also excluded the poor and transient.[20]

Other civic contributions to the needs of the veteran were even less substantial. The Council's Committee for Fire, Police and Returned Soldiers was chaired by former Army Captain Elkins, an insurance man in civilian life. Unfortunately the committee rarely dealt with the latter part of its jurisdiction. The Council's priorities are perhaps best indicated by its approval of $10,000 for Returned Soldiers'

Organizations, in May 1919. The gesture was made only when the Vancouver General Strike was imminent, and the "loyalty" of the veterans of critical importance. Even so, council contributed considerably less money toward actual veterans' groups than it gave to showy civic receptions for returning soldiers and military dignitaries.[21]

Private charitable insitutions within the City of Vancouver also assisted veterans. Many of them were of a temporary nature. The Y.M.C.A. opened the Red Triangle Club at 610 Cordova Street in March 1919. The Club operated for a year and was primarily intended for veterans who were passing through the city on their way home. The Catholic Church ran a similar institution, the Army Hut of the Knights of Columbus. Some ex-soldiers had recourse to institutions whose mission was to aid the destitute. Both the Salvation Army and the Central City Mission reported increased activity during the post-war period.[22]

One important institution which served veterans was the Returned Soldiers' Club, which had close ties with the provincial government and the city's businessmen. The club was managed by T.M. Harnett who was a member of the Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission and an executive member of the Vancouver branch of the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA). The club's operations were assisted by both the federal and provincial governments. Situated in the Elysium Hotel it provided club rooms and a dining room where meals were served at a cost of 30 cents each. There was also living accommodation

for 120. A charge of $6 per week was made for board, but those who were unable to pay were allowed to stay free of charge. In June 1919 the club's facilities were already overtaxed, and it was forced to arrange outside accommodation for some veterans. Another important feature of the club was its employment agency. In the year ending May 31st, 1919, it placed 1,766 veterans in jobs. This was no doubt the aspect of the club that was dearest to the hearts of its Chairman, W. Dalton, who was head of the Mainland Transfer Company, and the club's directors who included the President of B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Co., the Assistant Manager of the B.C. Electric Company, and F.W. Peters, General Superintendent of the C.P.R.. Their activities on behalf of the club allowed these men to satisfy their patriotic and philanthropic urges, while at the same time keeping a close watch on the potential supply of cheap labour.[23]

The list of government and private schemes to help the returning soldiers indicates that there was a great deal of good will but less in the way of overall planning and co-ordination. It was quite inadequate for the long term problems that would face veterans. Though things appeared prosperous in early 1919, it was not difficult to see that major economic problems lay ahead. For the moment Vancouver did not have a problem with unemployment, but the jobs available and the rewards they offered to the returned soldier were not always of a type that encouraged him to return to civilian employment.

The experiences of veterans, as they rejoined the civilian workforce, differed widely. They were not always "grateful" for what was offered and in several cases, it will be shown, they resisted the disciplines of low-grade industrial work. Those who had formerly been city employees were fortunate. While they were at the front the city had paid them a war allowance. They were automatically taken back on staff when they returned. The employees who had been hired to take their place were retired in order of seniority. At the other end of the scale were those who had no skills and no jobs to return to. The employment they were offered tended to be poorly paid, and low in status -- the kind of work that had formerly been given only to Orientals. Employers such as Perry Roe of Eburn Sawmills claimed that they had trouble attracting returned soldiers. He told the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations that the majority of the employees in the mill were white, and his policy had been to assist all veterans that applied for work. But he found that many of them were not physically able to do the work which, he admitted, was both hard and dirty.[24]

Roe's comments were echoed by John H. MacDonald, Manager of the B.C. Manufacturing Company. He employed one-third Oriental and two-thirds white labour, but had difficulty in retaining workers. He complained that he had fired six Orientals and hired six veterans to take their place in sorting lumber. He told the Commission that the next day the soldiers failed to turn up for work. Blythe Rogers, the President of B.C. Sugar refineries, was similarly unhappy with

the ex-servicemen he had hired to replace Chinese workers in the company's box-making operation: "...so far it has been very difficult because the returned soldiers do not seem to be able to do it, their fingers are not nimble enough." The enthusiasm the ex-soldiers brought to the job was no doubt dimmed by the low rate of pay. Fourteen dollars was not a princely sum for a forty hour work week; a month's work for Mr. Rogers would earn a married private with dependents considerably less than he had been receiving in post-discharge pay.[25]

Another reason for the soldiers' dislike of the work may have been that they shared the prejudice of the rest of society in considering certain work fit only for a "Chinaman". They were reluctant to work beside members of a race they considered inferior, and there is evidence that the Asiatics were not exactly keen on the idea themselves. The Royal Commission on Industrial Relations was told of one ex-soldier's experience. The man, who had been wounded in the war, went to work in a New Westminster sawmill. He was put to work beside Chinese and East Indians where he met with considerable hostility: "....they laughed him out of his job...he said to his wife...I do not mind the wood, but I cannot stick being [in] slavery to Chinamen and Hindoos".[26]

Though some veterans were at the mercy of grasping bosses, the experience of most seems to have lain somewhere between the complete security offered to former civic employees and the degredation of poorly paid work that was considered fit only for "coolies".

At least one employer seems to have realized that being able to obtain cheap labour was not necessarily the best reason for employing veterans. Coughlan's Shipyards, the city's largest employer, appears to have modified its management attitudes when it realized that a good record in employing veterans might help it land government contracts. In December 1918, when the company's workers walked off the job in protest against the unfair dismissal of an ex-soldier, a member of its management said angrily: " Damn the returned soldiers, I am going to run the business to suit myself". Yet in face of competition for the dwindling number of government contracts, the shipyard appears to have mended its ways. In late 1919 the SCR recommended that Coughlan's rather than Wallace Shipyards should receive a dry dock subsidy because of its "excellent record in re-establishment work and its closed shop agreement with international unions".[27]

The unions welcomed ex-servicemen into their ranks, encouraging them by cut rate or nominal membership fees. Some tried to find them employment. The executive of the Vancouver Local of the Typographers' Union attempted to get places in the trade for two of their apprentices who had been on active service overseas. The readjustment was not entirely without friction, although experiences like those of Bill Blackwood of the Operating Engineers were exceptional. He and three of his companions were supposed to be paid-up members of the Vancouver local throughout the war. When they returned they encountered the union's business agent, a former janitor at the Labour

Temple: "he was a pacifist, and when we walked into the Engineer's local with a uniform on it was like a red rag to a bull. He didn't know us at all". Blackwood, who eventually became an OBU member, left in disgust: "as long as he's business agent I won't belong". [28]

Unions did not necessarily accept patriotism as an valid reason for employing veterans. In January 1919, the Brotherhood of Railway Engineers, Freight Handlers and Station men compained that the C.P.R.'s decision to replace women and unmarried men with returned soldiers was an attempt at union busting. It may be that C.P.R. Superintendent Peters had his eye on the Returned Soldiers' Club as a source of labour.[29]

As the soldiers returned to the city at a rate of approximately 2,000 per month, a delicate balance of forces kept most of them reasonably content with their situation. The press and all levels of government drove home the idea that they were heroes whose war service had earned them not only praise, but also preference in employment. Post-discharge pay meant that they were not immediately at the mercy of the city's less scrupulous employers. The city was still feeling the effects of war time prosperity: there was a certain amount of unemployment, but demand for British Columbia's raw materials remained high and government war contracts had not yet been completed. Government agencies worked hard to help veterans establish themselves in suitable employment and to provide retraining for those who were disabled.

This balance, temporary as it was, was of critical

importance during the industrial unrest that Gregory Kealey has dubbed the "Canadian Labour Revolt" of 1919.[30] Vancouver was one of several cities that experienced an unprecedented degree of social unrest. At this time veterans were an unknown quantity, and both labour and capital competed for their loyalties. It is in this context that the views and actions of the leaders and members of the city's veterans' organizations are of particular interest.

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25. John H. MacDonald, testimony to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1. p. 315; "nimble fingers" quotation from testimony of Blythe Rogers to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1. p. 529.

26. Mrs Walter Crosfield testimony to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1, pp. 562-563

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CHAPTER 2

The Veterans Organize.

> ....a new order of things has come into existence since active warfare has terminated. These altered conditions have resulted in new ideas and notions that must reform our social system.
>
> B.C. Veterans Weekly
> Special Souvenir Edition
> June 1919 1

Canadian historians have given a great deal of attention to the Great War, but comparAtively little to its aftermath from the soldier's point of view. James Eayrs, Desmond Morton, and Glen Wright, who have described veterans' organizations in the immediate post-war era, have focused their attention on the fight for a cash bonus, which caused a large splinter group to break away from the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA), the largest organization. Despite the authorities' fear that the returned men might make common cause with labour radicals and the major role that veterans played in the Winnipeg General Strike, as outlined by David Bercuson, little attention has been paid to the role of ex-servicemen in other cities. Though the GWVA was of major national importance during this time of turmoil, the organization is not well known. Desmond Morton views it as an egalitarian association encompassing a wide range of viewpoints, where no one section was able to maintain control over another. It is hard to reconcile this idealized

view with the fact that the authorities used the GWVA as a weapon to keep veterans on "the right track", and it appears that in Vancouver the state and the economic elite used the GWVA as an agent for the political manipulation of veterans.[2]

Though the GWVA was the largest veterans' group, both locally and nationally, it was only one of many that were formed during and immediately after the war. In 1918, its year of incorporation, it had a national membership of 18,000, a number which grew to approximately 180,000 as demobilization took place. Nineteen-nineteen was its most successful year; in the Greater Vancouver Area, the Vancouver Branch had approximately 2,500 members, New Westminster over 600, and South Vancouver nearly 200. The GWVA constitution listed its aims as preservation of the memory of the dead, the erection of monuments, provision of suitable burial places and the inculcation of loyalty to Canada and the Empire. Membership was open to all who had served militarily, both volunteer and conscript. Its egalitarian ethos was emphasized by the use of the word "comrade" among all members, and by the organization's fight to get pensions equalized for all ranks.[3]

The association's close ties with all levels of government, however, hampered its ability to be an effective advocate. The Dominion Executive, the top layer of its three tiered structure, was based in Ottawa where it had close links with the federal government. Three members of the executive

comprised the Soldiers' Advisory Members to the Select Parliamentary Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Isolated in the nation's capital, with semi-official status, these GWVA officials had more in common with politicians and bureaucrats than with newly demobilized soldiers. In British Columbia, local branch executives of the Association formed the majority of the local demobilization committees sponsored by the British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission.[4]

Throughout the period under review, the executive of the GWVA's British Columbia Provincial Command, and the executive of the Vancouver branch were largely identical and formed a leadership elite. Many of them were part of, or closely allied to, government bureaucracies. In 1919 the executive of the Vancouver Branch included four employees of the Federal Department of Soldiers' Civilian Re-establishment, an employee of the Soldiers' Settlement Board, T.M.Harnett (BCRSAC member and Manager of the Returned Soldiers Club), Walter Drinnan (a former hotel and restaurant operator) and Cambridge graduate Ernie Paige who was editor of the B.C. Veterans Weekly.[5] It was a group that perceived itself as a conservative force.

The military authorites and the RNWMP had no doubts about the role of the Vancouver GWVA. It was "run by the indirect influence of officers", in order to "mould public opinion in the right direction". Its members were "well controlled by a president of sound views and he is supported by a strong committee of returned men". The city's businessmen and

politicians gave the association their enthusiastic support. On New Year's Day 1919, the Vancouver Branch moved into the former headquarters of the Vancouver Club. The building had been refurbished for the occasion: the walls of the lounge were painted with the flags of all former wartime allies -- except Russia. The opening ceremony was attended by many dignitaries; H.O. Bell Irving remarked that there was no organization that the Vancouver Club would sooner hand over to than the GWVA. He then warned "that there must be nothing of the element that had led to chaotic conditions in Russia. Those ideas must never take root in Canada". Lt. Col. R.C. Cooper, M.P. told the gathering that the aim had always been to get "level headed" men on the executive of the association and that no trace of bolshevism would be tolerated.[6]

The B.C. Veterans Weekly was an important propaganda tool. The magazine, which was the official organ of the association's provincial level, was published bi-weekly. It carried news of the various branches, and articles written by individual veterans. The editor was well aware that there was general agreement among the readers that reform was essential. The editorial content of the magazine shows an ambivalent attitude towards this idea. The B.C. Veterans Weekly claimed that it stood for:

> ...fair play and the advancement of a spirit of unity among citizen soldiers which is very necessary at this present time, because a new order of things has come into existence since active warfare has terminated. These altered conditions have resulted in new ideas and notions which must reform our social system. 7

Paige's editorials recognized that the wealth which had been amassed by war profiteers had called into question the morality of capitalism:

> The returned men are not capitalists; their sympathies are with the poor who struggle to obtain a mere existence. Pork barons and war profiteers would not receive much consideration, but would on the contrary be expected to disgorge.
>
> By all means let labour be an active party in the prosperity of the country; the returned men intend to be such, but partners must, of necessity co-operate or else the business of the firm would be ruined. An actual co-operation between labour and capital would bring all the returned men in, and the social improvements labour is advocating would receive almost unanimous support. 8

In the post-war euphoria even the GWVA had sent delegates to the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. Editor Paige gave lip service to socialism, providing it was brought about by "free, democratic methods", sentiments more characteristic of British than Canadian intellectuals. But the editor, like those who attended the opening of GWVA headquarters, believed that "Bolshevism should be stamped out". In the columns of the B.C. Veterans Weekly fear of bolshevism is more evident than a desire to work with organized labour or socialist movements.[9]

Paige was horrifed when the Western Labour Conference, dominated by the advance of the radical One Big Union (OBU), suggested the formation of joint soldier/labour committees:

> Such resolutions of course are worth no more than the value given to them by the men who pass them. Soldiers, as a body, though sympathetic to labour in all its legitimate claims can have no truck with revolutionaries, especially those of the Spartacan and Bolsheviki order. 10

The editor clearly saw himself, his magazine, and the GWVA, as

having an obligation: " ...it is impossible, either within or without the association to put a check on that [soldiers' protest] movement, therefore it has become a duty of the responsible officers to guide and direct it toward beneficial ends.[11]

The GWVA Vancouver executive was always careful to stress the concept of comradeship, which, in theory, minimized the differences between ex-officers and former members of the rank and file. Walter Drinnan, the Association's paid organizer promoted the idea at the opening of a new Branch:

> Loyal labour enlisted by the thousands when the war broke out, and so did loyal manhood of every other shade of the community. Lords, dukes, earls, and millionaires were no laggards when the call for men came, and in the deadly struggle that followed and which ended so gloriously for the cause of freedom, the labouring man was a comrade in the ranks with banker, broker, or any other individual. But the labouring man who did not go to the front and did not do his loyal "bit" in some way or other...cannot see that the war has in reality done away with the old time "class" distinctions. He does not realise that the officer who led his men, suffering with them, sometimes suffering more himself in order to spare the rank and file, is a "loved" comrade of his men. 12

In practice the GWVA Vancouver executive's actions opposed organized labour in the city, thus effectively giving its support to business interests. Anti-alien sentiment could be used to lower wages by firing aliens and replacing them with returned soldiers at a reduced rate of pay. The Vancouver GWVA's policies led directly to this kind of situation. It already had a record of persecuting aliens. In April 1918 it had co-operated in a national anti-alien campaign. At a large

demonstration held in Vancouver its speakers had called for the internment of enemy aliens at a low wage for "industrial purposes". The organization's post-war attitude towards this group was indicated in a December 1918, B.C. Veterans Weekly cartoon, which showed a large hand, labelled "returned soldier", crushing its enemies: profiteers, landlords, exploiters and aliens. The Vancouver branch focused its attention on the latter.[13]

In late January 1919, the Vancouver branch called on employers to replace alien enemies with veterans, charging that aliens were preaching "dangerous doctrines" in the city's shipyards and at gatherings of the Federated Labour Party. The GWVA meeting, with its appeal to the baser human emotions was part of a larger national strategy. It coincided with clashes between socialists and veterans in Winnipeg and Calgary, and Vancouver's military authorities were alerted. The city's socialist meetings were rescheduled and a meeting of Mayor Gale, veterans' organizations and socialist leaders was hastily convened. All present expressed themselves in favour of law and order. The labour weekly, B.C. Federationist, reminded its readers that the removal of aliens would not secure enough jobs for all returned men, and that anti-alien sentiments and bolshevik labels were being used to prevent unity between returned men and workers: "The distinction that is being made between soldiers and workers is purposefully made...The returned men in most cases are and always have been,

members of the working class".[14]

The disapproval of the B.C. Federationist did not prevent the Vancouver GWVA, which used the terms "alien", "enemy alien" and "foreigner" interchangably, from trying to implement its anti-alien policy. A committee, composed mainly of ex-officers, met with representatives of the B.C. Manufacturers' Association and the Employers' Association. The employers' organizations agreed to supply them with a list of enemy aliens who could be replaced by veterans. It was reported later that forty members of the B.C. Loggers' Association had promised not to employ aliens and to give prefence to veterans when hiring, and that the majority of firms in the city were filling vacancies with returned men and refusing to hire foreigners. It is not, however, clear to what extent this development represented a replacement of aliens, or to what extent it applied only to hiring new employees.[15]

In one case the GWVA policy of replacement of aliens by veterans led to wage cuts. The anti-union policies of Granby Consolidated Mining were notorious; it had quashed all of its Anyox employees' attempts to organize. The company pronounced itself eager to comply with the GWVA's anti-alien policy, and, when organizer Walter Drinnan visited Anyox in March 1919, it informed him that sixty of its 135 alien employees had been discharged. The firm was eager to see a branch of the GWVA established in the town. The branch's executive was to act for the workers in disputes between the company and employees. Drinnan was informed that two hundred more returned men were

needed to fill vacancies. They were offered excellent working conditions including housing for married men, picture shows and tennis. He was enthusiastic:

> Their [the Granby Company's] ready sympathy and anxiety to do all in their power to give employment at fair wages and under decent conditions to returned men was an object lesson...well worthy of consideration by employers in other parts of B.C. 16

Behind this rosy picture lay the company's wage cut of $1 a day which had led to a strike earlier in the month. Granby was relying on the inflow of returned soldiers to replace the strikers. It is hardly surprising that Ocean Falls expressed an interest in the same arrangement as Granby, or that the Rossland mine managers promised the GWVA organizer their support.[17]

Not all members of the GWVA were as susceptible to fear of enemy aliens, or to simplistic ideas on solving employment problems, as was the Vancouver executive. Branch members frequently expressed opposition to resolutions put forward by the leaders, but they appear to have been both outweighed and outmanoeuvered. In May 1919 several branch members tried to pass a resolution barring employees of the two senior levels of government from the executive. This would have ousted the branch's leaders who, in addition to being government employees, were ex-officers. The attempted coup which was engineered by Sam Gothard, the leader of another veterans' group, failed in the face of vigorous opposition by branch president, Rev C.W. Whittaker and Walter Drinnan.[18]

The GWVA branches in the province did not all think alike. Private Tom Barnard, union activist, FLP member, and President of the New Westminster branch, felt that the unrest that was sweeping the nation was caused by the production of goods for profit rather than for use. The problem of bolshevism could be cured by removing its root causes: social injustice and the workers' fear of unemployment, sickness, old age, and their dependents' lack of security. The resolutions of the New Westminster GWVA reflect the ideas of their president. It demanded that Government provide citizens with enough work to allow them to maintain themselves in comfort by their labour. Old people should be provided with pensions. Under Barnard's leadership the branch rejected the prevailing anti-alien and anti-Asiatic sentiments. The Victoria GWVA branch also dissented. Throughout the post-war period it worked with the city's labour movement.[19]

But in summer 1919 it was to be the attitude of the Vancouver Branch and the leadership group that controlled it that was to be reported in the daily press, and that would help to shape public perception of the returned soldiers point of view. It may have been the proliferation of veterans' groups that was responsible for the GWVA Vancouver executive's apparent stranglehold on its members. Those who were disenchanted did not need to expend their energies on dislodging the leaders. There were many other groups with different philosophies that they could join.

The Army and Navy Veterans (A&N), whose Vancouver unit had

a membership of 940 in 1919, shared most of the basic ideas of the GWVA. The A&N was also a national group, but whereas any ex-service man could join the GWVA, the A&N accepted only veterans who had been to the front, regular soldiers and sailors with six years service, militia men with nine years service and ex-members of the RNWMP. In 1919 ex-Major M.J. Crehan, manager of Crehan Mouat and Co., Municipal Auditors and Liquidators, was A&N President. Other members of the executive were lawyers and businessmen. The A&N, like most of the other veterans' organizations in the city, provided club rooms where its members could gather for meetings or recreation.[20]

The A&N and the GWVA often acted together. Both withdrew their representatives from the VTLC after the Western Labour Conference. Both called for the replacement of alien enemies by returned soldiers. In May 1919 the A&N pronounced itself against "bolshevism in all its phases". But the A&N kept a generally low profile. There are no newspaper reports of impassioned meetings, no internal divisions are apparent in its minute books, and the military authorities expressed no concern about its leadership and loyalties. The association made no attempt to take a leading role in the confrontation of 1919.[21]

The Khaki Labour Union provides an interesting comparison with the two nationally-based groups. A small, local organization, it attempted to provide employment for ex-servicemen. The "union" was founded in 1919 by J.H.S. Hallam, a Methodist minister who had formerly been a missionary

and a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps. He claimed to have formed the enterprise on the idea of profit sharing and industrial partnership, as a way of doing "something practical" about his religion. But Hallam's new mission may have owed as much to an obsessive fear of bolshevism as it did to "practical" Christianity. He told the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations that one reason for organizing the Khaki Union was that many labour representatives had "no use for the King and Flag of this country".[22]

Hallam contrasted the loyalty of the "true British subject" with the "radical reds" in the city's union movement:

> men who have shown their approval of that which has turned Russia into a dreadful shambles; reeking with the blood of her children who are betrayed by the enemy within. Surely any man with British blood coursing through his veins cannot for one moment be expected to take a back seat while men of this type misrepresent, misinform and endeavour to mislead the British Workman. [23]

Despite its leader's belief that the only true union was the union between employer and employee, it seems that the city's large employers had little time for the Khaki Labour Union. A letter to Coughlan's, adorned with the Union Jack and the White Ensign, requesting a meeting with the shipbuilders to explain the aims of the organization, does not seem to have led to any employment opportunities.[24]

The Khaki Labour Union's division of the population into "radical" and "loyal" segments did not endear it to the city's unions. Hallam worsened the situation when he indicated that his members would, in certain circumstances, act as strike

breakers. In attempting to get work for its members the Khaki Union undercut the Longshoremens' Union's bid to unload the Amur in May 1919. But seamen and firemen supported the longshoremen, making it impossible for the Khaki Union to fulfil the contract. Afterwards, a disgruntled longshoreman remarked that the name should be changed from Khaki Union to "Scab Union". In the economic conditions of 1919, the only way that the Khaki Union could obtain work for its members was to undercut the wages of established unions such as the Longshoremens', or to contract for work itself, at starvation wages. In May 1919 Hallam maintained that the organization was providing employment for the majority of its 400 members at 50 cents or more per hour, but this was a gross exaggeration. The Khaki Union member who, in three weeks, built a garage for a total wage of $30 appears to have been more typical. If the union had been so successful it would not have completely faded from the scene later in 1919.[25]

The Khaki Labour Union's portrayal of Vancouver's labour activists as "un-British" was ironic -- in 1919 the majority of the city's union leaders were of British origin. Many ex-soldiers were union members and in the Vancouver of 1919 they were able to find a veterans' organization that expressed pro-union sentiments: the 600-member Comrades of the Great War. The Comrades' membership qualifications were even more exclusive than those of the A&N; it was limited to those who had seen active service at the front. There was an allied branch in Victoria and affiliated members were scattered about

the British Columbia interior and even in Washington State. The facilities of the clubhouse of the Vancouver Comrades, at 518 Hastings, included a lounge, a canteen and a billiard room. President Sam Gothard's description of it as a home that members could make their residence, indicates that it also had sleeping accommodation. Gothard, was a printer, employed by the Vancouver World, and most of the the members were working men, many of whom were employed in the shipyards. In December 1918 the Victoria Comrades, along with other veterans' groups, attempted to form an alliance between labour and soldiers' organizations. In that same month the Vancouver Comrades instigated a walk-out at Coughlan's in protest against the firing of one of their members, Comrade Anderson.[26]

The Comrades and their president were harsh critics of the GWVA. In a letter to Prime Minister Borden, Gothard claimed that the rival organization was a "joke", controlled by an ex-officer clique which did not represent the majority of returned men in the city. Intelligence reports decribed Gothard as a "former socialist" and a "scoundrel", categorizing him with E.E. Winch and Victor Midgely as "very dangerous agitator[s]". The authorities' preoccupation with Gothard and their frequent estimates of the number of soldiers his organization controlled indicate that he had considerable influence on the local scene[27]

In addition to his attempts to oust the GWVA's Vancouver executive, Gothard continued his support of the VTLC after the withdrawal of the A&N and the GWVA. He helped to organize a

joint soldier/labour meeting in April 1919 where he made his allegiances clear, declaring that he never had a more decent reception than that he had been given by Winch and Midgely, the so called "anarchists". Gothard spoke of the inequalities that existed between veterans; he cited fifteen recent appointments of ex-efficers to government positions as evidence that the real interests of the returned soldiers lay with organized labour. This led RNWMP Commissioner Horrigan to remark that the Comrades were the playground of the "barrack room lawyer type of individual...more suited to the company of the T & L C than the more stable communities".[28]

Though Desmond Morton and Terry Copp maintain that "Canada's unions missed an opportunity when they showed little interest in the problems of returned soldiers", this was not the case in Vancouver. In addition to co-operation between the Comrades and labour, one veterans' group was even more closely tied to organized labour -- the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labour Council. This group, formed by the VTLC in conformity with the the Western Labour Conference's resolution, bore the same name as a group that had been active in Seattle during that city's General Strike. There is no doubt that withdrawal of support by the GWVA and the A&N from the labour body presented a problem. The Comrades' membership qualifications excluded many veterans, and not all disenchanted members of the GWVA could join. The Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labour Council welcomed all pro-labour veterans. The authorities, fearing the influence the new group might have on the city's veterans, kept

a close eye on its progress.[29]

The constitution of the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Council made the issue of class paramount -- workers and soldiers had common interests. The sacrificies of war had not been equally shared:

> ...during the whole of the War period, while many of us were engaged in fighting, the rest of the workers produced enough to maintain us in munitions, equipment, food etc. kept themselves and their dependents, but mantained in idleness and luxury a master class and produced many more millionaires and profiteers. 30

The group declared that no solution for the present economic and social system could be found until the system for profit had been replaced by a system for use. The constitution also allowed a careful examination of all would-be members; they had to be workers who subscribed to the principles of the group. New applications, which needed the support of two members, were subject to the scrutiny of the executive.[31]

The letterhead of the new organization reflected its ideology. It showed a worker marching in step with a soldier and a sailor. Jack Kavanagh, a leading figure in Vancouver's OBU wrote its first leaflet, "The Soldier's Welcome Home", which made indirect reference to the Vancouver GWVA, in its description of returned soldiers' organizations which were "...ruled by the officers who ruled us czar-like 'over there'". The leaflet also attempted to heal some of the wounds left by previous strife between veterans and labour. It claimed that the minds of soldiers had been poisoned against the labour leaders who were the very men who were doing the most to solve

contemporary problems. It ended with a threat: "...the employing class promised us our reward for defending their interests. If they cannot give it we must take it".[32]

The Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Council sought the moral and financial help of the province's labour organizations. The unions responded in several ways. The Loggers donated the use of their hall at 61 Cordova Street. Some unions appointed veterans as "walking delegates" to get recruits for the new organization. The Steam and Operating Engineers, the Longshoremen, the Boilermakers' Union and the Machinists' Union, gave financial support. But even the largest donation, $100 from the VTLC, was a tiny amount compared with the amount of government funding to other veterans' groups.[33]

Just how much success the new group had in the spring of 1919 is difficult to estimate. The B.C. Federationist reported its meetings, and printed letters from its supporters attacking the GWVA. The authorities' reports indicate that, though the Ex-Soldiers and Sailors Council was regarded as a bad influence on veterans, it was perceived as a lesser threat than the Comrades of the Great War.

Only fragmentary evidence remains of a third influential veterans' group which supported labour. The Campaigners of the Great War was recognized by the civic authorities as a veterans' group that qualified for funding, but it is not known if it received a grant. Scattered references to the Campaigners occur from 1918 until early 1921. Its club operated out of the Colonial Theatre on the corner of

Granville and Dunsmuir. The sales of the group's magazine the Campaigner, a publication which claimed to have a wide circulation in Vancouver during 1919, supported the operation. The size of its membership is difficult to assess. In 1919 it claimed to have 1,000 members, all of whom had seen active service at the front, but this claim cannot be verified using official records. Though G. Simpson was the Campaigners' president, the moving force behind the organization was R.H. Young, its secretary. Young, who was also editor of the Campaigner, had been a victim of a wartime gas attack and was to die of heart failure brought on by this condition in 1921. But despite his fragility he and the Campaigners were staunch supporters of labour. During the joint soldier/labour meeting in April 1919 he appeared on the platform beside Gothard and members of the VTLC.[34]

The veterans' groups that have been examined in some detail, were chosen because of their influence, their ideologies and their interaction with labour. But many other groups existed in Vancouver and others would be formed in later years. The Imperial Veterans, a national organization that had a Vancouver membership of 500 in 1919, was composed of veterans who had left Canada to join the Imperial forces. On their return to Canada these men found the benefits paid by the British authorities were much less than those given to veterans of the C.E.F. Under the leadership of Major T.B. Thomas the organization lobbied government for benefits for their members. In 1919 the Vancouver Imperial Veterans tended to stay clear of

politics, but were to become more radical during the unemployment crisis of 1920-22. Other veterans' associations in the city included those that dealt specifically with disabled veterans, and military clubs, such as the Seaforth Overseas Club, and the Vancouver Overseas Artillery Association.[35]

It must also be borne in mind that the press and the reports of intelligence agencies give a distorted picture by their emphasis on the political aspects of veterans' groups. The clubs, where ex-soldiers could relax and talk with their war buddies, were no doubt the main attraction for the majority of their members. The organizations also dispensed practical help in the form of free meals and clothing for members who were down on their luck. Though there was undoubtedly some hostility between ex-officers and other ranks, the picture is not all black and white. Many officers kept in touch with the men formerly under their command, and took a kindly, if paternalistic interest in their wellbeing.[36]

There were also many veterans who avoided ex-soldiers' groups -- who wanted no contact with anything that reminded them of the war. Despite the oft-stated opinions of the GWVA and the opposing ideas of the Ex-Soldiers and Sailors Labour Council, the views of the majority of veterans were unknown, and, as Canada entered its most critical period of confrontation in May 1919, the authorities were unsure where veterans' loyalties would lie.

Notes

1. B.C. Veterans Weekly, Special Souvenir Issue, June 1919, p.51

2. James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. 1 (Toronto, 1974) Chapter II; Morton & Wright, "The Bonus Campaign; Morton, Canada and War, pp. 87-9, David Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations and the General Strike (Montreal, 1974) pp. 170-5; "on the right track" from RNWMP correspondence cited in Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, p. 91.

3. Eayrs, Vol. 1, p. 44; Cairns and Yetman, "History of the Veterans' Movement", p. 58; PABC, BCRSAC Records, microfilm reel B-2515, Applications for Grants.

4. Cairns and Yetman, "History of the Veteran's Movement", p. 58; British Columbia, Sessional Papers, 1920, Vol. 2, BCRSAC Report, M-38.

5. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 30 January 1919, p. 12, Vancouver City Directories, 1919 and 1920.

6. PAC, Department of Militia and Defence, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File A HQC 2941, unsigned memorandum, 6 February 1919 and Gen. G. Godson to Adjutant General, 2 February 1919; PAC, Royal Canadian (North West) Mounted Police, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G 5791, Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, March 1919; Bell-Irving quoted in Daily World, 2 January 1919, p. 11; Col. Cooper quoted in Vancouver Sun, 2 January 1919, p.7.

7. B.C. Veterans Weekly, Special Souvenir Issue, June 1919, p. 51.

8. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 18 December 1918, p. 9.

9. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 6 February 1919, p. 12.

10. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 1 May 1919, p. 1.

11. B.C. Veterans Weekly, Special Souvenir Issue, June 1919, p. 11.

12. British Columbian, 20 June 1919, p. 1.

13. CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, Vol. 70, File A, Secretary, Vancouver GWVA to Mayor Gale, 13 April, 1918; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 12 December 1918, p. 1.

14. "dangerous doctrines" from the Province, 31 January 1919, pp 6 & 12; disturbances described in the Vancouver Sun, 5 February 1919 pp. 1 & 3; PAC, RG 24, Vol 2571, File A

HQC 2941, General Leckie to Adjutant General, 3 February 1919; call for unity in the B.C. Federationist 31 January 1919, p. 4.

15. List of enemy aliens referred to in the B.C. Veterans Weekly, 13 February 1919, p. 11; hiring policies discussed in Leckie to Adjutant General, 3 February 1919; PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(2), unsigned memorandum, 27 February 1919.

16. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 13 February 1919, p. 11 and 6 March 1919, p. 14.

17. B.C. Federationist, 28 March 1919, p. 1.

18. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 17 April 1919, p. 13 and 1 May 1919, p. 6; attempted coup documented in PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(2) unsigned confidential memorandum, 24 April 1919.

19. T.A. Barnard, testimony to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1, p. 504, B.C. Veterans Weekly, 27 February 1919, p. 26 and 10 April 1919, p. 27.

20. Army and Navy Veterans, Vancouver Headquarters (Private Collection), Proceedings of the First Annual Convention, Winnipeg, May 11-15, 1918; CVA, Pamphlet Collection, Army and Navy Convention Booklet, 1934; PABC, BCRSAC Records, microfilm reel B-2515, application for grant, 3 May 1920.

21. Province, 14 May 1919, p. 3; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 13 March 1919, p. 44.

22. Province, 10 January 1919, p. 24; J.H.S. Hallam, testimony to Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1. 1919, pp. 246-262.

23. CVA, City Clerk's correspondence, J.H.S. Hallam to J. Coughlan and Sons, 7 April 1919.

24. Ibid.

25. Hallam, testimony to Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Vol. 1, pp. 246-62; B.C. Federationist, 6 June 1919, p. 1.

26. PABC, BCRSAC Records, microfilm reel B-2515, Sam Gothard to J. Pyke, 18 December, 1919; Sam Gothard to Major Robertson, 18 February 1920; A.J. Pilkington, Vancouver City Comptroller to Comrades of the Great War, 16 March 1920, Comrades of the Great War, membership list as of May 1919; Victoria Times, 6 September 1918, p. 7; Province, 18 December 1918, p.1.

27. Gothard's letter to Borden cited in Eayrs, Vol. 1, pp. 42 and 46; PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, Files HQC 2817(2) and HQC

2817(3), Department of Militia and Defence Reports, February-May, 1919.

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29. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement (Ottawa, 1984) Revised edition, p. 110; Robert L. Freidheim, The Seattle General Strike (Seattle, 1964) p. 11-12.

30. PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817, B.C. Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labour Council Constitution, enclosed with RNWMP, E. Division, Secret and Confidential Report, 4 April 1919.

31. Ibid.

32. UBC Special Collections, Prince Rupert TLC Papers, File 1-2, B.C. Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labor Council to Prince Rupert Trades and Labour Council, 1 May 1919; Copy of Bulletin in PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(3), Department of Militia, Report of District Intelligence MD No. 11, 13 June 1919.

33. B.C. Federationist, 2 May 1919, p. 1; PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(2), Major Jukes to Asst. Director, Military Intelligence, 7 April 1919.

34. CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, File 13-E-2, H.J. Young to Vancouver City Council, May 1919; CVA, Vancouver City Council Minutes, 22nd May 1919; Vancouver City Directories, 1919 and 1920; B.C. Federationist, 25 April 1919, p. 1; Province, 2 February 1921, p. 7.

35. CVA, City of Vancouver Annual Report, 1919, p. 20; PABC, BCRSAC Records, Microfilm B-2515.

36. New Westminster Regimental Archives (Private Collection), File on Battalion Paymaster T.S. Annandale.

CHAPTER 3

1919 - The General Strike and its Aftermath.

> If we can only keep the returned soldiers with us, I am of the opinion that in case of trouble there are enough good loyal people who will stand behind the troops to make the outcome certain. On the other hand, if the disturbing elements win over a large number of returned men then the situation will become very serious.
>
> RNWMP Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, February 1919.[1]

In 1919 organized labour was in a militant mood in Vancouver as throughout the nation. But underneath the militancy there were deep divisions. In the spring of 1919 the Western Labour Conference resolved to set up One Big Union. The OBU believed that the existing craft unions were obsolete, and that effective action could come when all workers were united in one organization. Its programme advocated the use of the General Strike, and eschewed electoral activities. But Conference delegates were not unanimous; a significant minority believed the future of labour lay with the existing union and socialist or labour party structures. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council decided to support the OBU's organizing drive, and voted funds for this purpose, but it too was divided on the issue. The organizing drive coincided with a growing militancy among the workers. Even before the OBU could take official form the advance of the "one big union from below" resulted in an outbreak of General Strikes. Veterans were a further

complicating factor in an already complex situation. Some had returned to their unions, some were members of politically active veterans' groups. Others were newly returned and existing on their post-discharge payments. Both pro and anti-strike forces competed for their support, which was viewed as essential to any successful general strike.[2]

Their "loyalty" was first an issue in Winnipeg, where the metal and building trades' unions struck on May 1st, demanding recognition of their joint bargaining units, the Metal and Building Trades' councils. The strikers were supported by the city's Trades and Labour Council which voted for a General Strike to begin on Thursday May 15th. Though many may have had doubts about the wisdom of the action, workers supported the decision of the majority; between twenty-four and thirty-five thousand walked out on May 15th. The city was sharply divided, its anti-strike forces organized as the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand. It was hoped that the veterans could be persuaded not to support the strike. As the walkout began, the Winnipeg GWVA, the Imperial Veterans and the A&N called a mass meeting of ex-servicemen. The executives of these associations confidently expected to get the city's veterans to declare neutrality in the strike. They hoped it would be possible to form companies of returned men to assist the authorities in the maintenance of law and order.[3]

They had a nasty shock. The meeting was a disaster; between 2,500 and 3,000 veterans shouted down the official speakers. The resolution on neutrality was overturned and

replaced by one that declared the veterans' full sympathy with the strikers. An RNWMP agent who attended the meeting recorded his impressions: "...in spite of the resolution regarding the maintenance of law and order, and in spite of the attitude of the executives of the various associations toward Bolshevism, the individual returned soldier is NOT TO BE DEPENDED UPON ". It appeared that the worst fears of the authorities were about to be realized -- that rank and file veterans would make common cause with labour radicals. An anonymous letter sent from British Columbia to Ottawa claimed that the loyalty of only twenty soldiers in Vancouver and twenty-five in Victoria could be depended upon.[4]

In Vancouver, where preparations were being made for a General Strike on June 1st, in sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers, there was an heightened awareness of the importance of returned men and an increased concern for their welfare. The month of May saw a flurry of activity. The city's veterans' organizations made a joint call for social reforms. A committee of soldiers' groups put forward a broad programme, which included a minimum wage law indexed to the cost of living, public ownership of utilities, abolition of patronage, state health insurance, and tax reforms. There was however, no indication of how it intended to gain these objectives.[5]

Mayor Gale, who earlier in the year had been furious when veterans successfully blocked his patronage appointment as utilities commissioner, changed his attitude. On May 23rd, he and council voted to give a $10,000 grant to the city's

veterans' groups. It was seen as an investment in social peace. Alderman Elkins, a GWVA member, assured council that the money would serve to keep veterans satisfied and happy to support law and order and it was therefore the most economic expenditure council could make.[6]

The Mayor also helped to promote the Repatriation and Community Service League. This short-lived group, patterned on a Toronto organization, aimed to "...discharge our full duty to veterans and their dependents...to evolve a working basis of co-operative action in all matters of a direct interest to the community as a whole". The mayor was chairman of the first mass meeting of this new organization, which took place on the eve of the General Strike. The meeting was also attended by Secretary Neill of the Employers' Association, J.J. Coughlan, Shipbuilder; and two "moderate" representatives of labour, George Hardy of the Carpenters' Union and Helena Gutteridge, secretary of the VTLC. The particular time at which this organization appeared, its supporters, its stated aims and its rapid disappearance after the crisis, indicate that, like council's grants, it was motivated by the idea that veterans were more likely to support law and order in a community that understood their needs.[7]

Many groups expressed their concern for the veterans, but few put forward suggestions for practical help. The Vancouver Strike Committee recognized the needs of ex-servicemen; it made improved soldiers' pensions and a $2,000 cash gratuity for overseas service part of its strike demands.

This infuriated the GWVA and A&N which declared that "The majority of veterans ...can win justice for themselves and their dependents without subjecting the general public to the hardships caused by a widespread strike".[8]

The Vancouver Branch of the GWVA gained an important new member in May 1919. Ian Mackenzie, a Vancouver lawyer, was at the beginning of a distinguished political career. He was to become a Liberal MLA in 1920, a Liberal MP in 1930, and was to hold the portfolios of Immigration, Defence and Veterans' Affairs. Though the precise nature of his role in the events of May and June is not clear, his political skills were much in evidence. He proposed, and won endorsement for, a resolution that seemed more conciliatory to labour than the organization's previous stance. Refraining from any direct comment on the OBU, it blamed the current labour unrest on "abnormal post-war psychological conditions", "war profiteering", "unemployment and the failure of government to act". While expressing sympathy with "constitutional actions" to remedy these ills, it condemned "insurrectionary and riotous attempts that may imperil the safety and security of our fellow citizens, or any attempt to subvert the institution of British law". Though this cleverly and carefully phrased statement was supported by most branch members, some were suspicious. Mackenzie, its originator, was a newcomer who was clearly not a member of the working class. Opponents of the statement claimed "it could be construed as an implication that labour was disloyal and didn't intend to be law abiding". A week later it was decided that the

branch's action on the strike would be considered at a special meeting which would be called later. Meanwhile the South Vancouver GWVA sensibly declared that, as men from all classes were members of the association, the only safe thing to do was to remain neutral.[9]

Vancouver's General Strike in sympathy with the Winnipeg workers began on 3rd June 1919. Though the strike decision had been a close one, ten thousand workers walked off the job. There were indications that the GWVA had learned a lesson from Winnipeg. It made no attempt to hold a mass meeting and no effort to recruit a "law and order" contingent from its ranks. This is evidence of a major change; the GWVA and the A&N had encouraged the veterans' riot at the Labour Temple less than a year earlier -- in June 1919 they were unsure of their power.[10]

The "Law and Order" contingent was supplied by the Returned Men's Law and Order League, led by Ian Mackenzie. Though Mackenzie's earlier role as a new member of the GWVA prompts suspicions of a link between the two organizations, there is not sufficient evidence to confirm this. The group did not receive the public blessing of the GWVA. Neither the daily press nor pro-strike publications made reference to the fact that the leader of the "law and order group" was a GWVA member. Mackenzie may have been sincerely convinced that the General Strike was a bolshevik plot. It is also possible that he was acting as an agent for military intelligence. However it is most likely that his behaviour was opportunistic. As an

upwardly mobile lawyer with political ambitions he hoped to ingratiate himself with anti-strike forces and the city's elite.[11]

The founding of the new group was announced on the fourth day of Vancouver's strike. Its thirty eight members represented the city's business and financial elite who could easily afford to publicize the group's activities in large press advertisements and by the free distribution of the Returned Citizens' Bulletin. Though their leader issued hollow declarations of neutrality, there was never any doubt about the partisan nature of the group. Mackenzie met with Mayor Gale and the city's anti-strike Citizens' League, promising them the support of his group. On June 19th, he told veterans at an O'Brien Hall meeting that the purpose of the Law and Order League was to fight against the "rampant red revolutionaries" who had gained control of organized labour in the city. He then informed them of their duty to act as special constables; magistrates Shaw and South were on hand to swear them in. They were to be held in reserve in case of emergency; the signal for their deployment would be given from an aircraft flying over the city. Only a third of the three hundred veterans present took advantage of this opportunity. Most were angry and there was a noisy demonstration during the meeting.[12]

The dissemination of anti-strike propaganda was an important function of the Returned Men's Law and Order League. Its Returned Citizens' Bulletin was to be responsible for

the most provocative material published during the strike, but in the first week it had to tread carefully. Mackenzie was able to go further than he had as a GWVA member, but he was careful not to alienate completely the large number of strikers who were veterans. The first advertisements of the League claimed that the its sympathies were with organized labour "but [that] organized labour is under dangerous leadership". It warned workers to "Beware of Bolshevism" , resurrected the spectre of the 1918 strike, and ended by exhorting returned men to "Stand fast by our national ideals, our constitution, the authority of government and the solidarity of Empire".[13]

The B.C. Veterans Weekly also proceeded with care. Its June 10th editorial began by blaming war profiteers for the major part of the the current problems. This gesture being made, it could then get to its main theme:

> ...men among us have been allowed to preach sedition and revolution...class is pitted against class, man against man.
> None question the loyalty of 85 per cent of the men on strike. The record of a small percentage of the whole number is such that the whole movement is suspicion and will remain so while labour is controlled by its present leaders. 14

Even though the right-wing element among veterans had more access to funds and the press than their opposition, they could not give even the appearance of speaking for the majority of returned men until the strike was well under way. In the early days it seemed that the majority of veterans supported the strike. The Vancouver GWVA called off its regular meeting while the gatherings of the B.C. Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labour Council were packed. The pro-labour group continually

stated its commitment to constitutional methods in the city, but RNWMP agents reported that it had posted handbills in coastal logging areas calling on workers to help create a soviet government.[15]

On June 6th a meeting of the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' packed the Avenue Theatre, leaving two hundred men out on the street. Inside, the veterans were addressed by strike leaders A.S. Wells, Jack Kavanagh, and Charles Lestor. The meeting was opened by a veteran of the Boer War. He claimed that the situation in 1919 was no different from that he had seen after the earlier conflict, due to the fact that the system had not changed -- the problem was production for profit instead of for use. Wells urged the men to be orderly, warning them that the authorities were ready and waiting to fire on strikers.[16]

Four days later another of their meetings drew nine hundred men to the National Theatre to hear veteran Tom O'Connor defend the labour movement against charges that the strike was due to the work of a minority of agitators:

> The people of today blamed the agitators for the present social unrest, but they could neither bring it on nor yet avert it; it was a result of the condition under which we lived and would come whether we liked it or not...The leaders of the movements were just men who had considered the conditions more closely than others; they had made an effort to instruct and educate their fellow workers and instead of bringing on disaster, the leaders or agitators were rather instrumental in averting it.

O'Connor was cautious when a veteran asked about the purpose of the machine guns at Beatty Street, replying that the questioner should draw his own conclusions. The meeting's

chairman, Major Mercier, warned the audience to refrain from questions that might cause trouble at a time when feeling in the city was tense. He described Comrade O'Connor as the kind of machine gunner they believed in -- with good propaganda his ammunition.[17]

The second leaflet of the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors', "Returned Men and the Labour Situation", appeared during the early days of the strike. It stressed the educational function of the organization, and emphasized the unity of interests of ex-servicemen and workers -- a bond stronger than the comradeship of veterans:

> ...it makes no difference whether you earn your living with a pick and shovel or a pen. The distinctions between the different trades which existed prior to the war are being rapidly swept away under the stress of the enormous economic pressure which is developing. Perhaps you have not actually got back into harness...The gratuity cannot, however, last for long. Very soon you will be compelled to look for work. And your attitude in the present crisis will do much to determine whether there will be any work for you and what the hours and pay will be. It will help to decide whether you will have to make the best of a bad bargain as a lone individual or whether the representatives of a powerful working class will be able to demand for you the wages and conditions of labour which you have a right to expect -- but which will never be given to you voluntarily. 18

While Ex-Sailors' and Soldiers' meetings were packed and Ian Mackenzie's organization was trying to recruit special constables, the GWVA leadership gathered its forces. The public inactivity of the Vancouver Branch masked a great deal of behind-the-scenes activity. The association was also busy at a national level. The surprise of the May 15th meeting in

Winnipeg had been followed by the Calgary GWVA's support of that city's strikers. It was evident that a position which ignored strikers' grievances would be rejected by GWVA members. In its June 11th statement the National executive weighed its words carefully:

> This association is fully in sympathy with that portion of organized labour which is striving to better the conditions of the working men through lawful and constitutional means and is in no sympathy whatsoever with factions controlled by extremists who strive by all means to overthrow British institutions and incessantly breeds discord and advocates riot or revolutions and that we are unalterably opposed to capitalistic combines that seek by economic or financial pressure, to control to an unwarranted degree, the governing bodies of this fair Dominion to the detriment of the majority of people of Canada.

Desmond Morton sees this statement as being the result of "many painful compromises" -- perhaps the main compromise was between what the executive would liked to have said and what it knew the membership would support. The Winnipeg executive's intent before the May meeting and the conduct of the Vancouver executive indicate that the association's leaders saw their role as the guidance rather than the representation of their members.[19]

The official statement was not automatically assured of support. The meeting that gave it the Vancouver Branch's backing was carefully planned and orchestrated. Meetings had been postponed since the strike began. Meanwhile the association had been busy signing up ex-officers and N.C.O.'s as members, no doubt in the hope of strengthening the anti-radical forces.[20]

The strikers were still on the offensive when the GWVA Vancouver Branch held its June 12th meeting. Nothing was left to chance. The agenda appears to have surprised labour supporters. Members had been promised a "special" meeting to discuss the strike, but the meeting was not advertised as such, being held in the GWVA auditorium, the regular meeting place. President Whittaker answered protests by ruling that, though the meeting was not "special", it nevertheless had authority to discuss the strike. It was certainly not "regular". Special provision had been made for reporters. Four Victoria Cross holders, Comrades Bellew, Rayfield and Hanna were introduced to the audience. Then another V.C. Holder, Michael James O'Rourke, was "discovered" at the back of the hall. This hero was carried shoulder high to the platform where he and three other medal holders were made life members of the Vancouver Branch.[21]

All attempts that the minority who supported the strike made to debate the issues were swamped by appeals to crude patriotic and anti-labour sentiments. For example:

> While we were overseas giving our life's blood the slacker element was busy with its insidious, devilish work...Which Flag are you going going to to fight for, the red flag or the Union Jack?

And later in the meeting:

> I am a Britisher. I believe in God. I will not serve under a man who says he is out in competition with "Mr Christ".

The leadership was well prepared for certain issues. When Comrade O'Connor maintained that veterans in Winnipeg had endorsed the strike, Vice President R.P. Foster read a

telegram informing the meeting that the Winnipeg GWVA now opposed the strike.

The Vancouver branch went further than mere endorsement of the Dominion executive's statement. F.W. Russell Rigby and R. Crowe-Swordes, two SCR bureaucrats, put forward a resolution condemning Vancouver's labour leaders:

> That while this association is heartily in accord with the aims of legitimate labour as represented by the International unions and the American Federation of Labor, we are not in sympathy with the manner in which the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council organized the sympathetic strike in the city....using methods of intimidation to force men not in sympathy with the strike to leave their employment.

The motion went on to charge that the strike was inflicting hardship on citizens. The strikers' demand for a cash bonus was described as "merely a clumsy piece of political chicanery". Despite the hostility surrounding them, forty-three veterans, including Comrades O'Connor, Campbell, DeWeile, Beattie, Daly and Leah, went on record against the resolution. Comrade Campbell told the meeting of 800 that there were three times that number of returned men in the ranks of the strikers. But such sentiments were overwhelmed by the vocal majority -- when the vote passed, they stood to attention and "lustily" sang God Save The King.

One question arose immediately: was the meeting a reliable indicator of the view of the majority of veterans in the city? The much headlined GWVA meeting of 800 was attended by fewer veterans than the meeting of the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Council a few days earlier. President Whittaker

claimed that the Vancouver Branch represented over four thousand men, a considerable exaggeration. It is also likely that the forty-three members who had the courage to state their disagreement did not represent the full extent of the opposition, but merely the portion of the meeting that refused by be intimidated by its surroundings. Many members were upset by the proceedings --- they threw away their GWVA membership cards in disgust. The Vancouver Branch was not even able to exert its control throughout the Lower Mainland. The New Westminster Branch supported the aims of that city's strike. GWVA President Tom Barnard was a member of the New Westminster Strike Committee; his activites were endorsed by the branch's members. In these circumstances the sentiments of the GWVA's Vancouver meeting cannot be considered representative of the majority of the city's veterans, but rather as an expression of the feelings of a large right-wing faction.[22]

The strikers reacted quickly to the Vancouver GWVA's statement. At their mass meeting that took place two days later they referred to President Whittaker as a "bow legged sky pilot" and maintained that the GWVA meeting did not represent the views of the majority of the city's veterans. Representatives of two pro-strike veterans' groups spoke to the crowd. Ex-Private Simpson of the Comrades of the Great War called on veterans to stand and indicate their support. Several hundred men did so. R.H. Young of the Campaigners was careful to differentiate between GWVA official policy, which he

opposed, and the members of its rank and file, whom he had no quarrel with. Music at the meeting was supplied by the band of the Comrades of the Great War.[23]

The greatest value of the GWVA meeting was as propaganda. Ian Mackenzie's Returned Men's Law and Order League had been having trouble. Its inflammatory rhetoric had gone too far. The World had printed a particularly provocative advertisement in the form of The Returned Citizens' Bulletin in the 14th June issue. Headlined "ITS A RANK, REAL REVOLUTION", it warned ex-soldiers they were being led astray, and described a "Russia ruined, starved and crucified by Bolshevism". The organization's next advertisement was headlined "Anarchy, Chaos, Death, Famine". Probably due to a concern that members of the Typographical Union might refuse to print it, the item was rejected by The World as inflammatory and against the public interest.[24]

The GWVA's anti-strike resolution made a more acceptable headline. It was reprinted, along with President Whittaker's inflated membership claims, in the June 21st Returned Citzens' Bulletin. The same issue welcomed home the soldiers of the 72nd Battalion, apologizing for the strike which it blamed on a "bunch of slackers that have been preaching sedition". In contrast, the Strike Bulletin, which also addressed the men of the 72nd Battalion, had a defensive note. It pointed out that many veterans were also strikers:

> In the ranks of the strikers there are many hundreds of your comrades who were overseas with you. These men are not being led away by irresponsible attitudes...It is union and

> brotherhood, and it is absolutely the same principle of sticking together that was employed in France.

But the strike was already drawing to a close. As the men of the 72nd disembarked the strike committee was inquiring upon what terms city council would accept returning civic employees. When Council refused to reinstate them, the strike settlement was delayed until the beginning of July.[25]

Despite the rhetoric of the Returned Men's Law and Order League, the Vancouver General Strike had been anything but a revolution. Veterans had been reluctant to become special constables in the service of the state. But at the same time, unlike Winnipeg, there were no mass demonstrations or confrontations between veterans. It is not possible to say which side had the support of the majority of veterans. Contemporary observers disagreed. On July 2nd, the Vancouver Citizen, a publication of the anti-strike Citizens' League, commented on statements by "agitators" that the bulk of soldiers had supported the strike. It maintained that the final test of the soldiers' loyalty would be the GWVA Dominion Convention which was about to be held in the city. In the summer of 1919 the authorities and many veterans saw the strike, not as the major battle, but as a preliminary skirmish on the way to a larger showdown.[26]

A comment on veterans ended the final strike report of the Department of Militia and Defence. Employers in British Columbia, the document argued, would have to be shown the necessity of employing as many veterans as possible. During the strike the Citizens' League had recommended that returned

men be given preference in rehiring after the strike as "those loyal men who have fought against the principles of autocracy in France and Belgium are deserving of more consideration than the men who openly passed resolutions of sympathy with the Bolsheviki and Spartacans". But employers were motivated less by patriotism than by the opportunity for union busting. C.P.R. manager F.W. Peters, director of the Returned Soldiers' Club, had already replaced women, aliens and orientals with veterans. In June 1919 he recruited 188 ex-servicemen to fill the places of striking freight handlers and longshoremen. In the summer of 1919 twenty per cent of the employees of the Northern Construction Company, working on the P.G.E., were ex-servicemen. They were paid 75 cents per hour for a nine hour day, whereas union rates were 81 cents per hour for an eight hour day.[27]

Though these procedures served the purposes of employers, they did little to resolve the basic problem of unemployment; there were simply not enough jobs to go round. Large numbers of veterans were running out of post-discharge pay and the city was faced with its regular seasonal influx of unemployed workers from the hinterland. As early as July 1919 the RNWMP were anxious about this. However, if government at both levels made an effort to supply veterans with work, the Commissioner felt that the radical labour element would be easy to handle:

> ...the coming winter will be a critical time, and as I have remarked it is up to the government, supported by the provinces to keep these men satisfied and happy and therefore away from the influence of Bolshevism. Time and time again I have brought this to the notice of prominent

businessmen in Vancouver... 28

Throughout the following months the RNWMP continued their emphasis on veterans as the most critical group, whose loyalty could be best assured by the provision of work, or an extended period of post-discharge pay.

Veterans' associations also had to address themselves to the problem of unemployment, and to the growing demands for a cash gratuity. Two groups had disappeared from the Vancouver scene by the fall of 1919. No references to the Khaki Labor Union occur after the strike. The Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labor Council was another casualty. One of their last actions was a protest against the police raids on the headquarters of labour publications and the homes of strike activists. By July their meetings had fallen off drastically. About a hundred men, only half of whom were ex-servicemen, gathered to hear Alex Mackenzie of the Loggers' Association on July 13th. At a business meeting on the twenty-first of the month it was clear that the association was in a state of collapse. Its organizer, W.E. Kinney announced his retirement -- he could no longer afford to work without pay, and was leaving for Winnipeg. In August a police spy reported that the organization had ceased to exist. This was not altogether accurate, as further meetings were annouunced in the B.C. Federationist. It is nevertheless evident that the Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Council had ceased to attract veterans.[29]

The National Convention of the GWVA that was postponed during the strike went ahead in early July, aided by a $2,500

grant from the Vancouver City Council, and a $5,000 contribution from the Provincial Government. The gathering was preceded by a provincial convention where there was criticism of the bias of the B.C. Veterans Weekly. A Victoria member suggested that the publication should include a correspondence page for veterans who were also labour men. The New Westminster Branch put forward a resolution, which they wanted to place before the National Convention, demanding that government take whatever action was necessary to ensure that all law abiding citizens had work, health insurance and old age pensions.[30]

The National Convention showed just how badly the organization was split. Payment of a cash gratuity was the most divisive issue. A large proportion of delegates, representing perhaps a larger proportion of working class members, was strongly in favour of government paying a $1,500 cash gratuity to all men who had served overseas, and $2,000 to those who had actually been to the front. After a great deal of manoeuvering by the leadership, the convention finally passed a watered down and essentially meaningless resolution, which demanded a gratuity but left the amount to be determined only by the country's ability to pay.[31]

The issue of gratuities was not the only one that split the organization. It was, rather, a reflection of the deep divisions between the members and the executive which had been apparent earlier in Vancouver and Winnipeg. The same division was evident in the discussion of war profits. An amendment

that would have given substance to the organization's stated condemnation of war profiteers, was put forward by a Toronto veteran. He made the remarkable proposal that the government confiscate all profits made during the war, and then hand back only an amount based on the average profits of the three years preceding the war. The remainder was to be distributed to the widows and orphans of veterans. Comrade Barnard of New Westminster spoke in support of the amendment, maintaining that there could be no industrial peace in Canada while extremes of wealth and poverty were allowed to exist: "Remove the soil in which Bolshevism is readily propogated, and you will soon eradicate the Bolshevist". The amendment was also supported by Comrade DeWeile of the Vancouver Branch. But the leaders of the association suppressed it by scheduling its discussion on the afternoon of the last day of the convention, when there was only a short time for debate. The final endorsement was "in principle" only. It was then forwarded to an executive committee "to draft, with utmost care as to the phraseology".[32]

The manipulation of the convention did not go unnoticed in the daily press. An article in the Vancouver Weekly Review, signed by a "war chaplain" who advocated socialization of all industries, sharply criticized the proceedings:

> ...it is evident that their [the GWVA's] programme of reform has been made to order. It is not a natural growth of a body of reforming students but the made to order programme of a body of hired servants. The hand of the master is evident in every line.

Needless to say, these allegations were strenuously denied in the columns of the B.C. Veterans Weekly.[33]

Other Vancouver veterans' groups had their own remedies for social ills. The A&N and the Imperial Veterans saw the high cost of living as a major irritant. They called for action under the criminal code whenever profiteering was found, a suggestion aimed at the prices of basic commodities rather than the profits which had been amassed during the war.[34]

As the problem of unemployment among veterans became more apparent, an increasing number felt only a cash gratuity would make it possible for them to survive the winter. In October, Sam Gothard of the Comrades went to Ottawa to present a petition signed by eighteen thousand veterans. It requested a $2,500 gratuity, to be paid in bonds, the recipients being free to dispose of them at will. Tom Barnard, running as a labour candidate against Conservative Simon Fraser Tolmie in a Vancouver Island federal by-election, claimed that the government was able to afford a cash gratuity. The GWVA Advisory Committee to Cabinet modified the association's earlier decision; it asked for a $500 cash grant "to make provision for the anticipated stress of the current winter".[35]

Prime Minister Borden tried hard to ignore the agitation. On the 5th of November he stated categorically that there would be no gratuity. H.H. Stevens, Conservative member for Vancouver Centre, was in the city a week later. He told GWVA members that advancing money on gratuities was not in the

interests of the public, and that he would rather that pensions be equalized among all ranks. The speech had a considerable impact on the RNWMP Commissioner, who reported that Stevens had risen fifty per cent in the estimation of returned men. Stevens himself had no illusions. He wrote telling Borden that the speech had not gone down well with veterans: " I assure you that there is no doubt at all about the unanimity and the determination of the men to get this grant 'by hook or by crook'. If the men continue in their present state I should, at the next election, probably be defeated". Stevens reminded the Prime Minister that the government had made no provision for veterans who did not wish to live on the land. He suggested that those who wanted to start in business or buy a house should also receive assistance.[36]

There were at least five thousand unemployed in Vancouver when Borden finally responded to the growing unemployment among veterans. The December 1919 Order-in-Council made it clear that the forty million dollar grant for the relief of returned men was not an admission of reponsibility for the able-bodied. Help was given "without admitting that the Federal government is in any way responsible for the employment of former members of the forces who have returned to civilian life". An unemployed veteran qualified only if he was indigent: "Officers of the Department [SCR] shall investigate the home conditions of the applicant for assistance and shall take into consideration income from the earnings of members of the family".[37]

Veterans were furious about this and called it the

"charity dole". In order to receive aid an applicant had to go through a prolonged procedure. First, he needed a note from the SCR verifying that he was unemployed, and that no job was available. Then he had to complete a form which asked for details of property or and other investments he owned; if he was receiving a pension; who was his last employer; nature of his employment; duration of last employment; amount of salary and reasons for leaving. A lady visitor would then check on him. This "insulting and self-respect destroying" procedure was exacerbated by the requirement in some areas for applications to be made through the Canadian Patriotic Fund.[38]

Less than one year after they had been demobilized many of Canada's "heroes" had become objects of charity, subject to the same humiliating procedures their wives and families had endured while the war was in progress. The situation worried the officer in charge of the RNWMP. He reported that without useful work the men had "nothing to do but meet and discuss their grievances". These circumstances were being exploited by "agitators" who were busy "sowing the seeds of dissension on what might be termed very fertile ground".[39]

Veterans were understandably reluctant to go through the unpleasant procedure of applying for the Federal relief grant. At the beginning of January 1920 only 950 had received assistance in British Columbia. Despite the fact that the GWVA, which claimed a membership of 10,000, was the province's largest veterans' group, it reported only 176 of the cases that

received Federal assistance. This was less than the 185 reported by the Imperial Veterans and considerably less than the 252 reported by the Vancouver office of the SCR. Either the GWVA's membership consisted of the more affluent veterans, or the organization was failing to care for its disadvantaged members.[40]

The winter of 1919-20 was a bad one for many veterans, but it was free from social disorders. The returned soldiers had still to experience the worst effects of the post-war readjustment -- it was still possible to hang on to the dream of "a home fit for heroes".

Notes

1. PAC, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G 579-1, RNWMP Secret and Confidential Monthly Report.

2. Allen Seager, "Nineteen Nineteen: Year of Revolt", Journal of the West, Vol XXIII, 4 (1984) p. 45; Phillips, pp. 77-81, Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 87-104.

3. K. McNaught and D.J. Bercuson, The Winnipeg General Strike: 1919 (Don Mills, 1974) pp. 40-50.

4. Agent's Report in PAC, RG 24, Vol. 3985, File NSC 1055-2-21, "Winnipeg Mass Meeting of Soldiers", 15 May 1919; anonymous letter cited in PAC, RG24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(3), Jukes to Davis, 23 May 1919.

5. Province, 16 May 1919, p. 14.

6. Province, 24 May 1919, p. 10.

7. Vancouver Sun, 28 May 1919, p. 2; Province, 3 June 1919, p. 4.

8. Description of, and quotations from, GWVA meeting in the Province, 31 May 1919, p. 20; South Vancouver declaration from B.C.Veterans Weekly, 5 June 1919, p. 1.

9. Province, 23 May 1919, p. 7; B.C.Veterans Weekly, 29 May 1919, p. 6.

10. B.C.Veterans Weekly, 8 August 1918, p. 8; Daily World, 3 August 1918, p. 10.

11. For Captain Ian Mackenzie see Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto, 1958) pp. 424, 428, 465; The presence of intelligence agents within the Vancouver GWVA can be inferred from military intelligence documents in the PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(2), A list of contents of the file includes agent's reports (numbered 61-63 and 91) entitled "Vancouver-GWVA Secret Monthly Meeting". The Reports themselves have been removed.

12. The thirty-eight founders of the Returned Citizens' Law and Order League were mostly barristers, brokers and businessmen. They included Henry Bell Irving of Anglo British Packers; H. St. J. Montizambert of Dominion Petroleum; R.H. Tupper of Tupper and Bell, Solicitors; and Ian Mackenzie. List published in the Daily World 7th June 1919 p. 3; Vancouver Sun, 10 June 1919, p. 12; Daily World, 11 June 1919, p. 9; numbers of veterans joining the Returned Citizens' Law and Order League estimated in PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(3), Sgt. Butler to Col. F.E. Davis, 12 June 1919.

13. Returned Citizens' Law and Order League, advertisement, Province, 11 June 1919, p. 5.

14. B.C.Veterans Weekly, 12 June 1919, p. 8.

15. PAC, RG 27, Department of Labour, Vol. 314, File 190(c) memorandum on General Strike, RNWMP Agents 33 and 37, 4 June 1919; Daily World, 4th June, 1919, p. 11.

16. PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(3), Agent 27, Report on Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labor Council Meeting, 5 June 1919.

17. Ibid. Agent 27, Report on Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labor Council Meeting, 9 June 1919.

18. PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2576, HQC 2042, "Returned Men and the Labour Question", Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labor Council.

19. Morton, Canada and War, p. 88.

20. B.C. Federationist, 13 June 1919, p.6.

21. Information and quotations in this and the following two paragraphs from the Province, 13th June 1919, p. 7.

22. Advertisement, "Returned Citizens' Bulletin", Province 14 June 1919, p. 20; British Columbian, 16 June 1919, p. 1; PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2576, File HQC 3042, Report on Vancouver Strike, 30th June, 1919, Jukes to Davis.

23. Province, 16 June 1919, p. 10.

24. Daily World, 14 June 1919, p. 10.

25. UBC Special Collections, copies of Returned Citizens' Bulletin, 21 June 1919; Strike Bulletin, 20 June 1919; Elaine Bernard, The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers' Union (Vancouver, 1982) p. 60.

26. UBC, Special Collections, copy of Vancouver Citizen, 2 July 1919, p. 1.

27. PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2576, File HQC 3042(2), Report on General Strike, 23 June, 1919, No. 7; PAC, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G 579-1, RNWMP Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, October 1919.

28. PAC, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G 579-1, RNWMP, Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, July 1919.

29. PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2571, File HQC 2817(3) Agent 27, Confidential Report, 14 July 1919; PAC, RG 24, Vol. 2576, File HQC 2042, Agent 27, Confidential Report, 21 July 1919.

30. B.C.Veterans Weekly, 3 July, 1919, p. 3.

31. Eayrs, Vol. I, pp. 49-52.

32. Province, 5 July 1919, p. 16.

33. Opinions of "War Chaplain" cited in the B.C.Veterans Weekly, 17 July 1919, p. 1.

34. PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26 H1 (c), pp. 61036-7, President of Vancouver Branch, Imperial Veterans of Canada to Prime Minister Borden, 26 September 1919.

35. PAC, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G-579-1, RNWMP, Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, November 1919; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 9 October 1919, pp. 5 and 10.

36. Statement on gratuity reported in Vancouver Sun, 13 November 1919, pp. 1-2. RNWMP Commissioner's impressions in PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26 HI (a), Vol 112, pp. 61036-7; Steven's own assessment in PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26 H1 (c) Vol 24, p. 2457, memorandum, Stevens to Borden, undated.

37. Cited in Canada, Sessional Papers,, 1921, No. 14, Department of Soldier's Civilian Re-Establishment, Report, p. 162.

38. B.C.Veterans Weekly, 1 January 1920, p. 3.

39. PAC, RG 18, Vol. 1933, File G 579-1, RNWMP, Secret and Confidential Monthly Report, Vancouver, December 1919.

40 British Columbia, Sessional Papers, 1920, Vol. 2, BCRSAC Report, M-38.

CHAPTER 4.

Political Action.

> The veterans...are, or soon will be...powerful enough to secure the election of any candidate for parliamentary honours... Whenever an election takes place, assuredly soldier candidates will be nominated in practically every constituency, irrespective of whether there is a distinctive soldiers' party or not. It is safe to presume that the full weight of the returned men will be behind the soldiers' candidates. More than this, no political party could accomplish.
>
> "Soldiers and Politics" by Lukin Johnston, in B.C. Veterans Weekly April 1919[1]

It was not until December 1920, more than two years after the armistice, that veterans had a chance to take part in a major election. In 1916 provincial Liberals had ended a fourteen year Conservative reign in a "political avalanche" that left the Tories with only nine seats in the legislature. This electoral success had been due to the Liberals' contsruction of a united front including prohibitionists, labour, feminists and other reform groups. The administrations of Premier Brewster and later Premier Oliver were typical of early twentieth century Canadian Liberalism, as described by James Laxer: "catering to powerful economic interests while not forgetting the ordinary people". There was a spate of reform legislation affecting "ordinary people" between 1916 and 1920.

The lot of some workers was made a little easier by the Workmen's Compensation Act, the extension of the eight hour day, and fortnightly payment of wages to workers in major industries. Legislation for women included the Women's Suffrage bill, a female minimum wage bill and the Mother's Pension Act. In addition to the Soldiers' housing and settlement acts, arrangements were made to defer soldiers' property taxes for the duration of the war. Though this Liberal record contrasted well with that of the previous Conservative administration, it left a great deal to be desired. The problems described by Tom Barnard in 1919 remained untouched. "War profiteers" continued to flourish and basic social injustices remained. The worker still lived in fear of unemployment, sickness, old age, and his dependents' lack of security.[2]

Workers' anxieties grew as the post-war depression set in. War contracts had come to an end, and there was a sharp drop in world prices of the raw materials that British Columbia's export trade relied on. Premier Oliver, who was well aware of the growing discontent, sought to gain a mandate before the farmers, workers, and veterans who formed the major dissident groups could make politically effective alliances. The move also allowed him to take advantage of the disarray of his traditional opponents, the Conservatives, who had repeatedly criticized him for failing to enforce prohibition. In October 1920 a referendum showed that the public did not favour prohibition.[3]

Though many ex-servicemen were unhappy with the performance of the provincial Liberals, veterans' organizations could not agree on whether or not to enter the provincial election as an organized political group. The Great War Veterans' Association was officially non-partisan, opposing the formation of a soldiers' party or support for a particular party. The terms of its incorporation as a benevolent association prevented it in fact from taking part in any political action. This had conveniently allowed it to block attempts to form an alliance between Victoria veterans' groups and labour in December 1918. A policy of political neutrality was also expedient; veterans' groups relied heavily on government grants. But official non-partisanship was attacked from both inside and outside the organization. The Vancouver Branch discussed possible amendments to its Dominion Charter which would allow the association to enter politics in April 1919. The idea of a soldiers' party was also discussed in the 1919 Souvenir edition of the B.C. Veterans Weekly. While admitting that the posible formation of a soldiers' party was an important issue, it portrayed such a move as below the dignity of the returned man:

> Canadian soldiers and the soldiers of the Empire generally, have passed through a tremendous experience...Between them and duty there has been formed a permanent alliance. For such men the mere sibboleths of political partisanship have no meaning. 4

These sentiments were echoed by President Whittaker of the Vancouver Branch in May 1919:

> We were civilians before the war and now that we have returned...we are civilians again in a much grander sense....[our] interests are not distinct from the interests of men and women who through the hard and trying years of war...stood faithfully by. 5

Given the bias of the Vancouver executive and the context of early 1919, these sentiments are predictable. Non-partisanship ruled out the soldier-labour alliance that they and the authorities feared.[6]

Though official GWVA policy was used to rationalize its refusal to take part in alliances with labour, it had not stopped branches and their members from taking a political stance when it suited them. In 1918 the Vancouver branch supported Walter Drinnan who ran for the Conservatives against Mary Ellen Smith, a Liberal, in a provincial by-election. Drinnan's defeat apparently changed his mind about the advisability of veterans' political action. In April 1919 he declared that it "would allow the association to become the prey of politicians...[and]...nothing more than a stepping stone for some ambitious member". While Drinnan had lost, the Victoria GWVA helped elect Ex-Private Frank Giolma, who ran as an independent soldier against a soldier Liberal in another provincial by-election. As demobilization took place, the GWVA attracted activists from all political parties, including Liberal Ian Mackenzie and Tom Barnard of the Federated Labor Party.[7]

Though the GWVA was able to overcome all pleas for the formation of a soldiers' party in early 1919, the drive for gratuities brought the issue to the forefront later that year:

After the 1919 convention's unpopular refusal of gratuity demands, the GWVA's parliamentary lobby put forward a modified bonus plan, which sought aid only the soldier "who could demonstrate that state assistance in re-establishment is a real necessity for the welfare and further security of himself and his dependents". When even this modest proposal was rejected the association was faced with the possibility of losing members to rival groups. Branches openly expressed their discontent; the South Vancouver GWVA passed a unanimous resolution "in favour of the GWVA taking an active interest in politics, believing that such action...is in the best interests of Canada at this time, and that all other returned men's organizations be invited to associate themselves with the GWVA to this end". Even the B.C. Veterans Weekly had doubts about its previous stance. While contending that the organization "should maintain itself free and unfettered from all political action", it admitted that "whether the association alters its constitution or no, it cannot prevent its members from entering the fight". In response to these pressures, Comrade C.E. Doherty of the association's provincial executive was sent to Ottawa to try to get the association's charter amended "to permit political action in the fight for re-establishment". The attempt was unsuccessful. In October 1920 the organization faced a provincial election with its constitution unchanged.[8]

The Grand Army of United Veterans, the veterans' group which formed a soldiers' party in the 1920 provincial election,

was specifically committed to political action. First formed as the United Veterans' League, the organization had begun as a breakaway group of the GWVA, after the 1919 convention. Under the leadership of Ex-Sergeant Harry Flynn in Toronto, the League demanded a $2,000 gratuity for soldiers who had been to the front, and lesser amounts for other veterans. The United Veterans began its Vancouver organization in November 1919 led by President Jimmy Robinson (formerly of the GWVA), with Comrade Carrol (formerly of the Comrades) as secretary. The RNWMP feared that they might draw support not only from the Comrades and the Campaigners, but also from the radical section of the union movement. A large number of Imperial Veterans who had been strongly patriotic before 1919 were also expected to join; post-war hardships had led some of the Imperials to become "positively Bolshevik".[9]

The United Veterans' League was not able to establish more than a temporary presence in the city until the summer of 1920, when it had been renamed the Grand Army of United Veterans. The Vancouver branch of the GAUV announced its formation in July 1920 with J.L. Millar, manager of the Veterans' Engineering and Contracting Co., as president, and R.A. Webb, an employee of Canada Adjustable Double Deck, as secretary. The first executive is notable for the inclusion of Nursing Sister Smith as second vice president -- the normal practice of veterans' associations was to relegate women to the ladies' auxiliaries. In August 1920 the new group were able to announce that their Vancouver Club Rooms were ready for occupation. At the same

time, GAUV branches were being formed in New Westminster, South Vancouver, Victoria and Burnaby. This dismayed the GWVA, who pleaded with their members not to defect. That great supporter of the established order, the daily press, practiced censorship by exclusion; every meeting of the GWVA was reported in detail while the GAUV, its rival, was largely ignored.[10]

At its Provincial Convention, the GAUV resolved to contact labour. Secretary Webb, who had been appointed as organizer, was given the task of writing to the province's labour councils suggesting a joint farmer/labour/GAUV conference. He also carried a plea for political action to the United Soldiers' Council of Vancouver. His suggestion was rebuffed by the joint efforts of Ian Mackenzie of the GWVA, and Majors Crehan and Roberts, of the Army and Navy Veterans and the Imperial Veterans respectively. The idea of co-operation between labour, farmers and veterans was not well received by the head of the United Farmers, R.A. Copeland, who declared that he was opposed to any such development. It did, however, receive the support of outspoken labour MLA James Hurst Hawthornwaite. It was in the Greater Victoria area, where soldier and labour groups had previously attempted to unite, that the most serious, albeit incomplete and unsuccessful, attempt was made to elect soldier/labour candidates. In order to contest the four member Victoria City riding, the trade unions chose two candidates, James Dakers and Tom Dooly, and the GAUV selected two, C.K. Christian and R.P. McLernan. All four men ran on a joint "soldier/labour" ticket. This did not prevent the

Federated Labour Party from running two candidates. Nor did it deter incumbent Frank Giolma from contesting the election as an independent soldier. In Saanich Captain M.A. Orford, a shipyard foreman, represented the soldier/labour alliance. This dismayed one labour supporter who charged that Orford had "done more to force scab labour on us than anyone else". Captain B.J.Gasden, who ran in Esquimalt, was the fourth alliance candidate.[11]

In Vancouver veterans and labour were unable to form a similar alliance. This was partly, but not entirely, due to the influence of the GWVA. The United Public Service Council, under the chairmanship of Dr J.W. McIntosh who was a veteran and an independent MLA, included delagates from both labour and veterans' groups. On 26th October, 1920, it recommended a joint ticket of two soldier and two labour candidates in the six member Vancouver constituency. This was opposed by the GWVA, whose provincial executive two days earlier had warned members "on no account to allow the GWVA to become a stepping stone to the ambition of certain irresponsible persons". On 28th October the Vancouver Branch recommended that its delegates carry on in the Council, but refuse to participate in any electoral nominations. The Vancouver Trades' and Labour Council was lukewarm towards the proposed alliance. Its delegate told the United Public Service Council that, to support a joint ticket, the VTLC would have to take a referendum of its consitituent organizations, and that time did not allow for this.[12]

After the failure of the United Service Council to select acceptable candidates, the GAUV decided to run its own men in the Vancouver constituency. They made an attempt to run three candidates, but only two, President Millar, and Percival A. North, finally contested the six member riding.[13]

The GAUV's Provincial Political Platform put forward many of the same points that had been proposed by the United Service Council on the eve of the 1919 General Strike. It was a reform programme designed to have a broad appeal, but one which called for a more active governmental role than that contemplated by any Liberal politician. Only three points out of twenty four specifically concerned veterans: tax relief over the period of war service, preference for veterans in civil service employment, and improved re-establishment schemes. Three points represented the interests of industrial workers: amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Act, a general 44 hour week, and a "comprehensive industrial scheme, embracing the development of the principal natural resources of the Province". Other planks included old age pensions, health care for children, free secondary education and university scholarships. Several points were of interest to those involved in land settlement. Though seemingly inappropriate in an urban constituency, their inclusion indicates the GAUV's broader ambitions and earlier intention to form an alliance with farmers. Had this programme been put forward in 1919 by a united veterans movement it might have had an irresistible appeal, but the GAUV represented only a faction of

ex-servicemen -- and 1920 was not 1919.[14]

One development that may have undermined the credibility of the GAUV in the minds of some Vancouver voters was its reception of Prime Minister Meighen in the fall of 1920. Its local contingent was well prepared when the Prime Minister visited Vancouver. Two days before his arrival members agreed to gather at the GAUV Club Rooms and to attend the meeting in a bloc. Secretary Webb wrote to the Prime Minister enclosing a list of questions which concluded: "Is it the intention of the Government to again insult the returned men by an unemployment dole?". But GAUV members assured Meighen that they did not intend to create a disturbance at the meeting, and that they would give him "Fair and impartial hearing".[15]

Two hundred GAUV veterans attended the public meeting at the Allen Hotel. They sat in a group around the organization's banner and proceeded to heckle the Prime Minister and J.A.Calder, chairman of a special cabinet committee on re-establishment problems. They punctuated Meighen's speech with loud remarks about "war profiteers" and Calder was asked "How about the Ross rifle?". The minister's rhetorical question "What kind of government is best?" received a prompt reply --"Soovy-et". Calder maintained that though there had been a difference of opinion regarding the post-war gratuity "it had been dealt with and the result wa-- 'Failure' shouted a veteran". The best laugh of the evening when Calder refefred to his fair treatment of soldiers: "'...and I can safely say, ladies and gentlemen that no returned citizen ever came to

Ottawa and saw me without feeling...' --'Hypnotized' came a voice as quick as a flash -- and the audience yelled with delight". This incident was only one of many occasions in which the GAUV confronted Meighen across Canada, episodes which led to the group being named "Flynn's Indians" after their national leader. Meighen's visit not only resulted in a great deal of exposure, favourable and unfavourable, for the GAUV, it also demonstrated the hostility felt by many veterans toward the Conservative party. As such, it may have been of more help to the provincial Liberals than the GAUV.[16]

Many of the candidates contesting the 1920 provincial election were ex-soldiers who ran as members of the established parties. Despite official GWVA disavowal of political action, its more prominent members were very active during the campaign. The Liberals nominated Ian Mackenzie for one of the Vancouver City seats. Mackenzie offered to resign his presidency of the Vancouver GWVA. However, the alacrity with which he acceded to members' "pleas" that he stay on indicates that this was merely a gesture. At one election meeting he ran into trouble. After he had praised the Oliver government for its fair treatment of the returned men, one of the audience referred to the GAUV bonus demands, asking about the "two thousand". Mackenzie deftly diverted the question toward the Tories. He declared that the man would never get "two thousand" if he voted Conservative, as this would be, "strengthening the hand of Meighen and Calder".[17]

The Liberals spent lavishly during the campaign. In an

attempt to draw the reform voters of 1916 back into the fold, they addressed soldiers, women, and labour in large advertisements specifically targeted at each group. An advertisement in the Daily World informed veterans that "Under the Oliver Government British Columbia Leads all Provinces in Legislation for the Benefit of Returned Soldiers". It then went on to list the BCRSAC, the land settlement scheme, taxation relief, soldiers' housing and relief payments as examples. It concluded: "Obviously it is in the interests of all returned men to assist in returning this Liberal administration with a substantial working majority in order that it may continue its good work in the interest of British Columbia veterans -- Vote for a Liberal Candidate on December 1st". In a full page advertisement placed in the Vancouver Sun, five of the sixteen citizens who explained why they would vote "the straight Liberal ticket" were soldiers, and five were women. One of the soldiers, Tom Harnett, Past President of the Vancouver GWVA and Manager of the Returned Soldiers Club, was quoted as saying: "I am supporting the Oliver Government because in my opinion they are playing the game with returned soldiers". The Liberals rewarded their supporters; in 1921 Harnett was made a member of the Vancouver police commission, a Liberal patronage appointment. In the same year James H. Falconer, featured in the same advertisement, was appointed to the Liquor Control Board. Other Liberal advertising emphasized Ian Mackenzie's presidency of the Vancouver GWVA, in stark conflict with that

organization's stated policy. Significantly, his earlier connection with the anti-labour Returned Men's Law and Order League was omitted.[18]

Elsewhere, veterans were active in the opposition campaign. Tom Barnard, a GWVA member, was nominated to contest the Nanaimo riding for the Federated Labour Party. In New Westminister ex-soldier W.J. Sloan was chosen as a soldier/labour candidate at a meeting which included members of the GWVA, the GAUV, the Fishermen's Protective Association, the Street Railwaymen, the Civic Employees' Association and postal workers. Sloan's campaign was run by New Westminster GWVA President Asquith. In North Vancouver the candidacy of independent ex-soldier George Samuel Hanes was endorsed by the local GWVA.[20]

The Conservative party had its supporters among veterans but in Vancouver, GWVA past President C.W. Whittaker and Captain Daykin of the A&N were disappointed aspirants for a Conservative candidacy. Canon Joshua Hinchliffe, an A&N activist, was nominated as a Conservative candidate in Victoria. Colonel F. Lister, the disenchanted founder of Camp Lister, a soldiers' agricultural settlement, ran for the Conservatives in Kaslo. Led by ex-premier William Bowser, a right wing Conservative, the party ran a negative campaign, criticizing Liberal reforms. The Tories' main promise was a "clean business administration"; they offered little that might appeal to the soldiers, labour and reform groups who had supported the Liberals in 1916. The Independents complicated

the situation. When nominations closed there were approximately 60 candidates who were not affiliated to the traditional parties. In South Vancouver, the incumbent, J.W. McIntosh, Chairman of the United Service Council, ran as an independent. Several candidates in the interior ran on soldier/farmer tickets.[20]

On 1st December 1920, Premier Oliver and his Liberals "rode out the storm," selecting twenty-six members, compared to the Conservatives' fourteen. Four labour candidates and three independents were also elected, giving Oliver a working majority of four in the legislature. Clearly the Liberals were much less popular than they had been in 1916, but the majority gained in 1920 served its purpose -- the party would not have to seek another mandate until 1924 when the worst years of the post-war depression were over. Two of the three independents that were elected were soldiers: Major Richard Burde in Alberni, and George Hanes in North Vancouver. But two independent soldier MLAs lost their seats: McIntosh in South Vancouver, and Giolma in Victoria who came 17th in a field of nineteen. Most of the veterans that were elected had run as members of established parties. Colonel Lister won Kaslo and fellow Conservative Canon Hinchliffe became one of the four Victoria members. Veteran F.A. Pauline won the riding of Saanich for the Liberals, defeating a Conservative and the GAUV/labour nominee.[21]

In Victoria, where nineteen candidates contested four seats, the GAUV/labour candidates came 12th, 13th, 14th and

15th. C.K. Christian, in 12th place, obtained 1,716 votes, compared with 6,498 polled by top ranking Liberal, John Oliver. Twenty-seven candidates contested the six member Vancouver constituency. The popular Mary Ellen Smith topped the poll with 17,510 votes; next came Captain Ian Mackenzie with 13,850 votes. The inability of soldier, labour, or socialist candidates to make effective alliances helped place them at the bottom end of the poll. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council had not officially supported any candidate. FLP candidates took the 13th 14th and 15th places: W.R. Trotter with 7,481 votes, J.S. Woodsworth with 7,444, and T. Richardson with 7,192. The GAUV came even further down in the polls; J. L. Millar took 20th place with 2,808, and P.H. North was 21st with 2,633. The Socialist Party of Canada ran a full slate of candidates who came 19th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 27th respectively. But even if the total votes of soldiers, labour, and socialists had been focused on a few candidates they would still have been insufficient to win them a seat. Their eleven candidates gained only 39,789 votes, compared to 78,789 for the six Liberal nominees.[22]

The political programme of the Grand Army of United Veterans had come too late in the day. By the fall of 1920 many veterans were already back in the civilian mainstream. The December 1920 Provincial Election took place more than two years after the armistice. By this time the veterans' movement had lost much of its momentum; it was badly divided, and the memory of the war was fading from the mind of the public.

Premier Oliver's Liberals were to face the next two years of depression without a programme that realistically addressed the problem of unemployment. Despite their election advertising they were to be peculiarly unsympathetic to the needs of the less fortunate veteran -- the one who had failed to find employment, or who had found only temporary work in British Columbia's vulnerable resource industries or in its dying shipbuilding concerns.

Notes.

1. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 24 April 1919, pp. 3-4, 6.

2. Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933 (Toronto, 1972) pp. 162-164, 181-3; J. Laxer & M. Laxer, The Liberal Idea of Canada (Toronto, 1977) p. 20; Canadian Annual Review: 1916 (Toronto, 1917) pp. 775-9.

3. Robin, The Rush for Spoils, p.181.

4. B.C. Veterans Weekly, Special Souvenir Issue, June 1919, p. 11.

5. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 1 May 1919, p. 16.

6. Victoria Times, 7 December 1918, p. 12, B.C. Veterans Weekly, 24 April 1919, p. 12.

7. Robin, The Rush for Spoils, p. 175, B.C. Veterans Weekly, 24 April 1919, p. 12.

8. Morton and Wright, "The Bonus Campaign", p. 161; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 20 November 1919, p. 9 and 23 January 1920, p. 6.

9. Canadian Annual Review: 1919 (Toronto, 1920) pp. 621-622; PAC, Borden Papers, MG 26 H1 (a), Vol. 112, pp. 61036-7, RNWMP, E. Division's Report on Vancouver, 15 November 1919.

10. Province, 29 July 1920, p. 9; Colonist, 17 August 1920, p. 1; Vancouver Sun, 9 September 1920, p. 5; Information on the GAUV is scanty; RNWMP reports covering the period are not available; neither is the B.C. Veterans Weekly. The labour press largely ignored the new group.

11. UBC, Special Collections, Prince Rupert Trades' and Labour Council Papers, File 1-4, R.A. Webb to Prince Rupert Trades' and Labour Council, 18 September 1920; Chris Fulker, "A Viable Option: The Organization of the Soldier/Farmer/Labour Party for the British Columbia Provincial Election of 1920" (typescript, 25 pp) courtesy of the author; Vancouver Sun, 10 September 1920, p. 1; Province, 15 September 1920, p. 7; Colonist, 29 October 1920, p. 14 and 2 November 1920, p. 2.

12. Daily World, 25 October 1920, p. 2, 26 October 1920, p. 11, 27 October 1920, p. 1, and 29 October 1920, p.3; Fulker, "A Viable Option" p. 8.

13. Province, 10 November 1920, p. 16; Daily World, 3 November 1920, p. 2.

14. CVA, Pamphlet Collection, Grand Army of United Veterans,

Provincial Political Platform, 1920.

15. PAC, Meighen Papers, MG 26, Vol. 54, C.3435, pp. 030098-9, R.A. Webb to Prime Minister, 29 October 1920.

16. "Ross rifle" and "war profiteers" from the Daily World, 30 October 1920, p. 3; other quotations from the Province, 30 October 1920, pp. 12-15.

17. "Two thousand" demand from the Daily World, 10 November 1920, p. 4; Mackenzie's GWVA presidency from the Province, 5 November 1930, p. 36.

18. Liberal advertisement listing government benefits in the Daily World, 21 October 1920; full page advertisement for the "straight liberal ticket" from the Vancouver Sun, 30 November 1920; Mackenzie's presidency of GWVA noted in the Daily World, 10 November 1920, pp. 4, 18.

19 Fulker, "A Viable Option", pp. 12-13, Province, 28 October 1920, p. 7; Daily World, 4 November 1920, p. 9.

20. Fulker, "A Viable Option", pp. 12-15 & appendix; Daily World, 3 November 1920, p. 3; Robin, The Rush for Spoils, p. 184; Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto, 1958) pp. 410-414.

21. Ormsby, p.414; Canadian Annual Review: 1920 (Toronto,1921) pp. 231-235.

22. Analysis of the Vancouver results is difficult as not all parties ran a full slate of candidates.
Vancouver (6 Members)

M.E. Smith (Lib).....17,510
Ian A. Mackenzie (Lib).....13,840
J.W. deB. Farris (Lib).....12,550
James Ramsay (Lib).....12,279
M.A. Macdonald (Lib).....12,222
W.J. Bowser (Con).....11,617
J.P. Dougherty (Lib).....10,388
George Black (Con).....10,278
Samuel L. Howe (Con).....9,913
Edith L. Paterson (Con)..... 9,573
Joseph Martin (Ind)..... 8,123
John W. Mahan (Con)..... 8,810
W.R.Trotter (Fed.Lab)..... 7,481
J.S. Woodsworth (Fed Lab)..... 7,444
T. Richardson (Fed Lab)..... 7,192
M.B. Cotsworth (Ind)..... 5,511
Esther M. Crosfield (Ind)..... 4,166
G.J. Ashworth (Ind)..... 3,291
J. D. Harrington (Soc).....2,956
J.L. Millar (GAUV).....2,808
P.H. North (GAUV).....2,633

J.F. Smith (Soc).....2,267
C. Stephenson (Soc).....1,818
Sidney Earp (Soc).....1,694
William McQuoid (Soc).....1,524
T. Thomas (Ind Sold).....1,487
John Denis (Soc).....1,451

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1921, p. 497.

CHAPTER 5.

1920-1922: Unemployment, Disillusion, Disintegration.

> We're in the trenches more than ever we were in France, it's a worse death that faces us now. The The democracy they promised us is a slow lingering death; nothing else.
>
> Comrade Clark of the Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen, to a meeting of unemployed, Vancouver, March 1922. 1

It was not until after the 1920 provincial election that the full effect of the post-war depression was felt. In November N.G. Neill, secretary of the Employers' Association, had estimated that Vancouver's unemployed included 1,500 loggers, 500 sawmill workers, 500 metal trades workers, 1,000 shingle mill workers, 1,700 shipbuilders, and 250 of miscellaneous trades. The Department for Civilian Reconstruction stated that 570 disabled veterans were jobless. The situation had worsened in December when it was estimated that there were 10,000 unemployed in the city, approximately half of them veterans.[2]

In these circumstances it appeared to many unemployed veterans that the only method which might persuade the authorities to recognize their needs was confrontation. GWVA lobbying had failed, as had the electoral tactics of the GAUV. The rhetoric of 1919 had emphasized the legitimacy of veterans' claims -- bitter experience taught them that the group they belonged to was the poor and the unemployed. In 1919 the

authorities had made special arrangements for the relief of unemployed veterans. From 1920 onward, any special consideration they received was on an ad hoc basis, designed to pacify specific groups. For the most part their military past became an excuse for all levels of government to disclaim responsibility for their welfare.

Until 1940 Ottawa would continue to insist that unemployment was a provincial jurisdiction. But, as Struthers' detailed research has shown, the situation was no longer as simple as it had been before the war. Veterans were former "employees" of the Federal government, and many did not have the residential qualifications that would allow them to claim municipal assistance. These circumstances allowed provincial and municipal governments to claim that ex-servicemen were Ottawa's problem. Prime Minister Meighen rightly feared that if he assumed responsibility for veterans a precedent would be set for a continuing federal role in helping the unemployed. Veterans' problems had to be submerged in a far from adequate response to the situation. This policy was made clear in a federal statement on unemployment issued on 14th December 1920, promising that Ottawa would pay one third of the direct cost of municipal relief. The first federal acknowledgement of responsibility for the jobless was a hopeful move, but Meighen nonetheless maintained that the situation was unique, justifying the action by the "extraordinary circumstance of the war".[3]

One reason given by provincial politicians for their

denial of responsibility for veterans was the large number of veterans who had taken their discharges in British Columbia who had enlisted elsewhere. The 1920 report of the Provincial Minister of Labour alleged that British Columbia's re-establishment problems were complicated by these outsiders. Many veterans had come from other provinces on the advice of their doctors: "it is not always appreciated that much of the chronic employment problem in Victoria and Vancouver during the last years was attributable to the presence of so many ex-soldiers from other provinces".[4]

The statement had more than grain of truth in it. In the absence of accurate statistics the example of Ex-Private Tiddesley illustrates the problem. He was a married man of twenty-seven, formerly a farmer. He suffered from heart disease and gunshot wounds that had resulted in partial paralysis. He had suffered through one Winnipeg winter, which he had mostly spent indoors, but even so he had been frostbitten in one hand. He had sold his house and farm and come to the coast, despite the fact that he had no friends and no employment. He knew of other veterans who, attracted by the mild climate, wanted to do the same.[5]

The presence of veterans who had migrated to British Columbia for various reasons provided a convenient excuse for ignoring the plight of all. Premier Oliver had made his point of view clear early in 1919; all ex-servicemen were a federal responsibility. He complained that Ottawa's failure "to do its duty by the returned soldier places [him]...very much in the

same predicament as the helpless". Yet by the following winter the newly-elected premier no longer spoke of veterans as a special group.[5] It was left to Sam Guthrie, the Labour MLA from Newcastle, to tell the legislature of the despair of many ex-soldiers. He warned the Premier that there was no knowing what hungry men might do: "You have taught the soldiers, many of them unemployed, to use guns, be careful they don't turn them to other use."[6]

Oliver was careful not to directly criticize veterans, referring to them indirectly. He complained to the legislature that the unemployed were too fastidious in their choice of employment:

> ...how many of the unemployed can we persuade to go on the land as I did?...Farmers cannot get ditches dug to drain the land...I have dug ditches. What is good enough for me is good enough for the unemployed of today...There are the attractions of the city, and the people of today will not go through what the pioneers of the past went through.

The infuriated Sam Guthrie replied that the men had been good enough for service in France and they were willing to dig ditches or do anything else that would bring them in some money for the necessities of life.[7]

The British Columbia Returned Soldiers' Aid Commission ignored the question of provincial responsibility, responding to the upcoming unemployment crisis by a request to Ottawa for the unused portion of the forty million dollars which had been set aside the previous year for the relief of veterans. This would be applied to relief in the winter of 1920-1921. In addition, they asked that government undertake public works in

order to employ able-bodied veterans, and that the partially disabled who were unemployed should receive special help.[8]

The two senior levels of government placed the responsibilty for unemployed veterans squarely in the hands of Canada's cities and municipalities. Mayor Gale warned that the city could not assume the responsibilities of the other two governments. In November, before the Federal aid commitment had been made, the Mayor stated that, though the city had employed 150 returned men in the previous winter, it no longer had sufficient funds to deal with the situation.[9]

Vancouver veterans took steps among themselves to organize some help. On December 16th President Millar of the GAUV, Major T.B.Thomas of the Imperial Veterans and J.S. Woodsworth, defeated socialist candidate in the 1920 election, asked for the support of the Mayor and Council in making arrangements to use the Cambie Street army huts as an emergency centre. Mayor Gale replied that the city would not take any responsibility for the men -- in cases of absolute want the city's Relief Officer Ireland had the power to act. In other words, the Mayor told veterans that they would be treated in the same way as the rest of the unemployed.[10]

A day later, GAUV President Millar told a meeting of 3,000 unemployed, attended by Mayor Gale and representatives of the two senior levels of government, that he feared social unrest, proposing a programme of public works to alleviate the situation. He was chosen to be head of an unemployed committee

of twelve which was organized at the meeting. Other members included Major T.B. Thomas of the Imperial Veterans, the president of the B.C. Liberal Association and a Methodist minister. Their first priority was to provide practical help for single unemployed men. Millar and his committee contacted Brigadier General J.M. Ross, who gave them permission to use the Cambie Street Army huts which could sleep six hundred. Reverend McIntyre offered to mobilize his church organization to help in the crisis. The committee also suggested that the Returned Soldiers' Club provide three rather than two meals a day during the emergency.[11]

Mayor Gale and City Council would not approve these arrangements. Their rationalization for their decision was the needs of local merchants. They maintained that recipients of relief were issued food and lodging vouchers which were cashed at local businesses. As restaurant and lodging house keepers paid local taxes, council must patronize them. This could not have been the real reason for the rejection; the interests of city taxpayers would have been just as well served by the plans of the Committee of 12. It is more likely that it was part of a strategy of pacification, and that Major Thomas was correct when he attributed it to a fear of social unrest if the the men were gathered in one place. Socialists were regular speakers at meetings of the unemployed, and the Mayor later alleged that one member of the committee was connected with an organization "where the red flag waved". The committee countered by denying any link with extremists, but in the hope

that Council's view would change it suggested a compromise -- more cash relief could be given to the Returned Soldiers' Club.[12]

Throughout the winter the GAUV continued to represent the cause of the destitute. As the law stood in 1920 anyone who was caught begging could be jailed for vagrancy. Eric Hollis, an ex-serviceman, was convicted of this grave offence, and sentenced to three months' hard labour in Okalla. He later died in Vancouver General Hospital from injuries received when he was "mentally deranged". The Grand Army called for an examination of the case, pointing out that, if a magistrate could impose this kind of sentence for vagrancy, at least 5,000 men in Vancouver were at risk. It asked all returned soldiers' groups in the city to join in a campaign to oust the offending magistrate. The sentence on Hollis was finally quashed --not a great deal of help to a dead man -- but no investigation seems to have been made made of the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death.[13]

The Vancouver Branch of the Great War Veterans showed little interest in the plight of single unemployed veterans. It was not represented on the Committee of 12, and refused an invitation to send a speaker to a meeting of unemployed to be addressed by mayoral candidate L.D. Taylor. The GWVA's letter to the committee said that more could be accomplished by "co-operation" between the city's public organizations. A similar lack of concern for the unfortunate was shown by the branch's new President, W. Butterworth; in February 1921 he

ruled out of order a resolution that would have set aside $1,000 of the association's funds for relief purposes.[14]

The Returned Soldiers' Club was the organization that gave the most assistance to single unemployed veterans in the winter of 1920-1921. It also helped solve some of Mayor Gale's most pressing problems. Aided by funds from the Federal Government and from the Province, the City of Vancouver contracted out the care of the veterans to the Soldiers' Club. During the winter of 1921-1922 the Club provided meals and sleeping accommodation for them at a cost of $31,554.75. The agreement had several advantages. Contributions to the Club by private individuals and other charities could thereby be used to supplement public funds; the Red Cross donated $1,000 for extra beds and blankets. Though the two senior levels of government had refused to distinguish veterans from non-veterans, it became temporarily expedient for the civic authorities to do so. While veterans were under the care of the club they retained some of their status as "comrades", separate from the rest of the unemployed. The Club was potentially an ideal instrument of pacification. Whereas some members of the Committee of 12 had been politically suspect, the managers and directors of the Club were pillars of the established order who could be relied upon to keep their charges away from undesirable influences.[15]

The agreement severely taxed the Club's resources. There had been problems enough during the 1919 demobilization -- in the winter of 1920-21 it was bursting at the seams as at least

225 men crowded into accomodation designed for 120. In December 1920, 19,000 free meals were served. The basement was utilized -- extra blankets, extra stoves and a heater were provided by city council. Only the most needy were allowed to use the Club. Those who managed to get a job had to leave; the 100 who were employed on civic relief work at the end of 1920 were evicted as soon as they received their pay.[16]

In January 1921, as unemployed veterans strove to maintain their dignity in these overcrowded conditions, they received a further blow. The Club was to close at the end of February. The owners of the building had leased the premises to other tenants. The Club's directors sent several delegations to Council to plead for its continuation. In view of the emergency an extra month's lease was granted, but the Elysium Hotel quarters closed on 31st March 1920. It was not the end of the Club, which opened later in the year at another address. However, it was then a much smaller operation and was not again associated with the jobless.[17]

The March 1921 closure ended the city's differentiation between unemployed veterans and rest of the jobless. Relief Officer Ireland made it clear that the standards of the department applied equally to all. Those who could not get jobs were left to savour charity in establishments such as the Central City Mission, decribed by Dr Underhill, the Medical Officer of Health, as "dirty and lousy" and "a breeding place for vermin". In these conditions there could be no doubt as to who was the comrade of the unemployed ex-serviceman -- not the

comfortably situated executive of the GWVA, but his fellow in the ranks of the jobless -- veteran or civilian. It is not surprising that many made common cause with radicals, who in 1921, were already organizing the groups that were to become part of the Workers' (Communist) Party of Canada in 1922. The Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen, established early in 1921, was one of the groups present when the Vancouver section of the party was formed.[18]

As the Returned Soldiers' Club closed its doors this new veterans' organization was being formed. During February 1921 Jack Kavanaugh and Tom O'Connor arranged an unemployment parade which began at the Club and continued on to City Hall. A month later the Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen (CNUX) was formally established. Its constitution expressed the anger and bitterness felt by unemployed veterans. Its aims were:

1. To protect the special interests of the disabled and other ex-servicemen, and of the descendents of the fallen comrades.
2. To defeat the "divide and rule" tactics of the master class by promoting the solidarity of the workers.
3. To work toward the overthrow of capitalism, the cause of wars and of all the social evils from which we suffer.

Membership in the new group was open to "ex-servicemen of all countries of lower than commissioned rank". The constitution's preamble was strongly critical of established veterans' organizations:

> Hitherto we have been induced to become members of organizations reactionary in character, designed by the ruling class not to concert, but to control the strength of the membership; to render our efforts abortive and our aspirations unobtainable; and to anticipate an inclination on our part to form

> associations that would perpetuate the bond of sympathy and goodwill that ever attaches those who have shared common danger and sufferings.

It went on to condemn the treatment of ex-soldiers:

> The results of international war have shown how vain has been our sacrifice Wounded and broken we are denied even the access to the means of life. The widows and orphans of our fallen comrades have become the objects of charity while a ruling class flaunts in our face the wealth gained by our blood and suffering and by the supreme sacrifice of our comrades who fell on the field of battle.

The preamble and objectives were approved unanimously by a founding meeting reportedly attended by several hundred. The constitution, in its final form, ensured that the organization could not be taken over by unfriendly forces. It mandated co-operation with trade unions in order to represent a united front. But the CNUX carefully excluded members who belonged to a fraternal order or any other ex-service group from its executive.[19]

The new organization was apparently behind a parade of 600 returned men who marched to City Hall in late March 1921. They demanded that the city take care of unemployed ex-servicemen who were being forced out of lodging houses because of their inability to pay. The Mayor replied that only those ex-servicemen in the charge of the Returned Soldiers' Club were eligible for relief. The CNUX then formed a committee to take up the cases of individuals who had been refused help by both the SCR and the city.[20]

The organization's strength was well in evidence at the demonstration that greeted Bill Pritchard's return to Vancouver after serving a jail sentence for his part in the Winnipeg

General Strike. The CNUX paraded from the Returned Soldiers' Club to join the crowd at the railroad terminal. Pritchard's welcome attracted over 7,000 people: "returned men without number and working men and women of all sorts crowded the depot". The demonstration, addressed by Kavanaugh and Wells, was good exposure for the new veterans' group. The crowd was told that the ruling class had incited labour-soldier hostility, but that returned men had found that real wages had fallen and conditions worsened. After the demonstration the CNUX enrolled 120 new members.[21]

Early in April, the CNUX, along with the Council of Workers, another embryonic communist group, represented the jobless before City Council. Mayor Gale was unsympathetic, alleging that the men were husky and robust and could find work if they chose. He urged the rank and file to "lay off that red stuff, and let me tell you now. If the group we have to deal with are a bunch of Bolsheviki, if they believe in the Soviet government, as far as I am concerned I am through [with them]". According to the B.C. Federationist the Mayor said that he would "gladly let them starve". Though relief payments were extended for a longer period than had originally been intended, the men were told they would have to submit to a "work test," which consisted of breaking rock, in order to qualify. They were warned that if they refused to comply, they would be sent to jail to break rock for nothing.[22]

Feelings ran high in the spring of 1921. On 22nd April Lindsay Crawford, a Sinn Feinner, spoke to 800 men at a meeting

organized by Jack Kavanaugh in the Dominion Hall. The city's business interests were alarmed. An organization headed by ex-officers was formed under the leadership of Lt, Col. Richard Bell Irving, "with the express purpose of assisting the authorities to maintain order". Despite such protestations it may well have been this group that organized the disturbance at Crawford's meeting. A large mob gathered outside the hall where Crawford was speaking. The Seventh Battalion Band arrived on the scene and played the National Anthem. The crowd joined in, in an attempt to drown out Crawford's speech. At the end of the meeting Crawford was escorted out through a side door, but the audience were not so lucky: "most...were forced to pass through a lane formed by the waiting crowd and were forced to bare their heads or even kiss the Union Jacks along the line, and some blows were exchanged at times." The situation gave cause for concern among the military authorities, in April 1921 they had an armed force of 175 men ready in case of trouble; they could also call on 200 airmen and 500 militia.[23]

Labour and unemployed groups knew that the kind of real or threatened violence that characterized the Crawford meeting had the tactit support of the authorities. Radicals could expect no such tolerance. Even so, radical groups successfully defied Mayor Gale on May Day 1921. The Mayor had forbidden a May Day meeting on either the Cambie Street Grounds or in Hastings Park. A hastily passed city by-law stated that the Union Jack must be flown at all parades. The May Day Parade went ahead, drawing a crowd of 3,000. The mandatory Union Jack

was followed by the Red Flag, carried by a bemedalled ex-soldier. Comrade Sullivan of the CNUX acted as Parade Marshall. Afterwards an indoor meeting took place.[24]

The activities of the CNUX, like those of the GAUV, had left their mark on the GWVA. The senior veterans' group was failing. At its Provincial Convention in June 1921 organizer Drinnan described the previous year as " trying". A shortage of funds led to a cut in the provincial executive. The convention, realizing that the GWVA had lost its supremacy, now declared itself in favour of amalgamation with other veterans' groups. The sorry state of the B.C. Veterans Weekly is another indication of the association's waning fortunes. In 1919 it had averaged between twenty and thirty pages -- in 1921 it shrank to twelve per issue. The quality of news had also deteriorated. Reports of individual branch activities were irregular and a large portion of the magazine was devoted to reports of U.K. soccer.[25]

The CNUX's charges of "officers' control" of veterans' groups may have inspired an attempt by GWVA members to change the rules governing the executive. In June 1921 the Vancouver Branch passed a resolution making government employees ineligible for executive office. It was enthusiastically supported by Comrade Leach, who in 1919 had opposed the branch's anti-strike position. A similar resolution was put to the Victoria GWVA. Needless to say, the Vancouver leaders were upset by the move and passed the matter to provincial executive which ruled that it was beyond the Vancouver group's authority.

Dominion President MacNeill also ruled it out of order, allowing President Butterworth, an SCR employee, and the other civil servants on the Vancouver executive to breathe freely.[26]

In the summer of 1921 the Vancouver GWVA could no longer ignore the growing number of unemployed veterans. Early in the summer it made a canvass of jobless veterans which resulted in 2,000 registrations. Amidst a growing recession even Prime Minister Meighen admitted that "we know, however, no matter how perfect our work, no matter how devotedly we give ourselves to it these consequences [of unemployment] are inevitable". Even so, he told representatives of returned soldiers' groups that relief could not come about through public works: "practical relief is to be achieved...by bringing about conditions that will encourage the private employer to take on more men and it is to the attainment of such conditions that the government is addressing itself".[27]

Nonetheless the cities were face to face with the jobless. After its canvass of the unemployed, the Vancouver GWVA lobbied employers for jobs for veterans. This initiative quickly grew to encompass the problem of civilian unemployment. The result was a short-lived phenomenon, the Economic Council. The original idea was to involve business, service groups and organized labour in solving Vancouver's unemployment problem. Though the post of Chairman went to President Butterworth of the GWVA, the Council was dominated by business. One leading light was Major General A.D. McRae, C.B.E., a millionaire who

had made his fortune in real estate. He maintained that the Economic Council should not be a political organization but a "real business organization". The employers' associations which were represented included the B.C. Lumber and Shingle Associaton, the B.C. Loggers' Association, the B.C. Salmon Canners' Association, the Vancouver Real Estate Exchange, the Bankers' Association, the Retail Merchants' Association, the Chamber of Mines, the Property Owners' Association, the Employers' Association and the Metal Trades Employers' Association. Other members included the Kiwanis Club, the Rotarians and the Gyros. The University of British Columbia and the Ministerial Association were also represented. The VTLC sent delegates, though the politics of that central labour body had been drastically altered since 1919. After the General Strike strike, its charter had been lifted, and its radical leadership had been replaced by conservative unionists, loyal to the AFL. The Typographers were the only individual union to send a delegate to the Economic Council.[28]

The plan that eventually emerged was a business inspired version of economic co-operation. In order to pacify the jobless it asked for $300,000 from the three levels of government, the amount had been spent on relief in the previous year. In addition, it requested $500,000 from the Provincial Government, which was to be used for work on the university and roads. In return the Economic Council would supply jobs for all. Wages of 30 cents per hour would be paid to those who had formerly been unemployed. A strict system of rationing

would be enforced so that the men could be fed for 80 cents per day. In order to force the jobless to submit to the plan, soup kitchens were to be closed and doles discontinued.[29]

Not surprisingly the plan met with a great deal of skepticism and hostility. It went too far for some of those who had taken part in it. Neither the GWVA nor the VTLC representatives approved the 30 cent rate of pay, but they rationalized their acquiesence to the business majority, saying that they had to compromise in order to get a general plan agreed on. Editor Paige of the B.C. Veterans Weekly was also unhappy. He felt that "if each individual employer on the Economic Council, with the financial men assisting, were to set the wheels of their own machinery going, many men now unemployed would be given work also". He criticized the coercive nature of the plan: "...at present conscription of labour is not required. If conscription is necessary it is conscription of the organizing, managing and financially controlling classes that should be aimed at."[30]

In response to the Economic Council a special unemployment conference, organized by the provincial government, was held in Vancouver in August 1921. Several veterans' organizations sent representatives. A delegate from the New Westminster GWVA said that he favoured public works. Comrade Taylor suggested the municipalities clear vacant lots and that the province build roads. He was against a wage of 30 cents per hour and suggested instead a minimum wage law:

> Not a minimum wage law whereby a girl of sixteen will be paid sufficient to buy face powder, but a

> minimum wage whereby a man could provide sufficient for his wife and children, and have a little left to pay insurance or go to a picture show once in a while without having to rob his grocer, Thirty cents per hour is ridiculous. The men who would suggest thirty cents per hour should live on it.

Taylor then got into an argument with the Premier. Oliver insisted that he had lived on fifteen cents an hour, but Taylor retorted that prices had gone up since then and that a two bit steak now cost a dollar forty.[31]

Not all jobless veterans were able-bodied. One disabled ex-serviceman put forward a plea for those who could not tackle ordinary relief work because of war injuries. Some had been forced by necessity to tackle jobs they were unfit for and had ended up needing medical care. He criticized employers for not giving priority to disabled men when suitable jobs were available, and wanted to form a committee, including both doctors and the disabled, to seek suitable work for disabled ex-servicemen. Captain Deacon of the A&N praised the Federal Government for doing everything possible to care for disabled veterans, but charged that provincial and municipal governments and private employers had neglected them. His solution to unemployment was for employers to employ white labour and fire Asiatics.[32]

R.H. Webb of the GAUV joined Captain Deacon in voicing anti-Oriental sentiments though he put the problem of unemployment in a broader context. It was international in nature, and was caused by the uneven distribution of goods rather than their overproduction:

> The only trouble is that the average working man

> or woman is not given the wherewithal to buy for the results of their labour in production. We can't do that, never have been able to do it...the employers of labour themselves are the men who could do more to relieve the situation than anyone else.

Webb did not see matters improving under the existing economic system, and expressed little faith in the work of the Economic Council. One scheme he thought might help was government unemployment insurance for ex-servicemen. He had actively lobbied the Federal Government for this, but had been told that there should be no difference between the veteran and the non-veteran. Webb pointed to the hypocrisy of this position:

> You know what they called the man who went overseas, he was a hero; and you know what they called the men that stayed at home. They [the Federal Government] made the difference, but now because it suits them, they want us to quit making the difference.

Webb stated that conferences could not solve the unemployment situation ending his speech with a warning: "there is no man that is going to stand for being starved". But in the winter of 1921-22 the price of not starving was to be humiliation at the hands of the city's authorities.[33]

Mayor Gale, a minor figure in the British Columbia Liberal hierarchy, appeared sympathetic to the ideas of the Economic Council, possibly because it could save him a great deal of trouble. The provision of relief was an area where his actions could please neither taxpayers nor unemployed. But the ideas of the Economic Council found no favour among more powerful Liberals. The provincial government was not about to surrender its jurisdiction over public works, and the Economic Council quickly faded from public view as other preparations

were made.[34]

In September the Police Commissioners, including ex-soldier Tom Harnett, gave Police Chief Anderson orders to clear the city of vagrants and petty thieves before the expected influx of unemployed. The CNUX later alleged that police action had led to many returned men serving time in Okalla. In October Col. M.McLeod, head of the C.P.R. police, complained of an invasion of "hoboes", as poverty stricken men poured into the city. Tensions grew and Red Flag parades became the order of the day. The Mayor addressed a meeting of over 1,500 jobless in early November, when he announced that preparations were being made for their accommodation in Hastings Park and promised to spend $900,000 on relief work. He pleaded with them to "play the game", but the parades continued. Later in the month the Parks' Board and Chief Anderson refused demonstrators the use of the Cambie Street ground. Alderman Owen declared that "it is bad policy for citizens, however hungry they may be, to parade their poverty"[35]

As early as September, City Council had decided to accommodate single unemployed men in a relief camp during the forthcoming winter. In a reversion to the nineteenth century workhouse test the men would only be given relief if they stayed there. Even so the situation was so desperate that some unemployed veterans joined with the GWVA in lobbying council for the camp. Despite its prison-like aspect Mayor Gale portrayed Hastings Park in glowing terms. He also disclosed

one of his reasons for placing them there: "...the men will be constantly engaged. This is a whole lot better than having the men wander around the street where they would be available for sedition and Bolshevik propaganda."[36]

In these circumstances the registration of 1,233 men in the camp from 22nd November to 24th December, is a measure of their destitution. Forty-five per cent of them were veterans. Though the camp was the best attempt yet at pacification it paradoxically proved to be the ideal recruiting ground for the CNUX. The inmates did not passively submit to their fate and lost no time in protesting camp conditions. A delegation told city council that camp discipline was "the old army stuff". They objected to once more being ordered around in a military fashion. Inmates were particularly annoyed by the camp's 10 p.m. curfew and demanded to be allowed out until 11 p.m. in order to attend meetings. Council was unsympathetic. Alderman Joe Hoskins complained "they want a valet, that's what they want...give every one of them a valet. Then they'd be satisfied. They don't like getting up in the morning and going out to clear the golf course."[37]

The camp soon became the scene of confrontation as the police tried to supress CNUX activists. One morning in the middle of December several veterans who had been to a CNUX meeting the night before were ordered to report to the camp's office. A prominent CNUX leader, Comrade Sullivan, was told to leave the camp. His bed and meal tickets were taken away. The veterans protested, but police were called and he was removed.

Sullivan was interrogated by the deputy chief of police, who warned him to keep away from the park. The men were particularly hostile to the civic authorities. They alleged that Relief Officer Ireland and the Council committee responsible for the camp treated them contemptuously by refusing to recognize the inmates' own committee. In the middle of December, the B.C. Federationist reported that thirty policemen stood by as civic officials visited the camp, in case they needed protection. The Vancouver Sun reported a rumour that city firemen were ready with fire hoses in case of trouble.[38]

The CNUX complained continuously about conditions inside the camp. It claimed it was filthy and that, in the absence of medical care, an epidemic of flu had led to fatalities. Representative J. Jackson, evicted from the camp a few days before Christmas, appealed to the VTLC for labour support: "I say that the treatment accorded men at Hastings Park is infinitely worse than that given to the interned Austrians and Germans...during the war...When I was out at Hastings Camp there were 750 men there and they were fed like hogs in a trough". Others painted a different picture. In early January 1922 the Daily World reported that "with a spirit of light hearted determination reminiscent of the Great War, 750 unemployed men at Hastings Park are rapidly making inroads into the uncleared portion of the Park". It praised the provisions of the camp and reported there had been no complaints at an inmates' meeting. Later in the month a VTLC committee,

including Percy Bengough, former labour delegate on the Economic Council, also reported favourably on the camp. Bengough would have had little sympathy for the politics of such CNUX leaders as Secretary Bill Farnham.[39]

The Vancouver Branch of the GWVA had little sympathy with the Hastings Park veterans. Its visiting committee reported: "there is no returned soldier's organization there that this organization can reasonably be expected to render financial aid to". It found the camp to be clean and "superior" to many military camps. The only fault found was that the men only had 50 cents a week left after paying board and lodging, and too much "idle time" to spend it in. The GWVA committee recommended that inmates should be given more work. Patricia Roy, the one historian who has described the Hastings Park Camp, interprets its conditions relatively favourably, but misses the real point of the issue. Whatever the material conditions of the camp may have been, the psychological conditions -- the harsh discipline, the restrictions on personal freedom, and the socially useless work -- inevitably led to further confrontation.[40]

On January 25th, 1922, two hundred and thirty-two men left the camp and carried their baggage to CNUX headquarters at Loggers' Hall, to protest the ejection of one of their members who had made an authorized speech. The protesters solicited groceries from local merchants. Six were picked up by the police and charged with vagrancy. The next day a City Council meeting ended in stalemate as Mayor Tisdall expressed his

that: "Our [the GWVA's] mission today is to act as mediator in the adjustment of the unemployment problem." Later, he assured a meeting of the Vancouver GWVA that the association, far from endeavouring to establish "class consciousness," was seeking to establish a national consciousness that would be "true to the best traditions of the British Race and the ideals for which they had all fought overseas". At the same time the Association was distributing charity; in 1921 the Vancouver Branch served 5,000 free meals, which was partially responsible for its loss of $2,597.12 during that year.[45]

After their turnout at the February mass meeting the CNUX's organizing activities fell off dramatically as the Hastings Park Camp closed its doors. The group took part in the May Day parade and then dropped out of sight. It did not reappear in the winter of 1922-23. There were still a great many unemployed but the summer of 1922 had seen the beginning of several major public works. By the end of the year the Provincial Department of Labour reported that the "cloud of depression was lifting". As the unemployment crisis eased veterans seem to have been absorbed into the rest of the jobless.[46]

Notes

1. B.C. Federationist, 3 March 1922, p. 1.

2. Vancouver Sun, 19 November 1920, p. 3; Province 17 December 1920, p. 40.

3. Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, pp. 28-29.

4. British Columbia, Sessional Papers, 1921, Vol. 1, "Report of Minister of Labour for the Year Ending 31 December 1920," F4.

5. PAC, MG 26, Meighen Papers, Vol. 54, C3435, pp. 030351-2, Major General F.B. Edwards to Colonel Cy Peck, undated.

6. PABC, British Columbia Legislative Assembly, Sessional Clippings Book, 15 February 1919, and 24 February 1921.

7. Ibid. 1 March 1921.

8. PABC, GR 321, BCRSAC Minutes, 15 November 1920, p. 3

9. Vancouver Sun, 19 November 1920, p. 3.

10. CVA, Vancouver City Council Minutes, 16 December 1920.

11. Province, 17 Dec 1920, p.36 and 21 December 1920, p. 4.

12. Province, 20 December 1920, p. 21, 22 December 1920, p. 7, and 24 December 1920, p. 7.

13. Province, 15 February 1921, p. 1, and 16 February 1921, p. 17.

14. Province, 17 December 1920, p. 26, 18 December 1920, p. 13, 30 December 1920, p. 2, and 7 January 1921, p. 7.

15. PABC, BCRSAC Records, Microfilm B-2515, Financial Statement, Returned Soldiers Club, 10 May 1921; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 3 February 1921, p. 9.

16. Province, 8 January 1921, p. 22, and 1 February 1921, p. 11.

17. PABC, BCRSAC Records, Microfilm B-2515, Financial Statement, Returned Soldiers Club, 16 May 1922; CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, File 13-F-5, Returned Soldiers Club to Council, 14 February 1921; CVA, Vancouver City Council,

Minutes, 28 February 1921.

18. Doctor's comments cited in the Province , 28 December 1920, p. 7, and 30 December 1920, p. 7; CVA, Vancouver City Council, Minutes, 31st January 1921; for the CNUX and communism see William Bennett, Builders of British Columbia (Vancouver, 1937) p. 144; Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party in Canada (Montreal,1981) pp. 66-102; William Rodney, Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party in Canada, 1919-1929 (Toronto, 1968) pp. 37-39.

19. Unemployed marches from the B.C. Federationist, 11 Feb 1921, p. 1; constitution of the CNUX from the B.C. Federationist, 11 March 1921, p. 8; approval of document in B.C. Federationist, 18 March 1921, p. 1.

20. B.C. Federationist, 25 March 1921, p. 1.

21. B.C. Federationist, 8 April 1921, pp. 1 and 8.

22. B.C. Federationist, 18 April 1921, p. 1.

23. Lindsay Crawford meeting described in the B.C. Veterans Weekly, 28 April 1921, p. 9; military preparations from PAC, RG 24, Vol. 3985, MSC 1055-2-22, Secretary of Militia Council, memorandum, 12 April 1921; ibid. Director of Flying Operations to Officer Commanding, Canadian Air Force, 25 April 1921.

24. B.C. Federationist, 6 May 1921.

25. B.C. Veterans Weekly, 9 June 1921, p. 6.

26. Province, 20 July 1921, p. 2, 3 August 1921, p. 4, and 24 August 1921, p. 12; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 28 July 1921, pp 1 and 5.

27. Meighen on the "inevitability" of unemployment from Canada, House of Commons Debates, 2 June 1921, p. 4361; meeting with soldiers from the Province, 1 October 1921, p. 1.

28. McRae on the Economic Council from the Province, 10 August 1921, p.2; list of participants in PAC, RG 27, Vol. 1209, File 617.1.9.1B, Transcript of Labour Conference, Vancouver 10th August, 1921, p. 108.

29. Province, 11 August 1921, p. 4.

30. Need for employer's action from the B.C. Veterans Weekly, 1 September 1921, p. 6; "conscription of labour" from the B.C. Veterans Weekly, 10 September 1921

p. 6

31. Labour Conference Transcript, pp. 29-30.

32. Ibid. pp. 65-71

33. Ibid. pp. 74-77

34. Province. 8 October 1921, p. 3.

35. Invasion of "hoboes" from B.C. Veterans Weekly, 15 October 1921, p. 6; Gale's meeting with the jobless from B.C. Federationist, 2 November 1921, p. 1; Alderman Owen's views from B.C. Federationist, 25 November 1921, p. 3.

36. Gale on the Hastings Park camp from Vancouver Sun, 2 December, 1921, p. 14; B.C. Federationist, 25 November 1921, p. 3.

37. CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, 1922, Report on Special Employment Relief, Single Men's Registration; Province, 6 December 1921, p. 18; Alderman Hoskin's complaint from Vancouver Sun, 16 December 1921, p. 2.

38. B.C. Federationist, 16 December 1921, p. 1, and 22 December 1921, p. 4; Vancouver Sun, 16 December 1921, p. 2.

39. Unsatisfactory camp conditions from the OBU Bulletin, 30 March 1922, p. 4; attempts to enlist support of organized labour from the Daily World, 4th January 1922, p. 11. favourable report of conditions from the Daily World, 9 January 1922, p.3; Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 144.

40. CVA, City Clerk's Correspondence, 1922, P. Smith, Secretary, Vancouver GWVA to Mayor Tisdall; Roy, "Vancouver: 'Mecca of the Unemployed'," pp. 401-407.

41. Vancouver Sun, 26 January 1922, p. 1; Province, 28 January 1922, p. 16.

42. Province, 30 January 1922, p. 2.

43. Province, 1 February 1922, p. 20.

44. Province, 13 February 1922, pp. 7, 22; report on parade from the B.C. Federationist, 3rd March, 1922, p. 1.

45. Province, 15 February 1922, p. 11.

46. Roy, "Vancouver: 'Mecca of the Unemployed'." p.408.

CONCLUSION.

After the Great War there was an opportunity to form a strong, united veterans' movement that would press for social change in order to make Canada a "home fit for heroes". But there was no general agreement about the means that should be used to effect this end. Less than four years later, the ideal of social justice was almost forgotten, as fragmented veterans' organizations struggled to survive. In the midst of this struggle unemployed ex-servicemen were abandoned to radical organizations.

The differing interests and political views of returned soldiers were evident in the opposing ideologies of Vancouver veterans' groups before the General Strike of 1919. The largest group in the city, the Great War Veterans' Association, was controlled by an executive who opposed the city's Trades and Labour Council, labelling it bolshevik. Rather than listening to the views of dissident members the GWVA executive, dominated by government bureaucrats, employed all its strength to quash proposals with which it disagreed. The organization took an important role during the strike, providing the head of the Returned Citizens' Law and Order League, and passing a widely publicised anti-strike resolution. At that time the GWVA had considerable influence among the city's veterans -- its ineffective lobbying tactics had not yet been discredited.

Although it was the largest organized group, the Vancouver GWVA did not speak for the majority of the city's veterans. The strikers' demands, which included a bonus and improved pensions for ex-servicemen, had considerable appeal. Many ex-servicemen were strikers; many belonged to the pro-labour Campaigners or the Comrades. The meetings of the radical Ex-Soldiers' and Sailors' Labour Council were packed. Economic conditions also had their effect on militancy. At the time of the General Strike British Columbia was still feeling the effect of war contracts and there was a steady demand for its staple commodities. Veterans' post-war discharge pay meant that most were not immediately exposed to the job market. Though ex-servicemen were reluctant to join the "law-and-order" Returned Citizens League, Vancouver did not experience the kind of militant display of veterans' support for the strike that took place in Winnipeg. The city's veterans thus failed to take advantage of the opportunity to ally themselves with the strikers, whose demands recognized their grievances, at a time when their support could have helped improve the lot of all workers.

After the strike, divisions between veterans deepened. Though the GWVA remained the largest group in the city, its failure to endorse the controversial bonus scheme lost it many members. In the winter of 1919-1920 it was apparent that GWVA lobbying for better re-establishment terms would have no effect on the Federal Government. In 1920 the association was challenged by the growth of the Grand Army of United Veterans,

a breakaway group of dissatisfied veterans. The GAUV had several attractions. It endorsed a cash gratuity, something the GWVA refused to do. It put forward a reformist Provincial political platform, designed to appeal to a broad range of interest groups. The GAUV also tried to make alliances with farmer and labour groups. But it arrived too late in the day. Its programme gained little support in the 1920 Provincial election; two years had passed since the signing of the armistice and the momentum of the veterans' movement had already been lost -- Canadians were keen to return to business as usual.

The Provincial election took place before Vancouver could feel the full effects of the post war depression. In the two years that followed, the absence of a united veterans' group allowed all three levels of government to deny responsibility for jobless ex-servicemen, who only on rare occasions were distinguished from the rest of the unemployed. The two senior levels of government did contribute grudgingly to relief payments, but it was the municipalities that bore the major responsibility. Many of their actions were dictated by a need to pacify the unemployed veteran. To that end Vancouver did distinguish between veteran and civilian in the winter of 1920-1921. The agreement whereby the Returned Soldiers' Club cared for jobless ex-servicemen had the advantage of economy and also of isolating a potentially troublesome group.

The arrangement seems to have been a moderate success. Despite residents of the club joining in the hunger and

unemployment demonstrations of early 1921, there are no reports of disturbances. It was only after the Returned Soldiers Club closed that the city's most radical post-war veterans' group was able to gain strength. The Canadian National Union of Ex-Servicemen, which eventually joined in the formation of the Workers' Communist Party, concentrated its organizing efforts on single unemployed veterans. Its activities dropped off in the summer of 1921, but it became more militant after the Hastings Park Relief Camp opened. This prison-like institution for unemployed single men, designed to keep them from radical influences, ironically gave the CNUX an ideal opportunity for organization. During the winter of 1921-1922 continual protests made the CNUX a thorn in the side of the civic authorities. The men who joined gained no material benefits; some were expelled from the camp and harrassed by the police. But involvement in CNUX activies restored to their members some of their pride and dignity -- they were no longer helpless victims of callous and uncaring authorities. The protests continued.

The CNUX did not survive beyond 1922, by which time other veterans' organizations were also in a desperate situation. The idea of a broadly-based veterans' movement which would demand social reform remained only as a memory. Attempts to make an alliance with labour and to take political action had failed.

The GAUV gave the unemployed some support during the spring of 1922. It sent delegates to unemployment conferences

and a representative to address the May Day Parade. The group seems to have gained a general acceptance in the city and continued its presence until it amalgamated with others to form the Canadian Legion in 1925.[1]

Though it had lost a great deal of its power and influence by the end of 1921, the GWVA was still the largest veterans' organization in Canada. The GAUV's programme had attracted a large number of disenchanted ex-servicemen while the Army and Navy Veterans continued on course with a smaller, but steady proportion of veterans. In November 1921 the national membership of the largest veterans' groups was: GWVA, 50,000; GAUV, 20,000; and A&N, 12,500. Amalgamation became the theme of countless meetings as veterans' groups realized that they could not survive as separate entities. Victoria was one city in which amalgamation was successful; in 1921 its GWVA merged with other Victoria groups to form the Amalgamated Veterans' Association. Victoria was exceptional. In Vancouver, as in many other places, discussions were hampered by groups' unwillingness to give up their autonomy. Two organizations, the Campaigners of the Great War and the Comrades of the Great War, disappeared after 1921. By 1924 the Vancouver GWVA was no longer able to meet the outstanding $21,000 owed on its opulent clubhouse -- the building was sold to the Elks. Around the same time the South Vancouver and Nanaimo branches moved into larger quarters.[2]

Amalgamation of most Canadian veterans' groups into the Canadian Legion took place in 1925. Its constitution

symbolized the victory of the forces of pacification. While narrowly defining the Legion as a service club, it contained one important clause that denied radicals entry: "No avowed anarchist, communist or other person who advocates the destruction of organized government shall be permitted to become or remain a member".[3]

As this study is limited to the city of Vancouver, many questions remain unanswered. For example: to what extent did the presence of alternate organizations, that discontented GWVA members could join, allow the GWVA's Vancouver executive to assert its control over the branch? A comparison with veterans' groups in other cities might prove useful. In Victoria and New Westminster veterans and labour appear to have co-operated. Winnipeg is an obvious city to study, as militant rank and file veterans were able to take over its GWVA at a critical time. It would also be interesting to explore the re-emergence of radical veterans' groups in the 1930s. What were the connections, if any, between the CNUX and the Working-Class Ex-Servicemens' League and other left-wing organizations, which emerged in Vancouver during the later and more prolonged unemployment crisis?

In the early 1920s the failure of the veterans' movement was a national phenomenon. After the post-war depression, the economic expansion of the late 1920s made problems of social inequality and unemployment less obvious. Prime Minister King, intent on maintaining power, was not about to make any controversial moves in the direction of social justice.

Consequently, in the depression of the 1930s, Canadians, a large number of them veterans, suffered unnecessary hardship due to a lack of unemployment insurance and other social programmes. In these conditions there was a revival of the radical-labour tradition, but it took another war to prompt the 1940 constitutional amendment allowing a Federal unemployment scheme to be put in place. Ironically enough, it was a fear of problems in re-establishing the veterans of the Second World War that made this programme appealing to Prime Minister King.

Notes

1. B.C. Federationist, 3 March 1922, p. 1, and 5 May 1922, p.1.

2. Province, 8 February 1922, p. 24; B.C. Veterans Weekly, 5 November 1921, p. 13; Veteran, 27 December 1924, p. 8, 11 April 1925, p. 8, and 14 November 1925, p. 9.

3. Clifford H. Bowering, Service: The Story of the Canadian Legion (Ottawa, 1960) p. 30.

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