

**THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION:
ORGANIZING AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS**

by

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of the Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

Canada experienced its worst economic crisis during the Great Depression of the 1930s with unprecedented numbers of Canadians suffering extreme economic and social hardship. Survival and struggle to change those conditions became as much a mark of the times as the economic circumstances themselves. The Communist Party of Canada (CPC) was one organization that played a significant role in this national upsurge of struggle. The Party believed that the worsening material conditions would engender class consciousness of Canadian workers, leading to the overthrow of the capitalist system to achieve a worker-farmer socialist state.

The Party was instrumental in organizing workers, farmers, the unorganized and the unemployed, however, it was not successful in raising Canadian working class consciousness to a revolutionary level. The factors that will be analyzed as being the main contributing factors to the Party's limitations are the CPC's relationship with the Comintern, repression by the Canadian state, and dominant ideology that prevailed in Canada during the Depression.

From its inception in 1921 the CPC worked assiduously to meet the needs of Canadian workers in a rapidly changing economy in the 1920s and one that was also collapsing in the Depression. In many ways it recognized Canadian workers' needs in these times and was at the head of the labour movement fighting for workers' needs and defending them. However, the CPC was somewhat hamstrung by its very close relationship with the Comintern allowing this international communist body to dictate almost every move it made whether or not it was the best for Canadian workers.

State repression of the CPC and labour movement, also had a curbing effect on the advancement of the CPC in its work with Canadian workers, forcing the Party underground, decimating its leadership and intimidating Party activists, unions and workers. Finally, dominant ideology during the Depression, in spite of serious threats by alternate sets of ideas, particularly those promulgated by the CPC, largely stood its ground as defender of the present capitalist system that relied on the exploitation of Canadian workers for its survival.

DEDICATION

to Benjamin, Jean and Dijs

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Background

In the 1930s Canada was hit by a devastating depression, a depression that no-one thought would last longer than one to two years [Williams, 1973:112]. Canadians experienced terrible economic hardship, unprecedented in its history of capitalist development. In fact 'it]he Great Depression affected Canada more severely than any industrial nation except the U.S.' [Grayson & Bliss, 1971:viii]¹. A variety of statistics on agricultural production, unemployment, farm income and relief payments, attest to the depressed economic times.

Between 1930 and 1940 there were never less than ten percent of wage earners out of work [ibid:ix]. The worst year for unemployment was 1933 with a reported rate of 32% [Horn, 1972:2]. While unemployment dropped from 20% in 1934 to 12.5% in 1937, unemployment again increased in the late-1930s and stayed at high levels until well into the Second World War [ibid:10]. These official figures do not include most of the unemployed youth, the group hardest hit by unemployment. It has been estimated that by 1936, two-thirds of the youth were unemployed [Braithwaite, 1977:12].

In Canada the prairies received the severest blow from the Depression and of this region, Saskatchewan suffered the most. The per capita income of Saskatchewan fell 72% from 1929 to 1933 [Hoar, 1970:intro.]. The prairies, predominantly an agricultural region, saw the value of its agricultural products plummet to \$253 million in

¹ The Depression did not affect the Canadian population evenly. The middle class was more affected in terms of loss of security than loss of income. Also, many business owners actually profited [Hoar, 1970:15].

1932 from \$783 million in 1928. The net income of farm operations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba fell to minus \$10,728,000 in 1931 from \$363 million in 1928 [Grayson & Bliss, 1971:ix].

Not surprisingly, two million Canadians, or one in five, were public dependants in the worst year of the Depression. However, '[t]hese figures ignore the tens of thousands who were too proud to fall back on "charity" and the millions whose standards of living fell but not quite enough to force them onto relief' [ibid:x]. In some municipalities in 1937, 90% of the farmers were on relief [Braithwaite, 1977:30]. Although many were on relief, these "handouts" were barely enough to live on. Many destitute people found themselves ineligible for relief owing to the tough requirements laid down. This relief, such as it was, was the only form of social services in those days to help alleviate the economic stress for Depression victims.

Added to the hardship of little or no income, many families also experienced home evictions or the foreclosing of their farms. Similarly, many small businesses ended up in bankruptcy.

Nor was life necessarily comfortable for those lucky enough to have jobs. These employees experienced continual wage cuts, production speed-ups, worsening work conditions and the perpetual threat of job loss. "[I]t wasn't a case of looking forward to a raise but whether a pay cut would be coming. You know, 5% this year or 7% next year, just a whittling and scraping and pruning away" [quoted in Broadfoot, 1973:271]. The tremendous oversupply of labour produced terrible pay: "[I]t was a form of slavery, except I understand slaves in the American South were treated better" [ibid:116].

Economic struggle was not new for many Canadians. Although the 1930s were the toughest, it has been estimated that for about half of Canada's population the 1920s

never 'roared'. Instead it was a time of close-to-subsistence level of living [Horn, 1972:7]. The very depressed 1930s, then, were a culmination for many Canadians of an economic decline that had been going on for a number of years.

By the early 1930s capitalism in Canada had definitely reached a barrier in its development, in Karl Marx' terms of analysis of capitalism, a point of major contradiction between the forces of production (raw materials, tools, machinery and the labour force) and the relations of production (the way people are organized regarding the productive forces and in the labour process)². The productive forces were becoming destructive forces³, for example, with over-production and loss of markets, throwing large parts of the Canadian economy into chaos such as agriculture, sections of the manufacturing sector and some of the new primary industries. The very viability of Canada's capitalist economic system was starting to be thrown up for questioning. Could an economic system based on the appropriation of the surplus labour of many (workers) by a few (employers) continue to function satisfactorily for Canadian workers?

The Communist Party of Canada (CPC), which had been in existence for eight years by the beginning of the Depression, saw the Depression in Canada as a sign of impending collapse of capitalism, opening the way to workers overthrowing the capitalist system in Canada and ushering in a socialist system: Soviet Canada. In the pre-depression years, the 1920s, the CPC had worked with workers through trade unions,

² Explanation of Marx' materialist analysis of economic development in general is contained in the section on methodology and in Appendix B. More specifically, in regards to capitalism, Marx said that there are contradictions inherent to this mode of production that create crises from time to time, e.g., overproduction and unemployment. Marx also said that capitalism will face a *final* barrier, again, generated by its own logic, which will cause the destruction of capitalism [Anderson, 1974:47-48]. Capitalism creates the condition for its destruction and the class, the proletariat, that overthrows the capitalism class and system.

³ The productive forces become destructive forces in regards to the progress of the whole society, although some capitalists will benefit at these times of heightened contradiction.

farmer organizations and electoral activities. The CPC subscribed to Marxist-Leninist principles of revolution, one of the essential principles being that in times of deep capitalist crisis the increased impoverishment of workers⁴ raises⁵ their class consciousness. Further, the CPC believed '[a]s objective material conditions deteriorate (as when there is a relative decline in wages or an expansion of the industrial reserve army), class consciousness comes to the fore...'[Anderson, 1974:61]. At this time workers are most likely to become aware of an opposing class that exploits the working class and consequently develop a desire to change the economic system so as to eliminate their impoverishment and in general social inequality [Marx & Engels, 1977:433-44]. The capitalist system of production based on private property produces the very force, the proletariat or working class, that brings about its downfall. As Marx said, although "...in the proletariat man⁶ has lost himself, ...at the same time he has both acquired a theoretical-consciousness of this loss and has been directly forced into indignation against this inhumanity....Not in vain does it go through the harsh but hardening school of labour"[quoted in Tucker, 1978:34].

The CPC saw its historical role as leading the working class in what it saw as its revolutionary mission, for class consciousness does not occur automatically in times of capitalist crisis but needs to be elicited through the educational (practical and theoretical) activities of the Communist Party. The Communist Manifesto written in 1848 stated:

⁴ The modern labourer...instead of rising with the progress of industry sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper...' [Marx & Engels, quoted in Tucker, 1978:483].

⁵ It is not a mechanistic relationship between increased immiseration and raised consciousness. Immiseration is a pre-condition for raised awareness, not necessarily a sole cause of it. Nevertheless, '...the economic structure is ultimately the critical variable in determining human consciousness...' [Anderson, 1974:61].

⁶ Although the language in the quotation is gender-exclusive, the author is drawing on this quote in a gender-inclusive way for 'man' to include both women and men.

[t]he immediate aim of the Communists is...the formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. The Communists...are, on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement [Marx & Engels, 1977:49-50].

2. Thesis Question

Given this declared role of the CPC and the wretched economic conditions in Canada in the 1930s, what exactly did the CPC do for Canadian workers⁷ (and petty commodity producers such as farmers) in order to raise workers' consciousness, helping to bring them from a class-in-itself (an aggregate of workers) to a class-for-itself (a revolutionary class)⁸? To answer this question, the activities of the CPC vis-à-vis Canadian workers will be examined to find out to what extent the CPC met the needs of Canadian workers as an exploited class of people. By needs is meant the basic necessities of life, of food, clothing and shelter. Additionally, when understanding the basics of life, the means by which these basics are obtained are also viewed as a critical component to the lives of people.

Having determined these needs, the more important task implicit in the question to be answered will be to provide the factors which determined exactly how far the CPC

⁷ The term 'Canadian workers' has a broader meaning than members of the working class. For the most part, the term 'Canadian workers' is used to include unemployed workers as well as employed, and members of the petit bourgeois class, particularly farmers, as well as members of the working class. The working class, or proletariat, includes workers engaged in service production as well as workers in commodity production, that is, the majority of wage and salary earners.

⁸ A class-for-itself is a revolutionary class, a class with a fully developed class consciousness. For the proletariat to be a class-for-itself is to realize not only the state of its estrangement and the source of this condition, but that to rectify its state of alienation revolution is necessary.

was successful. In seeking these factors two areas of potential problems for the CPC will be examined: those problems internal to the Party and those external to it. In the internal area, the CPC's relationship with its international body, the Comintern, will be examined to find out to what degree this relationship helped or hindered the CPC in its Canadian 'duties'. The examination of the external area of problems will involve looking at the role of the Canadian state and the dominant ideology of the time. Since the CPC was a radical party, it will be asked how much the Canadian state interfered in the Party's work with Canadian workers. In regards to dominant ideology, it will be asked if Canadian workers' traditional way of thinking had room for an alternate set of ideas that challenged the 'system', proposed by the CPC. Conclusions regarding these questions can only be drawn after a general economic-political examination has been made of Canada in those times.

The aim of this thesis is to place the CPC in the Canadian economic and political context of the times. Without a clear knowledge of the economic developments in Canada one can hardly begin to understand the activities of a political group such as the CPC. An exposition of the CPC should be based on the following elements: a general economic analysis of Canada; an understanding of class formation in Canada; a knowledge of the political activities of the labour movement through political parties, union organization and strike activity; insight to other class struggles, manifested in political activities; and a perception of the dominant ideology and challenges made to it. But before embarking on an explanation of the method followed in this thesis it is appropriate to survey the existing literature on the CPC.

3. Literature Review

A substantial range of literature, primary and secondary, exists on the CPC⁹ in the 1920s and 1930s. This literature includes histories of the CPC, autobiographies and biographies of CPC members, memoirs of people's experience in the depression, studies of the labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s and studies of the 'left' in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s.

The main focus of the literature review (also see Appendix A) will be the histories of the CPC which comprise works written by academics (a combination of published writings and unpublished theses) and histories written by Party members. These two categories of histories will be called academic histories and Party histories, respectively.

For consideration as histories of the CPC there appear to be twelve writings in existence, nine of which are academic and three Party histories. Of the academic histories, four are unpublished theses written between 1964 and 1974. Four academic histories are books published between 1968 and 1988. The ninth academic history is a series of articles on the CPC published in a journal in 1974 and 1975. There are earlier histories of the CPC, both of which are Party histories, the first being published in 1939. The relative paucity of historical writing on the CPC, including the absence of any major academic writing, up to the 1960s, has been compensated for, then, by a number of histories since the mid-sixties. What, however, justifies yet another review? While each history makes some contribution to an understanding of the CPC, some more than

⁹ A writing on the CPC was classified as a 'history' of the CPC if it satisfied the following two criteria: it covered at least a five year period, and attempted to deal with the Party in a fairly comprehensive way, not just a focus on one part of the Party's activities. Significant writings on the CPC which do not qualify as histories, e.g., Fergus McKean's *Opportunism Versus Communism* and Lita-Rose Betcherman's *The Little Band*, nevertheless, will be drawn on throughout the thesis for factual information on the CPC and theoretical-interpretative discussions.

others, none is sufficient in itself; not one of the treatises contains all the elements that this writer considers crucial for an adequate history of the CPC.

Justification for this approach will be made in the ensuing section on methodology. Suffice it to say, now, that a political economy approach ensures that the subject of historical analysis is viewed in a context of societal development, not as an isolated object with no apparent inherent links to the society within which it exists.

All of the histories have been judged according to certain criteria, namely, theoretical approach, the amount of analysis/interpretation versus description, and the main argument regarding the CPC's birth and existence as a political force. Such judging revealed certain groupings within the histories. There are those histories that are predominantly materialist in theoretical approach, that have a balance of analysis/interpretation and description and view the CPC as an indigenous movement. The other group comprises histories that take a 'political party' (organizational) approach, are practically devoid of analysis but have an over-abundance of detail, and predominantly regard the CPC as an alien, if not subversive, body to Canada. Some of the histories do not fall clearly into one or the other of these groupings and straddle the two, having characteristics of both. However, on the whole, the CPC histories can be categorised as one or the other. For abbreviation's sake the first group will be called 'materialist' histories and the second 'political party' histories.

The 'political party' group will be examined first. A scrutiny of the materialist group will lead into a methodology section that will demonstrate how and why an adequate history of the CPC should be carried out, i.e., the method to be pursued in this thesis.

The 'political party' term is used to name this grouping¹⁰ to indicate a theoretical, or lack of theoretical, approach that generally views the CPC in isolation, as it would any political party or organization. Good examples of this are Melvyn Pelt's 'The Communist Party of Canada, 1929-1942' and William Rodney's *Soldiers of the International*. A standard set of criteria are employed in looking at the CPC as a political party: membership size; electoral success; contents of manifesto and rate of achieving objectives. While external relations of the CPC might be included such as those with the state, labour movement and Comintern, these relations are not explicitly put into an overriding theoretical framework. Using such a restricted approach, it is no wonder that the general picture conjured up of the CPC by some of the 'political party' writers is that of an organization existing in an hermetically sealed environment, a party that was alien, imported like a foreign virus, and that was inappropriate to its supposed constituency with very little or no connection to Canadian values and needs of the time.

The analytical approach of the 'political party' group seems to follow pluralism. For a pluralist '...power can be seen only in situational terms, each situation being treated as something new and particular, as a separate case study...' [Parenti, 1978:29]. While the 'political party' writers are content to draw power relations between the 'domineering' Soviet, the Comintern and the CPC, they neglect to draw a general picture of power relations in Canada, between the Canadian state and the Canadian population

¹⁰ Histories placed in the 'political party' group are: *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* by Ivan Avakumovic (1975); 'The Communist Party of Canada, 1922-1946' by Colin D. Grimson (1966); 'Capitalism Unchallenged: A Sketch of Canadian Communism, 1939-1949' by D.W. Muldoon (1977); 'The Communist Party of Canada, 1929-1942' by Melvyn L. Pelt (1965); 'Canadian Communism: The Post-Stalinist Phase' by Douglas C. Rowland (1964); and *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929* by William Rodney, (1968).

and between the economic elite and Canadian workers. In criticizing the pluralist or "behaviourist" theory, Robert Lynd wrote:

...bits of power may be analysed in detail as tactical moves in an endless game of competing parties and pressure groups, of trends in opinion polls, of the impact of state and regional issues on voting in national elections and so on without ever confronting directly the massive, over-all structure of power as a weighting built into the societal structure and the institutional system of the society [quoted in ibid:31].

For pluralists, power is 'everywhere but nowhere' and like the 'invisible hand' regulating the economic system so there is also a hand regulating a plethora of differing interests, needs and demands [ibid:32].

As these histories are bereft of structural political analysis so they are of economic content, structural analysis or otherwise. Hardly a reference is made to economic detail indicating an assumption that economic factors have no significant bearing on political activities, in this case, on the CPC's activities. The paucity of described economic development is best exemplified in Colin Grimson's history, 'The Communist Party of Canada, 1922-1946', in which the author does not even mention that there was a depression in process in his section addressing the time period of 1929 to 1935.

Other areas neglected by virtue of the blinkered 'political party' approach are the labour movement and agrarian struggle. Rodney is so preoccupied with reporting on CPC and Comintern congresses, meetings and conventions, that he all but omits mention of the Party's numerous activities with Canadian labour, the CPC's whole raison d'être. D.W. Muldoon, in 'Capitalism Unchallenged: A Sketch of Canadian Communism, 1939-1949', like other writers, discusses the CPC's contact with the labour movement without describing the whole labour movement and its conditions. Muldoon also

completely overlooks the agrarian struggle, both generally and in terms of the CPC's role in it.

Most praise can be awarded the 'political party' histories for their copious, although sometimes tedious, detail of matters relating to the CPC. Much primary research¹¹ has been done and although there could be prejudice in selection, these histories often provide quotes from primary material to substantiate their detail. Unfortunately, the amount of detail is not balanced by a similar amount of analysis or interpretation, a function of the pluralist approach already described. For example, Pelt does not state any argument until one-third of the way into his history. Ivan Avakumovic's history of the Party, *The Communist Party in Canada*, and Muldoon's history both offer more of a balance of description and analysis or interpretation, but on the whole the 'political party' histories are scanty in terms of interpretative or analytical statements.

The conspicuous argument of the 'political party' histories regarding the CPC's origins and existence is the 'alien' argument. In one form or another, three of the six 'political party' histories maintain that the CPC was foreign to Canada. Rodney rejects the CPC completely as a national party seeing it only as a foreign import. Grimson recognises Canadian roots for the CPC but states that the CPC was foreign to the Canadian labour and socialist movements, foreign to Canadian democratic values. With the more extreme versions of the 'alien' argument, the authors appear to provide lots of

¹¹ For this reason the author did not believe that it was necessary to do her own primary research. Ironically, those histories that quoted the most from official communist sources were the ones most often trying to discredit the Party. These quotes and detailed descriptions of primary sources, regardless of their particular use by particular authors, can be used for either positive or negative purposes in judging the CPC.

detail as an attempt to discredit the CPC, to prove that the CPC was quite undemocratic and inappropriate for the Canadian people. These interpretations of the CPC as 'alien' sometimes contain such pejorative references and inferences¹² regarding the Party that it would appear these writers are demonstrating more a subjective attitude of personal dislike of communism, and of the CPC in particular, than an academic conclusion.

This biased sentiment produces a picture of the CPC as a deceiving and subversive group of scheming individuals. For example, Douglas Rowland in his history, 'Canadian Communism: the Post-Stalinist Phase', maintains that the CPC worked towards furthering the Depression in order to bring on the revolution. While the CPC did view the 1930s as an unstable capitalist period, ripe for mobilizing towards revolution, it did not work to hasten the Depression as such, but worked to expose, more and more, the contradictions of capitalism of that time. In fact, the CPC focused a lot of its activities on reforms in the 1930s. Rowland's position is a misinterpretation of the CPC's theoretical view of the Depression for revolutionary gain and ignores the important social reforms that the Party fought for. Positions such as Rowland's help to paint a picture of a party that will use any means to obtain a particular end, namely revolution, manipulating a population and an economic system for its own non-Canadian spurious interests.

While the CPC made some tactical errors and had a small membership and was subordinate to the Comintern, to dismiss the Party as foreign, either in terms of the

¹² Following are some examples of inflammatory statements made about the CPC: '[t]hus by the end of 1921, the Russian revolutionary practice of subterfuge had been adopted by the C.P. of C. [Grimson, 1966:38-39]; the 'basic deception of the united front' [of the CPC] [ibid:49]; '...the united front aimed at the capture of the working-class support by deceit' [ibid:209]; '...the obvious desire of the party to create complete chaos in Canada...' [Rowland, 1964:8]. Rodney, among others, refers to CPC-initiated groups as "fronts" of the CPC giving the impression that groups such as 'Canadian Friends of Soviet Russia' were solely designed as a surreptitious way of spreading communist tentacles into the unsuspecting general public, rather than a genuine desire to establish a support group or labour organising group, whatever the case may have been.

labour and socialist movements or Canada as a whole, is to miss the point¹³. That is, the CPC may not have made itself very popular or got very close to achieving its revolutionary goal, but it did grow out of the needs of Canadian workers and continued to exist because of conditions in Canada. The CPC's solution to Canada's problems may have been alien to popular thought in the 1920s and 1930s, but this does not mean that its birth and continuing existence were alien to Canada. Ivan Avakumovic was not correct with the title of his book, *The Communist Party in Canada*. The incongruity of the CPC with Canada has been overemphasised at the expense of not recognizing the CPC's base in Canadian economic-political conditions.

Generally, the narrow theoretical approach of the 'political party' histories with their emphasis on description can be manipulated to produce certain conclusions. By choosing to ignore major areas of the Canadian reality in the 1930s, such as Canadian economic and power relations, it is easy to conclude that the CPC was an alien, either moderately so or extremely so. A problematic conclusion is usually generated by a problematic theoretical approach.

The 'materialist' histories¹⁴ are a marked improvement on the 'political party' histories because their broader, encompassing, nature generates more of a balance of analysis and description of the CPC's genesis and existence as a party. All three Party histories fall into this group of 'materialist' histories as one would expect.

¹³ Similarly, the Nazi and fascist movement in Canada during the 1930s did not have a broad Canadian base, but nevertheless had its roots in Canadian conditions.

¹⁴ The histories placed in the materialist group are: *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early years of the Communist Party of Canada* by Ian Angus (1981); *Thirty Years* by Tim Buck (1975(1952)); 'A History of the Communist Party of Canada' published in *Canadian Revolution*, (1975-76); *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976* published by the CPC (1982); *The Story of Tim Buck's Party* by Lesley Morris (1939); and *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* by Norman Penner (1988).

'Materialist' is used to describe this group of histories to indicate that they employ an approach to historical study that implicitly or explicitly assumes economic development to have an important bearing on the rest of societal development, that political phenomena and belief systems are closely tied in with occurrences at the economic level.

To varying degrees, the 'materialist' histories make references to the condition of the Canadian economy, thus providing an economic context in which to situate the CPC, both in terms of the Party's origins and its continuing existence. References are also made to the stage of development of social classes, changing conditions for workers and the role of the state. This approach makes it possible to see linkages between economic development and class formation, between class formation and working conditions for Canadian workers and between these working conditions and the CPC's activities as well as other political activities. The CPC is no longer an isolated organization.

However, none of the 'materialist' histories go far enough with their materialist analysis. For example, Ian Angus who claims to be a Marxist at the outset of his book, *Canadian Bolsheviks*, does not make any economic analysis until one-third of the way into his book. *The Canadian Revolution* history, 'A History of the Communist Party of Canada' also contains very little straight-forward economic analysis of Canada, while at the same time applying materialist revolutionary theory to analyse the CPC's mass activities and theoretical work. The CPC's 1982 publication, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976*, while being the most rigorous of the 'materialist' histories still does not have a thorough economic analysis. By thorough is meant covering not just historical moments here and there but the whole historic period being examined and the years leading up to that period as well as

changes occurring in the economic structure that are generating changes in class formation and social conditions for workers.

Inconsistency also exists in other areas of this economic-political approach. For example, Tim Buck in his *Thirty Years* writes about activities of the Canadian state for three chapters before giving any explanation of the state's role in a capitalist society. Given Buck was an activist not a theoretical specialist the omission is maybe understandable but nevertheless it is an omission.

One problem common to most of the 'materialist' histories is the use of terms without explaining them. Examples of these terms are opportunism, ultra-leftism, right-wing deviation, revisionism and reformism. If the Party 'materialist' writers were hoping that their histories would be read by the average Canadian worker, the use of these terms, particularly when left undefined, is sure to have the opposite effect. All of these terms are used in derogatory references to individuals and workers' organizations. Rather than acting as constructive criticism, these terms serve mostly to discredit a lot of people in organizations who genuinely worked to improve the lot of workers.

None of the 'materialist' histories conclude that the CPC was an alien import to Canada. While Angus and the *Canadian Revolution* history (both non-Party histories) criticise the CPC, both histories accept the CPC's birth and initial existence as legitimate, that the CPC in its birth and infancy could justifiably be called Canadian. By taking a materialist approach, this is the only conclusion one can come to, that the exploitative economic times of the 1910s and 1920s in Canada generated a number of workers' organizations aimed at radically changing society in order to eradicate the difficult conditions workers experienced. The CPC was one of these which had evolved out of a number of different radical Canadian workers' organizations.

This writer considers the materialist approach necessary to avoid viewing political parties as things that just appear. While often impetus for movements is gained from imported ideas and immigrants, at the same time the host country has indigenous needs which make it receptive to these imported ideas and people. In the case of the CPC, it cannot be denied that the socialist movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century (the precursor period to the CPC) gained considerable force from ideas brought from Britain and Europe and by immigrants from the U.K. and eastern Europe. However, the economic and political conditions of Canada at this time made Canada ripe for receiving such ideas and people with Canada emerging as an industrializing country, its agricultural base being transformed. There was a growing dispossessed and discontented working class and petite bourgeoisie (particularly farmers) which were trying to prevent their oppression and possible destruction.

Although two of the Party 'materialist' histories (Buck's and the CPC's publication of 1982) come closest to a political economy analysis of the CPC, they are very defective when it comes to coverage of the Party's relationship with the Comintern¹⁵. The Party's official histories show that the CPC was unswerving in its loyalty to the Comintern, Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the 1920s and 1930s but does not subject this relationship to a critical review. Even Norman Penner's *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*, the most detailed examination of the Party's relationship with the Comintern, does not go far enough. For example, in looking at the impact on the Party of the dramatic change in 1935 in

¹⁵ The Comintern, otherwise known as the Third International or Communist International, came into being in 1919 in the USSR, headed by Vladimir Lenin [Lerner, 1982:131]. Further elaboration on the Comintern is contained in later chapters.

Comintern policy, Penner does not examine the effect on the CPC's role in the union movement. There is sufficient evidence in other histories to show that the CPC betrayed its avowed Marxist foundation by uncritically following the dictates of the Comintern. In *Revolutionaries* E.J. Hobsbawm says:

[historians] must separate the genuinely international elements in Comintern policy from those which reflected only the state interests of the USSR of the tactical or other pre-occupations of Soviet internal politics. They must, above all make up their minds which policies were successful and sensible and which were neither, resisting the temptation to dismiss the Comintern en bloc as a failure or a Russian puppet show [1975:6-7].

The same guidelines apply to an examination of the CPC. It must be determined to what extent the CPC unnecessarily pursued the Comintern line to the detriment of socialism in Canada. However, in doing so it does not make sense to write off the CPC as an irrelevant, fraudulent and foreign organization in Canada because of a defective international relationship with the Comintern.

4. Methodology

The approach of this thesis draws on the principles of historical materialism (see Appendix B), placing analytical emphasis on the economic activity of Canada in the 1920s and 1930s in order to properly understand the political activity of Canadian workers and the Communist Party of Canada during the Great Depression. The economic system prevalent in Canada at this time is seen as dominant in determining how the political and ideological activities played out during the Depression.

In the historical materialist method the economic base of society comprises forces of production and relations of production. The forces of production are 'the labour power, raw materials, tools, techniques, and organization of the working personnel,

involved in the production of economic goods and services'. The relations of production are 'the social interactions into which human beings enter at a given level of development of the productive forces' [Rader, 1979:12]. The main social relations are the division of labour and classes, classes being determined by access to and control over, or ownership of, the means of production.

Seen as arising from the economic base of society to facilitate its existence is the superstructure which comprises political, legal, religious and education, intellectual, ideological and institutional organizations of society. Therefore, in applying historical materialism to the question at hand, the CPC and the Great Depression, we begin with an examination of Canada's economic system of that time, its base of economic forces and relations in the 1920s and 1930s. In this examination of the base it is determined what stage of development the forces of production are at and the consequent relations of production. In short, the class structure for Canada in the 1920s and 1930s is ascertained.

These were crucial years for the Canadian economy with significant changes occurring both in its agricultural and industrial base and its investment linkages. The economy was breaking away from a traditional British portfolio investment link and receiving more and more American direct investment, mostly through branch plants. The old staple of wheat was declining, new staples were opening up on a large-scale industry level and technological changes were occurring in manufacturing that was growing in central Canada. These economic changes wrought changes on the class structure of Canada: a burgeoning wage-earner class working in large-scale industry and a likewise booming white collar sector; a diminishing class of independent commodity producers; and a contracting and wealthier capitalist class.

These trends for Canadian workers and farmers were exacerbated by the crisis in capitalism in the 1930s – the Great Depression. As already noted, thousands of workers and farmers were adversely affected in this time. The key classes at the time had differing and changing control and power over the forces of production and this differential economic power caused various struggles.

Next, a political review of the 1920s and 1930s is made based on the premise that the major political activities during the depression, and in particular, of the CPC, were largely predicated on the significant changes occurring in the economic base. It will be shown how the changes in the economic base of Canada manifested themselves in terms of class struggle, of how the economic changes and conflict in the base reflected in the political-legal-ideological realm as well as at the point of economic production. It is often in the political, legal and ideological areas of society where people fight out and/or try to change the economic conflicts arising.

The shrinking group of farmers are seen to be politically active provincially and federally in the 1920s and 1930s, involved in a range of political actions and philosophies from the Social Gospel to the social democracy of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Likewise, the growing category of wage-earners in large-scale industries, de-skilled manufacturing workers and the thousands of unemployed of the 1930s responded to their economic situation: it was a time of growing unionizing and large public protests, among other forms of political activity. In particular, the CPC as a workers' party grew rapidly in membership in the 1930s (compared to the 1920s) and was very instrumental in organizing large-scale industry workers and the unemployed.

In Chapters Three, Four and Five, analysis of the political level will also examine the role of the state vis-à-vis the various classes and political struggles of workers that occurred. It was mostly through its coercive function that the state warded off workers' challenges to the given power (class) structure of Canada. The state's function of providing the conditions for accumulation of capital was, for the most part, carried out forcibly. The state relied far less on legitimization means, such as legislating labour law and establishing social policy, to support the given capitalist system. While in the 1930s the foundations were starting to be laid, it was not until the 1940s that the state seriously began enacting labour and social laws to stabilize the capitalist system [Finkel, 1979:1,81-99114-6].

In scrutinizing the ideological realm, alternate sets of ideas that arose to challenge the dominant societal ideas of the 1920s and 1930s will be analyzed. Ideas which challenged the dominant ideology are seen to derive essentially from the particular economic conditions of the Great Depression (and the prior 1920s). People's economic reality no longer matched the dominant ideology of the time bringing that ideology into question and seeing it replaced with alternate sets of ideas which challenged the assumptions of the dominant ideology. The 1920s and 1930s in Canada witnessed the surfacing of a variety of opposing sets of ideas to the Canadian dominant ideology, ideas that spurred group action. These alternate ideas, their carriers and the activities they generated were often brutally repressed by the state. In Chapter Three, the concept of dominant ideology will be discussed; dominant power relations, as a result of the given class structure, are seen as essentially determining the dominant ideology of the time.

Chapter Two, 'Political Economy of Canada, 1920s and 1930s' has four sections in the following order: economy, class formation, political development, and ideology. By starting the examination of the topic in this way, the economic and political backdrop to the CPC's activities during the Great Depression are analysed at the outset. The CPC is, then, placed in the context of real individuals and classes, and politics and ideas as part of the process of meeting their needs. One is prevented from viewing the CPC in an isolated political arena seeing only a large number of actions not necessarily connected. The premise of the analytical approach of this thesis (of historical materialism) is '...[people], not in any fantastic isolation and fixity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions' [Marx & Engels, 1976:43].

The CPC utilized strategies under the Third Communist International to capitalise on the economic and political times of the Great Depression, to raise Canadian workers' consciousness to socialism to hopefully achieve its ultimate goal of a socialist soviet Canada. During the 1920s the strategy of 'boring from within' the established political organizations was used. From 1929 to 1935 the strategy changed to 'class against class' in which the established political organizations were seen as enemies and the CPC established its own worker and farmer organizations. A swing to more of a 1920s strategy came in 1935 that continued to 1939 called the 'popular front' period in which the CPC dissolved its union and farmer organizations and again worked within other worker and farmer organizations and with all progressive parties.

Having, then, examined the political economy underlying the CPC's activities in the Great Depression, Chapters Three, Four and Five will focus on the main actions of the Party in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the emphasis will be placed on the 1930s,

this decade being the focus of the thesis. In each of these chapters the CPC's role in meeting Canadian workers' needs (established in Chapter Two) will be assessed in terms of the barriers of the CPC's relationship with the Comintern, state repression and dominant ideology. Finally, concluding comments including consideration of pre-conditions of revolution in Canada, and the effect of the start of the second world war for Canadians, will be made in Chapter Six.

Generally, the time-period studied is the 1930s, but more precisely, 1929-1939. The two years 1929 and 1939 coincide with the official beginning of the Great Depression and the beginning of the second world war, respectively. Although some recovery from the worst of the Depression had occurred earlier, it was not until the war economy began in 1939 that Canada really began to lift out of the Depression.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CANADA, 1920s AND 1930s

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, we wish to establish the economic, social and political context for our examination of the CPC, specifically the 1920s and 1930s. Apart from providing an overall societal fabric in which to situate the CPC, it is also seen as necessary to examine economic conditions if one is to understand political phenomena at a particular time and place. The operative premise is that what occurs in the political realm of society is essentially a result of the nature of the class structure which has been determined by a particular set of economic conditions. Therefore, to understand the political activities of the CPC we need to trace back to the economic conditions of the time.

Second, we wish to determine the general condition of Canadian workers in the 1930s and derive from this their needs so we can judge later on if the CPC met these needs. At its inception the Workers Party of Canada (WPC), the legal body of the CPC, set out the objective of joining with Canadian workers in their bread and butter struggles. The WPC accepted reform work as integral to its revolutionary goal, a principle of revolutionary work taken from Lenin's writings ¹, and a position of the Communist International. The reform movement was viewed as a vehicle the CPC could employ to educate workers towards socialism. The CPC, therefore, needed to have knowledge of

¹ In, particular, Lenin's writings entitled *What is to be Done?* and *"Left Wing" Communism and Infantile Disorder* address communist work with trade unions and the reform movement generally.

the objective situation of Canadian workers in order to follow through on a strategy of moving the workers towards revolution. Such knowledge would have to include an understanding of the Canadian economy, its class structure, and the political activities Canadian workers were engaged in.

In writing about the communist person in Russia, Lenin addressed the importance of having a practical understanding and analysis of real conditions in which a worker is immersed. It would seem, by extension, particularly important for a communist party to have an understanding of real conditions when Lenin wrote the following:

[i]n order to become a Social-Democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catch words and sophisms by which each class and each stratum camouflage its selfish strivings and its real "inner workings"; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected [Lenin, 1976:105]².

1. Economy

Introduction

The 1920s and 1930s saw Canada evolving more and more into an industrialized country. The process had its beginnings in the late-1880s, but the real transition period – an industrial-based economy superseding an agricultural-based economy – started taking shape in the years prior to the first world war and came to completion in the 1940s

² Before the collapse of the Second International in 1914 Social Democrat referred to communist.

[Brodie & Jenson, 1980:87-88,187; Johnson, 1972:171]³. The degree of industrialization is marked by the proportion of national income derived from manufacturing exceeding that derived from agriculture and the proportion of the labour force engaged in manufacturing exceeding that in agriculture [Clement, 1977:95]⁴.

Other indicators of industrialization in Canada included significant growth in the semi-processing of raw materials, for example, steel and pulp and paper. The stage of development of the labour process in the manufacturing sector was another indicator of industrialization. Manufacturing was carried out in large factories with large amounts of machinery and large work forces, the workers being organized in an increasing division of labour and becoming more and more de-skilled. Introduction of the assembly line in the 1920s in Canada further extended the technical division of labour, expanded the size of factories and increased the subordination of labour to machinery.

Another indicator of industrialization was the existence of mass work forces in the primary sector of the economy such as in mining and forestry, consisting of essentially unskilled labour. These new employer-employee situations in both the primary and secondary sectors of the economy were conducive to union organizing – many workers now being collected under the ‘same roof’.

Finally, an indicator of industrialization was the development of industrial capital in Canada, as opposed to merchant capital, capital which is the ‘...direct and long-term

³ For Leo Johnson, it was industrialization and capitalist sector development in the Second World War period ‘...which finally completed the transformation of the Canadian economy to industrial capitalism and finally incorporated most of Canadian labour into advanced modes of industrial capitalist production.’[Johnson, 1972:171].

⁴ There is debate regarding when Canada became an industrialized country, if ever. In the 1920s and 1930s manufacturing did not dominate the economy in respect to all primary production (agriculture, new resource industries, semi-processing of resources), only in regards to agriculture.

investment in the means of production; that is, it is engaged in the process of transforming resources by using the labour power of others' [Clement, 1975:34].

The 1920s

Among the repeating cycles of growth, recession and recovery in the first two decades of the twentieth century several new trends of economic development started to take shape in the 1910s, becoming very apparent in the 1920s. Wheat was becoming less important as the mainstay of the economy, new staples were growing up alongside the old main staple of wheat and the manufacturing sector was assuming more and more importance in the Canadian economy. In effect, the Canadian economy was moving away from the designs of the National Policy of 1879 which through immigration, railways, and tariffs established a national economy based on the production of wheat in the prairies. Immigration had provided settlers for the prairies and workers for the new resource and manufacturing sectors. Railways transported people to the prairies, finished goods from central Canada to the prairies, and wheat to central Canada for processing and exporting. Tariffs provided a protective barrier for Canadian manufacturers. In the words of two economic historians, the National Policy and its results '...were a program of economic nationalism, one in which railways and steamships, tariffs and industrial development, and the wheat of the prairies formed the essential elements of a structure which had been evolving since at least as early as the mid-nineteenth century' [Easterbrook & Aitken, 1965:394].

Aspects of the National Policy, however, were becoming obsolete by the mid-1910s and into the 1920s. In particular, the role of wheat was reaching its limit. The

wheat economy experienced one final boom in the 1920s before coming to the end of its role as the pivotal part of the Canadian economy.

The contribution of the western agricultural frontier to economic development had reached its logical conclusion. The prairies were full, and the benefits to be gained from outfitting and transporting huge numbers of immigrants and building railways had been realized. By 1930 it would become clear that agriculture was no longer the most vital or determinate component of the economy...[Brodie & Jenson, 1980:120]⁵.

Groundwork for the displacement of the old economic structure based on the National Policy was clearly being laid during the first world war. Fledgling enterprises were given good impetus during the first world war and immediate post-war years: '...a number of relatively new industries were expanded, and this momentum set the stage for their contribution to the boom of the twenties' [Safarian, 1970:27]. Non-ferrous metal extraction increased its exports from \$14 million to \$23 million over the ten years from 1911 to 1921 [Clement, 1975:80]. Pulp and paper exports also increased dramatically from \$19 million in 1913 to \$150 million in 1921 [Easterbrook & Aitken, 1965:488]. Steel production, aircraft building and ship building also got a boost in these years. Altogether, manufacturing more than doubled in annual value between 1910 and 1920 [Clement, 1975:80].

The main new staples were hydro-electricity, non-ferrous metals (copper, zinc and nickel) and pulp and paper, with Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia becoming the new "export" provinces. Quebec and Ontario became established as the manufacturing centres of Canada. Manufacturing alone had superseded agriculture in terms of output, measured by value of production, by the end of the first world war [Easterbrook and Aitken, 1965:521].

Along with improved world markets and developing new staples, technological innovations helped to pull Canada out of the post-war recession of 1920-1921. New technology had an important impact on the Canadian economy both in terms of new types of economic activity and their rate of growth. Electricity, gasoline motors, the electrification and mechanization of farms, and the new production techniques of mass production and the assembly line were some of the significant technological changes. Hydro-electric power assisted the development of non-ferrous mining in terms of mechanical techniques of production and metallurgical advances for reducing complex ores, as well as providing cheap, easily accessible power for the manufacturing centres in central Canada and the pulp and paper industry [Easterbrook & Aitken, 1965:519,525]. The application of gasoline engines along with the new forms of transport, the aeroplane and tractor, opened up areas for mining previously inaccessible by rail [Safarian, 1970:461]. These are some examples of the impetus new technology gave to the Canadian economy. The growth of the new sectors in the economy gave impulse to the new technologies which in some cases became productive activities in and of themselves, like hydro-electric power generation and the aircraft industry.

Demand for the products of the newly arising sectors came from Canadian and international consumers as well as business and individual consumers. Growing individual demand on the home front was mostly for electric home appliances and automobiles. It has also been pointed out that production in the construction industry, particularly houses, received a significant boost from the growing population of service

⁵ Also, Easterbrook and Aitken say '[b]y 1930, wheat had made its major contribution to Canada's growth [1969:492].

sector workers in urban areas [Buckley, 1967:178-9]. International demand was primarily for raw and semi-processed materials [Safarian, 1970:3,5].

During the 1920s manufacturing continued to gain ascendancy over agriculture, having increased from 44 percent of total production in 1919 to 46 percent in 1929, while agriculture dropped from 32 percent to 21 percent over the same period [Easterbrook & Aitken, 1965:521]. The recovery period of 1921-1926 and boom period of 1927-1929 helped bring about such economic successes as the Canadian auto industry which by 1929 was the world's second largest car producer [Clement, 1975:81]. By the late 1920s the pulp and paper industry in Canada had become the largest producer and exporter of newsprint in the world [Niosi, 1981:271].

The 1930s

The economic trends that were shaping up in the 1920s continued to develop in the 1930s although under somewhat different circumstances. Whereas the 1920s, globally and nationally, were mostly years of relative economic prosperity, the 1930s were years of extreme economic depression. What the Depression did was to bring into sharp relief contradictions in the economy that had been developing for a while, particularly during the 1920s.

The contrasting conditions of these two decades, prosperity and depression, were not unconnected⁶. Despite the fact that Canada was beginning to substitute new staples for its old mainstay staple of wheat and quickly developing an industrial sector, the country's economy was, nevertheless, still export-based. This made Canada greatly

6 Capitalism's boom in Canada in the 1920s would probably have bred a downfall in the 1930s even without the world depression, because of over-capitalization and over-production [Safarian, 1970:42,44,70-71].

vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the international markets particularly in wheat, fish, non-ferrous metals and pulp and paper. Nearly a third of Canada's production was exported [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:156]. When international markets started collapsing with the Great Depression taking hold on Canada's export countries, the exposed nature of Canada's economy quickly became apparent [Clement, 1975:83]. In the early-1930s most countries affected by the Depression adopted protectionist policies to protect their own home products, thus shutting the door on trade-dependent countries like Canada. Both the volume and price of export items plummeted. Canada particularly felt its dependence on the United States economy as American industrial production and foreign investment greatly slowed down.

The other main factor that led to Canada's depressed economy as a result of developments in the 1920s was over-investment. For example, in the newsprint industry there was over-expansion and in the auto-industry a situation of investment saturation. It has been suggested in one analysis of the Depression in Canada that:

Even if world conditions had not sharply deteriorated, some tapering off in economic activity might have occurred...While the decline in exports to the United States played an important role after the United States downturn, the immediate downturn in Canada was related to other factors [Safarian, 1970:70].

So, while Canada was adjusting to a diminishing role in wheat and a situation of falling investment opportunities, Canada also became embroiled in a world depression. Both internally and externally, Canada faced the problems of over-production and the collapse of prices.

The impact of the Great Depression on the Canadian economy was not even. By virtue of the fact that wheat and flour alone accounted for 32 percent of total Canadian exports in the late-1920s the agriculture sector suffered the most [Safarian, 1970:78]. By

1935 the price of wheat had fallen by half of the 1929 price [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:158].

As well as an appalling international market, the prairies (the main wheat growing area) were inundated with natural disasters in the early 1930s, from drought to grasshopper plagues.

On the other hand, the manufacturing sector centred in central Canada, kept its head above water in the Depression. 'During the bleakest years of the Depression, when unemployment reached unprecedented levels, the manufacturing sector was profitable, albeit less than in the boom years of the 1920s' [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:158]. Manufacturing had flexibility in reducing cost factors, particularly labour, to adjust to the new lower demand for their products. Extra tariffs placed on imported manufactured goods, from 1930 to 1933, assisted the manufacturing sector much more than any other slumping sector. In particular, concentrated industries suffered less from the Depression. For all of Canadian manufacturing the rate of return fell to 1.9 percent but only to 6 percent for the concentrated industries [Clement, 1975:85].

The 1930s Depression clinched the demise of wheat as the linchpin of the Canadian economy for by 1939 agriculture was only contributing 12 percent of the national income while manufacturing was contributing 27 percent [Easterbrook & Aitken, 1965:521]. The Depression spelt the end of the National Policy.

These changing economic conditions provided the rationale for the CPC's political work. It was a dynamic period of economic change that presented challenges for the CPC given the significant shifting patterns of workers that these economic trends generated. The mainstream labour movement had largely neglected organizing in the new industries taking shape. The CPC faced a situation in which there was growing

industrialization and additionally, in the 1930s, the dramatic effect of a savage depression.

2. Class Formation

Introduction

Changes in the forces of production brought concomitant changes in the relations of production. The economic transition from an agricultural base to an industrial base included a transformation in both the class structure and division of labour in Canada. There were various ramifications of this transitional process, for example, new productive forces, such as new technology in manufacturing and the new primary industries, brought about a growing wage-labour work-force, and the decline of prairie wheat as the engine of economic growth meant the decline of the number of farmers.

At the beginning of the 1920s, there were three apparent classes in Canada: a capitalist class or bourgeoisie, a working class or proletariat and a petite bourgeoisie. The capitalist class owned business enterprises (that is, the means of production in the form of factories, mining enterprises, etc.) hiring workers for their labour power. The working class, including white-collar and blue-collar workers, sold its labour power to the capitalist class in exchange for a wage or salary. The petite bourgeoisie comprised independent commodity producers (for example, farmers, fishers) and small-scale businesses in which the owners of the means of production also laboured and maybe hired, at the most, a few people for their labour power.

While these three classes continued to exist through the 1920s and 1930s the conditions of their existence were evolving and changing. The changes did not begin in

the 1920s but significant changes did become quite apparent by the end of the 1920s, changes not nearly as perceptible ten or twenty years earlier. It seemed to be a decade of clarification of the shifts between the classes in relative size and power and of shifts internal to particular classes. The 1930s saw a further crystallization of these shifts in a rather dramatic way because of the impact of the Great Depression.

In this section we will examine the three main classes in Canada in their evolution throughout the 1920s and 1930s so as to give a picture, with historical background, of the nature of social relations in Canada as they existed during the Great Depression. This examining will reveal the class and occupation nature of Canadian society which the CPC was faced with in its short-term and longer-term goals, of supporting workers in their immediate needs and reforms, and achieving a socialist joint worker-farmer state, respectively.

As stated, the 1920s and 1930s witnessed an evolving of new class relations, although these trends had been taking shape for a while. The capitalist class was becoming relatively smaller and more powerful, the working class larger and larger and the petite bourgeoisie declining in relative size and power. In somewhat more specific terms, Brodie and Jenson, in their book on party and class in Canada, point to three major changes in Canada's occupation and class structure which were to affect the nature of political activities in the 1920s and 1930s. While these changes '...became visible before and during the [first world] war [they] were accelerated by technology and the manufacturing and resource extraction activities of the twenties'. The three major changes were a large reduction in the number of people involved in agricultural production, a large growth in the "tertiary" or "service" sector of the workforce and a dramatic reduction in the number of craft positions required with a shifting demand for

more and more unskilled or semi-skilled workers [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:130-131; Johnson, 1972:149-177]. However, these changes were essentially induced by a changing capitalist class.

Capitalist Class

Such a trend posed the challenge for the CPC of organizing workers against employers that were ever-growing in economic power and political influence, a shift from smaller employers with relatively small numbers of employees to large employers, sometimes with mass work-forces. The capitalist class had expanded into new industries, areas usually unorganized and of little or no interest to the union establishment. The CPC would be charting new territory in meeting its goals of organizing hitherto non-union sectors. Growing American domination in the Canadian economy had its parallel in the trade union movement in which U.S.-based unions dominated. The CPC was to adopt union policies for Canadian autonomy.

Overall, Canada was experiencing the growth of an industrial capitalist class; traditionally Canada's ruling economic class had been a merchant capitalist class. The 1920s and 1930s saw the consolidation of concentration of the forces of production and American ownership of the Canadian economy. The dual process of growing concentration and American control had been going on for some years [Clement, 1975:75]. Concentration often came about by merging, creating horizontal and/or vertical integration in a section of the economy, sometimes even leading to a monopoly situation. The period of 1925 to 1930 represents the time of '...the greatest merger movement in Canadian history...' [Traves, 1983:28]. For example, in the pulp and paper

industry in Canada there had originally been twenty-six companies but by 1931 just five companies held 75 percent of the newsprint production [Niosi, 1981:19].

Concentration also came about by virtue of the very nature of the new technology. Technological advances made new economic activities (and growth in older ones) possible. However, the huge costs involved with implementing much of this new technology could only be afforded by large companies. Thus, new staple production was not undertaken by independent commodity producers as with wheat/agriculture, but by large corporations employing large labour forces, a lot of which were American-based. Likewise, the manufacturing sector received large infusions of American direct investment.

The 1930s Depression further contributed to the concentration and American control of Canadian industry. For example, in the auto industry the Depression was an opportunity for the three major American automobile producers to gain control of ninety percent of car production in Canada [Niosi, 1981:19]. Conversely, while some capitalists prospered in the Depression others were "eaten up". These were owners of smaller businesses unable to withstand the competition from the larger and expanding corporations or the tough economic times. 'The overall effect of the Depression was to eliminate smaller and weaker companies and further reinforce the dominant position of a few large firms' [Clement, 1975:83,85]. Some of them were bought up by, or merged with, large corporations which were often American branch plants [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:123].

Tariffs, which had been implemented as part of the National Policy, were a major cause of American direct investment in Canadian manufacturing. By establishing branch plants in Canada the Canadian and Commonwealth markets could still be reached,

unhindered. By 1930 one third of all manufacturing in Canada, and similarly industry in mining, smelting and petroleum production, was done by American branch plants [Clement, 1977:75].

Already, by the mid-1920s the U.S. had taken over from Britain as the dominant foreign country investing in Canada. However, whereas British foreign investment had predominantly been in the form of portfolio investment in which control over the use of the money lay in the hands of the borrower (Canada), U.S. foreign investment came to be predominantly direct investment, a form of investment in which all control lies in the hands of the investor. U.S. direct investment in Canada was mostly in manufacturing, particularly cars, and mining, particularly iron ore [Clement, 1975:87]. This shift in foreign investment in Canada reflected an international trend. The Depression saw the end of Britain's leadership in the capitalist world and the rise of U.S. leadership [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:156]. For Canada this meant becoming incorporated into a continental economy with '...[t]he development of the [Canadian] economy class structure and political organization of class relations...[responding] more and more to decision taken in the United States, in cities such as Detroit, Chicago or Pittsburg' [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:156; Clement, 1975:82-87].

As the ownership and control over the means of production became increasingly American, the indigenous capitalist class fractions were evolving as well. They had been becoming more industrially oriented, shifting away from their traditional commercial focus in transportation and exports. The indigenous capitalist class became more corporate and based more on manufacturing (mostly American) enterprises, not as manufacturers but as finance capitalists. Similar was the case in the growing resource extraction sector.

[N]ew industries were organized, almost from the beginning, as large enterprises with members of the financial and commercial elite sitting as corporation board members. This overlap of membership between transportation, financial, extractive and manufacturing interests became increasingly common, especially as industry and production became more and more concentrated [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:123].

Working Class

Work-forces (size, division of labour), type of worker (gender, level of skill, immigrant), place of work (urban, rural) and conditions of work created by the capitalist class needed to be reckoned with by the CPC in facing the reality of the Canadian working class and where its energies would be best placed for organizing and educating to raise class consciousness.

While the capitalist class was becoming smaller but more powerful, with the means of production being held in fewer and fewer hands, the working class was expanding mostly as a result of the development of labour intensive industries such as resource extraction in mining, manufacturing organized in large factories and the semi-processing of raw materials such as steel production and pulp and paper production.

Underlying this development in the working class were rapid population growth, particularly in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and urbanization. Rapid population growth came about through immigration under the National Policy providing large pools of labour for the rapidly expanding primary and secondary sectors of the economy. The number of semi-skilled workers had grown particularly rapidly during the high immigration period of 1896-1911 with the labour force increasing by 52.5 percent between 1901 and 1911. The ready availability of cheap labour meant that sectors such as mining and forestry could easily find much menial labour [Johnson, 1972:169].

Mining, lumbering and railway construction:

...were the industries with the most acute labour shortages and the least appeal for the native born and the immigrant skilled. Only the European workers seemed prepared to face the irregular pay, high accident rates, crude living conditions, and isolation that characterized the world of work in these expanding parts of the Dominion's economy [Avery, 1979:15].

With such large numbers of workers available, real wages dropped and it was not until 1925 labourers' wages recovered to 1900 levels [Johnson, 1972:169]. Many of these lowly paid menial workers were to rise up in protest during the 1920s and 1930s against their pay and poor working conditions.

Both population growth and urbanization reflected the growing demand for wage-labour by the expanding manufacturing sector based in the larger urban centres especially central Canada. '[T]he demands for a skilled and unskilled labour force attracted more and more people to the urban centres'. As early as 1918, half of Canada's population lived in urban areas, of which half were wage earners [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:58]. Many workers were attracted to urban areas to join the ranks of "service" sector workers. In fact, the sector for fastest growth in the labour force between 1901 and 1931 was the tertiary industries. 'A 218 percent increase (on the average) occurred among workers reporting the following occupations: transportation (252 percent), trade (253 percent), clerical (339 percent), other services (161.4 percent)' [Buckley, 1967:178-9]. In comparison, labour force growth in manufacturing for the same period was 65 percent [Buckley, 1967:179].

The labour force was also being radically transformed by the process of de-skilling. Experienced craft workers were being dispensed with for the call of the day was for large numbers of unskilled workers. 'Fewer and fewer craft workers were necessary for modern industry which required, instead, workers who could perform a repetitive task on the assembly line....' The craft workers who did exist were only involved in partial

fabrication rather than the making of the whole product as in prior times [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:131].

The Depression exacted a high price from the working class as many jobs rapidly disappeared. Unemployment was as high as 32 percent in 1933, and despite a recovery period in the mid-1930s unemployment was still 12 percent in 1937 [Horn, 1972:10]. For those who kept their jobs substantial wage/salary decreases were experienced: 36 percent in the east and 44 percent in the west between 1928 and 1944 [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:160]. Here is an indication, too, of the difference in impact of the Depression on different sectors of the economy. Employees associated with the exporting section of the economy suffered the most.

Petite Bourgeoisie

The petite bourgeois class would be recognised by the CPC, at least certain elements of it, for example, the 'dirt' farmers in the prairies, as an ally of the working class. This class, too, as with the working class was subject to the economic changes occurring in Canada and exploitation by the capitalist class. While farmers were a shrinking class the CPC viewed it as a significant force to incorporate into its action program for achieving the Party's long-term goal of socialism, a worker-farmer socialist state.

By 1931, of all the gainfully occupied population, the proportion of employees in all occupations except agriculture was 63 percent in Canada and had been increasing over the years [Macpherson, 1974:15]. The picture in agriculture, though, was the opposite with agriculture's contribution continually shrinking from 45 percent in 1891 to 30 percent in 1931 [Safarian, 1970:5]. More and more farmers, along with other

independent commodity producers and small-scale business operators, experienced proletarianization, that is, they were finding themselves members of the working class making a living by the sale of their labour power rather than by working for themselves on a farm or in a small business.. As Niosi puts it '...[a]n essential element in the destruction of this group of independent workers was the formation of a labour market' [Niosi, 1981:18]. This process of destruction of a class had been going on since the nineteenth century with the ascendance of industrial capitalism in Canada [Johnson, 1972:146]. As a whole the petite bourgeois class was declining as a result of the economic forces described earlier, namely, the relative degeneration of the wheat industry and the number of small businesses going bankrupt and/or being absorbed by much larger companies.

The Depression was particularly responsible for the declining petite bourgeoisie. With a 94 percent drop in income in five years many farmers were forced into joining the ranks of the unemployed in relief line-ups [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:158]. By 1932, two-thirds of the farm population were destitute [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:181 f15]. Prairie farmers suffered more than eastern farmers because the former relied almost entirely on wheat, an export crop, whereas the latter were engaged in mixed farming directed more to the domestic market [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:169]. Again, we see a differential in impact of the Depression on Canadian workers and the vulnerability of Canada's export-based economy.

It is apparent, then, that the CPC should give attention to the plight of the petite bourgeoisie, particularly farmers, as well as the working class. As with wage-earners, many farmers were falling victim to the crises of the capitalist economy and could

possibly be allied with the working class in attempts to alleviate problems suffered by both.

3. Political Development

Introduction

The CPC came into the 1930s when social movements and various other political responses, had already been taking place with the changes in the Canadian economic system, some of which the Party had been involved in. Often their antecedents went back to the late-1800s. New movements of dissent arose during the 1930s, sometimes out of earlier movements, but now more particularly in response to the impact of the Great Depression. The CPC was one of a number of political and social responses of the time. The Canadian workers the Party was wanting to attract were often members of these other organizations. How would the CPC appeal to these workers, their organizations, to meet their goals of organizing workers? These questions will be examined in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

In this section an examination will be made of the way in which the two disadvantaged classes, the working class and petite bourgeoisie responded, or reacted, to the economic conditions and their social consequences outlined above. We shall look at the farmers' movement first, then the labour movement, followed by a brief study of other types of political responses to the tough times of the 1930s in order to give a more complete picture of the political scene in the 1930s.

The political struggles of the classes most disadvantaged by the changing economic situation – the working class and petite bourgeoisie – were connected, if not

overtly, by virtue of both sets of struggle stemming from the same structural change, the ascendance of industrial capitalism. Leo Johnson expresses the connection poignantly in the following passage.

Since both old parties [the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party] generally place the interests of capitalists and big business ahead of those of the farmers and workers, the latter found themselves forced at times of extreme stress to undertake a long series of third party and extra-parliamentary strategies. Surprisingly, the literature concerning these groups almost entirely fails to recognize both the continuity of leadership between them, and the fact that the central issues which spurred their creation stemmed from a single problem – the deterioration of their status in the developing capitalist economy. Thus, the nine hours movement, the Grange, Patrons of Industry, the progressive farm-labour alliances of the 1920s, and the Social Credit and CCF parties in the 1930s and 1940s represented the interests of farmers and workers as they attempted to defend themselves against the erosion of their position [Johnson, 1972:146-147].

Writing in the 1970s, Johnson also stated that until the last few decades the working class has been circumscribed by petite bourgeois politics. '[W]orking class elements traditionally have entered the political arena on terms and conditions set by the on-going struggle between the petite bourgeois and capitalist classes' [Johnson, 1972:147]. Also, Brodie and Jenson, in reference to the state of parliamentary politics in Canada of the early-1920s say, 'Canada emerged in 1921 with a regionally-fractured federal system...aligned around the opposition between the petite bourgeoisie, of the west in particular, and industrial capital' [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:86]. Of the whole decade of the 1920s Brodie and Jenson say that it was not the labour movement but the farmers '...who continued to organize dissent...', create challenges to the two established parliamentary parties and raise questions of a class nature [Brodie & Jenson:136].

While a number of new political parties arose in the 1930s '...none emerged directly out of the ranks of organized labour' [Brodie & Jenson, 1989:155]. Labour had, of course, conducted its own struggles through strike action and the formation of a labour party here and there in earlier years. And labour was certainly perceived as a threat, more so than farmers [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:118]. However, the main point to be drawn from the above cited comments of Johnson and Brodie and Jenson is that the petite bourgeois class in the 1920s and 1930s was a substantial class, both objectively and in terms of its political activities, one which therefore, had to be reckoned with by the labour movement and the CPC if the working class were going to have success in achieving its goals of change and improvement. The obverse is true, too, that the farmers, for example, needed the support of the working class in their struggle against decimation. In the remainder of this section we shall see the extent to which united fronts were attempted and achieved between the two disenfranchised classes.

Farmers' Movement

The farmers' movement of Canada has primarily been an agrarian movement of western Canada. This is not to say that farmers in central and eastern Canada have not protested in different ways at different times. It is also recognised that other primary producers besides farmers have protested the encroachment of capitalism on their economic form of production. The farmers of western Canada, however, do constitute the largest number of independent commodity producers in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s (and the largest portion of the petite bourgeois class) and so by focusing on western farmers one is getting a picture of how the majority of the petite bourgeois class responded to the threat of capitalism to the survival of its class.

The farmers' movement as a term is used to include all forms of agrarian protest to prevailing conditions whether it be the formation of a political party for election purposes, the formation of an association for lobbying and educational reasons or the formation of an economic co-operative.

In the 1920s and 1930s Canadian farmers' protest action was either on a direct economic level (formation of co-operatives) or a direct political (indirect economic) level (formation of a political association or party for election purposes). However, both levels of action had the same objective, the removing of major economic obstacles to the farmer. Specifically, these obstacles were seen as the monopoly control of elevators and grain trade, the Canadian Pacific Railway's (CPR) control on transportation, prejudicial financing by the national banks and the protective tariff [Lipset, 1968:58,62,68,71-72]. Farmers expressed their objective as wanting to eliminate the middleman (who was the visible face of the exploitation farmers felt) and redistribute profits [Lipset, 1968:72-94].

The struggle by farmers for removal of aspects of exploitation began in the late nineteenth century and by 1920 a number of farmer associations and co-operatives had been formed. The Territorial Grain Growers Association (TGGA) was formed in 1901 in reaction to prejudicial treatment of farmers by the CPR. In 1905 the TGGA became known as the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association (SGGA) and the SGGA stayed in existence until 1926. The Grain Growers Grain Company (GGGC) was formed by the SGGA in 1906 as a co-operative for marketing grain so that the monopoly in the Grain Exchange by a few milling and exporting companies could be circumvented. In order to avoid grain-grading and pricing abuses at the elevator, the Saskatchewan Elevator

Company was formed in 1911. Therefore, the struggle of farmers in the 1920s and 1930s was the continuation of a quarter-century old fight for agrarian protection.

Added to the economic problems associated with elevators, transportation and the Grain Exchange were the frustrations of the vagaries of the natural environment causing extreme variations in crop yield, and the extreme variation in wheat prices internationally. For these reasons the Wheat Board, established by the federal government in 1919 to bring some stability for farmers but abandoned in 1920, was sought after again by farmers in the 1920s [Young, 1978:30]. This drive by Saskatchewan farmers was fruitless but did lead to the successful organizing of a Wheat Pool. It was a splinter group of the SGGA of more radical farmers, called the Farmers Union, which was responsible for organizing the Pool. 'The goal was to break the marketing monopoly for grain and cut out the middlemen by organizing co-operative marketing (through wheat pools) by farmers themselves' [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:144]. Within two years of being organized over half of Saskatchewan's wheat growers had joined the Wheat Pool [Lipset, 1968:87].

Despite opposition from the monopoly companies and the media, the various farmers' co-operatives managed to survive, and flourish in some cases. Not all farmers, nor even a majority at times, in the respective provinces joined the co-operatives, but sufficient numbers did join to make the farmers' co-operatives viable economic organizations.

Intermittent with direct economic organizing was political organizing for election purposes. Agrarian political organizing came to a peak in the years immediately after the first world war and in the early- to mid-1930s. These two periods correspond to depressed economic times. Two federal farmer political parties arose out of these two

periods, the Progressive Party of Canada (PPC) in 1921, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1932.

Farmers had experienced varying degrees of responsiveness by the mainstream political parties to their demands. The fact that two national farmers' political parties arose demonstrates the farmers' extreme dissatisfaction with the established parties. The PPC gained sixty four seats in the 1921 federal election, enough to become the official opposition [Clark, Grayson & Grayson, 1975:109]. The main grievance of the Progressives was the National Policy which farmers believed benefited "Eastern Business" at the expense of western farmers. The tariff, in particular, was a source of much discontent and farmers had lobbied for a number of years to have the tariff lifted. While some concessions were made to the Progressives between the federal elections of 1921 and 1925, the tariff was never lifted and the Wheat Board never re-instated.

The CCF participated in federal elections in the 1930s on a largely agrarian platform but was not to enjoy the success of the Progressive Party in 1921. However, at a provincial level in the 1920s and 1930s farmers' parties were quite successful in elections. In 1921 the United Farmers of Alberta gained power which was maintained until 1935 when it was succeeded by another agrarian-based party, the Social Credit Party. In Ontario, the United Farmers of Ontario took power in 1919 with the help of labour, lasting until 1923 [Smart, 1973:200]. Similarly, Manitoba farmers had success in the 1922 provincial election, later to be known as the Independent Farmers' Party [Robin, 1971:208]. The CCF won the 1938 election in Saskatchewan. There was not a farmers' party as such in Quebec, but the Union Nationale Party which won the 1936 election had a substantial agrarian following [Clark, Grayson & Grayson, 1975:312].

Labour Movement

As with the farmers' movement, the labour movement can be divided into direct economic activity (strikes, union organizing) and direct political activity (parliamentary and election involvement). Although the 1920s began in the wake of major labour unrest that had culminated in the Winnipeg General Strike, generally, this decade was a relatively quiet one for labour activity. In contrast, the 1930s were a decade of renewed labour action particularly witnessed by the large unemployed movement and unionizing along industry lines.

To understand the labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s it is important to understand the major trends in the movement during the preceding decade. First, there was a move to organize unions along industry lines as opposed to a craft basis. Second, organized labour made an attempt to establish working class representation in governments. Third, the labour establishment, essentially the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), was an obstructionist force to industrial unionism and at times to independent working class politics. A cleavage existed between the more conservative, craft-based trade unions and the more radical, industry-oriented workers. In the first two decades of the twentieth century a class consciousness was growing among the newer industrially-organized unions not apparent in the TLC-based unions [Abella, 1975a:7].

By the end of the first world war union membership was at a peak of 375,000. A serious slumping of this figure occurred in the 1920s, and despite significant unionizing in the 1930s the 1918 figure was not reached again until the end of the second world war.

⁷ For much of this overview on the Canadian labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s, the writer is indebted to Irving Abella's *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1902-1960*.

Finally, a trend well established in Canadian trade unionism by 1920 was the dominance of American-based trade unions in Canada. The colonial status of the TLC had been determined much earlier, according to Irving Abella. At the 1902 TLC convention all of the American union affiliates, on the orders of Sam Gompers the AFL president, voted '...to strip the Congress of its nationalist pretension and to make it subordinate in every way to the AFL' [Abella, 1975a:4]. Adding to this, another Canadian labour historian has called the U.S. trade movement with its basis of business unionism, as applied to Canada, "labour imperialism" [Lipton, 1967:135]. This early turn in the national labour movement was to have an important bearing on the CPC's rate of success in the labour movement. As well, the struggle of national versus American unions was to be an ongoing one in the labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s.

The labour movement entered the 1920s on the tail of defeated labour radicalism - not a good omen for the 1920s. In fact '...the decade of the 1920s [for both Canada and the United States] was a period of labour quiescence unmatched before...' [Abella, 1975a:15]. Despite the fact that the workforce was rapidly growing, the TLC refused to meet the challenge of organizing both the growing number of unskilled workers in the new industries and the growing number of white-collar workers. That in the 1920s union membership dramatically dropped, that union organization was all but at a standstill and that the strike weapon was virtually unused, demonstrate the paralyzed nature of the labour movement in this decade, its legacy from state repression of the labour movement in the late-1910s, particularly the Winnipeg General Strike.

The void left by the TLC's neglect was somewhat filled by the work of new national labour bodies: the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour (CCCL) organized in Quebec in 1921; the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL) formed by

TLC-expelled unions in 1927 and the Workers Unity League (WUL) formed by the CPC in 1930. The CCCL replaced the defunct Knights of labour which had flourished in Quebec up to 1902, the year the Knights were expelled from the TLC. Although it was against international unions because of the TLC's neglect of Quebec workers, the CCCL was more intent on serving the religious and cultural interests of Catholic workers in Quebec than organizing the unorganized or fighting for Quebec workers' rights on a class basis [Lipton, 1967:225; Logan, 1948:576].

The ACCL, also against international unions, attempted to promote wholly Canadian, industrial unions. Altogether, the ACCL was not successful, particularly in organizing the unorganized and by the mid-1930s was a flagging labour body [Lipton, 1967:243-245; Logan, 1948:381-385].

In contrast, the WUL had laudable success in organizing the unorganized in the 1930s. Its focus was also on organizing Canadian industrial unions [Lipton, 1967:255]. After the WUL was dissolved in 1935, CPC and ex-WUL members continued to be active in organizing industrial unions, the unorganized and unemployed in the latter-1930s. Since its inception the CPC had endeavoured, to varying degrees, to engage itself in labour struggles. The Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) established by the CPC in 1922 was designed to promote progressive policies in existing unions according to its aims of '...amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions, the organization of the unorganized, independent labor political action [and] fighting against class-collaborationism...' [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:33-34]. Lipton reports that by the mid-1920s '...the TUEL's impact on the [trade union] movement was considerable' [Lipton, 1967:228]. TUEL members were also involved with the ACCL although somewhat guardedly given the ACCL's rabid anti-AFL/TLC position.

Workers that the CPC (through the TUEL, WUL and individual members) was most instrumental in organizing were miners, lumber workers, textile and clothing workers, steel and auto workers and seamen. Generally, the efforts of the CPC significantly contributed to increased union membership by the mid-1930s and increased strike activity in the 1930s.

During the 1920s and 1930s the labour movement continued to try its hand in government elections at all three levels. The main issues that drove the labour movement to direct political action over the years were unemployment, the eight-hour day, falling wages and salaries, protectionism, conscription, the right to unionize and collective bargaining [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:91,137-138].

The move for national working class representation had begun much earlier in 1906, with an attempt by the TLC to form a Canadian Labour Party (CLP). After disappearing in 1909, the CLP was resurrected by the TLC in 1917 for that year's federal election. The devastating defeat of labour candidates portended minimal success for labour in the future through the electoral means to solving labour's problems.

A variety of provincially-based labour parties also sprang up across the country at the same time as the CLP, for example, the Independent Labour parties of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, and the Federated Labour Party of British Columbia [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:104]. The Ontario Labour Party (OLP), formed in 1917, enjoyed electoral success in the 1919 provincial election winning eleven seats and contributing two cabinet ministers to the new farmer-labour government comprising the United Farmers of Ontario and the OLP [Palmer, 1983:160]. Direct political action through labour representation in government was most successful at the municipal level [Palmer, 1983:150-151].

The failure to form a national labour party was a reflection of the segmented nature of the trade union movement. For example, in reviving the CLP in 1921 for the federal election on the basis of a federated party, the TLC still forbade the direct affiliating of industrial unions, resulting in the withdrawal of the Dominion Labour Party (DLP) and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) from the CLP. These sorts of splits continued to plague attempts for national electoral representation of labour in the 1930s. The CCF attempted to be a farmer-labour party from its inception in 1932 but there was no attempt until 1938 to seek trade union affiliation and support. The CCF rejected requests from Communist-led industrial unions to affiliate and the TLC would not affiliate [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:171].

Other Responses to the Depression

Other organizations arose in the tough economic times of the Depression, which were not predominantly farmer- or labour-based. But like the farmer and labour organizations they arose on platforms of economic and social reforms, seeking ways to rectify the adverse effects of capitalism.

The Union Nationale swept into power in Quebec in 1936 on a platform of a comprehensive set of reforms. The Catholic Church was a major strength of this new party and was the source of the reform proposals adopted by the Union Nationale. The farmers' organizations and trade unions, among other Catholic and patriotic organizations, supported this new nationalist party [Quinn, 1975:329]. The main objectives of the party and reasons for its popular support were the introduction of major social, economic and political reforms to improve the quality of life of Quebecers but in a

nationalist context. Not just capitalism needed reforming but English speaking industrialists, in particular, needed to be divested of their power over Quebec.

Another organization that responded to the economic and social problems of Quebec in the 1930s was The League of Social Credit, a philosophic relative of the Social Credit Party in Alberta. The League, established in 1936, was never as popular in Quebec, particularly in the 1930s, as the Social Credit Party in Alberta, with only two thousand members by the end of the decade. While the League espoused notions of monetary reform, a` la Major Douglas, and social reform, its main objective in the 1930s was rather '...the education and formation of an elite of experts in Social Credit' [Stein, 1975:348].

On a federal level, a Depression-generated party was the Reconstruction Party, begun by an ex-Conservative cabinet minister, Harry Stevens. The party wished to serve the interests of society's 'forgotten' groups such as "the intellectual, the worker, the farmer, the small merchant, the small manufacturer and the organized clerical classes". Called the eastern alternative to the CCF, the Reconstruction Party did not wish to radically change the economic and political systems but was critical of the two major parties [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:174]. The 1935 election brought a predominantly eastern urban vote for the Reconstruction Party with only Stevens being elected [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:178; Betcherman, 1975:44].

Moving further right on the political spectrum, there was an assortment of fascist movements in Canada in the 1930s, also spawned by the Depression [Betcherman, 1975:2]. A strong dose of anti-Semitism fuelled these movements. Fascism was particularly strong in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. In Quebec the movement exhorted economic nationalism gaining support from the Catholic Church, the Italian population,

war veterans, unemployed youth, students, European immigrants and small businessmen [Betcherman, 1975:23]. In 1933 some unemployed workers in Montreal established a fascist organization, the Federation des Clubs Ouvriers [Betcherman, 1975:36]. As with this group, Le Parti National Social Chretien, the Canadian Nationalist Party (Winnipeg) and the Canadian Union of Fascists (Winnipeg) all advocated reforming capitalism not destroying it: they wanted ..."state control" or a "corporate state" in coexistence with capitalism' [Betcherman, 1975:42-43]. State control would protect small business, workers and farmers from big business. Strong appeals were made to law and order, patriotism, and social justice to be obtained usually at the expense of Jews. Candidates were entered in municipal elections and support, on a symbiotic basis, was given to the federal Conservative party, the Reconstruction Party, the Union Nationale and the Social Credit for federal and provincial elections.

Finally, an organization that also appeared in the early Depression years but was not a movement as such was the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR). 'The LSR was called forth by economic distress and dislocation' [Horn, 1980:10]. This League, organized in late-1931, '...was the first organisation of social-democratic intellectuals in Canada'. In the preface to his book on the LSR Michiel Horn claims that the League '...had a strong influence on the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the farmer-labour-socialist party that took shape in the Depression [and that] [i]t helped to popularize ideas of social and economic change ultimately adopted by the two major political parties' [Horn, 1980:vii]. Its membership was predominantly '...college-educated, urban, anglophone and central Canadian' and its impact on the general public was limited, never reaching a membership of one thousand [Horn, 1980:14].

The political scene in Canada was becoming increasingly diverse in the 1930s, the CPC occupying the far left, revolutionary place in the spectrum. The CPC needed an analysis of Canadian politics that reflected an understanding of this diversity along with the needs of workers that drew them to various political organizations; this was a necessary starting point in order for the CPC to attract Canadian workers. Overall, the CPC would try quite different approaches: unity and sectarianism.

4. Ideology

Introduction

The farmers' and labour movements came with varying sets of ideas reflecting the various organizations' goals to overcome economic disadvantage. In order to appeal to workers in these organizations with its revolutionary communist platform the CPC had to bridge the often-large gap between the Party's and workers' political values, goals and subscribed-to means for achieving such political beliefs. At this point an examination will be made of the prevailing sets of ideas, goals and values of the farmer and labour organizations of the 1930s as well as the preceding decade of the 1920s which were the first years of the CPC's existence leading up to the Great Depression. In terms of Canadian societal prevailing ideas, Chapters Three, Four and Five will examine the impact of dominant ideology on the CPC's political organizing efforts and the Party's influence on this dominant ideology.

Farmers' Movement

In looking at the farmers' movement one can distinguish populism and social democracy as the two main forms of thinking that were part and parcel of the farmers'

struggles. Other terms have been used to describe the theory associated with the farmers' movement, these being the Social Gospel, reformism and progressivism.

The Social Gospel was the religious variant of reformism which was on its last leg in the early- to mid-1920s. Reformism is a more general term referring to the social reform movement of Canada that existed from the 1890s to the 1930s with both secular and religious bearings [Allen, 1975:45]. The main concern of reformism was the deterioration of Canadian society in both rural and urban areas caused by the onset of industrialization [Clark, Grayson & Grayson, 1975:41]. The Progressive Movement was another particular example of the general social reform movement, being on the one hand a federal political party of farmers and various provincial parties formed in the late-1910s and early-1920s, and on the other hand, the driving force behind farmers' co-operatives in the 1920s, for example, the wheat pools, [Clark, Grayson & Grayson:1975:120]. Its theory was a combination of populist ideas imported from the U.S. and socialist ideas imported from Britain.

It is difficult to describe the ideological content of the farmers' movement for it was not only different among the various sub-movements of the movement but also different within a sub-movement. Every sub-movement had its spectrum of ideas from conservative through to radical. However, one can distinguish some patterns in the theory of the various groups and see that, whether in the conservative, moderate or radical form, these ideas constituted a challenge to the dominant ideology and status quo of the time.

While solutions sought may have been different, the economic goals of the various organizations and factions within were similar. These were, essentially, to eliminate the economic power of big business which seemed to have a stranglehold on

the agriculture industry, preventing the smooth operating in farming. There was fairly wide currency of the idea of economic collective action in terms of forming various co-operatives to compete with the central Canadian monopolies. However, one must qualify the nature of the collective of co-operative actions amongst farmers. 'Co-operatives are simply described as the joint entrepreneurship of individuals' [Bennett & Krueger, 1968:351]. There was still a strong element of individualism in the agrarian movement. As Hutcheson expresses it: '...[n]ot all the supporters of these movements had by any means rejected liberalism, but it was apparent that the prevailing liberal economic policies of Canadian governments were inadequate to the times' [Hutcheson, 1978:120].

Most farmers did not want the whole economic structure radically changed so that profit and private entrepreneurship would be eliminated. At times comprehensive political programs were proposed for the nationalization of land, the banks, wheat marketing, railways, public utilities and natural resources but merely to ease the situation for farmers in a capitalist structure [Lipset, 1968:79,106,108]. In describing Canadian populism, Smart says these movements

purported to represent the rank and file of the people against "the big interests", but which did not go much beyond that analysis. They aimed at specific reforms in the economic and political systems. They called for a return to laissez-faire, free trade and fair competition, greater government control over large corporations and more progressive taxation policies. These populist movements lacked a class analysis and did not differ much in their overall ideologies from those whom they were opposing, though they were class movements if one looks at who participated in them [Smart, 1973:200].

Even more radical proposals than the aforementioned ones were made, such as, the '...[a]bolition of the competitive system and substitution of a co-operative system of manufacturing, transportation, and distribution...' but once an agrarian party began

campaigning seriously and particularly if elected, grandiose schemes of over-hauling the economic and less major schemes, like land nationalization, were quickly watered down or dropped from the party's platform or governing plans [Lipset, 1968:106].

The term socialism is often used in referring to the agrarian movement. It was not socialism of a Marxist variety, given that revolution was never advocated by any of the agrarian organizations. Social democracy, meaning the radical restructuring of capitalism through the parliamentary system, as a form of socialism, comes closer to describing some of the agrarian movement's objectives. However, as has been stated above, the aims of restructuring the economy were quite tenuous and were more the goals of the radical leaders of the organization than of the membership or movement as a whole [Lipset, 1968:86; Bennett & Krueger, 1968:350]. One can say, then, that in terms of ideas of social change that held wide currency among farmers and were ever legislated and implemented, social reform is the best term to describe the agrarian movement, that socialism is more misleading than helpful in describing the ideological content of the agrarian movement.

One must still emphasize though, that as conservative as the upsurge of agrarian protest was, ultimately, it posed some sort of threat or challenge to the status quo. The insurgent farmers' movements challenged the power base of the established two parties evident in the Progressive Party's success in the 1921 federal election. The reigning Liberal Party was quick to co-opt the Progressives, absorbing them into the party or at least their policies, diluting the Progressives' power. Agrarian parties were either elected at the provincial level or had some of their demands met by the established party governments. The Progressive Movement failed as a movement as such but left a legacy which was to become the basis of the CCF in the 1930s. The Progressive Party

...was the first important step in alienating farmers from their old party loyalties. Many who were active in the farmers' party never again supported the old parties, but continued to work for a new party. The success of the movement had proved that a third party could be built successfully within a short time [Lipset, 1968:82].

In sum, there was to some extent a crisis in liberal democracy. The capitalist system, as it was developing, was questioned and challenged (farmers' co-operatives) as was its political system (third parties were organized). Farmers had achieved a degree of class consciousness, that is, conscious of a common location and plight in the economy.

Labour Movement

Terms associated with the new and differing ideas coming from the labour movement are labourism, industrial unionism and syndicalism, and socialism and communism. Despite their stark differences in approaches to solutions of labour's problems these various sets of ideas were all based on the assumption that labour needed more control over its economic destiny. Of three forms of radicalism identified by Ross McCormack in the labour movement, labourism is seen as the most moderate, followed by industrial unionism then socialism [McCormack, 1979:16-17].

Labourism, which originated at the turn of the twentieth century, was '...to support electoral candidates who endorsed specific reforms associated with working-class demands or those who, in addition to their commitment to the movement's aims, also came from the ranks of the toilers' [Palmer, 1983:157]. This independent labour political action was seen to be necessary to achieve a number of economic, social and political changes. At the founding of the Canadian Labour Party in 1921 the aims of the new party were clearly articulated.

"We have in view a complete change in our present economic and social system. In this we recognize our solidarity with the workers the world over. As a means to this end and in order to meet the present pressing needs we recommend the following platform:"

The platform included twelve demands such as unemployment insurance, public ownership of utilities, old age and disability pensions, electoral reform, direct legislation and abolition of the Senate, nationalisation of the banking system, taxation reform, international disarmament, and repeal of the amendment to the Immigration Act which allowed the deportation of British subjects [Phillips, 1967:90].

After the defeat of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919, labourism dominated western radicalism in the 1920s, absorbing radical labour leaders from the syndicalist and socialist sectors [McCormack, 1979:171]. While labourism had some popularity, indicated by its limited electoral success, and helped lay the groundwork for the new social democratic party of the 1930s, the CCF, it did not threaten the capitalist system as such. Labourism addressed problems of capitalism and represented a level of class action – "only a worker could represent workers" – but it did not advocate radical restructuring of the economy as did the communist (CPC) and later the social democrat (CCF) elements in the labour movement.

The CPC, through its party and specific trade union bodies, the TUEL of the 1920s and the WUL of the 1930s, supported the reforms of labourism but only as a partial means for obtaining the ultimate goal of overthrowing capitalism and its institutions. The CCF as a labour party in part placed its platform emphasis on reforms but unlike labourism stated (at least initially) the goal to "eradicate capitalism" [Penner, 1977:196].

Industrial unionism in its most radical form of syndicalism lost its currency in the mid-1910s [McCormack, 1979:116]. However, industrial unionism in more moderate forms remained a popular idea with many trade unionists in and outside of the TLC.

Industrial unionism was viewed as necessary to increase the power of workers, particularly in strike action [Lipton, 1967:149]. This concept of organizing workers was not a total philosophy of society, but an ideal advocated by reformists through to communists. We have already referred to the goal of the industrial unionism of the TUEL and WUL.

Socialism also has a history dating from the turn of the century in Canada with both direct and indirect involvements in the labour movement, that is, trade union and parliamentary activities. Socialism in the 1920s was dominated by the communism of the WPC/CPC. Later, in the 1930s the CPC shared the socialist stage with the socialism of the CCF.

Some of the independent labour parties (part of the labourism movement) also had socialist objectives, for example, the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:166]. Socialist groupings survived throughout the 1920s albeit in a much diminished form compared with the previous two decades.

Although a communist party and a social democrat party existed their radical goals were essentially neglected in terms of educating workers. In fact, the CCF became more and more a reformist party in terms of its written goals. Norman Penner states that communism failed but that social democracy won the day as the newly accepted set of ideas to challenge and change capitalist society [Penner, 1977:256]. However, it was not social democracy but mere reformism that won the day. Whether through revolutionary or parliamentary ways, social ownership of the means of production was rejected by the majority of workers as evidenced by their voting behaviour, the watering down of the CCF's goals and the CPC's neglect to link communist education with its trade union practice.

Our political-economic analysis of Canada in the 1920s and 1930s has placed the CPC in a dynamically changing, developing and then depressed capitalist economy with the attendant significant class changes and political responses of those groups most adversely affected. For thousands of Canadian workers, both in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, needs were virtually at survival level by the early Depression.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE 1920s: 'BORING FROM WITHIN'

Introduction

The 1920s being the CPC's first period of existence was also the first period of potential evidence of the Party carrying out its professed organizing and revolutionary goals. This record helps to understand the CPC's performance in meeting Canadian workers' needs in the Great Depression. The economic-political conditions of Canada were ripe for a communist party and after its inception the CPC organized amongst Canadian workers in both the labour and farmers' movements. The CPC took up the call for revolutionary work in a more direct, co-ordinated and nationally-based way as yet not seen in the socialist movement – a mass worker's party.

From the beginning, the Comintern, also known as the Communist International (CI), was a controlling force in the life of the CPC. The effect of this relationship, as well as the strong presence of the Canadian state and prevailing dominant ideology in Canada were a complex of factors that hindered the role of the CPC as a mass workers' party.

1. Origins of the CPC

Precursors of the CPC

Organized resistance to capitalist economic exploitation dates back to the early part of the nineteenth century. By the end of this century socialism as a form of political

ideal and organization had become established. In its various parties and in its various types, socialism existed through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Many of these parties and political philosophies led to the forming of the Communist Party of Canada in 1921.

One of the first socialist organizations in Canada was the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), which established a local in Ontario in 1894. The American leader of the SLP was Daniel DeLeon whose brand of socialism rejected reformism and viewed trade unions as a barrier to revolution [Palmer, 1983:161-162]. A Christian-reformist variation of socialism arose in Canada in the Canadian Socialist League (CSL) in 1899. From Ontario, socialism spread east and west with British Columbia becoming '...the real foundation of Canadian socialism' [Palmer, 1983:161].

Kawecki, in his study of Canadian socialism, points to a cyclical development that Canadian socialism took in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Unity in the movement in the first decade was followed by a period of schisms in the 1910-1916 years. However, out of the years of division came a new unity, culminating in the foundation of the CPC in 1921-1922 [Kawecki, 1980:3,79].

The Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) was formed in 1904 from various socialist groups in Canada and shortly afterwards became dominion-wide [Palmer, 1983:162-164]. The SPC was similar to the pre-1900 SLP in that it held an "impossibilist" position which '...eschews reform measures for fear that they will forestall the inevitable collapse of capitalism. The only solution is perceived as political action through the vote and the tool of liberation is the state' [Kawecki, 1980:164]. Despite its small size the SPC regularly won seats in the British Columbian legislature [Palmer, 1983:164].

After six years of existence the SPC began to splinter. In 1910 the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) was formed by a breakaway from the SPC of European members and the Ontario SPC locals [Kawecki, 1980:4]. The main issue causing this split was that of working with trade unions. Whereas the SPC was against trade union work the new SDPC adopted a "possibilist" position of co-operating with unions and labour parties. A second splinter group formed when an Ontario SPC local broke away naming itself the Socialist Party of North America (SPNA). It adopted an even more rigid "impossibilist" position than the SPC [Kawecki, 1980:4,79].

In its fractured state the socialist movement was unable to lead the working class in the years, 1910 to 1916, "...leaving labour no option but to undertake political action on its own behalf" [Kawecki, 1980:79]. As Tim Buck points out, syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) reached the height of its strength in the period 1911-1921 [Buck, 1975:12]. Altogether, the attempts of organized labour in the 1910s to lead the working class in the void left by the socialists were unsuccessful, including the One Big Union (OBU), the various labour parties and an arm of the SPC involved in the OBU (SPC-OBU) [Kawecki, 1980:5].

Inspired by the successful Bolshevik revolution of 1917, moves were made, starting in 1918, to unite Canadian socialists under a Bolshevik banner [Angus, 1981:36-44; Kawecki, 1980:252]. Kawecki views these moves, particularly the final successful one, as "necessary" [Kawecki, 1980:5]. "Impossibilism" of the SPC and later the SPNA was limited by its "electoral and educational praxis" which rejected struggle for reform, thus alienating the labour movement [Kawecki, 1980:250]. The record of "possibilism" was no better with the SDPC also confining itself to a praxis of education and electoral politics. While the SDPC subscribed to "reform" it did not involve itself in organizing

industrial unions. The labour alternatives of labour parties and the OBU also proved inept with their approaches to the heightened class struggle of 1918-1919. It was at this point, with more information about Bolshevism available, that Bolshevism

...began being considered as an alternative and working class organizations entered into debates concerning the merits of the model of Bolshevism vis-à-vis their organizations [Kawecki, 1980:252].

Establishment of the CPC 1921-1922

The CPC, as did revolutionary socialism, grew out of Canadian experience, the genesis of the CPC being closely linked to other Canadian socialist parties. The CPC was not just another working class party but was the unity of Canadian socialists. By 1925 not one socialist party was left [Kawecki, 1980:2].

The CPC was formed in June 1921 and was composed of most of the SPNA membership and the majority members of the SPC and SDPC along with some members of the OBU and labour parties [Buck, 1975:21; Kawecki, 1980:253]. At a later conference in December plans were made for a legal communist party, the Workers' Party of Canada (WPC) which was launched in February 1922. The CPC, the illegal party which was referred to as the "Z" party, was dissolved as such in 1924 and the WPC's name was changed to the Communist Party of Canada [Avakumovic, 1975:31].

2. CPC'S Organizing

The WPC was different from its predecessor Marxist parties in that it aimed to become a "mass" party through action rather than relying on propaganda and patience for majority support [Angus, 1981:103]. In the words of its newspaper, the WPC aimed at achieving

"A party of action, seeking contact with the workers, a party in which the theorists and doctrinaires as such will find small place, a party of the workers, and with them in their daily struggles against capitalist oppression, seeking always to build up a united front of the working class for Industrial freedom and Emancipation from wage slavery" [quoted in Angus, 1981:103].

At this time the WPC viewed capitalism in Canada at a somewhat critical point with capitalism trying to overcome the years of high inflation (1915-1919) and then the recession years of 1919-1920. Canada's crisis was part of a world crisis in capitalism of over-capitalization and contracting markets [Buck, 1975:39]. The Canadian capitalist class was seen to be on the offensive using an intensified open-shop campaign and causing further unemployment [Buck, 1975:23]. The WPC also foresaw an imperialist war in the near future.

The WPC, and later the CPC, identified both members of the working class and farmers in the petite bourgeoisie as targets of its revolutionary program, to work closely with them in their respective organizations. In the previous chapter it was shown that these classes in the 1920s were situated in an increasingly industrializing economy which was reducing the number and relative power of farmers, particularly prairie farmers, and creating larger, less skilled work-forces in new industries with low wages and poor working conditions. The following section examines how the WPC/CPC, during the Comintern-named period, 'boring from within', penetrated significant farmer and union organizations as well as creating its own organizations in order to bring Party policies of unity, autonomy and reforms to Canadian workers with the ultimate goal of raising consciousness for a socialist Canada.

CPC and Labour

For the Party, preparing the working class for the next major capitalist offensive would best be facilitated by the WPC working with workers in their daily battles within the labour organizations that workers were already attracted to and organized in. This was called a united front approach. The WPC undertook to achieve a two-phase application of this united front policy: join the unions and the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) working for these groups' objectives; and replace the reformist leadership of these groups with communist leadership [Grimson, 1966:48-49]. This tactic was also called 'boring from within' and 'back to the unions' [Grimson, 1966:49; Buck, 1975:25].

In order to carry out its goal of working along side labour the WPC established the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) in 1922. Not a union itself, '[i]t was to carry out agitational and educational work [in the unions] in favour of amalgamation' [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:33]. The TUEL's program consisted of the following objectives: amalgamation of craft unions with industrial unions; organization of the unorganized; independent labour political action; fighting against class-collaboration; abolition of capitalism and establishment of a workers' republic [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:33-34]. Later, in 1924, the TUEL began calling for Canadian autonomy in the Canadian locals of international unions [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:36]. One Canadian labour historian has said that '[t]he TUEL's impact on the [trade union] movement was considerable'. The height of the TUEL's success was the mid-1920s when '...TUEL-sponsored policies seem to have won the support of about a quarter of the Canadian trade union membership as measured by votes on resolutions at central union gatherings [Lipton, 1967:228].

As early as the middle of 1922 communists were instrumental in assisting the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) District 26 in Nova Scotia secure a partial victory through strike action, getting militant workers elected to the district's executive and attracting at the same time militant left-wing people to the WPC. Despite provocation from the American president of the UMWA and moves amongst the district to secede, the WPC convinced the district to stay with the UMWA, thus keeping faith with its "united front" policy [Angus, 1981:118-127].

The success in Nova Scotia may have been the WPC's best in the 1920s but the Party also managed to implant itself in a variety of industrial and craft unions [Angus, 1981:131; Grimson, 1966:78]. It is claimed that '[t]he Communists played a remarkable leadership role in the labour movement in the early 1920s, [that] [t]here were no major labor conflicts in the decade in which they did not play some part – usually the leading part' [Angus, 1981:134].

By the late-1920s the TUEL appears to have petered out although the Party (now called the CPC) held strong leadership in several unions [Angus, 1981:176,275-276]. Two of these unions, the Mine Workers Union of Canada (MWUC) and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU), at the urging of the CPC, became members of a new Canadian labour centre called the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL) [Angus, 1981:275]. The ACCL was formed in 1927 by some independent Canadian unions which had consistently been rejected by the TLC. One of its official policies was organizing the unorganized [Communist Part of Canada, 1982:41-42]. The CPC supported the ACCL but was critical of its leadership which refused to accept amalgamation with the TLC as an eventual goal and the principle of industrial unionism [Angus, 1981:175-176].

As well as its ACCL involvement the CPC/TUEL adopted a new policy of building Canadian industrial unions while still ‘boring from within’ the established unions and the TLC [Lipton, 1967:249]. The CPC had considerable success with implementing this policy, demonstrating the extent of its influence amongst Canadian workers [Angus, 1981:276].

From the time of its founding the WPC sought to adopt the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) as the political party of the Canadian working class, for the CLP sought short term goals similar to those of the WPC. As well, the CLP was the only working class party (apart from the CPC) organized on a national basis [Angus, 1981:104-105]. During 1922-1924, the WPC was accepted for affiliation by the various provincial bodies of the CLP [Communist part of Canada, 1982:42]. As the WPC had hoped, the CLP became “the instrument for establishing a common front on all the vital issues” [quoted in Angus, 1981:177]. The WPC succeeded in organizing labour unity in some municipal and provincial elections on the basis of a common labour platform, avoiding intra-labour competition [Angus, 1981:107-109]. At its peak the CLP was a federated body of labour parties, socialist organizations, co-operatives, trade unions and some labour councils [Angus, 1981:104]. However, the CLP also eventually fell victim to the 1920s’ labour malaise and by 1927 most of organized labour had withdrawn its membership from the CLP [Angus, 1981:177-178].

Finally, the WPC/CPC made its presence felt in the TLC as well, although here, too, the CPC in the latter 1920s experienced strong anti-communist sentiment. In the TLC communists ran for office and pushed for their trade union policies of amalgamation and autonomy [Avakumovic, 1975:43-4]. As noted earlier, the TLC was unwilling to organize labour along industrial lines [Angus, 1981:138]. Support for the CPC from

within the TLC and consequently the CPC's success in this organization dwindled significantly to very little by the late-1920s [Avakumovic, 1975:43-44].

CPC and Farmers

In the CPC's history of itself it is claimed that at the founding of the WPC

[g]reat significance was placed on the farmers' militant struggle against conscription and exploitation by the banks, transportation companies, farm machinery trusts and so on [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:17].

"Poor farmers" were analysed to be an ally of the working class [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:17]. In his book on the CPC, long-standing leader of the Party, Tim Buck, says the WPC in February 1922 called '...for farmer-labour unity in all-sided struggle against big capital' [Buck, 1975:26].

In order to implement this objective the Party set up the Progressive Farmers' Educational League (PFEL) in 1925 after having used just Party locals to reach farmers [Avakumovic, 1975:39]. The PFEL's purposes was similar to the TUEL's: to be an educational force, in this case, with farmers, '...to educate...[them] on the need for progressive policies' by working through farmers' organizations [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:40]. While the PFEL was reduced to a pressure group in Alberta and Saskatchewan two communists got elected to the executive of the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan section) in 1928. Individual communist farmers also became active in the United Farmers of Alberta and United Farmers of Manitoba, getting elected as delegates to conventions and pushing for progressive resolutions. Both the PFEL and individual communists supported the farmers' co-operative movement [Avakumovic, 1975:39-40].

Of a membership of 4,500 in 1925, the CPC had 800-1,000 farmers, members who were often also workers in mines and lumber camps [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:29]. Farmers who were Communist Party members were also often Ukrainian or Finnish immigrants [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:29,40]. For much of the inter-war period (1918-1939) farmers made up ten to fifteen percent of the Party's membership [Avakumovic, 1975:39].

3. CPC and the Comintern

While the CPC was indigenous to Canada it was 'mentored' by an international organization, the Comintern, also called the Third or Communist International, which had been formed under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin in 1919[Avakumovic, 1975:13]. After Lenin died in 1924, the Comintern was mostly controlled by Joseph Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Understanding the Comintern and its influence on the CPC helps to better understand the CPC's record of achieving its goals. Overall, the relationship of the CPC to the Comintern was a subordinate one.

From its inception in 1921 the CPC was formally linked to the Comintern. The Comintern was designed '...to create and direct a world party with national units, named "Communist", to replace and destroy the influence of the existing socialist parties which, according to Lenin, had become hopelessly reformist rather than revolutionary'[Penner, 1988:1].

At the Guelph founding convention of the WPC in June 1921 a Comintern envoy was present and the Twenty-one Conditions of Admission to the Communist or Third International (CI) were endorsed [Angus, 1981:71; Avakumovic, 1975:13,21]. In the Program and Platform of the WPC, the Party states that in

"recognizing that the Communist International is the only real centre of world revolutionary activities, the Workers' Party will strive to rally the workers under the banner of the Third International" [quoted in Angus, 1981:349].

As a member of the Comintern one of the Twenty-two conditions was, that

all decisions of the congresses of the Communist International as well as the decisions of their executive committee, are binding on all parties belonging to the Communist International...All propaganda and agitation must be of a genuinely Communist character and in conformity with the program and decisions of the Communist International [Avakumovic, 1975:17].

One analyst of the CPC has delineated basically two periods in the CPC's thinking and action in the 1920s and views these as reflecting influence from the Comintern: "...the Leninist period and the birth of Canadian Stalinism" [Angus, 1981:331]. These stages were mirrored in the WPC/CPC's labour activity. The Leninist period was from 1922 to 1924 when the CPC worked "...to build a left wing on a class struggle program...[to unite] militant unionists in Canada and the United States". Through the TUEL, the CPC fought for amalgamation and support for the CLP [Angus, 1981:172]. A Comintern congress in December 1921 had decreed such a policy as a distinct break from the sectarianism of previous years, marking the recognition of the beginning of the 'second period', of capitalist stabilization [Angus, 1981:161].

Within the last year of the "Leninist" stage, or in its phasing out, the Comintern took on a new character having been usurped by the bureaucracy that had developed in the Soviet Union, particularly in the Soviet Communist Party [Angus, 1981:149]. The CI adopted the notion of "socialism in one country", as had the CPSU, which was the belief that socialism can be maintained in one country without revolutionary socialism occurring in other countries. The CI's foremost purpose now was to rally the international communist movement to protect socialism in the Soviet Union rather than

nurture national communist movements [Angus, 1981:152-155]. A tactical change emerged from the CI's "socialism in one country" position. This was the advocating that communist parties ally themselves with "progressives", something more than the original united front. Angus sees this shift being reflected in the CPC's adopting of a "Canadian independent trade union movement" position. Prior to this the CPC had advocated trade union "autonomy" only [Angus, 1981:172-3]. In somewhat of a contradiction to its original objective of trade union amalgamation the CPC allied itself with the independent Canadian trade union movement headed by the ACCL. Angus claims that the ACCL largely superseded the TUEL for the CPC [Angus, 1981:176].

The problems generated by the CPC's subordinate relationship with the Comintern do not sufficiently explain the CPC's failure in organizing a revolutionary movement. These internal problems were exacerbated by a set of external problems. The CPC had to face and try to overcome the external barriers of state repression and ruling class ideology.

4. CPC and the State

As the Canadian economy and class structure were unfolding in the 1920s and political challenges emerging and taking shape the Canadian state was playing an active role, not least of all in relationship with the CPC. During the 1920s, and in the 1930s, the Canadian state performed a function of repression and to a much lesser extent a function of concession-giving, when it came to its dealings with the working class and farmers.

Before examining the relationship between the CPC and the Canadian state, the role of the state in capitalist society will be defined. As outlined in Chapter One the state

is part of the political realm which reflects the materialist conditions of the society, the economic formation, that is, the condition of the forces and relations of production. The state comprises all levels and aspects of government, including parliamentary assemblies, government bureaucracies, the armed forces, the police and the judiciary [Miliband, 1973:50]. The larger political system that the state is part of includes political parties, political organizations, trade unions, labour disputes and class struggle in general.

It is widely accepted that the state performs three main functions, accumulation, legitimization and coercion [O'Connor, 1973:6; Panitch, 1977:8]. Accumulation refers to the state assisting the capitalist class in accumulating capital, for example, through the policy of interest-free loans to businesses. Legitimation refers to the ways in which the state legitimates the existence of private ownership of the means of production by softening the adverse effects of capitalism, such as unemployment insurance. Repression refers to the fact that the state has the monopoly on society's legitimate coercive means which can be used to reinforce the capitalist system and its institutions imposing these means on individuals and groups for societal control.

Our interest is in the coercive function of the state. It is argued in this thesis that the coercive acts of the state against the CPC (and the labour movement) were a major limiting factor in the CPC's success as an organizing force with Canadian workers. In other words, the state was one of the main factors that contained the extent of the CPC's activities. The coercive function does not only have a repressive effect but also an ideological one for coercive action by the state not only suppresses certain political organizations but also certain political ideas [Miliband, 1973:165]. However, ideology

will be dealt with separately, later, as another main factor in the success, or lack of, in the CPC's activities.

For radicals and labour activists the 1920s were ushered in in an atmosphere of darkness, extending from the state repression of the late 1910s. This was the atmosphere at the time of the birth of the CPC in 1921.

In the latter 1910s the Canadian state had embarked on an all-front assault on labour. This attack comprised the use of legislation, ideology and the forces of the police and army. The state worked hand-in-hand with the capitalist class of employers and with the conservative element of the trade union movement. While farmer radicalism was better organized, labour radicalism was perceived as the greater threat '...since it extended beyond single industries and regional boundaries' [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:85]. Canada was undergoing a transformation into a modern industrialized nation as already noted:

[t]he more far-sighted of the bourgeoisie recognized the implications of this transformation, and it was for this reason that the dissent organized by the workers, and not necessarily the farmers, had to be circumscribed and broken. A workers' revolution was, ultimately a greater threat than a farmers' revolt [Brodie & Jenson, 1980:86].

In 1918, with growing pressure from businesses fearful of radical ideas spreading amongst foreign-speaking workers, the federal government passed two Orders-in-Council allowing for the suppression of the foreign-language press and the outlawing of socialist and anarchist organizations. Languages classified as "enemy-alien" were those of immigrant labour and radical groups. Fourteen associations, most of which had ethnic worker memberships, were outlawed. Penalties for being in possession of banned literature or a member of an outlawed organization were a maximum fine of \$5000 or a five-year maximum prison term.

On the heels of the 1918 Orders-in-Council came further repressive legislation with the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, which together with the earlier legislation set the framework for anti-CPC (and anti-labour) actions by the state in the 1920s and 1930s. After the strike was brutally put down, amendments were made to the Immigration Act and Criminal Code making it easier for the state to jail and deport radicals and/or labour activists. Sections 41 and 42 of the Immigration Act were passed giving the state full power to deport "anarchists and Bolsheviks" and without prosecution [Avery, 1979:85]. An amendment also gave the state the power to deport an unnaturalized person convicted of a crime or who had become a public charge [Betcherman, 1983:50,127]. Section 98¹ of the Criminal code passed by the federal government defined "unlawful association" as having a purpose to change government or the economy by force or to hold such ideas. This gave the state 'extraordinary powers' [Betcherman, 1983:161,209]. A member of a revolutionary organization could be jailed for up to twenty years. Further amendments to the sedition provisions of the Criminal Code extended the maximum penalty from two to twenty years and removed the right to a good faith defence (savings clause) which in 1928 helped the state secure sedition charges against the communist editor of a Finnish socialist newspaper [Betcherman, 1983:31-41].

In 1919 the Intelligence Head of the RCMP believed "the pernicious doctrines of Bolshevism" were spreading rapidly throughout the world and Canada. Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and foreign settlements throughout the prairies were seen as

¹ Throughout the 1920s the Liberal federal government attempted to repeal Section 98 of the Criminal Code and Section 41 of the Immigration Act but the bills were always stopped in the Senate [Betcherman, 1983:156].

potential hotbeds of Bolshevism [Kealey & Whitaker, 1994:13]. Instructions were given to Officers Commanding

"to take steps to see that careful and constant supervision is maintained over these foreign settlements with a view to detecting the least indication of Bolshevik tendencies and doctrines." Socialists all over the west ...regarded the Bolsheviks "as champions of workers everywhere" and that "serious unrest" was an obvious possibility. Therefore, "our duty is to prevent the efforts of misguided persons to subvert and undermine the settled Government of Canada. Officers Commanding were to keep informed and "energetically deal with all unlawful and pernicious property [Kealey & Whitaker, 1994:13].

RCMP officers were to scrutinize all radical pamphlets and publications and prosecute where possible, record all public speeches in which seditious or treasonable content was anticipated, become very familiar with labour and other organizations to establish their "proclivity to Bolshevik influence, any current Bolshevik tendencies, or its Bolshevik nature" and especially give attention to the officials and leaders...who "must be carefully investigated and studied regarding their ways, habits, and antecedents". In performing all of these duties officers were not to "arouse suspicion or cause antagonism" [quoted in Kealey & Whitaker, 1994:14]. Written reports of RCMP intelligence work were made regularly, and usually weekly in the 1930s.

Hence, the CPC, with its birth in 1921, was an underground party and had a separate "legal" party, the Workers' Party of Canada (WPC) "above ground". The CPC immediately became the main target of the special RCMP surveillance branch set up earlier to monitor radical groups, the One Big Union (OBU) being its previous main focus. The RCMP diligently followed CPC activists and activities using informers from inside the Party [Avakumovic, 1975:15]. Avakumovic states that '[t]he threat of deportation and Article 98 of the Criminal Code became handy tools in the struggle

against Communists, making them vulnerable by both place of birth and revolutionary phraseology' [Avakumovic, 1975:15].

It was not until 1924, three years after its inception, that the CPC "came out" making itself public as a communist party. At the third convention of the WPC it was decided to dissolve the underground CPC and change the WPC's name to the Communist Party of Canada for it was apparent that the federal government was not invoking the repressive 1918 Orders-in-Council and 1919 anti-radical and sedition laws. While its organizing amongst Canadian workers continued in both the labour and farmer movements, the CPC from 1924, after becoming officially public, operated mostly on an individual member basis, through members who "infiltrated" the labour and farmer organizations.

While the RCMP Intelligence branch up to 1930 reported to the federal government that the CPC was no threat, this was not how the CPC was viewed in Toronto [Betcherman, 1983:5]. Here, anti-communist activities became overt through the actions of Chief of Police, Draper, and the Police Commission. Among other forms of harassment, communist meetings began to be violently disrupted by city police and arrests of CPC members made [Betcherman, 1983:21]. Ontario Police Chief Draper and his "Red Squad" effectively implemented the Police Commission's 1928 policy of '...prohibiting public meetings in any language other than English on the ground that it was the only language understood by police officers' [Betcherman, 1983:19]. Hall operators would lose their licences if meetings in foreign languages were held in their halls. Again, the target was the CPC which invariably held its meetings in a foreign language appropriate to its large non-English speaking audiences [Avakumovic, 1975:86; Betcherman, 1983:19-24; Communist Party of Canada, 1982:72].

Draper's anti-CPC actions were part of a larger state move against labour. A CPC member from those years later wrote that in the latter 1920s there was an '...increasing use of RCMP spies in labour organizations and of police and troops against strikers,...[as well as] a marked change in the attitudes of local police authorities to working-class activities' [Buck, 1975:56-57].

The atmosphere in Canada that the CPC was born into was meant to be repressive, discouraging at least to labour radicalism and Bolshevism in particular. That was the very design of the 1918 Orders-in-Council and the 1919 legislation; hence, the underground nature of the CPC for the first three years of its existence. Surveillance by the RCMP in the 1920s was a further constant reminder to the CPC of repression. Infiltration at top levels of the CPC was confirmed when in 1928 it was discovered that John Leopold alias J.W. Esselwain was an undercover RCMP informant. Esselwain had been an active Party member since 1922 in Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Toronto [Betcherman, 1983:131].

It was a demanding task for the CPC to thoroughly check the backgrounds of new members for possible RCMP infiltration and concern regarding divulgings and leaks of proceedings. This diverted time, energy and resources that could have been spent on organizing within the labour and farmer movements and carrying on communist educational work [Avakumovic, 1975:15].

Until 1924 when the Party went public, and to a lesser degree afterwards, the Party was forced to operate in secrecy which while helping the Party to survive in an anti-Bolshevik environment also helped reduce the Party's effectiveness both as an organizer of Canadian workers and as a builder of communist thought. Operating under a blanket of secrecy helps to raise suspicion in the eyes of the general populace, takes

legitimacy away and such an organization must fight that much harder to gain the trust and attention of those the Party focused on for organizing and change. Prospective members, even if they subscribed to the Party's values and goals, could well have been scared away from joining for fear of reprisal not just at a state level but in their communities and families.

When the CPC did operate in far less secrecy as in Toronto in the late-1920s the CPC attracted the full wrath of the state at the city level making it very difficult to call and lead meetings in community halls. Whether the Party operated in secrecy or publicly it was the target of on-going state repression at one level or another from the Party's beginning in 1921 and throughout the 1920s. The various types of state repression, whether spying or more overt acts, compromised the work of the CPC in reaching Canadian workers in its socialist program. Even so the CPC had been lulled into a false sense of security for the amended Criminal code was to be revived and used against the CPC in 1931 [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:22]. As the economy became very vulnerable with the Depression setting in the working class and its radical representatives became open targets of state repression again.

5. The CPC and Dominant Ideology

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations [Marx & Engels, 1976:67].

The third factor to be explored in regards to CPC organizing is ideology. It has been proposed that a major limiting factor to organizing by the CPC in the 1930s was the role of ideology in Canadian society. Class struggle, as well as being played out in the

economic and political spheres, also occurs in the ideological realm. The CPC's set of ideas, political goals and economic analysis were contrastingly different from those generally held by workers in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s. The CPC had a challenging task of moving Canadian workers to a revolutionary consciousness against an explicit and implicit dominant ideology.

By dominant ideology is meant the dominant set of values, ideas and beliefs in Canada that were constantly being reinforced in society, particularly by the capitalist class and through its various agencies, the state and media in particular. These prevailing ideas, values and beliefs reflect the existing economic relations, in this instance a dominant capitalist class and subordinate working class and petite bourgeoisie (farmers, small business owners). Another term that can be used for the prevailing values and class system maintained by dominant ideology is status quo.

Canadians held values, beliefs and ideas that generally reinforced the status quo of economic and power relations. While such ideas, values and beliefs may not have been in the best interest of the Canadian workers who held them they were held to be true and accurate.

A term used for such prevailing beliefs, values and ideas is hegemony. Antonio Gramsci developed this term in writing and analysing the Italian revolutionary movement in the 1920s. For Gramsci there are different ideological forces within hegemony including that of the church, family, nationalism, unique historical traditions [Boggs, 1976:42]. Gramsci distinguished two types of political control of a ruling class or regime: domination by direct physical coercion; and hegemony or 'direction' which was by consent or ideological control. No regime could completely rule without hegemony. The ideas, values, morality etc become part of 'common sense' [Boggs, 1976:38-39].

The dominant ideology in a class society is that of the economic exploiting class, the dominant economic class. The basic set of ideas subscribed to by most industrial and agrarian working people in Canada during the 1930s was that of the Canadian ruling class, the bourgeoisie. This set of ideas comprised beliefs, attitudes and values that legitimised a capitalist economic system based on the expropriation of surplus value from workers as the means to obtain profit. Generally, dominant ideology has a role of cementing a society as it legitimises the dominant position of the class that these ideas represent. Ruling class, or dominant, ideology helps maintain the given class relations – the system of inequality – by rationalizing the dominant and subordinate classes' positions.

The title of Goran Therborn's book, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, nicely expresses the role and effect of ruling class ideology: the all-pervasive power of ideology in a class society that in turn helps perpetuate the dominant power class in society by legitimizing its dominant position. Ruling class ideology helps maintain the given class relations – the given system of inequality – by rationalizing the dominant and subordinate classes' positions.

Furthermore, '...ideology is integral to every social practice and thus acts as the cement which prevents an unstable social structure from falling apart' [Sumner, 1979:ix]. Although repression was often resorted to by the Canadian state in quashing labour militancy and the CPC in the 1930s, without the legitimizing effect of ruling class ideology, repression could not have worked so successfully.

Overall, ruling class ideology is all-pervasive – it permeates, saturates and spreads through people's consciousness and 'social practice'. Workers are born into a

dominant set of beliefs which is constantly reinforced to one degree or another daily.

Bourgeois ideological:

... "hegemony" is not simply something which happens, as a mere super-structural derivative of economic and social predominance. It is, in very large part, the result of a permanent and pervasive effort, conducted through a multitude of agencies, and deliberately intended to create what Talcott Parsons calls a "national supra party consensus" based on "higher order solidarity".

It is not just via "macro-politics" of "agencies" but also through "micro-politics":

...in which members of the dominant classes are able, by virtue of their position, for instance as employers, to dissuade members of the subordinate classes, if not from holding, at least from voicing unorthodox views. This process of dissuasion need not be explicit in order to be effective...[T]here are criteria of 'soundness', particularly in regard to politics, whose disregard may be highly disadvantageous in a number of important respects. This applies in all walks of life, and forms a definite though often subterranean part of the political process...[W]hat is involved here is very largely a process of massive indoctrination [Miliband, 1973:163-4].

Although Miliband in these comments was referring to capitalist society of the 1960s, this process of "political socialization" was no less extant in Canada during the Depression. The bourgeoisie through its own means, mostly the media, and assisted by the state through the political parties, judicial system and schools, not to mention the conservative role of the churches, perpetuated its ruling class ideology in the ranks of the working class and petite bourgeoisie. 'Ruling ideas [held] sway because they [were] made to appear as naturally right and autonomous...' [Anderson, 1974:60]. For workers to subscribe to an ideology which supports capitalism, the economic system that impoverishes them, is to have false consciousness.

To take an epoch at its own word, to accept as given the ruling ideas, is to engage in reification and to fetishize the world. It is to be in a position of alienation. To persist in the bourgeois world view at a time when the contradictions between the forces and relations of production are growing

is to have a distorted mental picture of reality, to have false consciousness [Anderson, 1974:60].

Therefore, not just the CPC but the active labour movement in general was seen as a threat. In 1919, the Winnipeg General Strike had scared the Canadian middle class who saw this strike as the prelude to a Canadian revolution [Betcherman, 1983:Intro]. By the late-1920s the labour movement was also busily ridding itself of communism. Anti-communism in the established labour movement also added to the effect of state repression on the CPC in terms of it operating largely as individual Party members in worker organizations.

CHAPTER FOUR:

1929-1935: 'CLASS AGAINST CLASS' PERIOD

Introduction

The CPC entered the Depression years with almost a decade of experience of applying its goals and strategies professed at the founding of the Party in 1921. Tactical change which had occurred under the guiding hand of the Comintern during the 1920s became significant change in strategy first in 1929 and again in 1935, rendering stark changes in the CPC's labour and farmer work and outcomes. Anti-communism of an overt form of state repression as experienced in the latter 1920s, grew during the Great Depression. Cracks in dominant ideology appeared as the economy and political systems failed Canadian workers.

During the Great Depression there were two distinct periods of development for the CPC, 1929-1935 and 1935-1939, which correspond to two distinct periods of the international communist directing body, the Comintern. The position of each period was opposite to the previous period's position. The CPC's new and very different positions of 1929 and 1935 were adopted under the guidance of the Comintern and which included very different positions taken by the CPC in 1929 and in 1935 on tactics for organizing the working class and farmers. These switches, sometimes referred to as '180 degree turns', were made in terms of the Party's immediate goals and tactics, not its ultimate goal of revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The turns did not come about smoothly, without significant disruption and dissent within the CPC. In fact, on both occasions prominent members with good organizing and/or theoretical experience defected from

the Party. Ultimately, the Party's changing positions would have a significant impact on the CPC's potential influence.

The two contrasting periods will be examined in separate chapters to highlight the extreme changes made by the Party and to help understand the impact of such changes. As well, both state repression and dominant ideology will be viewed through the two periods to assess their impact on the effectiveness of the CPC.

Up until 1929 the CPC placed emphasis on 'boring from within' the established labour bodies – trade unions and labour parties alike. Then in 1929, at the behest of a Comintern Congress decision of 1928, the CPC formed a separate central labour body, the Workers' Unity League (WUL) and desisted in its efforts to unite the existing Canadian Labour bodies of the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the newly formed All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL).

1. CPC'S Organizing

The 1929-1935 period can be characterised as the 'class against class' period. The CPC adopted the 'class against class' position from the Comintern. At the CI's sixth congress in 1928 a new period of capitalist development and class struggle was announced and called the 'third period'. Capitalism was seen as entering a time of grave instability which would engender a period of heightened class struggle, of revolutionary struggle. The class lines were drawn. Socialist parties were viewed as the 'last reserve' of capitalist rule, necessitating exposure of socialists/social democrats as collaborators and attempting to win over the socialist rank and file [Avakumovic, 1975:54].

For the next six years the CPC embraced the new Comintern position in its organizing strategy with labour, including the unemployed, and farmers, mostly through independently formed organizations. The significance of the CPC grew in this time, particularly in organizing the unorganized and the unemployed.

CPC and Labour'

Reflecting the new 'class against class' period, a '...new trade union orientation formalized at the 1929 Party convention' [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:85]. Now the CPC was prepared to build a revolutionary trade union centre. It was called the Workers Unity League (WUL) and launched in 1930. While it seemed imperative to organize separately from the TLC and the ACCL, the CPC believed that the:

...purpose of the WUL was not to divide the existing trade unions despite the rampant anti-communism of many in leadership. On the contrary, the struggle to convince the reformist unions of the need for militant industrial unions based on class struggle policies had to be continued [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:85].

In the tradition of the TUEL, but now as a supplementary role, the WUL '...continued to "bore from within" the international unions and those of the All-Canadian Congress' [Ware, 1970:47]. However, the CPC abandoned its efforts to unite the existing Canadian labour bodies and the relative abandoning of the ACCL was met by resistance and seen as "contrary to all Leninist principles in trade union work" by one prominent Party member [Avakumovic, 1975:73].

The WUL's main objective was to organize the unorganized in industrial unions. By 1935 the WUL had brought 25,000 unorganized workers into industrial unions [Laxer, 1976:259]. The WUL included industrial unions in the mining, clothing, lumber and

textile sectors of the economy [Abella, 1975b:3]. One labour historian notes carefully that

[I]long before the CIO had undertaken the organization of the mass-production industries, the Communists had maintained an elaborate framework of unions, both inside and outside the Workers Unity League. Some of these existed only on paper, but they had been built around a faithful and militant nucleus of experienced party members who knew how to chair meetings, make motions, give speeches, print pamphlets, mimeograph handbills, and organize picket-lines – all indispensable when thousands of workers without previous trade union experience flocked to union halls [Abella, 1975b:25].

Despite the depressed economic times the WUL under its CPC leadership was committed to using the strike weapon against employers (and the state) [Abella, 1975b:3]. Better known CPC-led strike actions are the 1931 Estevan coal miners' strike, furniture and packing house workers' strike in Stratford in 1933, and a lumber workers' strike on Vancouver Island in 1934 [Laxer, 1976:290]. The CPC claimed leadership of ninety percent of the strikes in 1934 [Lipton, 1967:255]. By 1932 the WUL's membership was 40,000 and by the mid-1930s the joint membership of all the Canadian trade union centres (i.e., non-international unions) was almost half of the total trade union membership in Canada [Lipton, 1967:255-256].

The WUL was also committed to organizing the unemployed for the sake of the unemployed themselves and '...as a hedge against strike breaking' [Laxer, 1976:290]. Starting in 1930 the CPC assisted in setting up various organizations of the unemployed from neighbourhood councils to a federated body, the National Unemployed Workers Association which was an affiliate of the WUL with 16,000 members. A national program was formulated by the CPC/WUL demanding non-contributory unemployment insurance among other things [Avakumovic, 1975:75]. Furthermore, the WUL organized unemployed single men who had been placed in relief camps across the country. The

Relief Camp Workers' Union was formed which led a number of relief camp strikes, walkouts and finally the On-to-Ottawa Trek in 1935, a trek by rail of hundreds of unemployed men. The main demand was the abolition of the "slave camp" system [Jamieson, 1976:242].

The marked change in trade union policy in the 'class against class' period of new revolutionary class struggle, was accompanied by a new attitude to social democrats and their organizations. While, for the CPC, 'unity from below' was a correct strategy with labour organizations, alliances with their leadership were not. The CPC made strong verbal attacks on the leaderships of the CLP, the ACCL, the TLC and later the CCF. Renowned reformist parliamentarians such as J.S. Woodsworth were also treated as major enemies of labour, being called 'social fascists', 'fakirs' and 'labour misleaders' [Avakumovic, 1975:68-9]. The CCF, a new social democrat party that appeared in 1932, was totally rejected by the CPC with the CPC running candidates against it in elections [Angus, 1981:267-268]. Additionally, the Party's 'social fascism' attitude hampered workers' unity and strike action in industrial struggles such as the steel strike in Hamilton in 1929 [Manley, 1984:100].

While an analysis of these groups as class collaborationists may have had some theoretical merit, it could only have been counter-productive for practical purposes of the CPC converting social democrats and TLC/ACCL participants to communism. A lot of workers and farmers fed up with the Depression were attracted to CCF-type ideology of social democracy. By labelling social democracy social fascism and individual social democrats as social fascists the CPC helped to alienate potential revolutionaries rather than attract them. A separation should have been made between the leaders of such groups as the CCF, TLC and ACCL and their rank-and-file membership. Many years

later William Kashtan, General-Secretary of the CPC, indicated that the Party regretted its 'social fascism' stage¹.

CPC and Farmers

At the same convention that the CPC officially adopted the 'class against class' position a new agrarian program was adopted. The CPC emphasised the fact that farmers were also subject to the caprices of capitalist development. 'Canadian agriculture's growing dependence on the capitalist market had brought about a fundamental change in the orientation of Canadian agricultural production' [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:88]. In line with this economic analysis the CPC concluded that there should be a class alignment between the industrial working class, poor farmers and rural workers against capitalism [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:90].

The CPC's class analysis of farmers differentiated between rich farmers and poor farmers. Western provincial governments were seen as belonging to rich farmers. It was necessary to organize agricultural workers and poor farmers against rich farmers and big capital [Penner, 1977:162]. A Party leader states that it was at the 1931 plenum that the CPC '...formulated the first fully critical and comprehensive resolution adopted by our party up to that time on its relationship to and program of action for workers in agriculture and working farmers' [Buck, 1975:80]. A year earlier, in its Draft Constitution the WUL had "pledged to...the setting up of the State Power of the Workers and Poor Farmers through a workers' and farmers' government" [quoted in Angus, 1981:279].

The CPC's instrument for carrying out the "pledge" was the Farmers' Unity League (FUL) constituted from the old PFEL. As with the WUL the FUL was to continue

¹ Interview with William Kashtan, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1983.

working inside the established farmer organizations "...for the purpose of taking advantage of their disintegration and winning over poor farmers within them" [quoted in Avakumovic, 1975:82]. Part of this goal was the exposing of the leaders of the farmer organizations.

At a series of conferences held in December 1930 under the aegis of the CPC, over five hundred "dirt farmers" attended. The FUL was now underway with key leaders proposing a package of immediate reforms to help alleviate the plight of farmers in the Depression as well as longer term social demands. This proposal included calls for resistance to eviction, cancellation of tax arrears, immediate relief, Medicare, free education and guaranteed annual income. A call for the unity of oppressed farmers and industrial workers was also made [Avakumovic, 1975:82]. Among other things, the FUL organized farmer marches to prairie provincial capitals, protest meetings, strikes, eviction resistances and disruptions of Sheriff sales of bankrupt farmers' belongings [Avakumovic, 1975:74].

While the FUL had hundreds of locals which failed from the start, nevertheless, it succeeded at a time when the older farmer organizations were losing members. The FUL claimed in 1931 to have 5,000 members [Avakumovic, 1975:83-84]. Despite its aim to be nation-wide the FUL was essentially confined to Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Like the WUL, its sister organization, the FUL sharply criticised the leaders of other farmer organizations and their policies. The term "social fascist" was applied to these leaders too [Avakumovic, 1975:84].

2. CPC and the Comintern

In choosing to follow the Comintern position of 'class against class' the CPC all but abandoned its strategy of the 1920s, of working, or 'boring from within' already-established labour and farmer organizations. The Party's relationship with the CI brought some instability to the CPC as some long-term activist members in high-level positions resisted such extreme change.

The CPC came to its 'class against class' period at the behest of the Comintern. In terms of the trade union policy prescribed by the CI there was some resistance from within the CPC [Angus, 1981:276-277; Penner, 1977:133]. Otherwise, by the time of the 1929 convention a few weeks later the Central Executive Committee of the CPC had this to say:

[w]e accept entirely the line of the Communist International on our trade union work [quoted in Penner, 1977:134].

Deeper down, the CPC's adoption of the 'class against class' position was a time of bitter factional fighting that drove certain stalwart CPC workers from the Party. This state of affairs was preceded by the 1928 expulsion of Maurice Spector, the Party theoretician, chairperson of the Party for several years and editor of the CPC's newspaper [Angus, 1981:213]. Spector's crime had been 'Trotskyism' and Comintern pressure had been used to bring about his sacking [Avakumovic, 1975:54]. Leon Trotsky had been condemned by and expelled from the CPSU and Comintern a few years earlier for his critical views of the CPSU and Comintern, and for his theory of 'permanent revolution' [Angus, 1981:183-185, 187, 191, 192]. In expelling Spector, the CPC fell into line with the CPSU and Comintern position on Trotsky over an issue that the CPC had 'sat on the fence' with for several years.

So, while the 'class against class' position had been adopted at the CPC's convention in 1929 the adoption had not been without a struggle. The 1929 convention represented only a temporary resolving of differences. Resignations and expulsions of opponents to the CI line began occurring within weeks. The most significant expulsion was that in 1930 of Jack Macdonald who was a Party founder and general secretary for many years. This expulsion, as with that of Spector, came with pressure from the Comintern. Macdonald's crime was his 'right deviation' to 'American exceptionalism' and 'Canadian Independence', an anti-Comintern position [Avakumovic, 1975:59-60].

Linked to the same struggle was Party conflict with the Finnish and Ukrainian contingents of the Party [Angus, 1981:251-254; Avakumovic, 1975:62; Rodney, 1968:157]. A number of these Finnish and Ukrainian members plus other long-standing members were expelled from the Party. Some were later readmitted on the advice of the Comintern [Avakumovic, 1975:62-63].

The acceptance of the CI's 'class against class' position was finally clinched when the CPC formally accepted the CI's analysis that Canada was an imperialist country, although not without some Party resistance [Angus, 1981:315; Avakumovic, 1975:63-64]. Many years later, the then General Secretary of the CPC, William Kashtan, indicated that the resignations and expulsions of CPC members over Maurice Spector's expulsion in 1928 for 'Trotskyism' and Jack Macdonald's expulsion in 1930 for 'right deviation'² had a strong negative effect on the Party³. The depletion in members created a depletion in finances, morale and organizing power. These expulsions, on

² 'Right deviation' was a term used by the CPC and CI to mean right-wing ideas dressed as communist ideas that deviated from the correct, communist ideas of the CI, for example, believing that the North American working class was in a less oppressive condition than its European counterpart.

³ Interview with William Kashtan, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1983.

Comintern directives, are an example of the CPC's relationship with the Comintern interfering with the needs of the CPC and by extension of Canadian workers.

3. CPC and the State

Overt state action towards the CPC in the years of 1929-1935 was ruthless, to the point that legitimacy of its actions were protested by Canadians at large. The CPC being driven underground was placed in an attenuated situation for strengthening its organizing work. Concomitantly, the RCMP focused its intelligence work, during this time, on the CPC, its associated organizations such as the WUL, FUL and unemployed organizations, and language federations, such as the Ukrainian Farm Labour Temple [Kealey & Whitaker, 1993:8].

Until 1930 RCMP Intelligence reported to the authorities that 'the CPC was no threat'. This was to change.

Between the end of 1928 and well into 1935, [CPC] activists were being arrested, taken to court and charged with a variety of offences. Foreign-born Communists were deported or threatened with deportation. The authorities assiduously followed the activities of other party leaders before and after the top ones were arrested in August 1931. Occasionally the police raided the offices of the CPC, pro-Communist unions and mass organizations. Literature was confiscated from party offices. It became difficult to send Communist publications to Canada by sea or from the United States [Avakumovic, 1975:85].

This quote speaks of the state repression of the CPC during the period of 1929-1935 that occurred at all levels of government. The 1929-1935 years would see the first application of Section 98 of the Criminal Code, in 1929, which was against six communists for writing and distributing 'seditious' material [Betcherman, 1983:76].

The most overt act of repression against the CPC since its inception came in 1931. This was a culmination of state repression against communists that had begun in

1928 [Avery, 1979:117,138]. Federal, provincial and municipal forces combined to carry out an attack on the CPC in August 1931 including the ensuing prosecutions and convictions. While CPC offices across the country were being raided and files and literature confiscated, nine Party leaders were arrested and charged under Section 98 of the Criminal Code with sedition and membership in an unlawful association. At the same time the CPC was outlawed. These actions were to be the most dramatic instance of the use of this sedition law. The trial of the nine '...was, beyond doubt, one of the greatest travesties of justice in Canadian history' [Angus, 1981:271]. Eight were convicted and appeals were all dismissed except on the sedition charge, with seven jailed from February 1932 to November 1934 [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:76-81].

Shortly following the nation-wide attack on the CPC another resounding act by the state to quash radical and labour activism occurred. It came with the mine workers' struggle in Bienfait near Estevan, Saskatchewan in September 1931. The mine workers were newly unionised with the Mine Workers Union of Canada, a WUL affiliate. With large wage cuts, appalling working and living conditions strike action took place. The RCMP were brought in to break the strike which culminated on the day of the workers' strike-parade with three workers being killed, fifty people (including children) injured and sixteen people arrested. The courts handed out prison sentences of up to two years in length, with two communist leaders receiving the longest sentences [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:68-71].

Between 1930 and 1934, 22,968 Canadian residents were deported, many under section 98 of the Criminal Code [Braithwaite, 1977:38]. The Bennett Conservative government of 1930-1935 was known for its frequent use of Section 98 '...to rid itself of as many radicals as possible' [Betcherman, 1983:213; Penner, 1988:225]. In 1931 an

expanded use of Section 41 of the Immigration Act was made especially to deport alien radicals associated with the CPC. The state repeatedly used vagrancy charges to deport unnaturalized residents [Avery, 1979:91,117]. Hundreds of Canadian residents were arrested, jailed and/or deported without their families ever being notified, nor given the right of a trial [Betcherman, 1983:143; Avery, 1979:13]. In this time the number of foreigners deported under both Sections 40 and 41 of the Immigration Act increased significantly [Avery, 1979:136]. Communist organizers arrested typically received maximum penalties up to and including deportation [Avery, 1979:13]. A WUL organizer who was leader of the 1934 Flin Flon strike was imprisoned and deported to Scotland [Kealey & Whitaker, 1995:577]. Fabricated charges were often used to deport radicals and communists [Betcherman, 1983:143; Avery, 1979:117]⁴.

Repression of communist-linked activities continued through the early 1930s in different provinces. In Vancouver, the RCMP, provincial police and the "riot squad" regularly attacked the mass meetings, parades and protest marches of the unemployed in Vancouver in the early years of the Depression [Jamieson, 1976:237]. This sort of action came from a pervasive attitude amongst state forces that was based more on perception of the CPC than reality. Betcherman writes:

[I]like so many law-enforcement authorities in the Depression, Bingham [Vancouver Chief of Police] regarded the protest of the jobless as a Communist-engineered plot, unaware that the party often had to struggle to keep up with the growing impatience of the unemployed [Betcherman, 1983:93].

⁴ The federal government continued this practice in the second world war as amply demonstrated in William and Kathleen Repka's book *Dangerous Patriots*. Under an amendment to the Defence of Canada Regulations, more than one hundred left-wing trade unionists were interned between 1940 and 1942.

Police Chief Bingham of Vancouver attacked marches of the unemployed and arrested communist leaders [Betcherman, 1983:90-94]. Communist leaders were now charged with unlawful assembly, a step up from the vagrancy charge. As the Depression deepened and the unemployed were more and more organized, charges and punishments steepened [Betcherman, 1983:94].

After Bingham came "Scanlon's Cossacks", named after a Vancouver police sergeant and his constables who were renowned for regular harassment of organized unemployed people in the mid-1930s [Braithwaite, 1977:42]. Repression of the organized unemployed came to a head in 1935 when the On-to-Ottawa Trek was abruptly halted in Regina by the RCMP, local police and militia. '[T]he federal government had passed a special order-in-council authorizing the taking of all measures deemed necessary to halt the trek at Regina' [Jamieson, 1976:246]. The unemployed movement, some of whose leaders were CPC members, was effectively stopped at that point.

In Toronto, at the hands of Chief of Police, Draper, anti-communist activities by the state continued with a vengeance [Betcherman, 1983:21]. Most notoriously suppressed were a series of CPC meetings in Queen's Park in August 1929. With communist meetings now forbidden in public places, Toronto police arrested Party members for distributing meeting leaflets and prominent CPC members, among others, at the meetings. Scores of police on foot, horses and motorcycles stormed the meetings, successfully dispersing the crowd with force. Some communists were charged with unlawful assembly as had Party members earlier under the vagrancy section of the Criminal Code which gave a magistrate wide powers to uphold the charges and impose jail sentences and hard labour.

For the first time Section 89 of the Criminal Code was invoked against the CPC members of Toronto, after one of the Queen's Park meetings. Under this section of the Code members were able to be charged with unlawful assembly and given a maximum penalty of one year's imprisonment which was in addition to the more regular charges of disorderly conduct and obstructing the police [Betcherman, 1983:64].

The following month, in Toronto, Section 98 of the Criminal Code was invoked for the first time portending the much broader application of it in 1931. The district CPC organizer and five others were charged with seditious acts by virtue of writing a pamphlet or distributing it.

In 1931 with significant increases in arrests and deportation of radicals

...[t]he party became more secretive about its activities, and began screening its recruits very carefully...The party also developed a more efficient courier system while some members of the Politbureau dropped their official titles [Avery, 1979:136-137].

Part of the federal government's sweeping repression of the CPC and Canadian activism was the attack, in 1935, on a large gathering of unemployed congregated in Regina during the On-to-Ottawa Trek – to become known as the Regina Riots. The prime minister had enticed the main leaders to Ottawa for supposed discussions on unemployment-related issues. In their absence troops were ordered to move in on the unemployed demonstration during which one hundred people were arrested for infractions of the Criminal Code on unlawful association, carrying concealed weapons and assault. 'Slim' Evans, a CPC organizer, and others were arrested later in the day under Section 98 of the Criminal Code [Kealey & Whitaker, 1995:377,379].

The CPC through its defence organization, the Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL), an organization that grew amongst Canadians appalled by state denial

of basic rights, could not keep up with all the needed defence work of keeping communists out of the courts and jails and not deported [Avery, 1979:137]. In 1932 alone, between January and June, the CPC's paper reported that 132 communists were convicted for Party activity and sentenced to jail for a total of seventy two years [Braithwaite, 1977:39].

The work of the Party in organizing Canadian workers continued through this period now working 'from above' but with a significant number of its leaders charged under the most serious charges in the country or in jail as well as other high-profile CPC activists in similar dire straits including deportation. This was a decapitated party, gaining attention but at the same time pushed to the fringes. Tim Buck, Party chairperson, could use his trials to proselytize but the audience was a courtroom of mostly people already 'converted' and reporters from conservative publishing bodies. While Tim Buck received a hero's welcome at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto on his release from jail in 1934 all of the estimated 17,000 attending were not converting to communism. The real success indicated by this huge turnout was that there was a growing civil rights movement which the CPC personified and came to lead more and more in the latter-1930s. The Party believed its leaders were released from jail because of mounting working class mass pressure [Kealey & Whitaker, 1995:25].

The Draper regime in Toronto, the city that was the Party's nucleus, had progressively made it harder for the Party to hold public meetings, forcing it further underground. The price to pay for disregarding Draper's edicts was more charges, jailings and deportation, resulting in the diminishing of the number of key Party activists and resources.

This was the Party's most successful time organizing both in terms of the strength of the WUL and the size of the Party's membership. Not surprisingly, then, it was also the time the Party experienced the most crushing state action against it. Without state repression the CPC would likely have been more successful. In 1934 when the CPC was trying to become a legal entity again the RCMP reported in a security bulletin that '...it has been acknowledged by its leaders that the activities of the party have been greatly handicapped since it became an unlawful association in December, 1931' [Kealey & Whitaker, 1993:250]. Also, the CPC adopted a policy in 1934 that Canadian-born CPC members would be placed in leadership roles whether or not they were the most politically conscious [Kealey & Whitaker, 1993:283]. Such a compromising decision was probably made to avoid some of the state repression experienced by foreign-born activists in the Party and its organizations, and to minimise discrediting of the Party as a foreign-dominated organization.

The economic crisis had come, and those who threatened the economic and political status quo were treated with outright repression, for example, the state treatment of the Estevan strike and the unemployed in Vancouver and Regina. Workers' rights to associate, collective bargaining and to strike, and the unemployed's right to social assistance were not recognised along with the radical organizations that led workers in these issues, particularly the CPC.

4. CPC and Dominant Ideology

The first years of the Depression, as in the 1920s for the CPC, were not a vacuum for values, ideas and belief systems that validated the capitalist system and its supporting political structure. But the Depression with its devastating impact for

thousands of Canadians proved a challenge for the dominant ideology of the time. State repression of the CPC also helped to cause fissures in the usual bulwark of dominant ideology.

A civil liberties movement led by the CPC's CLDL sprang from the jailings of the CPC leaders in 1931 and petitions with tens of thousands of signatures helped to secure the earlier release of the men from jail. A broader movement around injustice than just immediate labour or farmer concerns was growing amongst a cross section of Canadians to protect fundamental human and political rights.

The language used by the state to justify its acts of repression against the CPC were often phrases of 'national security', or words meaning protection of the country from sedition by an outside evil influence. While these words had a natural appeal to Canadian citizens, stronger beliefs of political and individual freedom of expression often prevailed. Canadian citizens for the most part did not view the CPC as a threat to democracy or a national menace as the state and the media attempted to have its citizens, readers and listeners believe.

Some communists were elected to municipal governments and school boards including an electoral sweep on the municipal council and school board in Blairmore, a mining town in southern Alberta. It was no coincidence that a mining area, part of Canada's changing economy of a growing industrial work-force, with communist-influenced union organizing, would be so drawn to communist local political leaders.

The shaky times economically and politically at a national level translated into the voting out of power in 1935 of the R. B. Bennett government, even with its espoused late-in-the-day new Deal to address the current economic and social ills of society. The newly elected Mackenzie-King Liberal government was hardly a radical group.

However, this new government seemed to acknowledge the need for other state measures besides state repression of the growing national revolt reputedly led by the CPC.

While, at different levels, the state showed virtually no tolerance for the unemployed, a growing swell of support came from the public: mothers held tag days; the public supported protest marches and an outpouring of community support came with the On-to-Ottawa Trek as hundreds of unemployed Canadians rode the rails from Vancouver towards Ottawa in 1935.

The depth and breadth of poverty, ongoing high unemployment and decreasing wages and working conditions conspired to stimulate Canadian citizenry to question assumptions of its needs, expectations, values and belief in the current economic and political system. Many Canadian workers found themselves without the usual basic provisions, assumed to be a given right in Canadian society: to feed, clothe and house themselves and their families. The idea that this Depression was the usual cyclical one faded and was replaced by demands for unemployment insurance, debt forgiveness for farmers and other claims for immediate relief and longer-term solutions.

With the cracks in the economic and political system occurring and Canadian workers' views on this system starting to shift the CPC's door was potentially widening. Hegemony of the capitalist class was weakening to some degree under the strain.

Anti-communist sentiment was well established in the mainstream trade union movement. However, the CPC probably fed this feeling with its overt criticism of the labour movement as social fascist, creating in part its own ideological barrier. Possibly, the ACCL would have at least been more open to joining the WUL when the overture was made in 1935 if it had not been the object of social fascist name-calling. If there

had been a merging between the ACCL and WUL maybe the CPC would have been less rushed to dissolve the WUL when the 'popular front' period started in 1935 and sent the Canadian unions into the American-based unions.

CHAPTER FIVE:

1935-1939: 'POPULAR FRONT' PERIOD

Introduction

The second period in the CPC's evolution during the Depression was a new phase in international communism ushered in by the Comintern under the strong influence of Stalin and the CPSU. The 'class against class' period had had its vocal critics with certain national Party members of the Comintern, and with the growing threat of fascism in Europe the 'popular front' period was proclaimed by the Comintern in 1934 [Penner, 1988:128-131].

The 'class against class' period ended abruptly in 1935 with the new decision of the Comintern to implement the 'popular front'. The objective was to unite all anti-fascist groups as part of an international struggle against Hitler's aggressive fascist government. Social democrats and their party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), now became an ally and invitations were set to unite with the CPC over issues that the parties had common interest in. By June 1936 the CPC was proposing "...that despite the crisis in its ranks, the C.C.F. movement remains, not only for the CPC but for the working class and farmers, that movement which can and must be transformed into a mass federated farmer-labour party" [Quoted in Grimson, 1966:144].

While there had been a temporary ebb in some of the impact of the Depression in the mid-1930s, for the most part the economic and social destruction was unabating. So the change in CPC position and policy for its national program came when there was

no particular economic and political change occurring in Canada. How well did this new position then serve the CPC in meeting the needs of Canadian workers? Again, in this chapter the CPC's organizing with both the labour and farmers' movement will be reviewed followed by a consideration of the three factors regarded as major barriers to the CPC's success: the Comintern, state repression and dominant ideology.

1. CPC'S Organizing

The new international communist period of the 'popular front' demanded a radical change in organizing strategy for the Comintern's adherent party members. The CPC's resources, compromised by state repression, were to be channelled in a vastly different manner, although not dissimilar to strategy prior to the Depression, in the 1920s.

CPC and Labour

On the basis of the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935 and its own analysis of Canadian conditions, the CPC entered its 'popular front' period. It was believed that the growing threat of fascism on an international level and growing 'right' tendencies in Canada necessitated the unity of communist, social democrat and other 'progressive' forces.

According to a Party history, the CPC perceived a new willingness amongst reformist unions to organize the unorganized in industrial unions and establish a united trade union centre. 'The original reasons for founding the WUL receded into the background while the questions of organic unity, of merger came to the front' [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:100].

The ramifications of the CPC's new 'popular front' position for the CPC's trade union tactics were dramatic. In November 1935 the WUL wrote its own death certificate [Grimson, 1966:147]. The WUL's unions were requested to join the TLC "to strengthen the trade union ranks and to lay a solid foundation for a broad united front movement against fascism and another imperialist war" [Quoted in Abella, 1975b:3]. So the more militant, communist-led, Canadian unions were absorbed into the conservative craft-union oriented TLC and the like American Federation of Labour (AFL). '(T)he RILU (Red International of Labour Unions – the trade union organization of the Comintern) ordered the dissolution of the "revolutionary" trade union centres and a return to the "main stream" of the labour movement' [Scott, 1978:168].

Soon after the WUL's dissolution WUL organizers (who were usually CPC members) began organizing for the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), an industrial union organizing body from the U.S. Without the aid of these WUL organizers, one historian writes, '...CIO efforts in Canada would have been vastly circumscribed and conceivably aborted' [Abella, 1975b:25]. Ex-WUL activists were instrumental in the organizing of steelworkers, miners, woodworkers, autoworkers and seamen [Abella, 1975b:31,55,87,112; Laxer, 1976:98].

The new broad-alliance position also had ramifications for the CPC's attitude to and relationship with the CCF and other political parties. By early-November 1935 the CPC was withdrawing candidates in federal election ridings where there were CCF candidates and had declared in its newspaper that "...we are prepared to affiliate with the CCF" [Quoted in Grimson, 1966:144]. The CPC desisted in its 'social fascist' attacks on the CCF [Avakumovic, 1975:98-99]. In fact, the CPC proposed that the CCF "...be transformed into a mass farmer-labour party" [Grimson, 1966:144]. Its

application for affiliation to the CCF was refused. However, the CPC and CCF did form joint action committees at times on issues of common interest [Grimson, 1966:146; Avakumovic, 1975:103-104]. The abrupt reversing of the CPC's attitude to social democrats, in particular the CCF, with the adoption of the 'popular front' policy in 1935 did not swell the ranks of the CPC with converts either.

The CPC also withdrew its 'social fascist' attitude towards the Social Credit Party in Alberta and sought to form a broad progressive movement with the Social Credit Party and the CCF in Alberta [Avakumovic, 1975:109]. In 1938 Tim Buck, the CPC's secretary general, listed the following groups as potential allies of the CPC in its 'people's front': the trade union movement; the CCF; reform Liberals; local labour parties; Civil Liberties Union movement and the United Church of Canada [Avakumovic, 1975:111].

CPC and Farmers

Farmers were still a part of CPC analysis with the new 'popular front'. For example, in an issue of its paper in June 1936 it was stated that:

[t]he party feels...that despite the crisis in its ranks, the CCF movement remains, not only for the C.P. but for the working class and farmers, that movement which can and must be transformed into a mass federated farmer-labour party [Quoted in Grimson, 1966:144].

In concert with its new overall analysis and like its new tactic with labour, a decision to disband the FUL was made in November 1935. The FUL had, in fact, become virtually non-existent a few months earlier [Avakumovic, 1975:84]. The CPC expressed a "necessity of working in reformist organizations instead of destroying them" [Quoted in Avakumovic, 1975:84-85]. The rationale given for dissolving the FUL was that the FUL had essentially become an enlarged CPC and the Comintern called for co-operation with other progressive peoples [Avakumovic, 1975:85]. A year earlier the

CPC had called for a united front with workers and farmers of reformist organizations, drawing a distinction between the reformist leaderships and the memberships of these organizations [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:113].

At the Party's eighth convention in 1937 farmers again were addressed along with workers. A "people's program" for the achievement of 'Unity in Action' was presented. The program included a call to 'Save Canadian Agriculture'. The paper, entitled 'Monopoly vs. the People', stated that:

"...Canada needs a comprehensive national farm policy. Farmers must be protected against the conditions created by the fact that they sell their products in a market controlled by the buyers and are compelled to buy everything they need in a market controlled by the sellers..." [quoted in Buck, 1975:142].

2. CPC and the Comintern

The CPC's relationship with the Comintern in the 'popular front' period began with an upheaval for the Party as it continued in its subordinate role vis-à-vis the Comintern. It was a taxing move for the CPC to faithfully take on the Comintern's new position of 'popular front', with serious consequences for its organizing ability. At the same time, the move brought potential strength for the CPC as it sought a broader base from which to work.

The CPC's adoption of the Comintern's seventh Congress position of 'popular front' came quickly, but as in 1929 not without an internal struggle. Over the decision to disband the WUL there was vehement opposition from both the CPC and the WUL [Abella, 1975b:3; Avakumovic, 1975:132]. A criticism of the WUL-decision by a contemporary historian possibly reflects some of the sentiment of dissidents in 1935:

on orders from Moscow, the most militant national union in Canada unilaterally disbanded and turned over its entire membership to the American-controlled Trades and Labor Congress. It was a blow from which the national union movement was not to recover [Abella, 1975b:4].

Another historian writes that the WUL members were '...sent scurrying back into the unions they had denounced for half a decade as unreformable agents of imperialism' [Angus, 1981:329]. The president of the WUL, J.B. MacLachlan, resigned from the CPC in protest over the dissolution of the WUL [Avakumovic, 1975:132]. Other top WUL organizers similarly resigned. Dissolution of the WUL and the handing over of its unions to the TLC and AFL were regarded as a 'crushing blow' to the national union movement.

While the concept of a North American union movement is attractive, previous experience with international unions in Canada, for example, the United Mine Workers of America in the Maritimes in the 1920s, demonstrated that the interests of Canadian workers were sometimes sacrificed in the decisions made at US headquarters. The CPC had always pushed for Canadian 'autonomy' of unions, so to turn around in 1935 and drop its national unions knowing the danger of international unions for Canadian workers, was a move against the best interests of Canadian workers.

The CPC, through its earlier about-turn position, had managed to alienate the ACCL, a national Canadian labour organization. After several years of being the target of heavy criticism in the 'class-against-class' period, it is not surprising that the ACCL rejected an attempt by communists to form an alliance of the ACCL and WUL in 1935 as part of the CPC's renewed attempt to unite the Canadian union movement [Avakumocic, 1975:131]¹.

¹ This is not to say that there were not other reasons for rejecting an alliance. Also, the ACCL had displayed anti-communist sentiment before 1929.

Similarly, CPC leaders in the FUL objected to the dissolving of that farmers' organization and having to rejoin ranks with the older farmer organizations of the united front [Avakumovic, 1975:85].

CPC decision-making during all of the 1935-1939 period was well imbued with Comintern influence. For example, the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy, formed in 1937, was a branch of a Comintern-inspired worldwide movement [Avakumovic, 1975:128]. And the Party positions on Germany and then World War Two changed as a result of a changing Soviet foreign policy which affected a change in CI policy. Up until the signing of the Soviet-German Treaty of Non-aggression and Friendship in 1939, the CPC had maintained an 'anti-Fascist' stance on German aggression. With the Soviet-German pact, the CPC's stance became one of 'imperialist' denouncing of the war, focusing criticisms on England and France [Avakumovic, 1975:140].

In its general anti-fascism organizing, the CPC formed the Canadian Congress against War and Fascism as early as 1934. The Congress then reconstituted itself to become the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, which in 1937 became known as the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy [Avakumovic, 1975:128-129]. The League successfully attracted a cross-section of members, both in terms of individuals on the executive and affiliated organizations. Some TLC locals, CCF clubs and youth organizations were among the affiliates [Avakumovic, 1975:128-129]. 'The Communists worked hard for the league...' in educating the Canadian population on the evils of fascism and mobilizing Canadian to protest fascism abroad and at home [Avakumovic, 1975:128].

3. CPC and the State

In the beginning of the CPC's 'popular front' strategic period, with the 'iron heel' ruthlessness of Bennett's government rejected in 1935 as Canadians elected the new, Mackenzie government, prospects potentially seemed better for the Party in terms of state repression. Possibly the state would rely more on a legitimization role than a repressive one to support the capitalist economic system. The CPC in some ways had a new lease on life out from under the heel of the federal state – CPC leaders released from jail, the Party legal again and the draconian Section 98 of the Criminal Code repealed – but the CPC continued being the target of state repression nevertheless.

Having barely survived the decapitating of the Party in the early 1930s the CPC again came under the forceful attack of the state in the second half of the 1930s. The CPC's steady stream of criticism of, and challenges to, federal government foreign policy on Hitler, Germany, fascism and the second world war, and the CPC's record of being a leader and supporter of working class interests brought the Party into another head-on collision with the state which represented the interests of the capitalist class, particularly, businesses in manufacturing, resources and semi-processing industries. In central Canada where the strength of the Canadian economy lay in Quebec and Ontario, new industrial-based unionizing by the CIO, supported by the CPC, met strong resistance from the state.

One of the direct attacks on the CPC came in Quebec with Premier Duplessis' Padlock Act of 1937 which in effect, for Quebec, replaced section 98 of the Criminal Code that had been repealed. The 'Padlock Law' got its name from the fact that the Attorney-General of Quebec was empowered to padlock the premises where it was suspected communism was being advocated. The law was used widely against

communists and in effect the CPC was made illegal in Quebec. The distribution of communist literature was also prohibited along with the banning of the CPC's French-language newspaper, Clarte [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:120; Avakumovic, 1975:113; Braithwaite, 1977:102]. The intended effect of Duplessis' Padlock Law was achieved to some extent: a RCMP officer reported in a security bulletin that '...defeatism prevails among communists...and very few meetings are now taking place' [Kealey & Whitaker, 1997b:38-39].

The 'Padlock Law' was also designed for use against labour. It was well known that CPC members were active in the CIO. Also, Duplessis would not recognize any CIO unions and ordered the 6,000 strikers in the International Garment Workers strike of 1937 in Montreal back to work and arrested the leaders [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:119-120]. The CPC along with '...CPC mass organizations, ...socialists, trade union leaders and libertarians in general' protested the Padlock Law [Avakumovic, 1975:113].

Premier Hepburn made attempts in Ontario, also, to prevent CIO organizing. This was part of a broader attack using state forces in a concerted effort to prevent unionizing, break strikes and 'stamp out' communism [Avakumovic, 1975:111,133; Communist Party of Canada, 1982:106,116,121]. There was the use of police, courts and strike breakers by employers and the state, and anti-union editorials and headlines in the press to stop the unionizing movement. In a strike in Oshawa at General Motors in 1937 the forces of employer and state came together against the strikers and their union. This was a particularly overt case of employers (large mine owners and the auto industry) and provincial state forces consorting to prevent unionism. Red baiting was a main tactic used to justify the state's actions [Abella, 1974:103; Avakumovic, 1975:133].

In 1938 the two premiers of Quebec and Ontario clinched their repressions of communism and labour activities with the formation of the Duplessis-Hepburn alliance [Avakumovic, 1975:111-112]. The pact designed to suppress the working class movement, again, reflected the dominant section of Canada's economy and where forces challenging class power were not going to be tolerated [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:121].

During this period the Party involved itself in anti-fascist followed by anti-war movements. Its anti-war efforts involving worker strikes also engendered a rash of arrests, imprisonment and general harassment as with hall renting. By autumn 1939 the CPC newspapers, the Clarion and Clarte had been banned ² by the federal government.

The ongoing fear generated by a climate of state and employer repression also contributed to the invisibility and weakening of the CPC's work by the fact that individuals sometimes chose, or were advised, to keep their communist affiliations secret. For example, in 1935 new members in the Party in Alberta who were employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway kept their membership secret for fear of losing their jobs [Kealey & Whitaker, 1995:193].

State repression for the CPC in this period had the effect of the Party seeming to go 'underground', distancing itself from overt communism. Although the CPC adopted new positions, tactics and strategies following the Comintern convention of 1935 which watered down its prior sectarian stance, state repression also effected a certain degree of retreating of the Party from its earlier bolder days, of a communist party that publicly declared itself as such, promulgating the goals of socialist revolution. By 1939 the

² In 1940 under a special Order-in-Council of the War Measures' Act the CPC (along with pro-Nazi organizations) was outlawed again [Avakumovic, 1974:142; Communist Party of Canada, 1982:136].

Party's national daily newspaper, the Clarion, had become a series of regional weeklies for financial reasons [Communist Party of Canada, 1982:136]. The Party was under siege and showing clear signs of this.

4. Dominant Ideology

While the state at one level may have been relenting in its repressive approach to the CPC, the ideological approach of the state, the ruling class and media had not perceptibly changed. Civil liberty rights may have been restored by the state to some extent but the CPC was still viewed as a threat to the democratic rights of Canadian society.

With the much more open position of the 'popular front' the CPC focused much of its consciousness-raising efforts on the anti-fascist/anti-war movement. The CPC met with a lot of support from Canadian workers through the various organizations it headed up including support for the anti-Franco forces fighting in Spain. A significant degree of harmony was reached between the ideals of many liberal thinking Canadians and CPC activists well versed in communist values. This did not translate, though, into a breakdown of dominant ideology. Beliefs in freedom, peace came with the bedrock of dominant ideology, not a separate system of beliefs that could undermine dominant values and beliefs.

The anti-fascist/-war movement was almost a distraction, both ideologically and in terms of class struggle in the political arena. It was safe ground for many Canadian workers to be openly working with communists for it was not for the violent overthrow of the capitalist economic and political systems. The CPC had stepped back from its earlier revolutionary political program statements being more concerned with uniting with

all progressive forces regardless of political stripe [for example, Social Credit, Alberta Farmers].

Belief in trade union rights, often fuelled by the indomitable energy of ex-WUL organizers, was a growing force particularly as economic fortunes started turning around in some industries such as manufacturing in the Ontario-Quebec industrial heartland. Labour historians are almost unanimous in their appraisal of the benefit to shop-floor workers in CPC-led struggles, that whether a victory was secured or not, CPC organizing efforts always achieved for workers a sense of their industrial rights and organizing skills for collective action; in all an empowering experience.

Raising workers' consciousness to a trade union consciousness is a necessary stepping stone to a revolutionary consciousness but not a sufficient stepping stone. Workers ardently wanted their rights met but it was a much greater leap to a revolutionary consciousness that relatively few workers made. Nevertheless, employers often backed by the state and media, issued vitriol against the unions trying to make them synonymous with an 'unpatriotic' and 'undemocratic red scare' of communism. Coupled with this employers sometimes exercised the action of least resort, or threat of, firing suspected union activists. This was the absolute economic threat for a worker and his/her family and was successful at times in tempering workers' union activities.

Concerned about the instability caused by re-curing unemployment, poor working conditions and low wages, the state at some provincial levels, for example, Ontario, was moving to industrial labour law legislation. At the federal level the government struck the Price Spreads Royal Commission to investigate the growing economic concentration

and power amongst companies, and the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations as some provinces could not meet their relief obligations³.

Continuing with the relative electoral success of 1929-1935 at the municipal level, communist candidates continued to be elected, for example, in Winnipeg, or gain considerable numbers of votes even if not elected. In some cases, as part of the 'popular front' approach, 'progressive' candidates were backed by the CPC. Again, the CPC diverged from a communist position to a 'progressive' position.

Ironically, as the CPC retreated from its more overt communist position and merged more with the status quo of the progressive movement in Canada, ideological vigilance by the state and capitalist class did not noticeably lessen. Possibly, the owner class in the Canadian economy felt more threatened by a communist take-over as the CPC with its subdued, but still in place, platform of communist ideals was more embraced by mainstream Canada. The CPC was less marginalized and possibly harder to make a target of state repression, hence the greater need for ideological attacking.

After the iron heel of R.B. Bennett on the 1935 On-to-Ottawa Trek the strong beliefs held by the thousands of unemployed workers were dampened, at least in terms of a mass movement. Hopes, needs and desires for many Canadians were possibly placed on a new federal government that in the 1935 election had promised real change, for a better more promising and secure society. Some unemployed workers channelled their desires for a better society into volunteering for the international brigades fighting fascism in Spain. Lastly, thousands of unemployed assuaged their hopes for

³ The report of the Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations was provided to the Prime Minister in 1940 and became known as the Rowell-Sirois Report.

employment by joining the Canadian armed forces in 1939 as Canada joined the allied forces fighting Hitler in Europe.

As much as people's belief in the capitalist system was shaken by the dehumanizing experience of the Depression, capitalist values still managed to prevail, particularly in an atmosphere of constant discrediting of communism and its personification, the Soviet Union, by the media and state.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSIONS

1. Successes and Limitations

The CPC, inspired by the successful 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, was born in Canada at a time of clearly changing economic, class and political forces. The Party grasped these significant changes, arduously working to enhance the rights and relative position of Canadian workers, particularly as the Great Depression struck Canadian society. Its organizing record amongst unorganized and unemployed workers can be rated high as can its anti-fascism/war and civil liberties organizing. The CPC often was the initiator and main force organizing in these areas during the Great Depression. Its role amongst farmers in the 1930s was not as strong but the Party maintained farmers as part of its platform and policy recognizing 'dirt farmers' oppression as originating with similar forces that caused working class oppression and unemployment.

All of these major areas of organizing were marked by success in that organizations established by the CPC achieved some of their major goals over sustained periods of time. All goals may not have been met in all parts of the country or for all sectors of the economy (such as organizing unorganized workers), or as enduringly (as with the farmers' movement). However, the CPC threw itself undauntedly into Canadian society to achieve a certain set of objectives, faithfully adopted from the program of the Comintern. By any standards of organizing, particularly in comparison with the

achievements (or lack of) of other labour, farmer or political organizations of the time, the CPC stands out.

The CPC, then, was a relative success in the 1930s compared with other national organizations. However, the Party was far from reaching its goal of a Canadian labour-farmer socialist state, moving Canadian workers towards a mass revolutionary class. The CPC as an organizing body had an overall goal to build a revolutionary force in Canada, a new alternative political force that would lead in changing Canadian capitalist society into a socialist society, which would eliminate private property and establish social control of the means of production. The organizing goals and activities were tactics that were part of a much larger strategy for the CPC. As a viable, alternative political force in Canadian society, the CPC was not successful.

The main factors hampering the Party's success in its larger revolutionary cause have been identified as its relationship with the Comintern, state repression and dominant ideology. The problems caused by the CPC's relationship with the Comintern were internally generated, problems created by the Party's choice to adhere to CI policy. Externally, the CPC faced continual state harassment, if not outright repression, and the more subtle enemy of all-pervasive ruling class (dominant) ideology. Each one of the three main barriers on its own would have limited the CPC's success in the Great Depression. However, the three factors combined compounded the barriers faced by the Party. For example, the state reinforced by dominant ideology, worked to isolate, marginalize and discredit the CPC. However, in the 'class against class' period the Party also alienated a lot of potential support with its 'social fascism' labelling of a number of worker organizations and their leaders helping to isolate itself and reduce its credibility with workers.

The external problems of state repression and dominant ideology posed major barriers but were exacerbated by the existence of problems created by the Party itself. The CPC made mistakes in its evaluation of the Canadian situation and the tactics it consequently pursued. These errors were a result of a dependency relationship that the CPC had with the Comintern, a relationship in which the CPC allowed itself to be dictated to by an organization that did not necessarily have Canadian workers' interests at heart.

The most common criticism by writers on the CPC is the Party's relationship with the Comintern. These critics see the CPC as being dominated by the Comintern which in turn was subordinate to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and after 1929 to Joseph Stalin, the leader of the CPSU [Rodney, 1968:vi]. Criticisms on this point vary in degree from, on the one hand, painting the CPC as an alien, subversive, Soviet-established and anti-democratic organization, to, on the other hand, a grass-roots party organically grounded in Canadian soil but which carried out Comintern directives so faithfully that it was to the detriment of the needs of Canadian workers. Without degenerating into the conspiracy theory and denying the CPC's indigenous roots, it can be concluded that the CPC's relationship of dependency on the Comintern led to some inappropriate positions, policies and actions of the CPC for the needs of Canadian workers.

The CPC took its membership in the Comintern very seriously, to the point that all decisions passed down to the CPC from the Comintern were accepted as binding even when these decisions reflected the needs of the Soviet Union, rather than Canadian workers. The CPC declared and incorporated the goal of creating a labour-farmer socialist state into its platform but at critical times allowed Communist

International influence and imperatives to be a higher priority. Rather than always being a source of support for the CPC goal of a socialist Canada, the Comintern often exercised heavy-handed control of the Party, acceded to by the Party, in dictating the Party's tactics and positions, causing serious compromising of the CPC's effectiveness. One writer's evaluation of the CPC in the 1940s can be applied to the CPC in the 1930s. The CPC was unable '...to distinguish between the international...(communist) ...movement, as embodied by the Soviet Union, and the particular requirements of the Canadian movement' [Muldoon, 1974:iv].

Under the directives of the Comintern the CPC adopted contradictory positions during the 1920s and Depression years. The Party moved from the 'boring from within' position of the 1920s to the 'class against class' position of 1929 - 1935 and later to the 'popular front' position of 1935 – 1939. These contradictory positions did not help endear the CPC to Canadian workers and could have contributed to anti-communist feeling in the Canadian labour movement being fostered by the hegemonic forces of government, employers and the media. Shifts in policy may have been necessary due to changing national situations, but not such abrupt shifts which resulted in yesterday's enemy becoming today's ally and vice versa. If the CPC had acted more autonomously regarding Comintern resolutions it could possibly have brought about smoother transitions in altering tactical positions to fit changing economic and political conditions.

For the working class in general, such sudden switches would have resulted in confusion. Up until 1929 the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) had been supported as the mass political party of the labour movement. Then in 1929, for the 'class-against-class' period, the CLP was dropped and the CPC became the mass political party. Later in 1936 the CPC was dropped in favour of the CCF as the mass political party. During this

period the CPC also supported the populist Social Credit Party, and Liberal Party candidates in elections, both previously declared enemies of the working class. So much oscillating from one position to another would not have helped the Party nurture a working class belief in class political independence. It is difficult to instil beliefs of class enemy and separate class identity when sometimes the working class is told to spurn capitalists and class collaborationists as enemies and at other times told to unite with the very same elements as allies with a common interest. A united front concept is not necessarily a counter-productive strategy, but the frequent switching from united front to anti-united front position would likely have caused more confusion than consciousness-raising.

The CPC's relationship with the Comintern posed a serious hindrance at times for the Party in its goals of leading Canadian workers. Overall, the CPC's relationship with the Comintern often came at a high cost for Canadian workers' needs. The CPC was successful in organizing Canadian workers in spite of its relationship with the CI. The severe, contradictory, shifts in CPC policy adopted from the CI, '180 degree turns' in 1929 and 1935, created unnecessary losses for the Party's strength and that of Canadian workers in their class power. Likewise, confusion and alienation was caused by the CPC following the CI's position on Hitler and Germany in 1939 once the Soviet-German Pact was struck. While these switches in positions were purportedly not made in terms of the Party's ultimate goal of revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, but in terms of its immediate task at hand and tactics, the extreme changes did hamper the Party's long-term goal.

The shift to an extreme left position in 1929 of 'class against class' removed the CPC from mainstream labour, created a partial void of experienced national leaders due

to expulsions and protest resignations, and prevented numbers of Canadian workers and their allies from uniting with the CPC in common cause. In the 1929-1935 period the WUL organizing was possible without the severity of the 1929 'class against class' position with its 'social fascism' component. The CPC clearly demonstrated its ability to organize the unorganized in this period. It is possible the CPC would have increased its organizing level and its appeal as a pro-labour party if it had welcomed co-operating and co-ordinating with other labour organizations rather than taking its 'social fascist' stance. The CPC helped open the door to CCF popularity by rejecting organizations that held significant appeal for workers [Penner, 1988:78,108-9]

Given the lack of, or near absence of, organizing of unorganized workers by, and growing anti-communism sentiment in, the ACCL and TLC it was appropriate that the CPC establish its own labour organizing central and initiate and lead in unionizing. The CPC through the WUL was very successful where there had previously been a virtual void; this was an advantage of the Comintern position of striking out independently to organize workers in the new and growing work forces. But the sectarianism adopted by the CPC from the CI policy in 1929 reduced the Party's effectiveness for achieving its trade union goals and higher ones of a farmer-worker socialist state.

The 1935 sudden turn by the CPC to the 'popular front' position overnight extinguished Canadian autonomy for unionized workers when the WUL was dissolved, again creating a partial void in top leadership as experienced officials and activists divorced themselves from the CPC out of opposition to the new stance, and adding to the confusion for Canadian workers as the Party now embraced previously rejected organizations and leaders.

The CPC was reckless in adopting the CI's 'popular front' package in 1935. The CPC's change in trade union policy in 1935, with the dissolution of the WUL and absorption of its member unions into the conservative, craft-oriented TLC and American Federation of Labour (AFL) dissipated, if not effectively quashed, a strong national militancy. Thousands of workers were tossed in a disposable way to American-based organizations sacrificing Canadian autonomy. There was no democratic process of WUL member unions debating and deciding their own future. It was decided by the CI heavily influenced CPC leadership. The continuing organizing efforts and success of certain ex-WUL leaders during the period, 1935-1939, was to their credit, their dedication to workers' rights and hope for a better society, not necessarily that of the CPC.

The problems generated internally by the CPC's international relationship with the Comintern were exacerbated by barriers external to the Party. The CPC had the formidable task of facing and attempting to overcome the barriers of state repression and dominant ideology.

Throughout the Depression and the preceding 1920s the CPC faced state repression, both overt and covert, from being totally banned to the target of constant surveillance. The capitalist class was becoming increasingly dependent on a growing wage-labour workforce and the state made class struggle activities of the working class and their most radical representative, the CPC, the target of regular repression. It was no accident that state repression of the CPC was at its worst in the early 1930s – systematic raiding of CPC offices across the country, arrests of eight Party leaders, confiscation of Party files and literature, the outlawing of the Party, prolonged trials and convictions on charges of seditious conspiracy, and five year prison sentences – when

unemployment rates were at their highest in the Depression and the CPC actively organizing the unorganized and unemployed.

Such an environment hardly enabled the Party to flourish. State repression of the labour movement, generally, and the CPC, particularly, definitely contributed to a precarious situation for the CPC in organizing labour into a revolutionary force, if not just a union. To some extent the CPC was able to utilize state repression as a tool for raising class consciousness amongst Canadian workers by organizing legal defence campaigns for charged, arrested and jailed members and supporters. It could be argued that state repression of the CPC was an advantage to the Party's cause and significantly contributed to its record membership in 1934-5. However, overall this gain was less than the losses incurred for the Party in achieving its goal of organizing workers.

The Canadian state was unsuccessful in eliminating the CPC but its ongoing campaign to stop the CPC or largely circumscribe its political work had a significant impact on the Party's degree of success. State repression was a force the CPC had to contend with in terms of its activities and resources. An outlawed, decapitated party, as the CPC was in the early 1930s, was disadvantaged, and energies that could have been spent on organizing and educating workers was many times spent on the defence of the captured Party leaders. Repression, generally, acted to frighten workers away from militancy, and exhaust activists' energies that could more productively have been spent. This is not to say, however, that repression if carried too far cannot undermine the legitimacy of the state and the social order it stands for. Experiences of repression can act to raise consciousness of workers.

Secondly, repression, as part of its intended goal, helped make the CPC an undesirable political entity in the political landscape for Canadian workers to gravitate to.

Acts of coercion by the state as well as being designed to attack particular targets are also meant to act as a deterrent to further actions of the same type and create an atmosphere of fear. The message implicitly or explicitly sent is that certain political actions will be met with retaliation by the state often at a high cost, in the case of coercion against the CPC and its activities, possibly jail or deportation. In this way, state repression acts to have a ripple effect.

As stated in Chapter Three, state repression has an ideological as well as coercive effect, both combining to help produce a desired impact of containing the target of repression. In the 1930s the state aimed to maintain the dominant power of the capitalist class focusing its actions particularly on the growing working class as it showed signs of organizing and galvanizing its class strength against employers and placing limits on capital's profits. A significant proportion of the population suffered badly in the Depression, enough to raise a lot of questions about a system previously accepted unquestioningly, but revolution was a scary prospect, untenable. Consistent repression by the state of militants, particularly, the CPC and its activists, provided sufficient coercive power to cause questioning workers to hesitate in their possible rejection of the capitalist system. Even staunch CPC members were at times attracted to more peaceful means of system changing; for example, elections, after being subjected to interminable state repression.

Chapters Three, Four and Five also addressed dominant ideology, or alternatively, ruling class ideology, and hegemony as a barrier to the CPC's organizing of Canadian workers. In Chapter Two the sets of ideas and values of political organizations of classes adversely affected by growing industrialization and the Great Depression, were reviewed. The political goals of the CPC were the most radical of all

the political protest of this time, its ultimate goal being to replace capitalist society and its state with a socialist farmer-worker state.

Dominant ideology in Canada during the Great Depression was challenged as economic and social conditions worsened and new ideas were put forward as to what Canadian workers could hope for and demand. The CPC was successful in promulgating ideas of reform for social and economic change within the given system and human liberties, but not in generally attracting Canadian workers to its communist goals, to overthrow the capitalist economic, political and social system and install a socialist one. Undoubtedly, the CPC helped open cracks in dominant ideology with its alternate ideas on labour rights, civil liberties, international peace, and national democratic rights, such as in Spain, helping to drive a wedge into ruling class ideology and pose a threat not just economically but also ideologically. However, the Party did not bring communist values into mainstream thinking, notwithstanding its growing success in elections, particularly municipally, in the latter-1930s.

Hegemony, active reinforcing of ruling class ideas and beliefs rationalizing ruling class powers, was not overcome in the 1930s although challenged. Even though people's belief in the capitalist system was shaken by the dehumanizing experience of the Depression, capitalist values still managed to prevail, particularly in an atmosphere of constant discrediting of communism and its personification, the Soviet Union, by the media and state. Low numbers of members in the Party and voting numbers garnered by the CPC in municipal, provincial and federal elections, relative to the mainstream parties, are some of the main indicators of lack of support by Canadian workers for communist values.

State repression and dominant ideology combine to reinforce one another.

When alternate ideas are perceived as becoming a threat to the dominant ideas, overt repression, often coupled with an ideological campaign, is waged on those people, organizations and activities seen to be the threat. Although repression was often resorted to by the Canadian state in quashing labour militancy and the CPC in the 1930s, without the legitimizing effect of dominant ideology, repression could not have worked so successfully. The acts of repression (and ideological messages) are deterrents to potential converts as much as punishment for those engaged in the "illegal" activities.

In Canada in the 1930s people's belief in the capitalist system was shaken by the dehumanizing experience of the Depression. Counter political values did surface and take concrete form in the shape of new political parties. Extreme discontent with the way society was going was registered in the form of new organizations of the unemployed, labour and farmers along with their militant protests. But overall the economic and political systems in place in Canada did not lose their legitimacy; capitalist values prevailed through all the economic and political upheaval.

While the CPC had a clear class analysis of Canadian society regarding the growing areas of unorganized workers, at the same time it did not seem sufficiently in touch with workers' level of awareness. Canadian workers on the whole were not ready to make the political leap from their nascent union awareness to a communist, revolutionary consciousness.

The Depression was a difficult time for Canadian workers and the CPC had its work cut out in organizing this class. While a depression is seen as an ideal opportunity for a Marxist-Leninist party to make inroads into the working class, it is simultaneously a

delicate time for organizing and raising workers' consciousness. Workers often felt vulnerable in the Depression as the capitalist class became hell-bent on protecting its profits resorting to virtually any means to achieve such. Lay-offs, wage-cuts, speedups and general deteriorating of working conditions were common. In combination with employers the state acted to assist by sending in police to charge picket lines, protect scab workers, lay charges against workers and using the courts to convict and imprison labour radicals and deport those that are immigrants. Then in support of employers and the state, the media legitimized and rationalized the joint actions of employer and state. Such times of worsening working conditions can, on the one hand, draw workers to unions and possibly a radical party such as the CPC, workers feeling 'enough is enough', but, on the other hand, can deter workers who out of fear and experience may see such bodies as increasing work insecurity and attracting state repression.

For the majority of workers in the Depression, their objective working conditions – apparent ideal revolutionary conditions in view of the extreme exploitation – could just as easily go against their being automatically attracted to a communist party. Often their all-consuming concern was, not changing a 'rotten' system but the more immediate concern of job security. As one survivor of the Depression said "...nobody is demanding revolution when they are scratching for tomorrow's dinner. That takes all their energy" [quoted in Broadfoot, 1973:370]. Given the over-supply of labour '...workers were too scared to strike or wildcat because they knew there was a gang of workers that could easily be hired' [quoted in Broadfoot:127]. The over-riding fear of losing one's job was coupled with a reinforcing conservative and anti-communist ideology disseminated by the state and media. When times are tough workers can just as easily become more conservative as radical.

Anti-communism sentiment continued in the labour movement throughout the 1930s, if not overtly, at least incipiently¹. The hard work carried out by the CPC for the CIO in organizing industrial unions in the latter 1930s did not secure sympathizers to communism in the labour movement although attitudes to CPC organizers did become more positive and CPC positions increasingly adopted by labour organizations. Additionally, it can be proposed that the CPC's contradictory positions of pre-1929, 1929 and 1935 did not help endear the Party to Canadian workers, that is, make communism appealing.

2. Revolutionary Pre-Conditions

Doubt has been raised as to whether Canada was as economically ready for revolution as originally assumed by the CPC in the 1920s and 1930s. If there had not been a war maybe then there would have been a revolution. If capitalism had not come up with a solution to its crisis by the 1940s, further prolonged hardship could have engendered the class consciousness necessary for revolution. However, this is speculation and given that workers, particularly those unemployed, gratefully involved themselves in the wartime economy, indicates that objective conditions were not sufficiently present for revolution although arguably developing.

The question of why the CPC was not more successful in raising class consciousness, bringing Canadian workers from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself, is still a relevant question, for even if Canada's economic condition in the capitalist system

¹ The new Canadian labour body formed in 1940 from an amalgamation of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour and the Canadian contingent of the CIO condemned communism from the outset [Abella, 1973:51].

was not exactly a revolutionary one, it was still a very serious capitalist crisis that presented an excellent opportunity for the CPC to significantly raise class consciousness. Many workers hard hit by the Depression did experience some questioning of their previously unquestioned beliefs. They did feel the system was being unjust and the governments irresponsible in their treatment of labour – the employed and unemployed. This questioning for the majority, however, did not reach a level of class consciousness in which the opposing interests between workers and capitalists/employers are seen as irreconcilable. It is possible to conclude that everything else being equal, that no matter how much educational work the CPC carried out in terms of class analysis of the Depression and educating for socialism, the Canadian workers had not experienced sufficient, prolonged immiseration to accept socialist revolution as the answer to the Depression. In the German Ideology Marx and Engels said:

...if these material elements of a complete revolution are not present – namely, on the one hand the existing productive forces, on the other the formation of a revolutionary mass, which revolts not only against separate conditions of the existing society, but against the existing "production of life" itself, the "total activity" on which it was based – then it is absolutely immaterial for practical development whether the idea of this revolution has been expressed a hundred times already...[Marx & Engels, 1976:62].

Canada, economically, was too immature for a revolution and the continuing success of ruling class ideology with the vast majority of Canadian workers indicated this.

To overcome the all-pervasive binding effects of dominant ideology and the debilitating and fear-inspiring effects of employer-state repression the economic system needed to break down much further. Canada, economically, was too stable for the radical ideas of communism. The collapse of Canadian capitalism was not sufficient for Canadian society, economically and politically, to lose wholesale legitimacy in the eyes

of workers. While a significant proportion of the population suffered badly during the 1930s, enough to raise a lot of questions about a system many had previously accepted unquestioningly, communism was a scary, untenable prospect.

By the end of 1939, Canada entered World War II with many unemployed turning to enlistment in the forces for a way out of unemployment, and many men and women at home moving into the war industrial economy. It was also the eve of a further outlawing of the CPC.

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APPENDIX A:

LITERATURE REVIEW SUPPLEMENT

Further to the literature on the CPC reviewed in Chapter One a substantial and growing collection of writings exists on the CPC. These works do not cover the CPC as comprehensively as the publications reviewed but do provide an extensive scope of information on, and interpretation and analysis of, the Party, its activities and context during the Great Depression and preceding decade of the 1920s from the Party's inception in 1921.

Included in these additional writings are academic essays, theses and biographical and autobiographical writings with most being academic essays published in historical journals. The last several decades have seen a steady flow of such publications on the CPC assisted with the release in the 1980s of previously classified materials on the Party.

The main achievement of these various writings is in providing a richness of detail of events and situations the CPC was involved in and throwing light on the times that existed for Canadian workers in the great Depression of the struggling unemployed and employed. Details and conclusions arrived at by the various authors confirm this writer's views of the CPC although the authors would not necessarily agree with all of this writer's arguments.

A number of themes, not mutually exclusive, can be identified in the writings, covering the Party in the 1920s and 1930s. The primary ones are the CPC and Quebec, the CPC and women, the Party and labour, the Party and farmers, the CPC and the

unemployed, some key activists of the CPC, political decisions and intellectual, analytical and education work of the CPC, and state repression of the CPC.

On the Quebec question, Olszen shows that the Party came later to Quebec than other parts of Canada. The Party saw Quebec as the 'weak link' in Canadian capitalism and it was through the unemployed movement, particularly in Montreal, that the CPC got its footing in Quebec. As much as the Party's influence grew in Quebec with a growing number of French Canadian members as well as English, and ethnic residents through the unemployed and unionizing movements, the CPC was hampered by state repression and the control of the Party in English speaking Toronto [Olszen,1966:233].

The CPC was cognizant of the woman question initiating certain organizations for women and organizing women workers. However, the Party, largely influenced by the Comintern's directives, mostly approached women's issues, particularly in the 1930s, from a class analysis point of view, making secondary the particular oppression of housewives [Sangster, 1985:53-56; 1989:55,89-90]. Steedman writes of the democratic organization of the CPC union, the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers, being conducive to female workers with its shop-floor democracy, a feature lost with the start of the Party's 'Popular Front' period in 1935 when the union was ordered dissolved and merged with the AFL union, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Many writings address the CPC's union organizing amongst the unskilled, semi-skilled and industrial and factory workers that the union establishment all but neglected in the 1920s and early 1930s. Mostly, the CPC is praised for its dedicated work and achievements, one exception being Manley's essay on the CPC's 'united front' period in the 1920s in which the author concludes that the Party was soundly 'defeated' in its

attempts to infiltrate and influence the established labour movement [Manley, 1998a:148].

Some key activities of the CPC with farmers and agricultural labourers in Alberta and Saskatchewan confirm that the Party had a farmer program that went beyond a declared political goal on paper. However, it had limited success, in part because of the contradictions between capitalist companies, farm owners and farm labourers, and also because of pressures placed on the Farmers' Unity League leadership by the Comintern and central CPC leaders to disregard Canadian prairie realities.

CPC empowering of the unemployed in the 1930s through local and national organizing to gain reforms and build a force for socialist revolution is addressed by several authors. State repression of the unemployed and resistance by governments to the unemployed's demands, and relative victories by the unemployed movement with the CPC often the chief force are depicted as significant events in the 1930s.

Although at risk of subjectivity, the autobiographical and biographical writings of key CPC activists particularly illustrate the times of the great Depression for the unemployed and very oppressed employed and the challenging and often dangerous work of Party activists in light of state repression. Those interviewed by Weisbord for her book *Strangest Dream* attest to the great belief Party members had in achieving a humane society for all Canadians inspired by the Bolshevik revolution and better social conditions in the Soviet and which drove them in their communist activities often in spite of great odds.

Of the Party's key policy positions and changes in the 1920s and 1930s and intellectual, analytical and educational work several authors appraise the CPC, some through the biographical study of Stanley Ryerson, a key intellectual activist in the CPC,

particularly in Quebec. Some writers are relatively positive about the Party's political and intellectual analysis [Clarke,1977; Kealey,1982a; Kealey,1982b]. In contrast, another author is very critical of the CPC's analytical work as in the work of Ryerson, calling it a 'Stalinist distortion' [McDougall,1981]. Regardless, overall what is shown is that Ryerson was the first CPC analyst to devote considerable time to analysing Quebec's place in Canada regarding its history, class analysis and nation status, and generally was a principal intellectual of the Party, his first main writing being *1837: The Birth of Canadian Democracy* published in 1937.

A recurring theme in many of the writings is state repression of the CPC, labour and the unemployed by municipal, provincial and national levels of government which was often very brutal. Evidence is raised of the muting effect repression had with the CPC and its activists being driven underground in the early 1930s, and with threats of jail and deportation, and violent attacks at meetings, rallies and protests. The evidence also shows the CPC's unrelenting organizing in spite of, and even success sometimes because of, repression. Many Canadians not normally sympathetic to communist values came to support the CPC in its fight to preserve political and civil rights.

One writer in particular is worthy of note, John Manley, who has written extensively on the CPC particularly during the period of the Great Depression. In one article Manley states that a purpose of his is to '...contribute to the emergence of a social history of Canadian communism' [Manley,1992:66]. This, Manley achieves with copious research of primary documents and his attendant interpretation and analysis. Seemingly, an admirer of the tenacity of CPC members and activists in working with Canadian workers, he is also critical of the Party because of its often subordinate

relationship with the Comintern which reduced the Party's effectiveness for Canadian workers.

As with Manley, there is, in general, a lack of rigorous political-economic analysis in these authors' writings. While much information and insight is gained on the CPC and particular situations it faced, the writings on the whole do not provide an economic and class analysis of why conditions existed as they did and what engendered the political activities of Canadian workers, their organizations and state repression.

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APPENDIX B:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The general approach ¹ used in this thesis is one based on the principles of historical materialism developed by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Secondary writings (Marxist) ² are also used for clarification of Marx and Engel's works.

Historical materialism is based on a set of premises regarding the development of human society. The starting point of this theory is real people in activity, people meeting their immediate daily needs of food, shelter and clothing and other less essential needs which change over time. Real individuals in their activity of meeting the need for subsistence are engaged in a labour process which is to be found, in different forms, in every epoch of history. Individuals interact with nature in order to meet their needs and in this labour process change nature and human nature [Marx & Engels, 1976:36-50].

The economic base of society, then, is viewed as the most important causal factor in the way society develops. The economic base conditions ³ the political and legal institutions and the ideological and cultural areas of human society. While in

¹ A combination of primary and secondary sources have been used for information on the CPC during the 1920s and 1930s. These are mainly Party and academic histories of the CPC and autobiographies and biographies of Party members. In order to obtain a social history of the times, a sense of the lives that Canadian workers and their families led, publications containing individuals' stories of their experiences in the Depression are drawn on.

² There is a wide range of secondary literature on Marx and Engels' historical materialism. The base-superstructure model explained below is the one most popularly used to explain Marx and Engels' historical materialism. Another model used has three components: an economic base; a political and legal structure; and an ideological and cultural superstructure [Rader, 1979:9].

appearance history moves *unconsciously*, and the results of people's struggles and conflicts appear as *accidents*, in essence every individual contributes to the result, being impelled by economic circumstances [Engels, 1976:488].

Some things are a force of production at one moment in history but not at another. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels view a class as a productive force at certain times, for example, the bourgeois class is seen as the emancipator of productive forces from the fettering effects of feudal relations. The bourgeois class in its ascendance quickly develops the forces of production – transportation, communication and manufacturing – to a much higher level than under feudalism [Marx & Engels, 1977:33-4,36-9]. However, on this matter of productive forces, this writer takes the view of Goran Therborn, who argues, that, to be faithful to Marx, the concept of the forces of production should be used only in the sense of technical organization and labour process. Marx writes of the development and the level of development of the forces of production and it is this that we should concentrate on [Therborn, 1976:374].

Productive forces, on the whole, determine productive relations, which in turn facilitate the forces. '[T]he rhythm of the forces of production is dependent on the relations of production'. Changes in the mode of production come about with an 'increasing mutual maladjustment' between the forces and relations of production. This is the fundamental law of social change.

³ The term conditions is used rather than determines to de-emphasize economic determinism and emphasize a two-way relationship between the base and superstructure. The word conditions means to effect, bring about, place conditions on, and is not such a definitive term as 'determines'; it has more flexibility in it for implying 'incomplete determinism' [Rader, 1979:15] or '*ultimately* determining' (author's emphasis) as Engels wrote [Engels, 1976:1-487].

The growth of the forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production, leading to social revolution to the fall of the old system of relations of production and the creation of a new system...[Comforth, 1982:79].

The forces of production and relations of production are either in correspondence (harmony) or contradiction. They are in contradiction when the relations of production no longer facilitate the continual growth of the forces.

The relations of production rise out of the forces of production. As already stated, relations of production primarily denote social relations among people engaged in economic activity. These economic relations are historical, meaning that they are specific to a particular time and are not fixed for all time, universal facts. Particular relations of production reflect a particular level of development of the productive forces. Historically, as a result of the development of the forces of production – the rise of agriculture and handicraft production – and the accompanying division of labour, a separation occurred between owners and non-owners of the means of production and producers and non-producers (who appropriate from producers). When the means of production are no longer socially owned (owned by everyone) but are owned by individual people or groups of people private property has come into existence. In historical materialism, history is seen as the movement of this private property and the history of class struggle.

Between the economic base and superstructure there exists a dialectical relationship, that is, there is a certain degree of interdependence between the two parts. Historical materialism is not economic determinism nor technological determinism. By dialectical relationship is meant an interaction, as opposed to a one-way contact, *but* between unequal forces, that is, the economic factors have greatest force in the long

run, in these interactions. A dialectical relationship also emphasises process, that the interaction between the economic base and superstructure is *ongoing* in a conflict-resolution style⁴.

As a method, then, historical materialism leads one directly to examine the economic base of society in order to understand the other aspects – political, legal, cultural, ideological etc. One needs to first examine the forces and relations of production to establish the mode of production (that is, their stage of development). Then one is ready to examine other aspects of society as structures that essentially developed out of that particular mode of production and also that reinforce the mode's existence.

⁴ While the base-superstructure model emphasises the economy as the most important factor in societal development, the “dialectical relationship” term is used by this author to emphasize the non-simplistic nature of this relationship between the base and superstructure.