

**A Crisis of Commitment:
Socialist Internationalism in British Columbia during the Great War**

by

Dale Michael McCartney
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APPROVAL

Name: Dale Michael McCartney
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: A Crisis of Commitment: Socialist Internationalism in British Columbia during the Great War

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Emily O'Brien
Assistant Professor of History

Dr. Mark Leier
Senior Supervisor
Professor of History

Dr. Karen Ferguson
Supervisor
Associate Professor of History

Dr. Robert A.J. McDonald
External Examiner
Professor of History
University of British Columbia

Date Defended/Approved: _____ 4 March 2010 _____



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ABSTRACT

Historians who have examined the BC socialist and labour movement have generally overlooked the First World War period, assuming that the left uniformly opposed the war. In reality, close attention to archival sources and newspapers has revealed that the war created a crisis of commitment for BC leftists between their commitment to socialist internationalism and thus opposition to the war, and their support for the British Empire and the war it was engaged in. Eventually, the need for socialist internationalism to protect ethnic Canadian socialists led the BC Federation of Labour to elect a new anti-war leadership coalition. This coalition built several new organizations, including the Federated Labour Party and the One Big Union, as well as led the general strikes in Vancouver and Winnipeg in 1918 and 1919. This study is the first to demonstrate the central importance of socialist internationalism to the success of the post-war left.

Keywords: Socialist Party of Canada; Social Democratic Party of Canada; Industrial Workers of the World; British Columbia Federation of Labour; Vancouver Trades and Labour Council; Labour Movement in British Columbia; World War, 1914-1918; Opposition to World War, 1914-1918; Albert “Ginger” Goodwin; Vancouver General Strike; Winnipeg General Strike; Parmeter Pettipiece; J.H. McVety; William Pritchard; Joseph Naylor.

To my wonderful parents,
You taught me to love learning, and believe in justice.
There are not enough words to express my gratitude,
but I hope you will accept this as a start.

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When I arrived at SFU as an undergraduate, I intended to study American history. I changed my mind after less than an hour of a lecture by Professor Mark Leier. From the Spring of 2000 until the day I write this sentence Mark has been absolutely central to my thinking about the world. Although I am sure that makes him uncomfortable, it has meant a lot to me. Having the opportunity to work on this thesis with his guidance – for five years! – has been incredibly rewarding.

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Chapter 1 – An Army Under Many Banners

In July of 1918, Albert “Ginger” Goodwin, a union organizer, socialist party member, and outspoken critic of Canadian participation in the ongoing conflict in Europe, was hiding out in the woods near Cumberland, BC. Goodwin was living in the woods as a draft dodger,¹ trying to avoid the Canadian authorities that had ordered him to report for military duty, authorities represented in the woods around Comox Lake by a group of local hunters deputized into the Dominion police force. When one of these officers encountered Goodwin on July 27, the special constable raised his gun first and shot, killing Goodwin and unwittingly providing the unifying point for a coalition of anti-war socialists.²

Goodwin’s death led to one of Canada’s first general strikes in Vancouver in protest. His funeral was a huge event in the history of Cumberland, BC, and of the left in BC.³ Since

¹ Goodwin had been classified “D: temporarily unfit for service but subject to reexamination later,” but when he led the smelterworkers of Trail out on strike, he was recalled to the draft board, classified “A: combatant services, overseas.” After exhausting his appeal attempts, he fled to the woods near Cumberland, BC. See Roger Stonebanks, *Fighting For Dignity: the Ginger Goodwin Story*, (St. John’s, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2004).

² Ginger Goodwin’s life and death are recounted in several places. The best researched biography of Goodwin is Roger Stonebanks, *Fighting For Dignity: The Ginger Goodwin Story*. Unlike Stonebanks’s book, most of the work on Goodwin has been focused on uncovering a conspiracy to have him murdered. For a work that emphasizes this mistaken agenda, see Susan Mayse, *Ginger: The Life and Death of Albert Goodwin*. The notion of a conspiracy to murder Goodwin is debunked by Mark Leier, “Plots, Shots and Liberal Thoughts: Conspiracy Theory and the Shooting of Ginger Goodwin,” *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997), 215-224. Finally, Goodwin has become a popular figure for leftists of all types today, and has reached a certain folk hero status in BC. As part of this, there are a number of songs about him, including one by Vancouver punk band DOA’s frontman, Joey “Shithead” Keithley. See Joey “Shithead” Keithley, “Ginger Goodwin,” on *Beat Trash*, (Vancouver: Sudden Death Records, 1999).

³ William Pritchard, a leader of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) in Vancouver, a major anti-war speaker, and the party’s official representative at the funeral, clearly remembered attending the event, even more than fifty years later. According to his account, he was the second and final speaker at the funeral, after W.W. Lefeaux, another anti-war Vancouver socialist. He recounts the funeral, including a portion of his speech, in his account of his own life, recorded in 1972, University of Manitoba at Brandon Archives. In this same recorded autobiography, Pritchard repeated a common belief among leftists who were in BC when Goodwin was killed, explaining that he believed Goodwin was murdered by someone hidden behind him, at least some feet off the ground in a tree. He based this on his examination of the corpse.

his death Goodwin has become a martyr and a symbol for anti-war activists, who see his refusal to fight as an inspiration.⁴

Unfortunately, Goodwin's courage has overshadowed a more complicated story and the politically appealing aspects of Goodwin's death: his principled stand against war, and his long-term dedication to both the socialist left and the anti-war movement, have obscured the difficulties the BC left had coming to support Goodwin's position. Although the general strike that was launched to protest his death appears to be the result of spontaneous organization, it was actually the climax of a long struggle to protest the war and to try to build a stronger working class movement for the post-war period. Goodwin's murder was a turning point in the history of struggle between the BC working class and the Canadian government, but it was also the last part of the fulcrum on which the BC left's approach to the war pivoted from a divided acquiescence to militant, and radical, opposition. Goodwin's murder was the catalyst for action for the left, but the ideological basis for the general strike, and for protest against the war in any form, was laid in the heavily contested years of 1914-1917.

Despite the importance of the first years of the War, however, scholars have shown little interest in studying them to explain the conditions that made the Goodwin strike possible. The pre-war collapse of the left and the post-war workers' revolt that echoed around the world have received extensive study by historians both popular and academic, yet the war period itself, when the changes necessary for a fractured left to become a workers' revolt were made, has received very little attention from scholars.

⁴ The Cumberland Museum, in Cumberland, BC, organizes an annual pilgrimage to Goodwin's grave, proving his continued significance to leftists in BC. See The Cumberland Museum and Archives website for more information, www.cumberlandmuseum.ca (last retrieved 12 October, 2009).

The few historians who have considered those years have largely overlooked the turmoil within the BC left. A. Ross McCormack declares that “the [BC socialist] movement was more unified after 1914 than ever before.”⁵ Martin Robin similarly remarks that, beginning in 1914, the labour movement drifted away from the “safe anchor of the Liberal and Conservative parties” and into the orbit of the radical socialist movement as a result of the pressure of the war.⁶ This passing analysis overlooks the reality that the first three years of the war forced the left to make serious ideological and tactical shifts. Two of these changes were especially important and made the Goodwin strike and the workers’ revolt possible. The first of these was ideological. The beginning of the war was a crisis of commitment for socialists around the world, and in BC many were torn between imperialist and socialist sentiments.⁷ At stake was their professed internationalism, a tenet of all major BC socialist and labour organizations.⁸ Internationalism became hotly contested during the war, and it was only when left-wing leaders pointedly denied British Imperialism and instead committed themselves to internationalism, that socialists were able to build the anti-war coalition that became the post-war revolt.

⁵ A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 118.

⁶ Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, (Kingston, ON: Industrial relations centre at Queen’s University, 1968), p. 118.

⁷ In this period, English-Canadian nationalism was a type of imperialism, through which Canadians identified as British subjects. As Carl Berger puts it, “Canadian imperialism was one variety of Canadian nationalism – a type of awareness of nationality which rested upon a certain understanding of history, then national character, and the national mission.” See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 9.

⁸ The socialist organizations I am referring to are the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDP), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). These three organizations had very different approaches to socialism, which will be explored more fully below, but all three were socialist, and, as became clear in the war, shared some basic ideals, most especially their opposition to capitalism and war. The labour movement in BC included several overarching labour bodies. The largest was the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL), and the second largest was the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC). These two organizations, whose membership overlapped considerably with the SPC and SDP, will also be considered throughout this thesis.

While the socialist movement's changing understanding of internationalism was an ideological adjustment, the second major amendment wrought by the left upon itself during the war was tactical. Before the war the use of the general strike, to oppose the war or otherwise, had been unpopular.⁹ When the war began, in fact, the failure of most of the left to sustain its commitment to internationalism meant that much of the labour and socialist leadership on BC saw the capitalist state as a potential ally in a war against a reactionary Germany. But as these leftists changed their opinion of the war, they had their newspapers censored, their parties made illegal, and their very bodies threatened by the possibility of being sent overseas or murdered for refusing to go. They reacted not by abandoning political action, but instead by embracing the general strike tactic in addition to parliamentary political action.¹⁰ Neither the Goodwin strike, nor the larger Vancouver general strike that came the next year, were the results of socialists embracing the larger ideology of syndicalism; instead the strikes indicate a willingness to consider new tactics as a result of the difficulties of the war. But even the consideration of the general strike as a tactic would not

⁹ On pre-war opposition to the general strike tactic, see Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater*, (Vancouver: BC Federation of Labour – Boag Foundation, 1967), 57, 60. In Europe, the general strike was discussed extensively as a weapon to use against the war. The idea of using a continental general strike to prevent the war had some strong supporters, notably Jean Jaurès, the leader of the French socialist movement. Jaurès may not have fully believed that such a strike was possible, but he appears to have believed that discussing it was worthwhile, for the radicalizing effect it had on workers and supporters of socialism. The IWW pursued a similar tack, constantly discussing the general strike as the ultimate weapon, even when it was clear that the conditions were not ideal for its use. Socialists in BC of all stripes were certainly familiar with Jaurès, as his murder shortly before the start of the war received extensive coverage by *The Voice* and *The BC Federationist*. See *The Voice*, 7 Aug. 1914; *The BC Federationist*, 7 Aug. 1914. For a discussion of the idea of the general strike in Europe to prevent the war, see Phil H. Goodstein, *The Theory of the General Strike From the French Revolution to Poland*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 215-239. The closest any large group in BC came to using the general strike before the war was the Vancouver Island miners' strike of 1912-1914. This strike was ultimately a failure, but for a stretch of several months, all of the mines on the Island were closed by a general strike of miners.

¹⁰ David Bercuson is the historian guiltiest for overstating the BC left's syndicalist tendencies, but he is not the only one. See Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978), p. 252-257. See also Ben Isitt, "The Search for Solidarity: The Industrial and Political Roots of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in British Columbia, 1913-1928," (MA thesis: University of Victoria, 2003). Isitt's overstatement is not as egregious as that by Bercuson, but he still mistakes a tactical acceptance of the general strike for ideological support for syndicalism more broadly.

have been possible without the changes that occurred within the left during the war. Anti-war activism against the First World War was integral to the post-war revolt.¹¹

While the years immediately before the war have been the subject of some study by historians and the workers revolt after the war has been closely studied,¹² the war period in between has received less attention, despite its importance.¹³ The first studies to have examined the war period are plagued with problems, especially the issue of western exceptionalism. Western exceptionalism emphasized the uniqueness of workers' radicalism in Western Canada, but in reality reflected the uneasiness with which liberal scholars

¹¹ It is important to differentiate here between a pacifist objection to the war, and the socialist objection to the war. The pacifist anti-war movement was essentially liberal, even if some of its proponents were not. In general it viewed militarism as the cause of many of society's problems. In contrast, socialist anti-war activists understood militarism, and the war itself, as symptoms of a larger systematic problem. The distinction between these two is important when discussing the relationship between wartime and post-war activism, because it was the structural analysis of the socialist anti-war movement, and its criticisms of capitalism, that became important elements of post-war activism. For an account of the pacifist movement during the war, see Thomas Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

¹² The book-length studies that explore the BC left in the immediately pre-war period include John Hinde, *When Coal Was King: Ladysmith and the Coal Mining Industry on Vancouver Island*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990); and *Red Flags and Red Tape*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). The key studies about the postwar workers revolt are David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*; and *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike*, Rev. ed., (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University press, 1990); Craig Heron, ed. *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

¹³ There are only a few histories of the BC left that include the war period. See A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Peter J. Campbell, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); and Ben Isitt, "The Search for Solidarity." There is more work that is in unpublished thesis format, some of the best of which are James R. Conley, "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa: 1986), and R. A. Johnson, "No Compromise – No Political Trading: The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver: 1975).

approached Marxist subjects, and has been debunked.¹⁴ A. Ross McCormack's *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, for example, suffers badly from this western exceptionalist approach. Western exceptionalism led McCormack to split the Canadian left along an unimportant line – the line between the West and Central Canada.

McCormack also struggles with the actions of the left during the war. Ironically, considering the title of his work, he lumps BC leftists together, and overlooks the important divides that did exist during the war. Although McCormack's research is excellent, he struggles to understand why the anti-war movement gained the momentum it did, and does not offer very much insight into the ideological issues facing the BC left. He recognizes that

¹⁴ Western exceptionalism has been carefully undermined by a variety of scholars, working from a variety of perspectives. At its heart, and from its origins, western exceptionalism is simply a liberal explanation of the roots of working class protest. That is, it generally reflects the assumption that liberal democracy contains all the tools necessary to satisfy the demands of all of a nation's citizens. Thus, those who have chosen a political perspective that challenges the legitimacy of liberal democracy in general must be, in some way, experiencing a unique failure of that system to account for their troubles. According to this model (and according to David Bercuson in *Confrontation at Winnipeg*), if the necessary changes are made to correct this oversight, workers will return to mainstream politics. This understanding of western exceptionalism owes much to Mark Leier, "W[h]ither Labour History: Regionalism, Class, and the Writing of BC History," *BC Studies* 111 (Autumn 1996), 61-75. The most famous Canadian examples of western exceptionalism are David J. Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg; Fools and Wise Men*; A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*; Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*. Also significant is R.A. Johnson, "No Compromise – No Political Trading: The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia." Three specific arguments have been used to undermine western exceptionalism. One demonstrates that the apparently unique radicalism of the western working class was actually a more broadly Canadian phenomenon, while the second suggests that the radicalism of western workers (or workers in general) was not concentrated in the least privileged of workers, or those who worked under the most severe conditions. The third approach argues that the number of radicals in the west has been greatly exaggerated anyway. The best work of the first type is Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt." For a more recent example, see Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*. The second theoretical challenge to western exceptionalism was perhaps first articulated by Allen Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-1921." Since Seager's work, there have been several noteworthy studies. James Conley's work has proposed a "crafts in crisis" model. See James R. Conley, "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919." More recent studies have returned to study the miners the McCormack and Bercuson pointed to as the paragons of radicalism, and suggested that their politics were far more complicated. These studies represent the third challenge to western exceptionalism. John Douglas Belshaw's work on Island miners in the late 19th century emphasizes the role of culture in shaping miners' politics, which he believed were far more conciliatory than McCormack suggested. See Belshaw, *Colonization and Community*. John Hinde's study suggests that the category that affected miners' politics most strongly was neither class, nor craft, nor cultural identification, but instead their perspective on their community. In Hinde's analysis, western exceptionalism is useless because it fails to account for the effect of community expectations on the miners' politics. Instead of radical members of the working class struggling for socialism, Hinde suggests that miners in Ladysmith worked in concert with the middle class residents to improve their community, often in opposition to the Dunsmuirs, the local coal baron family. See Hinde, *When Coal Was King*.

some leftists were concerned about rank and file support for the Empire and the war, but he underestimates the scope of this crisis within the socialist leadership.¹⁵ As will be explored further in later chapters, the siren call of nationalism found eager listeners among prominent socialist leaders, as well as within the rank and file of the labour movement. McCormack, in overlooking this important chasm, fails to explain the complexities of the war period.

Although McCormack's study underestimates the significance of the wartime crisis of internationalism among leftists, and suffers the contradictions inherent in a western exceptionalist study, it was still the best work on the BC left before and during the war until a revisionist school of historians re-examined the topic, starting in the early 1990s. This revisionist history has yet to produce a study that satisfactorily examines the war period itself, but nonetheless the issues discussed in this revisionist literature are the issues that this study will try to engage with.

Three historians feature prominently in the literature. The first is Mark Leier, whose studies examine the pre-war left in Vancouver. On top of several articles, Leier has published two monographs on the pre-war left.¹⁶ His work revises the history written by McCormack and others in several ways, but two that are especially important for this study. The first is his insistence on returning the IWW to the history of the BC left. McCormack has a brief discussion of the Wobblies, but makes them characters in a wild-west story, instead of serious components of the BC left.¹⁷ Leier's work, especially his *Where the Fraser River Flows*, examines the integral role the IWW played in the pre-war BC left. It goes

¹⁵ McCormack, *Reformers*, 123-125.

¹⁶ A partial list of Leier's work on the pre-war union movement, and its ties to the SPC, includes *Red Flags and Red Tape*; "Solidarity on Occasion: The Vancouver Free Speech Fights of 1909 and 1912," *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (Spring 1989); "Workers and Intellectuals: The Theory of the New Class and Early Canadian Socialism," Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, eds. *Making Western Canada*, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996).

¹⁷ See McCormack, *Reformers*, 98-117. Other than McCormack, the only history of the IWW in BC written before Leier's work is Jack Scott, *Plunderbund and Proletariat*, (Vancouver: New Star Press, 1975).

beyond just a recitation of their activism, though, and makes a convincing case for the influence of anarcho-syndicalism on the pre-war ideological landscape in BC.¹⁸

Leier ends his study at the start of the war, when the IWW's role in the BC left began to change. The IWW has an important history of its own during the war, but what matters most for this study is that the IWW's response to the war provided an important intellectual touchstone for the left. In the early years of the war, it was as a foil to the ideology of the mainstream labour leadership. But when, in 1916, socialists and labour leaders in BC began to work against the war, their analysis was clearly influenced by the work of the IWW. The mainstream left demonstrated how important the IWW had become to them in 1918, when the Canadian government made membership in the Wobblies illegal. The Socialist Party of Canada and the BC Federation of Labour invited refugees of the crackdown on the IWW to join their still-legal organizations, thereby finalizing the anti-war coalition.

Leier's study of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) explored the formation of a union bureaucracy and the calcification of the labour movement in BC. Although Leier's *Red Flags and Red Tape* concludes with the creation of the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) in 1910 his account of the ambivalent anti-racism of the VTLC before the war lays the foundation for the argument of this thesis.

While Leier was more critical of the trade union movement in this period than the earlier histories, and suggested that the SPC activists that were at the centre of most histories of the left were not the revolutionaries that McCormack had assumed they were,¹⁹ Peter Campbell has worked to rehabilitate the SPC, and argues that their ideological approach was far more complicated, and politically coherent, than the first generation of historians had

¹⁸ Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*.

¹⁹ Leier, "Workers and Intellectuals."

recognized.²⁰ Although Campbell's work is to some extent at counterpoint to Leier's – Leier sees the SPC as fundamentally reformist, Campbell believes they were radical working class leaders and educators – the two of them actually agree on some key issues. The SPC was more complicated, and contradictory, than has previously been understood, and one of the key issues with which SPCers struggled was the question of racism, whether in the context of Asian exclusion, First Nations rights, non-English speaking comrades, or even that hoary European concern, the Jewish question.²¹ Both Leier and Campbell recognized, in a more nuanced fashion than earlier works, that the question of the British Empire was central to BC socialists' approach.

But both have flaws, and had either of them chosen to extend their studies into the war period, these problems would have been clearer. The first issue they both face is the flexibility of individual membership in these organizations.²² Because the membership of these organizations tended to be fairly malleable – although there were always a few stalwarts

²⁰ The key work in this rehabilitation is Peter Campbell, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

²¹ Campbell's central contribution to these issues can be found in "East Meets Left," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 20 (Fall 1999), 35-65; "Making Socialists": Bill Pritchard, the Socialist Party of Canada, and the Third International," *Labour/Le Travail* 30 (Fall 1992), 45-63; "Not as a White Man, Not as a Sojourner": James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922," *left history* 2,2 (Fall 1994), 37-57.

²² Leier has addressed this in his later work, especially *Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden, Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy*, (Vancouver: New Star Press, 1999), where he follows the career of Robert Gosden, a Wobbly, trade union activist, co-founder of the One Big Union (OBU), and spy for the RCMP. Although Gosden's career, to make a grand understatement, was unusually convoluted, many leftists of the period moved through these organizations as they saw fit, holding several cards at once or changing over specific issues. Several prominent BC leftists were involved with the IWW, SPC, and SDP at different times, on top of their prominent roles in the trade union movement. Examples include J.A. McDonald, who was a Socialist and then, later in life, a Wobbly, and Fred Thompson, who followed a similar trajectory. In contrast, George Hardy began his career on the left in the IWW, and moved onto the SPC and SDP, as may have UMWA organizer and BC Fed official Joseph Naylor. See Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, 6-7; George Hardy, *Those Stormy Years: Memories of the Fight for Freedom on Five Continents*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956); Fred Thompson and David Roediger, ed., *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 1993); Kerry Taylor, "Jack' MacDonald: A Canadian Revolutionary in New Zealand," *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993), 261-268. It is Susan Mayse who asserts that Joe Naylor was a wobbly, see Mayse, *Ginger*, but she also suggests Ginger Goodwin was a member of the IWW, which Roger Stonebanks has proven conclusively is not accurate. See Stonebanks, *Fighting for Dignity*. The result is further questions as to Naylor's affiliations.

who stayed in each organization – their ideological positions were suppler than Leier and Campbell suggest. In the war period, there are several examples of this flexibility. Shifting conceptions of internationalism, the increasing popularity of the general strike, the idea of a new workers’ political party, and even the response to the government’s crackdown on radical organizations demonstrated that ideological differences that were trumpeted from the front page of every left-wing newspaper in 1914 were non issues by 1917. Some of the simple truths of the history of the BC left – that the SPC was impossibilist; that the IWW and the trade union movement were always at odds; that the house of labour, especially the BCFL, was run by the conservative edge of the BC left – are untenable after an examination of the war period.

More recently, another scholar has attempted to use the insights of Leier and Campbell, as well as some new research, to offer a synthesis of the changes wrought on the BC left after 1914. Although his work emphasizes the importance of the 1920s, Ben Isitt is the first historian after these revisions to try to explain the role of the war in the larger history of the BC left, especially as it relates to the foundation of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Unfortunately, while he recognizes the flexibility of the left in this period, he confuses some important ideological details, and as a result misses the remaining distinctions within the BC left. Even more importantly, he overlooks the enormous importance of internationalism, the changing perceptions of which were an engine behind the left’s drastic movement during the war.²³

Isitt asked some of the same questions in his thesis that I will ask in this study. Isitt discusses the pre-war left’s fractured nature, and the struggles activists had trying to build coalitions for industrial and political campaigns. He also rightly notes the close alliance

²³ Ben Isitt, “The Search for Solidarity.”

between formerly disparate parts of the left at the end of the war, when, as he puts it, “these two forms of struggle became intertwined at the end of the First World War, located *between syndicalism and social democracy*.”²⁴

Isitt’s conclusion is that the need for solidarity forced leftists to chart a course between syndicalism and socialism, creating a synthesis and eschewing earlier sectarian battle. But, in fact, there was very little of syndicalism in the late war left. The socialist movement did embrace the general strike as a tactic by the late war period, and the Ginger Goodwin strike did signal a change in how the socialist movement intended to pursue its goals. But syndicalism meant much more than just the use of the general strike, and no other component of the philosophy made any headway with socialists. While the founding of the OBU, contemporaneous with the workers’ revolt and just after the creation of the Federated Labour Party (FLP) indicated that socialists – SPCers and SDPers alike – intended to support industrial action in the post-war period, that was no change from their pre-war involvement in the mainstream labour movement. Instead, the OBU’s creation indicated the frustration socialists felt with the power of conservative unionists within the mainstream labour movement. Instead of an enormous ideological shift, it was simply the result of a longstanding left-right split in the house of labour.²⁵

This is not to say that there were not important ideological shifts during the war, or that syndicalism did not play a role in some of these shifts. There was certainly a tactical *rapprochement* between syndicalists and socialists, fueled by a shared commitment to ending the war, and building socialism to prevent another such conflict. But while the tactical shift

²⁴ Isitt, “The Search for Solidarity,” 35, emphasis in original.

²⁵ Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), p. 467. This is also the characterization made by Allen Seager and David Roth, “British Columbia and the Mining West: A Ghost of a Chance,” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers Revolt in Canada 1917-1925*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 258.

regarding the general strike may imply the sort of massive ideological shift Isitt proposes, there was no corresponding commitment to other syndicalist political planks.

The most important ideological change in the left during the war was not related to syndicalism, but to socialist internationalism. All three of Leier, Campbell, and Isitt acknowledge the interconnected issues of race, ethnicity, and internationalism, but only Leier makes any serious attempt to examine the topic, and his work focuses on the prewar period.²⁶ Isitt offers only token acknowledgement of the topic, which is all the more remarkable considering the language of race and ethnicity fills the pages of wartime left-wing newspapers, which he used extensively as source material.²⁷ In contrast to Isitt, Campbell's work on the pre-war left has been exemplary in its attention to the issue of race, but his coverage of wartime issues of ethnicity and internationalism is much more limited. It is not that his wartime work is token, so much as it is that he is determined to rescue the SPC from the accusation that it was racist, or at least more racist than its competitors. Thus, rather than examining how perceptions of internationalism changed within the SPC during the war, he argues that the SPC was less racist than mainstream society, an assertion that is surely true, but just as surely beside the point.²⁸

The limited attention paid to the issue of internationalism during the war by these scholars is likely the result of their specific agendas. Simply put, neither Isitt nor Campbell are particularly interested in wartime ideological rifts that cannot be easily classified as left-right splits, or as divisions (or alliances) between advocates of parliamentary action and advocates of industrial action. When viewed in this way, the shifting attitudes of the left on

²⁶ Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, p. 125-142.

²⁷ See Isitt, "The Search for Solidarity," p. 24, 126-127.

²⁸ See Campbell, "East meets Left"; "Not as a White Man, Not as a Sojourner?: James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922," *left history*, 2, 2 (1994), p. 37-57; and *Canadian Marxists*, p. 17-19.

questions of nationalism, internationalism, and the war are background to the more traditional sort of political bickering that has historically defined the BC labour and socialist movements.

Isitt is particularly guilty here, as the late war period is central to his study. But the abrogation of socialist internationalism which led to a split in the BC left, and then the emergence of unity built on an internationalist critique of the war, does not easily fit his framework because it is not defined by the traditional distinctions between advocates of parliamentary and industrial action. As a result, Isitt has largely ignored questions of internationalism. Thus, when challenged to define why the left was so divided in 1916 but so strongly united by 1918 he suggests the pressure of conscription forged a coalition built on “solidarity by necessity.”²⁹ While he is right to recognize the importance of the anti-conscription campaign, his description makes this solidarity seem miraculous, rather than hard earned and created by a group of anti-war activists who retained their commitment to socialist internationalism, and took positions of leadership in the new late-war coalition. Isitt acknowledges that 1917-1921 was a period of unprecedented solidarity, but his determination to link it to the political issues of the 1930s causes him to overlook the actual roots of that solidarity.

Only one scholar has paid any serious attention to the question of internationalism during the war, and that was as part of a larger discussion of British Columbians’ exclusion of Asian immigrants. W. Peter Ward wrote the most chronologically complete study of the question of racial exclusion in BC and as a result looks at the left’s participation in the exclusion movement. Unfortunately, Ward employs a heavy-handed psycho-historical

²⁹ Isitt, “The Search for Solidarity,” p. 37.

approach that overlooks the importance of context in shaping ideology, and has largely been debunked.³⁰

Ian McKay, in *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* has attempted a "reconnaissance" of what he has described as the first formation of the Canadian left, the "social evolutionaries."³¹ McKay's goal was to offer some general insights into the national left over three decades, and of course this necessarily means some important topics are missed.

Thus McKay, like McCormack and Campbell before him, overlooks the divisive influence of the war on BC's socialists. He notes in passing that "both of the larger left parties denounced the war," eliding the massive ideological difference between the SPC and SDP's analysis of the war. Instead he continues his story a few paragraphs later with the reaction to the murder of Ginger Goodwin, pairing it with anti-conscription riots in Quebec and the Maritimes as evidence of the left's principled resistance to conscription, which represented the ultimate "violation of the liberal freedom of conscience, of possession over one's own body, and of the rights of minorities."³² By ignoring the split in BC's left in the first years of the war, McKay misses the huge changes that the left underwent during the war. Thus, the importance of the Goodwin strike is actually underestimated in McKay's analysis, because he does not recognize the enormous changes in the BC left that were required to create it.

³⁰ W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed., (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002). For a trenchant critique of Ward, see Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" *BC Studies* 80 (Winter 1988/89), 24-52.

³¹ Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920*, (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2008). McKay laid out the vision of Canada's left history that shaped *Reasoning Otherwise* in *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History*, (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2005), 147-154.

³² McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 421-422.

Despite these limitations, McKay rightly recognizes that the postwar period was suffused with issues of nationalism, and that “in Canada the Great War was the making...of a more organically unified left,” a left that McKay argues was actively internationalist.³³ But because he passes over the war period so smoothly, he ignores how incredibly fraught the creation of an internationalist anti-war workers’ revolt really was. For long stretches of the war, many major leftist leaders chose nationalism over socialism.³⁴ McKay avoids exploring this and as a result misses the centrality of anti-war activism to building the postwar revolt.

By looking more closely at 1914-1919 in BC, therefore, it becomes apparent that responding to the war was a struggle for the future of Canada, and the future of the left. When the war started, the important questions for leftists to answer about the war related to what they would do about the war itself – would they fight? Would they encourage others to fight? Would they allow workers to kill workers in their name? Or would they speak out against the war and risk the consequences?

At first many leftists answered these questions by throwing themselves into the war, at least ideologically. They used the language of scientific socialism to justify the war effort, and to express support for the Entente in general, and Britain especially. To do this, leftists had to betray some important elements of their prewar political philosophy. The most important ideological plank to be abandoned was socialist internationalism – only by treating workers from Germany and Austria-Hungary as enemies could these leftists justify supporting the effort to kill them in enormous numbers. Many leftists chose nationalism over socialism in the crucible of the first twelve months of the war.

³³ McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 431, 450-453.

³⁴ The pressure to make this choice started long before adulthood, even. See Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001).

But by late 1915, the consequences of accepting the war had become much more complicated. The Canadian state engaged in a racialized campaign of internments, which in some cases gathered socialists and union leaders into the government's net. In some cases, even Anglo leftists who spoke out against the war found themselves targeted by the Canadian state. Additionally, the war was far worse than expected, and as the death toll mounted the pressure to increase recruitment numbers mounted as well. With this came the threat of conscription, which for many socialists would make it impossible on any level to define the war as a struggle for democracy, or to justify it using the language of socialism, as they had in the first year of the war.

When the Canadian government arrested socialists for opposing the war, it reminded leftists that while they may have called a truce in the class war to fight the Great War, the capitalist state had not done the same. The left responded by beginning the process of reorganizing again, to muster some sort of defence to the arbitrary power of the state and capital. Conscription made this process much more urgent. Nonetheless, nationalism and petty political differences prevented any serious political organizing until 1917, when a new leadership cadre established itself in both the labour and socialist movements in BC.

This cadre, in contrast to its predecessors, was anti-war and internationalist. As a result, it was capable of mustering a coherent critique of the war, and therefore of conscription as well. These leftists used their critique of the war to build a coalition of leaders – many of whom were previously pro-war – that began to take actions that reflected their internationalist, anti-war ideology, and were also conscious efforts to reorganize Canada after the horrors of the war, both to prevent another war, and to build a more just, socialist future.

This was the coalition of leaders that held BC's first general strike, in 1918, to protest the death of their comrade Ginger Goodwin. They were also the leaders who would build both the Federated Labour Party and the One Big Union. Many of them were involved in the general strikes in Winnipeg and Vancouver as well, the most important battles in the Workers revolt in Canada.

Therefore, the struggle to build an anti-war movement in BC was about much more than just a response to the war – it was about building an antiwar coalition that radicalized the left, and changed the course of Canadian political history.

The chapter following this introductory one will examine the first part of this profound ideological shift, specifically the socialists who, at least for a short while, acquiesced to the war and supported the government. The third chapter will discuss those socialists who continued, after the war started, to oppose it, in print most often but sometimes in action, and will discuss the ideological differences between them and the pro-war leftists.

The fourth chapter will discuss the conscription crisis, a turning point for the anti-war movement. The revival of a credible anti-war movement coalesced around the issue of conscription, and activists put it to good use, bringing new recruits and generally rebuilding the left. This fourth chapter will examine the creation of an anti-war coalition and the beginnings of the post-war revolt.

The final chapter will examine, in broad strokes, some of themes of the post-war period, and suggest ways in which the war, and the anti-war movement, made the post-war period a time of great militancy and serious retrenchment on the part of the left. The roots of both the victories and the defeats of 1919 and 1920 can be seen in the late war period.

Chapter 2 - Lamenting an International Catastrophe

In the decade before the Great War, the Canadian left repeatedly stated its abhorrence for capitalist wars, and both the BC labour movement and the national Trades and Labour Congress threatened general strikes to prevent Canada from participating in a war in Europe.³⁵ Socialists and labour leaders commented unfavourably on the creation of a Canadian navy, with Fred Dixon, a Social Democratic Party of Canada member from Manitoba, dryly remarking, “Canada needs no navy. There is no necessity for the politicians to broaden the basis of their operations by going to sea; they can rob us just as well on dry land.”³⁶ Anti-war sentiment was consistent in the years before the war began, and at each national convention from 1911-1914, the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress reaffirmed its opposition to the idea of a war between Germany and Great Britain, because “capitalists of the world cause all wars,” and they led only to “the degradation of the toilers.”³⁷

Thus when the First World War finally began in August of 1914, the BC left and labour movement appeared more intellectually prepared for the war than most Canadians, in the sense that they had been discussing the prospect of conflict for several years. While popular opinion held that it would only last a few months – Lloyd’s of London took bets at even odds that the war would be finished by 31 December³⁸ – some socialists worried that it

³⁵ The Trades and Labour Council, and the Canadian socialist movement in general, were hardly unique in taking this position. The European socialist movement, at the behest of Rosa Luxembour, pursued a similar tack. Obviously, the Socialist International also failed to mobilize this sort of resistance when the war actually began, which led Luxembour and Karl Liebknecht to found the Spartacist League. See Susan Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, *A History of German Social-Democracy: 1848 to the Present*, trans. J.A. Underwood (Hamburg: Berg Publishers, 1986), 58-60. Also, see Robin, *Radical Politics*, 119; McCormack, 119-120.

³⁶ *The Voice*, 15 Apr. 1910.

³⁷ Robin, *Radical Politics*, p. 119. See also McCormack, p. 120.

³⁸ See John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978), 23.

could be much longer.³⁹ One of these was John Harrington, an important theoretician for the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC). Harrington, in a long series of articles in *The Western Clarion*, explained that the roots of the war could be found in the history of capitalism itself, and that this was a modern iteration of the same drive to conquest that had fostered wars throughout time. Therefore, according to Harrington, it was not likely to be the short fracas that many hoped.⁴⁰

Despite this ideological preparedness for the war, its beginning opened chasms within left organizations in BC, forcing them to take positions that were less abstract than those formulated in peace time, before the front page of every mainstream newspaper called Canadians to do their patriotic duty by supporting the war effort. A practical response to the war had to account for the pressures placed on the left by the increasing popularity of a vulgar patriotism, an interventionist government, and an urgent call to increase production as quickly as possible, all of which were conditions of a country at war.⁴¹ Despite their protestations before the war, when the war actually began, many leftists abandoned their pre-war stance and offered tacit or even explicit support to the war effort. The beginning of the war was a crisis of commitment for socialists around the world, and in BC many were torn between nationalist and socialist sentiments.

³⁹ For the Canadian belief that the war would end quickly, see Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1974), 212-213; John H. Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, 23-24. Elizabeth Armstrong, in her analysis of Quebec's experience of the war, suggests that the belief at the start of the war that it would be short played a key role in creating the "*union sacrée*" that papered over resistance to the war in 1914 and 1915. See Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1974), 54-55.

⁴⁰ Harrington had the invaluable advantage of not starting his series until Christmas 1914 had passed, but nonetheless seems prescient in comparison to his contemporaries. *The Western Clarion*, 2 January 1915 – July 1915. The paper was published monthly for most of this period.

⁴¹ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook have an extensive examination of the home front during the war in *Canada 1896-1921*, 212-320; see also Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).

Internationalism is a rarely discussed component of socialist thinking, yet it had enormous ideological significance in the context of wartime. Any analysis of socialist internationalism must begin with the best-known phrase in the Marxist canon: “Working men of all countries, unite!”⁴² Leaving aside the gendered implication of the phrase, there are two realities that the quote recognizes about internationalism, which are key to understanding Marxist internationalism ever afterwards.

The first of these is the recognition of the existence of countries. As Benedict Anderson has argued, the concept of “nation-state” resulted from the early stages of capitalism, and reflected the bourgeois need to establish market formations with geographic and social boundaries in order to overthrow the divine legitimacy claimed by monarchies.⁴³ Marx and Engels were not only conscious of this process, but believed that it was desirable from their political perspective, for the bourgeois revolution was the precursor to the communist uprising.⁴⁴ But recognizing the existence of countries means that socialists afterwards did not, or should not, advocate a pre-modern shared identity, tribal or monarchical. Instead, socialists building from Marx’s leadership were trying to construct a post-national reality, one that escaped the binds of nationalism, for an international identity.

Marx also explained what this post-national identity should be: a class identity. While some leftists would propose a liberal internationalism built on the promise of humanitarianism – that is, one that tried to base its internationalism on the abstract idea of a human, *sui generis*, unaffected by the social world that creates people in any meaningful

⁴² This phrase is, of course, the final sentence of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. See Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd Edition*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978 and 1972), 500.

⁴³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983), 37-46.

⁴⁴ Marx’s explanation of the need for socialists to support “every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things,” including the bourgeois revolution, can be found in the *Communist Manifesto*. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” in Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed.*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 500.

material sense⁴⁵ – Marx insisted that this internationalism could only be built on the material reality of class conflict. Thus, the community socialists should imagine, to return to Anderson, was an international proletariat, which was post-national, recognizing the existence of countries but refusing to allow the false idols of nationalism or jingoism to distract them from the ultimate goal.⁴⁶ The framework for socialist internationalism was set in 1848, but BC socialists were still struggling with even the basics of Marx’s maxim by 1914.

Before the war the socialist movement had no coherent critique of racism, or of the Anglo-centrism that alienated an increasingly multicultural Canadian working class. Leftists, at times, even supported the profoundly reactionary Asian exclusion movement, which weakened any claims the left made to supporting an international working class.⁴⁷

But that is not the whole story of the left’s perception of internationalism before the war. While many leftists supported exclusion, in certain contexts some socialists opposed it as well. One noteworthy example is socialist and union organizer and socialist Frank Rogers. Rogers, who was murdered in 1903 while on a picket line by company hired thugs, was a strong proponent of organizing all workers, regardless of ethnicity or background, into the fisher’s union. His organizing efforts united European, Japanese, and First Nations fishers

⁴⁵ During the First World War, this sort of internationalism was best expressed by the liberal pacifist anti-war movement. Heavily influenced by Christian teachings, many liberal pacifists struggled to remain committed to pacifism, or internationalism, one the war began. See Thomas Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945*, 3-10, 43-59.

⁴⁶ There is even some evidence that Marx feared a revolution in Europe that predated the world revolution by too long would be defeated, despite Europe’s apparent readiness for socialism. See “Europocentric World Revolution,” in Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd Edition*, (New York: Norton, 1978), 676.

⁴⁷ The two most prominent works on the history of Asian exclusion are Patricia Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); W. Peter Ward, *White Canada*. For the starting point of a broader discussion of racism and Anglo-Centric bias within the BC left, see Peter Campbell, especially “East Meets Left,” and *Canadian Marxists*, 12-13, and his detailed biographical research into the early lives of his subjects; and Mark Leier, especially *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 125-142.

in the same union, negotiating with canneries and refusing to allow racial difference to break class solidarity.⁴⁸

Rogers's work in the BC left largely predates the socialist organizations this thesis examines, but even the SPC – the most rigidly anti-ethnic of the SPC, SDP, and IWW cohort that made up the BC left during the war – has examples of the best sort of internationalism in the pre-war period. D.G. McKenzie, a prominent writer and speaker and member of the SPC's Dominion Executive Committee, spoke often against Asian exclusion, arguing instead, as Rogers did, that Asian workers should be organized into mainstream unions with their white working class contemporaries. For example, when the UMWA local in Lethbridge, Alberta, voted to allow Japanese and Chinese workers to join the union in 1909, McKenzie praised their actions in the pages of the *Western Clarion*.⁴⁹

Peter Campbell has also explored two highlights of pre-war SPC internationalism, in the case studies of Hussain Rahim and James Teit. Rahim was one of a group of South Asian militants working against British imperialism in India, who Campbell argues the SPC supported in spirit, if not in any material fashion, until 1910. Then, Rahim arrived in Canada, and immediately started working with the SPC and IWW. Campbell connects him to the free speech fight of 1912, as well as documents his fundraising efforts on the part of both organizations. On top of that, Rahim – who was Hindu, but had changed his name while fleeing colonial forces – worked with Muslim and Sikh radicals within the *Ghadar* movement, an international anti-imperialist movement filled with thousands of multi-religious South Asians. Rahim rose through the SPC ranks fairly quickly, challenging BC's

⁴⁸ Janet Mary Nicol, "A Working Man's Dream: The Life of Frank Rogers," *BC Historical News*, 36,2 (2003), 2-5; Jeremy Mouat, "Frank Rogers," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XIII (1900-1910), http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=7032&interval=25&&PHPSESSID=h7342ndaatsh51u5q88rbis337.

⁴⁹ *Western Clarion*, 26 June, 1909.

racist voting laws under the auspices of the party, and eventually becoming a member of the Dominion Executive committee in later 1912 or early 1913. Although evidence is scarce, it is possible that Rahim played a leading role in reinvigorating the party at this point, as with his election to the DEC the SPC also began to publish the *Western Clarion* again (the paper lapsed between November 1912 and March 1913) and began recruiting again. Moreover, meetings for the DEC were held in the offices of the Canada-India supply company – Rahim’s business – from February 1913 until late 1914. Rahim’s involvement was fleeting – he appears to have left the party in the fall of 1914, at least partly because he was associated with the murder of Immigration official William Hopkinson by Mewa Singh, another *Ghadarist*. It nonetheless represents the potential for serious socialist internationalism that the SPC represented.⁵⁰

Campbell has also detailed the life of SPC member James Teit. Teit was a long-term member of the Socialist Party of Canada, as well as one of BC’s first anthropologists, and a prominent white ally to First Nations peoples in their struggles against colonialism. Campbell argues that “it is simply impossible to understand the history of the native rights movement in British Columbia in the first two decades of the twentieth century without understanding the role played by James Teit.” Teit is another example of a pre-war socialist whose commitment to internationalism was exemplary.⁵¹

For every story of successful internationalism, though, the left had at least one of ethnic tensions undermining solidarity. One example is the split within the socialist movement between the SPC and the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDP). The SDP

⁵⁰ Peter Campbell, “East Meets Left: South Asian Militants and the Socialist Party of Canada in British Columbia, 1904-1914,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue internationale d’études canadiennes*, 20 (Fall 1999), 35-65. The quote is from p. 39.

⁵¹ Peter Campbell, “Not as a White Man, Not as a Sojourner’: James A. Teit and the Fight for Native Rights in British Columbia, 1884-1922,” *left history*, 2,2 (Fall 1994), 37-57.

broke away from the SPC in 1907, because ethnic socialist groups felt that the leadership of the SPC refused to recognize their unique cultural issues, or even to pay attention to their theory or input. Although few of the standard histories of the socialist movement in the period pay close attention to the split, research on the ethnic socialists themselves reveals how marginalized non-English socialists felt within the SPC. The Ukrainian example is illustrative. In 1907, immigrant Ukrainian socialists founded the first Ukrainian socialist newspaper in North America, *Chevronyi prapor* (*Red Flag*), and affiliated with the SPC. *Chevronyi prapor* was short-lived, as was the association between the Ukrainian socialists and the SPC. By 1909 *Chevronyi prapor* had been replaced by the seminal *Rabochy Narod* (*Working People*), which was popular among the dozen or so Ukrainian locals of the SPC that had been formed across the country, including prominent groups in Nanaimo, Vancouver and Phoenix, BC, a mining community in the Crowsnest pass. These organizations worked within the SPC, and often cooperated with candidates and events organized by the English leadership of the SPC.⁵²

In late 1909, however, Ukrainian socialists called for a Ukrainian socialist convention, apart from the SPC. They were frustrated with their English comrades, who they believed were marginalizing them within the party. In an editorial in *Rabochy Narod* signed by some of the most prominent Ukrainian socialists in Canada, the reasons for this convention were explained.

...Some nationalist-oriented English comrades are trying to relegate us to the background without taking into account that we, like they, pay ten cents a month in party dues which are used almost exclusively in propaganda and literature for the English, while thousands of our people live in the darkness of illiteracy, and the life of our paper, supported solely by voluntary donations, is gravely threatened.⁵³

⁵² Peter Krawchuk (trans. Mary Skrypuyk), *Our History: The Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Movement in Canada, 1907-1991*, (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1996), 5-7.

⁵³ Krawchuk, *Our History*, 7.

The convention led to the foundation of the Federation of Ukrainian Social-Democrats (FUSD). The FUSD leveled some serious criticisms at the Dominion executive of the SPC as well, castigating them for removing “internationalism” from their constitution and demanding they support trade unions and women’s equality.⁵⁴

When the Dominion Executive of the SPC refused to recognize the FUSD as an autonomous organization within the SPC, the Ukrainian Socialists joined locals of German and Finnish speaking comrades in abandoning the SPC to its ethno-centrism. At first the FUSD suggested Ukrainian leftists join the Industrial Workers of the World, but when a group of Winnipeg ethnic locals broke from the SPC, the FUSD helped craft a manifesto that emphasized the reason for their split was that the SPC refused to support internationalism, the Socialist International, or Socialist parties in other countries. With the FUSD, and a faction of ex-SPCers led by Ernest Burns, these locals became the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDP).⁵⁵ Although the FUSD would eventually split, and a small group would rejoin the SPC, the creation of the SDP was a serious blow to the SPC. It disrupted their funding, undermined their membership, and created a competitor for the labour vote. The competition would prevent either party from having any serious electoral success.

BC leftists were not consistently internationalist, as the SPC/SDP split proved. But, on occasion, they utilized internationalist rhetoric, as they did before the war to express opposition to the possibility of an European conflict. For example, at a public debate with a conservative speaker in Victoria in early 1914, A.S. Wells, a Victoria labour leader, Socialist, and secretary-treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL), laid out the left’s objections

⁵⁴ Krawchuk, *Our History*, 8.

⁵⁵ Krawchuk, *Our History*, 8-10; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 73-74.

to militarism. His case was founded on class conflict and politics. As Wells explained, his opponent, Major Lipsett, had “stated that we should all be prepared to do our share to protect our country and the property of the people. Mr. Chairman, I have worked practically all my life, and I have no property and no country – the only country I acknowledge is the one in which I have a job. The workers of the world have no country; they are shipped about like so much cattle to wherever there is a chance to get work.”⁵⁶

Wells’s comments were an impressive antidote to the patriotism of militarist speakers like Lipsett. By arguing that workers were nation-less, Wells was making a radical challenge to notions of patriotic, nationalist, and imperial identity. There was some truth to Wells’s comments as well, as many Canadian workers were born elsewhere, and moved across oceans and borders in search of jobs.⁵⁷ Wells’ analysis is a good example of the criticism that the left used to try to argue against a war, at least until the war started.

When the war finally started, however, leftist opposition crumbled. Leftists in BC responded to the start of the war with either disappointment verging on despair or with optimism about the possible result of the war that reflected a widely shared innocence regarding the scope of the conflict. Parmeter Pettipiece, socialist printer, editor of the *BC Federationist*, SPC candidate in 1912, and prominent leader of the Vancouver Trades and

⁵⁶ *BC Federationist*, 27 Feb. 1914.

⁵⁷ Although, of course, Asian exclusion meant that many workers could not move with such ease. Only a few months after Wells’ debate, the *Komagata Maru* incident – when almost four hundred British Subjects were blocked from entering Canada because they were Indian – would make this clear. See Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*.

Labour Council (VTLC) and BCFL, reacted with sadness.⁵⁸ He titled his editorial “No Ear for Reason,” and lamented the fact that, despite the work of every major labour movement in Europe, “the great war that the world has so long feared threatens at this moment to engulf the human race.” Pettipiece was already sickened by the “horror now convulsing the world,” but believed that “it [was] too late” to do anything to prevent massive slaughter.⁵⁹

In his earliest responses to the real war, Pettipiece was absolutely sure of what to blame for the upcoming disaster: capitalism, and the nationalism that accompanied it. As he explained

competition is war, whether human beings are sacrificed on the battlefields or in the sweatshop and mine, and the international bloody conflict now raging is the logical result of the race of nations for new territory to exploit and for commercial supremacy in the ever-lessening markets of the world.

He resolutely rejected the assertion that the war was meant to protect innocents from the aggressive German government. He reminded his readers that it was Russia that Canada was going to war to protect, “Russia the great archenemy of human freedom, and whose name stands to-day among the nations as the master tyrant of the age...It cannot be anything but a

⁵⁸ For the most extensive look at Pettipiece’s checkered career, see Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 150-151, 168-170. Pettipiece moved further from the SPC after 1912, when he ran unsuccessfully on the SPC ticket in Ymir, and became the managing editor of the *Federationist*, the official paper of the BCFL, in 1914. See *BC Federationist*, 12 June 1914. An interesting footnote to Pettipiece’s career with the left is the ignominious grounds upon which his tenure at the *Federationist* ended. He was removed from his post, and replaced by A.S. Wells, in 1918, when he admitted to the *Federationist* board that he had been embezzling funds from the paper. There followed a confused, and very contentious, debate about advertising payments and the debt owed to the *Federationist* by Pettipiece, the details of which are largely obscured by the minimal note taking by the Secretary-Treasurer in those years. Nonetheless, Pettipiece’s malfeasance never became a legal issue, but definitely marginalized him among the labour left leadership at the very end of the war. See University of British Columbia Special Collections, *Vancouver and District Labour Council Fonds*, Box 22, “Minutes of the Directors of the *BC Federationist*,” May 20, 1918 (p. 76-77), June 27, 1918 (p. 82-83), June 28, 1918 (p. 84-85), Oct. 7, 1918 (90-91), Dec. 17, 1918 (p. 93), Dec. 28, 1918 (p. 94).

⁵⁹ *BC Federationist*, 14 Aug. 1914.

reactionary reason which takes any nation into partnership with the Czar and his corrupt brood.”⁶⁰

Indeed, no nation was excepted from responsibility for this travesty. Pettipiece reminded his audience that history would remember that “the labor movement of Europe and of the world was the only force that, up to the very last moment, fought with every device at its command to prevent the outbreak.” Pettipiece received news of the outbreak of war sadly, describing it as “the supreme human folly for the ages,” and telling his audience that “already thousands upon thousands of human lives have been sacrificed to the conscienceless and insatiable greed of modern capitalism as typified in the personalities of the various governments of Europe.”⁶¹ Moreover, he reacted with anger, accusing the governments of Europe of encouraging the bloodshed to make economic gains.

Despite his passionate response in the first weeks of the war, it only took a month for Pettipiece to abandon socialist internationalism and offer conditional support for the war.⁶² As he explained, “the Kaiser and his brood, the war-mad bureaucracy of Germany, are the obstacle which has to be removed before any further progress in human affairs can be made.” Therefore, since the left had failed to prevent the outbreak of the war, “the best wish which the working class of any country can extend to workers of Germany is, that the military bureaucracy of Germany will be broken and humiliated, so thoroughly, that it can never rise again.”⁶³ Despair became resignation quickly, and resignation soon metamorphosed into support for the campaign against Germany.

⁶⁰ *BC Federationist*, 7 Aug. 1914.

⁶¹ *BC Federationist*, 7 Aug. 1914; 14 Aug. 1914.

⁶² It will come as no surprise to those familiar with the pre-war left that Pettipiece’s internationalism proved illusory. He was a strong supporter of Asian exclusion, and an outspoken supporter of the Asiatic Exclusion League. See Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, p. 169.

⁶³ *BC Federationist*, 21 Aug. 1914.

Those socialist leaders who supported the war after it began were certainly not alone. Canadian workers in general joined the military in massive numbers, and 65% of the men who volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force before 1916 were blue-collar workers in the civilian world.⁶⁴ Although this was less patriotic outpouring than the result of high unemployment in 1914, it still meant that socialists such as A.S. Wells had few examples to support his contention that workers were not motivated by nationalism. Shortly before the war, Wells had proposed a BCFL amendment that would have banned militia members from the labour movement, but in the months leading to the conflict the referendum fizzled, in part because of this widespread mobilization.⁶⁵

There were also those socialists and labour leaders who felt the start of the war could be turned to workers' benefit. George Hardy, a sometime Wobbly and SPCer who worked in the Vancouver labour movement throughout the war, proposed in August 1914 that the war might spell a crisis of capitalism resulting from the massive national debts he argued the war would create.⁶⁶ An anonymous writer in the *Federationist* echoed this sentiment by suggesting that this war, finally, might spur workers to "see through the deception that has been practiced on them" and turn their power to take control of society.⁶⁷ Some leftists hoped to make more prosaic gains by supporting the war; the leadership of the Nanaimo local of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) announced the end of their two year

⁶⁴ From BC alone 55,570 would serve in the war, of a total population of only 450,000. See Matthew E. Smith, "The Development of a Socialist Opposition: The Case of British Columbia, 1880-1945," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1978), 173. See also Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*, (Toronto: Random House, 1993), 278. His description of the outpouring of support by Canadian citizens at the start of the war, as they joined the army in the hundreds of thousands, can be found on p. 47-70.

⁶⁵ *BC Federationist* 16 March 1914 and 27 March 1914. Wells's amendment received heavy support from the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, which voted 12-1 in support, but the Federation itself either never took a vote, or the results of the vote were too insignificant to warrant reporting in the *Federationist*.

⁶⁶ *BC Federationist*, 14 Aug. 1914.

⁶⁷ *BC Federationist*, 28 Aug. 1914.

strike of coal mines. In return, they asked the government to remove the scabs that were “drawn from the very countries with which the empire is at war today” and replace them with the union miners, who were “loyal British subjects.”⁶⁸ For union miners on Vancouver Island, support for the war appeared to be a method of winning back jobs that had been lost in a vicious strike.

Another notable example of left support for the war effort was the willingness of some labour leaders to participate actively in the bureaucracy of the war. In the very early days of the war, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council was invited to send a representative to sit on the council of civic leaders that would manage the “Home Guards,” a voluntary national protection scheme. The invitation spurred a debate within the VTLC about the war, which ended with a speech by James McVety, a former SPC candidate for provincial office, and the president of the VTLC at the time. McVety told his fellow unionists that

We [anti-war unionists] had to face the fact that the Kaiser had plunged Europe into war, and [McVety] was of the opinion that until the Kaiser and his brood had been cleaned out, nothing could be accomplished in the direction of universal peace. [McVety] strongly supported the Council being represented on the civic defence committee.⁶⁹

McVety finally convinced the council, and had himself elected as its representative on the Home Guards committee.

McVety’s argument to the VTLC was a clear indication of the rhetorical tack taken by socialists and unionists who had once opposed the war but now supported it. To make the transition from anti-war to pro-war, and to convince others to make the same shift,

⁶⁸ UMWA local 2155 resolution, as quoted in *BC Federationist*, 14 Aug. 1914.

⁶⁹ “Minutes of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council Executive,” *Vancouver Trades and Labor Council Fonds*, Box 16, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver, BC, 3 September 1914 (p. 187-189).

socialists who supported the war had to make the case that something about the war was different than socialists had predicted before August 1914.

They chose to emphasize the allegedly semi-feudal and autocratic nature of the German government and Germany's aggressive posture in the conflict. Regardless of whether the German government was more responsible than any other for starting the war, the fact that socialists of all stripes throughout the Entente countries decided that it was had an important effect on the anti-war movement. By identifying Germany as a unique threat to the basic values of democracy and socialism, some leftists were able to equate protecting traditional socialist values and ideas of internationalism with the pro-war agendas of the governments of the belligerent countries arrayed against Germany. By declaring the war as a war for democracy, the socialist movement could argue that support for the war was the appropriate socialist response. Of course, such a position flew in the face of the fundamental socialist plank of internationalism, which demanded that any Marxist defend the interests of the international working class, a group of people who would – as even the pro-war socialists recognized – particularly suffer in the war. But in the same way that many of these same socialists had shown little practical commitment to internationalism before the war, so did their response to the war show no serious attempt to protect their ethnic comrades. The pro-war socialists' support for the British empire was a betrayal of their Indian allies, but their support of the Russian empire, which was spared criticism because of its role in the Entente, was both a crime against Finnish, Ukrainian, and Jewish workers in Canada and treason against socialists everywhere. Despite only two weeks earlier calling Russia "the great archenemy of human freedom," the start of the war meant that Russia was

no longer a target for pro-war socialists, which suggests how complete the abandonment of socialist values by many leftists was at the start of the war.⁷⁰

Canadian socialists who forsook pre-war internationalism were not unique, and several prominent leftists from around the world provided eloquent explanations of why socialists should support the war. One of these was the American writer and socialist Upton Sinclair, who was best-known for his novel *The Jungle*. Sinclair argued, as Pettipiece did, that the German government and ruling class were unique threats to freedom and democracy around the world. Sinclair explained that “the difference between the ruling class of Germany and that of America is the difference between the seventeenth century and the twentieth.” To Sinclair, the German ruling class was less than human: it was “a beast with the brains of an engineer.”⁷¹

Another such voice was Peter Kropotkin, the leading European anarchist of the time, who shocked his comrades when he announced his support for the war effort on the part of the Entente countries.⁷² Kropotkin was unequivocal in his support, as well, declaring “I consider that the duty of everyone who cherishes the ideals of human progress, and especially those that were inscribed by the European proletarians on the banner of the International Working Men’s Association, is to do everything in one’s power...to crush down the invasion of the Germans into Western Europe.” Kropotkin went on to insist that this was the right position because Germany was the aggressor in the war, and therefore represented the sort of aggressive autocracy all leftists must oppose. Like Sinclair and

⁷⁰ The quote is from *BC Federationist*, 7 Aug. 1914.

⁷¹ Upton Sinclair, “Resignation from the Socialist Party of America,” quoted in Max Eastman, “The Pro-War Socialists,” in William L. O’Neill, ed., *Echoes of Revolt: The Masses, 1911-1917*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 252-253.

⁷² So shocked was the American anarchist movement that they did not believe reports of Kropotkin’s position, and did not print his discussion of the war until November 1914, three months into the war. See Peter Glassgold, ed., *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth*, (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2001), 374.

Pettipiece, Kropotkin perceived the German government to be a unique threat to the safety of the world.⁷³

Both Sinclair and Kropotkin recognized the irony of their position, that they were giving governments they had opposed for decades their stamps of approval. Sinclair especially admitted that his argument was a departure from his previous positions, and resigned from the Socialist Party of America (SPA) when he took his stance public. Both consoled themselves with hopes that defeating Germany would lead to the expansion of progressive forces in Europe, but as American anarchist Alexander Berkman sadly explained, echoing Pettipiece's original anti-war argument, they had lost sight of the key fact about the war, "the war in Europe is not a war of nations, but a war of capitalist governments for power and markets."⁷⁴ Pettipiece's failure was not the result of the provincialism of BC

⁷³ Peter Kropotkin, "Kropotkin on the Present War," in *Mother Earth*, Vol. IX, No. 9, 9 Nov. 1914, reprinted in Glassgold, *Anarchy!*, 374-379. The quote is from p. 374. Kropotkin's support for the war may have been related to Mikhail Bakunin's own distaste for Germany. Bakunin suffered throughout his life at the hands of the German government, including being tried for treason (despite being Russian) and sentenced to death. Perhaps even more important to Bakunin than the personal pain he had suffered at the hands of the German government was the role the Germans played in defeating the Paris commune, and the libertarian experiment in Lyon, in 1870-1871. Mark Leier, in his biography of Bakunin, notes that the 1873 work *Statism and Anarchy* is beset by an intense dislike for all things German, but especially for Bismarck's government, that extends into his criticisms of German liberals, social democracy, and ultimately Karl Marx. Kropotkin was surely affected by this, in addition to his own contested loyalties to Russia. Finally, it is worth considering that at least a small part of the socialist left's willingness to support a war against Germany and Austria-Hungary was its feelings about the Commune. Socialists in BC celebrated the anniversary of the Commune's declaration every year, much like modern day BC socialists celebrate the life and death of Ginger Goodwin every June. See *Western Clarion*, 14 March 1914. For socialists who regarded the Commune as the height of the left's achievement in Europe, German aggression was likely particularly offensive. For details on Bakunin, see Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), especially 282-283.

⁷⁴ Alexander Berkman, "In Reply to Kropotkin," *Mother Earth*, Vol. IX, No. 9, 9 Nov. 1914, in Peter Glassgold, ed., *Anarchy!*, 380-381. The quote is on p. 380. Berkman's argument is very persuasive, and turns on the belief that the oppressive power of the German government and that exercised by any other capitalist government was different only in degree, and not in nature. As Berkman asked, "Can Prussian militarism be destroyed by the militarism of the Allies? Does not the militarism of a country – of *any* country – ultimately rest on the consent of the people of that country, and has not Kropotkin always argued that the revolutionary consciousness and economic solidarity of the workers alone can force capital and government to terms and ultimately to abolish both?" See Berkman, *Anarchy!*, 381.

socialists, but instead was part of an international collapse, in which leftists could not sustain anti-war work in a world where the nations or Empires they held so dear were at risk.⁷⁵

This general collapse led BC socialists to pay more attention to the European left than they usually did, but only to find a justification for their own sudden about-face. In August and September 1914, BC's socialist and labour papers prominently featured stories about the persecution of leftists, especially in Germany. In the case of the *BC Federationist*, these stories included an investigation of the suspected murder of Karl Liebknecht in 1914. A prominent German left social democrat, and outspoken critic of the war even after it started, Liebknecht was erroneously reported by the *BC Federationist* to have been murdered by the German government.⁷⁶ The paper, voicing the protest of the BCFL,⁷⁷ started by praising Liebknecht as "the foremost member of the socialist group in the German parliament." The author regretted to inform his readers, however, that Liebknecht had been killed by military authorities for refusing to take active part in a war "which he believed had been started by military-mad emperor William and his war party."⁷⁸

The article detailed the investigative work Liebknecht had done that supposedly led to his death. He had exposed a complicated plot by German arms manufacturers to stir anti-

⁷⁵ Even Kropotkin found it in his heart to defend the Russian empire, which he insisted could never be as autocratic as Germany. But his concern was more for France, which he (following Bakunin) viewed as the bulwark against general reaction in Europe. See Kropotkin, *Anarchy!*, 376-379.

⁷⁶ *BC Federationist*, 21 Aug. 1914. For information on Liebknecht, who was eventually murdered after the war by the right-wing terrorist *Freikorps*, see Helmut Trotnow, *Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919): A Political Biography*, (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1984); Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social-Democracy*, 55-81.

⁷⁷ The *Federationist* was the official voice of the BCFL, and cleaved closely to the opinions of the BCFL leadership. This is no surprise, considering the close connection between the two groups (*Federationist* editor Parmeter Pettipiece was also the president of the International Typographical Union local 226, in Vancouver). In 1914, the trustees who monitored the BCFL's interest in the *Federationist* were especially pleased with the close relationship between the *Federationist* and the BCFL, explaining "the editorial policy of the management, we believe that except in a few instances, it has during the past twelve months more nearly expressed the opinion of organized labor as represented by the B.C.F. of L., than it did in past years; in the absence of either protests or instructions from the executive of the federation, we conclude that the views expressed by the paper coincide at least with those held by our executive officers..." See *BC Federationist*, 29 Jan. 1915.

⁷⁸ *BC Federationist*, 21 Aug. 1914.

German sentiment in France in order to justify increased German military expenditures.⁷⁹ Moreover, he had divulged the repellant conditions in German military barracks, and had joined other socialist deputies in refusing to applaud the Kaiser at the close of the parliamentary session in 1914. According to the *Federationist* these incidents had caused great consternation in the German military, and so he was silenced by “military murderers obeying the behest of their maniac master and his brood.”⁸⁰

Parm Pettipiece and the *Federationist* argued strenuously not just that Liebknecht had been killed for protesting German participation in the war, but that he had been murdered for insisting the German government was responsible for causing the war. Pettipiece told his readers that the most important lesson to learn from Liebknecht’s murder was that the German socialist was killed because he recognized “the military bureaucracy of Germany was the greatest menace and enemy which the international peace movement and working class of Europe had to face.” Blaming the German bureaucracy and the Kaiser himself for starting the war and labeling them a special threat to the working class of the world was an important part of formerly anti-war socialists justifying their profound ideological shift.

Making the argument that Germany was uniquely authoritarian was the keystone in the *Federationist’s* support for the war, but it was not the only argument Pettipiece could muster. If his audience was not convinced by the argument that Germany needed to be destroyed for democracy to prevail, Pettipiece insisted that it should at least admit that there was nothing to be done once the war began. As he put it:

We have consistently opposed all preparation for war and the cultivation of the war spirit. We have passed resounding resolutions by the mile. We have denounced, protested, petitioned,

⁷⁹ This was one of the finest moments of Liebknecht’s career, for it united his campaign against corruption in government (officials as prominent as the Kaiser himself were investors and close friends of the offending companies) and his antimilitarism. See Trotnow, *Karl Liebknecht*, 120-126.

⁸⁰ *BC Federationist*, 21 Aug. 1914.

and “ever humbly prayed” for years. But all to no avail...It has ceased to be a question of what ought to be, what should be, or what might have been. It is now a question of what Is.⁸¹

The article then compared the situation the left found itself in after the war started to the experience of being tossed out of a boat and into the ocean, and asked rhetorically whether the right response would be to write a “ponderous” resolution opposing the upsetting of their boat. No, the only option was to make the best of what had happened.

Another *Federationist* article reinforced Pettipiece’s point a few weeks further into the war. The author of the editorial, entitled “We Must Choose,” argued that there were three sides in the early stages of the war: the people of Germany; the people of Belgium, Britain, and France; and the “common enemy of everything democratic in all those countries...the military caste or bureaucracy as represented by the Kaiser and his party in Germany.” The author carried his analysis to the conclusion reached by pro-war socialists the world over. He wrote, “as long as the threat of the Kaiser’s military madness remains, the feeling will always be abroad in the world that at any time it may break out, and in a moment destroy the patient work of those who labor for peace.” Therefore, there was only one way to protect peace: “disagreeable as the conclusion may be, we are obliged to admit that the only force capable of destroying the menace of German military bureaucracy is military force.”⁸²

As this second article shows, Pettipiece – as a prominent union leader, former SPC election candidate, and editor of the *Federationist* – had staked the ground upon which the socialist left would divide in those early months of the war. He challenged anti-war socialists to accept that their time had passed, insisting

Now that things have reached the stage they have, there is no half-way house or place for compromise. To sit on the fence in face of

⁸¹ *BC Federationist*, 21 Aug. 1914.

⁸² *BC Federationist*, 4 Sept. 1914.

such a plain proposition as is seen in Europe to-day, either means that we have not the mental equipment capable of forming an opinion, or that we are afraid to state what opinion we have formed. Or course we can shirk the whole question, and retire into a corner, babbling theories like a religious fanatic telling his beads. But...we can see that the military party in Germany has, by a steady and consistent policy covering the last forty years, made itself the most formidable foe of democracy in Germany. And that it is now using its power to crush the democracy of adjacent countries with a ruthlessness which is disgusting even to those who accept the ordinary horrors of war as part of the game.⁸³

Pettipiece's position is clear – no legitimate supporter of democracy, or even anyone committed to pre-war conceptions of peace, could oppose the conflict once it had started, because Germany was a threat to democracy, and only military force could end this threat. The sudden converts to the war were careful to connect their support to the issues the pre-war peace movement had been based on, notably lasting peace and democracy. By claiming that the government of Germany was a unique menace to democracy, pro-war socialists' analysis revealed its close connections to more conservative notions of nationalism and support for the British Empire.

The only other option besides supporting the war that Pettipiece considered possible was to retreat to a corner and babble meaningless theories. This derisive description was clearly meant to discredit remaining opponents of war within the BC socialist left, particularly the SDP, which continued to agitate against the war through the pages of their papers. By failing to recognize what was at stake, these socialists had rendered themselves irrelevant, in Pettipiece's view.

Thus, the socialists who abandoned their anti-war stance in early August 1914 had two arguments to defend their position. The first was that Kaiserism was the most

⁸³ *BC Federationist*, 4 Sept. 1914. Other examples of this perspective, which dominates public discussions of the war in the BC labour press in 1914, can be found in "Organized Workers are not in favor of war," *BC Federationist* 25 Sept. 1914; "Proposed Socialist Conference," *BC Federationist*, 27 Nov. 1914; "German Labor and the Effects of War," *BC Federationist*, 18 Dec. 1914.

autocratic force the world knew, and it was their duty as socialists to defeat it. The second was to argue that the war had begun, and it was useless to oppose something that was underway and inevitable at that juncture.

Both arguments required pro-war leftists to betray large parts of their pre-war analysis. Considering the spirited attacks these same socialists had launched before the war at the Canadian and other governments around the world, especially the Russian Czar, declaring Germany unusually autocratic meant conveniently forgetting their past positions. And after years of arguing against capitalism and liberal politics, principled opposition to powerful and sometimes difficult to name forces was nothing new. In fact, when Pettipiece told his readers that the issue was not “what ought to be,” or “what should be” but instead was a matter of “what Is,” he easily might have been a pre-war liberal, telling socialists to abandon their campaign to abolish capitalism. Abandoning socialist internationalism in order to support the war meant forsaking other aspects of socialist thinking as well, and Pettipiece’s efforts to defend himself reflected that reality.

When pressed, the pro-war left used both of these arguments to defend its position. One example of this was the debate at the BCFL convention of 1915 over the possibility of a war between Canada and the United States. Because the USA had remained neutral in the war, there was some fear that the USA and Canada might one day be on opposite sides of a military conflict. A unionist from Nanaimo urged the convention to take a position that guaranteed a general strike in the event of war between the two North American countries. The debate that ensued included A.S. Wells announcing that he supported any resolution that reminded workers that it was “stupidity” for workers to fight each other, while Vancouver Island miner Joseph Naylor told the convention that it should be advocating against militarism in general, and not just the threat of a war with the USA. But the debate

also included both the argument that the idea of a possible war between the countries was “groundless” because of their shared culture, and the insistence that standing against war was useless. James McVety told the convention that, while he once would have supported such a resolution, he could not after “the way in which all the anti-war talk among workers in Europe during the past fifteen years had collapsed last August.” Thus the pro-war left used both arguments – that the war resulted from the unique crimes of the German government and that it was impossible to stop it, anyway – to speak against campaigns to oppose militarism in the BCFL as well as in the pages of the *Federationist*.

The pro-war argument that leftists needed to accept the reality of the war, rather than struggle against it, was an attitude that prevailed among more than just the labour leaders who acquiesced to the war. The SPC rarely published editorials in its newspaper the *Western Clarion* that were as brazen in their support for the war. But from the first issue of the *Clarion* after the war started, and for two years afterwards, the overwhelming tone of the SPC response to the war was one of resignation at best, and cynical acceptance at worst. While the SPC was never openly supportive of the war in the same way that the *Federationist* was, it was not critical of the war either, instead arguing it was an inevitable result of capitalism.

The basis of the SPC’s acquiescence to the war was laid out on 6 August 1914, when the SPC released its manifesto in response to the start of the war. It promised that the SPC would not pass “futile resolutions” against the war, but would instead draw attention to the fact that the war resulted from the inevitable conflict for markets between international capitalists. Seen in this light, the only hope for the international working class was to abolish capitalism. Until that was done, the Dominion Executive told Canadian socialists, there was

no way to prevent such conflicts.⁸⁴ By November of 1914, the *Clarion* was regularly running articles stating that “we cannot prevent war under this god given system,” and assuring its readers that there would be “no peace under capitalism,” which served as uncharacteristically succinct summations of the SPC’s position for the following two years.

Unlike the *Federationist*, the SPC’s *Western Clarion* did not openly support the war, and its response was more internationalist in that it eschewed the anti-German rhetoric that characterized *Federationist* editorials.⁸⁵ However, even though the SPC did not openly support the war it was just as defeatist about the prospects of ending it, and thus showed virtually no commitment to the anti-war position it had taken before 1914.⁸⁶ Although there were several articles in the August issues of the *Clarion* that decried the war and lamented the potential loss of life, the writers had little to offer in terms of support to those leftists who still opposed the war. According to one editorialist, “we realize with profound sorrow the awful circumstances surrounding our European comrades, but we can offer no aid so long as these dynastic wars are being fought...When the opportunity presents itself to the European workers to rise in revolt against the brutal military rule of capital, it becomes the duty of every workingman on earth to render what aid he may.”⁸⁷ Although the SPC was less

⁸⁴ *Western Clarion*, 15 Aug. 1914.

⁸⁵ The manifesto was practically internationalist as well in that it was co-written by William Prichard, J.H. Burroughs, and Husain Rahim. Rahim, who served on the Dominion Executive Committee of the SPC for a year and also helped the *Clarion* be printed for a short while, left the SPC shortly after the manifesto was published, likely due to complications resulting from his role on the shore committee that welcomed, and tried to assist, the *Komagata Maru* earlier in 1914. For more on Rahim, see Peter Campbell, “East meets Left: South Asian Militants and the Socialist Party of Canada in British Columbia, 1904-1914,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 20 (Fall 1999), 35-66. For the story of the *Komagata Maru* see Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*.

⁸⁶ There was an exception to the internationalist perspective of the *Clarion*. In October of 1914, then editor J.H. Burrough published an article entitled “The Affirmation of ‘German Culture’” written by socialist stalwart E.T. Kingsley, in which Kingsley argued that the war was the result of the militaristic culture inherent to Germany. That argument, which was a perfect parallel to the attitude of the *Federationist* at the same time (and for the next three years) was at odds with the SPC’s political direction, and Burrough was removed as a result of publishing the article, and replaced by William Pritchard. See *Western Clarion*, 24 Oct. 1914 for the original article, and *Western Clarion*, 21 Nov. 1914 for the discussion of Burrough’s ouster.

⁸⁷ *Western Clarion*, 29 Aug. 1914.

willing to support the war than the BCFL, it completely abdicated responsibility and accepted the war as unavoidable. Ideologically, the result was the same, as the SPC also failed to register a strong stance against the war, and slowly drifted away from even the modest criticisms it registered in the first month of the war.

The tone of inevitability that coloured much of the *Clarion* coverage of the war was clear in the titanic series “War – its cause and outcome,” by J.H. Harrington, which comprised a large part of the SPC response to the war before 1917. Starting in January 1915, Harrington’s long essays were printed in every issue and composed a seven-part series, which examined the causes of the war both ancient and modern. The essays are long and turgid, but also thorough and demonstrate a strong commitment to Marxist analysis.⁸⁸ They are also a perfect example of the most common complaint about the SPC: that the party was more concerned with exploring the timeless science of socialism than they were dedicated to practically aiding the working class.⁸⁹

Harrington explained, in the opening of the first in the series, that “this war, and all other social evils are but incidental to the crowning evil, capitalism.” Thus, “to the slaves of capital, a knowledge of the immediate author of this present trouble is of little account. Of incalculable value, however, would be an idea of what may happen when ‘the war is over.’” The remainder of the first of the series was dedicated to explain the roots of property ownership, and the history of superstition among “primitive man.”⁹⁰ The second article explored the growth of society from ancient times, through the “first form of social

⁸⁸ J.H. Harrington, “The War – its cause and outcome,” in *Western Clarion*, 2 Jan. 1915; 16 Jan. 1915; 30 Jan. 1915; 1 March 1915 (there was no February issue); 27 March 1915; 10 April 1915; May 1915 (at this point the *Clarion* became a monthly publication); July 1915.

⁸⁹ For a thorough review of the common complaints about the SPC, see Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, p. 8-11.

⁹⁰ *Western Clarion*, 2 Jan. 1915.

organization,” “the establishment of a political state,” and explained how “class antagonisms spring from property.” It then explored the rise of Rome and Carthage in the ancient era.⁹¹

The third in the series continued with this analysis of “social change” in the modern era, starting with the decline of Rome and finishing with the rise of Charlemagne.⁹² The fourth in the series explored the rise of modern commercialism, through the growth of capitalism, and into the “advent of Prussia.”⁹³ In the fifth article Harrington turned his attention to the “inevitability of war under commodity production,” although he still had little insight to offer in relation to the war then being fought. It was only in the final lines of this fifth part of his epic series that Harrington offered any insight into the Great War, when he explained “while slavery holds a place in this distracted globe there will be war. Let sentimentalist, Socialist and otherwise, prate of ‘war on war’ as they will. War on slavery is the only means to affect that end.”⁹⁴

In the sixth of the seven articles, Harrington returned to more theoretical ground, explaining the modern financial system.⁹⁵ Finally, in the seventh of his articles, he explores the war that Canadian troops were then fighting. But, as promised, he showed no interest in analyzing its causes or potential ways to end it. Instead, he attended to the “probable outcome” of the war. Echoing the opinion of George Hardy in the *Federationist*, Harrington predicted a heavy debt load for the Entente countries. More importantly, though, Harrington believed that the war had forced countries to abandon “the old method of production,” and instead “[revert] to a form of communism.” This had brought the “slave

⁹¹ *Western Clarion*, 16 Jan. 1915.

⁹² *Western Clarion*, 30 Jan. 1915; 14 Feb. 1915.

⁹³ *Western Clarion*, 1 Mar. 1915; 27 Mar. 1915.

⁹⁴ *Western Clarion*, 10 Apr. 1915.

⁹⁵ *Western Clarion*, May 1915.

class...face to face with its master class,” which was an important step towards the working class becoming “united as a class.”⁹⁶

If it was to become united as a class, Harrington hoped the working class might “have some awkward questions to ask when society denies them, in times of peace, what she supplied in profusion in times of war.” If the workers did ask such pointed questions, “this energy directed along class lines will form the necessary objective force with which to revolutionize society. Directed along racial and national lines it would almost certainly result in anarchy and years of strife: the negation of progress.”⁹⁷

Thus, Harrington’s series, which basically comprised the entirety of the *Clarion*’s response to the war in 1915, culminated in a message that was very similar to that of the pro-war *Federationist* writers, even if it was not rooted in the same ideological ground. Harrington recognized the problems of nationalism and nations, but he had no answer for the current war. While he hoped that it might lead to the creation of a revolutionary working class, he fundamentally left the actual work of resisting capitalism and the millions of deaths that he admitted the war would cause to others: either to European workers, as the *Clarion* had earlier, or to the left in the future, after the war was over.

Most importantly, the essays meant that the SPC was discussing the war in those first years, but never actively advocating a strategic stance against it. Instead, as with the tone of their manifesto, the essays treat the war as the inevitable result of capitalism. As Peter Campbell has argued, the SPC was dedicated to the education of workers more than to

⁹⁶ *Western Clarion*, July 1915.

⁹⁷ *Western Clarion*, July 1915.

direct political action for most of its existence, and the early years of the war were no different.⁹⁸

There were pockets of analysis that belie this description. J.H. Harrington, in the midst of his analytical series in March 1915, wrote a *Clarion* editorial railing against the emptiness of nationalism for workers, for example. He warned his readers that “the national spirit must be rooted out, the class spirit must be fostered.” The good news was that “Marxian philosophy will do both jobs effectively,” and thus Harrington prescribed worker education as a solution to the war.⁹⁹ Coming in the context of his long explanatory series about the inevitability of the war, though, Harrington’s critique of nationalism was overwhelmed by the message that the war had been impossible to avoid.

Generally a resigned acceptance of the inevitability of the war was the position of the SPC, at least in the pages of its official organ. The result was that the SPC and the public intellectuals who wrote and edited its newspaper ended up in much the same position as the generally more conservative union leadership in BC. How they got there was different – while the labour leadership in the BCFL actively supported the war, making theirs a sin of commission, the majority of the SPC leadership – SPC founder E.T. Kingsley was an exception – disliked the war, but treated it as if it was inevitable, and thus not worth really exploring or speaking against. To continue the metaphor, theirs was a sin of omission. Regardless of how its constituent parts got there, within a month of the war starting, the organized left in BC had largely come to terms with the war effort.

⁹⁸ Campbell explains this in a more flattering way, by explaining that SPCers “were not so much interested in what *is* as in what the what *is* is in the process of becoming.” That is, they were dedicated to educating workers about what the future could be, and less concerned with organizing them to be stronger in the short term. Even Campbell notes, though, that there was an important exception to this, when SPCers threw themselves into the labour revolt in the late war and postwar period. See Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, p. 22-23, and 9.

⁹⁹ *Western Clarion*, 27 March 1915.

There were consequences to pro-war leftist's ideological waffling that they likely did not foresee. Labour leaders and socialists who chose to support the war, and who argued that the German government and people were more militaristic, more feudal, and ultimately more "backward" than white British subjects, offered succor to wartime perceptions that ethnicity determined people's behaviour, and that it was immutable. Of course, this was counter to the very basis of Marxism – that society was created by economic realities, not ethnicities – and it meant that non-Anglo workers could not hope for the BC left to help to prevent the deaths of millions of workers on the battlefields of Europe. But it was not just in Europe that the left's compromise had an impact – in BC itself, the left's abdication of its role in critiquing the language and ideology of nation meant that that same left was no longer able to offer the important political support that their ethnic comrades in Canada required. Thus, when the Canadian government began interning "enemy aliens" – that is, people who originally hailed from the countries that formed the Central powers – the BC left was incapable of mustering any serious criticism or resistance.

Internment began with the passage of Privy Council order 2721 (PC 2721) in October, 1914.¹⁰⁰ Internment was justified by the government on the notion of subjectship which assumed that an immutable identity resulted from birth place, as opposed to more liberal notions of citizenship, in which the government's lack of trust could have been allayed by immigrants attaining Canadian citizenship. Because the Canadian government retained its emphasis on subjectship, people born in the countries or empires with which

¹⁰⁰ The order was made law 27 Oct. 1914. See James Farney and Bohdan S. Kordan, "The Predicament of Belonging: The Status of Enemy Aliens in Canada, 1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39,1 (Winter 2005), 85-86. For a longer history of the change in Canadian policy towards "enemy aliens" from May 1914 until the post-war period, see Gregory S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-1920: The Impact of the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 73,3 (1992), 281-314. See also Barbara Roberts, "Shoveling Out the 'Mutinous': Political Deportation from Canada Before 1936," *Labour/Le Travail* 18 (Fall 1986), 77-110, especially 81-86.

Canada was then engaged in a war could not be trusted – the state assumed their loyalty would lie with the land of their birth.¹⁰¹ For the Canadian government, this was even more important when those immigrants espoused political philosophies that ran counter to the government or capitalism. Thus, when the government began interning “enemy aliens,” it purposely targeted those Germans and Ukrainians who were involved in the labour movement or socialist political parties.¹⁰² An important result for the BC left leadership was that their acquiescence to the ethnic bias of wartime Canada had placed them in a position where it was very difficult to defend their colleagues from this sort of attack by the Canadian state.¹⁰³

Proof of the left’s inability to protect its ethnic members was the experience of a trade unionist from the Crowsnest Pass named Herman Elmer. The Elmer case was an example of the government’s willingness to persecute leftists for speaking against the war, but more importantly it indicated that the violence against workers that a pro-war position tacitly accepted was ultimately a potential danger in Canada as well. By abandoning socialist internationalism in its attitude towards Europe, BC leftists also deserted their commitment to a united multi-ethnic left at home.

Vancouver socialists learned of Elmer’s predicament from an anonymous letter – the author signed it “proletarian” – that appeared in the *BC Federationist* on October 16, 1914, only a couple of months into the war. Elmer, who “proletarian” described as “a most

¹⁰¹ This explanation of the ideological underpinnings of the Canadian government’s program of internment originates with Farney and Bohdan, “The Predicament of Belonging,” p. 86.

¹⁰² Kealey, “State Repression,” p. 292-294.

¹⁰³ For a good overview of the popular Canadian reaction to German and Austro-Hungarian immigrants during the war – a reaction that was as ignorant and fear-based as it was widespread – see Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1974), 224-227. It is worth noting that Brown and Cook, in an excellent example of the limitations of their sweeping survey, make some small mistakes here (they call the IWW the *International Workers of the World*), and moreover generally regard the actions of the Canadian government to be both restrained and appropriate. Nonetheless, their discussion of popular demand for anti-German laws, and their approving account of the Government’s authoritarian response, is well researched.

energetic and progressive man,” was born in Germany, but had lived in Canada at least long enough to become a leader of the UMWA local in Michel, BC. The Michel local was part of District 18 of the UMWA, western Canada’s oldest UMWA district, and also one of its most radical, as it had endorsed the SPC as its political wing the year before the war.¹⁰⁴

While in a private meeting of the local, Elmer told the audience something that socialist speakers had said for several years: that the war was a conflict between capitalist powers, that it was unjust, and that he opposed it. In an act that demonstrated the intimate connection between the ideological collapse of internationalism and the practical breaking of solidarity, one of Elmer’s union brothers leaked his comments to the local press, and Elmer was arrested for his stance and for his nationality.¹⁰⁵

“Proletarian” told *Federationist* readers that the matter hinged on the question of where Elmer had been born. As he explained, the designation of German and Austrian-born people as “enemy aliens” meant they had virtually no rights within Canada, and could easily be targeted for any political or social reason. He warned other non-naturalized Germans and Austrians “to take special care of themselves during the war,” because they were clearly going to be easy scapegoats for animosity created by the conflict in Europe.¹⁰⁶

It was also one of the earliest hints from the authorities that, as much as the left might feel like the war had changed the situation enough that it justified their conditional support for capitalist governments, the Canadian government and its ruling class allies were

¹⁰⁴ The only extensive history of the local is Bruce Ramsey, *The Noble Cause: The Story of the United Mine Workers of America in Western Canada*, (Calgary: UMWA District 18, 1990). Unfortunately, this history is severely compromised by its “official” history status, and fails even to discuss the Elmer case

¹⁰⁵ *BC Federationist*, 16 Oct. 1914.

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note here that, although all of the immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire were termed Austrians, many of them were from the region now known as Ukraine. These workers were some of the most vocal supporters of the left in Canada (especially, in this period, the Social Democratic Party of Canada), and generally extremely anti-Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nonetheless, they were viewed as “enemy aliens.”

not prepared to call a truce to the class war. As “proletarian” detailed in the letter that alerted BC unionists to the Elmer case, “it may also be interesting to know that although corporations and coal companies are still employing so-called alien enemies, yet a case has come to our knowledge of such an employee not being able to take a case against his employer in court....” Earlier in the letter, the author had quoted from *Halsbury’s Laws of England* as to the laws regarding enemy aliens, which stated roughly that they had no legal rights under English common law. The example of non-naturalized workers being refused their rights in an industrial situation was alarming to unionists, and made the class ramifications of an apparently ethnic conflict clear to the pro-war left.¹⁰⁷

Just as the letter’s author “proletarian” had feared, the “alien enemies” act was used early in 1915 against a foreign-born worker, in an attempt to deny him his right to sue his employer after he was injured at work. An Austrian worker named Topay, after being injured in an accident in a mine in Michel, sued the company for damages. The company responded by pressing the judge to rule that he was ineligible to sue, because he was an “enemy alien.” Although the judge ruled in Topay’s favour, the case exacerbated labour’s fears that the enemy alien legislation might interfere with the workings of the unions.¹⁰⁸

The Elmer case made the issues of the war immediate, domestic, and internal, and raised the spectre of betrayal of ethnic comrades within the union movement. Despite this, pro-war socialists offered no support to Elmer, beyond printing the long letter discussing his case, and promising to explore the issue further.¹⁰⁹ Even the leadership of the UMWA did little to prevail upon their members to retain solidarity with their ethnic comrades. Speaking

¹⁰⁷ *BC Federationist*, 16 Oct. 1914. See also Kealey, “State Repression,” 281-283, for an explanation of the class significance of the crackdown on “enemy aliens.”

¹⁰⁸ *BC Federationist*, 19 Feb. 1915.

¹⁰⁹ *BC Federationist*, 14 Nov. 1914.

at the annual convention of UMWA District 18 in 1915, the District's vice president, William Graham, tried to offer some modest encouragement to the UMWA rank and file to protect the union's foreign-born members. He told the delegates that he viewed "with an intense horror" the events in Europe in the past year. He lamented that the war, while it might mean more work for the union's members, had seen key unionists depart from the District, either to serve in the military or through the "arrest of some foreign-speaking brother who, justly or unjustly, incurred the wrath of the military authorities." Graham continued that, in his opinion, UMWA members "should use every endeavour to try and make matters as comfortable as possible" for the imprisoned union brothers. But, he quickly added "it is not my intention to comment on any great length on the present reversion to barbarism, and will content myself with voicing my own personal feelings."¹¹⁰ Although Graham was critical of the government's treatment of "enemy aliens," his statements were carefully qualified and paralleled the position of the *Federationist* that some foreign-language unionists deserved to be interned.

The District 18 representative to the UMWA's international executive, David Rees, was more adamant in his denunciations of the attacks on UMWA members. He told the convention delegates that it was incumbent on them to "go on record decrying" the war, and suggested that the union demonstrate "to the workers at large, especially in view of the cosmopolitan make up of our organization, that we have no quarrel whatsoever with one another." Rees addressed Elmer's arrest specifically as well, telling the audience:

I am sorry that Herman Elmer and other members of our organization have been interned as prisoners of war; more so when I think of the insidious and unmanly action of the party who laid information against Elmer. Needless to state his solemn obligation to his brother man was immediately set

¹¹⁰ University of British Columbia MSS Collection, Rare Books and Special Collection, Susan Mayse Fonds (hereafter Mayse Fonds), Box 2, Folder 19, p. 10-11.

aside when he felt he had a chance of courting the favor of his masters by causing the removal of a scholar like Brother Elmer.¹¹¹

Rees did speak against Elmer's imprisonment, and he castigated the union members who were responsible, but he did not offer any plan for action or resistance, and his language was guarded and careful. Although Graham and Rees joined the *Federationist* in taking a modest stance against Elmer's arrest, neither the leadership of the BCFL nor of the UMWA were prepared to take action against the war, or even to protect their "cosmopolitan" rank and file.

This uneasy acceptance of the imprisonment of "enemy aliens" remained the position of the pro-war leftists even when Anglo-Celt workers in Michel and Fernie "went so far as to threaten job action if they were forced to work with 'enemy aliens'" in May 1915. When the miners took this aggressive a stance, the editors of the *Federationist* were shocked. But even when faced with this grotesque betrayal of the spirit of the labour movement, the left could only react with a confused, and conflicted, scolding in the pages of the *BC Federationist*.

In an article entitled "The Amazing Proletariat," an unknown *Federationist* writer explained the actions of the Crowsnest Pass miners. "It amounts to this – members of the United Mine Workers of America, who can claim British citizenship, sought to deprive of employment other members of the United Mine Workers of America who are of German or Austrian nationality."¹¹² But for all that the actions of these miners was clearly against every tenet of organized labour and socialism, the writer could still find a scenario where he could understand their actions. If these "enemy aliens" had done anything to disrupt the war

¹¹¹ Mayse Fonds, Box 2, Folder 19, p. 46-47.

¹¹² *BC Federationist*, 25 June 1915.

effort, then they were “fools” and deserved their treatment. The author urged the German and Austrian miner to remember “he is in an enemy country. He should keep his tongue still, and set a careful guard upon his actions. If he has not enough sense to do these things...then he is an ass, and not worth [our] consideration or sympathy...”¹¹³

For socialists who had spent years working against the war the suggestion that their German members had no right to work against the war was rank hypocrisy. Worse yet, the author made any defence he was trying to mount for immigrant workers meaningless when he told his audience that any intemperate remarks on the part of “enemy aliens” made them “not worth consideration or sympathy.” The best the writer could muster was that there appeared to be no such misbehaviour in this case, and so he offered a lukewarm condemnation of the actions of the Anglo miners.

For those socialists who found the anti-ethnic bias of Michel miners upsetting, it was especially frustrating that it was found in this local of the UMWA, which contained some of the most progressive workers in the province. In 1914, before the war, they had officially endorsed the SPC as their political arm. In fact, the community of Hillcrest, on the Alberta side of the border but involved in the same protests and in the same local of the UMWA, had returned a Socialist to the provincial legislature only a few years earlier. As even the author of “The Amazing Proletariat” noted, “it is pretty plain proof that a glib aptitude for using the terminology of scientific [socialist] economics, is no sign of international working class consciousness, or working class solidarity.”¹¹⁴ Even for pro-war socialists, the actions of the rank and file Anglo miners sat uneasily with the ideals of socialism or union solidarity.

¹¹³ *BC Federationist*, 25 June 1915.

¹¹⁴ *BC Federationist*, 25 June 1915.

The Elmer case serves as a useful example for studying the wartime left because it highlights the conflicts within the BC left created by the pressures of the war. The Elmer case was the result of the nationalist paradigm under which the war was fought, a paradigm that the left happily accepted shortly after the war began. When E.T. Kingsley, the founder of the SPC and a major ideologue within the BC left, wrote in 1914 that the German working class was just as much to blame for the war as the German government because German workers were “so obsessed with militarism as to make them traitors to the international working class,” it is impossible to know if he meant Elmer as well.¹¹⁵ But the Canadian government, as a result of its campaign against German workers in Europe, included Elmer in the category “enemy,” and Kingsley’s support for the European campaign meant that he was, even unwittingly, providing justification for the state’s actions against Elmer.

The left leadership that had accepted the war at first, and had abandoned its internationalism in the hopes that the state would welcome them as allies in the war effort, had to face the fact that their position had helped expose Elmer to internment. Moreover, while the left may have hoped that by supporting the war it might avoid the state’s wartime repression of dissent, Elmer proved differently. Leftists may have hoped to call a truce to class war on the basis of protecting the nation, but the state perceived the Great War as a time to press its advantage, and instead of rewarding leftists for their service, the Canadian

¹¹⁵ Quote taken from Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, 80.

government dramatically increased its censorship of left-wing papers, its monitoring of leftists' activities, and its use of coercion to quell dissent.¹¹⁶

A similar arrest the next year indicated that socialists were clearly targets for government persecution. In 1915, in circumstances very similar to those that led to the arrest of Herman Elmer a year earlier, a SPC speaker and political candidate named John Reid was arrested in Red Deer, Alberta, for something he said at a political rally in rural Alberta. Specifically, Reid had argued that the workers had no country, and thus no stake in the war, which had been perceived as seditious and, as a result of a complaint from someone in the audience, led to his arrest.¹¹⁷

When his case finally came to trial, the complaint against Reid was fleshed out. Witnesses told the court that Reid had compared the alleged German atrocities in Belgium to those of British troops in South Africa during the Boer war, which Reid himself had witnessed. Reid made the radical point in his speech that there was no moral high ground for the British in the Great War, and thus workers should not be swayed by appeals to nationalism.¹¹⁸

Reid was found guilty of sedition, and sentenced to 15 months in prison. The Dominion Executive Committee of the SPC broke the case down carefully in the pages of the *Clarion*, and they felt the message of Reid's conviction was clear – socialists were targets

¹¹⁶ The literature on the government's repression of the left during the war is extensive. The key texts include Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979); Barbara Roberts, "Shoveling out the 'Mutinous'"; Kealey, "State Repression,"; Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *RCMP Security Bulletins: the Early Years, 1919-1929*, (St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History 1994).

¹¹⁷ The Reid case was discussed in *Western Clarion*, Aug. 1915; Oct. 1915; Mar. 1916; Apr. 1916.

¹¹⁸ *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1916.

of the government because of their politics, but especially because of their potential to question the war.¹¹⁹

As Jack Kavanagh would tell *Clarion* readers in an editorial, appeals to patriotism had become a cover for attacks against socialists and workers in general. By implication the left needed to end its infatuation with patriotism to return to a position where it could effectively criticize the government. He wrote:

One of the most cherished delusions held by the workers resident in the British Empire, and one that is being rudely shattered, is that of the “right of free speech.” As a matter of fact, this “right” disappears with alarming rapidity whenever free speech is contrary to the interests of the master class, whose interests are, at the present time, sheltered from the bitter winds of adverse criticism by the mantle of patriotism, which has always been in favor as a refuge by every pirate who desired his operations to remain unquestioned...the fact that a few millions of slaves are killed, disabled, or driven insane is but a side issue. Because of that, our so called “right” to free speech becomes restricted to speaking in favour of a continuation of the slaughter now in progress.¹²⁰

Kavanagh specified that it was not just any criticism of the war that the master class feared – it was “criticism of the war from a working class standpoint.” Kavanagh’s point was that the great threat to capital was working class internationalism, and thus it was internationalism that the left must re-embrace to criticize the war effectively.¹²¹

While the SPC started to reevaluate its position on internationalism as a result of the attacks by the state on activists like Elmer and Reid, the BCFL was not prepared to take that ideological step. If any non-English socialists were watching the coverage of the Elmer case and hoping that it signaled the beginning of a left that would welcome their involvement, they might have read a *Federationist* article from 8 December 1916 closely. The headline,

¹¹⁹ *Western Clarion*, Apr. 1916; May 1916.

¹²⁰ *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1916.

¹²¹ *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1916.

written by an unknown author, was titled “though imprisoned still sticks to his guns, a fearless German socialist speaks the truth about the Great War, how the masses have been led and tricked into the bloody game.” While the title suggested that the BCFL might finally be openly supporting Elmer and his cause, in fact, the article was about Karl Liebknecht, and it was a vehicle for the author to reiterate the case that Germany was authoritarian and a danger to international democracy.¹²² Ironically, an article that, in another context, represented the best internationalist spirit of socialist solidarity, in fact was employed to justify a war that Canadian socialists, German or otherwise, had once condemned. Meanwhile, German-Canadians who belonged to the BCFL did not receive any protection or assistance from the leaders of the house of labour, who ignored their plight lest it threaten the BCFL justification of the war effort.

This was because the commitment to internationalism needed to support Elmer was missing in the leadership of BC labour’s most important umbrella groups, the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL), and the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) in 1916. The trade union movement in BC was still being led by the figures that had been most willing to accommodate the war.¹²³ Although a few anti-war activists were elected in 1916 – A.S. Wells, for one, was secretary-treasurer of the BCFL – the majority of the officers were in the pro-war camp, including President J.H. McVety, one of the earliest supporters of the war within the BCFL, and Victoria labour leader Christian Sivertz.¹²⁴

Sivertz is representative of the most openly pro-war element within the BC left, and his success demonstrates the power of that wing before 1916. Sivertz was a co-founder of

¹²² *BC Federationist*, 8 Dec. 1916.

¹²³ This is reflected in the executives of both organizations, but also in the continued prominence of Parmeter Pettipiece, who remained the editor of the *BC Federationist*.

¹²⁴ Sivertz’s significance to this period has been misunderstood, mostly I think because he was outside the centre of left-wing activity in BC, Vancouver.

the BCFL in 1910, and was president of the Federation in 1913. He also served as the secretary-treasurer of the Victoria Trades and Labour Council during the war.¹²⁵ In both capacities he was a supporter of socialism, and almost lost his job as a letter carrier when he chaired a meeting in 1913 that was highly critical of the government's handling of the Vancouver Island Miners' Strike.¹²⁶

When the war began, though, Sivertz's radicalism was a casualty of the conflict between imperialism and socialism. His son, in his biography of Sivertz, explains that he "had a deep feeling for the young, then emerging nation of Canada, and he took seriously the war against the German Kaiser."¹²⁷ As a result, he not only worked to have the labour movement support the war, but he also served as a censor for the federal government, spending his evenings secretly censoring the mail in Victoria.¹²⁸ His service earned him a patronage position as a member of the local conscription exemption board in 1917, where he served the state judging the claims of those who wanted to be exempted from compulsory military service.¹²⁹ Sivertz was no casual proponent of the Empire, and his prominence in the BCFL in 1916 indicates the continued relevance and power of leftists who supported the war effort.

The pro-war stance of this leadership group continued to be reflected in the pages of the *Federationist*. Still edited by Parmeter Pettipiece, the paper remained a supporter of the war into 1917. Indeed, the *Federationist* even provisionally supported the notion of national registration, which it admitted would likely lead to conscription. When national service was

¹²⁵ Information on Sivertz is from Ben Isitt, "From Patriotism to Bolshevism? Victoria Workers, Class Consciousness, and World War," unpublished paper, (April, 2000), See also Bent Gestur Sivertz, *The Sivertz Family, Book 1: Christian Sivertz*, (Parksville, BC: Arrowmaker Graphics, 1982).

¹²⁶ Isitt, "From Patriotism to Bolshevism?", p. 35.

¹²⁷ Isitt, "From Patriotism to Bolshevism?", p. 36, as taken from Sivertz, *The Sivertz Family*, p. 58.

¹²⁸ Isitt, "From Patriotism to Bolshevism?", p. 36.

¹²⁹ Isitt, "From Patriotism to Bolshevism?", p. 37.

being discussed in the national press, the *Federationist* ran a front page editorial explaining its position. As the author explains, “this journal by no means looks upon the present European war as a result of petty jealousies between rulers and ruling classes of the various countries involved.” Instead, “it has come as the logical and only result of the circumstances of history that have left a powerful feudal survival of the middle ages, alongside of the civilization and culture that corresponds to the industrial and political development of modern capitalism.”¹³⁰

The argument being made was similar to the argument that Pettipiece had made in August 1914. Britain, France, and Belgium were not only bastions of democracy, they were “the countries in Europe in which modern capitalism developed and its industrial and commercial mechanism was brought to the present stage of perfection.” In contrast, “Central and Eastern Europe are still far more feudal than capitalist.” The compromise of socialist analysis was so complete that the author could write

The old feudal autocratic rule was still as firmly seated in the saddle at the outbreak of the war as it was two centuries ago. The economic development of those states had been largely borrowed from Western Europe, and because of this it had not been accompanied by the requisite political development to make of those borrowing countries modern capitalist states, with the ordinary capitalist conceptions and codes of morals and ethics.¹³¹

The result of such a brutalization of socialist analysis was that it could be used to justify virtually any action to keep the war going in the name of democracy, and thus, when the government proposed national registration in late 1916, the *Federationist* was receptive. While most left-wing groups immediately responded with revulsion, and some discussed

¹³⁰ *BC Federationist*, 29 Dec. 1916.

¹³¹ *BC Federationist*, 15 Dec. 1916.

destroying registration cards, the pro-war leaders of the BCFL saw registration as an opportunity to achieve some measure of political power.¹³²

As A.S. Wells explained on the front page of the *Federationist*, “If conscription is necessary, let it come. But first let the working class have a voice in the government which decides upon it.”¹³³ Further support was offered in an article by an unnamed author the next week, which explained “a government move is now on in Canada that has for its purpose the mobilizing of all the aid it is possible for the Dominion to give in the desperate struggle of the mother country and her Allies against the feudal and military menace of central Europe.”¹³⁴

The *Federationist*'s concerns with the registration scheme were in form, not function, and it proposed that this was an opportunity for the Canadian labour movement to establish its prominence in Canadian economic affairs by helping to construct a service programme to win the war. Indeed, the author had specific ideas about what this policy should look like. He suggested that industrial and military conscription were acceptable, as long as they were accompanied by conscription of wealth, and that industrial conscription should continue after the war as well. The only further proviso that the *Federationist* wanted to insist upon was that industrial conscription should come first, with “military conscription to follow when all labor requirements of industry had first been filled with white labor only.”¹³⁵ In the racial perspective of the *Federationist*, workers support for the war effort should be rewarded with effective exclusion of “aliens” and Asians. To support the war, socialists had

¹³² For immediate resistance, see *The Voice*, 26 Jan. 1917; *BC Federationist*, 22 Dec. 1916, which features an article about the proceedings at the VTLC meeting, where delegates voted to renew their conviction that conscription was wrong.

¹³³ *BC Federationist*, 22 Dec. 1916.

¹³⁴ *BC Federationist*, 29 Dec. 1916.

¹³⁵ *BC Federationist*, 29 Dec. 1916.

abandoned even the pretence of internationalism, and as a direct result any commitment to solidarity with non-English Canadian co-unionists.

When the war became a reality, it was an ideological commitment to socialist internationalism that proved to be the factor that determined whether each left-wing organization chose to retain an anti-war stance. This remained true even when the threat of conscription was raised by the Canadian government. For bodies like the BCFL and the SPC, supporting the British Empire was more important than honouring pre-war promises to resist a conflict in the name of socialist internationalism. As the following chapter argues, only a few leftist groups – especially the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDP) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – were able to retain a practical internationalism as part of their ideological approach after the war began.

Chapter 3 – Building Internationalism Against Capitalism

While some Canadian socialists and labour leaders relinquished their anti-war convictions after the war started, for others, the realities of war only made their campaign more pressing. The Socialist Party of Canada and the BC Federation of Labour both struggled with their anti-war stance, but two other leftist organizations became more convinced with the start of the war that it was socialists' duty everywhere to oppose the war. These were the Social Democratic Party of Canada and the Industrial Workers of the World. Both organizations shared one important theoretical tenet that sustained their anti-war work and meant that when the rest of the left rejoined them in opposition to the war, it was their example anti-war activism would follow. That shared tenet was a serious commitment to socialist internationalism.

As explained in the previous chapter, it was not a measure of radicalism that determined whether an organization spoke out against the war in 1914 and 1915.¹³⁶ Instead, as the unlikely development of a parallel stance between the SDP and the Wobblies indicates, the key factor was commitment to internationalism and the corresponding ability to critically analyze both the appeal of the British Empire and the propaganda that convinced so many people of all political stripes to support the war. All groups, at least before the war, had shared a commitment to anti-militarism, but after the war started, only those who showed a commitment to internationalism were able to make their pacifism a relevant part of their wartime analysis.

The SDP was formed in 1909, and its membership was at first made up primarily of ethnic socialists who worked in languages other than English, especially Russian and Finnish.

¹³⁶ This has been the assertion of most historians to this point – especially A. Ross McCormack, who overlooked that some of the most radical elements of the BC left in 1913 were quiet or even supportive, of the war in 1914 and 1915. See, for example, McCormack, 118, where he depicts the left during the early war as united and led by the most radical of elements, neither of which was actually true.

The anti-war rhetoric of the Social Democratic Party sounded very similar to that of their socialist colleagues in other organizations when the war began. The front page of the 7 August 1914 edition of *The Voice*, the leading English SDP paper in western Canada, bore a cartoon of three skeletons, representing death, debt, and devastation, rejoicing at the prospect of war.¹³⁷ Indicative of the SDP's international consciousness, the front page also carried news of the death of Jean Jaurès, the French socialist leader murdered the week the war began. Jaurès was an important voice in the Socialist International section that was protesting the war, and *The Voice* recognized that his death was a great loss to the anti-war movement. In the first few weeks of the war, *The Voice* reiterated the SDP's position often, which can be summed up with one editorial from the front page of the 7 August issue:

Now, from the workers' point of view what quarrel have we with the workers of Germany, or they with us? None, absolutely none. What quarrel have we with the German citizens of Canada? None, absolutely none. Then what is all this hullaboo about patriotism and the flag?¹³⁸

The first response from the SDP appears to be similar to that of the SPC and BCFL. But closer inspection reveals important differences that hinged on the SDP's internationalism.

¹³⁷ The importance of the SDP in BC is hard to estimate. Although the SDP was not as closely aligned with the BC labour movement as it was in other provinces, because the SPC often held this role, it did attract the allegiance of a few important labour leaders. The most significant of these were Ernest Burns and Bertha Merrill Burns, both of whom had been charter members of the SPC in 1903, but abandoned the SPC over its unwillingness to adopt policies supporting women's rights. Perhaps more indicative of their position is that, by the time the war began, the SDP was the only party of the two to have any representatives in the legislature. John Place held the seat for Nanaimo City, and Parker Williams, who won the seat in Newcastle as a member of the SPC, changed parties only a few weeks after the election in 1912. In the next election, in 1916, both parties suffered serious setbacks, but the one successful socialist candidate was Williams again, running as an independent. In the post-war period, with the advent of the Federated Labour Party (FLP), these clear lines lost their coherency. In Newcastle, Sam Guthrie, who was once a member of the SPC, won the seat for the FLP, running against J.H. Hawthornthwaite, who ran as an Independent Socialist. The FLP also ran, unsuccessfully, J.S. Woodsworth in the city of Vancouver. See Elections BC, *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986*, http://www.elections.bc.ca/elections/electoral_history/toc.html, last accessed 12 April 2006. For information on the Burnses, see Janice Newton, "The Alchemy of Politicization," in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds., *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 131-135.

¹³⁸ *The Voice*, 7 Aug. 1914.

The most obvious difference was that the SDP's opposition to the war was not as fleeting as that of the BCFL or SPC. On 14 August, when Pettipiece was the *Federationist* was taking the first steps towards acceptance of the war, *The Voice* published explaining that the author could not accept the justifications for war because a traditional definition of patriotism was "parochial." Instead, the author urged his readers to embrace a patriotism that meant "a desire to serve the entire universe."¹³⁹

The next week, the paper published an article suggesting that armament manufacturers might be the cause of the war. Unlike Parm Pettipiece, however, who repeated Karl Liebknecht's accusations against the German munitions industry as part of blaming German for the war, the SDP organ indicated that British manufacturers and French weapons companies were just as much to blame.¹⁴⁰

Finally, in late August, the SDP used *The Voice* to announce its policy towards the war. It reminded workers that

Ever since the war terror began its march through Europe the capitalist press of Canada acting on behalf of the capitalist class, have done their utmost to create the war spirit and arouse a patriotic cry, calling upon the workers of Canada to go forth and shed their blood in the interests of the master class. We desire to emphasize the fact that this war, as all modern wars, is being waged between international capitalists...it can, therefore, be of no real interest to the working class...We appeal to the workers of Canada to refrain from lending any assistance in this war. Let the masters fight their own battles.¹⁴¹

The SDP retained its active stance against the war even after it started, which was in stark contrast to the BCFL and SPC. This was not the only difference between the wartime analysis of the SDP and its pro-war former comrades. In fact, the SDP's interest in

¹³⁹ *The Voice*, 14 Aug. 1914.

¹⁴⁰ *The Voice*, 21 Aug. 1914.

¹⁴¹ *The Voice*, 28 Aug. 1914.

international issues, and its attention to the concerns of international comrades, meant that it viewed the start of the war very differently.

Firstly, as part of the Socialist International the SDP was far more optimistic that European socialist parties would intervene to stop the war. The most obvious proof of this was on the front page of *The Voice* of 14 August 1914; the SDP printed the response of every major European socialist party to the war. The reported response of the various parties were mixed – the Austrian Social-Democratic Party lamented lost democratic freedoms in Austria, but accepted the right of the Austrian government to punish Serbia for the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In sharp contrast, the German Social-Democratic Party (the party of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourge) announced the “class-conscious proletariat of Germany raises a burning protest against this criminal behaviour of the war-mongers.” *The Voice* reprinted the comments of the Seattle Central Labor Council, which echoed the sentiment of the German socialists, and those of the French Unified Socialist Party and the British Socialist Party which were both more reserved, urging opposition to Austro-Hungarian aggression, but offering no criticism of their own governments.¹⁴²

This close attention to international socialists was reflective of the SDP’s internationalism.¹⁴³ But it also meant that when the Socialist International failed to prevent the war and collapsed as a result, the International’s failure was a more serious challenge to the SDP than other parts of the BC socialist or labour movements.¹⁴⁴ The SDP press followed the actions of parties within the International closely, including printing a

¹⁴² *The Voice*, 14 Aug. 1914.

¹⁴³ *The Voice* featured a section that appeared each week in the pre-war period, and most after the war started, called “European Labor Affairs.” The article was a collection of notes about the actions of the international labour and left, although it followed the British Labour Party most closely.

¹⁴⁴ For example, when the International Socialist Congress meeting that was scheduled for August 1914, was cancelled, the *BC Federationist* showed little concern, and responded simply by noting the noteworthy delegates who would now be staying in North America, including Canadian delegate James Simpson. See *BC Federationist*, 14 Aug. 1914.

translation of the French Socialist manifesto when that party decided to join the war effort.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, *The Voice* editors reprinted articles from the European press, arguing that German socialists (at least the rank and file membership of the movement) had been deceived into supporting the war.¹⁴⁶

When the SDP was ready for a post-mortem, however, of the fall of the Socialist International, it demonstrated that it had not abandoned the spirit of socialist internationalism. A special editorial piece, commissioned for *The Voice* and written by C. from Fort Rouge, Manitoba, made this clear. In sharp contrast to the imperial apologia of the BCFL or SPC, C. insisted, “it is utterly impractical and useless to put the blame on one nation more than on another.” Indeed, the article interrogated the reasons Britain, and in turn Canada, used to justify their entrance in the war, and found them sorely lacking.

C. denied the Belgian atrocities, an important underpinning of the British and Canadian justification for the war. As soon as the German’s invaded Belgium in August, reports began to appear in allied newspapers that the Germans were massacring civilians and raping women. For mainstream news sources, this was further proof of the barbarism of the Kaiser and his subjects. The allied governments used these accounts to justify the war, and the British went so far as to author an official report based on the testimony of Belgian refugees in 1915.¹⁴⁷ After the war these accounts proved to be greatly exaggerated, and C.’s

¹⁴⁵ *The Voice*, 18 Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁶ *The Voice*, 18 Sept. 1914.

¹⁴⁷ The report was called the Bryce Report. Commissioned by the British government and published in 1915, it included depositions from 1200 witnesses attesting to the violence of the German occupation. That said, Rouge’s concern about the authenticity of the reports undoubtedly reflected his justifiable cynicism about the honesty of governments at war. For more on the Bryce Report, see Trevor Wilson, “Lord Bryce’s investigation into alleged German atrocities in Belgium, 1914-1915,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14 (1979), 369-383.

analysis proved accurate.¹⁴⁸ As historian Jeffrey Keshen has argued, it was necessary for the state and Canadian media to overstate the Belgian atrocities, as a way to justify the position that “only the total destruction of Germany would ‘better humanity and extend the bounds of freedom.’”¹⁴⁹ Thus, C.’s critique struck at the very heart of the justification for the war in Canada, as well as the basis on which pro-war socialists had defended their ideological shift.

C. told his audience that the atrocities were impossible to confirm, and further,

The atrocities perpetrated on the Belgians by the German soldiery are but mere child’s play when compared with the horrors of the rubber trade in the Congo, which is maintained by Belgians year in and year out as a standing institution. A deputation of Belgians have been sent to the American president, calling his attention to the cruelties perpetrated by the Germans – will they also solicit his aid in suppressing the Congo iniquity?

The statement made a radical connection between imperialism in Africa and imperialism in Europe. C.’s perspective demonstrated a cosmopolitan internationalism that overcame both racial and national boundaries. The central spirit of the essay, that “socialism is international and knows neither racial, nor national barriers,” is an accurate reflection of the tone of the SDP response to the beginning of the war.¹⁵⁰ In contrast to the labour movement, and the

¹⁴⁸ The historical debate about the Belgian atrocities seemed settled until the publication of John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Horne and Kramer have done what appears to be the first work using Allied and German sources, and they conclude that the atrocities did occur, to some extent. Their final estimate is 5146 civilians killed by German forces, while the number of rapes is impossible to confirm. This is not an insignificant loss of life, but it certainly does not constitute the massive crimes against humanity that many Allied observers suggested had occurred. See Horne and Kramer, 74-75.

¹⁴⁹ The quote is from *Saturday Night Magazine*, cited in Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War*, (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1996), 14, for more on the role of the Belgian atrocities in justifying the war effort to Canadians.

¹⁵⁰ C. Fort Rouge, “Some Rational Thoughts on the European Tragedy,” *The Voice*, 9 Oct. 1914. For other examples of the commitment of the SDP to socialist internationalism after their socialist allies largely announced their support for the war, see *The Voice*, 14 Aug. 1914; 28 Aug. 1914; 18 Sept. 1914; 25 Sept. 1914; 30 Oct. 1914; 6 Nov. 1914; 20 Nov. 1914; 27 Nov. 1914; 4 Dec. 1914; 11 Dec. 1914. Some of these pieces offered some forgiveness to Socialist parties that supported the war, especially the British labour party (see 27 Nov. 1914), but they never failed to reiterate the SDP’s opposition, on the basis of international socialism.

right wing of the SPC, the SDP's internationalist analysis became more militant with the beginning of the war, and provided the impetus for the SDP's outspoken opposition.¹⁵¹

This internationalism, and the SDP's continued opposition to the war, made the SDP's analysis of the start of the war qualitatively different than the response offered by the BCFL. As a result, the SDP perspective had important effects on the BC left. One of the most significant of these was to lay the foundation for new coalitions in the later war period, by recognizing that building ethnic solidarity was a domestic issue as well as important as a response to the war. Some SDP thinkers recognized that the war could easily split the country's working class along ethnic lines.¹⁵² For example, when the war started, the SDP correctly predicted a rise in anti-German and Austrian rhetoric in Canada. One *Voice* writer darkly joked that the war could be fought in the streets of Winnipeg, with the cosmopolitan city of Winnipeg having sufficient numbers of naturalized citizens from all the combatant countries. The joke, of course, was on the left – the writer hinted that such a thing might be roughly what the Canadian government desired, and the results might be disaster for workers in the city. The implication for a BC reader was clear, of course, in that BC too featured populations from all the belligerent nations.¹⁵³

A few pages later, in a more serious vein, the same author explained that patriotism was parochial, and that he was a patriot of the world, and had a “desire to serve the entire universe.” He explained:

¹⁵¹ The most obvious proof of the increasing militancy of the SDP stance can be found in C.'s article referenced above. While early in the war the SDP made the point that the war was partially the result of elites in the Entente countries working to secure power and increase wealth by creating a war, C.'s comparison of the war and European imperialism globally is a much stronger stance.

¹⁵² It is important to note here that, while SDP activists worked to prevent splits along ethnic lines, they still totally failed to account for Québec any meaningful way, and missed the opportunity to challenge a massive split within the Canadian working class, that would (of course) be of serious consequence later in the war.

¹⁵³ *The Voice*, 14 Aug. 1914.

What have I got against my German or Austrian brother? In the trade union to which I belong we have Britishers, French, Russians, Italians, Germans, Austrians, and several other nationalities. For years past we have met together, sat side by side, worked side by side and discussed questions that concerned us all in a like manner. We have called each other “brothers” in our meeting room and we shall continue to do the same. There exists not the slightest enmity twixt my German brothers and myself, and what is true in this local sense or aspect of this question is equally true in the larger sense of the question.¹⁵⁴

The point of the two articles was to highlight that there were serious consequences to the war that were not limited to Europe. The author made an attempt to use the commitment of the union movement to internationalism as a part of sustaining his anti-war analysis. In turn, internationalism was part of the strength of the labour before the war, and in the author’s opinion that needed to continue through the war itself. To keep the union movement alive, activists could not let go of their pre-war internationalism; in turn, to maintain a sincere socialist internationalism, they had to actively oppose the war.

For all that *The Voice*, and by extension the SDP, had a clear conception of internationalism, the anti-war left was not as united in its choice of tactics. The increase in prominence that its principled wartime stand created for the SDP helped party leaders to organize several speaking events, including a series in 1914 focused on the war and issues arising from it. The first session featured suffragist Nellie McClung – who supported the SDP insistence that internationalism was the key to preventing war – and was chaired by J.S. Woodsworth.¹⁵⁵

Besides propaganda events like the speaking series and *Voice* editorials, the SDP had another avenue to try to work to oppose the war. This was through its close ties to the

¹⁵⁴ *The Voice*, 14 Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁵ The series, called “People’s Forums,” pre dated the war, but the topics in 1914 focused heavily on war issues. See *The Voice*, 30 Oct. 1914.

Dominion Trades and Labour Congress (DTLC). This relationship with national trade unions is embodied in the figures of James Simpson and James Watters. Both were Socialist Party of Canada members who became prominent unionists in the DTLC, after relinquishing their membership in the SPC. Both left the SPC in 1909 and both went on to join the SDP. Simpson's most important work within the DTLC, as vice-president from 1904-1909, was when he was in the SPC, but he ran for the presidency of the Congress in 1909 after joining the SDP, and lost by a mere 11 votes. Watters on the other hand served as the President of the DTLC during the war, and was a member of the SDP at the time, although his response to the war bore no resemblance to the party's stance.¹⁵⁶

Thus, the SDP reasonably hoped that the federal union movement might defend progressive politics and oppose the war, especially when, at the first convention after the war started, the DTLC adopted a motion against the war. But whereas before the war the DTLC had threatened serious action, up to and including a general strike if Canada went to war, conditions in October 1914 – most notably the popularity of the war – had made such a strike politically impossible.¹⁵⁷ Instead the DTLC, with the support of Winnipeg representative and SDP member R.A. Rigg, restated its “utter abhorrence of war as a means

¹⁵⁶See Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, 102-105, 126-127.

¹⁵⁷ McCormack, *Reformers*, 121. It is hard to judge the popularity of the war among the populace in fall 1914, but the popular media was definitely behind it, and recruiting numbers suggest that, even if the war was not popular, people were not interested in discussing a general strike to stop it. In August, 1914, 21,964 men volunteered, with another 10,080 joining up in September. Although recruiting numbers dropped in October, to 5,294, but increased again in November, to 13,466. Unquestionably, this was due to the recession that lasted into the first months of the war, as well as the popularity of the conflict, and the belief that it would be over quickly and relatively painlessly. But even if it does not indicate widespread joy at the onset of conflict, it certainly indicated that a general strike would be unpopular at best. The statistics are taken from J.T. Copp and T.D. Tait, *The Canadian Response to War: 1914-1917*, (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1971), 9. See also Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, 212-320.

of settling disputes” and promised that should any other nation’s working class begin work to end the war, the DTLC would work to the same ends in Canada.¹⁵⁸

But the statement finished in a contradictory fashion, and sounded much more like the VTLC and BCFL than it did the SDP by the end. Explaining that the DTLC’s abhorrence for the war did not mean it in anyway accepted “German barbarism,” the statement insisted that this was clearly “not a war of Britain’s choosing,” and that “with the inevi[t]able struggle now on we express the hope that despotism in Europe will be hurled to its final destruction, to make way for constitutional freedom in all countries in Europe.” The perspective of the DTLC executive, who issued the resolution, could at best be described as conflicted, and the idea of a general strike was long gone from their statement. The reversal of the DTLC left the SDP marginalized by its insistence on an anti-war stance.

The SDP was not the only organization that spoke against the war, even after it started. In BC, another principled group who remained anti-war was the IWW, which shared the SDP’s commitment to internationalism but otherwise was a very different organization than the SDP. The IWW was a syndicalist union, a philosophy that is clearly related to the socialism of the SPC and SDP, but has some important differences. Defining syndicalism can be challenging because it bears a close resemblance to socialism and industrial unionism. Like socialism, it is meant to reorganize society to benefit workers; like industrial unionism, its practical model is large unions of workers in a variety of workplaces. But unlike socialism and industrial unionism, syndicalism is both anti-capitalist and anti-state. A syndicalist organization like the IWW was built to create radical change in both the economic and political field; it “was not primarily concerned with making the workers’ lives

¹⁵⁸ The quote is from *The Voice*, 16 Oct. 1914. The relationship before the war between the SDP and the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress was always cordial, and generally closer than the ties between the SPC and DTLC (although not the SPC and the BCFL). For more on the pre-war alliance between the SDP and DTLC, see McCormack, *Reformers*, 92-94; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 102-107.

bearable within a capitalist society, but in making life impossible for capitalism.”¹⁵⁹ Because Wobblies believed that the state was an ally to capital, they emphasized an ethic of direct industrial action rather than parliamentary action to achieve their ends.¹⁶⁰

Direct action mostly meant action on the shop floor, against employers, but it could also include more public disturbances.¹⁶¹ Wobblies insisted the working class could use its position to create political change, by forcing employers to make concessions and ultimately by collapsing the state by destroying capitalism. And this power could be exercised with the simplest, but also most revolutionary of actions: the removal of labour power, that is, the strike. Following the logic of syndicalism and the power of strike in industrial conflicts, political change could be created with the strike as well, especially by the general strike. After all, as prominent Wobbly spokesman Big Bill Haywood was known to say, if workers just put their hands in their pockets, all the world’s machines would stop running.¹⁶² Of course, opposing the state also meant that Wobblies were not generally persuaded by the rhetoric of the Canadian and American governments that urged participation in the war. This made them ready allies to the SDP in the anti-war movement.

¹⁵⁹ Jack Scott, *Plunderbund and Proletariat: A History of the IWW in BC*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1975), p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ Several scholars have contributed to my understanding, including Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990), 3. Also useful, especially for explaining how American syndicalism developed as a response to the limits of parliamentary socialism as well as to the challenges of monopoly capitalism is Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the USA*, (London: Verso, 1987), 97-103. Buhle refers to syndicalism as “Industrial Socialism,” but the definition fits. In contrast, even some historians of the IWW have struggled with syndicalism as an idea. Melvyn Dubofsky regards the IWW as an industrial union with ties to the socialist movement, which dramatically underestimates the IWW’s analysis. See Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All 2nd ed.*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 58-60. In the Canadian context, A. Ross McCormack makes a similar mistake. See McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 100-105.

¹⁶¹ The most obvious example in the history of the IWW is the free speech fights, when IWW members joined other socialists in protesting prohibitions against public socialist agitation by speaking, and correspondingly getting arrested, in such massive numbers that the local authorities had to recant in order to prevent their jails being overrun. For Vancouver examples, see Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, 57-85.

¹⁶² William D. Haywood, *The General Strike*, in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 49. Haywood summed it up in one of his most memorable turns of phrase, “all the workers have to do is to organize so that they can put their hands in their pockets; when they have got *their* hands there, the capitalists can’t get theirs in.”

The IWW's analysis of the war demonstrated its unflinching internationalism, as well as its belief in the efficacy of direct action.¹⁶³ The IWW joined most other left-wing organizations in emphasizing the role of international capital in creating the war, but the IWW coupled this analysis with a tactical emphasis on how workers, and soldiers could use their instrumentality to stop the war.¹⁶⁴ For example, one pamphlet, which included a speech by Haywood on the value of the general strike, also included an essay written by a British comrade about the war. Entitled "The Last War," and written by "G.B.," the essay underlined the importance of the individual soldier. "Let us begin with the man in the trench," G.B. urges, "for though the war does not start with him, it depends on him. If there was no man willing to go into the trench there would be no war."¹⁶⁵

Socialists in BC did chastise workers for joining the war effort, but they tended to focus instead on pressuring politicians to avoid the war in Europe. This led to a certain measure of fatalism, clearly visible in the previous chapter, that contributed to the labour and socialist movements' brief acceptance of the war. But Wobblies, believing that their power rested entirely outside the parliamentary realm, focused their energies on direct action to

¹⁶³ Charting the IWW response to the war is difficult. There was no major publication by BC Wobblies, and tracking down pamphlets has proven impossible. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the Wobblies were banned in 1918 by the Canadian government. There was a major IWW newspaper in Washington state, the *Industrial Worker* which BC Wobblies read, and which certainly paid attention to left politics in BC; see *Industrial Worker*, 21 Apr. 1917; 26 May 1917; 23 June 1917. The first article references a piece from *The Western Clarion*; the second an article printed in *The BC Federationist*. The third article compares the state of censorship in Canada favourably to that of the United States. The secondary sources of importance include Francis Shor, "The IWW and Oppositional Politics in World War I: Pushing the System Beyond its Limits," *Radical History Review* 64 (1994), 75-94; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall be All*, 349-375.

¹⁶⁴ Up to and including sabotage against the military. In 1914 an anonymous editorialist in IWW organ *Solidarity* urged American Wobblies, should the U.S. join the war, to join the military and – referencing an international symbol for sabotage that originated with luddites – "take his wooden shoes for everyday use." Quoted in Francis Shor, "The IWW and Oppositional Politics in World War I," 81.

¹⁶⁵ G.B., "The Last War," reprinted in William D. Haywood, *The General Strike*, (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, n.d.), found in University of Arizona Special Collections, AZ 114, box 1, folder 1A, exhibit 21. Republished at <http://digital.library.arizona.edu/bisbee/main/iww.php> (last accessed 23 March 2006).

prevent and oppose the war. One early example in 1914 was the immediate expulsion from the union by Vancouver and Edmonton locals of all Wobblies who volunteered to fight.¹⁶⁶

The most important tactical result of the IWW's emphasis on direct action was the union's support for the general strike. The general strike had been often discussed in Europe and North America, but BC had few examples of the possibilities of such a strike.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps partly because there had been so few practical examples, the idea of the general strike was often opposed by trade unionists, and sometimes by socialists. Trade unionists, especially those who thought of themselves as pure and simple unionists and eschewed political action by unions disliked them because they felt general strikes were too political; in contrast, socialists tended to dislike them because they were too industrial. That is, socialists insisted that the real power stemmed from a workers' vote – changing government was more important than winning “commodity struggles.”¹⁶⁸ In a sense, the IWW liked them precisely because they accomplished these dual purposes, and because they were the logical extension of the belief that workers' power was the result of their role in industry. Regardless of the level of support or opposition, all participants understood that the general strike was qualitatively different than other strikes; it was an attempt to use industrial power to make political change. In the later part of the war, the need for unorthodox political tools became

¹⁶⁶ McCormack, *Reformers*, 119. This was a widespread strategy on the part of the IWW to oppose the war. See Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall be All*, 354-357. Although Dubofsky derides it for its ineffectiveness, the action ensured that the IWW did not even tacitly support the war effort, a moral position few of its socialist contemporaries could match.

¹⁶⁷ The closest any large group in BC came to using the general strike before the war was the Vancouver Island miners' strike of 1912-1914. This strike was ultimately a failure, but for a stretch of several months, all of the mines on the Island were closed by a general strike of miners. The best account of the strike is John Hinde, *When Coal Was King*.

¹⁶⁸ Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, p. 94-95.

clearer to leftists of all stripes, but at the start of the war it was only the IWW that advocated such tactics as a way of ending the war.¹⁶⁹

Although Wobbly propaganda was predominantly written in the USA, which did not join the conflict until 1917, the IWW began work against the war as early as 1914.¹⁷⁰ A poem published in *Solidarity* in October, 1914, demonstrated the frustration of Wobblies, not only at the war, but also at the socialist movement, which had by October acquiesced to the war. Written by Lawrence Tully, it read in part,

I stood upon the battle field
And watched the spitting flow
Of life-blood from the Saxon
And his stalwart Teuton foe.

And Comrade this and Comrade that
Had drenched themselves again;
They had done their masters' bidding,
And were numbered 'mongst the slain.¹⁷¹

While Tully's poem captures the frustration many Wobblies felt at the beginning of the war – and matches the despair felt by their socialist and trade union contemporaries – several Wobbly poets moved beyond anguish to voice their opposition to the war.

One of these was Ralph Chaplin, a leading Wobbly thinker, writer, and eventually editor of the Wobbly organ *Solidarity*, who wrote the blistering poem “The Red Feast” for the *International Socialist Review* in October 1914. The poem castigates workers for supporting their bosses overseas, fighting in a war to benefit capitalism. The opening line yells at his

¹⁶⁹ There are several excellent discussions of the general strike in the constellation of IWW tactics, but one of the best is a speech Bill Haywood delivered in 1911. The speech was later published as a pamphlet, which was reissued during the war bound with G.B.'s “The Last War.” For the wartime version of the pamphlet, see William D. Haywood, *The General Strike*, found in University of Arizona Special Collections, AZ 114, box 1, folder 1A, exhibit 21. Republished at <http://digital.library.arizona.edu/bisbee/main/iww.php> (last accessed 23 March 2006).

¹⁷⁰ The IWW passed an official resolution declaring “We as members of the industrial army will refuse to fight for any purpose except the realization of industrial freedom,” as early as 1914, and renewed it every year thereafter. See Joyce Kornbluh, “Behind Bars: War and Prison,” in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 316.

¹⁷¹ Lawrence Tully, “Comrades,” in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 325-326.

audience, “Go fight, you fools!” and Chaplin continues with a grim reminder of the benefits of the deaths of workers to capitalists. He asks his imagined working class audience, “You see the tiny crosses on that hill? / It took all those to make one millionaire.” Finally, he returns to the crimes of capitalists, without relenting in his suggestion that workers were fools for fighting.

In peace they starve you to your loathsome toil,
In war they drive you to the teeth of Death;
And when your life-blood soaks into their soil
They give you lies to choke your dying breath.
...
Then you will find that “nation” is a name
And boundaries are things that don’t exist;
That Labor’s bondage, world-wide, is the same,
And ONE the enemy that it must resist.¹⁷²

Chaplin and Tully highlight one aspect of the IWW anti-war work; that is, the emphasis on not fighting for the world’s nation-states on the battlefields of Europe. But the best of the Wobbly wartime songs, written by Joe Hill, demonstrates that this was not a pacifist resolution against war, it was a war on war, a struggle against capitalism that could potentially include violence – just not against other workers.

The song was “Should I Ever be a Soldier.” It is not one of his most famous songs, and does not even appear in Joyce Kornbluh’s edited collection of IWW writings, but it is one of his best. Written to the tune of the titular song from the musical *The Colleen Bawn*, it emphasizes that a day might come in which Hill himself, and assumedly other Wobblies, would be prepared to fight a war. But that war would be “to crush the tyrant’s might,” in the ranks of “the army of the toilers,” not in Europe in service of the American, Canadian,

¹⁷² Ralph Chaplin, “The Red Feast,” in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 328-329.

or any other government. “Should I ever be a soldier,” Hill announced, it is “neath the Red Flag I would fight.”¹⁷³

The point of Hill’s song is that the Wobblies were ready to fight against capitalism, but not for it. As Hill made clear in the last stanza of the song, short of actually fighting a war against elites, the next best option was to strike for better working conditions.

Why do they mount their gatling gun
A thousand miles from ocean,
Where hostile fleet could never run –
Ain’t that a funny notion?
If you don’t know the reason why
Just strike for better wages,
And then, my friends – if you don’t die –
You’ll sing this song for ages¹⁷⁴

Hill’s song, which emphasizes the militancy and radical internationalism of the anti-war movement, comes to an important conclusion. In the analysis of Hill, and the Wobblies in general, the real power of anti-war workers came from their role as workers. Rather than working to pass resolutions against the war in local halls or provincial legislatures, it was much more useful for the anti-war movement to take industrial action to try to force political change. The ideology of the Wobblies meshed well with the rest of the anti-war movement in BC in the first years of the war, but this tactical decision remained controversial until anti-war activists had exhausted all parliamentary options. Thus, while the Wobblies had allies in their calls for internationalism in the SDP and a few members of the SPC, they would not find broader support for the general strike until 1916 and 1917.

An anti-war ethic was reflected in the more prosaic writing of Wobblies as well. In an editorial printed just after the USA joined the war in Europe, in April 1917, the editor of *The Industrial Worker* laid out the IWW position particularly clearly. The editor writes,

¹⁷³ Joe Hill, “Should I Ever be a Soldier,” in *I.W.W. Songs: Songs of the Workers*, 26th edition, (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1936), 13. Special thanks to Ross Smith for passing along this reference.

¹⁷⁴ Hill, *I.W.W. Songs*, 13.

“...industrial action is the one effective anti-militaristic method. Only the most superficial student of war or of economics does not recognize that war is basically industrial in its causes and dependent on workers as workers in industry as much as on workers as fighters on the battlefield.” Moreover, “the worker who merely talks against war is ineffective and powerless. The worker who organizes against capitalism, realizing that industrial slavery is the basis of all slavery, that industrial war is the cause of all wars, is on the winning road to working-class peace.”¹⁷⁵

The IWW also contributed a practical internationalism that coincided well with the SDP's acceptance of their ethnic comrades. IWW conceptions of internationalism came out of the American context, where anti-African American racism was one of the most serious stumbling blocks to organizing industrial workers.¹⁷⁶ Wobblies carried this perspective into Canada, and thus took it for granted that not only would European comrades be respected, so would the contributions of workers of colour, including the Chinese and Japanese working class that did BC's most dangerous and unappealing jobs.¹⁷⁷ Wobblies, perhaps more than any other section of the left, based their success on challenging the divisions among workers created by race and ethnicity. Thus, opposing a war across those same lines came naturally, and internal ideological contradictions did not force the IWW away from its strident anti-war perspective as they did some other leftist organizations in BC.

¹⁷⁵ *The Industrial Worker*, 14 Apr. 1917.

¹⁷⁶ For an example of the IWW's internationalist praxis, as it were, see William D. Haywood, *The General Strike*, in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 49, *passim*. Haywood discusses the popularity of the general strike as a tactic in Europe, and the tone of the speech is openly admiring. More, he directly addresses racism as a serious division within the working class, and explains why he believes that it has to be overcome immediately. Another, more lyrical, version of Wobbly anti-racism can be found in the Joe Hill song “Scissor Bill,” in which he attacks workers who lack class consciousness for their backward approach to race and for their support for nationalism. See Joe Hill, “Scissor Bill,” in Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, 136.

¹⁷⁷ Mark Leier's discussion of the ethnic background of Vancouver Wobblies demonstrates the diversity of their backgrounds. Although most were European, they were of more diverse roots than the primarily Anglo-Celt leadership of the socialist and trade union movement. See Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, 99.

In fact, during the war, IWW membership grew, at least partially because of its successful efforts to appeal to non-English radicals. *The Industrial Worker*, while calling for more support for non-English newspapers, pointed out in 1917 the union was supporting papers in twelve languages other than English.¹⁷⁸ Even more profound is its editorial demand for “World organization.” In a book review, the editor declares,

There is now no nation in the world that stands alone in anything except its petty political forms of government. In industry, there is no Jew or Gentile, no Yankee or Chinese, all men are reckoned according to the form of wealth they produce...It is this international character of industry which has brought the modern form of working-class organization into existence... Since industry is international, a form of labor organization which takes no account of national lines must be developed.¹⁷⁹

The IWW saw itself as the international form of a labour organization, the answer to the international nature of industry, and correspondingly war. Because a critique of the state was inherent in syndicalism, and the IWW’s internationalism was so integral to its analysis, the union joined the SDP on the margins of the BC left in outspoken opposition to the war, even after it had started.

The leading left wing organizations in BC reacted in different ways to the start of the war. The SPC and the trade union movement either withdrew from speaking against the war or, more often, supported it on nationalist terms. But the SDP and the IWW maintained the same position they had held before 1914 – unequivocal opposition to war. For both, this resulted from their commitment to socialist internationalism, and their unwillingness to accept the nationalist justification for the conflict. But both faced heavy pressure to fold their opposition. As a result, they found themselves forced together, to some extent, on the margins of both mainstream Canadian society and the BC left. It was when they were joined

¹⁷⁸ *The Industrial Worker*, 10 June, 1917.

¹⁷⁹ *The Industrial Worker*, 7 July, 1917.

there by the rest of the BC left that the impact of their principled stance began to be felt throughout the BC labour and socialist movements. When a larger portion of the left rejoined them in condemning the war, the analysis of the SDP and the IWW had important roles in shaping the ideology of the anti-war movement. The SDP's commitment to internationalism provided guidance and support to their socialist allies, while the direct action ethic of the IWW led the anti-war movement to eventually incorporate militant labour action along with their attempt to use parliamentary means to achieve change. But these groups could only exert this influence when the rest of the BC left joined them in their principled internationalist resistance to the war.

Chapter 4 – “Neath a Red Flag I would Fight”

While the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) had successfully retained their internationalism despite the pressures of the war period, it was clear in 1916 that the rest of BC’s left had not been as ideologically strong. The major labour organizations in BC, including the British Columbia Federation of Labour (BCFL) and the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) were led by people who had once been described themselves as socialists and had spoken against the war, but by 1916 their position was clearly in favour. Meanwhile, the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) had largely retreated from open criticism of the war, and instead was more focused on publishing macro-economic history and book reviews. The splits in the BC left were widening by 1916, as was made clear in the provincial elections that year.

For BC leftists who hoped to improve their parliamentary position 1916 was pivotal. Not only did BC Premier William Bowser finally call a provincial election that year, after an aborted attempt in 1915, but 1916 was also the year that provided socialists with the key national election issue – registration and conscription. Thus, the provincial election of 1916 and the federal election of 1917 served as valuable opportunities to prove that the BC left could be successful without substantially changing its ideology or tactics.

The provincial election also offered an opportunity for the leftists to compete with each other, with the potential spoils being either the opportunity to be the left’s representative in parliament, or at least the chance to score some sectarian rhetorical points. Each camp ran separate candidates in 1916 as they had before the war, often against each other. Although the SDP ran only three candidates, and the SPC only four, they overlapped candidates in the mining district of Comox, and this suited the SPC’s overall strategy of opposition to both capitalist and social-democratic parties. When an SDP local chastised the

party for allowing this overlap, the *Western Clarion* saw fit to answer for the SDP. Declaring “a Social-Dem. Looks very much like a Laborite or Liberal to us,” the *Clarion* emphasized that SDPers were not true socialists, and that if this local objected to the SDP candidate being run, their best course of action would be to join the SPC.¹⁸⁰

It was not only the SPC that entered the election determined to outshine the other left parties, if not by winning seats from the Conservatives or Liberals than by spreading its propaganda as widely as possible. The Vancouver Trades and Labor council, in the pages of *The Federationist*, indicated its intentions to pursue its own tack as well, supporting candidates in both Vancouver and South Vancouver as part of an “Independent Labor” slate. The candidates not only ran against the SPC and SDP, the traditional recipients of VTLC support; they were some of the most prominent pro-war labour leaders in the city, including J.H. McVety, who represented the VTLC on the Home Guards committee in Vancouver.¹⁸¹ This was part of a drive to create a new political party. When the election day finally arrived, the *Federationist* begrudgingly encouraged voters to vote for SPC and SDP candidates where available (the *Federationist* chose the SPC candidate where the two socialist parties overlapped), but the *Western Clarion* would not even make that nod to unity, telling its readers that the “working class ticket” were the four SPC candidates in the field, and no one else.¹⁸² The leadership of the labour movement in BC, heading into the provincial election of 1916, was clearly supportive of the war, and was strongly sectarian, openly working against the left movements like the SDP which had been more outspoken in their opposition to the war.

There were major differences in platform, as well. The SPC pursued a platform that was almost identical to its prewar platforms. William Pritchard, who would later become

¹⁸⁰ *The Western Clarion*, May 1915.

¹⁸¹ *BC Federationist*, 26 Mar. 1915.

¹⁸² *BC Federationist*, 8 Sept. 1917. *Western Clarion*, Sept. 1915.

one of the SPC's most prominent critics of the war, offered an election statement that was comprised of a history of the development of human society, from pre-history, through slavery, and into capitalism. He concluded by assuring potential voters that his goal is "not to catch votes, but to make Socialists."¹⁸³

Making a similar point was the SPC candidate from Fernie, in the Crowsnest Pass area. T. Connor urged voters to remember that "no attempt at palliation under any form of slavery ever did anything," a stance that was clearly more directed at the SDP and VTLC, who supported a platform including the eight hour day and a compensation system for injured workers, than it was at either the Conservatives or Liberals.¹⁸⁴

In contrast, the SDP organ *The Voice* endorsed candidate W.R. Trotter, a former SPCer who ran in Vancouver, campaigned with his support for the prohibition of alcohol in the province, which was a big part of the election but a very small part of the rest of the left's agenda. *The Voice* commented amusedly that Trotter's opponent in Vancouver, SPCer John Harrington, was "of that vintage known as 'impossibilist,' and does not want any elector to vote for him who would also vote for any other party or candidate."¹⁸⁵

The bickering between the three factions reflected more than just organizational egotism. It was the result of the three organizations going in different directions. The SDP remained openly anti-war, but it lost its already slim parliamentary role in BC when SDPer John Place retired from provincial politics and Parker Williams abandoned the SDP to join Ralph Smith as Liberal-Labour candidates in the 1916 election.¹⁸⁶ The SPC was still critical of the war, and its election effort included figures, like Pritchard, John A. MacDonald, and

¹⁸³ William Pritchard, "Our Mission," *Western Clarion*, May 1915.

¹⁸⁴ T. Connor, "Fallacy of Palliation," *Western Clarion*, May 1915.

¹⁸⁵ *The Voice*, 25 Aug. 1916.

¹⁸⁶ Party affiliations from British Columbia, *Election Results of British Columbia, 1871-1986*, (Elections BC, retrieved from <http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/resource-centre/electoral-history-of-bc/>), p. 123-128.

John Harrington, who had written against the war, but the party pursued a platform that was similar to its prewar platforms in its dedication to opposing capitalism in general, with little concern for more immediate issues.¹⁸⁷ Finally, the BCFL, which had the largest membership by far of the three groups, was led by a group of pro-war unionists who had, in the past, belonged to the SPC and or the SDP, but by 1916 were running candidates under the Federation's own banner.

As a result, the three groups were not just feuding; they had completely different political visions. Regardless of the roots of these differences, or of which left-wing organization the candidates were affiliated with, they lost, and the left found itself "represented" in the provincial legislature by Parker Williams and Ralph Smith.

Reactions to the election results were predictable. The *Federationist* had little to say, and the SPC regarded it as a victory despite losing all its candidates losing decisively.¹⁸⁸ J.A. McDonald, writing for the SPC in the *Western Clarion*, decried the "foolish workers" who once again voted against their interests. McDonald assured his readers, though, that despite not winning any seats the campaign had been "the most successful ever engaged in by the Socialist Party of Canada," from the perspective of propaganda, at least.¹⁸⁹ In 1916, both the socialist and labourist left still regarded electoral success to be decided, at least partially, by how they did in relation to each other.

In contrast to the general determination of all these organizations to work against each other, the events of the war were beginning to affect the BCFL and SPC and force them to reevaluate their stance on the war. Both the *Federationist* and *Western Clarion* had begun featuring more articles that could consistently be called anti-war. Rather than an

¹⁸⁷ For the SPC's platform, see *Western Clarion*, 10 Apr. 1915 and May 1915.

¹⁸⁸ See *BC Federationist*, 22 Sept. 1916;

¹⁸⁹ *Western Clarion*, Oct. 1916.

afterthought, the war became the key topic in several issues of both papers, especially after the Elmer and Reid cases had brought the consequences of inaction into the open.

Beginning in 1916, the SPC began to change its tone towards the war. The party, especially in the pages of the *Clarion*, started to connect its critique of the war to the issues of the day, and used an internationalist analysis to do so. Part of this was related to the political emergence of William Pritchard as a leader of the SPC. When Pritchard took over as the editor of the *Clarion* late 1914 he had been a member of the party for only a few years. In the first years that the *Clarion* was under his editorship, the paper faced major economic challenges; it missed several issues in that time, and moved back and forth from a biweekly to a monthly publication, and the party faced the challenges created by the war in addition to its failure in the provincial election.¹⁹⁰ By 1916, though, Pritchard's personal voice started to emerge more clearly in the pages of the *Clarion*. Pritchard, as even his supporters acknowledge, was sectarian, arrogant, and wrote in a tone that was dryly cynical.¹⁹¹ But he was also an outspoken internationalist, and this gave him the perfect theoretical background to criticize the war and speak to the issues emerging in BC in 1917.

It was Pritchard who wrote an editorial entitled "Attrition" in January 1916, which was one of the first articles in the BC labour and left press to actually look at the incredible loss of life that the war represented. As Pritchard explained, when governments threatened to fight to the last man, they meant they were willing to fight "to the last worker." In fact, Pritchard told his readers, "three million Germans already sleep, over one million Frenchman have spoken for the last time, and several million gallant warriors of Russia, Italy

¹⁹⁰ Economic challenges were not limited to the *Clarion*. In one remarkable example of the need for the socialist press to take advertising when it could get it, the anti-war *Voice* featured a series of ads for the Imperial Royal Flying Corps advertising to recruit mechanics, starting on 29 June, 1917.

¹⁹¹ Peter Campbell has certainly painted a more positive picture of Pritchard than any historian before him, but he acknowledges this characterization. See Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, p. 74.

and Britain have fought their last battle.”¹⁹² Pritchard’s piece demonstrated bitterness about the consequences of the war, and a practical rejection of the nationalist argument that some lives were more valuable than others, based on the flag on their uniforms.

In addition, Pritchard published another series of articles, this one by Moses Baritz, about the situation in Europe. Baritz was a Jewish socialist from Ontario who focused on the state of the government and the left in each of the belligerent nations.¹⁹³ His uniformly critical tone and approach was a sharp contrast to the position of the *Federationist* and the SPC earlier in the war. While Baritz was caustic in his analysis of Germany, he was equally so when discussing the British and French socialist movements’ failure to mount any opposition to the war. Although the articles did not offer any strong prescriptions, his attention to the specifics of the wartime left suggest his belief that things could have been different.¹⁹⁴ After Baritz’s series had finished, Pritchard continued similar analysis from month to month in a section titled “International Notes.”¹⁹⁵

Pritchard was also a critic of the characterization of certain Canadians as “enemy aliens.” Pritchard refuted the assertion by a farmer organization that “anti-registrationists were pure alien enemies!” Pritchard joked that he wondered what “an impure alien enemy would look like” and told his readers that such designations were clearly meant to discredit the anti-registration campaign.¹⁹⁶

That analysis echoed a long article written by Jack Kavanagh a few months earlier. Kavanagh, while not as interested in the question of enemy aliens, was concerned about the limitation of protest against the war. He contrasted the imprisonment of SPC activists like

¹⁹² *Western Clarion*, Jan. 1916.

¹⁹³ For more on Baritz see David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, p. 43-44; Robin, *Radical Politics*, p. 114.

¹⁹⁴ Moses Baritz, “The European Situation,” *Western Clarion*, June 1916; July 1916; Aug. 1916; Sept. 1916; Oct. 1916; Nov. 1916; Dec. 1916.

¹⁹⁵ *Western Clarion*, Feb. 1917.

¹⁹⁶ *Western Clarion*, Feb. 1917.

Reid with the popular notion that Germany was a threat to democracy and freedom. Building on that point, Kavanagh suggested that the war was an attempt by Britain's master class to conquer other master classes, but that the casualties would not only be workers, but workers' rights. Kavanagh complained that "it is not even safe to argue with the recruiting sergeants who importune one at every corner. Such is our boasted freedom!"¹⁹⁷ The war, instead of protecting democracy as promised by pro-war leftists, meant socialists were at risk of imprisonment simply for speaking their minds.

Writers such as Kavanagh, Baritz, and especially Pritchard had moved the public position of the SPC from a tacit acceptance of the war to open resentment, if not resistance, by 1917. When the Canadian government began registering workers and seriously floated the idea of conscription, SPCers were ready to respond, and criticize, the government's plan.

In contrast, the leadership of the BCFL remained pro-war when the issue of registration arose, and their first month of response to the national service plan reflected that analysis. It is not clear, however, that the BCFL's membership supported its leaders' acquiescence to registration. Indeed, when the BCFL met for its annual convention at the end of January 1917, a month after registration had first been floated, the leadership group of the BCFL had changed its attitude towards registration slightly, likely because of the combined pressures created by SPC criticism of the government and broad opposition to registration among BCFL member unions.

One example of this new attitude among the BCFL leadership was BCFL Secretary A.S. Wells's report to the convention about registration. While Wells had once written that "if conscription is necessary, let it come" his report to the convention was written in a

¹⁹⁷ *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1916.

substantially more speculative tone than he had offered in that first editorial.¹⁹⁸ As he explained to the convention, in an effort to ascertain the meaning of the new policy Wells had met with Prime Minister Borden and MP R.B. Bennett, who was the chairman of the Registration board. As he explained, Wells and his companions, BCFL Vice Presidents Morrison and Yates, and VTLC secretary Victor Midgely, pressed Borden and Bennett on the significance of the registration scheme and their long-term plans for it, especially on the issue of conscription. Although the two federal politicians were evasive, the labour delegation soon moved onto other topics of discussion. Wells, who once boasted that he “had no country,” told Prime Minister Borden of “the situation in this province; the preference that was and is being given to ‘alien enemies’ and Asiatics, even in the manufacture of munitions,” and urged the politicians to take control of the province’s industry before they considered conscripting manpower.¹⁹⁹

Wells told the BCFL that was not the end of his attempts to modify the government’s registration agenda. As he reported, the next step was to meet with the coastal union federations, all of which agreed that they opposed registration, but disagreed on the possibility of resisting it. Bolstered by similar resolutions throughout Western Canada, though, Wells told the convention that individual union locals “spontaneously, without any common understanding, took action against the registration scheme; mass meetings were held, and working people advised to ignore the cards, a policy that was followed to a large extent in the larger centres of the province.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ *BC Federationist*, 22 Dec. 1916.

¹⁹⁹ A.S. Wells, “Report to the BCFL Convention,” *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

²⁰⁰ A.S. Wells, “Report to the BCFL Convention,” *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917. It is likely that Wells is being disingenuous when he presents this process as being so sudden and unorganized. He gives us a hint that he feared the potential response of government censors or the possible criminal charge for sedition when he spends the next two paragraphs explaining how the BCFL’s stance was not unpatriotic.

Wells defended his actions in his speech to the BCFL, and explained his perspective on the issue of registration at length. As he told the convention:

Naturally enough, the government press and some misguided individuals have caustically criticized the “unpatriotic” stand taken by the labor organizations, overlooking entirely the fact that the workmen of Canada are quite willing to co-operate in any scheme of genuine national service, but refuse to be a party to any arrangement by which the government hope to turn large numbers of workers over for exploitation to the profiteering manufacturers of this country, who, while every second or third home in Canada is mourning the loss of some member who has lost his life in protecting the property of the plutocrats, are wringing the hearts blood out of the Dominion for private profits. Admitting that State capitalism does not abolish exploitation, it is a process capitalism must pass through and the workers would be better satisfied if they knew the surplus value was being used for the general good of the nation instead of enriching a flock of buzzards who fatten on the necessity of Empire.²⁰¹

These sentences capture perfectly how much pressure Wells and the pro-war left faced as they entered that seminal convention. Wells had moved from cautious acceptance of conscription to the labourist insistence on conscription of wealth concomitant with conscription of manpower to prevent the unequal abuse of the classes in Canada. He also hints at the true fear conscription raised for many conservative unionists who otherwise supported the war: the spectre of conscription of labour. Wells’s statement included an acknowledgement of his support of state capitalism, but underpinning his critique was the fear that the conscription of labour would not be matched by a similar amount of government control of industry, meaning the de facto destruction of unions without the social democratic gains possible under state capitalism.²⁰²

Throughout the statement, Wells demonstrated the continued power of the Imperialist sensibilities that were so important to the pro-war left. He pressed the

²⁰¹ A.S. Wells, “Report to the BCFL Convention,” *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

²⁰² For more on this fear, see McCormack, *Reformers*, p. 125.

government to rid BC of its “enemy aliens” and “Asiatics” as part of its conscription program, and accepted the “necessity of Empire.” But there was none of the drum beating support for the war that existed earlier, and ultimately the speech is an attempt to gather resistance to an important government policy in a time of war, which was an important and politically volatile change from the previous years of the BCFL’s political stance.

Change was the theme of the BCFL convention in 1917. The delegates to the convention arrived with a purpose, and it was to reconfigure the labour movement so that it could contend with the war and its attendant issues more effectively. The convention in 1917 was held in Revelstoke, in the Rocky Mountains, and the *Federationist* remarked that it was special from the moment it started, as there was “practically none...of the petty squabbling and personal bickering that unfortunately marked at least some of the previous gatherings.”

This might have been because some of the most disruptive and conservative labour leaders in BC did not attend the convention. Christian Sivertz was absent, and Parmeter Pettipiece was there only as the editor of the *Federationist*, and therefore largely refrained from participating. Similarly, J.H. McVety was chairing the meetings as the incumbent president, and thus played a smaller role in debates. As a result, discussions led to a shift in policy by the BCFL towards some of the key issues of the day.

Firstly, the convention resolved itself as outspokenly opposed to registration and conscription. In contrast to the dithering of the BCFL leadership before the convention, the delegates endorsed resolutions censoring the national Trades and Labour Congress for its failure to oppose registration, and supporting Manitoba SDPers and labour legislators R.A. Rigg and H.R. Dixon for their stance against registration. Most importantly, a resolution

urged the incoming Federation executive to “use the entire energy and force of the Federation in opposing any measures that the government enact to enforce conscription.”²⁰³

These resolutions were supported by the election of a new executive. The slate of candidates who became the leaders of the BCFL in the winter of 1917 was radical and militant, and featured a new, more cooperative attitude by the labour leadership towards other left organizations, especially the SPC. Most importantly, it would be outspoken in its opposition to the war, and willing to stand up not only to employers but to the government as well.

The new president of the BCFL was a miner from Vancouver Island named Joseph Naylor. Naylor replaced J.H. McVety as the leader of the BCFL, and was his antithesis in many respects. McVety was a machinist, but had spent more than a decade working as a labour bureaucrat, in both the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council and the BCFL.²⁰⁴ Although he had once been a socialist, by 1916 he was considered a reformer, and had a reputation for being the sort of politico that could never be trusted to choose what was best for the rank and file over what was best for his career.²⁰⁵

In contrast, Naylor was at the beginning of his career as a union officer, and still smelled of the coal mines whence he came. Naylor was a member of the United Mineworkers of America, and had been a leader during the general strike of miners on Vancouver Island before the war.²⁰⁶ He was an unapologetic socialist who spoke against the

²⁰³ All of this is in the official record of the convention, as published in the *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

²⁰⁴ McVety started as a trustee on the VTLC in 1902, and served as vice president in 1905, and five terms as president of that organization between 1906 and 1909. See Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape: The Making of a Labour Bureaucracy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 67-68.

²⁰⁵ For a glimpse of the socialist opinion of McVety, see William Pritchard's review of the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress's convention in Vancouver in October, 1915. *The Western Clarion*, Oct. 1915. McVety's reputation was well earned; he had been a supporter of compulsory arbitration for 10 years, and was more than willing to ignore the wishes of the rank and file to bring a strike or lockout to an end. See Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, p. 171.

²⁰⁶ The best account of the strike on Vancouver Island is John Hinde, *When Coal was King*.

war and connected the struggle for socialism to the struggle to end the war. As he explained in a letter to *The Western Clarion* in 1915, workers needed to “advance from striking against the encroachments of the master class” and instead should “wage a war against the ownership of the means of life, also to control the law courts, police, armies and navies as long as they are necessary, which won’t be long when controlled in the interests of all instead of a few.” He finished by urging all socialists to “educate our fellow workers to the nature of this struggle, and never miss an opportunity to put our principles before the people, both male and female, and work for the overthrow of this damnable system.”²⁰⁷

Joseph Naylor advocated a practical internationalism when discussing more local issues as well. He and McVety, whom he replaced, had been in contact the year before when Naylor had pushed McVety to lobby the government to free interned workers who had belonged to the UMWA, and had assisted in convincing the federal government to release the miners (presumably including Herman Elmer).²⁰⁸ At the convention itself, Naylor also submitted a resolution regarding the presence of Asian labour in Vancouver Island mines, and it offered a new solution to a problem that contrasted sharply from the attitudes of Pettipiece and other conservative labour leaders. Naylor recommended the BCFL lobby the provincial government to enforce a minimum wage law for all adults working underground. This solution, which was referred as a recommendation by the convention on to the provincial government, foreshadowed the momentary unity of white and Asian unionists that occurred beginning in 1917. It is clear evidence of a remarkable difference between Naylor’s internationalism and the exclusionary ideology of McVety and others.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *The Western Clarion*, 27 Mar. 1915.

²⁰⁸ *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

²⁰⁹ *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

Naylor was not the only radical elected to lead the BCFL in 1917. In almost every case, the new members of the BCFL executive were anti-war socialists, who had experience with building multiethnic coalitions. The new executive council included outspoken anti-war activist Albert “Ginger” Goodwin, whose anti-war work was well-known (and led to his murder the next year), and Joseph Taylor, who submitted a resolution to the convention to pass a vote of non-confidence in the federal government as a result of its registration scheme.²¹⁰

The successful candidates had run on an anti-war, internationalist platform, and their election victory demonstrated that they had the support of the more than forty delegates, representing more than twenty unions and the trades and labour councils of Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince Rupert. The new BCFL executive’s election win meant that the BCFL was moving to an explicitly anti-war position. Importantly, this anti-war sentiment had been rekindled by a slate of candidates who renewed the left’s emphasis on internationalism and on class identity over racial or ethnic identities.

The effects of this shift were clear quickly. The most obvious example was the blooming solidarity between Asian and white unionists. In 1916, the Chinese Canadian Labour Union was organized, and it was an active organizer in the lumber industry by 1917,

²¹⁰ *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

where it joined with white unions in several strikes.²¹¹ The unity of white-Asian workers was not unprecedented, but it was unusual.²¹²

More important, and more indicative of the changing attitude of the labour movement in the latter years of the war, was the shingleweavers strike of 1917. The strike was an example of dawning solidarity between Asian and white unionists. It started in the summer of that year, as 800 men, most of whom were Chinese, struck for the eight-hour day. Although the white and Asian workers actually had different demands – the Chinese workers demanded higher wages than their white allies – and were negotiating separately, they were united in their mutual determination to not undermine each other. In fact, white union organizers told the *Federationist* that they were more confident in the fortitude of the Chinese workers than they were of their own rank and file.²¹³ Although that summer's strike would fail, the unity shown by the two unions would lay the foundation for a series of more successful strikes between 1918 and 1921.²¹⁴ Gillian Creese suggests that these were the result of the radicalization of the BC labour movement in the late war period, and the increasing popularity of socialism among labour leaders in that period.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Gillian Creese, "Organizing against racism in the workplace: Chinese workers in Vancouver before the Second World War," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 19,3 (Fall 1987), 39.

²¹² Most of the earlier solidarity across ethnic boundaries had occurred in the fishing industry. One important example is Frank Rogers, a union organizer who organized fishers of Asian, European, and First Nations ancestry into one union at the turn of the Twentieth Century. See Janet Mary Nicol, "A Working Man's Dream: the Life of Frank Rogers," *BC Historical News Quarterly* 36,2 (Spring 2003), 2-5. Jeremy Mouat, "Frank Rogers," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. XIII (1900-1910), http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=7032&interval=25&&PHPSESSID=h7342ndaatsh51u5q88rbis337. But the late war period of solidarity was much more extensive than previous periods. Gillian Creese identified thirty-five strikes involving solidarity between Asian and White workers before World War II. Of these, seven (20%) came between 1916 and 1921, when this anti-war coalition was leading the BC left. In all the years before that period, there had only been six such strikes. See Creese, "Solidarity or Exclusion?" Appendix A, p. 51.

²¹³ *BC Federationist*, 27 July 1917.

²¹⁴ See Gillian Creese, "Organizing against racism in the workplace," 40-41; Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity," 39-40.

²¹⁵ Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity," 27.

But it was not enough to be socialist – as Creese herself notes, socialism had not prevented racism in the past.²¹⁶ Instead, it was the return of a viable ideology of internationalism that enabled late war radicals to support strikes that recognized Asian and European unionists as allies rather than competitors. Creese herself notes that solidarity occurred in circumstances in which “white workers no longer distinguished Asians as ‘foreigners’ whose exclusion would advance the situation of ‘real’ (white) workers; they were seen as members of the Vancouver working class with interests similar to other workers.”²¹⁷ That attitude was widespread only when unionists embraced internationalist socialism, and in the case of 1917, this was happening as a result of the increasing popularity of the anti-war movement.

This anti-war movement was never a single organization, but its vitality can be judged by its presence in a variety of other institutions. One was the labour movement, which was growing throughout the war.²¹⁸ By July 1917 the *Federationist* was reporting that VTLC meetings were gaining new delegates at each meeting, especially when meeting to discuss the war or conscription. Among the new delegates that month were George Hardy from the Carpenters’ union, and Ernest Winch from the Longshoreman’s union. Both were socialists, Hardy a veteran of the IWW, and Winch a longtime SDPer, and they joined Joe Naylor, Albert Goodwin, and Joseph Taylor in the BCFL, and Victor Midgely and Jack Kavanagh in the Vancouver Trades and Labour council.²¹⁹ The growth of the labour

²¹⁶ Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity,” 37.

²¹⁷ Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity,” 27.

²¹⁸ David Bercuson asserts that the labour movement enjoyed a growth of one hundred per cent during the war. See Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, 58.

²¹⁹ The discussion of the new delegates to the VTLC is in *BC Federationist*, 6 July 1917. For more on George Hardy, see George Hardy, *Those Stormy Years: The Fight for Freedom on Five Continents*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956). Hardy unsuccessfully ran for the VTLC presidency later that year against McVety, see *BC Federationist*, 5 Oct. 1917. For more on Ernest Winch, see Peter Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, 31-72.

movement was a sign of the growing importance of the war as an issue in the lives of unionists.

Not only did this slate of anti-war activists establish themselves as the leaders of the left in BC at this point, but their prominence and popularity led the established left leaders to adhere more closely to their anti-war analysis. One example of this was shifting politics of the editors of the *Federationist*, Parmeter Pettipiece, and later A.S. Wells. Pieces appearing in the *Federationist* after the BCFL convention in January 1917, demonstrate the evolving opinion of its editors, and of the BCFL leadership in general. One important change in editorial policy at the *Federationist* was the paper's attitude towards conscription. The *Federationist* had at first acquiesced to conscription, suggesting that it was welcome as long as it was matched with conscription of wealth. As late as December 1916, the *Federationist* published a Wells article on its front page telling unionists "if conscription is necessary, let it come," but as a result of the leadership change at the convention, the *Federationist* soon changed its position on conscription.

At the BCFL convention in January, 1917, A.S. Wells submitted a referendum of member unions asking whether or not they would support a general strike in the event of the Canadian government enacting conscription.²²⁰ It was a dramatically different position on conscription than he had taken when writing in the *Federationist* a month earlier, and in the months after the convention the *Federationist* would switch to better reflect the position of the BCFL executive.

One example was an article published after the convention, in which the *Federationist* was critical of the Dominion Trades and Labour Congress for its failure to stand against conscription, which caused DTLC president J.C. Watters to write a defensive letter to the

²²⁰ *BC Federationist*, 2 Feb. 1917.

paper.²²¹ The *Federationist* was even more explicit six weeks later, when it described conscription as “the most damnable and galling...yoke of servitude” a democratic people could be subjected to. Indeed, in the author’s view, conscription was so oppressive that its introduction was “a victory for the Huns of mid-Europe” because it represented the “rejuvenation of despotism and autocracy” in a democratic country. Thus, the author argued, the only acceptable stand for organized labour was “unflinching opposition to conscription, either for military or industrial purposes.”²²² While the *Federationist* still lacked Naylor’s anti-nationalist analysis, the anti-war position of the new executive had pushed the paper to take a stance against conscription.

The power of the anti-war movement was moving even the most staunchly pro-war socialists into the anti-conscription, and eventually anti-war camp. One example was the ubiquitous J.H. McVety, whose ability to hold a position in the union leadership throughout the war was tested in October, 1917, at a VTLC meeting. There Jack Kavanagh, an SPCer and anti-war speaker, threatened to resign as president of the VTLC unless McVety quit a position he had accepted on a conscription exemption panel. When McVety refused, Kavanagh resigned, and McVety was elected by the delegates at the meeting as the new president of the VTLC.²²³ But the pressure was clearly building on McVety, and only a few weeks later he resigned his position from the conscription exemption board, before accepting a position as a candidate for the left in the federal election.²²⁴

McVety’s about-face was necessary if he was going to be a BCFL supported candidate. When the *Federationist* started campaigning for the federal election in the fall of 1917, conscription was the key issue. The paper announced that the labour candidates’

²²¹ *BC Federationist* 27 Apr. 1917.

²²² *BC Federationist*, 1 June 1917.

²²³ *BC Federationist*, 5 Oct. 1917.

²²⁴ *BC Federationist*, 2 Nov. 1917.

platform would be “anti-conscription,” and would reflect the “platform and policy of the BC Federation of Labour.”²²⁵ The platform was explicitly anti-war and internationalist. The BCFL’s “statement to the electorate” insisted that “unless swift and intelligent action” was taken, “within the near future countless millions of the earth’s people will perish of starvation and its attendant diseases, a fitting climax to the suicidal frenzy that has already drenched the earth with the blood of other millions of its victims.”²²⁶

It was a significant change for the *Federationist* to regard the victims of the war as equal. But the author went further, and declared “in the face of this world holocaust of death and devastation every artifice of ruling class society is used to accentuate the horror of the awful conflict, by appealing to the blind prejudices and base passions of the unthinking multitude and urging it on to ever more frenzied deeds of reckless fury and senseless slaughter.”²²⁷ This was a drastic change for the *Federationist*, but reflected the agenda of the leadership of the BCFL and the membership who elected them over that past year.

As the election campaign continued, this new attitude seemed to create new opportunities for unity within the left. Starting in June, the *Federationist* advertised weekly meetings for the SPC, which were advertised with the slogan “no conscription, no compromise!”²²⁸ Even more significant were speaking events, organized on a biweekly basis, featuring speakers from the VTLC, BCFL, and SPC sharing a stage. The first of these was on 13 June 1917, and included speeches by SPCers W.W. LeFeaux and William Pritchard, *Federationist* editor Parm Pettipiece, and SPC founder E.T. Kingsley. The meeting was

²²⁵ *BC Federationist*, 12 Oct. 1917.

²²⁶ *BC Federationist*, 9 Nov. 1917.

²²⁷ *BC Federationist*, 9 Nov. 1917.

²²⁸ *BC Federationist*, 1 June 1917.

chaired by J.H. McVety. An unusual collection, surely, as Kingsley, Pettipiece, and McVety had all been in the pro-war camp earlier in the war, while Pritchard was strongly anti-war.²²⁹

Indeed, Pritchard had written, only one month earlier, a blistering editorial about the *Federationist's* “policy of confusion.” Noting that the *Federationist* had argued Germany was “entirely bureaucratic and feudalistic,” Pritchard chastised it for not knowing that Germany was the fastest growing economy in the world, and one of the most industrially advanced. He also insisted that nothing could be more “bureaucratic than the British foreign office,” and no government was more tyrannical than “France in Morocco, or Russia in Persia.” In light of this, Pritchard explained, the *Federationist's* perspective was “violent and non-sensical.”²³⁰ Considering the tone of his editorial and the power of his denunciation, it is startling that he would be invited to appear on a stage with the target of his ire only a month later. It is a testament to the power of the issues – especially conscription – but also the rapid change in position of the BCFL and *Federationist* that one of BC’s most prominent anti-war speakers would appear at a *Federationist* event.

The speeches at the event demonstrated that the SPCers were not tempering their analysis to fit with the position of the BCFL – instead, Pettipiece and Kingsley evinced a new attitude that bore a closer resemblance to the opinions of the SPC speakers. Pettipiece declared himself opposed to the war, and insisted he had been since 1906. Not only that, he told that audience that workers had the power to stop the war, if they wanted. He said, “all the workers have to do is ‘do nothing,’ and that will provide a solution to all their difficulties.”²³¹ Even previously pro-war Kingsley acknowledged that “there never was a war but which had sprung from economic sources...all the military is for is to protect the master,

²²⁹ *BC Federationist*, 15 June 1917.

²³⁰ *Western Clarion*, May 1917.

²³¹ *BC Federationist*, 15 June 1917.

who rules and robs [workers].” Although Kingsley still used Prussianism as a synonym for autocracy, he made some allowances for the internationalism of his fellow speakers, and emphasized the shared challenge that the war presented to workers throughout the world.²³²

Not surprisingly, the SPC speakers took the anti-war analysis at the event even further. Pritchard delivered a speech that included a diatribe against the British Empire, and suggested that the British ruling class was to blame for the war.²³³ LeFeaux went further, and questioned the justifications for the war, especially the Belgian atrocities. Almost repeating the argument of C. from Fort Rouge published in *The Voice* two years before, LeFeaux contrasted the reaction of Canada and other belligerent countries to the reported Belgian atrocities to the reaction to reports of atrocities committed by Belgians in the Congo. Like C. before him, he used this example to demonstrate that the war was not about human rights or freedoms, but instead about property rights.

LeFeaux then reminded the audience that volunteering for the war was foolish. As he announced, it was “folly to allow sentiment and patriotism or hysterical loyalty, which would not bear scientific investigation, to lead them into death by what was practically suicide.”²³⁴ Speeches like that, which in this case was reprinted word for word by the *Federationist*, marked an important change in approach for the major organ of the labour movement in BC, and represented the increasing commitment among leftists in BC to an antiwar, anti-conscription coalition.

Perhaps the key element to this budding coalition was the new leadership of the BCFL, especially Joe Naylor. In an article which appeared in the 1 June issue of the *Federationist*, Naylor demonstrated that some labour leaders shared the SPC’s ideological

²³² *BC Federationist*, 15 June 1917.

²³³ *BC Federationist*, 15 June 1917.

²³⁴ *BC Federationist*, 15 June 1917.

opposition to nationalism, militarism, and the war.²³⁵ The article was a short history of the stance of labour towards militarism generally, and conscription more specifically. Instead of using timeless metaphors about human truths and the terrible costs of capitalism, Naylor instead used a more local example to support his point. Talking about Cumberland, BC, where he lived and worked, he wrote:

Here we have patriotism's most convincing object lesson and expression...While we are fighting for "democracy and the liberty of small nations" the slaves of the Canadian Collieries, Ltd., are not allowed to organize for the purpose of in any manner bettering their conditions...for the Canadian Collieries, Ltd., will not stand for that foreign organization known as the UMWA.

He finished by pointing out an irony. "At any rate," he wrote, "conscription will not effect (sic) this delectable burg, for less than 3 per cent. of the men here engaged are British subjects."²³⁶ Naylor's internationalism was relentless – it appeared again the next week when he urged workers to remember that their interests were shared by German workers, not Canadian capitalists²³⁷ - and it made it much more possible for sincere solidarity to exist between the socialist and labour leadership.

Naylor was not the only labour leader who helped with this. Albert "Ginger" Goodwin, the BCFL vice president and outspoken socialist, took time away from organizing smelterworkers in Trail to run on the SPC ticket in the provincial election in 1916. He also wrote for the *Federationist* and the *Clarion*, analyzing the war. In the June issue of the *Clarion*, Goodwin wrote an article entitled "Nationalism and Internationalism." He explained in it that only a nation's capitalists benefited from nationalism, not a nation's workers. As an example that this was true, he pointed to the war, and suggested that anyone who said that

²³⁵ In point of fact, Naylor was a member of the SPC, and spoke on its behalf against the creation of a new labour party. See *BC Federationist*, 9 Mar. 1917.

²³⁶ *BC Federationist*, 1 June 1917.

²³⁷ *BC Federationist*, 8 June 1917.

Canada was “fighting for freedom,” unless they were paid agents of the class that profited from the war, were “hopelessly at sea, and detrimental to the workers as a whole.” He continued:

To accept the teachings of “nationalism” is to segregate the workers of the world and make out of them enemies ready and willing to fly at each others’ throats when the exploiters want them. The boundary lines of the various countries do not cover the cloak of exploitation...The slaves of England, Germany, Austria, France, Russia, U.S.A. and other countries under the yoke of capitalism, live under the same general condition of wage slavery...We are international in kind, and our enemy is the class that live from the produce of our toil.²³⁸

Goodwin also wrote a letter in the fall of 1917 to discuss the economic conditions created by the war, in which he explained that “this bunk” of the danger of the “devilish hun” was a cover for a naked cash grab by the wealthy and powerful throughout the British Empire.²³⁹

The contents of the *Federationist* and the *Clarion* reflected that the war and conscription were the most important issues of the rest of 1917. Commentaries on one or both issues appeared in every issue of both papers. Moreover, the BCFL, the VTLC, and the SPC continued to build trust in each other, and members of all the organizations began to moonlight for their former rivals. The VTLC chose to accept the SPC’s resolution regarding conscription, and adopted it as its own.²⁴⁰ W.J. Curry, a longtime SPC member and dentist on Vancouver Island, began writing regular letters to the *Federationist* about the war. One particularly angry letter related to the arrest of another former SPCer, Charles Lestor, who had been arrested in the USA for organizing against the war. Curry used the

²³⁸ *The Western Clarion*, June 1917.

²³⁹ *BC Federationist*, 2 Nov. 1917.

²⁴⁰ Vancouver Trades and Labour Council Fonds, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Box 22, p. 60-61. (hereafter VTLC Fonds)

occasion to warn Canadian organizers of what awaited them, and to urge them to continue their campaigns against tyranny, especially conscription.²⁴¹

Another important example of a growing anti-war coalition could be found in the letter section of the *Federationist*. George Stirling, the BC organizer for the Social Democratic Party of Canada, maintained a steady correspondence in the pages of the *Federationist* in 1917 and 1918. Like Curry, Stirling also wrote regularly about the war, and was an advocate against militarism in general.²⁴² The *Federationist* even published a short lament when Industrial Workers of the World leader Bill Haywood was arrested for sedition as a result of speaking out against the war in the USA.²⁴³ Considering the paper had generally referred to the IWW derisively as “the bummery,” and insisted that as “an instrument for the attainment of real freedom and liberty [the IWW] was largely a joke,” this was an unusual example of solidarity on the part of the *Federationist*, and a sign of the effect the war was having on the mainstream left.²⁴⁴

During this period of *détente* on the left, even the *Clarion* had some kind words for the IWW, which was surprising considering it had once announced that “if the IWW is not financed by the capitalist class, it ought to be!”²⁴⁵ Wobblies in the United States in 1917 and 1918 were facing a period protracted persecution, resulting in the Everett massacre and the forced expulsion of Wobblies from Montana.²⁴⁶ One of the most heinous crimes against the IWW in the era was the lynching of Frank Little, an outspoken opponent of the war and an

²⁴¹ *BC Federationist*, 19 Oct. 1917.

²⁴² *BC Federationist*, 14 Sept. 1917.

²⁴³ *BC Federationist*, 5 Oct. 1917.

²⁴⁴ *BC Federationist*, 14 Nov. 1914.

²⁴⁵ *Western Clarion*, 31 Aug. 1912, as quoted in Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, p. 57.

²⁴⁶ See Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume IV: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917*, (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 518-558.

organizer for the IWW in Butte, Montana.²⁴⁷ Pritchard called the murder of Little an “abominable outrage” and J.H. Harrington wrote an article building on the point. He argued that the IWW was a victim of the times, because capitalists were pushing government to target people with “no local standing” for deportation, to prevent effective union organization. The parallels in Harrington’s analysis between the treatment of the IWW in Washington State and Montana and the imprisonment and deportation of ethnic socialists in Canada were clear, and Harrington included a condemnation of the role of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in excluding ethnic miners from work and union locals, and thereby exposing them to the ire of employers, just as Local 18 in the Crowsnest Pass had done to Herman Elmer. Like the *Federationist*, the *Clarion* was pushing for solidarity among leftists in the face of both capital and the government by the fall of 1917.

As always, the SDP led the way in constructing this coalition. Although *The Voice* often insisted that it had no interest in pursuing the tactics of the Wobblies, it still showed them considerable support, both by printing articles about the union and defending its aims and members, and by publishing analysis by Scott Nearing and John Gabriel Soltis, both Wobblies.²⁴⁸ Among the articles defending the IWW was one in December, 1916, praising the IWW for organizing the “unskilled, migratory workers” that advanced capitalism seemed to create in greater numbers than ever before. *The Voice* article, while never discussing the war, does offer the prescient suggestion that the growth of the IWW would likely lead to more established trade unions adopting the tactics and philosophy of the IWW, to better

²⁴⁷ Arnon Gutfeld, “The Murder of Frank Little: Radical Labor Agitation in Butte, Montana, 1917,” *Labor History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 1969), p. 177-192.

²⁴⁸ Soltis was a Minnesota-born socialist, who was revealed by Harold Lord Varney in his red-scare era tell-all to have been Wobbly. See <http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/others/varney.html> (last accessed 15 Oct. 2009). Soltis published an article in almost every issue of *The Voice* until its transition into the *Western Labor News*, starting 20 July 1917, and ending 2 Aug. 1918. It is Soltis himself who reveals Nearing, who also wrote a short article in every issue of *The Voice* throughout the war, was a Wobbly sympathizer. See *The Voice*, 20 July 1917.

enable the construction of solidarity among organized workers. The SDP's openness to the IWW is another example of the power of the war to foster unity among leftist organizations.²⁴⁹

The federal election was another milestone in the growth of this coalition. By the time the election date rolled around in December, 1917, socialists and labourists were campaigning together on an anti-war platform. W.J. Curry was speaking at events to support the candidacy of J. Taylor, the labour candidate in Nanaimo,²⁵⁰ and George Stirling, the BC organizer for the SDP, was speaking at events to support I.A. Austin, the BCFL candidate in the West Kootenays.²⁵¹ The *Federationist* published a list of labour-endorsed candidates around the country every week on the editorial page, and by 30 November it featured labourists, SPCers, and SDPers from across the country, though none from east of Quebec.²⁵²

An ominous indication of the importance of the left's campaign against conscription appeared the week before the election. The *Federationist* delivered the grim news that the first person had been arrested for refusing to register. Duncan Kerr, an engineer at a mill in Pitt Lake, BC, and a member of the International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers (ISOE), had lost his job for refusing to register, and when he arrived in Vancouver was seized by a press gang and forced to tell a judge that he refused to register, upon which he was sentenced to two years hard labour in a prison in New Westminster.²⁵³

The author of the article tried to offer some small consolation to Kerr, and tried to inspire the *Federationist* readers, by reminding them that Kerr was simply defending his

²⁴⁹ *The Voice*, 1 Dec. 1916.

²⁵⁰ *BC Federationist*, 14 Dec. 1917.

²⁵¹ *BC Federationist*, 23 Nov. 1917.

²⁵² *BC Federationist*, 30 Nov. 1917.

²⁵³ *BC Federationist*, 7 Dec. 1917.

democratic rights. Kerr was imprisoned so “that the law of the jungle may be appeased,” but the author hoped it would not be for the full term. Instead, he hoped the “cringing slaves outside the penitentiary [would] be pushed up hard against the wall of misery, that they will be compelled to develop at least the rudiments of a backbone, a thing that is not yet known to their anatomy.”²⁵⁴ The Kerr case brought the question of tactics to the forefront of the slowly forming coalition, and the election was the first opportunity workers would have to demonstrate whether they had developed “backbone.”

Despite the stakes of the election, as demonstrated by Kerr’s two year prison term, and the growth of the anti-war coalition, Conservative Prime Minister Borden’s Unionist government was returned to power. The coalition had failed to achieve any electoral success, despite the sincere belief, at least within the BCFL, that some small victories were coming.²⁵⁵ When there were none, the *Federationist* reacted angrily, with Pettipiece publishing an editorial congratulating the new government on its ability to call upon “the loyalty and devotion of the blind and stupid host that so nobly rallied in support of its own betrayal and crucifixion upon the cross of ruling class rapacity and rapine.”²⁵⁶

The *Clarion* was more sanguine, arguing that it was a political failure but a success of propaganda. Pritchard was sure that “many wage slaves heard the message for the first time,” and assured his readers that “indications are not wanting that the seed fell on fruitful soil.”²⁵⁷

Although the anti-conscription forces had lost the election, their opposition to conscription continued to motivate political action. Moreover, there was the outstanding

²⁵⁴ *BC Federationist*, 7 Dec. 1917.

²⁵⁵ Several articles indicated that the *Federationist*, at least, believed that the left had a good chance of winning seats. See *BC Federationist*, 30 Nov. 1917; 7 Dec. 1917; 14 Dec. 1917.

²⁵⁶ *BC Federationist*, 21 Dec. 1917.

²⁵⁷ *Western Clarion*, Jan. 1918.

issue of Duncan Kerr's imprisonment. The BCFL decided to submit the idea of a general strike to protest Kerr's imprisonment to a vote of affiliated unions.²⁵⁸ This would be the second vote on the idea of a general strike to oppose conscription, and the previous vote had been contentious.²⁵⁹ That first vote had resulted in the executive having the power to declare a general strike if someone was conscripted against his will. But Kerr had not actually been conscripted, and so the executive decided to hold another vote on the question of a general strike against conscription.²⁶⁰

The results of the second vote by BCFL unions on the issue of a general strike were divided. Several of the most radical unions in the province, such as the longshoremen and the civic workers in Vancouver, expressed immediate support.²⁶¹ But a month after the vote was put to unions, VTLC secretary Victor Midgely told the *Federationist* that sentiment on the ballots returned was split.²⁶²

Over the following months, the idea of a strike in defence of Duncan Kerr faded from the pages of the *Federationist*. Likely because there were such divided attitudes among the membership of the BCFL's rank and file, the BC left leadership turned their energies to other strategies for opposing the war, and expanding the power of the left.

One of these strategies was the campaign, born out of the election of 1917, to build a federal labour party, eventually called the Federated Labour Party. The idea of a new party had started with McVety in 1916, but it was officially inaugurated at the BCFL convention of 1918. Some of the radical anti-war delegates spoke against the new party, including Naylor, Ernest Winch, and Ginger Goodwin, all of whom pointed out that there was already in

²⁵⁸ *BC Federationist*, 7 Dec. 1917.

²⁵⁹ *BC Federationist*, 22 June 1917; 29 June 1917.

²⁶⁰ *BC Federationist*, 7 Sept. 1917.

²⁶¹ *BC Federationist*, 14 Dec. 1917.

²⁶² *BC Federationist*, 11 Jan. 1918.

existence a socialist party and a social democratic party. But the party was created over their protests, with the strong support of McVety, Pettipiece, Kingsley, George Hardy, A.S. Wells, W.J. Curry, George Stirling and the formerly disgraced then politically resurrected socialist J.H. Hawthornthwaite.²⁶³

Although some scholars have pointed to the FLP as proof of the split within the left at the end of the war, what is remarkable is that the FLP did not destroy the fledgling coalition.²⁶⁴ Instead, the FLP became one more weapon in the hands of the left, especially after the war was over. Part of the reason that the coalition survived the creation of the FLP was the crucible of the last months of the war. If Kerr and the FLP vote had tested the resolve and commitment of the reviving BC left, they were precursors to the two crises that finally resulted, for a few years, in a coherent BC left leadership.

The first of these was the death of Ginger Goodwin. Goodwin, who was conscripted under suspicious circumstances after the collapse of a strike he had led of smelterworkers in Trail, had dodged the draft, and fled to live in the wilderness near Comox Lake, on Vancouver Island.²⁶⁵ While wandering in the woods alone one afternoon, he was killed by a special constable hired by the Provincial police to capture draft dodgers like him.

Goodwin's death was met with shock by most of the left, and fury by all. Most leftists believed that he had been murdered for his politics, perhaps even assassinated. When word of his death was received in Vancouver, it was William Pritchard who seized the floor

²⁶³ For a discussion of the creation of the FLP, see Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, 148-49; A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 143, and fn 27; Harry Gutkin and Mildred Gutkin, *Profiles in Dissent: The Shaping of Radical Thought in the Canadian West*, (Edmonton: NeWest publishers, 1997), 271-272; David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978), 119; and *BC Federationist*, 1 Feb. 1918; 8 Feb. 1918.

²⁶⁴ Martin Robin, referencing Dorothy Steeves, asserts that the new party split the SPC. See Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, p. 150, and fn 63. See also Dorothy Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada*, (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977), p. 30.

²⁶⁵ His story is widely told, but the best source is Roger Stonebanks, *Fighting for Dignity*.

at a special meeting of VTLC. He told the other delegates that Goodwin was a victim of his labour activism, and that he had been drafted in the first place as a result of his work on behalf of the smelterworkers of Trail, BC.²⁶⁶ Pritchard also highlighted that the left had lost a good speaker, writer, and organizer who had been well-liked throughout BC. Pritchard was sent to Cumberland as the representative of the SPC for Goodwin's funeral. Jack Kavanagh went further, incorrectly suggesting that Goodwin was unarmed when he was shot. He was murdered by the state, which Victor Midgely argued was a strange way to prosecute the war.²⁶⁷

At that same meeting of the VTLC, elections were held to elect a new executive, and it was not coincidental that the elected slate featured several of Vancouver's most outspoken anti-war activists. Ernest Winch won office as President, with Kavanagh elected vice president, Pritchard elected as a trustee and Midgely returning as business agent. Significantly, J.H. McVety – who had only recently decided he opposed conscription – was also elected as a trustee, which is an example both of the broad support the anti-war coalition had among leftists by 1918, and of McVety's undeniable opportunism.

The death of Goodwin made the connections between the anti-war movement and the labour movement even clearer, and more important than ever. Goodwin had been one of the anti-war executive of the BCFL, as well as a respected unionist and a noted SPC speaker, author, and election candidate in 1916. Compared to Kerr, who was a rank and file member of the International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers with no connection to the small group who ran the BC left throughout the war, Goodwin was a close friend of Joseph Naylor's, a longtime associate of the socialist leadership, and a former Vice-President

²⁶⁶ William Pritchard experienced something similar – he was originally classed “category three” but reclassified as “category one” a few months into 1918, apparently due to bureaucratic reclassification. See William Pritchard's account of his own life, recorded 1972, University of Manitoba at Brandon Archives.

²⁶⁷ *BC Federationist*, 2 Aug. 1918.

of the BCFL. He was also emblematic of the changes in the left that had occurred since the provincial election of 1916. He was a noted labour leader, and a socialist, who rose to prominence in the BCFL as a radical voice that connected the campaign against the war to the struggle for socialism. He was an internationalist, who had spoken out before and during the war against nationalism, and he was therefore at the very heart of the coalition that had been built by the challenge of the war.

Moreover, Goodwin had presented himself to the VTLC when first conscripted, hoping that he could be the test case to finally challenge the conscription act using direct action. Instead, Jack Kavanagh, himself an important part of the radical anti-war element in the late war left, mocked Goodwin, insisting that he “was supposed to be a revolutionist. If he did not know what to do, there was something wrong with his ‘revolution.’”²⁶⁸ Now that Goodwin was dead, there was extra pressure on the left to make up for its past mistakes.

Thus, the reaction of the left to Goodwin’s murder did not appear out of thin air, but instead was the result of a number of streams of ideological and tactical change that had affected the left over the two years before that fateful August. The labour movement knew it had to do something – not only was Goodwin a significant labour leader, but he was the victim of conscription, a policy that the left had fought against, but failed to mount any action to prevent. His death also came at time when the anti-war coalition felt stronger than it ever had. The failure to win any victories in the election had not convinced labour leaders to abandon their ideological position. Instead, it had led them to consider other tactics. Most important of these was the general strike.

The VTLC therefore decided to protest Goodwin’s death with a one day general strike. The proposal was made by Kavanagh, who had strong anti-war credentials. Not only

²⁶⁸ *BC Federationist*, 22 March 1918. See also Isitt, “The Search for Solidarity,” 30.

was the strike an important protest of Goodwin's death, but it was the first serious test of the technique in BC as well. Moreover, it was a powerful way to judge the level of support anti-war topics had among workers in Vancouver. Ultimately, by the time the workers downed tools on 3 August 1918, the strike was about much more than just Goodwin. Goodwin's death was a symbol of what socialists had insisted was worth fighting against – unchecked autocracy of capital and the state.

The strike was the first example of this movement's strength. It started at noon on 2 August, and included thousands of workers, especially in the metal trades and shipbuilding industries, as well as the street railway workers, boilermakers, and members of the International Longshoreman's Association. Only a few hours after the strike started a group of returned soldiers attacked the VTLC leadership at the labour temple because "some businessmen persuaded [them] that the strikers were pro-German and anti-patriot." Victor Midgely, the VTLC secretary, was seized and threatened with defenestration, but was saved by telephone operator Francis Foxcroft, who intervened and likely saved Midgely's life.²⁶⁹ The strike lasted the rest of 2 August, but most of the workers were back at work the next day. Nonetheless, the strike was a conditional success, especially because it aroused such a strong reaction from both Vancouver business leaders and the government. It was obvious to leftists that the general strike was a powerful weapon.

Although the battle between the veterans and the unionists dominated the discussion of the strike after it happened, just as important was the widespread support among unionists for the actions of the VTLC leadership. When the popular press of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Board of Trade, accused the VTLC executive of not representing the

²⁶⁹ The quote is from Elaine Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982), p. 54-56. See also Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, p. 44; *BC Federationist*, 9 Aug. 1918.

interests of the rank and file unionists in the city, the executives and the VTLC delegates resigned en masse, and insisted that they would offer member unions the chance to replace them.²⁷⁰ When all of the delegates and executive were returned to their positions by 29 August it validated their stance, and the anti-war coalition more broadly.²⁷¹

The strike inspired other forms of resistance as well. When William Pritchard arrived back in Vancouver from Goodwin's funeral, he discovered that as a result of the strike seven leftist leaders had been identified by the city government, and told that they must leave the city with their families within a week, or face imprisonment. Also on the list were fellow VTLC executive members and anti-war leftists Ernest Winch, Jack Kavanagh, Victor Midgely, and Vancouver Island unionist Joseph Naylor.²⁷² But the anti-war coalition was determined to protect its leadership, and it organized a group of bodyguards, known as the "four Ls" to protect Pritchard and his comrades. In addition, the four Ls compiled their own list of seven prominent Vancouverites, and told Mayor Harry Gale that he and the other six members of that list would share the fate of the men the city was threatening.²⁷³ Thus, the determination of anti-war socialists to oppose the government's aggression extended as far as threatening vigilante action against elected officials by August 1918.

Opposition to autocratic actions of the Canadian government was clearly expressed in the pages of the *Federationist* as well, despite government policy of censorship. The chief censor visited the BCFL in August 1918 to discuss *Federationist* editorials, and although the

²⁷⁰ *BC Federationist*, 9 Aug. 1918. See also VTLC Fonds, Box 22, p. 124.

²⁷¹ *BC Federationist*, 30 Aug. 1918.

²⁷² Pritchard tells this story in his recorded autobiography, University of Manitoba at Brandon archives, 1972. Although he does not name the other 6 members, there is an oblique reference to the list in the *Federationist* account of the VTLC meeting from 9 Aug. 1918, which appears to indicate that those four were included. Peter Campbell's list includes these five, as well as Ernie Cotterell and George Thomas, but it is not clear where he found the evidence for his list. The link between the targeted individuals was their stance on the war – Naylor was not even a resident of Vancouver, but he was one of the most popular anti-war speakers in the BC left. See Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, 44. *BC Federationist*, 9 Aug. 1918.

²⁷³ Pritchard autobiography, 1972. Pritchard explained the story in an interview with David Millar as well, as quoted in Campbell, *Canadian Marxists*, p. 88.

Federationist committee agreed to his recommendations, they made it clear in the next issue that they were preparing to resist.²⁷⁴ Fear of censorship did limit the paper's willingness to publish outright accusations, but oblique complaints were common. One editorial remarked upon the "horrors" of autocratic rule, and then sarcastically praised Canada's government for being "so truly and thoroughly democratic that they would not engage in any impudent infringement upon our long cherished and sacred rights of free speech and free press." The article finished with a warning to workers – "if you wish to speak or publish with due and proper regard for your spiritual salvation and physical safety, neither speak nor publish the truth."²⁷⁵ Coming as it did in the wake of the death of Ginger Goodwin, and in the context of a state that was threatening to arbitrarily imprison socialists for their beliefs, the power and danger of the truth was clear to the anti-war movement. Importantly, the left had discovered by the summer of 1918 that they had to oppose the root of those issues – the war – to mount any opposition to the challenges of government tyranny. Thus, speaking out against the war and conscription – as Goodwin had – was itself a resistive act, and the anti-war left dedicated itself to taking that action with gusto in the months after Goodwin's murder.

One opportunity for the anti-war coalition to demonstrate the power of its commitment to internationalism and solidarity arrived in September 1918. That month, the Canadian government passed a pair of orders-in-council that clearly targeted socialists and the emerging anti-war movement, despite being couched in racialist language. The resolutions, Privy Council Orders 2381 and 2384, banned a large number of political organizations, and almost the entire foreign language press. Among the banned

²⁷⁴ The account of the Censor's visit is in VTLC Fonds, "Minutes of the Directors of BC Federationist," Box 22, p. 86-87. The *Federationist* response is 9 Aug. 1918. They printed the exact wording of the censorship order, and then wrote a pointed article about the importance of "law and order" being just.

²⁷⁵ *BC Federationist*, 2 Aug. 1918.

organizations were the Industrial Workers of the World, the Social Democratic Party of Canada, and a number of Ukrainian and Finnish organizations, including the Ukrainian and Finnish Social Democratic parties, that had left the SPC a decade earlier in a bitter split.

When the orders were announced, the SPC offered solidarity and condolences. It suggested that leftists continue working within the law to do what they could to advance socialism, and reminded them that the future of the working class was irrepressible by any government. Although the SPC could not, for fear of the censors themselves, offer much more compelling support, the very fact of their acknowledgement of the alliance between themselves and these parties is a good indication of how much had changed since the start of the war.²⁷⁶

A better indication, though, could be found in the speeches of the anti-war rallies that the SPC, SDP, BCFL, and eventually the FLP were jointly holding weekly by the end of the war. As the war ended, the socialist movement was absolutely anti-war, and basing this position on the recognition that only an international working class effort could make anything good out of the current conflict, and prevent repeats. W.J. Curry is a good example of the shape of this movement by 1918. Curry was a dentist in Nanaimo, and a longtime member of the SPC who had become a regular contributor to the *Federationist* during the war. When the Federated Labour Party was created, he was one of its early supporters, and was a regular speaker at its weekly events.

At one of these events, Curry offered some thoughts on the topic of “Labor and Terms of Peace.” His comments offered a thorough example of the growth of the socialist anti-war movement:

²⁷⁶ *Western Clarion*, 15 Oct. 1918.

What are to be the terms of peace and who is going to negotiate them?...If...civilization is to progress, or even survive social forces with a broader and a new outlook must dominate the terms of peace as well as the economic fate of the nations after the war is over. This is our business, and in spite of the politicians and profiteers, we are going to attend to it...That force which must soon grasp the reins of political power is no other than Labor representing the common people and the only useful and peace loving class in society. In every country we see the growing solidarity and increasing consciousness of the workers regarding their great historic mission to free themselves and the world from the curse of war and poverty once and for all.²⁷⁷

In the early years of the war, the leaders of the BC left had argued that the survival of civilization was dependent on the destruction of the Kaiser of Germany and his government, who were a unique threat to the future of humanity, as well as political values such as democracy and freedom. By the end of the war, socialists and labour leaders in BC agreed with Curry that the survival of civilization depended not on capitalist nations but instead on the work of an international working class, organized into one movement pressing for both socialism and peace. The change in analysis was profound, and the reason it occurred was the work of a group of socialists, from a variety of different left traditions, who were inspired by a spirit of socialist internationalism to oppose the war and autocracy. After the war, these socialists continued to struggle to build a movement that would prevent poverty and war in the future, and the organizations they built reflected for a few brief years their commitment to internationalism, socialism, and peace.

²⁷⁷ *BC Federationist*, 11 Oct. 1918.

Chapter 5: An Anti-war Revolt

The day before the federal election in 1917, Joseph Naylor, in his final month as the president of the BCFL, published a long article about an unusual topic in the pages of the *BC Federationist*. The subject of Naylor's article was a Russian revolutionary named "Nikolai Lenine [*sic*]." Naylor, who charitably comments that socialists had been "more or less skeptical" of the Russian revolution to that point, told his audience that Lenin might represent a new "hope for the proletariat of the entire world." Lenin represented new hope to Naylor because he had successfully led a worker's revolution in a militarized society that enforced conscription of soldiers. With the federal election about to decide whether Canada's government would introduce conscription, Naylor feared that he might find himself in a society much like Russia by January 1918. Naylor concluded his essay on a hopeful note:

If the Bolsheviki policy and principle has been correctly sized up and set forth by the press...it should appeal to every woman and man on earth, whether Briton, Hun, Yankee, or Jap, for in that direction only lies the hope of peace, fraternity, and good fellowship among the peoples of the earth. In that direction only lies the end of slavery with its trail of poverty, misery, war and slaughter.²⁷⁸

Naylor was not the only Canadian socialist celebrating Lenin's revolution in Russia. On 25 March 1917, Matthew Popovich, editor of Winnipeg's *Robochy Narod (Working People)* and a prominent member of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, proposed that the USDP adopt the following resolution:

We Ukrainian workers assembled at a massive meeting in Winnipeg send fraternal greetings to the Russian revolutionary workers with the arrival of a shining revolutionary triumph over the autocratic Czar and the destruction of the prison of the peoples from which will also come forth thirty million Ukrainians. We are convinced that the Russian comrades will not stop at the complete overthrow of the

²⁷⁸ *BC Federationist*, 14 Dec. 1917.

political structure of Russia but will carry forth the struggle of the working people to full victory over its enemies.²⁷⁹

It is not shocking that Ukrainian socialists were excited about the victory of the Russian revolution – few peoples had suffered worse at the hands of the Romanov dynasty. More impressive is the unity of opinion between the SPC and USDP. There was unprecedented interest, from all corners of the Canadian left, in the Russian Revolution. The SPC published an article by Leon Trotsky, “Pacifism in the service of imperialism,” covering four of the January, 1918 *Western Clarion*’s 12 pages.²⁸⁰ Within two months the party was selling Trotsky’s pamphlet “The Bolsheviki and World Peace,” and William Pritchard paid it the highest praise he could muster, writing “the Russian Revolution...proves the Materialist Conception of History is correct.”²⁸¹ Even the BCFL was excited – J.H. Hawthornthwaite’s by-election victory in January, 1918 as a member of the newly formed Federated Labour Party was heralded by the *Federationist* as a “Bolsheviki triumph.”²⁸²

The popularity of the Russian Revolution was surprising considering the low opinion most Canadian socialists had held of Russia before it occurred. As one *Federationist* writer explained, the Russian Revolution had occurred in “a country notoriously backward in political development and where the common people had been held for centuries in illiteracy and degradation by the ruling power.”²⁸³ It was a testament to the sincerity with which BC leftists embraced late war internationalism that they regarded the Russian Revolution as a beacon of hope for themselves and workers around the world. Considering Leon Trotsky had once been, like Hermann Elmer, an ethnic comrade imprisoned in a Canadian

²⁷⁹ Cited in Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigner: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932*, (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 72.

²⁸⁰ *Western Clarion*, Jan. 1918.

²⁸¹ *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1918.

²⁸² *BC Federationist*, 25 Jan. 1918.

²⁸³ *BC Federationist*, 25 Jan. 1918.

internment camp, the open acknowledgement of Trotsky's influence by BC socialists and labour leaders is an impressive indication of the distance which the left had ideologically traveled between 1914 and 1918.²⁸⁴ Near the end of the war, internationalism and opposition to the war created unity that had never existed before in the Canadian left.

This collection of leftists, who had worked so hard against each other before and even during the war, found by 1919 that there was more to agree about than ever.

Commenting on the Winnipeg general strike, Ian McKay writes, “there was something about Winnipeg 1919 that allowed for the development of a left that combined a striking heterogeneity of forms with a striking unanimity of purpose.”²⁸⁵ Even reactionary forces in Winnipeg at the time were concerned about the power of a coalition of leftists that included the leadership of the BC anti-war movement. The *Winnipeg Citizen* listed the figures it feared were behind the “Bolshevist” agitation in Winnipeg; on the list were Victor Midgely, William Pritchard, and Joseph Naylor, as well as several Winnipeg and Alberta based anti-war activists, including Joseph Knight, R.J. Johns, R.B. Russell, and Fred Dixon.²⁸⁶ The *Citizen* labeled all of them as Bolshevist agents and German spies, utilizing the nationalist rhetoric of both the recent past and the near future in its denunciations. Eventually, two anti-war activists who had been part of the anti-war movement in Vancouver were charged with “seditious conspiracy” for their roles in Winnipeg – J.S. Woodsworth and William Pritchard. Pritchard was convicted and sentenced to a year in jail.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Trotsky was in an internment camp in Amherst, Nova Scotia, for three weeks in 1917. See Kealey, “State Repression,” p. 293, fn. 30. See also William Pritchard writing about Trotsky's internment, *Western Clarion*, Mar. 1918.

²⁸⁵ Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 465.

²⁸⁶ *The Winnipeg Citizen*, as quoted in Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975), p. 55-56.

²⁸⁷ Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919*, p. xx.

This “striking unanimity of purpose” was not limited to Winnipeg; Vancouver leftists carried out a general strike of their own. In Vancouver forty-five unions and more than 11,000 workers went on strike on 3 June 1919 to protest the treatment of workers in Winnipeg, and to make more radical demands including the six-hour working day.²⁸⁸ The Vancouver Strike lasted into July, and was supported by general strikes in Prince Rupert, New Westminster, and Victoria at different times in June and July.²⁸⁹

In Vancouver’s case, the general strike was not the result of spontaneous or miraculous organization by the left, nor was it an undisciplined or poorly guided reaction to the difficult economic and political circumstance of 1919. Instead, it was the result of the changes that had occurred in the Vancouver left leadership during the war. That leadership had been radicalized, but more importantly it had constructed a coalition to agitate against the war that was built on a genuine commitment to socialist values, especially internationalism. The anti-war movement’s internationalism enabled solidarity across ethnicity and in the face of the interests of both capital and a coercive Canadian state. That sort of solidarity turned the BC left into a viable social movement, and out of it emerged some of the actions and institutions of greatest consequence in Canadian left history.

The One Big Union provides another useful example of the remarkable vitality of the anti-war movement built to protest conscription and the murder of Ginger Goodwin. The OBU’s earliest structure was a central committee to manage the Union as a whole, with individual provincial committees for each of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The first central committee was composed of William Pritchard, R.J. Johns, Joe Knight, Victor Midgely, and Joe Naylor. The Provincial committee chairmen were Jack Kavanagh in BC,

²⁸⁸ Allen Seager and David Roth, “British Columbia and the Mining West: A Ghost of a Chance,” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers Revolt in Canada 1917-1925*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 255-56.

²⁸⁹ Seager and Roth, p. 256.

Carl Berg in Alberta, R.B. Russell in Manitoba, and R. Hazeltine in Saskatchewan.²⁹⁰ David Bercuson proposed that what linked all of these men was their membership in the SPC, and many of them did share that. But what is more striking is that they were also the most active anti-war figures in the years before they built the OBU. Focusing on the BC leaders, Pritchard, Midgely, Naylor, and Kavanagh were all among the most militant anti-war activists in BC. Their prominence was not simply the result of their party affiliation – it was their anti-war stance that ensured they had a position of prominence within the SPC, and eventually the OBU.

As the orders-in-council issued by the state in 1918 indicated, the government was concerned about the rising influence of the anti-war movement. After the war was over, the Canadian state was still conscious of the danger that international solidarity represented, as were its capitalist allies. As historians have extensively examined, the immediate aftermath of the war included changes to the Immigration Act, which allowed for the federal government to deport “enemy aliens” to, in the words of the Department of Justice official in Winnipeg, “stem the tide of revolution.”²⁹¹ In the eyes of government officials, including Minister of Justice Arthur Meighan, removing inappropriate immigrants from Canada was an issue of existential importance to the state of Canada, and determining who was inappropriate was both a political and ethnic decision.²⁹² Thus, the latter years of the war and its immediate aftermath were defined by issues of ethnicity and race, not only within the left but also in mainstream Canadian political life. The workers’ revolt cannot be understood

²⁹⁰ Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, p. 85.

²⁹¹ The quote is from a letter from A.J. Andrews to Arthur Meighan as quoted in Tom Naylor and James Mitchell, “The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers’ Revolt*, p. 207.

²⁹² Donald Avery also recognizes the ethnic basis for the government’s response to the General strike. Donald Avery, “Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadian Nativism,” in David Mackenzie, ed., *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 272-3.

unless it is contextualized as not only a class confrontation, but an ethnic and racial conflict as well.²⁹³

It was not just the government that used ethnicity as an excuse for class conflict; when business leaders in Winnipeg, Vancouver and other cities chose to call their anti-strike organizations “citizens’ committees” they were consciously invoking the language of ethnicity and race.²⁹⁴ By calling themselves citizens, not only did they disguise their class position, but they also indicated that they felt their authority stemmed from the fact that they were citizens of the Dominion, and by extension the Empire, in contrast to the foreigners who were behind the agitation.²⁹⁵

Conservative business leaders and the government were wrong when they accused the leaders of the general strike wave of being foreigners, but they were right that the strike wave was organized by people who were connected to international trends. The coalition that was at the heart of the general strikes in Vancouver, and that built the FLP and the OBU, would have been impossible to sustain were it not for the return of a practical internationalism that grew directly out of the war and the treatment of ethnic leftists in Canada by the government and pro-war forces. The coalition was built, and succeeded, because it united the SPC, the BCFL, and the rest of the left into multiethnic alliances after 1916 that opposed the war and the erosion of democratic rights that accompanied the war

²⁹³ A point that becomes obvious when reading Craig Heron, ed. *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada*. Discussions of ethnicity are sprinkled throughout all of the regional histories of the workers revolt, with Tom Mitchell and James Naylor paying special attention to the ethnic aspects of the Winnipeg general strike. See Mitchell and Naylor, “The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm,” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers’ Revolt*, 176-230.

²⁹⁴ The “Citizens Committee of 1000” in Winnipeg is famous, but similar names were used in other prairie cities, see Mitchell and Naylor, “The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm,” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers’ Revolt*, 202. In Vancouver, the reactionary forces called themselves the “Vancouver Citizens’ League”; see the only complete secondary account of the Vancouver general strike, Elaine Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982), 59.

²⁹⁵ For the breadth of this phenomenon, see Mitchell and Naylor, “The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm,” in Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers’ Revolt*, 202.

effort. But, as the failures of the left in the early war demonstrated, this was only possible when it could be staked on the ideologically secure ground of socialist internationalism.

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