RESPONSES TO CHANGE: LABOUR, CAPITAL AND THE STATE

A Study of the Montreal Working Class through an Examination of Strikes and Lockouts in Montreal, 1901-1914

by
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ABSTRACT

Working-class conflict was a common characteristic of industrialized countries at the turn of the twentieth century. Workplace relations were being significantly altered as technological and philosophical changes in work relations altered the nature of labour. The impact of such transformation can be seen in an examination of strikes and lockouts in Montreal from 1901-1914. The analysis of working-class conflict reveals the complex and interconnected relationship between its three main players: state, capital and labour. All three groups, as seen in Montreal, attempted to preserve control while confronted with rapid industrialization and economic growth.

Between 1901-1914 Montreal workers struck with regularity. The city's workforce was vulnerable to the changes in production methods brought about by the second industrial revolution. The already precarious economic resources of Montreal workers were further strained, and the profits of this unprecedented economic growth were not equally distributed among the working class. Additionally, social and demographic changes in Montreal, alongside these other transformations, further complicated relations within the working class. Challenges to working-class solidarity came from the ethnic fragmentation of the class itself and from capital and the state, which had access to a plethora of legislative and judicial resources in order to stifle workers' dissent. An examination of strikes and lockouts in Montreal from 1901-1914 reveals a multitude of technological and sociological forces that influenced working-class cohesion and prompted collective action by the working class. This study shows how strikes and lockouts in Montreal resemble and differ from other regional patterns of working-class conflict in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The turn of the twentieth century was a time of upheaval for the working class internationally. Changing methods of production and alterations of the working environment shifted the social relationships that governed the workplace. One of the consequences of this shift in industrial production was increasing strike activity by workers in industrialized countries. Numerous international studies have been conducted on working-class conflict during this transitional phase of industrial production.[1] The transformations occurring in the Montreal working class, which had their own particular characteristics that were determined by factors and influences unique to the city, were parts of a larger global phenomenon.

Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey have conducted the most comprehensive Canadian study of labour disputes.[2] Ian McKay's[3] examination of the Maritimes and Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer's study of Southern Ontario were most useful in placing significant patterns and trends that emerged in Montreal within a larger Canadian framework. Although there were characteristics specific to Montreal between 1901-1914 that influenced the working class, the theme of diminishing control when

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[1] Among the standard international studies of strikes are the following works: Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974); James Cronin, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); Donald Snyder, *Determinants of Industrial Conflict: historical models of strikes in France, Italy and the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1974).

[2] Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 20 (Fall 1987), 85-145. Also consult the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Plates 38-39.

[3] For the two standard regional studies of Canadian strikes from 1901-1914 see: Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977), 423-458 and Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," *Acadiensis*, 13 (Autumn 1983), 3-46.

confronted with changing working conditions is prevalent in all of the studies covering this period.

It is also impossible to examine the Canadian working class and ignore the United States. The industrial and economic development of Canada was closely affiliated with that of its American neighbour, as American industrial development was pushing northward in the form of branch plants. It is not surprising that the American influence extended to the development of the Canadian working class. Therefore, the evolution of the Canadian workers is best understood as being part of a North American process. Many of the social changes in American workers productive lives were mirrored in Canada.[4]

Obviously the characteristics of Montreal, both geographical and social, shaped the city's working class and governed the nature of labour disputes. The social conditions of Montreal's working class have been examined by H. B. Ames in *The City Below the Hill: a sociological study of a portion of the city of Montreal, Canada* and by Terry Copp in *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Conditions of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929*.[5] The Montreal working class responded to the upheaval of its working environment by strengthening the collective labour movement, and its position as the hub of the Canadian manufacturing sector made it particularly attractive to the

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[4] For a discussion of the influence of American unionism in Canada see Robert Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974). Also, for an examination of the technological and philosophical changes sweeping across the North American workplace see David Montgomery, *The fall of the house of labour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[5] The works mentioned above are the two standard social histories of Montreal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: H. B. Ames, *The City Below the Hill: a sociological study of a portion of the city of Montreal, Canada* (Montreal: Bishop Engraving and Printing, 1897) and Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Conditions of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974). A survey of the history of Montreal is provided by P. A. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992). Also, helpful is P. A. Linteau, René Durocher and Jean-Claude Robert, *Quebec: a history, 1867-1929* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983).

recruitment efforts of American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions.[6] Montreal workers, like their counterparts in other industrial centres, attempted to regain some of their lost control through striking. Chapter Two examines the general trend in labour disputes in Montreal including the economic, occupational and skill levels of strikers as well as the issues that prompted strikes and the responses of their employers. As Cruikshank and Kealey remark, in attempting to understand strikes in Montreal from 1901-1914, David Montgomery's conclusions that working-class conflict is best understood within the larger context of transformation occurring around the working class are applicable.[7] Therefore, an examination of the interaction between labour, capital and the state is essential in comprehending the dynamics of labour disputes within Montreal from 1901-1914.

The most concrete examples of state interest in the working class are presented in its developing attempt to document labour disputes and in its reactions to violence or the possibility of working-class violence. The federal government by no coincidence began to show an increasing interest in such matters at the turn of the twentieth century, which led to the establishment of the Department of Labour. The role the government played in the formation of violence is often overlooked, as its aggression, rather than being retaliatory, surfaced in the preemptive measures it initiated to forestall possible challenges by workers. The working class lacked political power and legitimate avenues for voicing its discontent, unlike the state, which could embody its coercion within the legitimate legislative and judicial resources at its service. Chapter Three discusses these

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[6] Standard works examining labour in Quebec include: Jean Hamelin, Paul Larocque, et Jacques Rouillard, *Répertoire des grèves dans la province de Québec au XIXe siècle* (Montréal: Presses de l'École des hautes études commerciales, 1970); Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec. Des*

features of Canadian industrial relations through an examination of Montreal. The state clearly did shape the way classes interacted; thus its prominent role in the evolution of the Canadian working class at the beginning of the twentieth century cannot be overlooked.[8]

Combined with the technological and philosophical changes transforming the Montreal working class, there were substantial demographic and social changes as well. The city's ethnic composition was significantly altered by a large flux of immigrants from Continental Europe.[9] The immigration practices of the Canadian government, which were heavily influenced by capital, created an abundant supply of available labour within the city.[10] These workers brought with them social ideas that then entered the discourses of the Montreal working class. Alongside other existing cleavages in the Montreal working class, the new immigrants were confronted with the prejudices and insecurities of French Canadians who had been concerned with their cultural preservation within the country.

As with any study there will be matters that have been overlooked. This is, in part, governed by the sources that have been used. The main primary sources for this paper are the strikes and lockouts files, *The Labour Gazette* and newspaper articles from

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origines à nos jours (Montréal: Boréal, 1989); Fernand Harvey, ed., *Le Mouvement ouvrier au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980).

[7] Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," 86.

[8] The most detailed study of the state's role in industrial relations during this period is Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

[9] Linteau devotes a chapter to immigration from 1896-1914 in *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*. A general discussion of Canadian immigration policy is provided in Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic. A History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). This work is accompanied by an excellent bibliography of other secondary works on immigration and related topics.

[10] The collaboration between industry and the state regarding immigration policy is most evident through the recruitment of Italian immigrants in Montreal. For an examination of these practices see:

the *Montreal Daily Star* and *La Presse* surrounding these disputes. The two government documents were closer to the employers' perspective and none of these four sources provided a great deal of direct insight into the workers' perspective, which further illustrated the close relationship between state and capital in the early twentieth century. Conclusions regarding the social repercussions of the changes upon the working class, such as Heron and Palmer's findings regarding shop floor solidarity by Ontario craft workers in face of the increasing dilution of their skills, are by and large extrapolations from the data provided in these documents. Therefore, social concerns had to be gleaned from these rather thin documents in terms of social issues, as they were primarily concerned with the empirical data surrounding working-class conflict. Also, these documents had a primarily male focus, as did the press. Therefore, the contributions made by women were not cited directly or indirectly in these sources. This omission by no means implies that their contributions were not noteworthy, as women clearly played an important role within the Montreal workforce. Copp's study found that that two thirds of Montreal's population at this time was working class and Ames's research figured that one-fifth of the workforce was female workers.[11] Therefore, women played a substantial role that was ignored or not necessarily accessible through these government sources or the mainstream press in Montreal. Additionally, the works that do examine women or certain ethnic groups in the workplace tend to be either gender studies or ethnic histories.[12]

Robert F. Harney, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism," *Labour/Le Travail*, 4 (Fall 1979), 57-84.

[11] Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, 9, 29.

[12] There are several good gender and ethnic studies of Canadian workers. Among them are the following works: Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife, Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Franca Iacovetta, ed., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* (Toronto:

The Montreal working class will be examined as a collective, which had many diverse elements. The analysis of working-class conflict will show how this collective identity was complex and shaped simultaneously by diverging and unifying forces from within the working class itself and extraneous influences, primarily capital and the state. Therefore, the examination of the state's role in shaping violence and influencing the composition of the working class was equally important in shaping strikes as the actions of the workers. Strikes and lockouts in Montreal from 1901-1914 are best understood when viewed as part of the complex and unequal relationship between state, capital and labour.

University of Toronto Press, 1998); Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*; Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause. Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). All of these works provide good bibliographies for further study of women and labour in Canada.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GENERAL CONTOURS OF STRIKES

At the turn of the twentieth century Montreal was a city undergoing transformation. Growth in various areas demonstrated the development of Central Canada's major metropolitan centre. Its economic prosperity was spurned by increasing industrial activity that was sweeping across North America. Montreal was emerging as the hub of the manufacturing sector in the country, as well as being a longstanding commercial and transportation entrepôt, a prime location for banks and railway companies and home to the nation's largest port. The individuals who controlled capital reaped the financial rewards of this expansive economic growth. However, their prosperity was often at the expense of the working class whose grievances were ever increasing as their labour and productivity became attached to increasing profits and technological advances which rendered their skills less valuable and thereby more easily replaceable. The analysis of working-class conflict at the outset of the twentieth century illustrates the effects of unfettered capitalist growth upon the working class.[1] Furthermore, the examination of strikes and lockouts in Montreal from 1901-1914 reveals many of the issues that confronted the transformed working class during this dynamic period of economic and social change.

An examination of Montreal at the turn of the twentieth century illustrates the climate of dichotomies within the city that facilitated the development of labour strife. Like many urban centres across North America, Montreal was experiencing the effects of

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[1] The Education Committees of Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), trans. Arnold Bennett, *The History of the Labour Movement in Quebec* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), 62.

urbanization. As economic historians William L. Marr and Donald G. Paterson point out, the changes of modern industry and urbanization altered the lifestyle and consumption patterns of a city's inhabitants. The results of such change were growth in various sectors of the economy such as the increasing demand for construction and renewed activity in the manufacturing and tertiary sectors rather than primary sector growth.[2] It was these aforementioned areas that were at the forefront of strike activity in Montreal during 1901-1914. The prewar years in Montreal were notable for strikes in the building trades, railway industries and sectors of mass production.[3]

The social conditions of the Montreal working class during the latter years of the nineteenth century and at the outset of the twentieth century have been well documented by several historians. Both Copp and Ames highlight the poor working, living and economic conditions of Montreal labour. The contrast between the extremely wealthy and the working class was increasing, as the rewards of economic growth were not spread equally amongst all. This dichotomy is evident as one compares the lifestyle of Montreal's affluent capitalist elite, as described in Donald MacKay's *The Square Mile. Merchant Princes of Montreal,* with that of the working class.[4] The earnings of workers failed to keep pace with the cost of living thus contributing to sub par living conditions for the working class. Copp concludes that 47 percent of the Montreal labour force lived well below the poverty line and there was a marked absence of job security and

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[2] William L. Marr and Donald G. Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), 196.

[3] Leo Roback, "Quebec Workers in the Twentieth Century," in *Lectures in Canadian Labour and Working-Classs History*, ed. W. J. C. Cherwinski and Gregory S. Kealey (St. John's, Nfld.: Committee on Canadian Labour History & New Hogtown Press, 1985), 168.

[4] P. A. Linteau, *Brève Histoire de Montréal* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), 94-95. The term 'the Golden Square Mile' is the area in which Montreal's commercial elite resided such as Cornelius Van Horne, Thomas Shaungessy and Richard B. Angus.

subsistence incomes amongst the Montreal working class.[5] The difficulty Ames had in portraying the city to his contemporaries as "an organic whole"[6] is evident from an examination of employers' and the state's responses to workers' job action.

As with any place, the geography of Montreal played a role in the economic development of the city. Montreal's prime waterfront location gave the city national preeminence by having the busiest port in the country. The following description of navigation season shows the range of employment offered by the port as a consequence of the oceanic and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence shipping system:

> Preparations for the opening of navigation have, in many localities, given work to large numbers of shipwrights, caulkers, dockhands, and [the like], who would otherwise have remained in comparative idleness throughout the month, and the improvement thus effected in the demand for labour, and for common labour in particular, has been very generally experienced.[7]

However, the city's severe winters made the port inoperable for half the year. As Copp points out, a great flaw in the Montreal economy was that the harbour closed for four months of the year.[8] This feature of the city that helped to establish it as the prime port of the country was also responsible for its cyclical employment patterns. The effects of this were widespread, as strikes were concentrated in certain seasons due to the lack of leverage workers in many industries had during the winter months. This may explain

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[5] Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Conditions of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 43.

[6] H. B. Ames, *The City below the Hill: a sociological study of a portion of the city of Montreal, Canada* (Montreal: Bishop Engraving and Printing, 1897), xii. Ames argues that the city was an organic whole where everyone was interconnected and therefore the prosperity of the working class was in the best interest of all its citizens. He encouraged philanthropic ventures by the city's affluent citizens to improve the welfare of the poor.

[7] *The Labour Gazette*, 2, 1901-2, 564.

[8] Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, 143.

Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey's conclusions regarding the inconsistency in the frequency of strikes in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada.[9]

The winters also affected many other occupations, in particular the building trades, which had great interdependence among each other. For instance, if excavation were delayed due to the weather, the contracts of other workers involved in the construction process such as bricklayers, masons, electrical workers and so forth would consequently be delayed. Therefore, spring and summer were the peak months for building trades work; however, a late spring could offset building plans. As well, workers within navigation and the building trades had to seek alternative employment during the winter months when work in their area ceased. The inactivity of the winter months often led to a glut of available labour during this season. Therefore, the average working-class family's financial state became all the more precarious. As milder weather approached, District Reports compiled by the Department of Labour indicate an increased demand for labour emerging in the spring months.[10]

Two processes that were occurring simultaneously in industrial centres across North America had a profound effect on the shape of working-class conflict: the growth of organized labour and the technological and philosophical changes sweeping the workplace. The repercussions of these twin processes can be seen in an analysis of Montreal's working class at the outset of the twentieth century. An examination of each of these two features helps in understanding the labour environment within which working-class strife occurred. As national borders began to become obsolete in industrial

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[9] Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 20 (Fall 1987), 92. Their national study of strikes concluded that strikes in Quebec occurred less frequently than in Ontario but were bigger in size. This latter point is attributed to the size of strikes in Montreal's manufacturing sector.

production, with branch plants of American companies extending northward, it is not surprising that the organization of workers followed. With the branch plant movement at the turn of the twentieth century, the Montreal industrial sector was experiencing similar transformations as were other manufacturing industries in Canada. Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer discuss, in depth, the repercussions of the growing American presence in the workplace within Southern Ontario, 1901-1914. Their conclusions regarding the lack of worker control over the working environment, coupled with the changes on the shop floor and working-class responses via striking, were, by in large, paralleled in Montreal during the 1901-1914 years.[11] Copp argues that in order for changes to occur in the predicament of the working class, "employers would have to be compelled to alter their views on labour as a commodity to be bought at the lowest possible price and only mass unionization could force the issue."[12] Thus, it is not surprising that the growth and infiltration of international unionism spread to Canada and in particular Montreal.

The expansion of American unions in Canada can be seen in Montreal where American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions flourished at the turn of the twentieth century. One reason for the AFL's apparent success was their ability to combat craft sectionalism, a nineteenth-century factor that hindered the success of the Knights of Labor in bringing skilled tradesman into the realm of organized labour. The AFL and its leader, Samuel Gompers, recognized the importance of the autonomy of each craft and

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[10] *The Labour Gazette*, 2, 1901-2, 564.

[11] To compare the climate of working-class conflict in Ontario during the same period see Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer's work, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977), 423-458. Also, for a discussion of the effects of branch plants on social relations in the workplace and union growth see Robert Babcock, "The rise of branch plants," in *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 28-37.

[12] Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, 43.

premised the organization of workers on one union for each trade and craft.[13] The AFL in the Scranton Declaration officially recognized that it was not possible to mix workers of various skills, especially those belonging to skilled trades that were rooted in the individual identity of each craft or trade. The declaration combined the craft system with industrial unionism.[14] Despite the fact that some labour historians such as Robert Babcock believe the Scranton Declaration was made with Western unionism in mind and was not only a direct response to technology and craft unionism, the following excerpt shows the effects of voluntarism and illustrates how it did, on occasion, help to combat craft union sectionalism.[15]

> Voluntarism meant that each trade had the right to decide its own policies and principles without outside interference. In reality it meant that powerful unions like the UMW [United Mine Workers] were permitted to adopt an industrial organization but the carpenters, machinists, and other strong crafts would not allow weaker unions to organize upon the same heretical principles.[16]

This desire for maintaining their own craft or trades identity reveals the individualistic roots of the skilled trades, where the value of the craftsman and his skills was at the forefront. The difference in attitude towards skilled and unskilled workers is apparent in the following remarks regarding a shipliners' strike in 1906: "Their work is chiefly the building of cattle stalls on the steamers and kindred work. They are not carpenters and almost any man who can drive a nail can be a shipliner."[17] This debasement and dilution of skill was being threatened by the mechanization of the workforce which allowed many jobs once only performed by skilled individuals to be done more cost effectively and

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[13] Desmond Morton, *Working People* (Ottawa: Deneau & Greenburg, 1980), 68.
[14] Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*, 76.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

efficiently by machines. Striking was a means for workers to respond to this transformation in their working environment.[18] Economists Marr and Paterson discuss labour in terms of "human capital."[19] It is apparent that as the value of "human capital" declined, the union or collective labour movement strengthened, paving the way for industrial unionism by the 1920's.

The decline in the value of "human capital" was one of the results of the other twin factor that influenced the working class throughout North America. The issues that led to strikes indicated workers' desire for asserting control over their working environment. This emphasis on control was a reaction to the changing nature of the workplace at the turn of the twentieth century. Employers wanted to have work accomplished in the most efficient manner possible. This would in turn lead to enhanced productivity and maximum profits. These features were part of the philosophy of scientific management, which brought sweeping changes to many manufacturing sectors. Ian McKay, in the broadest definition, identifies scientific management as "a systematic effort to obtain greater productivity from workers by exerting greater managerial discipline."[20] One of the features of this new philosophy of scientific management was Taylorism, a system of workplace governance codified by an American engineer. Taylor outlined three principles for a job system that would lead to optimum productivity: job standardization, task simplification and wage payment .[21] This new philosophy of scientific management limited the creativity and autonomy of workers and visibly altered their work environment. The emphasis on the division of labour and the supervision of

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[17] *Montreal Daily Star*, 6 September 1906.

[18] For a look at the relationship between dilution of workers' skills and shop floor changes see Heron and Palmer's study, "Through the Prism of the Strike."

[19] Marr and Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History*, 215.

workers to ensure that they worked productively at their assigned tasks created an interesting role for foremen who were neither workers nor management. The focus on output and production surrounding scientific management may have alienated workers further from their employers and subsequently made them more inclined to challenge their bosses. Heron and Palmer, in their examination of Southern Ontario, conclude that one of the consequences of scientific management was a revitalization of fraternal solidarity on the shopfloor.[22] This was also evident in the Montreal workplace, as strikes were frequent despite their limited success. Perhaps striking gave workers a sense of autonomy that had been diminished by technology and the onslaught of scientific management. The manufacturing sector of the economy was particularly vulnerable to the aims of scientific management and Taylorism. Primarily affected in Montreal were workers in the garment, textile, footwear and tobacco industries.[23] The principles of breaking down jobs to maximize output were applied to these factory-based manufacturing industries where incorporating piecework and subcontracting allowed employers to modify wage payments to maximize profits.

Economists Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram argue that the union movement in the early twentieth century hardly threatened the social order and did not alter the economic structure in a significant way.[24] These assertions of Norrie and Owram regarding the impact of early unionism are questionable especially when examined against research surrounding strikes and lockouts in Montreal. Doubt can be cast upon such comments as one measures them against the changing social relations in the

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[20] Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," *Acadiensis*, 13 (Autumn 1983), 29.
[21] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 431.
[22] Ibid., 447.
[23] CSN, *The History of the Labour Movement in Quebec*, 72.

workplace due to scientific and technical changes.[25] These transformations were brought to the forefront by unions, as such issues prompted work stoppages. The industrialization and mechanization associated with economic development in the period affected the way individuals interacted in the workforce and created a new hierarchy within the social order of production. This is evident while examining the frequency of strikes relating to issues stemming from the aforementioned changes in technology among the manufacturing sector of Montreal's workforce. Arguably unions and the growth of the collective labour movement were a response to the social changes occurring throughout the Montreal workplace and the rest of North America.[26] Despite the hardships that the working class experienced, this period was a formative time for Montreal workers. They were beginning to manifest their cohesion both politically and in the workplace. With respect to their productive lives, strikes and lockouts became commonplace amongst Montreal workers.

The federal government, which was essentially a facilitator of capitalist interests during this period, was concerned with documenting these labour conflicts within Canadian urban centres. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the state viewed labour disputes as a serious matter.[27] Working-class conflict was seen as detrimental to the growth of the Canadian economy. These concerns provided the impetus for the establishment of the Department of Labour in 1900 and the creation of the strikes and

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[24] Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1991), 383.

[25] The repercussions of scientific management, including the social changes in the workplace, are examined by David Montgomery, *The fall of the house of labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 216-56, and by Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

[26] Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 88 conclude that transformations of the workplace in North America as a consequence of scientific management, multi-plant organizations and assembly line production changed the climate of labour capital relations.

lockouts files and the government publication *The Labour Gazette*. The Department of Labour sent forms to the employer and employee representatives upon the news of a strike.[28] These forms, identical for both parties, asked that the following information be conveyed to the Department of Labour: union involved, cause or object of the dispute, the number of firms or establishments affected, approximate number of employees involved (broken down by sex), the commencement and termination dates of the dispute and additional remarks. The files also contained newspaper clippings from the Montreal press pertaining to the strikes.[29]

One of the weaknesses of these clippings is that early compilation did not provide the newspapers' titles or dates. Thus, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the articles reflect the biases of a given newspaper towards the working class. The files also included any other correspondence between the Department of Labour and either party in a strike such as memorandums or progress reports about disputes. The communications between the Department of Labour and employers have inherent biases, as both these groups generally wanted to have matters resolved quickly. The workers' position in these files was not always as explicit as that of the state and employers. Nevertheless, such files are informative of how employers' interpretations of labour disputes differed from those of their workers and the attitude of the state towards labour conflict. Despite biases, then, the sources show the mentality of the employers towards workers' concerns and how both groups responded to the continuous changes within Montreal's labour environment at the turn of the century.

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[27] McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes," 43.

[28] Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950" in *Workers and Canadian History*, ed. Gregory Kealey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 383.

In addition to the strikes and lockouts files, the Department of Labour kept records of working-class conflict and issues surrounding labour in *The Labour Gazette*. This document, which commenced monthly publication with the establishment of the Department of Labour in 1900, in conjunction with the case files of class conflict, provides the empirical data surrounding the analysis of working-class conflict in Montreal from 1901-1914.[30] By no means was either of these publications exhaustive in their records of the number of disputes that occurred during these years. However, the two publications together provide a fairly comprehensive account of the number of disputes and the issues that led to conflict. What these two sources lack in terms of establishing a better understanding of the atmosphere of the city surrounding various labour conflicts, in particular the workers' position, was provided by examining two Montreal dailies, the *Montreal Daily Star* and *La Presse*. The supplement of these additional primary sources compensates for the lack of workers' and general public's perspective in the two government publications.

It was often difficult to determine whether a given dispute was a strike or lockout. This is evident from the following comments surrounding a strike by Montreal bricklayers: "The trouble between the bricklayers and contractors culminated five weeks ago and since then the former have been 'lockout' or 'on strike', the term used depending on the direction of the speakers sympathies."[31] Cruikshank and Kealey addressed this ambiguity in their survey of Canadian strikes and conclude that the two terms were often

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[29] For an extensive explanation of the evolution of the strikes and lockouts files refer to Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Workers and Canadian History*, 380-388.

[30] Summaries of Canadian labour disputes at the turn of the twentieth century are also given in the following documents: *Report on Strikes and Lockouts in Canada 1901-1916* (Ottawa: Government Printing, 1918) and *Report on Strikes and Lockouts in Canada from 1901 to 1912* (Ottawa: Government Printing, 1913).

[31] *Montreal Daily Star*, 4 June 1908.

used interchangeably.[32] Thus, for the analysis of Montreal, the term lockout will only be used to describe a work stoppage when it was referred to as a lockout in either *The Labour Gazette* or the strikes and lockouts files.

Labour historians have detected a relationship between the economic conditions of a region and the prevalence of working-class conflict. Heron and Palmer's study of industrial conflict in Southern Ontario from 1901-1914 furthers the classical contention that industrial unrest follows economic cycles of contraction and expansion.[33] In addition, McKay's study of strikes in the Maritimes establishes that the region's economic structure had a significant effect on the general pattern of strikes from 1901-1914.[34] Table 2.1 provides an annual breakdown of Montreal disputes between 1901-1914.

Table 2.1 Annual Totals of Strikes and Lockouts 1901-1914

Year	**Total Number of Strikes/Lockouts**
1901	11
1902	7
1903	24
1904	18
1905	12
1906	15
1907	15
1908	8
1909	5
1910	14

[32] Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 127.

[33] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 425. Heron and Palmer found that their work supports the findings of Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974). They concluded that strike activity occurs in cycles or waves.

[34] McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes," 3-46.

1911	19
1912	15
1913	13
1914	4
Total:	180

Sources for this table: A) strikes and lockouts files (hereafter files) B) *The Labour Gazette* (hereafter LG).

A total of 180 strikes were recorded in *The Labour Gazette* and the strikes and lockouts files for these fourteen years. This total does not necessarily represent all disputes that took place due to the tallying procedures of the aforementioned government documents. However, the totals do provide a good indication of the frequency of working-class conflict in Montreal. Despite the turn of the twentieth century being characterized as an economic boom, there were several small recessions during these years. Three can be categorized in the following groups: 1903-1904, 1907-1908, and 1911-1912.[35] It is evident from examining the total number of disputes for Montreal between 1901-1914 that there was an increase in strike activity at the beginning of periods of recession, but that workers' capacity to combat initiatives waned as 'hard times' deepened. These six recession years account for 56 percent of all the disputes from 1901-1914. It would be reasonable to conclude that during the recession years employers cut back on workers' pay. Thus, disputes surrounding wage issues became all the more prevalent, and strike activity in Montreal from 1901-1914, consequently, similar to other studies conducted, tended to occur in "bursts or waves".[36]

[35] James Thwaites, "La Grève au Québec. Une Analyse quantative explorative portant sur la période 1896-1915," *Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), 185.

[36] Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 88. They make this conclusion for the entire period of their extensive look at Canadian strikes. These conclusions are similar to the findings of other standard international works. They further the contention that the changes that were transforming the Montreal workplace were in many respects part of a larger North American and international transformation of the working class caused by the technological and philosophical changes.

Marr and Paterson provide a good indication of the economic conditions for daily sustenance for the average working class family in Montreal from 1901-1914. In 1900, males in the manufacturing sector earned approximately $7.78 a week and females employed in the same area made $3.65 a week.[37] A Department of Labour budget study estimates that a family of five needed a total of $9.46 a week for food and shelter and $13.77 for the total needs of the family.[38] Clearly the $3.65 and $7.78 earned by families in 1900 falls short of this estimation, assuming a male and female working. The effects of inflation on the cost of living in the first ten years of the twentieth century are equally apparent: even though average wages rose, the disparity between the actual family income and budget estimates increased. By 1911 the average adult male earned $10.55 a week, women $6 a week and children $4 a week.[39] Inflation during the decade increased expenses to $12.82 for weekly basics and $18.31 for the total budget; even those in the skilled building trades at this time could not adequately meet the cost on the basis of a male 'breadwinner' wage.[40] Thus, as Marr and Paterson correctly conclude, it was necessary for more than one family member to work to adequately provide for their most basic needs.[41] Copp's study corroborates the statistics provided by Marr and Paterson. He concluded that 47 percent of the Montreal labour force was well below the poverty line, which is an astounding statistic as he estimates two thirds of the city's population was working class.[42]

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[37] Marr and Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History*, 201.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 201-202.
[42] Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, 43. Copp identifies working class as a person garnering income from wages rather than self-employment or salary.

These figures regarding the cost of living explain the overwhelming emphasis on wages as an issue for working-class conflict during this period, and buttress negatively, Roback's conclusion that, "The economic and social conditions of the workers were favourable to union organization and militancy."[43] Copp suggests that, "in situations where wages normally lagged behind prices labour militancy was directly proportional to the rate of price increases."[44] These conclusions are corroborated through an examination of strikes in Montreal, as a large percentage of the strikes focused around wages. Wage-related issues accounted for 28 percent of the reasons that prompted workers to challenge their employers. A 1904 garment workers' strike was brought about due to the rising cost of living facing workers. As the Superintendent of one company reported: "The girls claim that they cannot live on the wages we give them. This is owing to the greatly increased cost of living in Montreal, rents have gone up twenty-five percent and the cost of food and clothing have also increased."[45] Teamsters made similar demands for wage increases in 1909, as they struck because their wages failed to keep pace with the increasing cost of bread.[46]

Montreal had consolidated itself as an important manufacturing centre both provincially and nationally during the first decade of the twentieth century.[47] Between 1901-1911 Montreal constituted 55 percent of Quebec's industrial production and between 17-18 percent of Canada's.[48] Moreover, half of the province's urban dwellers

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[43] Roback, "Quebec Workers in the Twentieth Century," 168.

[44] Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty*, 128.

[45] *Montreal Daily Star*, 20 October 1904.

[46] *Public Archives of Canada*, strikes and lockouts files, (hereafter PAC), RG 27, vol. 296, file 3146.

[47] The standard works on the history of Montreal are: P. A. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992) and P.A. Linteau, René Durocher, and Jean-Claude Robert, *Quebec: a history, 1867-1929* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983).

[48] Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*, 148.

lived in Montreal, it follows suit that Montreal was home to a large portion of the urban working class of Quebec.[49] As the city comprised such a large portion of the province's industrial output and sustained the bulk of its urban population, it is not surprising that the majority of strikes within the province during this period occurred around Montreal. This is evident when one examines the totals of strikes in Quebec from 1901-1914, as complied by James Thwaites in his study "La Grève au Québec: Une Analyse quantative exploratoire portant sur la période 1896-1915," with the totals for Montreal during the same time frame.[50]

Table 2.2 Montreal Strikes as a Portion of Totals for Quebec

Year	**Number of Strikes in Montreal/Quebec**
1901	11/30
1902	7/20
1903	24/36
1904	18/34
1905	12/22
1906	15/25
1907	15/33
1908	8/20
1909	5/11
1910	14/19
1911	19/20
1912	15/25
1913	13/19
1914	4/6
Totals:	180/320

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG C) Thwaites, "La Grève au Québec," 183-204.

[49] CSN, *The History of the Labour Movement in Quebec*, 62.
[50] Thwaites, "La Grève au Québec," 186.

As deduced from Table 2.2 above, roughly 56 percent of strikes within the entire province were centred in Montreal over these fourteen years.

The cluster of manufacturing, construction and transportation industries within the city also made it a fertile ground for the demonstration of labour strife. The manufacturing sector consisted of close to 33 percent of the city's workers, 14 percent were employed in the construction sector and another 6 percent worked in Montreal's transportation sector.[51] Therefore, it is not surprising that trade union growth flourished in the city as Marr and Paterson comment: "Trade union movements, for instance, were more likely to develop in urban settings where employment was concentrated in manufacturing, construction and transport than in rural societies where primary industries, especially agriculture, predominated."[52]

Irving Abella's assertions that AFL unions weakened the Canadian labour movement and paved the way for French Canadian separate unionism can be questioned. They appear to overstate the role American unionism had in the emergence of separate Catholic unions in the province of Quebec.[53] The nationalistic and religious differences that fostered the growth of Catholic unions were rooted in the historical French Canadian versus English Canadian antagonism that have plagued English and French relations since the Conquest. The aforementioned conclusions by Abella perpetuate the myth that AFL unions did not recruit extensively from the francophone population of Quebec (Montreal). Jacques Rouillard addresses this fallacy in his article "Le Militanisme des Travailleurs au Québec et en Ontario," as he states "Il ne faut pas croire que 'les

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[51] Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*, 177.
[52] Marr and Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History*, 205.
[53] Irving Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1902-1960* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Society, 1975), 40.

internationaux' à cette époque recrutent en majorité des travailleur anglophones."[54] In this study Rouillard cites Alfred Charpentier's conclusions that approximately 68 percent of the members of international unions in Montreal by 1918 were francophones.[55] Rouillard's statistics also corroborate Charpentier's conclusions as he states that by 1911 non-francophones comprised at the most 25 percent of international unions in Quebec.[56] Thus, based on the above analysis Rouillard accurately asserts: "On a donc tort d'identifier les 'internationaux' aux anglophones et la CTCC [la Confédération des travailleur catholiques du Canada] aux francophones."[57] This view is supported in an analysis of strikes and lockouts in Montreal as any resentment or ill feelings towards the AFL stemmed from employers who opposed workers coalescing and voicing disapproval. Fernand Harvey identifies two tendencies that have dominated unions within North America: the socioeconomic context and the sociopolitical context. The Quebec union movement was riddled with rivalry and schisms. The shape of unions in the province was moulded by outside influences which Louis-Marie Tremblay identifies as British, American and French Canadian religious sentiments.[58] Her conclusions that the American presence hastened the emergence of unions in Canada are definitely apparent from examining the overwhelming presence of AFL membership among the Montreal

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[54] Jacques Rouillard, "Le Militanisme des Travailleurs au Québec et en Ontario, Niveau de syndicalisation et mouvement des grèves (1900-1980)," *RHAF*, 37, no. 2 (septembre 1983), 212.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Fernand Harvey, présentation à *Aspects historique du mouvement ouvrier* (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal express, 1973), 14. For a more in depth examination of the political actions of Quebec workers see Alfred Charpentier, "Le mouvement politique-ouvrier de Montréal, 1883-1929," *Relations industrielles*, 10, no. 2 (mars 1955), 74-95, and Jacques Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrier au début du 20e siècle," in *Le mouvement ouvrier au Québec: aspects historiques*, ed. Fernand Harvey (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980), 185-213.

workforce and striking workers. It was on rare occasions that workers echoed disparaging views toward international unions.

Insight can be gained into the concerns of the Montreal working class by examining the reasons that led workers to strike. The causes for strikes in Montreal from 1901-1914 were similar to those found by Heron and Palmer in Southern Ontario, in McKay's examination of the Maritimes and in Thwaites' research on Quebec strikes, which all generally cover the same period. The conditions of work were the preeminent issues that pushed workers into conflict with their employers. This was a consequence of the diminishing control the workers had of their workplace that was at the heart of industrial conflict throughout North America at the turn of the twentieth century.[59] A member of the International Association of Longshoremen, surrounding a 1903 Longshoreman's strike, acknowledges many of the grievances relating to the working environment in the following comments.

> The pluck-me system that has been in operation on the docks of Montreal for years must be abolished. This much-to-be condemned system practically means the early deterioration of our health, as we have been worked for hours and hours without ever tasting food, and one of our demands is for a meal at least every six hours. That is only asking for justice. To go without food ruins our constitution, and we are practically in a state of slavery, and what can be expected of such unfortunates? Our lives have now been made as better as they possibly can be.[60]

Table 2.3 examines the issues that led workers to strike from 1901-1914.

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[59] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," and McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes," examine the loss of workplace control in Canada and Montgomery, *The fall of the house of labor* looks at the American context. There are parallels in Montreal with the conclusions McKay draws regarding control strikes at the turn of the century in the Maritimes. They, as in Montreal, were not limited to crafts/ skilled workers but occurred across sectors, especially among semi-skilled workers.

[60] *Montreal Daily Star*, 21 April 1903.

Table 2.3 Issues of Strikes and Lockouts 1901-1914

Issue	Frequency
Against reduction in wages	10
Wage increase	73
Piece work	6
Working conditions	13
Work day length	13
Wage scale	6
Sympathy	22
Union recognition	11
Open shop/closed shop	11
Union affiliation	1
Employment of children	3
Overtime	3
Lockouts	2
Company not accepting union price list	2
Worker's not sign contract	1
Training and skill level	3
Foremen related	6
Method of wage payment	4
Cost of living	1
Company not signing agreement	1
Unknown	1
Strikebreakers	1
System of fines	1
Objection to fellow workers	1
Union dues problem with management	1

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG C) *La Presse* (hereafter *Presse*) D) *Montreal Daily Star* (hereafter *Star*).

Even though only one dispute directly cited cost of living as the cause of a labour stoppage, the overwhelming number of disputes relating to wages was a reflection of the

financial situation of the urban Montreal working class. More than half of the causes recorded for labour disputes between 1901-1914 were wage-related. This is a reflection of the diminishing real wages of the working class and the inequality in the distribution of profits of capitalist growth during these boom years in the Canadian economy. This feature was a constant characteristic of strikes throughout the province as Thwaites' research found that strikes with wages and another cause accounted for 71.6 percent of all disputes. The growth in the economy and the subsequent inflation accounted for the focus on wages.[61] This explanation for wage-centred disputes was also offered in McKay's study of the Maritimes as 46 percent of the issues raised related to wages.[62] Often it was not single issues that prompted workers to challenge their employers, as 25 percent of the disputes examined were caused by multiple issues. This reflects the fact that Montreal workers were faced with a plentitude of challenges in their productive lives.

Though union related issues were not as frequent a reason for striking as the aforementioned wage-associated resentments, the growing influence of unionism on the Montreal workforce can be seen when one analyzes the connected causes that prompted collective job action.[63] The two most prominent issues behind work stoppages were workers' demands for union recognition and controversies surrounding the open or closed shop. If there was a great deal of rivalry among various unions, it certainly was not reflected in the grievances that motivated workers to strike during these years, as only one dispute focussed on union affiliation. A partial explanation for this could be that

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[61] Thwaites, "La Grève au Québec," 194.

[62] McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes," 17.

[63] For an examination of union membership in Quebec see: Rouillard "Le Militanisme des Travailleurs au Quebec et en Ontario,"; Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec. Des origines à nos jours* (Montréal: Boréal, 1989); Fernand Harvey, ed., *Le mouvement ouvrier au Québec.*

Catholic union strength was in its formative stages and thus the French Canadian religious cultural dimension to the union movement had yet to solidify its presence.

The growth and impact of unionism were also evident in the attitudes towards strikebreakers. One could reasonably infer from the following comments regarding strikebreakers at a 1901 cigarmakers strike that those who did work during a strike were not voicing opposition to the collective labour movement but rather took employment due to their dire financial situation: "Généralement, les ouvriers qui se décident à accepter du travail ou les ouvriers sont en grève sont des ouvriers qui chôment la plupart du temps ou qui travaillent que pour les plus petits salaires à cause de leur manque d'habilité."[64] As well, it would be reasonable to conclude that unions provided workers with the cohesion as well as moral and fiscal support to mount challenges against their employers. The benefits of monetary support from AFL affiliates are evident from the following discussion surrounding a cigarmakers strike:

> During the month fifty-five cigarmakers in the employ of Granby firm went on strike against a reduction in wages. The strikers have joined the Montreal Union and will receive strike benefits from the International Union. So far the strike of the cigarmakers in Montreal has cost the International $900 000 and according to the men's statement they are now in a better position to continue the strike than they were five months ago.[65]

These comments reflect the confidence union affiliation gave workers in labour disputes.[66]

Several of the issues that prompted workers to strike were a reaction to the working class's adjustment to changes brought about by managerial innovations. The

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[64] *La Presse*, 22 avril 1901.

[65] *The Labour Gazette*, 2, 1901-2, 438.

[66] For an analysis of the growth of AFL unions in Canada and their effects on the Canadian labour movement see Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*.

prevalence of piecework, which led to workers being insufficiently remunerated for their work for the benefit of increasing efficiency and cost, was one of the results of the transformation of workplaces that was central to this period. Once again issues surrounding piecework were most visible in the manufacturing sectors of Montreal's economy. Table 2.4 identifies strikes that centred on objections to piecework.

Table 2.4 Piecework Strikes

Year	Sector	Issue
1903	Bookbinders	Objection to piecework
1904	Cloakmakers	Increase pay for piecework
1905	Shoeworkers	Objection to new piecework prices
1907	Garment Workers	Abolition of piecework, method of wage payment, competency of foreman
1911	Acme Glove Workers	Against the reduction in piecework, increase in wages, changes in foreman

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG.

The manufacturing sector was particularly vulnerable to piecework as this type of work was conducive to divisions of labour that could be subcontracted out by employers. These strikes within the manufacturing sector reflect the overall pattern of striking over issues of job control which were also central to McKay's analysis of the Maritimes and Heron and Palmer's examination of Ontario.[67]

Closer supervision of workplaces led to the increasing presence of the foreman within the workplace, men who occupied the ambiguous area between the capitalist

[67] To compare the Montreal context at the turn of the century with other regional studies in Canada see Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," and McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes."

entrepreneur and the worker.[68] He was a daily reminder of inequality among the workers. there to ensure production standards so that profits could be maximized, creating a layer of ownership presence that was previously absent. The tensions that arose from this new workplace hierarchy were evident as strikes emerged where grievances centred specifically on the foreman. Table 2.5 identifies disputes where the foreman was identified as one of the grounds for striking.

Table 2.5 Foreman-Related Disputes

Year	Sector	Issue
1904	Paper box makers	Objection to change in foreman
1907	Garment Workers	Reinstatement of discharged foreman; union recognition
1907	Garment Workers	Competency of foreman; abolition of piece work; method of wage payment
1910	Bricklayers & Mason	Foreman not a union member; union affiliation
1911	Acme Glove Workers	Change in foreman; increase in wages; against reduction in piecework
1913	Garment Workers	Objection over employment of assistant foreman

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG.

As with piecework related strikes, work stoppages concerning the foreman occurred in the manufacturing sector of the economy (with the exception of a bricklayers' strike). The examination of piecework and foreman-related disputes reveals how industries of

[68] Montgomery in *The fall of the house of labor* discusses the managerial revolution that accompanied Taylorism and the effects it had on the changing role of the foreman in the workplace.

mass production, such as garment workers, were quite susceptible to the changes in industrial production.

Labour disputes occurred in a wide range of occupations within the Montreal working class. A breakdown of strikes through sectors is provided in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 Sector Analysis of Disputes 1901-1914

Sector	Number of Disputes
Clothing Trades	
Garment Trades	26
Boot and Shoe workers	7
Clothing Cutters	1
Boot and Shoe Lasters	5
Shoe machine workers	1
Leather workers	2
Glove Cutters	1
Tailors	1
Acme Glove Workers	1
Total:	45
Food and Tobacco Preparations	
Bakers	7
Cigarmakers	11
Butchers	1
Brewery Workers	1
Total:	20
Printing and Allied Trades	
Printers	5
Bookbinders	4
Printers and Bookbinders	1
Stenographers	1
Lithographers	1

Total:	12
Building Trades	
Electrical Workers	2
Plasters	4
Roofers and tinsmith	1
Plumbers and Steamfitter	4
Stonecutters	3
Painters	2
Stonemasons and Bricklayers	2
Heaters	1
Wire Workers	1
Tile Layers	1
Carpenters	7
Granite Cutters	2
Marble Cutters	3
Total:	33
General Transport	
Longshoremen	7
Carters	2
Street Railway Employees	2
Teamsters	7
Shipliners	1
Freight Handlers	2
Dock Labourers	1
Total:	22
Metal Trades	
Moulders	2
Iron Moulders	6
Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers	3
Machinists	2
Boilermakers	1

Structural Iron Workers	1
Total:	15
Textile Trades	
Textile workers (Cotton Workers)	5
Silk Mill Weavers	1
Total:	6
Unskilled Labourers	
Labourers (of various sorts)	4
Total:	4
Miscellaneous Trades	
Woodmachine workers	1
Foundary Helpers	2
Cordage Workers	1
Paper box makers	1
Hotel Waiters	2
Telegraphers	1
Gas Workers	1
Glass worker	1
Brass Workers	2
Rolling mill employees	1
Trunk Workers	1
Tin Workers	1
Hair Goods Workers	1
Firemen	1
Wollen workers	1
Packers	1
Egg Testers	1
Bill Posters	2
Stage hands	1
Total:	23
GRAND TOTAL:	180

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG.

Clearly, the clothing trades were the most active in labour disputes during these years, with one-quarter of the total number of strikes occuring within this sector. The frequency of strikes by clothing trade workers can be attributed to several reasons. AFL unions had heavily recruited workers in the garment and allied trades. Therefore, clothing trades' workers were sustained by the support of organized labour in their challenges to employers. Also, as discussed earlier, these manufacturing sectors were most affected by the changes brought about by managerial change. The fact that workers within these areas struck with regularity, however, does not necessarily imply that they were the most successful in their labour action.

It was in the sectors where the economic viability of the city was most directly affected that strikers had the most leverage; consequently, it was these disputes that drew the most attention. A prime example of this was in the transportation section of Montreal's workforce. Even though strikes by workers in the general transport sector only accounted for 12 percent of the labour disputes, these conflicts were always regarded as a serious matter. For instance, strikes by longshoremen, teamsters and affiliated workers captured the attention of the media and politicians of the city and sometimes the nation. A labour dispute by longshoremen could paralyze the port of Montreal and trade throughout the country. This is evident in the following excerpt of a letter by the Mayor of Montreal sent to the Dominion government with respect to a 1903 longshoreman's dispute.

> To the Honorable Premier,
>
> Ottawa:
>
> As you are no doubt aware, a strike of longshoremen exists in the Harbour of Montreal, which is causing harm to the trade of Canada.

> The Harbour of Montreal is the national port of Canada.
>
> The harbour is under the direct controls of the Harbour Comissioners representing the Dominion of Canada.
>
> As Mayor of Montreal I respectfully request the Dominion Government to afford all necessary protection to the said Harbour, and to the trade and commerce of the country now being done in the harbour.[69]

When the fiscal ramifications of a dispute were significant, as was often the case with longshoremen's strikes, those with power were more pressed to find solutions. The relationship between the attention devoted to a dispute and economic activity was also prevalent in the concern surrounding a carters' strike.

> In the event of a general strike business in the city will be seriously crippled, as the large transportation companies are engaged in the removal of all kinds of merchandise from warehouse to train and vice versa. While all businessmen who would be inconvenienced, fruit dealers and those who handle perishable goods would be the greater suffers.[70]

Another strong group of workers within the Montreal workforce were those in the building trades, which accounted for 18 percent of the strikes from 1901-1914. They were second only to the clothing trades in the total number of labour disputes. However, the distribution of strikes within this sector across thirteen occupations reflects the fragmented or individualistic nature of the skilled trades. Unlike workers in the clothing trades, who were organized into large unions regardless of their position, workers in skilled crafts or trades attempted to maintain their occupation's separate identity even in the face of unionization. This is probably a reflection of the fact that building trades workers were skilled workers whereas most garment workers were semi-skilled at best and could be replaced. Therefore, the building trades were unlikely to have a large

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[69] *Montreal Daily Star*, 5 May 1903.
[70] *Montreal Daily Star*, 26 May 1901.

number of workers in one trade. Also, this is a reflection of union growth among skilled workers where there was a separate union for each craft or trade.

The delineation of sector categories for Table 2.6 are taken from *The Labour Gazette*. These headings have their shortcomings with respect to identifying the skill level of Montreal workers. The Montreal workforce can be more aptly divided into five broad categories: 1) skilled trades 2) semi-skilled operatives 3) local transport workers 4) general transport workers and 5) unskilled labour. The most easily identifiable of these groups were unskilled labourers. These workers recorded only four disputes during these fourteen years. This is not surprising as they lacked bargaining power and were not affiliated with unions. As well, they were transient and easily replaceable due to their lack of skill and the abundant supply of unskilled labour within the city. Semi-skilled operatives formed a large portion of the city's workers since they were employed within the thriving manufacturing sector of the city. This group encompasses machine workers, factory workers, garment workers and textile workers. AFL unions heavily recruited these workers; as well the mechanization and technological changes sweeping across workplaces most directly affected these workers.[71] Therefore, it is not surprising that strikes by semi-skilled operatives represented approximately 41 percent of the labour disputes within Montreal in 1901-1914. Another group that oddly enough showed a great deal of clout in labour disputes was local transport workers. These labourers were semi-skilled at best and included the likes of street railway workers. But they belonged to well organized unions and were important to the daily operations of the city. Their security

[71] For a look at union growth in various manufacturing sectors see: Rouillard, "Le Militanisme des Travailleurs au Québec et en Ontario," 201-224; Jacques Rouillard, "Implantation et Expansion de L'Union Internationale de Travailleurs en Chaussures au Québec de 1900 à 1940," *RHAF*, 36, no. 1 (juin

rested with their employment, and its pivotal importance to the city, not skill level. Finally, probably the most powerful group in the Montreal workforce were general transport workers. All the workers under the heading in Table 2.6, with the exception of the street railway employees, belonged to this group. The skills required by a dock labourer, a carter and even a longshoreman, similarly, were not great. However, their importance to the operation of Montreal's transportation industry and hence the port, with its national economic significance, was where their power lay. Also, many of the challenges that led general transport workers to strike were similar to those skilled craft workers faced in Southern Ontario.

The discussion above illustrates why it is rather inappropriate to divide the Montreal workforce into skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled and form generalizations between those relationships and strike totals. Often it was other features, such as the industry specific to the city where the workers were employed, that governed the repercussions of a given work stoppage rather than the skill level of the workers. This is why strikes by labourers such as street railway employees were able to garner more attention than labour disputes by skilled workers.

Several themes become apparent from an initial examination of strikes in Montreal, 1901-1914. Workers were losing control over their working environment whether in the changing social relations of the workplace, technological advances or influence over wage payment. This was not unique to Montreal as studies of other Canadian regions at the turn of the twentieth century commented on similar workplace

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1982), 75-105; Jacques Rouillard, "Les travailleurs juifs de la confections à Montreal (1910-80)," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82), 253-259.

transformations.[72] In response to the aforementioned changes in the working environment the collective labour movement grew and the state's concern with labour increased. Therefore, the state, capital and labour all began to have both diverging and complementary interests in class relations. One of the responses of the working class to these changes was striking with increasing frequency. How these views converged and the tensions that arose from them will be examined in Chapter Three.

[72] The standard Canadian studies for this period, which have been referred to throughout this chapter, are Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes," and Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950."

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRIANGLE OF STRIKE VIOLENCE

> Strike violence is related to features of the sociopolitical context within which strikes occur, the legislative environment, the skill mix of striking workers, and of great importance, the strategies utilized by striking workers and the counter strategies used by employers...[1]

An examination of working-class conflict reveals the adversarial nature of labour relations at the turn of the twentieth century. As Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz note in "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Industrial Relations," "the social relations under which capitalist production takes place embody a structural antagonism of interest between employers and employees."[2] The introductory review of strikes in Chapter Two shows how labour was constantly trying to gain concessions from capital. Various circumstances surrounding the relationship between the state, capital and labour created the environment for violence surrounding labour disputes in Montreal. A study of violence examines not only the violent acts themselves but also the responses of those who attempted to curtail the violence. The following analysis examines working-class conflict in Montreal from 1901-1914 and will explore how various groups interacted to shape the violent dimensions of strikes.

Several historians have examined trends in violence surrounding strikes.[3] As Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey point out in their analysis of strikes in Canada

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[1] Don Sherman Grant II and Michael Wallace, "Why Do Strikes Turn Violent?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 96, no. 5 (March 1991), 1117-50.

[2] Leo Panitch and Don Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Labour Relations," *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (Spring 1984), 136.

[3] Standard international works include James Cronin's study *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); P.K. Edwards, *Strikes in the United States, 1881-1974* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981); Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (London: Cambridge

between 1891-1950, several of the conclusions reached in these, and other international studies, can be applied to the Canadian context.[4] Most studies of strike activity cover periods "when labour unions were virtually excluded from legal participation in the polity,"[5] which is comparable to the socio-political context of Montreal in 1901-1914. Other studies which focus on the post World War II era, such as Don Grant and Michael Wallace's study of Ontario between 1958-1967, provide interesting points on strike violence even though the socio-political context is very different. Among the valid criticisms of literature analyzing strike violence, the lack of sources from the workers' perspective is the foremost problem. Sociologists studying the problem have found the response rate from unions to be poor and tended to focus on employers' answers.[6] Additionally, as many documents are compiled by the state, which viewed matters in a similar light as employers, a bias in the presentation and interpretation of the data emerges. A better understanding of the state's role in industrial relations at the turn of the century, especially instances that involved aid to civil power, is supported by several valuable Canadian studies.[7] Overall, many of the contemporary works provide helpful insight and a better understanding of violence in pre-World War I Montreal.

University Press, 1974). Also, consult the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Plates 38-39.

[4] Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 20 (Fall 1987), 85.

[5] Grant and Wallace, "Why do Strikes Turn Violent?" 1122.

[6] Ibid., 1132.

[7] The following are works which aid in understanding the state's role in industrial relations at the turn of the twentieth century: Don Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power: The Cape Breton Experience in the 1920's," *Acadiensis*, 3 (Spring 1974), 45-64; Desmond Morton, "Aid to the civil power: the Canadian militia in support of social order," *Canadian Historical Review*, 51 (March 1970), 407-25; Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Leo Panitch and Don Swartz, "Towards Permanent Expectionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Labour Relations," *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (Spring 1984), 133-57; Bob Russell, *Back to Work? Labour, State and Industrial Relations in Canada* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990).

To effectively discuss violence and labour disputes, one must define the parameters of violence and distinguish between different types of violent behaviour. Violence includes aggressive acts against property and/or people with the aim of destruction, injury, harm or intimidation. It can be distinguished as being either a public or private expression. Public violence is behaviour that is motivated by the desire to rectify perceived injustices, altering social conditions or maintaining the social order.[8] Considering this definition, violence surrounding strikes is a public rather than private process. Workers, by engaging in violent acts, were expressing disapproval over the conduct of their employers or the state. As an examination of violence illustrates, the dimensions of violent actions are not only governed by those who initiate them but by the responses of the receivers as well. This is reflected in Judy Torrance's assertion that public violence is politics-in-action as the powerful try to preserve them while the less powerful act to change social relations.[9] With respect to conflict surrounding labour disputes, the state and capitalist entrepreneurs represent power responding against striking employees to maintain the status quo. Therefore, to fully understand the violent nature of strikes it is imperative to examine the actions of the employers and the state in response to challenges posed by workers and, especially, to explore how such actions served to escalate or de-escalate tensions.

It could be argued that the differential of power between the workers and the state and capital, which determined the nature of labour relations, facilitated the development

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[8] Judy M. Torrance. *Public Violence in Canada, 1867-1982* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 15, 78.

[9] Kenneth D. Tunnell, "Workers Insurgency and Social Control: Violence By and Against Labour in Canada," in *Violence in Canada: Sociopolitical Perspectives*, ed. Jeffery Ian Ross (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 78.

of violence.[10] At the beginning of the twentieth century the working class was attempting to secure

> the state's recognition of the collective, class specific organization of labour, the trade union as legitimate representation of workers in the capitalist labour market. Moreover, the independence of trade union association from direct interference by the state itself had to be established.[11]

The absence of this environment for labour at this time created the lack of free and collective bargaining for workers which increased the likelihood of tensions, and thus violence, surrounding labour disputes. The lack of political and economic power of the working class is evident from the discussion of the issues facing the Montreal working class in Chapter Two. Workers' productive lives were constantly riddled with influences, such as mechanization, working conditions, and fluctuating wages, which were outside of labour's control.[12] Therefore, striking was a way for workers "to inflict economic harm on the employer in order to gain concessions from him."[13] At times, an employer's response to a work stoppage influenced whether or not a strike would take a violent turn. An example of this would be an employer's decision to keep an operation running in the face of a labour dispute. This would limit the ability of the strikers to inflict sufficient economic harm upon the enterprise, thereby increasing the frustrations of the striking workers and setting a likely stage for a violent response.

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[10] Ibid., 79.

[11] Panitch and Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism," 136.

[12] For a discussion of scientific management and the Canadian workplace see Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prisim of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977), 425-458; Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes 1901-1914," *Acadiensis*, 13 (Autumn 1983), 3-46. As well, for the general repercussions of scientific management in the North American workplace see David Montgomery, *The fall of the house of labor* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987).

[13] John-Paul Alexandrowicz, *The Determinants of Contemporary Picket-Line Violence: An Empirical Analysis of Canadian Strikes* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 6.

The close relationship between state and capital is apparent in the ability of employers to secure labour during a strike. Strikebreakers increased workers' frustrations, as their work stoppage was not as effective if the enterprise was still operating. It is apparent from analyzing labour disputes that occurred during these years that the presence of replacement workers exponentially increased the likelihood of tension, especially if this was presented in conjunction with picketing. The presence of picketers alongside strikebreakers often created a precarious situation. "Picketing is generally understood to involve these elements: (1) the presence of one or more persons, (2) communication by spoken or written messages, or through behaviour, and (3) intention by presence or communication to secure a sympathetic response from third persons."[14] The acquisition of replacement workers resulted in worker-versus-worker hostility surfacing alongside the workers-versus-capitalist entrepreneur/state tensions. The proper or partial functioning of the enterprise weakened the power of striking. Moreover, when this was accompanied by the presence of picketers, instances of worker-on-worker violence such as heckling and intimidation emerged. The potential for disorder created by the presence of strikebreakers in labour disputes was highlighted in the requisition of aid to civil power in such situations. The protection of strikers or non-strikers was an issue almost every time aid to civil power was required in Canada between 1895-1914.[15]

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[14] H. W. Arthurs, *Labour Law and Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981), 254. For a close examination of Canadian labour law consult A. W. R. Carrothers, *Collective Bargaining Law in Canada* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1965).

[15] Morton, "Aid to the civil power," 423. This period was one of overall labour strife throughout the country. The militia was called eleven times between 1895-1904 and seventeen times between 1905-1914. Moreover, almost every case was concerning a strike whereas prior to this period the militia was used more frequently for religious or political reasons.

The employers' perspective on keeping operations running during any dispute is well documented. For instance, this was reflected in the following comments by steamship owners surrounding the troubled 1903 longshoremen's strike. The steamship owners were able to pressure their employees, pressing the possibility of attaining replacement workers: "The situation is practically the same as it was a month ago when the stevedores threatened to import about one thousand men from the Old Country and declared that they would recede in no way."[16] State forces, summoned to preserve order, often complicated this issue:

> We consider, however, that the calling out of the troops at the present time is unnecessary and is done to intimidate the men. No one case has been proven of violence on our part. The only violence done was by an employee and a brother-in-law of a stevedore. They seem to be determined in the hope that by so doing they will gain the sympathy of the public and compel the men to go to work under their terms.[17]

Employers were able to secure protection from the state and instruments of the state to ensure that strikebreakers could be retained. Ian McKay remarks that capital consolidated such workers in place (strikebreakers) and had the support and involvement of the state to ensure implementation of their agenda.[18] Capital possessed a wide array of resources to help it accommodate to the inconveniences of a labour dispute. The laws at the turn of the twentieth century placed a higher priority on the protection of an employer's property and the right to carry on operations than workers' rights to organize, collectively bargain and protect their jobs.[19] Employers could hire special private police

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[16] *Montreal Daily Star*, 6 April 1903.
[17] *Montreal Daily Star*, 29 April 1903.
[18] McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," 25.
[19] Stuart Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa: Task Force on Labour Relations, 1968), 72.

and had the support of regular law enforcement officers to protect strikebreakers.[20] These resources of the capitalist employers point out the political dimension of industrial relations and thereby the close relationship between the state and capital.

The state was in the precarious position of having to provide for all its citizens and foster economic growth. This dichotomy of government objectives is captured in the following comments:

> On one hand, it [the state] functions to further capital accumulation, or at least not hinder it, while on the other hand, it functions to assure its subjects that a socioeconomic system with built in inequalities appears legitimate, fair, and in their own best interests.[21]

However, in many instances it is apparent that in attempting to secure the former aforementioned goals, the welfare of the working class suffered. Kenneth Tunnell identifies this phenomenon as state-corporate transgression: the state and its agencies working in conjunction with capitalist producers either commit actions that result in social harm or fail to act in ways to prevent socially injurious actions.[22]

The role the state decided to take in industrial relations is most clearly represented by the legislation the Canadian government passed during these years.[23] The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act 1907 (IDIA) was the largest piece of labour legislation adopted between 1901-1914, and the Montreal workforce felt its impact. Several of the sectors covered by the act figured prominently in Montreal. The IDIA incorporated

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Kenneth Tunnell, "Crimes of Capital Against Labour," in *Controlling State Crime*, ed. Jefferey Ian Ross (NY: Garland Publishing, 1995), 211.

[22] Tunnell, "Workers Insurgency and Social Control," 92. Tunnell uses this term in the context of post World War II Ontario. He cites examples such as work-related deaths, injuries, and occupational diseases, which are examples of state negligence in the treatment of workers in Montreal from 1901-1914 as well.

[23] The most comprehensive work on industrial relations from 1901-1914 is Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire'*.

compulsory conciliation and a mandatory "cooling off" period for disputes in certain industries. A tripartite investigation board was established to examine the issues of a dispute and recommended non-binding resolutions. The industries governed by the act were those identified as public utilities.[24] This piece of legislation reflects how both employers and capital turned to the state when confronted with issues.[25] However, the state did not emerge as the mediator or 'impartial umpire'. The following situation identified by Russell is more indicative of the environment of conciliation that was in the spirit of the IDIA: "Intrinsic to the work of politics then was a process that often witnessed the forfeiting of negotiations to the state on behalf of labour, but ultimately for the benefit of capital."[26] Despite the focus in labour relations literature on the conciliating role the state played, the state's coercive functions were by no means absent.[27] The state's coercive measures, unlike those of the working class, were masked within the legitimate legal institutions of the country. Its access to political power allowed the state to exercise its coercion in what appeared to be more subtle ways.

Therefore, violent incidents[28] were common occurrences and addressed with judicial leniency. Frequently, arrests were made but later charges were dropped or offenders were acquitted. It almost appears that worker-on-worker violence, which was what these situations often entailed, was not perceived by the state as a serious matter. It was only when citizens outside the realm of the labour dispute were affected, as was the case in longshoremen's, street railway employees' and machinists' strikes, that those in

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[24] The above discussion of the IDIA 1907 is taken from Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire'*, 4-7.
[25] Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire'*, 362.
[26] Russell, *Back to Work*, 82.
[27] Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," 96.
[28] The types of violent incidents around strikes in Montreal are discussed later in Table 3.2.

power gave meaningful attention to the hostilities.[29] Moreover, even in these instances, efforts were not made to understand the workers' complaints and frustrations, be it with the bargaining process or the retention of replacement workers. Instead, the employer and the state colluded with the help of their collaborated resources to stifle worker dissent and coerce a settlement. McKay's observation that strikes were viewed as a threat to public order, and even civilization itself, captures the attitude of the state in the face of potential working-class violence.[30] Frequently, in such instances it was also the state's reaction to the possibility of violence that affected the atmosphere around a given dispute as much as the aggressive behaviour of the strikers.

It is apparent from an examination of strikes in Chapter Two that the working class's transformation within Canada, including Montreal, was reflective of patterns occurring throughout North America. Desmond Morton found that, similar to Canada, the use of aid to civil power in the United States after 1870, was requested in economic rather than religious or political situations.[31] Thus, another characteristic that becomes apparent from the examination of government and employer responses to working-class violence is the anticipatory nature of the state and capitalist actions in preventing outbreaks of violence. This was seen again in the 1903 longshoremen's strike. The instructions to the militia during this dispute reflect the power that the militia had in maintaining order:

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[29] It was often that aid to civil power was requested in industries that were covered by the IDIA 1907.

[30] McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," 37. This illustrates that the role the state played in creating the environment for violence around labour disputes, as actual acts of violence were rare. For a national breakdown of violence and strikes see Cruikshank and Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," which corroborates these conclusions.

[31] Morton, "Aid to the civil power," 415. The American government used its apprehension of labour violence as a justification to increase military spending.

> It is however possible for extraordinary cases to arise of immediate and pressing danger when violent crimes are being or likely to be committed-which in the opinion of the officer, demand his immediate interference. In these emergencies the officer should take action as he thinks necessary...[32]

Remarks such as these raise the question: to what extent did the presence and discretion of law enforcers, such as the militia, escalate tensions? Furthermore, one could question whether their proactive measures were always necessary? As Don Macgillivray concludes in his examination of the Cape Breton miners in the 1920's and the role of aid to civil power, it is difficult to determine if events would have remained peaceful without the militia presence. However, there are definite parallels between the organization of the longshoremen in Montreal and the Cape Breton miners. Both belonged to strong, disciplined unions, which is how Macgillivray accounts for the fact that no miners were arrested during times of quite acute conflict.[33] However, at times the public was concerned, or at least the media wanted authorities to prevent escalation of conflicts or the potential for violence to occur.[34] This is evident in the following comments made in relation to a May 1903 street railway dispute: "It was unquestionably the result of allowing the men to hold a procession, which, according to several authorities, was illegal, and should have been stopped and broken up by the police before it assumed the proportions it did."[35]

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[32] *Montreal Daily Star* , 29 April 1903.

[33] Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power," 54.

[34] For a general overview of the print media in Quebec see Jean de Bonville, *La Presse Québécoise de 1884 à 1914, Genèse d'un média de masse* (Québec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1988).

[35] *Montreal Daily Star*, 25 May 1903.

The judiciary was used to stifle labour demands at the turn of the twentieth century.[36] The support that employers had from the judicial branches of society is evident through an examination of the charges against strikers and sympathizers surrounding the May 1903 street railway employees' strike. The conclusions Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer make regarding the sympathies of the courts towards anti-union employers/strikebreakers were also seen in Montreal court proceedings surrounding this dispute.[37] The following are examples of some of the sentences passed by the court recorder: "impolite to police-$5.00 and costs or twenty days," "shouting 'scabs' on the street-$5.00 and costs or one month," "shouting 'scab' and disturbing the peace, $10.00 and costs or two months."[38] The subjectivity of some of these charges is readily apparent as strikers were brought before the courts on grounds such as being "impolite to police."[39] The protection and encouragement replacement workers received is obvious as nine out of the fourteen conviction records concerned referring to replacement workers as scabs. This resulted in fine penalization for the offenders. These examples show how the employers and state were able to legitimize their treatment of striking workers by institutionalizing their limited power through the judiciary. This reflects the following remarks made by Tunnell in his analysis of labour struggles:

> The individuals who initiated such social change ...had little access to legitimate political circles and were left to their own devices. Thus, they struck out at their common enemies their employers and the agents of social control, including the state and the criminal justice system.[40]

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[36] Both Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," and McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," have discussions of the judicial and legislative environment striking workers encountered.

[37] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 451.

[38] *Montreal Daily Star*, 26 May 1903.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Tunnell, "Workers Insurgency and Social Control," 84.

The legislative environment surrounding labour relations has been a source of antagonism between the working class and employers.[41] The prosperity and development of industry was its primary aim, and legislation was consistently adopted to thwart any gains in power that opposition could make.[42] The discussion thus far illustrates how it was possible for workers to see themselves as victims despite the fact that they were often the initiators of violence.[43] As violence in strikes took on many forms, it is helpful to separate the analysis of violence in Montreal into two categories: those disputes that had the potential for large civil disorder or collective acts of violence and conflicts with isolated acts of violence. This discussion will show that in the former instances the nature of the violent behaviour was more likely to be in the form of individual acts of aggression, whereas the latter had the potential to mobilize many resources of the state to prevent civil disorder. The latter cases also refer to labour disputes where the atmosphere or climate suggested the possibility of violence. Therefore, the focus will not only be on collective acts of violence that at times can diminish the extent of the hostilities which existed around labour disputes.

Limiting the analysis to collective acts of violence produces statistics such as the following by Cruikshank and Kealey. Their research on collective violence surrounding strikes concludes that between 1901-1910, only twelve strikes in the entire province of Quebec included collective violence and two required military interventions.[44] Such

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[41] There has been debate between sociologists and labour historians regarding the role of the state in labour relations. Russell argues that it is important to look at the state's intervention in the larger context of labour relations, instead of merely focusing on ad hoc instances of aid to civil power. As true as this may be it is difficult to overlook the fact that the state enacted legislation to facilitate the interests of capitalists which simultaneously thwarted the free and collective bargaining environment for workers.

[42] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 451.

[43] Tunnell, "Workers Insurgency and Social Control," 78.

[44] Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," in *Workers and Canadian History*, ed. Gregory Kealey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1995), 361.

modest figures diminish how important the violent aspects of strikes are in fully understanding working-class conflict in Montreal. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of violence surrounding strikes analyzes not only the empirical statistics but also the disparity of power between workers and their employers that allowed for such hostilities to erupt in tensions and physical confrontation.

Several of the large 1901-1914 Montreal disputes involved longshoremen, street railway workers and machinists. All worked in industries of civic and even national importance; the inconvenience caused by their work stoppages had large repercussions. As well, the sheer number of workers involved in labour conflicts within these sectors was huge and each group was organized into strong labour unions. These workers ran the gamut of occupational differences encompassing skilled tradesmen, semi-skilled labour, and the relatively unskilled, often casually employed. Replacements could be found by employers; they may not have been as efficient, but their availability allowed operations to continue. All three of these occupations belonged to strong unions. J. A. Frank's conclusion that weaker unions are less able to control picket-line violence is not necessarily applicable to an analysis of Montreal from 1901-1914.[45] The circumstances for serious social unrest in Montreal often occurred in the well-organized and pivotally important transportation industry. Though street railway employees were at best semi-skilled operatives, their importance to the city's public transportation network gave them a larger degree of leverage than their skill level would seem to merit, and they were backed by a powerful international union, the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees of America.

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[45] James A. Latornell. *Violence on the Picket Line: The Law & Police Response* (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1993), 9.

The May 1903 street railway strike was a reoccurrence of a dispute from February which lasted two days and involved 1 200 workers. The severity of the strike in February was recognized immediately: "Jamais une grève n'a suscité autant d'intérêt dans toute la population de la ville de Montréal, puisqu'elle touche près de, chaque citoyen...."[46] For the second dispute in May the workers had fallen out of favour with the public:

> Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of this strike as compared with that of last February is the lack of anything like sympathy with the strikers. In February there was a general undercurrent of feeling that perhaps the men had grievances which needed redress; to-day not one man out of a thousand seemed to take this point of view.[47]

Perhaps there was a link between the workers' frustrations and the inability of individuals outside of their predicament to understand labour's concerns. In certain respects strikers were more unruly surrounding the May 1903 street railway strike than the 1903 strike by longshoremen. Frustrations and confrontation over usual operations during a strike allowed for a situation to develop that highlighted striking workers' threats to a public dependent on city transportation: "The car stopped to take on passengers, and this was the signal for a volley of stones, pieces of wood and anything and everything that the crowd could lay its hands on. Windows were smashed and the occupants of the car were badly frightened."[48]

Noticeably absent from the list of strikes with collective violence are workers in the master builiding trades, as their labour disputes often paralyzed the entire construction industry of the city. Perhaps the difficulty in replacing workers within the trades led employers to accede to their demands more quickly and preempted the outbreaks of

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[46] *La Presse*, 6 février 1903.
[47] *Montreal Daily Star*, 23 May 1903.
[48] *Montreal Daily Star*, 25 May 1903.

violence that resulted in disputes within the transportation sector. It is interesting to compare the events and atmosphere surrounding a dispute within the building trades with those by longshoremen in 1903 and the street railway workers in May 1903. For instance, the 1910 bricklayers and stonemasons dispute was of a similar size with respect to striking workers and also had the potential for significant detrimental repercussions on the industry: "Comme ces deux corps de métiers, les maçons et les briqueteurs, commandent en quelque sorte, aux autre ouvriers de la construction, on peut dire que pratiquement toute la construction est affectée par cet grève."[49] However, the city did not experience the same level of mobilization of law enforcement and state intervention that accompanied large-scale walkouts by longshoremen and street railway workers.

This could in part be due to the fact that confrontational picket-line situations, which would have been enticed if replacement workers were present, did not emerge in this building trades' strike, despite the fact the construction strike commenced on February 23 and was not resolved until 6 July 1910.[50] Within the skilled building trades, replacement workers were undoubtedly more difficult to attain. As many studies have suggested, the position of certain skilled workers in the labour market allows them bargaining leverage with their employers, resulting in a situation more favourable to labour's demands being met without violence.[51] In the cases of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, there was greater competition in securing work and a greater supply of labour. Therefore, they were more likely to adopt "militant tactics" to protect their jobs.[52]

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[49] *La Presse,* 4 juillet 1910.

[50] This duration is somewhat misleading as excavation and building did not pick up until well into spring. Therefore, the full impact of this dispute was not felt until late spring.

[51] Grant and Wallace, "Why Do Strikes Turn Violent?" 1129.

[52] Ibid., 1130.

The actions of politicians, both at the civic and the national level, also show the close relationship between capital and the state. This supports Jamieson's conclusion that the role of government in most industrial disputes is at the best equivocal and, on balance, discriminatory in favour of the employer.[53] The federal government, as Macgillivray states, "maintained a constitutional aloofness" toward addressing the causes that led to labour strife and the use of military in aid to civil power.[54] No effort during this period was made to address the structured inequality between capital and labour and the state's use of coercive powers on behalf of capital.[55] As was indicated in a 1903 longshoremen's dispute, the collusion between capital and the state in the facilitation of employers' interests was often determined by the capacity of workers to effectively block the undertaking of work:

> The presence of the militia has had the effect of preventing any serious disturbances. The work of unloading the ships is proceeding apace, and men have been found willing to take the places of the strikers. They are rather few in number, however there is little possibility that the number will be very largely augmented. Every man who is willing to work is escorted to the ramps by a guard of police and thence to the ships by a squad of militia. Once the men are on the vessels they are not allowed to come ashore except to remove the cargo from the ship to the wharf. Arrangements have been made whereby they are to be fed and housed on the vessels they are working on.[56]

The amount of support the steamship companies were able to secure from agents of the government reflects how the law at this time placed a high priority on the protection of

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[53] Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 69.

[54] Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power," 64. This was a feature of Mackenzie King's government in the 1920s in Macgillivray's discussion but was indicative of the Canadian government's attitude from the turn of the century.

[55] Panitch and Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism," 139. It was not until the Rand ruling in 1946 that this was officially addressed but the inequalities were so large and the resources of capital were huge. For a more detailed discussion of the post World War II years see Panitch and Swartz's article.

employers' property and the right to carry on operations.[57] This was more important than the workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively and protect their jobs.[58] It is difficult to establish what if any violent turn that the longshoremen's dispute in 1903 would have taken without the intervention of the police and perhaps the militia. However, from examining the newspaper articles surrounding the strike it is apparent that this dispute was a fertile ground for labour violence. This is likely accounted for by the large number of determined strikers who were confronted with owners and the state doing everything within their means to ensure that the port operated in a 'business as usual' manner.

Large instances of collective violence or the potential thereof have been the primary focus of this chapter thus far. However, an examination of primary sources surrounding violence and labour disputes shows that some of the most significant damage to persons or property occurred in smaller scale conflicts. These did not have the same level of intervention by capital and the resources of the state as seen in the disputes discussed previously in this chapter. Table 3.1 shows a list of disputes that were accompanied by violence as compiled through examining the strikes and lockouts files, *The Labour Gazette* and newspaper articles surrounding strikes in Montreal during 1901-1914 in *La Presse* and the *Montreal Daily Star*. A total of twenty disputes had reports of violence.

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[56] *Montreal Daily Star*, 29 April 1903.
[57] Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 72.
[58] Ibid.

Table 3.1 Strikes with Reports of Violence

Sector	Number of Strikers
1902 Electrical Workers	260
1903 Street Railway Employees	1 200
1903 Longshoremen	2 200
1903 Street Railway Employees	1 200
1903 Carpenters	120
1904 Bakers	6
1905 Dock Labourers	200
1906 Carters	250
1907 Gas Workers	95
1907 Longshoremen	1 600
1908 Cottonmillhands	?
1908 Railway Machinists	1 800
1909 Bakers	65
1910 Garment Workers	60
1910 Cigarmakers	?
1911 Carpenters	200
1911 Longshoremen	1 800
1912 Bakers	60
1912 Garment Workers	4 500
1913 Garment Workers	1 000

Sources for this table: A) strikes and lockouts files (hereafter files) B) *The Labour Gazette* (hereafter LG) C) *La Presse* (hereafter *Presse*) D) *Montreal Daily Star* (hereafter *Star*).

It is interesting to examine the relationship between union memberships and violence. Of those strikes mentioned in Table 3.1, only two did not involve unionized workers: the 1907 gas workers who struck for a wage increase and the 1910 garment workers who walked out for the same reason. Therefore, in Montreal at the turn of the twentieth century, belonging to a union did not diminish the likelihood of violence surrounding a dispute. Of the three largest confrontations involving civil disorder

discussed above, the longshoremen, street railway workers and machinists all were members of well-established unions. Union growth during this period was in its infancy and, even though workers may have belonged to these collective organizations, their power was still limited and easily counteracted by the state and employers.[59] The greatest advantage employers had at this moment was their ability to hire replacement workers to keep an enterprise operating during a strike; regardless of a union's strength employers were able to ensure that this could occur swiftly. The retention of strikebreakers was a prevalent anti-union practice throughout North America at this time.[60] Also, the analysis of Montreal supports Jamieson's conclusion that the relationship with levels of industrial conflict and violence go hand-in-hand.[61] For instance, 1903, which had the most disputes of all these years, also had four large-scale strikes with violent activity and two of the largest disputes of the decade. Heron and Palmer remark that industrial capital precipitated strikes in periods of economic crisis when labour could not afford costly work stoppages in hopes of diminishing the strength of trade unions.[62] This causation may be hard to establish, but the recession year of 1903 did have the highest pre-World War I total of 24 disputes. Perhaps workers' frustrations increased their susceptibility to violence. The resolutions of strikes with violence were as follows: workers succeeded in five; employers succeeded in nine; both parties

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[59] For a discussion of Quebec unionism in the twentieth century the standard workers include: Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec. Des origines à nos jours* (Montréal: Boréal, 1989) and Fernand Harvey ed., *Le mouvement ouvrier au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980).

[60] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 427.

[61] Torrance, *Public Violence in Canada*, 48.

[62] Heron and Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike," 450.

compromised in six. Therefore, in eleven of the disputes, just over half, the strikers made some gains, as the settlement was either a compromise or an entire worker victory.[63]

Individual acts of aggression or violence against persons or property were reported for the majority of the disputes listed on Table 3.1. The focus on strikers' violent actions is an example of how it was easy to overlook the state's role in strike violence. "The media saturate consumers with sensationalized reports of individual one-on-one crimes that usually involve violence rather than those on state crime."[64] For instance, a bakers' strike was accompanied by extensive damage to property and physical aggression as "...they [the strikers] proceeded to wreck the shop, smash panes of glass and showcases and use Mr. Schakler, his son and son-in-law, roughly."[65] With respect to this incident four arrests were made, two men and two women, even though the charges were subsequently withdrawn. Regardless of the size of a dispute or the industry or skill mix of workers involved, the presence of strikebreakers virtually always fuelled hostilities. The aforementioned bakers' strike was an example of violence against property and persons that was seen quite frequently in Montreal labour disputes: "The driver ran into the building to try and find out his assailants, but was met by a determined gang just within the door, who beat him with fists and sticks, rendering him quite helpless."[66] What precisely motivated or perpetuated workers to engage in such acts is unclear, but frustration with the power employers had to replace them, which limited their effectiveness as strikers, was no doubt one factor.

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[63] It is difficult to establish any direct links between the presence of violence and its effects on the settlement of the dispute. Russell, *Back to Work*, 104, raises a similar discussion in his critique of labour historians' studies of industrial relations and the failure to establish a relationship between state intervention and strike outcomes.

[64] Tunnell, "*Workers Insurgency and Social Control*," 24.

[65] *Public Archives of Canada*, strikes and lockouts files, RG 27, vol. 293, file 3173.

[66] Ibid.

The workers who engaged in violent acts were among the most powerful working-class groups in the city. They were either members of skilled trades or part of the general transport sector of the city. The majority of violent accounts, 14, involved labour disputes of either skilled workers belonging to a specific trade or transportation industry workers, labour sectors the state had a vested interest in monitoring. It is not surprising that unskilled workers who were marginal in the larger context of working-class conflict did not figure into accounts of strike violence.[67]

The frustrations of workers in incidents such as those surrounding the bakers' dispute and the availability of replacement workers may both reflect, to a certain extent, the economic situation of the working class in Montreal during this period. With the growth in the city's population,[68] the average working-class family had to struggle even more to adequately provide for their most basic needs.[69] These two factors may have led to frustrations, especially in situations where strikers perceived their struggle as necessary to the survival of the family unit.

The discussion of violent behaviour surrounding strikes leads to an examination of the types of violent acts associated with the labour disputes cited in Table 3.1. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the categories of violent behaviour that were reported during strikes, drawing on information in the strikes and lockouts files, *The Labour Gazette, La Presse* and the *Montreal Daily Star*. Despite the fact that there were 20 disputes with

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[67] The small representation in strikes by unskilled workers can be explained by several factors. They were extremely transient, lacked any clout or bargaining power and were very easily replaceable due to the surplus of unskilled labourers within the city.

[68] The changes of Montreal's population and its ramifications on working-class conflict and violence surrounding those disputes will be examined in Chapter Four.

[69] Refer to Chapter Two for an economic analysis of the cost of living for the average working-class family at this time. As well, the issue of working-class social conditions is explored in depth in Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Conditions of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

reports of violence, there were 12 different types of violent acts due to the fact that certain acts were associated with more than one dispute. Several categories of violent acts stand out: intimidation, physical assaults against persons and property, and the use of weapons. The latter two are quite easy to assess as they left physical marks of damage. However, intimidation, which was frequently reported, was extremely subjective and harder to identify as a type of violence. It is quite likely that it was even more widespread than reported in these primary sources.

Table 3.2 Types of Violent Acts

Burning of two fingers and ears
Police presence
Aggressiveness/threats
Brick thrown at person's head
Stone throwing
Intimidating replacement workers
Arrests for obstruction
Stabbing
Physically assaulting strike breakers
use of threatening language
Shots fired

Sources for this table: A) files B) *Star* C) *Presse*.

There were eleven counts of violent acts that can be classified under the broader category of physical aggression against persons or property. These were cited in a various range of occupations and skill mix. Skilled workers who committed such acts included electrical workers, carpenters and bakers. The remaining acts of physical violence against persons were undertaken by general transport workers: longshoreman and carters. Both were segments of the Montreal working class that were well represented by unions and important to the economic well being of the city. Therefore, from this albeit small

sampling, non-union affiliation, or the lack of skill, did not necessarily imply violent, unruly behaviour. In all of these situations one constant feature was the operation of the enterprise during the dispute and the presence of replacement workers. Therefore, it is safe to assume that in any occupation, regardless of skill level or trade, anti-union practices by the employer, supported by the state, increased the likelihood of violence.

Equally as interesting are the numerous reports surrounding the potential for violence. These included intimidation of replacement workers, police presence and use of threatening language. Twelve incidents of this nature are recorded. Therefore, the potential for disorderly behaviour among strikers was a public concern. These reports surrounding the possibility of violence were met with arrests, fines and injunctions by judicial authority, and, at times, it appears that the potential for unrest was treated with the same if not greater action as actual incidents of violence. One overarching theme that emerged from analyzing violent acts is that no attempt was made to address the reasons for the violent acts by strikers or to curtail those conditions. This was probably due to the fact that the vast majority of them were instances of worker-versus-worker violence, which merely served to divide the working class.

The way in which Quebec society viewed labour relations is helpful in understanding the response to individual or "random" acts of aggression that commonly accompanied strikes in Montreal. As Linteau, Durocher, and Robert note, "In Quebec labour relations were as far as possible considered individual relations, and thus a matter for the Civil Code."[70] This may help to explain why individual acts of aggression, such as those which comprised the vast amount of violent acts for strikes during this period,

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[70] P. A Linteau, René Durocher and Jean-Claude Robert, *Quebec: a history, 1867-1929* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983), 419-420.

continued unabated and did not receive the same level of attention as conflicts with vast civil disorder. Obviously, the capacity for social unrest was larger in the latter disputes. However, the ill-founded treatment of workers, which continued over this fourteen year span, was a cause for concern in the ability of workers to voice their disapproval and bargain collectively in a safe environment. The discrepancy in the state's response to these two different types of violence illustrates the government's complacency toward creating a more favourable environment for the Montreal working class.[71] In terms of its legislative power, "the government rarely took the initiative and was satisfied with minimal legislation during this period of heavy industrialization."[72]

Another example of the state's lack of initiative for intervention was evident in allowing certain industrial disputes to carry on longer than other strikes. This is definitely a reflection of the state's discretion in using its resources in labour disputes, since the state and capital always had access to them. The resources of capital and how they overwhelmed labour are captured in Panitch and Swartz's comparison:

> The organizational and ideological resources of labour remained scarcely measurable against the network of associations, organizations, advisory bodies, in house publications and mass media which were owned by or financially beholden to capital.[73]

Table 3.3 shows the length of the various disputes which were accompanied by violence.

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[71] This is not only indicative of Montreal but also the general attitude of the Canadian government towards the recognition of the demands of labour. For an extensive discussion of the government's role in industrial relations in the pre-World War I period see Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire'* and Russell, *Back to Work*.

[72] Linteau, Durocher and Robert, *Quebec: a history, 1867-1929*, 420.

[73] Panitch and Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism," 139. These remarks were made in reference to the lack of practical effect of the Rand resolution in the 1940s, which recognized the right of labour to free and collectively bargain. However, the plethora of resources which capital has amassed is also reflective of the power differential between capital and labour at the turn of the twentieth century.

Table 3.3 Length of Disputes with Reports of Violence

Disputes	Length
1902 Electrical Workers	April 14-25
1903 Street Railway Employees	Feb 6-8
1903 Longshoremen	March 31- May 11
1903 Street Railway Employees	May 23-27
1903 Carpenters	April 13-30
1904 Bakers	Jan 6-16
1905 Dock Labourers	Sept 1-6
1906 Carters	May 29-June 5
1907 Gas Workers	April 20
1907 Longshoremen	May 15-23
1908 Cottonmillhands	May 4
1908 Railway machinists	Aug 5- Oct 5
1909 Bakers	July 23-end Oct
1910 Garment Works	March 24-25
1910 Cigarmakers	July 22-25
1911 Carpenters	July- end of month
1911 Longshoremen	Nov 17-20
1912 Bakers	May 1- June
1912 Garment Workers	June 10-July 27
1913 Garment Workers	Sept 19- several months later replacements secured

Sources for this table: A) files B) LG.

The sampling may be too small to make definitive conclusions, but some generalizations around the trends surrounding the length of violent disputes can be made. In general most disputes that were associated with violence were resolved within a month. Those within the transportation industry were resolved fairly quickly.[74] Those that had the least

[74] The length of the 1903 longshoremen's strike is somewhat misleading, since the walkout did not reach its full threat until navigation season opened well into April.

ramifications on industries outside of the one on strike tended to continue without state intervention, often for long periods of time.

The failure of many disputes to raise similar concerns as those within the transportation industry could be explained, in part, through examining the character of organized labour in Canada and Montreal during this period. However, divisions between workers of various skills or job descriptions limited the strength and solidarity of the union. Finally, the more important the value of an employee's labour to his/her employer and or the state the more seriously would the demands of the workers be addressed and their striking become a concern. Why did disputes by longshoremen garner the responses they did whereas disputes by building trades workers of similar size failed to result in the same response? Unionization in skilled crafts and trades had been increasing with the emergence, consolidation, and growth of AFL unions.[75] However, these worker were still quite loyal to their occupations and individual identities, which prevented them from mobilizing in larger unified work stoppages of the sort seen in the transportation sector. With this observation it would be reasonable to conclude that the transportation sector in Montreal was already moving toward the industrial unionism that would emerge in the post World War I era, unlike the skilled craft and trade unions which still lagged further behind in this transition.

The analysis of violence surrounding strikes in Montreal from 1901-1914 reveals that there were many forces in play which shaped the violent dimensions of strikes. The actions or lack thereof, of the employers, the state and the working class interacted to shape the violent aspects of strikes. The working class was by no means a unified entity in terms of strike violence. Worker-on-worker violence constituted the majority of cases

of violence surrounding these strikes. Strikebreakers broke the back of working-class cohesion and elicited violence. The interventionist policy of the state in industrial relations at the turn of the twentieth century is clear from examining violence surrounding strikes in Montreal and surveying some of the literature on the role of the state in industrial relations. However, it is rather difficult to conclude what the effect of the state's resources was on the unravelling of strike violence. Morton suggests that "the arrival of uniformed, armed troops seems to have been sufficient to restore civil authority or to calm the apprehensions of timid magistrates."[76] However, a counter perspective is provided by Macgillivray in his statement that "the presence of troops may not have been viewed as a neutral, stabilizing force by other participants." Rather it was merely an example of what Craven calls the characteristic practice of the Canadian state "toward the ad hoc suspension of hostilities," in the context of "a generalized defense of private property rights by the capitalist."[77] It is difficult to determine what may have transpired in situations where police or aid to civil power was requested. However, it is obvious that the state's resources were actively used to protect anti-union practices that hindered the working class and further weakened the impact of class conflict. Without such active intervention by the state the worker-on-worker violence would not have surfaced so predominately.

Alongside the actions of employers and the state that helped to divide and frustrate workers, other social changes were occurring in Montreal. The city was experiencing significant demographic shifts through both internal and external migration.

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[75] For an examination of AFL growth in Canada consult Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*.

[76] Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power," 46.

[77] Panitch and Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism," 13. For a more detailed examination of Craven's argument see Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire'*, 303.

These social changes in Montreal served to compound the fear of industrial unrest with religious and ethnic tensions.[78] The influx of immigrants from continental Europe changed the composition of the working class and therefore the characteristics of strikes and lockouts in Montreal between 1901-1914. The effects of these social changes on the various dimensions of working-class conflict will be examined in Chapter Four.

[78]Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 89.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMMIGRATION, ETHNICITY AND THE WORKING CLASS

Montreal, as we have seen, was transformed both economically and socially at the turn of the century. Economic prosperity led to the growth of many industries within the city.[1] This economic expansion precipitated an unprecedented population growth that was prompted by two principal factors: immigration and a rural exodus. Most of the new inhabitants who arrived as a consequence of the rural-urban migration were French Canadians from within the province; these individuals easily integrated with the francophone community. In contrast, the largest source of Montreal's population increase, non-British European immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe, lacked a common culture with either of the established cultural groups of the city: the francophones or anglophones. Two of the largest groups to arrive during the 1896-1914 wave of immigration were Jews and Italians. There were marked contrasts between the new French Canadian inhabitants of Montreal and the immigrants from Continental and Eastern Europe, who among themselves were extremely diverse. However, both these groups had one overarching commonality within the city: they by in large integrated into the existing working class of the city. The diverse ethnic composition of Montreal is another example of the internal cleavages within the working class. These new immigrants strengthened the size, and in certain respects the cohesiveness of workers, but they also fuelled a longstanding concern among French Canadians to safeguard their

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[1] For a look at the economic and social changes in Montreal from 1896-1914 see P. A. Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992). For general economic histories of Canada consult William L. Marr, and Donald G. Paterson, *Canada: An Economic History* (Toronto:

cultural identity within Canada. This complex relationship between these new working-class immigrants from Europe and the French Canadian working class is evident from examining strikes involving ethnicity in Montreal from 1901-1914.

During the initial decades of the twentieth century, industrialization and immigration were a dominant feature of Canada. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock outline the multiple causes that came together to foster Canadian economic growth from 1896-1914. There were improved prices for Canadian staples, new forms of wheat were developed for Prairie agricultural production, technological innovations allowed new industries to flourish and declining transportation rates, along with increasing foreign demand for Canadian exports, improved Canada's trading position.[2] The relationship between this growth and immigration had its reciprocal features; economic growth lured immigrants to Canada, but the new immigrants also fuelled the expansion of development, by providing a surplus labour supply that allowed employers to secure workers at minimal wages. Canada took in over three million immigrants during these years. Although they were overwhelmingly Europeans, their composition was quite different than the Anglo-British composition of the majority of the nations' immigrants in the preceding decades.[3] The shift in the ethnic distribution of Montreal follows these national trends. Table 4.1 shows the shift in the percentage representation of various ethnic groups in Montreal between the two census years at the turn of the century.

Macmillan of Canada, 1980) and Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owram, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1991).

[2] Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic. A History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 111.

[3] Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 112-113.

Table 4.1 The Ethnic Distributions of Montreal 1901-1911[4]
(as a percentage of the total population)

Ethnic Origin	**1901**	**1911**
French	60.9	63.5
British	33.7	25.7
Jewish	2.5	5.9
Italian	0.6	1.5
German	0.9	0.5
Other European	0.6	1.6
Asian	0.3	0.3
Other	0.4	0.9

The increase in Montreal's population during these years was part of a national trend as over fifty percent of the new immigrants found industrial employment in urban centres. Table 4.2 shows this trend for major Canadian cities.

Table 4.2 Percentage Increase in the Population of Canadian Urban Centres 1900-1911[5]

Montreal	50
Toronto	81
Winnipeg	200
Edmonton	600
Vancouver	300

The data in Table 4.2 may provide a skewed picture of the size of the cities as the smaller urban centres had larger percentage growths. However, this is not surprising as they had a smaller population base. The population of Montreal in the 1901 census was recorded

[4] This is presented as a percentage of the total population of the city. This table is adapted from Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*, 162.

[5] The statistics for this table are taken from Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 112-13.

as 267 730, almost doubling by the 1911 census to 467 986, which corroborates Kelley and Trebilcock's conclusions presented in Table 4.2.[6]

The economic boom of the early twentieth century was closely linked to this growth in population, as industry had a large role in determining the flow of immigration and the types of immigrants who arrived in Montreal.[7] Railway companies were quite influential in the immigration process. By 1900, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR) had determined that certain groups of immigrants, such as the British, made poor construction workers. British workers were unwilling to work for low wages, and they could use their native language to voice their grievances.[8] Therefore, immigrants who would be able to withstand substandard working conditions were more attractive. Thus, it was not by accident that there was an influx of Italian immigrants to Montreal in the first decade of the twentieth century, many of whom worked as part of construction crews for the CPR. The government's focus on labour use and the type of immigrants that were recruited was not unique to Montreal as in the West, South Asians were a desirable source of labour even though they were viewed as racially inferior.[9] Italian sojourners, prior to this period, had established a reputation as good workers leading their skills as labourers to be coveted by the CPR in the early 1900s.

The Italian immigrant arrival shows the close relationship between labour and immigration during this period. For example, the CPR had a monopoly on the Italian labour supply to Montreal. Labour agents, such as Antonio Cordasco, worked in

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[6] Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*, 160.

[7] The link between immigration and labour at the turn of the twentieth century and the reception these immigrants received in Canada is discussed by Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland amd Stewart, 1979). This work does tend to concentrate more heavily on Western Canada.

[8] Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 25.

conjunction with the CPR from 1901 to 1904. Immigrant agents supplied the CPR with workers who would withstand long days at low wages. The following comments in a 1904 Royal Commission on Italian labour describe the attractiveness of Italian workers to the CPR:

> Italians are the only class of labour we can employ who [we] can hire for a year on wages they earn in six months...if we have Italians there is no danger of their jumping their jobs and leaving us in a lurch.[10]

The immigration of Italians to Montreal in the early 1900s was intricately linked to the labour needs of the city. Immigrants from Europe were a source of competition for the native French Canadian working class of Montreal. Also, French Canadians were concerned that immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe would upset the linguistic and cultural balance established at confederation.[11] Often, they were more attractive to employers as they could be exploited for their labour further than French Canadians, which likely dampened relations amongst the two groups. The recruitment of Italian immigrants by capitalists and their ability to influence Canadian government immigration policy is an example of the cooperation between government agencies and capitalist entrepreneurs.

During the first thirty years of confederation the most prominent voices regarding immigration were employers, trade unions and nationalists. Employers favoured an open policy that was heavily promoted whereas trade unions in general were more concerned about contract labour schemes and the large masses of people who served as competition to the existing working class of the city. The economic concerns of the government were

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[9] Franca Iacovetta, preface to *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), x.

[10] Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 27.

paramount, and thus it is not surprising that its policies generally supported and reflected the interests of employers throughout the country.[12] Both the French Canadian and the English business communities of the city supported immigration.[13] With Montreal established as a Canadian metropolis at the turn of the century, it had a plethora of industries that required a large workforce. Canadian immigration policy until World War I had two goals: one was the recruitment of agricultural immigrants to populate Western Canada, which was accomplished through the efforts of Clifford Sifton, Wilfrid Laurier's Minister of the Interior; the second was to allow business a free hand in recruitment of labourers.[14] It was this latter goal that was most evident in an examination of the working class in Montreal from 1901-1914.

After the French and British, Jews formed the largest ethnic group in Montreal by World War I.[15] Unlike the Irish, who were the initial largest non-English or French group in the city, Jews did not assimilate into either of the dominant cultural groups of the city. By 1911 they comprised 5.9 percent of the city's population.[16] In 1901 the Jewish population of Montreal was 16 717 and by 1911 it had reached 76 199,[17] but this was by no means a monolithic group. Historians have made distinctions regarding Montreal's early Jewish community. The "uptown" Westmount Jews were, primarily, the successful Jews of the city who arrived before the turn of the century. In contrast, the new "downtown" Jews were the immigrants that arrived at the turn of the century and accounted for the greater increase in Montreal's Jewish population in the first decade of

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[11] Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 14.
[12] Ibid., 13-14
[13] Micheal Behiels, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration: from ethnocentrism to ethnic pluralism, 1900-1985* (Ottawa: CHA, 1991), 55.
[14] Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 18.
[15] Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal*, 165.
[16] Ibid.

the twentieth century. The new immigrants satisfied, in part, the demand for labour that the growing capitalist system of Montreal required. Thus, the new "downtown" Jews worked in the clothing industry, as tradesmen, as factory workers, for the CPR or Grand Trunk Railway (G.T.), as shoe repairmen, in abattoirs, at bakeries, in tanneries and in electrical and woodworking shops.[18] Therefore, taking Leo Roback's stratification of labour, these new Jewish immigrants were competing for work in the same areas as the French Canadians. The French Canadians, who composed three-quarters of the labour force, nevertheless were concentrated in the lower category of semi-skilled production workers and unskilled labourers.[19] This fact escalated tensions between the two communities since they competed for the same jobs.

The second most predominant group in this wave of immigration were the Italians. In 1901 the Italian community in Montreal was only 2 102 people; by the time of the 1911 census this number had risen to 7 434.[20] Italian settlement underwent changes during the early decades of the twentieth century. The Italian community prior to the turn of the century was primarily sojourning as workers came for a part of the year to work and returned home. Thus, they did not establish roots, but by 1900 a turn toward settlement was emerging.[21] Whereas sojourners were primarily single men and seasonal workers, settlement led to the emergence of families and a permanent Italian community

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[17] Erna Paris, *Jews, An Account of Their Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 30.

[18] Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," in *The Jews in Canada*, eds., Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8.

[19] Leo Roback, "Quebec workers in the Twentieth Century" in *Lectures in Canadian Labour History*, eds. W. J. C. Cherwinski and Gregory S. Kealey (St. John's, Nfld.: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1985), 166. Roback divides the urban Quebec working class into different strata. The second stratum was formed by semi-skilled production workers and the third stratum consisted of unskilled labourers. These two lower strata were where the majority of immigrants, who arrived from 1896-1914, were employed as well as the majority of the French Canadian working class in Montreal.

[20] Behiels, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration*, 2.

[21] Michael Del Balso and Bruno Ramirez, *The Italians of Montreal: From Sojourning to Settlement, 1900-1921* (Montréal: Les Éditions Courant Inc., 1980), 39-40.

within the city. This change in settlement patterns was reflected in the February 1905 parish records, which reported that half of the 4000 Italians were workers with families.[22]

Montreal had grown around its harbour. Italian labourers had been reported working at the city's docks as early as 1895.[23] The prevalence of Italian immigrants in occupations around the city's harbour, or as labourers, continued with the change in the community toward a permanent settlement. The increasing demand for labour at the turn of the century encouraged the transition of Italians from sojourning to settlement. Railroads provided the largest demand for labourers. Italians also worked in commercial services and the utilities and construction.[24] Many Italian immigrants worked for the Montreal Street Railway Company (MSRC), while Montreal Light Heat and Power (MLHP) employed between 100-250 Italian workers. Work for Italian immigrants, like other workers in the city, was cyclical, rising during the summer months and declining in the winter.[25]

Similar to the Jewish community, the Italians of Montreal were not as homogeneous as they appeared to outsiders. Despite regional differences within the Italian community, a collective identity within the city emerged. However, neither of these two groups, Italians nor Jews, lived in isolation of the French Canadians of Montreal. It was not until 1910 that tensions developed in the Mile End area with French and Italian parishioners at St. Edouard petitioning for and receiving their own parish.[26]

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[22] Bruno Ramirez, "Montreal's Italians and the Socioeconomy of Settlement, 1900-1930: Some Historical Hypotheses," *Urban History Review*, 10, (June 1981), 40.

[23] Bruno Ramirez, "Workers Without a Cause: Italian Immigrant Labour in Montreal, 1880-1931," in *Arrangiarsi: The Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada*, eds. Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino (Montreal: Guernica, 1989), 121.

[24] Ramirez, "Workers Without a Cause," 120.

[25] Ibid., 121.

[26] Jeremy F. Boissevain, *The Italians of Montreal: Immigrant Adjustment in a Plural Society. A Report to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Ottawa, 1965), 6.

Job security for immigrants was tenuous at best.[27] As a result, workers were often only guaranteed employment on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, not only were Italian immigrants, like Jews, competing for the same jobs as the French Canadian population of Montreal, employers often found them more attractive than French Canadian workers.

Whereas Jewish immigrants contributed toward the growth of trade unionism in Quebec, Italian immigrants have not been identified as making any such contribution to the working-class movement of Montreal. Bruno Ramirez attempts to explain the absence of this role within the Italian community. First generation Italian immigrants rarely engaged in collective action and with respect to forming a working-class consciousness their efforts were not emancipatory.[28] Ramirez concludes that the first generation Italian Canadian contributions are best assessed through their consolidation of the Canadian capitalist system.[29] The methods by which Italian immigrants were recruited help explain, in part, the absence of an emancipatory role within the community's working class. The *padrone* was a middleman between Italian immigrants and employers. Robert Harney comments on the targeting practices of Canadian immigration policy regarding Italian immigrants:

> Canada had a higher percentage of 'target migrants' in its Italian immigration than the United States did. There were sound economic reasons for that, but there were also terribly fraudulent advertising of work and exploitation of migrants, so Canada also had a very high percentage of seasonal and 'target migrants' trapped into longer sojourns.[30]

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[27] Ramirez, "Workers Without a Cause," 121.
[28] Ibid., 132.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Robert F. Harney, "Men without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, ed. Franca Iacovetta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 206-230.

This may help explain why Italian workers exhibited a lack of activism. Harney analyzes early Italian immigrants' lack of labour activist in terms of sojourning and its geospatial priorities: "It is a truism of migration studies that people who reared themselves as sojourners, regardless of how long they dwell in a host country, continue to think of the problems and needs of their home town as paramount."[31] Italians who arrived in Montreal during this time were coming to improve their financial situation in Italy. A close examination of the role of the *padrone* in the formation of Italian labour is provided in Harney's article, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study in Padronism." The *padrone* was a feature of the commerce of immigration in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century that was embraced by employers and prospective Italian immigrants.[32]

The role of the *padrone* in Italian immigration is supported by an examination of Italian recruitment conducted by the *Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Immigration of Italian Labourers to Montreal and the alleged Fraudulent Practices of Employment Agencies*. The Italian agents who brought over immigrants had exclusive contracts with major companies, exemplified in the case of Antonio Cordasco and his relationship with the CPR. The *padrone's* ability to provide a continuous supply of labour contributed to the workers' poor treatment and tenuous job security. Thus, any leverage that many of these Italian labourers may have had was severely compromised. This explains why strikes in Montreal from 1901-1914 exhibited only one instance of collective job action by a large number of Italian workers.

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[31] Harney "Men without Women," 211.

[32] Robert F. Harney, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism," *Labour/Le Travail*, 4 (Fall 1979), 84.

Disapproval of immigrants was not always expressed as direct condemnations of a certain group. For instance, an article in *Le Devoir* [33] warned against allowing immigrants who had contacted cholera into the city. The reluctant acceptance of immigrants was partially excused as a health concern, justified because disease came from Europe. However, there appears to have been an overall tone of panic in the report. This concern can, in part, be explained by French Canadian fears that the overwhelming influx of immigrants to Montreal was proportionally decreasing the French-speaking population of the city. The antidote was to accentuate the significance of the francophone countryside. In an article "L'immigration au Canada jugée par les Etats-Unis," the French Canadian nationalist rural ideal for Quebec was presented:

> Un des points le plus importants de ce rapport est que le Canada recherche particulièrement une classe d'emigrants agricoles de gens qui viennent soit comme proprietaires, fermiers ou garçons laboureurs et qu'il s'applique à exclure ceux dont la présence tend à congestionner les villes et les cités.[34]

The latter part of this quote reflects the fears of French Canadian nationalists that immigrants would change the face of their city.

In expressing its objections toward immigration at the turn of the century, *Le Devoir* used the pillars of French Canadian society to buttress its case: language and religion. Thus, nationalists' opposition to immigration was grounded in cultural institutions which were a feature of mainstream French Canadian society. Bourassa often editorialized on the need to preserve French as the language of the Catholic Church.[35]

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[33] *Le Devoir*, 26 novembre 1910.
[34] *Le Devoir*, 2 avril 1910.
[35] *Le Devoir*, 1 octobre 1910.

Italians, even though they shared a common religion with the French Canadians, could also undermine their strength.

A belief that immigrants would degrade Canadian society is also found in "Un peu d'immigration."[36] The author warned that if immigrants are not morally suitable they should be sent back lest Canada become a haven for the downtrodden of the world. The French Canadian press attempted to discredit the morality of Italian immigrants by capitalizing on the poor living conditions and overcrowding in their areas, which were similar to other working-class neighbourhoods of the city. For instance, in *La Presse* the following connection was made between living condition and immoral activity: "[T]oute une colonie italienne [living] dans une malpropreté et une promiscuité dangereuses'.[37]

Italian women, unlike their Jewish counterparts, did not often work outside the home. They supplemented the family income by taking in boarders.[38] In contrast, many Jewish women worked in the garment industry. This helps to explain why there was no mention of any female Italian labourers in the 180 strikes and lockouts recorded in the strikes and lockouts files and *The Labour Gazette*.[39] Linking immigrants to criminal activity and vagrancy was another method of instilling and reflecting hostility towards immigration at the turn of the century. This was common in the French Canadian media, where Italians were often depicted in derogatory ways. Linking Italians to vagrancy and criminal activity was a method that achieved this effect:

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[36] *Le Devoir*, 5 octobre 1910.

[37] Del Balso and Ramirez, *The Italians of Montreal*, 6.

[38] Ibid., 47.

[39] For an examination of sources on women and labour in Canada consult the following works: Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife, Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause. Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) and Iacovetta, *A Nation of Immigrants*.

> Les agents de la Sûreté Provinciale ont fait des perquisition samedi soir chez les Italiens. Ils ont opéré onze arrestations et ont saisi soixante stylets et poignards et quartante revolvers.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Il y eut dix arrestations. Plus tard un Italien se présenta pour fair libérer, moyennant caution, un de ses amis qui était sous verrous. On lui demande s'il était armé, il répondit négativement, mais poussé à bout, il avoua être en possession d'un poignard: séance tenante on l'envoya rejoindre son copain les cellules.[40]

Despite the fact that violence within the Italian community frequently involved disputes among Italians and posed no threat to others within the city, newspapers capitalized on their actions and, as Bruno Ramirez concludes, sensationalized these incidents. For instance, the following headline in *Le Devoir* perpetuated the violent image of the Italian community: "Une grave et mysterieuse affaire entre compatriotes italiens."[41] In an article entitled "le désarmement des Italiens," *Le Devoir*[42] made a concerted effort to highlight that those in possession of weapons were Italian. Such stories worked to reinforce the stereotype of Italians as violent, aggressive individuals.

The connection between violence and ethnicity was not limited to French Canadian society as the tendency to link violence with immigrants was seen throughout early Canadian history.[43] Jean Morrison explains the roots of many of the hostilities immigrant workers encountered in a study of the violence surrounding a Lakehead freight handlers strike prior to World War I:

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[40] *Le Devoir*, 14 mars 1910.
[41] *Le Devoir*, 10 mars 1910.
[42] *Le Devoir*, 14 mars 1910.
[43] The following sources discuss the reception Asian, South Asians and Eastern European immigrants received: Bolaria Singh and Peter Li, *Oppression in Canada*, 2ed (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988); Milton Israel, ed., *The South Asian Diaspora in Canada: Six Essays* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1987); Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995)

> The orderly evolution of Canadian society as a natural and inevitable process based on British precedent was a salient tenant of British Canadian mythology which looked on past and present turbulence as deviations from the norm, fomented by non-British elements. The ethnic composition of those who took part in the many violent labour disputes reinforced the idea that violence was an alien import to Canadian society and its British institutions.[44]

A similar cultural mentality was exhibited in Montreal towards the perceived woes immigrants brought to the community.

As is apparent from the preceding discussion of immigrants who came to Montreal at the turn of the century, especially the Jews and the Italians, they formed an important element of the working class. The workplace was an environment where most immigrants interacted with the French Canadian population on a daily basis. An analysis of strikes from 1901-1914 helps deepen an understanding of how ethnicity affected the Montreal working class and had an impact on labour disputes during these years.

Even though the strikes that mention ethnicity are not proportionally a large number, they are insightful in understanding the ramifications of immigration on the Montreal working class and working-class conflict.[45] Table 4.3 provides a list of strikes that had an ethnic dimension in their reporting, as compiled from examining the strikes and lockouts files, *The Labour Gazette* and newspaper articles surrounding strikes in the *Montreal Daily Star* and *La Presse*.

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[44] Jean Morrison, "Ethnicity and Violence: The Lakehead Freight Handlers Before World War I," in *Essays in Canadian Working Class History*, eds. Gregory Kealey and Peter Warrian (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 143.

[45] Of 180 strikes and lockouts recorded from examining the strikes and lockouts files and *The Labour Gazette*, 17 were related to ethnicity.

Table 4.3 Strikes Involving Ethnicity

Date of Dispute	Sector
May 1904	Jewish Bakers
June 1907	Longshoremen
July 1909	Bakers
October 1909	Garment Workers
May 1910	Butchers
March 1910	Garment Workers
May 1910	Hebrew Butchers
July 1910	Cigarmakers
July 1910	Iron Molders
November 1911	Garment Workers
March 1912	Hotel Waiters
May 1912	Bakers
July 1912	Garment Workers
September 1912	Silk Mill Weavers
August 1913	Garment Workers
September 1913	Garment Workers
October 1913	Labourers

Sources for this table: A) strikes and lockouts files B) *The Labour Gazette* C) *La Presse* D) *Montreal Daily Star*.

It is apparent that many of the strikes in which ethnicity was a factor involved predominately Jewish workers. For instance, disputes that focus on ethnicity in strikes by garment workers, bakers, and butchers all centred around Jewish workers. The garment industry was one of the primary employers of such low and semi-skilled ethnic labour. An analysis of disputes within the garment industry that mention the ethnicity of the workers reveals the ethnic tensions among these immigrant workers and French Canadians. This cleavage in working-class cohesion is another example of worker-versus-worker animosity.

The discrimination Jewish workers encountered in the Montreal workplace was exposed through the newspaper coverage of these strikes. For example, in 1911 over 300 garment workers struck, citing conditions of work as the cause of their actions. Of the five newspaper articles on record in the strikes and lockouts file for the March 1911 garment workers' strike, only the French Canadian account of the events referred repeatedly to the ethnicity of the workers. This emphasis on ethnicity could lead one to conclude that the focus on ethnicity prejudiced the reporting from a class conflict perspective and developed coverage of the strike as an ethnic issue. Moreover, the article points out that, despite the fact that the French Canadian workers were satisfied, the Jewish workers remained on strike: "On nous dit que les Canadiens-français sont très satisfait du règlement de la compagnie qui assure le respect aux femmes et le maintien de l'ordre dans l'établissement."[46]

The focus on ethnicity and Jewish workers was not solely a characteristic of the Montreal working class. This is reflected in the following comments surrounding a Toronto Eaton's garment industry strike in 1912:

> Those affected [by the dispute] are almost entirely Jewish and the chief slogan by which it was hoped to cut off public sympathy was the report – that this is only a strike of Jews. The appeal to race and creed prejudice has succeeded, too, in so far as it has prevented Gentile cloakmakers from joining in a sympathetic strike.[47]

A garment industry strike in August 1913 involving only 15 workers illuminates the difference ethnicity lent to strike reports within the Montreal media.[48] Newspaper

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[46] *Public Archives of Canada*, strikes and lockouts files, (PAC hereafter), RG 27, vol. 299, file 3434.

[47] Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*, 320.

[48] For a general examination of the Montreal press see Jean de Bonnville, *La Presse Québécoise de 1884 à 1914, Genèse d'un média de masse* (Québec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1988). Also,

accounts of the strike reported that "[t]he twenty pressers who are out are all Hebrew workers."[49] This interpretation of the events implies that the strike occurred because of the workers' ethnicity, not that their complaints regarding the dismissal of a fellow employee caused discontent. Clearly, the francophone press viewed Jewish workers within the garment industry as competitors to the French Canadian working class. French Canadian workers viewed them first as Jewish and second as working class. This divisiveness weakened the strength of unions and the working class within Montreal. *La Patrie* highlighted the attitudes of French Canadian workers' towards unions that recruited heavily among the city's ethnic workers:

> Beaucoup de Canadiens qui ne faisaient pas parti de l'union des taileurs il y a quelques temps ont derièrement joint cette union ce qui déjoue grandement les plans de manufacturiers qui prétendaient remplacer par eux les ouvriers juifs et anglais.[50]

Defensive posturing toward ethnic minorities thus seems to have characterized the prejudices of French workers. Employers' prejudices towards non-francophone workers were evident from the comments by a company director to the Department of Labour: "Not one of our native born employees was affected by a strike."[51]

At times, the reporting of these strikes implied that the ethnicity of the workers, rather than their actual grievances, led to the work stoppages. This was evident in a bakers' strike in July 1909. In this dispute 35 out of 50 bakers on strike were Jewish, and the owner of the company stated that the men had sufficient wages: "[T]he men have been earning from $15 to $ 25 a week which is more than non-Jewish bakeries pay,"

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for a look at Jewish immigration and *Le Devoir* consult Pierre Anctil, *Le Devoir, Les Juifs, et L'Immigration: de Bourassa à Laurendeau* (Quebec: Institut québécoise de recherche sur la culture, 1988).

[49] PAC. RG 27, vol. 302, file 105.

[50] Ibid.

claimed the owner in correspondence with the Deputy Minister of Labour.[52] What is also interesting is the seriousness surrounding the dispute and the concern of the company involved that arbitration by the Lemieux Act was necessary for a strike involving only 45 men. Furthermore, it appears that it was not the number of workers that alarmed the employer and the media but rather their ethnicity:

> We have offered the men wages in a parity with the Christian Bakers but they refuse and want to take advantage of their special situation as Jewish bakers to exact terms which are beyond the earning power of our business. [53]

Additionally, ethnicity was the most dominant feature in two other reports surrounding this dispute. Newspaper excerpts demonstrate how ethnicity was central to the strike:

> The situation is a serious one, for 8 or 10 thousand Jewish residents of the north-east quarter of the city, as many families are unable to get bread at all.[54]

> The periodical strikes affecting the Hebrew bakers' trade in Montreal and district are again manifest. The Star was informed this morning, that during the past three years disputes between the Jewish bakers and their employers have taken place on average of four times a year. It was said what characterises the Jewish Bakers' Union is its frequent organisation and dissolution.[55]

Jews in Quebec left their mark in two areas: trade unionism and commerce and finance.[56] The tension surrounding the former's impact on the relationship between French Canadian and Jewish workers was all too apparent in strike situations.

The fear of social unrest, when ethnic workers were involved, was prevalent in the reports surrounding the Hebrew butchers strike[57] in May 1910 as a special committee

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[51] PAC. RG 27, vol. 297, file 3199.
[52] PAC. RG 27 , vol. 296, file 3173.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

was appointed to investigate the strike. There was concern over potential unrest among the forty thousand citizens in the Jewish community who would be without kosher meat.[58] A *Montreal Daily Star* report on the July 1909 bakers' strike captured the fears of social unrest surrounding the labour dispute:

> The strike of Hebrew bakers in the city is beginning to assume considerable importance. The striking bakers are fighting with owners with an energy and determination seldom seen in strikes, almost every day adding to the number of assaults or other acts of violence perpetrated by them.[59]

In a strike by the garment workers in 1911, the francophone press insinuated that complaints by the Jewish workers were unfounded. In a 9 May 1912 strike of the Master Bakers, strike reports indicated that the "strikers are all Jewish, most of them do not speak English."[60]

French Canadians had a tendency to link Jewish immigrants with radical unionism, perceiving this as a threat to the French Canadian working class. The company in the May 1912 bakers strike, a conflict over American and Canadian union affiliation, stated that it made many concessions but the employer considered Jewish workers as trouble makers and revolutionary.[61] A similar delineation regarding the ethnicity of striking workers was made in an August 1913 garment workers strike: "The twenty pressers who are out are all Hebrew workers."[62] The garment workers strike in September 1913 by far attracted the most attention of any other strike on file for Montreal

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 9.
[57] PAC. RG 27, vol. 297, file 3256.
[58] PAC. RG 27, vol. 299, file 3434.
[59] PAC. RG 27, vol. 296, file 3173.
[60] PAC. RG 27, vol. 296, file 3489.
[61] Ibid.
[62] PAC. RG 27, vol. 302, file 105.

during the fourteen years examined. Once again the theme of Jews and American unionism arises as the United Garment Workers' union is described as "a Jewish organization"[63] and ethnicity was clearly seen as escalating tensions in the strike:

> Montreal Herald "Race Question in Strike Dispute"
> The strike at the factory, according to the managers statement this morning is the result of efforts on the part of the business agent of the Garment Worker's Union to exclude the French workers from the place and employ none but Hebrew.[64]

Some French Canadians thought that American unions, especially within the garment industry, were formed to strengthen the Jewish working class at the expense of French Canadian workers. In the struggle for the union shop, French Canadian workers felt that Jewish workers were attempting to monopolize occupations.

The strikes which allude to ethnicity among Italian workers are much fewer than those which reflect upon the relationship between Jews and French Canadians. The grievances in a garment workers' strike in March 1910 illustrate that French Canadians had concerns surrounding Italian immigration to the city. The stereotypes and prejudices toward Italians were reflected in the explanation for this dispute.

> Certain employees objected to promotion of assistant foreman in coat tailoring department to a position of Foreman. Objected on grounds that he was an Italian and that at times he spoke rudely to one or two of the men and they feared he would discharge and replace some of them.[65]

Obviously the workers must have believed, to a certain extent, that Italians were short tempered and unpredictable as 60 individuals, 30 men and women, struck on these grounds for five days. There was a general feeling of hostility and reluctance on the part

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[63] PAC. RG 27, vol. 303, file 112.
[64] Ibid.
[65] PAC. RG 27, vol. 297, file 3227.

of French Canadians to consider immigrants as fellow workers and members of the same class. These views are reflected by a report in a French paper[66] surrounding a strike among cigarmakers involving Cuban workers. The francophone paper interpreted the strike in the following manner: "[L]es ouvriers de cette nationalité ne veulent pas travailler avec les Canadiens ou les Americains."[67] The English papers that accounted for the same strike mentioned the Cuban workers in a dispute surrounding the open versus closed shop and expressed concern over scab labourers. A strike among Silk Mill Weavers in September 1912 revealed the nationalism and nativism this wave of immigration aroused amongst French Canadians. A French newspaper provided the following explanation for the strike: "...protégés les ouvriers nationaux contre l'invasion et la concourrence d'oeuvre etrangère."[68] French Canadian attitudes towards immigrants were, therefore, occasionally, fuelled by their own insecurities and prejudices.

Despite the enthusiasm for immigration by the business elite and the Liberal government, both federally and provincially, all Montrealers did not welcome the influx of new workers. Michael Behiels, in his study *Quebec and the Question of Immigration: from ethnocentrism to ethnic pluralism, 1900-1985*, divides the opposition into several categories: demographic, economic, socio-cultural and political.[69] The most vehement opposition to immigrants came from French Canadian nationalists. Henri Bourassa was the most prominent voice of French Canadian nationalism during this period and made no efforts to mask his attitude toward immigrants. French Canadian nationalists held a bi-

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[66] From the compilation of the strikes and lockouts files for 1907-1914, the date and issue of the newspaper are not provided in most cases. Thus, it is only possible to determine whether the paper is French or English. In cases where reference to the paper is made within the text is it possible to identify other details about the source.

[67] PAC. RG 27, vol. 297, file 3284.

[68] PAC. RG 27, vol. 300, file 3586.

[69] Behiels, *Quebec and Question of Immigration*, 6.

national vision of the country thereby making it irreconcilable with ethnic plurality.[70] In the fifth anniversary issue of *Le Devoir*, a section devoted to comments on immigration discussed how French Canadian nationalists believed that immigration disrupted the national, economic and social order of the country.[71] Another, earlier *Le Devoir* article captures aspects of the Canadian ideal espoused by nationalists.

> En Canada divers elements empêchent la réalisation de l'idéal national. Si pratiquement rêvé par Lafontaine, Macdonald, Cartier et Blake. Certains factions s'emploient même à détruire cet idéal en sapaint le double principe de l'autonomie canadienne et de la dualité éthnique de la nation.[72]

The Jewish population, which arrived at the turn of the century, challenged this two-culture perspective more than any other group of immigrants, since they had no common linguistic or religious ties to either the francophone or anglophone population of Montreal. Historian Michel Brunet describes the nationalism encountered by Montreal's Jews as a

> blend of...agriculturalism, anti-statism, and messianism combined with a militant ultramontane Catholic faith with the national rebirth of an agricultural French-speaking republic on the St. Lawrence.[73]

As an organ of French Canadian nationalists established by Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir* espoused a program of anti-immigration 'patriotism'. Often opposition to immigrants was more subtly expressed through support for the growth of the so-called two founding races. This by no means implied that there was not direct anti-Semitism towards Jews in *Le Devoir* and other French Canadian papers. Anti Jewish propaganda

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[70] Ibid., 10.
[71] *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir,"* (Montreal: Imprimé au "Devoir", 1915), 46.
[72] *Le Devoir*, 28 juillet 1910.
[73] Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 7.

was common in French journals such as *La Nationaliste*, *La Verité* and *Action Sociale*.[74] Francophones, as members of the same working class, were close to the new Jewish immigrants and had the political clout to manifest their anti-Semitism.[75] French Canadian nationalists and the Catholic Church were concerned about foreign ideologies, such as secularism, and about other religions. Brought by immigrants, these forces were perceived as dangerous influences on French Canadian workers.[76] The wave of immigration from 1896-1914 thus disrupted the bi-nationalist vision of Canada:

> Par sa constitution politique, par sa composition éthnique, comme par le droit naturel, le Canada est une confédération anglo française, le produit de l'union féconde de deux grandes et nobles races. Il doit rester sous l'égide de la Couronne d'Angleterre, le patrimoine d'un peuple bilingue.[77]

Italian immigrants could not be linguistically integrated into this bilingual model and Jewish immigrants, who shared no common language or religion, encountered anti-Semitism which heightened the potential threats they already posed to the bi-national vision of the country. Despite *Le Devoir's* Montreal base, it did not hesitate to criticize immigration across the country, especially where dangers were perceived as threatening or challenging the bi-national vision of the country. For instance, Galician immigrants in Western Canada were regularly denigrated in *Le Devoir:*

> La population ruthène laisse la Galicie travaillée par les doctrines radicales et anarchistes et fort peu éclairée. Si, à son arrivée ici, l'on ruini chez elle la confiance en une autorité enseignante et si on la met en face d'un Bible qu'elle ne peut même pas lire à quels excès ne pourra-t-elle pas se porter? [78]

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[74] Benjamin G. Sack, comp, "Early This Century," *Canadian Jewish Archives*, no. 4 (Montreal: Nationa Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1975), 59.
[75] Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 8.
[76] Behiels, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration*, 7.
[77] *Le Devoir*, 27, 28 juillet 1910.
[78] *Le Devoir*, 28 décembre 1910.

These remarks reflected the unfounded generalizations that nationalists laid upon immigrant groups. Galicians in this excerpt are described as a threat to the peace and security of the country. English Canadians and French Canadians were regarded as the two founding 'races' of the country and *Le Devoir* repeatedly raised discussions alluding to the protection of the dual nature of Confederation based on these two groups. Even though such articles did not often explicitly refer to immigrants, the emphasis on duality was a method of voicing resistance toward immigration. Headlines in *Le Devoir* such as "Confédération de Race"[79] and "Le double principe de l'autonomie canadienne et de la dualité éthnique de la nation"[80] were common examples of these sentiments, purposefully presenting Bourassa's views. The preservation of cultural identity within Canada was not only a feature of French Canadian nationalism, but a reflection of the insecurities mainstream French Canadian society had about maintaining its cultural identity in Canada. Ethnic plurality was a hindrance to achieving this goal. Therefore, even though nationalists such as Bourassa may have represented an extreme form of disapproval of immigrants, they were drawing from a dissatisfaction of ethnic plurality that had been a feature of French Canadian society for years.

The immigrants who arrived in Montreal in the early 1900s would not easily assimilate into either the French Canadian or the Anglo-British culture of the city. Thus, in the minds of French Canadians they posed a larger threat to preserving their culture than any previous group of immigrants. The newcomers did manage to integrate into the French Canadian working class. However, their inability to directly conform to any of the established cultural groups in the city, compounded by French Canadian nationalist

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[79] *Le Devoir*, 19 février 1910.

fears, served to accentuate cleavages in the working class. Yet one of the legacies of the new immigrants, in particular of the Jews, was the increase in collective identity they brought to the Montreal working class. Thus, the analysis of ethnicity and the working class illustrates the proximity between forces that both unified and divided the working class. The solidarity among the Jewish working class provided the environment for unions to flourish in sectors they dominated. This solidarity, sometimes extended across the working class, and was reflected in remarks surrounding a May 1904 bakers strike: "The Jewish labour unions of the city have promised us their hearty support and intend holding next week a series of mass meetings for the purpose of awaking the sympathies of Jewish workingmen of the city."[81]

The ethnic plurality of Montreal allowed for unions to emerge differently than in any other city in Quebec. This variance can be traced to the prevalence of English within the city which allowed American unions to develop in a manner which would have been inconceivable in Quebec City, where French was the dominant language. However, in turn-of-the century Montreal, the language of commerce was clearly English. In Quebec three types of unions were emerging: national, international and Catholic. The latter did not consolidate until after World War I. The Catholic unions were a part of the response by French Canadian nationalists toward the perceived threat against French Canadian cultural homogeneity brought about by external immigration. Additionally, even though French Canadian nationalists may have represented an extreme spectrum of opposition to ethnic plurality, their attitudes were helpful in assessing mainstream French Canadian

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[80] *Le Devoir*, 28 juillet 1910.
[81] *Montreal Daily Star*, 12 May 1904.

society's reaction toward immigration and the integration of the Montreal working class at the turn of the century.

The influx of immigrants at the turn of the century thus helped shaped the environment of labour disputes in Montreal. It created a wealth of surplus labour that allowed employers to easily secure replacement workers in the semi-skilled manufacturing sector which dominated the Montreal economy. The ease with which workers could be secured increased the likelihood of worker-versus-worker violence on the picket lines examined in Chapter Three. As well, the social and cultural context of the city played an important role in the cold reception these new immigrants received from the rest of the Montreal working class and hindered the potential these new workers would have in further strengthening working-class cohesion. Instead, they exposed many of the traditional insecurities and prejudices French Canadians espoused towards non-francophones. However, alongside the divisiveness these new immigrants fostered, industries flourished through the availability of labour, easing the infiltration and growth of unionism within Montreal.

CONCLUSION

The Montreal working class from 1901-1914 was a collective entity that was confronted with dividing forces both internally and externally. Externally, the state, through legislation, and employers, with the sole aim of maximum profits, helped to squash any gains workers attempted to make. The composition of the working class served to simultaneously unify and divide it. Craft and trade individualism prevented workers from attaining their full unity. Additionally, the influx of new immigrants, who increased the numerical strength of the working class and brought with them social ideas to help it foster a collective identity, also accentuated cleavages in French Canadian society. As well, worker-on-worker violence, legitimized by the state, was perhaps the largest dividing factor in working class cohesion, and a significant influence on the nature of strikes and lockouts in Montreal from 1901-1914.

The growth of industry in Montreal, at the turn of the twentieth century, as Heron and Palmer observed in Southern Ontario, was very rapid.[1] The shifts in the traditional relationships that governed production were swiftly changing and all three principal groups in industrial relations, the state, the employers and the working class, attempted to maintain some semblance of control. However, the means workers had to maintain power paled in comparison to the state's wealth of resources. Furthermore, the dominant feature in Canadian industrial relations, as Craven remarks, was that capital and labour were constantly turning to the state to 'mediate' their problems.[2] However, this ultimately was a disservice to the workers as the state, which was preoccupied with

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[1] Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-1914," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (December 1977), 426.

economic growth, decided that maximizing profits and the growth of industry were its superceding goals. Thus, it influenced class relations in favour of employers at the expense of the working class. The state from 1901-1914 did take interventionist measures to spurn the growth of the working class, charting an immigration policy favourable to industrial growth. The consequences of this environment, in which low wages and poor living conditions were routine features of the 'new' Canada, prompted workers to strike.

Striking provided workers with a legitimate method to voice their concerns, an attempt to regain some of power they lost with the changing relations between labour and capital. However, an analysis of labour disputes in Montreal from 1901-1914 shows that the state did its utmost to stifle any challenges from the working class. The most significant example of this was the ability of employers to legally retain protected strikebreakers, a process pitting workers against fellow workers. Coupled with the ethnic and occupational identities that divided workers, this practice by employers, endorsed by the government, exacerbated tensions around industrial relations in Montreal from 1901-1914. In light of this disadvantageous environment, workers nevertheless attempted to challenge their employers through regular work stoppages. In the 180 strikes in Montreal between 1901-1914, the complexity of class formation at the interface of the actions of labour, capital, and the state is revealed.

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[2] Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 362.

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