

The International Unions and  
the Workers' Revolt in Quebec, 1914-1925

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## Abstract

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This thesis contributes to our understanding of both international unionism and of the labour revolt in Quebec, two neglected areas in Quebec labour history. It examines the industrial conflict of the war years and the post-war revolt in 1919 and 1920, a period of militancy characterized by rapid trade union growth and aggressive strike action by international unions. During the same period workers renewed their interest in independent political action and briefly attained a small measure of success. A major focus of this study is the ethnic, religious, political and gender divisions within the international unions and the labour party in Quebec. The labour revolt was, however, ultimately unsuccessful. While this was because employers were generally stronger than organized workers, especially in the depression of the 1920s, it also faltered on profound divisions within the Quebec working class.

The emergence of a Catholic labour movement as a serious rival to secular international unions created one of the most important divisions within the Quebec working



class. This thesis constitutes a significant revision to our understanding of the formative years of this confessional movement. While there is a large body of work on Catholic organizations, few studies have examined either their role in the 1919 labour revolt, or the specific nature of the rivalry with the international unions.

Inter-union rivalry in the years from 1916 to 1925 is an important theme of this study. Catholic union promoters conducted an experiment in the industrial relations of social harmony which involved attempting to replace class conflict with harmonious relations with employers. While eschewing strike action, Catholic unions and their supporters often helped employers undermine international union strikes in the hope of destroying and supplanting the more aggressive secular organizations. The result was that the Catholic labour movement impeded the growth of the American-based unions and contributed to the defeat of the workers' revolt.

## Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the sound advice and constant support from my supervisor, Irving Abella. I would also like to thank the other members of my thesis committee, Ramsay Cook and Craig Heron, who provided invaluable guidance and encouragement. It has been extremely rewarding to work with these historians who have set such a high standard in the discipline. They all contributed to the worth of this thesis; its weaknesses and errors are, of course, my own responsibility.

I owe a debt to numerous archivists and librarians. In particular I wish to thank those who assisted me at the Public Archives of Canada, the Archives de la Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Archives de l'université Laval, the Public Archives of Ontario, the Labour Canada Library, the York University libraries and in particular its inter-library loan service, the Canadian Jewish Archives, and Wayne State University Archives.

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## Introduction

"[J.T.] Foster et le Conseil des Métiers et du Travail [de Montréal] ne sont d'aucune utilité aux ouvriers."

- Machinist, Winnipeg General Strike leader, and  
One Big Union promoter R.J. Johns, 1919<sup>1</sup>

"Oui, indéniablement de nos jours, la Fédération Américaine du Travail est une école d'assimilation américaine, de matérialisme conscient, de germination socialiste; et pour nous, ouvriers catholiques de cette province, c'est de plus, une Ecole antinationale et antichrétienne."

- Firefighter and Catholic union promoter Alfred  
Charpentier, nd.<sup>2</sup>

As a representative of railway shop craft workers at Railway Board arbitration meetings in Montreal, Winnipeg's R.J. Johns had ample opportunity in May and June 1919 to observe the city's labour movement first hand. What he found surprised him. Instead of the docile workers he had been led to expect, there was an impressive amount of strike activity and some support for a general strike movement. At a rally in support of the workers on general strike in Winnipeg, the enthusiasm of the 2,000 strong crowd made him think, he said, that he was at that moment in Winnipeg. Johns also noted that this militancy was a rank and file affair and he used the occasion to denounce the "safe and sane" labour leaders who were in his view the main opposition to workers as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Here, he was referring to conservative craft unionists such as those who ran the Montreal Trades and Labor Council (MTLC) and who refused to sanction a general strike.<sup>4</sup> Johns frequently returned to Montreal later in 1919 and in 1920 to promote militant industrial unionism in the form of the One Big Union, while Trades and Labor Council president J.T. Foster and most other union leaders were roundly denouncing the secessionist movement.

Johns' statements reveal one of the major cleavages within the Montreal labour scene. Despite his optimistic and favourable public assessments of the rank and file, throughout 1919, the period Greg Kealey has dubbed the "labour revolt," the MTLC remained a stronghold for the craft unions affiliated to the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and loyal to the policies of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLCC). This "council of reactionary leadership," as one militant participant in the 1919 general strike movement, Alex Gauld, later described it, was never seriously challenged.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time as Johns addressed the rally in Montreal, American-based craft unions and organizations directly chartered by the TLCC in Quebec faced a challenge of an entirely different nature, from an emerging Catholic union

movement. This was the outcome of the grafting of two currents, an older Canadian nationalist one, which had recently been revitalized by a Catholic social action current and the considerable material support of the Church. Catholic social activists formulated an alternative project based on the desire to establish harmony between social classes, to reinforce the Catholic nature of Quebec society, and on the view that Canadian workers should control their own affairs, independent of American ties. Ironically, advocates of Catholic unionism, such as Alfred Charpentier, a future president of the Confederation des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada (CTCC), considered that the "reactionary" MTLC, denounced by Johns and Gauld, represented a dangerous socialistic movement that was all too eager to promote class conflict and to challenge the social and political order. By 1919, there were thus three distinct forces within the Quebec labour movement: there was an international union leadership closely identified with the policies of the TLCC; within these unions there was a rank and file that supported more radical measures than the TLCC was prepared to sanction; and there was a Catholic union movement of growing proportions.

By 1919 most organized workers in Quebec belonged to American-based unions. International unions had first emerged

in Canada in the 1850s and 1860s. A few were branches of British organizations established by Anglo-Celt immigrants. Often the international tie was formed when independent craft union locals in Canadian cities sought membership in a union based in the United-States. Canadian workers were attracted by the advantages a larger organization could offer, including more benefits, help for those seeking work, the exchange of information, greater financial support during a strike, and the ability to pressure employers in different locations. While many of these unions joined the American Federation of Labor, Canadian international union locals tended to remain fairly autonomous until the mid- 1890s. At the turn of the century, organizers for international unions and for the AFL established scores of new locals, effectively making American-based international unionism the dominant form of labour organization in central Canada. With this dominance the AFL established its ascendancy over the Canadian labour movement. This did not mean that the TLCC or Canadian locals followed all of the policies of AFL. On the contrary, there were considerable differences on such matters as political action and state intervention.<sup>6</sup>

The division between labour leaders and rank and file members that Johns found in Montreal in 1919 was a result of

developments that dated from the last decade of the nineteenth century when unions consolidated more power into the hands of international executives. This centralization involved the establishment of union bureaucracies with full time officers and full time paid organizers, a trend that also occurred in local trades councils. These officials became experts at labour-management negotiation and the interpretation of labour legislation as both became more complex. With these skills labour leaders increasingly developed lifelong careers as union officials, spending less and less time on the shop floor. As a result, they developed concerns that were different from the workers they represented and that could at times leave them at odds with their members. Through orderly collective bargaining they sought to standardize labour conditions in written contracts. This precluded any political use of the strike weapon. The observance of agreements also required greater discipline from workers and union leaders sometimes had to enforce their provisions on their own membership. In part this was done by centralized control over strike support funds, by ordering members back to work, it could even mean helping to break a strike. They also insisted on following clearly established procedures to prevent hasty moves. When considering a strike, this level of union leadership weighed the impact defeat could have on the central



organization, its resources, and their own positions, considerations that could make them more reluctant to sanction such action.<sup>7</sup>

There is an extensive literature on international unionism in Canada. This reflects the fact that it was, in its various forms, the dominant expression of organized labour from the late nineteenth century until the 1970s. Historians have examined the different waves that entered Canada, from the craft unions later associated with the AFL, to the Knights of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, to the Congress for Industrial Organization. Much of this literature has sought to explain the attraction of unionism that spanned the international border. Some studies have examined the constraints that continentalism imposed on Canadian workers, or the process by which American control was established.<sup>8</sup> For Quebec during the years 1914 to 1925 there are studies of international union members in particular industries and on labour political action.<sup>9</sup> As a movement, however, the international unions in Quebec have received relatively little scholarly attention.<sup>10</sup>

For Quebec, for the years prior to the 1930s, only Robert Babcock has examined the relationship between the American

Federation of Labor and French-Canadian workers and that only for the period up to 1914.<sup>11</sup> English Canadian historians have tended to focus on more radical challenges to the social order. Studies, for example, have been undertaken on the Industrial Workers of the World, the Winnipeg General Strike, the One Big Union, and on the industrial and political militancy that led to the election that brought Ontario's Independent Labor Party to share power in 1919.<sup>12</sup> There has, however, been a general neglect of the Quebec situation.

Among Quebec historians most institutional labour histories have focused on national and Catholic unions. By competing for the allegiance of francophone workers, the Catholic unions posed a real threat to the AFL. On this aspect of Quebec working-class history, there is an extensive literature in both published and thesis form.<sup>13</sup> This is hardly surprising since it embraced a distinct philosophy at odds with the rest of Canadian and North American labour. In addition, as an academic discipline, labour history emerged in Quebec in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the wake a growing independence movement. National and Catholic organizations had the appeal of an indigenous product promoted by some of the most nationalist elements in French Canada. And as Fernand Ouellet has pointed out, after the CTCC secularized

to become the Confederation des syndicats nationaux in 1960, nationalists maintained an interest in the origins of a movement that they viewed as a vehicle for the transformation of Quebec into both an independent and a social democratic society.<sup>14</sup>

This study looks at the role the international labour movement in Quebec played during the years 1914 to 1925. In those years, the term international, as it was frequently used by workers, employers, politicians and Catholic union promoters, not only meant unions whose headquarters were American based, some independent, but most affiliated to the American Federation of Labor, it also referred to Canadian organizations directly chartered by the TLCC, sometimes known as federal unions. What these organizations had in common was that they were all secular or religiously neutral bodies, most accepting, if not committed to, organization on an international basis. During the years under study, Quebec workers in these unions also expressed varying degrees of commitment to independent political action. Because this movement was viewed as more effective and aggressive in dealing with employers in contrast to the national or Catholic unions, the term international captivated and enthused the imagination of many francophone workers just as the Congress

for Industrial Organization would inspire Canadian workers to organize in the 1930s.<sup>15</sup>

In Quebec class antagonism as expressed through workers' industrial and political activities during the war years and the subsequent labour revolt, was largely the affair of international or TLCC organizations. For one thing, these religiously neutral bodies represented by far the greatest proportion of workers in Quebec. They represented almost all unionized anglophone and immigrant workers, and attracted most francophone union members. French speakers were the majority of members in Montreal and most other industrial centres, far surpassing the numbers in Catholic unions. By 1921, the Catholic unions had only 15.4 per cent of the province's organized workers.<sup>16</sup>

Fuelled by fuller employment during the war, union membership rose rapidly. Workers became more aggressive, presenting employers with more demands for higher wages, better working conditions and more control over the workplace. Prospects of winning strikes, virtually the only effective means of securing gains, improved considerably in the tight labour market. Workers also challenged government actions designed to limit their effectiveness. In some cases, wartime

workers felt a growing frustration with their own cautious leadership that discouraged militant action that could hinder munitions production.

After the war, workers in secular unions mounted an even more impressive offensive, trying to make important gains on the shop floor, to establish collective bargaining in new sectors, and to use industrial action to force governments to take notice and concede demands. This tremendous growth and militancy seemed to offer the prospect that the benefits that craft unions had at times won for skilled workers could be extended to new groups, including the unskilled, women, public sector workers, even some professionals, although not all of these hopes were fulfilled. It was also this movement that took part in the 1919 labour revolt and in the general strike movement in May and June of that year, attempting to push the bounds of acceptable practices as defined by the TLCC. While the MFLC leadership that Johns denounced was conservative, there were elements in the movement prepared to advocate a general strike. These included both anglophone socialists, and militant francophone labourists.

Quebec workers, conscious of their growing industrial clout, also engaged in political action. Discontent over the

wartime policies of the federal government, conscription in particular, led to a massive extra-parliamentary protest movement by French-Canadian workers, and to a renewed attempt at political action. The creation of a new labour party, the Quebec section of the Canadian Labor Party, represented a remarkable and unprecedented level of cooperation among working-class groups from across the province. Political action revealed that some workers aspired to achieve more than material gains within the existing industrial system. A few even viewed the international labour movement as a vehicle to transform parts of Quebec society.

Labour's offensive was halted in the depression of the 1920s. Unemployment discouraged strikes or contributed to their failure, while employers sought to reverse many of the gains workers had won, a number participating in a continental open shop drive. In private industry and in the public and 'para-public' sectors most of the newly organized saw their efforts crushed. Some managed to hang on despite intense and prolonged anti-union campaigns. Unions in only a few sectors such as the garment trades remained combative. The depression and the offensive by employers and the state forced labour to retrench, but not all the gains were lost. As a movement, it was still larger than in 1914.

Contributing to the defeat of the labour revolt were the actions of the emerging Catholic labour organizations, and indeed the rivalry between the international unions and the emerging Catholic labour bodies forms a second major concern of this thesis. The first small steps towards the establishment of confessional labour organizations had been taken before the First World War. But it was the mounting militancy of the war years and of the labour revolt that provided the sense of urgency and the impetus that led Catholic union promoters to produce a movement that emerged in institutional form with the establishment of the Confederation des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada in 1921.

Catholic unionism was a major impediment to militancy during the labour revolt. These unions, far from challenging the social order, were quiescent during and immediately following the war, rarely engaging in vigorous struggles with employers. Supported by the Catholic clergy, and by nationalist intellectuals such as Henri Bourassa, the Catholic labour movement did much to undermine the revolt outside of Montreal, in many places halting the expansion or establishment of international unions.

At the start of the depression in 1920, the Catholic unions embarked on a campaign to try to displace the international unions in their stronghold of Montreal. While the Catholic labour movement tried to gain the support of francophone Catholics with a nationalist and religious appeal, it also represented a fear of social change and was part of an offensive that aimed at extending clerical control over Catholic Quebec. This campaign had limited success. Francophones in the international unions, while almost all practising Catholics, nonetheless often resented the actions of Catholic union promoters and were suspicious of their motives. Despite sometimes massive pressure to conform to the wishes of the clergy, most recognized the difference between doctrine that they had to accept and teaching which they could question.

Much of this thesis deals with Montreal, its suburbs, and the surrounding district, not only because it was the stronghold of the international unions, but also because this area accounted for half of Quebec's manufacturing workers and an even greater proportion of its output. In 1921 it held fully two thirds of organized workers in the province. In 1919 it accounted for more than 80 per cent of industrial disputes in Quebec. Independent labour politics was largely, though not



exclusively, a Montreal affair. For the area outside this metropolis, the thesis focuses primarily on the rivalry between international and Catholic union movements.<sup>17</sup> In addition this thesis focuses on the industrial and political actions and concerns of Quebec trade unionists, on their struggles with employers and governments, rather than on the relationship with international headquarters, or the AFL. It does not attempt to chronicle the growth and development of all component organizations. Nor does it examine one set of international unions whose members kept their distance from most other organized workers during this period, the brotherhoods in the railway running trades.

The organization of this thesis is neither completely chronological nor wholly topical. Chapter one deals with trade union growth, strike activity, and relations with government during the war years. Chapter two examines the course of the post-war labour revolt and its subsequent defeat in the depression of the 1920s. Chapter three describes labour political action. The growth of Catholic unionism and the resulting inter-union rivalry is then discussed in two sections, chapter four on the years of secular union growth between 1914 and 1919, and chapter five dealing with the rivalry from 1920 to 1925.

A major thread running through this thesis is the ethnic, religious, political and gender divisions within the Quebec working-class and within the international unions. The picture of the international labour movement that emerges is of one fraught with tensions. Often these tensions involved several factors that interacted in complex ways. Linguistic, ethnic and religious affiliation could produce either fragmentation or solidarity. Certainly religion and nationalism were key ingredients in the Catholic union appeal. French-Canadian workers, outside of the national and Catholic union movement, also divided over the use of nationalism which could be both an effective source of militancy and a factor dividing an ethnically diverse working class. There were also tactical and ideological divisions over trade union practices and organization. Many male workers were unsure about the proper role of women within the workforce, in unions and in the Labor Party. The Labor Party represented an uneasy alliance between erstwhile political foes.

Ironically, it was the industrial and political militancy of the secular international unions during the years 1916 to 1919 that helps explain the successful establishment of the Catholic labour movement. International union activity

prompted the Catholic Church to provide the funds, the personnel, the prestige and the press to promote the Catholic labour movement during these years, and while its initial success in establishing new unions and attracting new groups of workers, outside of Quebec City and the older national union movement, was moderate, Catholic union activities in this period laid the groundwork for later growth.

This study provides insight into the international unions in Quebec during the years 1914 to 1925 and contributes to the growing literature on the post-war labour revolt in Canada.<sup>18</sup> A central element of this study is an examination of the spectacular expansion of this movement during and after the First World War and the militancy of the labour revolt in Quebec. It demonstrates that Quebec workers through their international union did indeed play an important role in the revolt. It reveals, however, that while there were elements in common with the rising tide of militancy elsewhere in Canada, there were also significant differences, many of which stemmed from the much smaller degree of support for socialism, and from the particular linguistic, religious and ethnic composition of the Quebec working class.

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6. For a review of these developments see Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement. A short History, Toronto, 1989, 8-30; Bryan D. Palmer, Working-Class Experience: rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991, Toronto, 1992, 91-154; On the ascendancy of the AFL over the Canadian labour movement see Robert Babcock, Gompers in Canada. A Study of American Continentalism Before The First World War, Toronto, 1974.
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10. As a movement there is some discussion in general histories of Quebec labour. The best of these is Jacques Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec: des origines à nos jours, Montréal, 1989.

11. Babcock, Gompers in Canada; and Babcock, "Samuel Gompers and the French Canadian Worker," in American Review of Canadian Studies, 3 (2), autumn 1973, 47-66.

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14. Fernand Ouellet, "Monographs on the Working Class: Misery and Organization," in Economy, Class & Nation in Quebec. Interpretive Essays, ed. and trans, by Jacques Barbier, Toronto, 1991, 260.

15. On the enthusiasm of Canadian workers for the CIO see Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 4-5.

16. Ouellet, "Monograph on the Working Class," 260.

17. The focus on Montreal may also reflect a bias in the sources. Few Quebec TLC unions or labour councils kept their minutes or correspondence from this period. Nor have any of the major figures in this movement preserved their papers. Lamentably, Quebec was not served by the diversity of labour papers that students of this period find in Ontario or the West. For the entire province, there is only one labour paper that spans most of the period, Montreal's Monde ouvrier/Labor World. Some daily newspapers had labour columns, sometimes written by a local conservative craft union leader. TLC union members in Quebec City often felt that they had no voice in the local press at all. They were only able to maintain their own newspapers for short periods of time and most copies have disappeared. The sources contain another bias as well. Even in Montreal, neither Labor World nor any of the daily press provided a forum for socialists or other critics of TLCC or MTLC policies, limiting access to competing views within the international unions. The sources on Catholic unions, on the other hand, have been much better preserved.

18. There is an extensive literature on the labour revolt. Some of the key works are Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg:

and "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897-1919," Canadian Historical Review, 78, 2, June 1977, 154-175; Heron, Working in Steel: and Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le travail, 13, Spring 1984, 11-44; Naylor, The New Democracy.

## Chapter 1

Quebec Workers, The International Unions,  
and the First World War, 1914-1918.

"[T]he men might just as well get their guns and fight against alien enemies at home as go to Europe to do their fighting".<sup>1</sup>

This was union activist Narcisse Arcand's indignant response when the federal government sent more than a hundred interned enemy aliens to work for Asbestos Corporation, just as Thetford miners were set to strike. It was no coincidence that the military analogy echoed phrases used by French-Canadian nationalists who decried the war waged by the "Boches de l'Ontario" against French language minority rights.<sup>2</sup> It has long been clear that domestic issues, the Ontario bilingual schools issue and conscription in particular, had a powerful impact on the attitude of most French Canadians towards the conduct of the war effort, even towards the war itself. What Arcand's statement makes clear, and what has been neglected, is that the federal government's labour policies also angered Quebec workers and eroded their support for the war. Arcand's words are also suggestive of division along lines of national origin. Indeed one of the most striking characteristics of the Quebec working class at this time was its ethnic and religious



diversity, and the possibilities for both solidarity or fragmentation that this produced.

This chapter first describes the Quebec labour movement on the eve of the First World War. It then examines the impact of the wartime economy on trade union growth and militancy, focusing, in particular, on federal government labour policies. An underlying concern is to illustrate some of the divisions among workers in the international unions that subsequently played an important role in the post-war labour revolt.

#### Working-Class Quebec On The Eve Of The War

Any consideration of Quebec labour must take into account a number of obstacles to the formation of a unified and effective challenge to the social order. One of the most formidable obstacles was the fragmentation of the Quebec working class. First there were regional divisions within the province's economy. Montreal held a dominant position because of the size of its industrial and commercial output. While Quebec City and the urban areas of the Eastern Townships focused mostly on light manufacturing, elsewhere industrial centres based their development on resource extractive

industries. Secondly, there were specific ethnic and religious mixes within particular regions and industries. Thirdly, distinct organizational and ideological positions within the labour movement reflected and were re-enforced by these demographic and occupational differences.

By 1914, Quebec was engaged in a period of rapid urbanization and industrial development. In 1911, 48 per cent of the population was urban, a trend so accelerated by the First World War that in 1921 the figure had reached 56 per cent. Urban growth was uneven, however, largely the result of the distribution of industry. With a population of 618,506 in 1921, Montreal accounted for over a quarter of the province's inhabitants far surpassing all other centres in Quebec and making it Canada's largest city. Montreal Island had a population of 714,466. More than half of the province's city dwellers were concentrated in one metropolis. No other centre even came close in importance. The second largest, Quebec City was the only one of medium size with a population of 95,193. Other industrial cities such as Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières and Hull were much smaller each with over 20,000 inhabitants while another three towns, Saint-Hyacinthe, Lévis and Shawinigan had populations over 10,000.<sup>3</sup>

Given its size, it is not surprising that Montreal and its suburbs accounted for well over half of all industrial production in Quebec. The years before World War One witnessed strong growth in Montreal. This was partly because Montreal was in the region, along with Southern Ontario, where Canadian manufacturing was becoming increasingly concentrated. An important commercial and financial centre since the nineteenth century, it was home to the largest and most important group of Canadian capitalists. It had a diversified manufacturing sector with a large number of labour intensive light industries such as food and beverage processing, textiles, clothing, boots and shoes, and tobacco, as well as heavy industry in iron and steel such as in the production of transportation equipment. It was the site of the Grand-Trunk Railway's Point Saint Charles yards, the Canadian Pacific Railway's Angus shops, and since 1912, the giant British owned Canadian Vickers shipyards in the suburban municipality of Maisonneuve. This growth and the concentration of people and production meant that construction was also an important employer.<sup>4</sup>

Though Quebec City had experienced slower growth than Montreal, it still was an important port and the provincial capital. It too had labour intensive light industries that

produced consumer goods. It had an important boot and shoe sector, and produced corsets, tobacco products and garments. Across the St. Lawrence in Lévis there was a shipyard, and up river at Montmorency, Dominion Textile had one of its many Quebec factories.

In the Eastern Townships a number of small centres were attracting new, often labour intensive, light manufacturing. Dominion Textile had mills in towns such as Sherbrooke, Drummondville and Magog. Canadian Consolidated Rubber had plants in Granby, Sherbrooke and Actonvale. There were also medium and small scale metal working plants, the largest being Canadian Ingersoll Rand in Sherbrooke, as well as hosiery, boots and shoe, and furniture factories. There were some paper mills at East Angus and Windsor Mills. Asbestos was extracted at Quebec's one important mining centre around Thetford and Black Lake, mostly for export to the United States.

Many of Quebec's labour intensive industries produced tariff protected goods for sale in Canada's growing cities and in the recently settled western provinces. Some of these industries were branch plants of American and British companies. And American capital became increasingly important after World War One. The importance of light industries,

especially textiles, garments, leather, rubber, electrical appliances, confectionery and tobacco, accounted for the employment of a large proportion of women in Quebec's paid labour force. In plants in some of these industries women made up to half of the employees or more. In 1911, 27 per cent of the workers in manufacturing were female and women were also entering clerical and retail employment at a growing rate.<sup>5</sup>

Outside of Montreal, Quebec City and the Eastern Townships, industrial growth depended on resource development. There was a large number of rivers north of the St. Laurence and in western Quebec suitable for hydro-electric installations. This, and the abundance of forests, attracted large pulp and paper mills to Hull, the Saguenay region, and the Saint-Maurice Valley, the area that included Trois-Rivières, to produce newsprint, much of it for export to the United States. In the Saint-Maurice valley there was also the rapidly developing town of Shawinigan where electrochemical plants using new technologies, some of them producing carbides, were also being established. The large supply of hydro power also explains the presence in Quebec of a number of heavy users of electricity such as the cement, silk and textile industries.

Ownership in a number of leading industries was highly concentrated and this pattern was increasing. The giant Canadian Pacific Railway Angus shops were the largest producer of railway rolling stock in Canada. The Canada Cement Company dominated cement production. Dominion Textile controlled almost all Canadian cotton textile factories. In iron and steel Montreal Rolling Mills was part of the Steel Company of Canada. The Montreal Tramway Company had a monopoly over streetcar service in Montreal, as did the Montreal Light , Heat and Power Company over the distribution of electricity and gas. Three other large companies divided the remainder of the Quebec market. Concentration also characterized financial services. For instance, regional institutions such as the Bank of the Eastern Townships was sold to the Bank of Commerce in 1912. In the food and beverage industry, sugar, brewing and distilling were concentrated but there was greater competition in the production of butter, cheese and baked goods. Ownership was also highly fragmented in shoemaking, garment production, saw milling, printing, in wood products for building construction, and in real estate.<sup>6</sup>

Most large scale industry was owned by Canadian Anglo-Celts, many based in Montreal, or by American and sometimes British business interests. There were only a few French

Canadian capitalists who ranked among this business elite. While some nationalist politicians and journalists, such as Henri Bourassa, were concerned by the absence of French Canadian control in whole sectors of the provincial economy, it seems that nationalism was seldom a factor that overtly infused labour disputes during this period. Nationalists were reluctant to promote economic nationalism because it would hinder the acceptance of cultural duality by Anglo-Celt Canadians.<sup>7</sup> Nor did the leaders of the international unions who represented an ethnically mixed membership wish to ignite nationalist tensions. On the other hand, populist municipal politicians in Montreal, such as Mayor Médéric Martin, frequently denounced the trusts and the English minority in the same breath. Overall, however, organized workers in Montreal responded to monopolization much like workers in many other North American cities by denouncing trusts and demanding the nationalization of public services.

French Canadians were much better represented in medium and small sized businesses in competitive sectors. They also counted on the patronage of the provincial and municipal governments.<sup>8</sup> French Canadian workers also expected their governments, especially at the municipal level, to offer patronage in the form of jobs and to respond to their

concerns. There is no indication that class relations with French Canadians employers were any less antagonistic than when the employer belonged to another ethnic group. Quebec City's boot and shoe industry, for example, dominated by francophone interests had a long history of bitter strikes. It was, however, in industries owned by French Canadians that local Catholic bishops were able to make the first small steps towards the establishment of a Catholic labour movement.<sup>9</sup>

Quebec's ethnic groups were not evenly distributed across the province. In 1921, 80 per cent of the population was francophone but anglophones were concentrating increasingly in Montreal, which also attracted most of the provinces immigrants and had significant Jewish and Italian communities. While francophones made up 60 per cent of the population in Montreal, they were almost 70 per cent in the region around Hull, 77 per cent in the industrial areas of the Eastern Townships, over 90 per cent in Quebec city, and 95 per cent in the St. Maurice Valley, the region that included Trois-Rivières.<sup>10</sup> And in all centres except Montreal the proportion of francophones was increasing.

Montreal attracted anglophones from the rest of Quebec and received large numbers of immigrants from the British



Isles and Europe. In Montreal, apart from the Anglo-Celts, the Jewish community was the largest minority group. It dated back as far as the Conquest, but was rapidly growing with the arrival of thousands of immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe. By 1921, it counted 46,000 members, over six percent of the population of greater Montreal.<sup>11</sup> There were also some 14,000 people of Italian origin in Montreal in 1921, about two percent of the population, as well as Ukrainian and other European immigrants.<sup>12</sup> It was the larger proportions of non-Catholic, non-francophone workers that hindered the attempts to establish Catholic unionism in Montreal, while the relative homogeneity of the working class in Quebec City made it a viable option.

Ethnicity also influenced the division of labour and this too had an impact on union organization. Many workplaces had mixed compositions but members of some groups predominated in certain jobs or in some industries. Anglo-Celts tended to hold a privileged position in the labour market. They predominated in many kinds of office work, especially in firms owned by anglophones, and in supervisory factory positions. The iron and steel industries had a mixed workforce but anglophones held more skilled positions than francophones. Some employers, such as the giant Canadian Vickers shipyards and the Canadian

Pacific Railway's Angus workshops, gave preference to job applicants from Great Britain. These were often apprenticeship trained workers knowledgeable about new technology imported from Great Britain or the United States. Skilled craft workers from outside Quebec, generally Americans, were hired in the new pulp and paper mills while unskilled labour came from nearby villages and farms. There were more anglophones than francophones, both skilled and labourers, in the printing, publishing and bookbinding industry. Francophones predominated as both skilled and unskilled among boot and shoe workers, as well as in the textile mills, in the tobacco industry, in woodworking and in logging. They were also the majority in municipal employment and in asbestos mining, although in the latter there were also significant numbers of Eastern European immigrants. While Jewish workers were employed in a wide range of trades and workplaces, they were largely concentrated in the garment trades. Italians generally worked on railway and street railway construction or in short term labouring jobs such as in the railway shops.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, many unions had mixed memberships. Meetings were sometimes held in both French and English. For example, this was the case at the Montreal labour council. An alternative used in some construction unions, among

typographers and garment workers, was for locals to be organized along language lines. The ethnic division of labour sometimes meant that some groups predominated in some unions. For example, most members of the British based Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) were immigrants from the United Kingdom. But overall, francophones made up three quarters of Montreal's international union membership in 1918.<sup>14</sup> Montreal's police, firefighters, tramway workers, boot and shoe workers and tobacco workers, just to name a few, had predominantly francophone organizations under French Canadian leadership. Francophones probably accounted for an even higher proportion of members in such organizations elsewhere in the province. While Jewish immigrants were not a majority of workers in the clothing industry, their concentration in certain sectors, such as men's ready made clothing, often in skilled jobs, and their commitment to labour organization, meant that the garment unions were important institutions in the Jewish labour movement and in the Montreal labour movement as a whole. Within the garment unions ethnic locals were also set up for French Canadians and Italians.<sup>15</sup> The concentration of some groups such as Italians in poorly organized sectors such as street railway construction and labouring helps to explain why few Italians were organized.<sup>16</sup>

Working class communities in each of these centres also had distinctive histories. Both Montreal and Quebec City had a proletariat with a tradition of organization and established working class institutions. Anglo-Celt and European immigrants often arrived with experience of socialist or labour activities. Jewish immigrants from Russia, for example, often arrived with a commitment to Marxism, socialism, anarchism, bundism, or labour Zionism.<sup>17</sup> Migrants from the rural parishes with little or no previous exposure to unions supplied much of the labour in most cities but may have accounted for a much larger proportion of the workers in some newer industrial centres, such as Shawinigan, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Grand-Mère and La Tuque in the Mauricie region near Trois-Rivières, and Chicoutimi, Jonquièrre and Kénogami in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean region. There was a split between the older and newer industrialized centres. Workers from rural parishes were harder to organize, and were initially more susceptible to Catholic unionism.

The economic expansion in Quebec since the 1890s had encouraged the growth of labour organizations, craft unions for the most part. This is reflected in the increased number of strikes, mostly aggressive actions for higher wages. There were 391 disputes in the years 1896-1915, compared to 169 in

the previous 45 years.<sup>18</sup> By 1914 the best organized workers were in metalworking, railway running trades, construction, printing, the garment industry, boot and shoe production, cigarmaking, and longshoring. There had also been repeated but unsuccessful attempts to organize textile workers.

By 1921, over three-quarters of the unionized workers belonged to international unions, most of which were affiliated to the American Federation of Labor and to the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.<sup>19</sup> While there was a Quebec provincial executive of the Congress, its activities were limited to an annual pilgrimage to lobby the provincial government. Local trades and labour councils were much more active and influential. In fact, the influence of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council reached into numerous other industrial centres, reflecting Montreal's industrial and commercial dominance, and the weakness of the international movement outside the metropolis. The only council with a viable newspaper, Le Monde ouvrier/The Labor World,<sup>20</sup> it often initiated or participated in organizing efforts outside Montreal. The Council's leaders in this period, such as president J.T. Foster and secretary Gustave Francq, were craft unionists dedicated to international unionism, and closely associated with the policies and positions of the Trades and

Labor Congress of Canada. They were labourists who insisted on a separation of economic and political action - a position that precluded any political use of the strike weapon. They also dominated the Quebec Labor Party established in 1904.

While the membership of international unions was perhaps three-quarters French Canadian,<sup>21</sup> their movement included workers from numerous religious and ethnic backgrounds. Hence figures such as Francq opposed appeals to the national interests of any particular community. They also considered that a separation of economic and religious matters was necessary to ensure the unity of a working-class movement that included significant numbers of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish members. It was the diverse composition of the working class that led craft union leaders in Montreal to oppose appeals based on the ethnic nationalism of any particular community. This, for example, explains why the Montreal Trades and Labor Council opposed the French Canadian nationalist campaign for official recognition of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, their patron saint, as a legal holiday.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that the union leadership was indifferent to French language rights. It supported bilingualism. When there were different interpretations of the French and English texts of the Council's constitution, the French language text took

precedence.<sup>23</sup> In 1908 both anglophone and francophone delegates to the Council voted for a motion calling for legislation to force public utilities to offer service in French.<sup>24</sup> The only other council that established labour papers and that organized far beyond its regional membership was the Quebec and Lévis Federated Trades and Labor Council.

The international unions faced two kinds of rivals. There were national unions, many of which had been expelled from the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada at the Berlin Convention of 1902.<sup>25</sup> At the time, those expelled represented some 20 per cent of organized labour membership in Canada. Many of these unions then formed the National Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (NTLCC). Most of its membership, some 80 per cent, was from Quebec.

Secular, nationalist and organized along craft lines, but with few resources, this movement remained small and weak, although individual organizations could prove quite effective. The strongest national organizations were in the boot and shoe industry. Renamed the Canadian Federation of Labor (CFL) in 1908 it soon lost many of its Quebec affiliates. In Montreal the movement effectively disappeared in 1911 when national shoe workers joined the United Shoe Workers of America.

In Quebec City, national unions remained important but divided. A quarrel over public school policy prompted most locals to abandon the CFL's Conseil central des métiers et du travail de Québec for a new council, the Conseil central national du district de Québec et de Lévis.<sup>26</sup> There was also an emerging Catholic labour movement that was the result of increased Catholic social action, motivated by a concern for the plight of industrial workers and by a fear of the secularism of religiously neutral international unions and of socialism. But, before the war, only a few small Catholic unions had been established by interested clergy.

There was another distinctive form of working-class organization in Quebec - the labor clubs. These were neighbourhood political organizations, first established in the 1890s, where members of both national and international unions could meet with unorganized workers to socialize, discuss current issues, pass resolutions asking for government action, and organize political campaigns for candidates they had chosen or endorsed. Since only a small proportion of workers belonged to unions, some of these clubs provided a larger basis of support for the Labor Party. In Montreal, by the start of the war, however, all but two of the clubs had



severed links with the Labor Party.<sup>27</sup> This division followed an alliance between the Labor Party and a municipal reform movement that included important elements of the business community whose aims were to administer the City rationally and in a business like manner, put an end to corruption and patronage, and reduce taxes.

A broadly based coalition that hoped to cross ethnic and class lines, the reform movement had endorsed francophone labourists and carpenter Joseph Ainey for election to the powerful new Board of Control in 1910. The reform movement won these elections, but changes in the way street paving projects were paid appeared to favour wealthier western wards and alienated francophone workers in eastern sections of the city. In the 1912 elections an opposition group led by cigar manufacturer Médéric Martin emerged to challenge the reform majority on council.<sup>28</sup> Ainey remained popular, but most labor clubs abandoned the Labor Party before the 1912 municipal elections so that they could support candidates who were not endorsed by the Labor Party. The breakaway clubs formed a federation that in 1914 took the name of the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal (FCOM).<sup>29</sup> During the war, the FCOM presented itself as the voice for both the class and national interests of French-Canadian workers. Ainey, on

the other hand, represented the current within the Labor Party that opposed appeals on ethnic or national lines, and that was willing to join coalitions that included the anglophone business community.

The clubs had a diverse composition and reflected a wide range of positions, particularly as many more were established in 1919 and 1920. Most of the clubs affiliated to the Labor Party were francophone organizations, but some had a mixed membership that included anglophones. The Saint Louis Labor Club served workers in the heart of the Jewish garment district. Some clubs restricted membership to workers to prevent them from being taken over by members of the liberal professions. There were a few, however, that crossed class lines,<sup>30</sup> such as the Longueuil Labor Club, which drew together farmers, workers, shopkeepers and professionals. Its membership included the mayor, a manufacturer, and most of the aldermen who were local merchants.<sup>31</sup> Despite such exceptions as the Verdun Labor Club, and the Saint Louis Labor Club, which had large socialist memberships, most of the clubs were labourist organizations that desired more working-class influence and participation in government, denounced monopolies, but did not proceed to a systematic denunciation of capitalism. Some of the clubs provided a base for radicals,

represented on the Montreal Trades and Labor Council by Alfred Mathieu and Henri Julien of the Sainte Marie Labor Club. These were working class French-Canadian nationalists opposed to the socialists but prepared to advocate militant direct action to achieve political ends.

Montreal also had a significant socialist movement, represented by members of the Social Democratic Party of Canada and the Socialist Party of Canada. Socialists formed a small opposition to the Montreal Trades and Labor Council leadership. Numbers in council did not, however, reflect socialist strength in the labour movement, as large numbers of socialist garment workers were members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW), an organization excluded from the Montreal labour council because it was not a member of the American Federation of Labor. This was also the case for socialist machinists who belonged to the British based Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE). Most socialists were Anglo-Celtic and European immigrants. Indeed, socialism was particularly important in the growing Jewish immigrant community.<sup>32</sup> In the 1916 Montreal municipal elections in Saint Louis ward, the heart of the Jewish garment district, both the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Poale Zion (Labour Zionists) presented candidates. Ladies Garment Worker Joseph Schubert

ran for the SDP, while Hananiah Meir Caiserman, later a founder of the Canadian Jewish Congress, ran for the Labour Zionists.<sup>33</sup>

There was also a French section of the Socialist Party led by Albert Saint-Martin, but socialist parties attracted few French-Canadian members, despite the energetic leadership of Saint-Martin and L.G.N. Pagé, the president of the barbers' union, who were able to help mobilize large numbers of workers around issues such as unemployment.<sup>34</sup> Jacques Rouillard has suggested that it was the Catholic clergy's campaign against socialism that considerably reduced socialism's appeal among francophone workers. In 1906 clerical authorities reacted quickly to the first public appearances by socialists in Montreal in the May Day parade. The following year Archbishop Bruchési asked Catholics to abstain from this event. Socialist opposition to private property and its association with revolution were clearly at odds with the teachings of the Church, unlike membership in an international union or even in the Quebec Labor Party.<sup>35</sup> French-Canadian socialists seem to have been free-thinkers or held unorthodox religious views, while most French Canadian workers remained practising Catholics. While religious sentiment in itself was clearly an important impediment to the development of socialism among

francophones, it was all the more so since Catholicism was a core component of French-Canadian identity and nationalism.

The ethnic divisions within the working class were extremely deep and entrenched organizationally. Anglo-Celts, French Canadians, and Jewish workers often predominated in different unions, although there was often contact and cooperation through the labour council. Even within a union, workers were often divided into separate locals along language lines. Ethnicity also divided workers on the political front as socialists were predominantly immigrants also organized along ethnic or linguistic lines. At the same time, separate ethnic locals need not in themselves hinder labour solidarity. Ethnic, religious, linguistic or gender differences did not always mean that relations were characterized by hostility. Organizing a local by language or gender, for example, could facilitate recruitment and was used to strengthen the broader labour movement. Common aims and experiences could bring workers from a number of different groups together.

Among francophone labourists in Montreal, there was a serious disagreement about whether to use ethnic bonds to advance workers interests at city hall, for example. The French-Canadian working class nationalism of the Fédération

des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal, while an effective source of militancy, was at odds with the view among Labor Party leaders that nationalist appeals were divisive. Throughout the province, there were also serious divisions among francophones between supporters of international and national organization. At the same time Catholic social activists were attempting to lure francophone Catholics into unions established along confessional lines. A factor that favoured national and Catholic unions outside of Montreal, was that while some of the larger internationals had francophone or bilingual business agents, this was not always the case. Local unions often had to deal with international representatives and to undertake their correspondence with headquarters in English.<sup>36</sup>

Many of these organizational differences within the Quebec working class were played out in the severe crisis of unemployment that gripped the country in 1914 and lasted through the first year of the war. Trade unions in Quebec, both national and international, were in retreat in the face of attacks by employers. Mounting unemployment meant that few strikes succeeded, little organizing was possible, wages were cut, and many locals were barely able to maintain their existence or disappeared altogether. Towards the end of 1913,

shoe manufacturers in Quebec City locked out more than 4,000 national union members in an attempt to destroy their organizations and forced them to accept a contract with a no strike clause that included fines against the unions for any transgression.<sup>37</sup> In September 1913, 350 garment workers in Montreal went on strike against a pay cut and were then replaced.<sup>38</sup> And in 1914 the carpenters' union in Montreal, one of the most aggressive of the building trades, suffered a serious defeat after employers broke an agreement to reduce hours and increase wages.<sup>39</sup> Large-scale unemployment also meant massive poverty for large numbers of working-class families from 1913 until a recovery began based on munitions production. Depending on the location and on the sector of the economy this recovery was uneven, but its impact relieved much of the distress through late 1915 and early 1916.

The incidence of strikes gives some indication of labour's weakness at the start of the war. While there were 26 disputes involving all types of unions in 1912 and 19 in 1913, there were only six in 1914 and again in 1915. Of the six in 1914, with the exception of a large one by carpenters, all involved fewer than 40 workers. In five, workers hoped to improve their wages and conditions while one was a defensive struggle against a wage decrease. There was a single victory,

four loses, and a compromise in the form of a reduced wage reduction. In 1915, two were sympathetic actions, one by papermakers in Donnacona Quebec, the other by Montreal ironworkers, in support of fellow union members in the United States. Both lost, as did both Montreal tailors and unorganized munitions workers making shells in Sherbrooke. A walk-out by some 2000 Thetford miners, without benefit of a union, won a wage increase and better conditions. At Montreal's Canadian Vickers shipyards, the organized trades won wage increases, but those without a union failed to do so. Three of the disputes in 1915 involved industries engaged in war related production where unions had not yet been formed or where organization was incomplete. In two out of the three, however, there was a measure of success.<sup>40</sup> The improving economy of 1916 was evident in the increased number of disputes, fourteen in all, in their size, as most involved several hundred workers, and in the degree of success, as workers won or accepted a favourable compromise in 12 cases.

Until the economy picked up, the most important expression of working-class militancy was a massive movement of the unemployed in Montreal. Montreal had the largest number of unemployed workers in Canada, an estimated 50,000.<sup>41</sup> From April 1914 until June 1915 large numbers of jobless workers,



mostly men but also including some women, appeared regularly at city hall to demand work. Workers directed their demands at Montreal's municipal government not only because both the federal and provincial governments left responsibility for unemployment relief to municipalities, but also because Liberal Médéric Martin had just been elected mayor in a campaign based on a promise directed to the French-Canadian working class to complete public works and provide employment. Martin's victory marked a break in the traditional alternation of English and French speaking representatives in the mayoral office. It also signalled the growing political weight of French-Canadian workers in the city's east end wards, whose numbers were being augmented through rural migration and Montreal's annexation of several of the surrounding working-class suburbs. The mass demonstrations began when on taking the oath of office Médéric Martin invited all the city's jobless to show up at city hall for work the following Monday morning. The 12,000 who showed up surpassed both the mayor's expectations and the city's ability to provide jobs, as it engaged only some 2,500 workers temporarily on public works.<sup>42</sup> Crowds numbering from scores to thousands appeared time and again for well over a year to demand work.

Championing the demands for work on the part of Montreal's French-Canadian workers was the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal, which claimed that Martin owed his election to their support and that his pledge of employment was made specifically to their members.<sup>43</sup> Initially elated by Martin's victory, by 1915 the FCOM became critical of Martin's inability to fulfil his promise. When Martin arrogantly demanded that the unemployed no longer annoy him at city hall, the FCOM sought a candidate who would be able to defeat him in the 1916 elections. One newspaper, La Patrie, considered that this was a critical loss of support for Martin.<sup>44</sup> Indeed Alfred Charpentier, who was then a club member and would soon be a leading figure in the Catholic union movement, later claimed that the federation dominated municipal politics in 1915.<sup>45</sup> The federation unsuccessfully courted Adélard Fortier, president of the Montreal Dairy Company, as their candidate for mayor.<sup>46</sup> As military contracts began to have an impact in reducing unemployment in late 1915, this campaign collapsed and Fortier declined to run.

The Socialist Party, led by Albert Saint-Martin and L.N.G. Pagé, also played a major role in mobilizing the unemployed and had initially organized the crowds that appeared at city hall. Locals of the Social Democratic Party,

organized on language lines, also became vehicles to mobilize immigrants who were hard hit by the crisis.<sup>47</sup> When one crowd of 7,000 unemployed assembled at city hall, it included several thousand Italian, Jewish, Polish and Russian workers.<sup>48</sup> While newspaper reports do not always identify the leadership of protests by immigrant workers as socialists, it is clear that immigrant workers organized numerous demonstrations to demand an end to their exclusion from job sites by city foremen. In March 1915 for example Italian workers occupied city hall and a week later demonstrated outside the Italian consulate.<sup>49</sup>

The unemployment movement revealed a number of characteristics of Montreal's working class. In a period of high unemployment and with a weakened union movement, French Canadian workers in Montreal expected to use their political clout to exert greater influence over the allocation of jobs and services at the municipal level. Médéric Martin was able to secure his election in 1914 with an appeal that combined class and ethnic solidarity. The strength of the ethnic ties was such that the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal turned to a prominent member of the francophone business community when they sought a challenger to Martin.

International union leaders, on the other hand, usually opposed appeals based on ethnic solidarity that divided anglophones and francophones, such as those made by both Martin and the FCOM. Trades and Labor Council leaders also opposed Martin and challenged his claim to represent the working class. As a Liberal, Martin had successfully defeated a Labor Party candidate in a federal by-election in 1906.<sup>50</sup> While Martin loudly proclaimed that he was the workingman's friend and a trade unionist who maintained his membership in the Cigarmakers Union, he differed from the position of the trades and labour council on a number of issues. The latter, however, had less influence in municipal politics than the FCOM, and played a less active role in the unemployment movement than either the FCOM or the socialists. The council believed that the federal government should take responsibility for unemployment, as the problem was too large for local governments. Moreover council leaders were reluctant to mobilize the unemployed, as they were suspicious of rowdy demonstrations that threatened to get out of hand and that could be used by socialists to attack the moderation of council leaders. In addition, there is no indication of any cooperation between the FCOM and the socialists. At the onset of the war, then, workers' movements in Quebec were deeply divided by ethnicity, ideology, and organizational structure.

### Wartime Production and Growing Labour Militancy

In the spring and summer of 1915, long after the declaration of hostilities, munitions contracts began pouring into Quebec, gradually reducing unemployment, and reviving the economy. The war required a wide range of products manufactured in Quebec. Its factories received orders for 35% of the production of munitions and other military supplies during the war. Shells and explosives were mass produced throughout the province in workplaces as diverse as foundries, cement factories, engineering firms and railroad shops. The Imperial Munitions Board (IMB), the agency charged with allocating contracts, also built and ran its own plants, including two large munitions factories near Montreal. The army's need for uniforms revived both Montreal's clothing sector and the boot and shoe industry in Quebec City, also the site of the factory that made Canada's own ill fated Ross rifle. Demand for carbides, metallic magnesium, and acetic acid, made Shawinigan an important chemical centre. Quebec was also a major supplier of asbestos, used to make filters for gas masks, gloves for handling rapid fire cannons, as well as in machine shops and in naval and submarine construction.<sup>51</sup> The Canadian Vickers shipyards, established by a British

parent company after the enactment of the 1910 Naval Bills, finally received long awaited contracts for submarines, submarine chasers, and cargo vessels. At its height it employed more than 15,000 workers. In 1917 and 1918 the Imperial Munitions Board expanded its shipbuilding program to other yards on the Saint-Lawrence in Sorel, Trois-Rivières, and Lévis.<sup>52</sup>

Almost as soon as production began, workers and unions complained of poor conditions and excessively low wages. Workers were particularly surprised at the absence of a fair wage clause. Since the passage of the Fair Wages Resolution by Parliament in 1900, in response to pressure from organized labour, such a clause was routinely included in federal government contracts.<sup>53</sup> Its aim was to prevent sweating. In practice, it compelled government contractors to pay a scale of wages drawn up by the Department of Labour based on local conditions. While these were not necessarily union scales, they provided important protection against excessively low wages. Moreover, it covered both the organized and unorganized, an important advantage in the context of massive unemployment, wage cuts and relatively weak labour organization that still characterized Quebec through 1915. But as early as November 1914, machinists making shells at Canada

Car and Foundry Company were surprised to receive lower wages than those at other firms in Montreal, and lower than those listed in the federal government's fair wage schedules. This prompted the District Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to write to the Minister of Labour that "we fail to see why the fair wage clause cannot apply in this case being a Government contract".<sup>54</sup> Numerous other complaints soon followed.

In 1915, the TLCC and the unions involved in munitions production, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) in particular, embarked on a lengthy and frustrating campaign to convince the government to include a fair wage clause in munitions contracts. The Canadian government claimed that it had nothing to do with the allocation of contracts, since mostly they came from Great Britain, and were distributed first by the Shell Committee, and then after November 1915, by the Imperial Munitions Board (IMB), and these bodies were responsible to the British Ministry of Munitions. While British agencies, they operated in Canada and were run by Canadian capitalists. The real opposition to a fair wage clause, through most of the war, came from IMB president and Toronto millionaire Joseph Flavelle. While both the British government and Canadian politicians were at times inclined to

concede the demand, they would not overrule Flavelle's position, because they judged his work in organizing and supervising Canada's war production to be indispensable. Hostile to trade unions as a matter of principle, Flavelle did not want to make any concessions to organized labour that might raise wages or enhance the prestige of union leaders. He also wanted to make sure that the war produced no permanent change in labour relations, especially if it meant shifting more power into the hands of workers and their organizations.<sup>55</sup>

The difficulty for international union officials was that many wanted to avoid strikes in war related industries. This was partly out of patriotism, partly to avoid the accusation that they were impeding the war effort, usually an employer's first reaction, and perhaps also out of a concern for how the government would respond. Some high ranking labour representatives assured the government that they would discourage work stoppages in munitions production. While there was no formal commitment not to strike, the Montreal based vice-president of the IAM, J.A. McClelland, promised Borden he would, in his words, try "to avert trouble".<sup>56</sup> This policy was emulated by the trades and labour council in Montreal. During



one conflict, Labor World urged munitions workers to exercise restraint:

il encouragera les ouvriers travaillant aux fournitures et aux munitions de guerre à accomplir courageusement leur devoir malgré les vexations et les abus dont ils sont souvent les victimes.<sup>57</sup>

In April 1916, MTLCC intervention reportedly prevented a general strike of garment workers producing uniforms.<sup>58</sup>

In exchange for this cooperation, organized labour lobbied the government to regulate the terms of employment in munitions production. In early 1916, a TLCC delegation, with officials from Quebec representing boots and shoe workers, garment workers, carpenters, and machinists, and including both J.A. McClelland, and IAM business agent and MTLCC president J.T. Foster, presented its case to cabinet. It wanted a permanent fair wage board with equal representation from employers and international unions, as well as an impartial chair, with the power to set wages and working conditions. The delegation stressed that workers were becoming increasingly impatient with poor wages and working conditions, and that only efforts by union leaders to restrain them had prevented more strikes from occurring. The dilemma was that labour was reluctant to use its only effective tool, strike action, to put pressure on the government. As Myer Siemiatycki

has pointed out, Prime Minister Borden and Joseph Flavelle saw no need to grant the demand for a fair wage board partly because they already had the cooperation of labour leaders.<sup>59</sup> The TLCC vigorously pursued its campaign for fair wages into 1917 but its lobbying efforts remained ineffective.<sup>60</sup>

The cautious approach the TLCC and international union leadership was criticized by rank and file members angered by employers alleged profiteering from the war. One Montreal plumber complained that the feeling in Canada had been that workers should not fight for their rights in war time. But, he went on, workers had organized to fight employers, and since employers took advantage of the situation, so should workers.<sup>61</sup> Indeed there was a widespread belief that employers producing munitions or distributing foodstuffs and other essentials, both to the army and domestic consumers, were reaping large profits while workers were asked to make sacrifices for the war effort. A recurring theme during the war, it was related to another key source of working class outrage, rampant wartime inflation.<sup>62</sup> In 1916 a Quebec Department of Labour official noted that prices were rising with "fearful rapidity."<sup>63</sup> The cost of basic items for a working class family in Montreal in 1918 was 50% higher than in 1915. Nor did the inflation abate after the Armistice, as

it continued through 1919 and into 1920.<sup>64</sup> The desire to maintain real wages was an essential ingredient in the resurgence of unionism and direct economic action. As jobs grew more plentiful in 1916, wage earners were in a better position to organize and secure gains. Firms found it harder to replace strikers and the threat of dismissal lost its sting, particularly for those with skills in short supply. International union leaders, such as J.A. McClelland, continued to urge restraint, but it became increasingly difficult to contain discontented workers.

For its part, the federal government and the IMB relied increasingly on the Department of Labour to try to avert strife. Fair-wage officers investigated complaints and attempted to settle disputes, often calling upon international union officers such as McClelland to help, sometimes alerting him to strikes that erupted without his knowledge.<sup>65</sup> If it deemed a complaint justified, the Department of Labour might try to persuade an employer to bring wages or conditions up to a certain minimum. In shell production, for example, there were repeated complaints about two Sherbrooke companies that paid exceedingly low wages.<sup>66</sup> One of these firms provoked an unsuccessful strike by unorganized machinists in 1915 when it reduced rates on piece work.<sup>67</sup> In 1916, the Department of

Labour tried to convince the firms to pay a minimum wage of 25 cents an hour.<sup>68</sup> When they ignored this advice,<sup>69</sup> the Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour called on IMB Chair Joseph Flavelle to use his influence. In this case, Flavelle summoned representatives of the two companies to Ottawa to discuss the matter,<sup>70</sup> and the complaints ceased.

But this route seldom worked. Flavelle was generally loath to pressure employers. In March 1916, carpenters at the Henry Morgan Factories in Montreal heard that employers were compelled to pay 25 cents an hour to machinists, and wanted the same wages to make boxes for shells.<sup>71</sup> Flavelle refused to intervene on the grounds that boxes were only a small part of the company's business.<sup>72</sup> The Minister of Labour, Thomas Crothers, even tried to persuade Flavelle to force employers to improve wages by revoking orders, but except in one case, Flavelle refused.<sup>73</sup> Some large conflicts were narrowly averted by union officials, despite Flavelle's reluctance to intervene. When an important munitions producer in Montreal fired three employees for membership in the IAM, 5,000 machinists threatened to strike. McClelland persuaded them to wait until he could speak to the company manager, but had to plead with the Minister of Labour to urge the firm to grant an interview. Crothers referred him to Flavelle who first

declined replying "To do so, Mr. McClelland, would be virtually to recognize your union." When Flavelle finally arranged a meeting with the company manager, the IMB president argued that the IAM had no case. McClelland was nevertheless able to get the three reinstated.<sup>74</sup> This process was frustrating for organized labour. Any action depended on the discretion of the Department of Labour and IMB officials who decided what constituted a legitimate grievance. Moreover, a company was under no obligation to deal with a union.

The issue of fair wages was the cause of one of the first large and protracted strikes in munitions production. In February and March 1916, some 300 to 500 shipwrights, mostly British immigrants, and members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ), walked off the job at the giant Canadian Vickers Shipyards. While the immediate impetus for this action was a wage cut,<sup>75</sup> they demanded the 45 cents an hour listed in the Federal government Fair Wages Schedule for Montreal, far above the 27 1/2 to 32 1/2 cents they had been getting.<sup>76</sup> For its part Canadian Vickers management refused to negotiate, declined the services of a Department of Labour fair-wage officer,<sup>77</sup> and claimed that the action was the result of enemy influences.<sup>78</sup> A week into the dispute, Canadian Vickers claimed that operations were quickly

returning to normal, that it had found 80 replacements, and that a 100 strikers had returned. The rest, it said, could easily be replaced.<sup>79</sup>

The strikers probably felt that their best chance of success was to mobilize public opinion and the support of other workers. They organized a number of protest meetings,<sup>80</sup> and appealed to other trades at Canadian Vickers to walk out in sympathy. This seemed quite possible as other craftworkers soon expressed discontent. Plumbers, for example, declared that they were unhappy at the "deplorable conditions" in the yard and at the treatment they received.<sup>81</sup> Nor was interest restricted to Canadian Vickers employees. For one concerned worker "it would be suicide for the toilers of Montreal to allow fellow workers in the same city to suffer defeat. If we allow some to be trodden underfoot our turn will come next".<sup>82</sup> In mid-March, Maisonneuve Labor MP Alphonse Verville warned Prime Minister Borden in the House of Commons that if the government did not take action soon, the strike could spread and that there could be disturbances. Borden replied that his government was doing all it could to settle the strike.<sup>83</sup>

The government's main role was to censor news of the event. Canada's Chief Press Censor, E.J. Chambers, complained

that he had considerable difficulty keeping the Montreal press quiet, as some publishers were unhappy at restrictions on an event that was so widely known.<sup>84</sup> He was particularly alarmed when, frustrated at the absence of press coverage, strikers marched from the Canadian Vickers yard to the offices of Montreal's main dailies shouting and bearing banners claiming that the newspapers were afraid to publish anything for financial reasons, although exactly what they meant by this is not clear.<sup>85</sup> While censorship was ostensibly imposed because military and naval authorities regarded any publicity about plants with military contracts as dangerous,<sup>86</sup> Chambers main fear was that the reports on the Canadian Vickers dispute could provoke other workers to strike as well. There was a danger that it would spread in the Canadian Vickers plant,<sup>87</sup> but he was well aware that there was considerable unrest in a number of places, and was concerned that it could provoke strikes elsewhere in Montreal and in other cities.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed trouble was then brewing in Toronto and Hamilton. As Naylor and Siemiatycki have pointed out, the main role of censorship during strikes was to isolate disputes by restricting labour's ability to seek the support of both public opinion and other workers.<sup>89</sup> Chambers, also unhappy about the debate in Parliament, asked whether it could be

suppressed in Hansard.<sup>90</sup> Nor was the Chief Censor alone in trying to restrict public scrutiny of working conditions. Later when the federal government established a Royal Commission to hear the grievances of machinists in Toronto and Hamilton, it declined a request to have it investigate conditions elsewhere. IAM business agent J.T. Foster tried to get the government to extend its mandate to Montreal but failed.<sup>91</sup>

At the end of March, union officials at Canadian Vickers officially capitulated to the company. Canadian Vickers made no change in wage rates, promising only to do its best to increase wages in the future and to take back the strikers as they were needed.<sup>92</sup> While defeat was the result of employer intransigence, and press censorship, trades and labour council leaders may also have kept the strike from spreading. Effective censorship, defied only by Labor World, meant that many of the details were obscure, but the council executive was certainly blamed for its defeat. The plumbers' union charged that the Council executive did not take an interest in the dispute, and implied that they did not do their duty to the striking workers. Foster replied that they had done their best to settle the conflict, and refused to consider the outcome a defeat since there was a promise of future



increases. Council secretary Gustave Francq stated: "Il est du devoir du Conseil des Métiers et du Travail de régler les difficultés qui surgissent par la conciliation et l'arbitrage. Avant de prendre une décision on devrait réfléchir et en penser les conséquences".<sup>93</sup> This account is cryptic but the defence of the executive members' actions suggests that the Council leaders exerted a moderating influence. There were continued complaints about the passive attitude of union leaders. In July 1916, one Montreal worker observed that workers in every country except Canada were receiving increased wages on war contracts because of the rising cost of living. The only reason such increases had not been secured in Canada, he said, "was because of the lack of aggressiveness of the workers and their so-called leaders".<sup>94</sup> The Canadian Vickers strike may also have produced a legacy of bitterness and suspicion against council executive, headed by machinists business agent J.T. Foster, that was to last into 1919.

On 23 March 1916 just over a week before the Canadian Vickers strike ended, the federal government extended the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (IDIA) to all war related industries by Order in Council.<sup>95</sup> The IDIA, also called the Lemieux Act, was the main piece of federal government legislation governing labour disputes and was

intended to avert strikes. Ordinarily this law applied to metal and coal mines, to a number of transportation agencies and to public utilities, such as gas, water and electric service. It banned strikes and lockouts until a tripartite conciliation board investigated and issued a public report with non-binding recommendations. On each board there was a member chosen by the employer, another by the employees, who then agreed on the third who acted as an impartial chair, or if they could not agree, the chair was appointed by the Minister of Labour. In practice the board usually attempted to resolve the difference between employers and workers. The Lemieux Act often worked to labour's disadvantage, as effective strike action was often dependent on timing or surprise, and because boards often tried to settle with committees of employees, avoiding the issue of union recognition.<sup>96</sup> Labor World labelled the extension of the IDIA "Chloroforming workers."

The MTLC, like many labour councils across Canada, was surprised by this action and appalled that TLCC president James Watters had approved of the move, contrary to Congress policy, and without even informing them that it was being considered. The Lemieux Act, according to Foster, was also of little use to workers unless they were well organized.

Moreover, its process was too slow, as most of the work was finished before a board issued its decision. And Foster doubted Watters' claim that the government would impose a board's findings on employers.<sup>97</sup>

Government intervention, including the application of the IDIA, was a key issue in the Thetford Mines strike of 1916. Faced with a multitude of grievances that included dangerous working conditions, low wages, and payment in kind at company stores,<sup>98</sup> asbestos miners established a local of the Western Federation of Miners in the fall of 1915 with the help of AFL organizers from Montreal.<sup>99</sup> Immediately afterwards, a rival Catholic union was also set up. The nature of this inter-union rivalry is dealt with at length in chapter four. For this discussion, it is sufficient to note that the international union won the support of most workers. Nine-hundred joined the WFM, while 200 to 300 were Catholic union members.<sup>100</sup> The greater success of the WFM was due in part to the fact that Thetford had an ethnically diverse workforce, and that it united francophones, anglophones, Russian and Italian workers. Included in the WFM list of demands was, among other things, recognition, a closed shop, a check off system, an eight-hour day, and an increase in the daily wage from \$1.75 to \$2.50 to offset the rising cost of living.<sup>101</sup> From the start, the six

companies, actually under three controlling interests,<sup>102</sup> formed a united front, hiring a single lawyer to represent them, and refusing to negotiate.<sup>103</sup> Their only move, likely intended to preempt the demand for a 75 cents increase, was to raise wages 25 cents in April 1916.<sup>104</sup>

In this dispute, the union felt that the Minister of Labour had helped the companies frustrate union efforts to initiate conciliation and to prepare for a legal strike. At the end of June, the Department of Labour sent Narcisse Arcand, a fair-wages officer recently appointed from the ranks of organized labour, to mediate, but to no avail.<sup>105</sup> Arcand informed the union that their industry came under the IDIA, and that it would be a criminal offence to strike before a board completed its work. The Labour Department also implied that the penalties provided by the Act would be rigidly enforced.

Around mid-July, Arcand was quickly removed from Thetford by the Department of Labour following a complaint from the employers' lawyer. This prompted Arcand, aghast at the employer influence over the government, to resign as a fair-wage officer. Arcand believed his removal was motivated by a desire to prevent conciliation under the Lemieux Act, since he

was probably instructing the union in how to initiate the process.<sup>106</sup> At about the same time the Minister of Labour, Thomas Crothers, intervened personally demonstrating no sympathy for union demands. Meeting with representatives of companies, the WFM, and the mayor of Thetford, he stated that an IDIA board could not deal with recognition and the check off, then he tried to convince the miners to abandon these demands, and argued that there was no advantage in asking for a new increase of 50 cents, when 25 cents had earlier been granted. Undeterred the union made a formal request for conciliation. Crothers then suggested that a committee of employees from each mine meet separately with mine managers, and assured the delegation that WFM secretary J.L. Rousseau, their principal spokesperson, could accompany each committee.<sup>107</sup> The union believed this more appropriate for unorganized workers but complied none the less. Despite Crothers' promise, some companies would not meet with Rousseau, presumably on the grounds that he was not one of their employees.<sup>108</sup>

The union also believed that Crothers was willing to interpret the Lemieux Act in new ways to suit the employers. His department turned down the union request for a board on the grounds that the five companies could not agree upon a

single representative. The union had asked for a single board to deal with the employers as a group. Since the companies were represented by the same lawyer, this was viewed as another stalling tactic.<sup>109</sup> Crothers also reminded the men that they were not yet in a legal position to strike. The rejection of their application for conciliation, whatever its legal merits, surprised the union. It complained that the Minister's opinion "est incompatible et avec l'esprit et avec la lettre de la loi concernant les différents industriels." The delays exasperated the miners. Rousseau warned the Labour Department that

nous signalons à l'attention du ministère qu'il nous est impossible d'empêcher plus longtemps les membres de l'union de se mettre en grève, si cette commission n'est pas nommée prochainement. De plus, nous nous défendons de toute responsabilité relativement à la situation qui pourrait se produire; car nous avons donné des preuves du patriotisme qui nous anime en empêchant jusqu'à ce jour la grève d'éclater à la mine de Thetford-Mines et en nous conformant aux lois qui régissent le pays, puisque nous demandons la constitution d'une commission d'arbitrage.<sup>110</sup>

While helping to delay conciliation, the federal government furnished one mine owner, Asbestos Corporation, with a new pool of labour, some 140 German and Austrian internees who were to work under the supervision of 50 armed private detectives.<sup>111</sup> The union viewed this as a deliberate

attempt to intimidate the miners, while Crothers claimed that they were sent only because of a shortage of labour.<sup>112</sup>

The initial reception of the internees was hostile. Montreal's Labor World called for their removal, warning that enemy aliens handling dynamite and other explosives during wartime was a security threat.<sup>113</sup> The indignation of the local community, which had some 200 citizens who had joined the army in Europe, led Narcisse Arcand, back once again to help the union, to declare at a protest meeting that "the men might just as well get their guns and fight against alien enemies at home as go to Europe to do their fighting".<sup>114</sup> Yet sympathy soon developed between union members and the prisoners, many of whom had union cards and did not want to scab. Dissatisfied with the dangerous conditions that resulted in at least one death, they wanted to return to the internment camp. The companies responded to this new found solidarity by threatening to withhold food if they joined the union.<sup>115</sup> In this case workplace contact and the shared experience of obnoxious company tactics and dangerous working conditions produced solidarity both across ethnic lines, and across lines of national origins.

After waiting another week in vain for a conciliation board, some 900 members of the WFM dropped their tools on 3 August 1916 stopping production at five mines.<sup>116</sup> The mine owners, intent on destroying the WFM,<sup>117</sup> rejected all compromise. The strike collapsed after several weeks not only because of fierce employer resistance, but also because the Catholic union supplied strikebreakers. In the end, the companies signed a single "agreement" that was in their words "made with the employees individually." The document was signed by twelve miners, two from each mine, none representing a union. One lawyer signed for all the companies.<sup>118</sup> The outcome was produced with the help of a Department of Labour fair-wages officer. Crothers described it as "perfectly satisfactory" to everyone.<sup>119</sup> Far from being satisfied, WFM secretary J.L.Rousseau felt that the miners "ont été indignement joués par le Ministre du Travail". The Department of Labour had postponed the strike, had helped supply prisoners to the companies, and worked out a settlement that ignored the union.<sup>120</sup> This defeat had long term consequences. As in the 1916 Hamilton machinists' strike, worker militancy never fully recovered.<sup>121</sup>

The Thetford strike dominated discussion of the IDIA at the 1916 TLC convention. Since its enactment, labour was



divided in its opinion on the IDIA. Welcomed in 1907, the TLCC called for its repeal in 1911 following a dispute that revealed its biases. In 1916, in the hope of improving the legislation, the TLCC executive was preparing amendments for consideration at the annual convention, but these were never discussed. Events at Thetford convinced the convention that the Minister of Labour was willing to jockey with the provisions of the Act to interpret it in favour of employers. The chair of the Resolutions Committee called this dispute

the most serious indictment that has ever been made against the Department of Labour and proves that the Act is a colossal farce in every sense of the word. It means that through the caprice or whim of the Minister of Labor clauses can be interpreted entirely in the interests of the employers.<sup>122</sup>

At the convention, the Minister of Labour walked into the hall during the discussion. To bursts of raucous laughter from incredulous delegates, Crothers attempted to justify his conduct, the use of interned labour, even holding up the final agreement, describing it as having produced a "happy family." He also presented a new argument for refusing a board, citing the presence of the Catholic union for the first time.<sup>123</sup> In the end, the convention condemned Crothers for his handling of the dispute and called for the complete rejection and repeal of the Lemieux Act.<sup>124</sup>

The need to equip Canada's growing army also boosted Quebec's clothing industries, largely concentrated in Montreal. This was the sector with the largest strike during the war and the most numerous disputes in 1917. In these disputes, there was little federal government intervention beyond the usual efforts by a Department of Labour fair-wage officer. There was no censorship, nor did this industry come under the IDIA.

The militancy of the needle trades owed much to the concentration of Jewish workers in this sector. Unfortunately, an exact breakdown of the ethnic composition of the workforce in this industry does not exist for the 1914 to 1918 period. Only in 1931 did the census ask questions that provide such figures. By 1931, almost 29 per cent of the workers in this industry were Jewish.<sup>125</sup> While Jewish workers were a minority in a workforce that included French Canadians, Italian and Eastern European workers, the proportions of members of each group differed depending on the branch of the industry. For the most part, dressmaking and millinery factories employed non-Jewish labour, mostly women. There were large numbers of Jewish workers in the men's ready-made clothing and in the women's cloak and suit trade. There were also different proportions based on skill and gender. Most of the skilled in

these two sectors were Jewish.<sup>126</sup> Overall 55.7 per cent of the men and 14 per cent of the women in the garment trades were Jewish.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, while their presence was significant, Jewish women and girls were a minority of their sex in every branch of the industry.<sup>128</sup>

Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland often arrived in Canada with a commitment to social justice and radical change through Marxism, socialism, anarchism, labour Zionism, or Bundism that led them to organize and participate actively in labour organizations.<sup>129</sup> Combined with a strong sense of their Jewish identity, this led to the establishment of Jewish unions as early as the last years of the nineteenth century. There were Jewish tailoring locals in Montreal in the 1890s.<sup>130</sup> A Jewish labour movement, centred on the needle trades was emerging before the First World War. By 1914, a United Jewish Labour Council was formed.<sup>131</sup> In most garment workers disputes, the majority of strikers and union leaders were Jewish.<sup>132</sup> This was certainly evident in a long and bitter dispute in the men's clothing industry in 1912.<sup>133</sup> As most factory owners were also Jewish, this was also a bitter intra-ethnic struggle, one that helped forge a Jewish working class consciousness that separated the immigrant Downtowners

on the Main from the more established Uptowners in the city's west end.

The 1912 strike had been conducted by the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA), a union whose local leadership and membership in Montreal, and in the larger production centres of the United States, was largely immigrant, but whose international executives were corrupt, nativist and anti-Semitic.<sup>134</sup> Montreal's Jewish workers watched with interest the division in 1914 that led the UGWA's larger immigrant locals in the United States to form the more militant Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, an industrial union under Jewish leadership. And Montreal workers soon followed suit, sending Elias Rabkin, who later went on to a long career in the ACW hierarchy, to the Amalgamated's first convention in 1915.<sup>135</sup> There may have been a "serious factional fight" in Montreal between supporters of the UGWA and the ACW, but in 1916 it was clear that the ACW had carried the day.<sup>136</sup> While the leadership and most members of the ACW were Jewish, making it an important institution in the Jewish community, the union wanted to organize workers of all ethnic groups. It quickly established a French language local, number 115, and hired Adhémar Duquette, a French Canadian organizer. In 1921, it added an Italian organizer to its paid staff. Barred from the

AFL, the ACW had no representation on the MTLCL, but maintained good relations with the council.

The ACW was the largest and most important Jewish union. Other Jewish unions in Montreal included the International Ladies Garment Workers of America (ILGWU), another industrial needle trades union founded by Jewish workers in the United States with jurisdiction over wage earners in women's clothing production. There was also the Cap Makers Union, the Journeymen Tailors' Union and the Jewish Bakery Workers Union.<sup>137</sup> About a third of the men in the fur and fur goods industry were Jewish<sup>138</sup> and they played an important role in the Fur Workers' Union. While the international leadership of this organization was Jewish, the Montreal locals had both French Canadian and Jewish leaders, the former predominating.<sup>139</sup> The Jewish labour movement did far more than defend workplace interests. As a movement it offered its members a wide range of educational and cultural activities, often easing the transition to Canadian life for recent Jewish immigrants. It also set itself apart from the business unionism of the AFL by a commitment for social justice.<sup>140</sup>

As the war revitalized the men's garment industry, the ACW organized rapidly, sometimes where unions had failed in

the past, and pressed its demands on employers in the second half of 1916. Successful strikes at two of the larger factories revealed its growing strength.<sup>141</sup> It also raised wages without a walkout at other large concerns. Faced with this threat, manufacturers prepared to fight. The ACW faced a well organized Clothing Manufacturers Association (CMA) composed of 14 of the larger establishments,<sup>142</sup> employing 65 per cent of the workers in men's clothing.<sup>143</sup> As in 1912, the 1917 strike was an important intra-ethnic struggle. The president of the CMA was Lyon Cohen, owner of Freedman Company, and a prominent member of the Jewish community who represented the established and powerful community leaders who lived in Montreal's west end.<sup>144</sup>

The timing of the confrontation was chosen by the CMA, even though a first strike erupted at Semi-Ready Factory, under non-Jewish ownership, in December 1916. In early January 1917, CMA President Lyon Cohen fired the shop chairman of the union at his factory.<sup>145</sup> Work from his firm was then sent to other members of the CMA, prompting more than 3000 workers to walk out of all the Association's workshops on 12 January.<sup>146</sup>

Recognition was certainly one concern as the CMA refused to negotiate with the "foreign representatives of the union,"

a reference to the American officials who came to Montreal to help with the strike.<sup>147</sup> More important, however, was control in the workplace, what employers called discipline. The hiring process, the division of work, the pace of work, the introduction of new machinery and new production methods, were all key issues.<sup>148</sup> In full page newspaper advertisements in English and French, the CMA denounced the union's desire to run their businesses.<sup>149</sup> By way of examples, Lyon Cohen explained that the union prevented him from discharging a worker who refused to do work as the foreman required; it had also fined a presser twenty five dollars for working at a faster pace than the union permitted. When this presser refused to pay, the Amalgamated forced Cohen to fire him. This kind of constant interference had, Cohen claimed, reduced output by thirty percent.<sup>150</sup> The CMA opposed other demands as well. The ACW wanted to forbid one team of workers in a shop from doing the work of another team. It also wanted new employees hired through the union.<sup>151</sup> Because changing styles and methods altered the work process, the union wanted to renegotiate production procedures at the start of each season. And it wanted grievances handled by an elected committee in each factory.<sup>152</sup> It was this last issue that produced the greatest employer resistance.<sup>153</sup> Only some weeks into the

dispute did the union add wage increases and shorter hours to its demands.

On 12 February, a month into the dispute, the ACW declared a general strike throughout the men's clothing industry<sup>154</sup> bringing out 1,500 workers from 46 sub-contractors shops that were doing work for members of the CMA,<sup>155</sup> increasing the number of strikers to at least 4,500. This was the largest single strike in Quebec during the war, and the largest garment workers dispute before the 1930s. This walk-out may have encouraged other needle trades workers to strike as well. On 26 January the ILGWU issued demands for higher wages, shorter hours and recognition, and declared a general strike involving 1,000 workers in the women's cloak and suit trade.<sup>156</sup> In all, there were some 5,500 strikers out at one time. Smaller walkouts of fur workers and journeymen tailors followed in March.

Jewish workers were strong strike supporters and accounted for most of the strikers. The ACW had, however, made a serious attempt to recruit French Canadians who were, according to one union official, initially apathetic towards organized labour. The effort paid off as French-Canadian strikers, many of them very young girls, were later described



as "stanch and loyal members fighting shoulder to shoulder alongside of their sisters and brothers of Jewish, Italian and English nationalities."<sup>157</sup> Precise figures are rare. One hostile employer estimated that 70 per cent of the strikers were Jewish,<sup>158</sup> suggesting that 30 per cent were of other ethnicities. Another source states that of 5,000 ACW members in 1917, 1000 were French-Canadian women, and that there were several hundred Italians.<sup>159</sup> The ACW had a remarkable degree of success in organizing and promoting solidarity across ethnic lines.

The ethnic composition of the strikers soon became an issue when one non-Jewish employer in the men's clothing industry tried to raise anti-German and anti-Semitic sentiment against strikers and union representatives. Alfred Wood, the vice-president of Semi-Ready, charged that the strike was engineered by German agents from the United States intent on hindering the production of military uniforms, and called on the Canadian government to deport the "German-Jewish" strikers.<sup>160</sup> Realizing that such false statements could harm the Jewish community, CMA president Lyon Cohen called Wood's charges of German sympathies and disloyalty ridiculous.<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, such claims induced the Canadian government to restrict the movement of union organizers. When ILGWU Vice-

President Elmer Rosenberg travelled to Montreal from the United States he was temporarily held by the authorities as a dangerous alien before being released.<sup>162</sup> Wood's anti-semitism also found a receptive ear in Montreal's judiciary. When three juvenile picketers charged with disturbing the peace were acquitted for lack of evidence, recorder Semple, the city's chief magistrate, assumed that the young accused and their union representatives had not told the truth because "unlike the police constables who testified against them and who know what it is to perjure themselves, and are, at least, Christians". He also described ACW secretary B. Rishikoff as of "deficient moral and mental capacity." Semple later apologized claiming he was mis-interpreted.<sup>163</sup>

These were bitter strikes. There was mass picketing around the factories, sometimes in extremely cold weather. Huge crowds of strikers appeared shortly before the end of the work day to greet strikebreakers coming out from the factories.<sup>164</sup> While strikers tried to prevent the factories from operating, the manufacturers looked to the police to help keep them open. More than a third of the Montreal force, some 300 constables, were deployed against the picketers,<sup>165</sup> often charging into them on horse back.<sup>166</sup> Despite the rough handling, when police ordered crowds to disperse, they

frequently met resistance. There were many arrests. On one day alone they took 27 persons into custody.<sup>167</sup> Peter Bercovitch, the Amalgamated's attorney and the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Saint Louis, denounced the police brutality, accusing the police chief of favouring the employers.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, when one firm secured an injunction against picketing by the ILGWU, the police chief interpreted the order to mean that all picketing was forbidden. It took a delegation from the MTLG to the mayor to get a revocation of the police order against picketing.<sup>169</sup>

Faced with the brutal partisanship of the police, strikers responded with violence on picket lines and near strikebreakers' homes. One strikebreaker was hit on the head with an iron bar on his way from work. A bomb exploded at the house of another. One man was arrested for threatening scabs with a gun, while another was charged with sabotage, having allegedly poured corrosive acid on some overcoats.<sup>170</sup> Some manufacturers used these incidents to portray the unions as tyrannous organizations with little support among the strikers. In an open letter to Mayor Médéric Martin, Harris Vineberg, an important manufacturer, claimed that the ACW was imposing a "reign of terror". Probably referring to the picket line clashes, he wrote of the "heart-rending scenes" of

workers "crazed with fear" through the "evil hour". Assaults on strikebreakers, prompted Semi-Ready Clothing to entrench them in the factory and to send their families out of town.<sup>171</sup> The Ladies Garment Manufacturers Association painted a picture of the ILGWU that engaged in:

...violent picketing, murderous assaults, intimidations, destruction of property, and the hiring of gangs of sluggers, who are paid to maltreat certain of the work people who<sup>172</sup> are eager to return to remunerative employment.

The strike was a struggle that divided the Jewish community. Lyon Cohen claimed he had accepted the position as president of the CMA partly because he believed that his work in the community would help in dealings with the unions.<sup>173</sup> The union, for its part, resented a number of employer tactics. It charged that the CMA had asked the New York police department for its record on ACW organizer Joseph Schossberg hoping to get him deported. For recent Jewish refugees from Russia calling out the police and informing were considered two particularly outrageous offenses. The union also claimed employers prevented Jewish charities from giving aid to the strikers. There was clearly a good deal of bitterness. One crowd of strikers, likely more secular than religious,

disrupted Lyon Cohen's attempt to address the opening of a new synagogue.<sup>174</sup>

There was important support for the striking garment workers within the immigrant Jewish community. A downtown Business Men's Strike Relief Committee led by Lyon W. Jacobs, councillor for Saint Louis ward, and Peter Bercovitch was formed to give moral and financial support to the strikers. It organized a tag day to raise funds and helped to counter the employers' hostile publicity campaign, organizing a mass meeting and inviting prominent municipal officials including Mayor Martin to speak because "Nous voulons démontrer que les grévistes ont des amis".<sup>175</sup> Other organizations in the Jewish labour movement also helped. In an appeal to organizations in a number of United States cities Montreal's Labour Zionist movement raised \$1,100 for the ACW strike fund.<sup>176</sup> Since the strikers did not get much support from the local Jewish press, reluctant to alienate the manufacturers, the strikers established their own newspaper that ran for eight weeks, producing 20 issues.<sup>177</sup>

There were numerous attempts to get the employers to accept mediation.<sup>178</sup> As a result of one such suggestion, representatives of both sides met with municipal officials,

including Mayor Médéric Martin, in early February.<sup>179</sup> The CMA, however, would not meet union officers but only with strikers as individuals<sup>180</sup> and refused any form of arbitration.<sup>181</sup> Frustrated by the impasse and wanting to make his labour sympathies clear, Mayor Martin wrote a review of his efforts, condemning the employers and encouraging the strikers to stand firm for recognition.<sup>182</sup> This represented important public support from outside the Jewish community.

After more than two months on strike from 12 January 1917 to 19 March 1917 the strike was settled through the mediation of Michael Hirsh, a prominent Montreal businessman, and Peter Bercovitch. All issues would be settled by a five member committee, none of whom were to be connected with the clothing industry. Two representatives from labour were chosen by Bercovitch, two from business by Hirsh, and a chair was selected by the four.<sup>183</sup> This solution maintained the illusion that the employers had not conceded to deal directly with ACW representatives at the same time as they accepted substantive negotiations. This outcome was greeted enthusiastically by the workers as a victory and for good reason. The Board of Inquiry later granted a 48 hour week, a one dollar across the board increase, and the recognition of shop committees.<sup>184</sup> The outcome involved voluntary arbitration of a kind that later

developed into the establishment of permanent boards to deal with future disputes. While there was nothing legally binding in the board's recommendations, it dealt with far more issues than the boards under the Lemieux Act. This dispute established the ACW as the most important of the Jewish unions in Montreal, a symbol of Jewish working class consciousness. It also portrayed the profound and bitter divisions between Uptowners and Downtowners within the Jewish community.<sup>185</sup>

Members of the ILGWU fared less well in their bitter two month dispute. Manufacturers were prepared to lose the entire season to maintain the open shop and to extend piece work. When the strike was called off, employers refused to reemploy many of the strikers, citing their actions during the dispute, forcing about 200 cloakmakers to leave for other production centres. As a result, the organization rapidly lost membership and its hold on the few shops that had earlier come to terms with the union. Montreal's Cloakmakers remained in poor condition for the duration of the war.<sup>186</sup>

Women Workers During The War

One of the most significant aspects of trade union growth during the war was the organization of large numbers of women workers. In 1917, about forty per cent of the 4,500 striking Amalgamated Clothing Workers and half of the 500 striking fur workers were women. The ACW noted how women maintained the picket lines during the bitterly cold and long winter strike. During one day of confrontations with scabs and police, nine women were arrested.<sup>187</sup> After the strike, the Amalgamated considered the women more active than men in rank and file affairs, participating in all discussions, and much more active than women in other clothing centres.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, largely because of the number of activist Jewish women, women in the garment industry were more militant than in other sectors.<sup>189</sup> The organization of the men's ready made clothing sector was the most successful campaign to incorporate women into the labour movement during the war.

Women's organization during the war was uneven, however, even in the garment trades. They were better organized in the ACW and the fur worker's union, than in the ILGWU. Three quarters of the ILGWU strikers in 1917 were male cutters in the cloak and suit trade. Organizing efforts apparently



concentrated on these workers because they were alleged to be the most solid union supporters. This was a case where ethnicity and gender combined to hinder greater unity. The organized cutters were mostly skilled Jewish men while the women were predominantly French Canadians who were considered less skilled. The male unionists considered gentile women more difficult to organize.<sup>190</sup> Skill may also account for the stronger support that men gave to this union, as it was much harder to replace these workers who played a key role in the production process. The women were much more vulnerable to being fired and replaced by other workers.<sup>191</sup> Male ILGWU members were ambivalent when women initiated strike action, as they did over the uneven distribution of work in a shop late in 1917. The men initially supported their female co-workers then returned to work three days later saying that the women were wrong to strike, only to be ordered out again by the union.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, the Montreal ILGWU had asked the union's international leadership to appoint a French Canadian organizer in 1914 and again in 1916 but without success.<sup>193</sup> The ILGWU did, however, organize women beyond the women's cloak and suit trade in 1917, when it established a local for Montreal's millinery workers.<sup>194</sup>

If the organization of women was viewed positively by needle trade unions, the entry of women into wartime industries was considered a serious threat by other international unions. In 1916, at the urging of the Imperial Munitions Board, thousands of women were hired to produce munitions, including explosives and fuses. Labour leaders in Quebec suspected that this was less to meet a labour shortage than to release more men for military service. The Montreal Trades and Labor Council objected on the grounds that men were still out of work.<sup>195</sup> As later noted by Mark Irish, who directed the IMB's department of labour, there was never a shortage of unskilled male labour in Quebec during the war.<sup>196</sup> Labor World also complained about women's low wages because they exerted a downward pressure on men's earnings.<sup>197</sup> In addition, Gustave Francq, under the pseudonym Jean Lacroix, objected on grounds that might gain nationalist and clerical support: "l'avenir de la race" was at stake. He argued that since women were weaker than men and could not do the same work, there was a need to protect them against "la maladie, l'épuisement et la mort."<sup>198</sup> While every other province suspended for the duration of the war the enforcement of provisions in their factory acts that restricted the employment of women, the Montreal Trades and Labor Council successfully convinced the Quebec government to enforce the

regulations that limited the hours of work for women, that prohibited night work, and that allowed government inspectors to decide on the suitability of various kinds of work for women. The result was that many women in munitions factories were thrown out of work.<sup>199</sup> The conservatism of the Quebec government on this question bolstered the ability of male trade unionists to exclude women from employment.

Women also entered a wide range of jobs in a number of other industries, not all engaged in war work, that had been previously occupied almost exclusively by men. For example, women replaced men in the hose room and in the moulds and roll departments in rubber goods factories and were expected to remain in these occupations after the war. They replaced men lacing springs in some furniture and upholstery concerns and, in addition, in a number of areas in electrical factories where employers continually sought to place women in new positions. In the large railway shops women ran light machines, lathes, and toiled as general carpenters, painters, mattress makers, armature winders, and as unskilled labourers.<sup>200</sup> Attempts to prevent the entry of women into new areas were not restricted to wartime industries as Montreal's cigarmakers struck a number of times in 1918 because of the employment of larger numbers of women workers.<sup>201</sup>

### Labour And Conscription

During 1916 and into 1917, Quebec workers became increasingly upset at military recruitment policies, particularly as it appeared that the government was moving towards conscription. This was especially the case among French Canadians. Their attitude to the war, while it ranged from enthusiastic to indifferent at the start, was always contingent on a voluntary effort and declined steadily over the course of the conflict. Approval for the government's war policies, and even for the war, dissipated in large part because of the treatment of francophone minorities outside Quebec, especially in Ontario where Regulation 17 drastically reduced the right to French language education. The almost complete disregard of labour's interests, however, especially in regard to grievances of workers engaged in munitions production, also contributed to the erosion of support even for voluntary recruiting.<sup>202</sup> There was, moreover, growing resentment at the coercive measures used by some employers to urge men to volunteer.<sup>203</sup> Anglo-Celt workers, more supportive of the war, were also troubled by federal labour policies and a war effort that seemed to demand greater sacrifices from workers than from employers. A few socialists, like machinist

Richard Kerrigan, maintained a pacifist opposition to war. The TLCC, for its part, while endorsing the legitimacy of the allied cause, was committed to opposing compulsory military service.

As voluntary enlistment declined in the second half of 1916, the federal government established the National Service Board to conduct registration, a census of Canada's manpower, to coordinate recruitment and the employment of men in munitions factories.<sup>204</sup> Both organized labour in Quebec, and French Canadians generally, believed that this was a prelude to conscription. The MTLC was outraged that TLC president Watters, having secured government assurances that it was not a step towards the draft, recommended compliance. Already tainted by his earlier support for the extension of the IDIA, this action confirmed the view that Watters was not properly representing the position of the labour movement to the government.<sup>205</sup>

Opposition to registration and conscription was based, in part, on the fear that the measures would be used to regiment workers, to force employees to stay in a job assigned to them.<sup>206</sup> At a time when union leaders discouraged strikes, jumping, or moving from one job to another for higher wages or

better conditions was one way individual workers could improve their situation. Among skilled craft workers in short supply, toolmakers, toolsetters, millwrights and molders, there was a good deal of movement from plant to plant as manufacturers offered higher wages to attract them away from other employers.<sup>207</sup> Nor were the fears that the government might restrict labour mobility entirely groundless. J.T. Foster recalled that R.B. Bennett, the head of the National Service Board, had said

that the workers employed in the munition factories were jumping from one shop to another, which impeded work, and that some legislation would have to be adopted to put a stop to it.<sup>208</sup>

To keep wages down, the IMB encouraged employers to voluntarily restrict movement in smaller centres, although it could not do the same in larger ones. As an historian of the IMB later wrote:

In the large manufacturing centres the Department of Labour [of the IMB] was unable to control this movement of labour, but in the smaller centres, where not more than ten manufacturers operated, the movement was arrested by a common-sense plan of mutual agreement between the manufacturers to pay the same wages for the same labour.<sup>209</sup>

The IMB also wanted to stop competition between shipbuilders: "An attempt was made to restrict the transfer of men from yard to yard, but it failed."<sup>210</sup> Legislation that would freeze

workers in their jobs would also hinder them from going on strike.

As conscription was about to be announced, the TLCC invited 80 international unions, including the railway brotherhoods, and the Federation of Letter Carriers of Canada, to a special four day conference in Ottawa early in June 1917 to discuss a wide range of topics, including the labour policies of the IMB, and conscription. By reaching beyond its own affiliates, the Congress hoped to put more pressure on the government. They were also leaving behind the closed door lobbying that had proven ineffective. Their report listed the grievances that had mounted since the start of the war: the poor working conditions in munitions factories; the employment of women in larger numbers while skilled men were still out of work; the use of interned aliens to break strikes as at Thetford. The conference also expressed concern about the high cost of living, attributed it to speculators, and called for greater government control over the cost and distribution of food and fuel through a wide ranging program of nationalization. And it expressed its complete opposition to industrial and military conscription. Their main proposal, however, was for the reorganization of the IMB to include representatives from labour.<sup>211</sup>

But without a threat of something like strike action, even such a united front of organized workers could put little pressure on the government. The TLCC and affiliates, like the IAM, were still trying to avoid strikes in munitions production as they continued their campaign for a fair wage clause. They even took their case directly to British authorities, but to no avail.<sup>212</sup> Perhaps it was because they still had the cooperation of labour leaders that the Borden government refused to believe that there was serious unrest or that they needed to make any concessions to labour.<sup>213</sup>

The introduction of conscription in May 1917 produced a massive extra-parliamentary protest movement throughout Quebec during the summer of 1917. Francophone workers throughout the province played a prominent role in these demonstrations. This was, however, primarily a political battle, one that as Leo Roback has stated, never joined with the industrial militancy of these years. Conscription was also the major issue in the federal elections in December 1917. While all but three seats in Quebec went to the anti-conscriptionist Laurier-Liberals, Prime Minister Borden was returned to power. The result was the virtual exclusion of Quebec and of any French-Canadian representation in the government.



Nor did these elections mean an end to discontent. The MTLIC complained that the enforcement of the Military Service Act by federal police victimized workers.<sup>214</sup> Trades and labour council president Foster feared that the Act was being enforced in a selective manner to help break strikes, as he said that the federal police chose not to harass men of military age working as strike breakers.<sup>215</sup> Montreal's Labor World, the organ of the MTLIC, also wondered if the serious unemployment among munitions workers between June 1917 and March 1918 was punishment for Quebec's opposition to conscription, although the Department of Labour said that it was the result of a shortage of raw materials.<sup>216</sup>

In the aftermath of the election there was a rapprochement between the international unions in Canada generally and the government. In reaction to growing militancy and unrest, the government decided to seek labour's support. This was facilitated because conscription received the powerful backing of AFL president Samuel Gompers who expressed his support for the measure in a speech in Toronto in December 1917 just weeks before the federal elections. In January 1918, the government invited the AFL President to address the House

of Commons where he provided more support for the governments' war policies.

In a gesture to organized labour Borden chose Senator Gideon Robertson, a conservative leader of the Commercial Telegraphers' Union, as Minister of Labour. In January 1918, union leaders from across Canada were invited to meetings with Cabinet members in Ottawa. There they were offered a measure of influence on government committees if they continued to try to prevent strikes and rein in more militant and radical elements. In effect they also had to tacitly support government war policies, including conscription. International union leaders believed that the government had finally recognized that co-operation with labour was essential to the war effort. In return labour leaders were named to government boards and commissions over the following months.<sup>217</sup> This did not, however, represent the degree of influence that labour had hoped for. All in all, labour was given far less influence in government than the AFL received in the United States, whose role produced tangible benefits for American workers.<sup>218</sup>

Indeed, the federal government continued to issue orders-in-council that threatened workers rights without consulting labour. In April 1918 it introduced the Idlers Act that made

useful work obligatory for males age 16 to 65. This was considered a direct threat to the right to strike. The MTLC became alarmed when the Prime Minister, during the Winnipeg civic workers' strike of 1918, stated that in his opinion the Act applied to strikers. Foster declared that:

The press has been very loud in saying that a man who leaves his work at the present time, especially in munitions, or shipbuilding work, is an idler, ... There is a danger. Men who refuse to allow themselves to be exploited by war profiteers are not to be put in jail for going on strike."

There was also a problem in that a useful occupation was not defined and some men were being fined for working at their customary trades.<sup>219</sup>

In July 1918, as a further gesture to labour, the government issued a war labour policy. This statement called for workers to have the right to organize a union without fear of discrimination, and called on employers to recognise unions, to pay the wages that prevailed in their district, and to give equal pay to women. Workers were asked to maximize production. It established a Labour Appeals Board as a final review for decisions made by conciliation boards under the Lemieux Act. This last move was particularly welcomed by Montreal's Gustave Francq, named one of its two labour representatives. The policy was hollow, however, since

compliance was voluntary. Even the government apparently ignored it. A week later a more coercive element was added to the government's policy when it was announced that violators of the IDIA would be prosecuted.<sup>220</sup>

The federal government's military recruitment policies of 1916 and 1917 created widespread resentment throughout Quebec. When registration was introduced many workers were already resentful that government leaders were asking for greater sacrifices from workers than from employers, and they feared that the measure might be used to restrict labour mobility. Despite Prime Minister Borden's promise to the contrary, registration turned out to be a prelude to conscription for overseas service, a move that produced a massive anti-conscriptionist movement and that led to the bitter and divisive 1917 general elections.

Conscription not only undermined confidence in the conduct of the war effort, the refusal to address labour's concerns provoked greater militancy and industrial unrest. In the wake of the 1917 federal elections, Prime Minister Borden made a number of gestures to woo labour support. A trade unionist was made Minister of Labour. Some TLCC representatives were placed on government boards and

committees along side prominent business leaders. International union leaders in Quebec hoped that such tripartite consultation would lead to the enactment of favourable legislation, that cooperation would produce concrete results. In July 1918 the federal government issued a war labour policy calling on employers to recognize unions. This in itself was a remarkable and unprecedented gesture. In the end, however, the policy was unsubstantial. Compliance by employers was voluntary. Labour's role on government boards did not provide real influence or lead to the kind of government concessions TLCC leaders desired. And at the same time as the Union government offered the appearance of influence, it continued to impose more coercive measures on workers, including the Idlers Act and the threat to prosecute IDIA violators.

#### New Organizing and Growing Militancy

Despite the promise made by TLCC and international union leaders that they would promote industrial peace, the number of disputes continued to grow. Indeed for many workers industrial militancy must have seemed like the only remaining option given the cautious stance of MTLC leaders and the failure of TLCC lobbying efforts. While workers in war related

industries had benefited first from the revitalization of the labour movement, organization and unrest then extended to other sectors of the economy. Of particular significance was the organization of new groups of workers. For example municipal employees and tramway workers across Quebec also organized and fought on an impressive scale for the right to bargain collectively. There were often expressions of solidarity between these two groups of workers. Police and firemen struck in Sherbrooke in 1916.<sup>221</sup> In Quebec City firemen stationed at the city hall attacked passing street cars run by scabs during a dispute that same year.<sup>222</sup> Three thousand tramway workers in Montreal organized and secured a contract after a strike threat in 1918.

These developments were significant for two reasons. Municipal workers and tramway employees tended to be French Canadians, thus significantly increasing their presence in the labour movement. Secondly, the rising number of successful strikes suggested that militancy worked. Indeed, in 1917 there were 31 disputes in Quebec, more than double the number of the year before.<sup>223</sup> These were almost all aggressive actions by workers seeking collective bargaining rights, better wages and working conditions. Of the 23 listed in the Labour Gazette or

in the Department of Labour Strike and Lock-out files, only four resulted in employer victories.

Opposed to the rapprochement with the government and with the attempts to discourage strike action, socialists were generally at odds with more conservative TLCC leaders.<sup>224</sup> The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia that brought the Bolsheviks to power also encouraged socialists in Canada. In Quebec this was evident among Montreal's machinists and in the European immigrant communities. In February 1918 more than 3,000 people gathered in Montreal to hear James Simpson, a leading member of the Toronto SDP, speak approvingly about the new Bolshevik government.<sup>225</sup>

Growing rank and file militancy was also evident in the railway shops. This was an industry that witnessed one of the most important developments in collective bargaining during the war. While there had been earlier attempts at inter-union co-operation, the formation of Division 4 of the Railway Employees Department of the AFL in 1918, uniting seven craft unions, was a major step towards industry wide negotiations. Its aim went further than higher wages; it wanted uniformity among the various railway companies, and between different regions of Canada. When negotiations with the Railway War

Board began in April 1918, Division 4 was armed with a strike mandate.

Railways were, however, essential to the war economy. In May 1918, the federal government warned the negotiating committee that if it called a strike, it would impose martial law and force shop craft workers to work at military rates of pay. Alternatively, they could accept the same agreement as was then being worked out in the United States, the McAdoo award. On 16 July 1918 the Canadian government ruled that this settlement would apply in Canada. On the one hand, as James Naylor has pointed out, the threat of a strike won recognition for Division 4 and an industry wide agreement; on the other, the McAdoo award was considered inadequate and rejected by the 30,000 strong membership. Militancy was, however, kept in check by international union leaders. A strike was forbidden by the Executive Council of the Railway Employees Department of the AFL in Washington, and any union that went on strike was warned that it would have its charter revoked.<sup>226</sup>

To the irritation of Montreal machinists like Richard Kerrigan, militancy and strikes were kept in check not only by union officials in Canada but by the AFL as well.<sup>227</sup> To answer criticisms of international headquarters, IAM president



William H. Johnston, came to Montreal, accompanied by Canadian IAM vice-president McClelland, IAM business agent J.T. Foster and W.D. Mahon of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Johnston placed victory in war above the local concerns of Montreal machinists. Canadian and American workers, he said, were in the war to win and it would be "criminal" to strike during the war. What was at stake on the battlefield was more important than the monetary demands of Canadian shop craft workers. The meeting degenerated into a shouting match as Johnston was frequently and violently interrupted by socialist critics. Socialist machinists were plainly not moved by patriotic appeals especially when, as one pointed out, the allies were fighting the new Bolshevik government in Russia. The division between the international leadership and rank and file socialists in Montreal's shops was clear, as Johnston in turn denounced the Bolsheviks in Russia.<sup>228</sup>

Shipbuilding was another industry where growing militancy was evident. A Marine Trades Federation (MTF) was formed among craft workers in 1918 in an attempt to establish collective bargaining on an industry wide basis and uniform conditions over all the shipyards of eastern North America. This joint council had a significant impact in the shipbuilding centres

of Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Sorel, Quebec, and Lévis. In 1918, several disputes erupted in Quebec shipyards. In Montreal there was a strike of ships' carpenters at Frazer-Brace in May 1918, and in another successful dispute at the John McDougall Caledonian Iron Works, 43 machinists stayed out from March until October. There was also a ten-day dispute of 1,500 workers at another yard in Montreal at the end of July 1918. The Department of Labour also received numerous requests during the months of July for boards of conciliation from shipyards across the province. While the extension of the IDIA to munitions industries was initially greeted with outrage in 1916, it was later viewed by unions as a way of forcing reluctant employers to discuss wages and conditions in what was often a public forum. International union leaders wanted uniform wages and hours throughout the whole industry similar to those introduced in the railway shops.<sup>229</sup> In the case of the MTF industry-wide collective bargaining was checked by a government appointed royal commission, and by the establishment of rival Catholic unions.

Instead of forming a board under the Industrial Dispute Investigation Act to deal with each request, the government appointed a royal commission with the power to recommend the bargaining agent and wage scales in all the disputes. The

majority report of the royal commission ignored the MTF demands for a uniform settlement and supported different wage scales in each locality. Many of these yards, notably those in Trois-Rivières and Lévis, were also the scene of inter-union rivalry between international and Catholic unions. And the commission further recommended that Catholic unions be recognized at two companies in Trois-Rivières and at the Davie Shipbuilding at Lauzon. The latter recommendation was particularly contentious since a strike of 239 men had erupted at Lauzon when the employer declared that he would only hire Catholic union members and fired seventeen MTF militants.<sup>230</sup> The Federation also believed that the commission was unduly and surreptitiously influenced by the Catholic unions in Trois-Rivières. A delegation of international union leaders was reportedly ready in October 1918 to threaten a general strike in shipyards on the St. Lawrence from Toronto to Quebec City if the Davie dispute was not settled to their satisfaction.<sup>231</sup> While it is unclear why they backed down, it may have been because an order-in-council prohibiting strikes in all wartime industries was issued within a few days of the publication of this threat.<sup>232</sup>

This ban revealed that the government was alarmed by the mounting strike wave. And it came quickly on the heels of two

others that severely restricted civil and trade union liberties. On 25 September 1918 the government had prohibited the possession, production or circulation of publications in fourteen enemy alien languages.<sup>233</sup> On 28 September 1918 it had declared illegal fourteen specific organizations, including the Social Democratic Party.<sup>234</sup> Clearly, federal officials were also alarmed by socialist activity.

These restrictions came as a surprise. The TLC had rejoiced over promises of co-operation and mutual entente that the government made to TLC representatives. Labour leaders, Francq claimed, had held up their end of the bargain: "Ils ont tenu parole, ils se sont toujours efforcés d'empêcher les grèves, ils n'ont pas craint de dénoncer eux-même publiquement les quelques révolutionnaires, soi-disant ouvriers, qui semaient le trouble et la discorde dans la nation." In return the government had promised to consult labour before taking any measures affecting workers.<sup>235</sup> The restrictions demonstrated that the policy of cooperation gave labour little influence, and enraged even the most conservative craft union leaders who found their position completely undermined. In Montreal, Francq was clearly dismayed:

Hélas! tout cela n'était qu'un rêve, et toutes les espérances des travailleurs du Dominion ont croulé sous le coup de l'acte le plus autocratiques, le plus incompréhensible, le plus inacceptable de tous

*ceux que ce gouvernement a faits depuis son arrivée  
au pouvoir.*

To take away the right to strike left workers without the only  
weapon that they could use to redress grievances:

*le gouvernement a décrété qu'à l'avenir les ouvriers  
devront subir tous les affronts, toutes les  
persécutions, toutes les injustices qu'il plaira à ceux  
qui les emploient de leur infliger.*<sup>236</sup>

### Conclusion

During the war there was massive trade union growth,  
first in wartime industry, then in other areas of the economy.  
A significant development was the organization of workers in  
new occupational groups with little or no previous experience  
of the labour movement. Trade union membership affected  
workers of all ethnic backgrounds. A mixed workforce did not  
necessarily lead to fragmentation, as there were important  
examples of solidarity at Thetford or among Montreal garment  
workers for example. This growth was the result of a number of  
conditions fostered by the wartime economy. Less fearful of  
losing their jobs as work became more plentiful, workers felt  
a growing sense of injustice and outrage as employers profited  
from the war while spiralling inflation eroded wages that were  
all too often inadequate to provide a decent living for a

working class family. In addition, wartime discontent was also fuelled by a number of government policies. These included the refusal to include fair wage clauses in munitions contracts, the use of unfree labour in the form of interned aliens at Thetford just as union members were preparing for a strike, and by promoting the hiring of women in non-traditional occupations. With growth came greater militancy. As the war progressed, it was clear that strike action, or the threat of a strike, worked. In collective bargaining, an important development was a first successful example of a national industry-wide agreement in the railway shops.

Militancy mounted despite the efforts of international union leaders, at the local, national and international levels to restrain strikes among workers engaged in vital wartime production. While these efforts had a measure of success, they increased the tensions between craft union leaders, anxious to help the government sustain the war effort, and more militant elements among the rank and file. While moderate trade union leaders were anxious for patriotic reasons to help sustain the war effort, they also hoped that their activities would be rewarded with fair wage clauses in munitions contracts, for instance.

For its part, the federal government combined repressive measures with some significant, but largely symbolic, concessions to the TLCC leadership. Sometimes government policies had positive if unforeseen consequences for organized labour. The extension of the IDIA to all wartime industries in 1916 was greeted as an unacceptable substitute for a fair wage clause, but by 1917 and 1918 workers viewed such government intervention as a way of forcing otherwise intransigent employers to discuss wages and working conditions. After the 1917 federal elections, as a response to labour's growing militancy, the Union government invited TLCC to participate in a limited manner on government boards and committees. International union leaders welcomed these offers hoping that such cooperation would lead to more significant role within the state, to more active participation in decision making and in more favourable labour legislation. The government also made an important albeit ineffective gesture in support of union recognition. Despite the high hopes, labour leaders never gained the influence that they sought. Close to the end of the war, the goodwill the government's gestures might have fostered was cancelled when the 1918 Orders-in-Council banning strikes and restricting political rights was issued.

## Endnotes

1. United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners business agent Narcisse Arcand, TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 111.
2. For an example see Mason Wade, Les Canadiens français de 1760 à nos jours. Tome II (1911-1963), Ottawa, 1963, 93.
3. Yves Roby, Les Québécois et les investissements américains (1918-1929), Québec, 1976, 12; Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, and Jean-Claude Robert, Histoire du Québec contemporain, De la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929), Montréal, 1979, 416-7.
4. This brief description of the Quebec economy is based on John H. Dales, Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development, Quebec 1898-1940, Cambridge, 1957; Roby, Les Québécois et les investissements américains; Linteau, Durocher, and Robert, Histoire du Québec contemporain, 351-427; John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, A Short History of Quebec, Toronto, 1993; Robert Armstrong, Structure and Change. An Economic History of Quebec, 1984.
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6. Linteau, Durocher, and Robert, Histoire du Québec contemporain, 360, 373, 383, 462-4; Dickinson and Young, A Short History of Quebec, 195; Ronald Rudin, "Naissance et déclin d'une élite locale: La Banque des Cantons de l'Est, 1859-1912," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, 38, 2, automne 1984, 165-179.
7. Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf. The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec 1900-1914, Ottawa, 1972, 41.



8. Linteau, Durocher, and Robert, Histoire du Québec contemporain, 465.
9. See Parisé, Mgr Eugène Lapointe; and Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux, 160-70.
10. Nathan Keyfitz, "Population problems" in Jean-Claude Falardeau, (dir.), Essais sur le Québec contemporain, Québec, 1953, 73.
11. Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal, 1910-1950," Journal of Canadian Studies, 19, 2, Summer 1984, 97; Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," in Journal of Canadian Studies, 17, 4, Winter 1982-83, 48.
12. Jeremy Boissevain, The Italians of Montreal, Ottawa, 1970, 2.
13. William J. Roy, "The French-English Division of Labour in the Province of Quebec," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1935; Ross McCormack, "Cloth Caps and Jobs: the Ethnicity of English Immigrants in Canada 1900-1914," in Ethnicity, Power and Politics, Jorgen Dahlie and F. Tissa, eds., 1981, 38-55; Lloyd G. Reynolds, The British Immigrant: His Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada, Toronto, 1935, 157-189; Ronald Rudin, The Forgotten Quebecers. A History of English Speaking Quebec 1759-1980, Quebec, 1985, 201-214; Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 48; On Italian workers see Bruno Ramirez, "Workers Without a Cause: Italian Immigrant Labour in Montreal 1880-1930," in Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino eds., Arrangiarsi. The Italian Immigrant Experience in Canada, Montreal, 1992, 119-134.
14. This estimate was made by Catholic union activist Alfred Charpentier. Jacques Rouillard also believes that this holds true going back to the start of the century. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 36, fn 89.
15. Louis Rosenberg, Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada, Montreal, 1939, 177; Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 99-100.
16. Ramirez, "Workers Without a Cause:" 119-134.

17. Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History", 46.
18. Of those where the cause can be determined, 56.5 per cent were fought uniquely for increased wages. James Thwaites, "La Grève au Québec: Une analyse quantitative exploratoire portant sur la période 1896-1915," Labour/Le Travail 14, Fall 1984, 190-194.
19. Rouillard, Les Syndicats Nationaux, 233-4. Rouillard estimates that in 1921 there were some 72,761 organized workers of which 17,600 belonged to Catholic unions.
20. On Le Monde ouvrier/The Labor World see Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier/The Labor World (1916-1926): an Analysis of Thought and a Detailed Index" Unpublished D.E.S. Thesis, University of Montreal, 1971.
21. Rouillard, Syndicats Nationaux, 36, fn 89.
22. Labor World, 7 February 1925.
23. Labor World, 9 October 1920.
24. Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf, 102.
25. On 1902 Berlin Convention see Robert Babcock, Gompers in Canada. A study in American Continentalism Before the First World War, Toronto, 1974; Robert Babcock, "Gompers in Canada Revisited," in W.J.C. Cherwinski and G.S. Kealey eds., Lectures in Canadian Working Class History, St-John's, 1985, 89-100; Jacques Rouillard, "Le Québec et le congrès de Berlin, 1902," Labour/Le Travailleur, 1, 1976, 69-91; Jacques Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux, 73-83.
26. Jacques Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec. Des origines à nos jours, Montreal, 1989, 85-88. The quarrel was over the uniformity of public school texts, a reform strongly opposed by the Catholic Church.
27. According to Jacques Rouillard a number of labour clubs were organized in Montreal in the 1890s to bring workers together to discuss issues of common concern. Some were organized by traditional political parties and the idea of forming a labour party was suggested by one club that was unhappy with the actions, or inaction, of the recently elected

federal and provincial Liberal governments. These clubs were also active in municipal politics. They organized a number of mutual benefit measures and social activities. One provided unemployment benefits. Some had libraries and placement offices, organized excursions and sporting competitions. On the labour clubs see Jacques Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière, 1899-1915," in Fernand Dumont et al. (dir.) Idéologie au Canada français 1900-1929, Québec, 1974, 267-312.

28. Michel Gauvin, "The Reformer and the Machine: Montreal Civic Politics from Raymond Préfontaine to Médéric Martin," Journal of Canadian Studies, 13, 2, Summer 1978, 21.

29. Groupe de chercheurs de l'Université du Québec à Montréal sur l'histoire des travailleurs québécois, L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois (fin du XIXe siècle à 1919) Recueil de Document, Montréal, 1976, 23, 71, 73.

30. La Patrie, 3 November 1921.

31. La Patrie, 14 February 1920.

32. Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 46; Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal," 100.

33. La Patrie, 4 April 1916.

34. On Albert Saint-Martin see Claude Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, militant d'avant-garde (1865-1947), Laval, 1979.

35. Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière," 305-12.

36. Leo Roback, "Quebec Workers in the Twentieth Century" in Cherwinski and Kealey, eds., Lectures in Canadian Working-Class History, 167.

37. La Patrie, 12, 20 January, 16 February 1914; Labour Gazette, February 1915, 932-3.

38. Labour Gazette, February 1915, 934.

39. La Patrie, 15 July, 26 December 1914.

40. Machinists' Monthly Journal (henceforth MMJ), August 1915, 746; September 1915, 837; Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," in Pierre Elliott Trudeau, ed. La grève de l'Amiante, Montréal, Éditions du Jour, 1970, 126-7; Le Canadien, 21 October 1915; The Blacksmiths Journal, August 1915, 17.
41. La Patrie, 17 April 1914, 27 February 1915.
42. Francine Nagant, "La politique municipale à Montréal de 1910 à 1914: L'échec des réformistes et le triomphe de Médéric Martin", Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Université de Montréal, 1982, 253; La Patrie, 17 April 1914; Robert Rumilly, Histoire de Montréal Vol. 3, Montréal, 1972, 458-60.
43. La Patrie, 25 September 1915.
44. La Patrie, 14 May 1915.
45. Alfred Charpentier, "Le mouvement politique ouvrier de Montréal," dans Fernand Harvey, Aspects historiques du mouvement ouvrier au Québec, Montréal, 1973, 161.
46. La Patrie, 29 September 1915.
47. For example, a local of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party was active organizing demonstrations of unemployed Ukrainians in Montreal. Peter Krawchuk, The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918), Progress Books, Toronto, 1979, 44.
48. La Presse, 21 April 1914.
49. La Patrie, 3, 10 March 1915.
50. Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière", 281-2.
51. Collectif, Thetford Mines à ciel ouvert. Histoire d'une ville minière 1892-1992, Thetford Mines, ville de Thetford Mines, 1994, 238.
52. Dales, Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development, 71; Dickinson and Young, A Short History of Quebec, 208, 221; David Carnegie, The History of Munitions Supply in Canada 1914-1918, London, 1925, 252. On Canadian Vickers see Graham

D. Taylor, "A Merchant of Death in the Peaceable Kingdom: Canadian Vickers, 1911-1927," in Peter Baskerville, ed., Canadian Papers in Business History, Vol. 1, Victoria, 1989, 213-244.

53. On the Fair Wage Resolution of 1900 see Paul Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State 1900-1911, Toronto, 1981, 190-5; and Bob Russel, "A Fair or Minimum Wage? Women Workers, the State, and the Origins of Wage Regulation in Western Canada," Labour/Le Travail, 28 (Fall 1991), 59-88.

54. NA, Flavelle Papers, MG 30 A 16, Vol. 6, File 64, G.H. Vickers to Crothers, 13 November 1914.

55. David J. Bercuson, "Organized Labour and the Imperial Munitions Board", Industrial Relations, 28, 3, July 1973, 602-616. On the Imperial Munitions Board see Peter Rider, "The Industrial Munitions Board and its relationship to Government, Business and Labour, 1914-1920," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974. On Sir Joseph Flavelle see Michael Bliss, A Canadian Millionaire. The Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph flavelle, Bart. 1858-1939, Toronto, 1978.

56. As quoted in Myer Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy: The 1916 Hamilton Machinists' Strike", Labour/Le Travailleur, 3, 1979, 135; On the labour campaign for fair wages see also Myer Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained: The Defeat of a Rank and File Workers' Movement in Canada, 1914-1921." Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1986; and James Naylor, The New Democracy. Challenging the Social Order in Industrial Ontario 1914-1925, Toronto, 1991, 25-7, 31-4.

57. Labor World, 9 March 1916.

58. Labor World, 18 March 1916.

59. MMJ, February 1916, 183, March 1916, 283; Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy," 121-2.

60. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 6, File 64, "Memorandum re Munitions Contracts, Fair Wages Clause, etc." F.A. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labour to R.L. Borden, 11 June 1917; Memorandum from Moore and McClelland to Hon. J. H. Thomas, 17 May 1917.

61. Labor World, 15 July 1916.
62. See Labor World, 14 July 1917, 23 March, 8 June, 17 August 1918.
63. As quoted in Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, Toronto, 1974, 35.
64. Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, 35, 133.
65. For an example see MMJ, August 1915, 746.
66. MMJ, May 1915, 438.
67. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II-1916, Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour Gerald H. Brown to Flavelle, 16 February 1916; MMJ, September 1915, 837; Louise B.-Lavoie, Les débuts du mouvement ouvrier à Sherbrooke, 1873-1919, Sherbrooke, 1979, 97.
68. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II-1916, Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour Gerald H. Brown to Flavelle, 16 February 1916.
69. MMJ, October 1915, 991.
70. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II- 1916, Flavelle to Brown 17 February 1916.
71. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II-1916, A.E. Hughes to R. L. Borden, nd.
72. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II-1916, Flavelle to R.L. Borden, 23 March 1916.
73. Bercuson, " Organized Labour and the Imperial Munitions Board," 613; Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy," 144-5.
74. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 6, File 64, Memorandum from Moore and McClelland to Hon. J.H. Thomas, 17 May 1917.
75. There were 500 strikers according to the District Council of Carpenters and Joiners, 294 according to the company. Strike and Lockout File, Vol. 305, Strike 65, W.J. Jeffers to

Department of Labour, 2 March 1916. Labor World, gave a figure of 400, 18 March 1916.

76. NA, RG 27, Vol. 305, Strike 65, W.J. Jeffers to Department of Labour, 2 March 1916; and an untitled memo, nd.

77. Plumbers', Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, April 1916, 19; NA, Chief Press Censor, RG 6, E, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, Memo, 29 February 1916,

78. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, Chambers to E. Boag, 28 February 1916.

79. NA, Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout File, Vol. 305, Strike 65.

80. Labor World, 8 April 1916.

81. Plumbers', Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, April 1916, 19.

82. Labor World, 25 March 1916.

83. Labor World, 18 March 1916; Canadian House of Commons Debates, 15 March 1916, 1763-4.

84. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, Earnest J. Chambers to F.A. Acland, 26 February 1916.

85. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, E.J. Boag to E.J. Chambers, 29 February 1916.

86. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, E.J. Chambers to Mr. Cordonsmith, 27 February 1916.

87. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, Chambers to E. Boag, 28 February 1916; Chief Press Censor to Le Devoir, Le Canada, Le Réveil, and Le Soleil, 29 February 1916.

88. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, Memo, 29 February 1916.

89. Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy," 147-8; Naylor, The New Democracy, 28-30.

90. NA, Chief Press Censor, vol. 511, file 170-M-1, E.J. Chambers to Crothers, 16 March 1916.
91. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 2, File II- 1916, Brown to Flavelle, 11 April 1916; MMJ, June 1916, 590-1, 606. This was during a short lived strike of machinists making shells at the Mechanical Engineering Company in Montreal on April 10, 1916. The employees had a verbal agreement for a war bonus. It was paid until December but when the order was completed the company refused to pay the remainder. When they quit work, the manager issued the bonus, then discharged or locked out all workers. Foster asked the special commission on conditions in the munitions industry to investigate. The hearings were adjourned, however, to allow one of the commissioners, McClelland, to travel to Montreal where he settled the dispute.
92. NA, Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout File, Vol. 305, Strike 65.
93. Labor World, 8 April 1916.
94. Labor World, 15 July 1916.
95. P.C. 680.
96. Paul Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire', chapter 9; Jeremy Webber, "Compelling Compromise: Canada Chooses Conciliation over Arbitration 1900-1907," in Labour/Le Travail, 28, (Fall 1991), 15-57.
97. Labor World, 8, 29 April 1916.
98. Labor World, 23 September 1916; J.L. Rousseau to the Clerk of the Commission of Conciliation and Enquiry, 28 July 1917, in Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1115; Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," 126.
99. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," 127.
100. Labor World, 5 August 1916; Rousseau to Department of Labour, 28 August 1916 in NA, RG 27, Vol. 304, Strike 5.



101. Montreal Star, 26 August 1916; Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," 128.
102. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 107; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1119; On the asbestos industry see, Robert Armstrong, "L'industrie de l'Amiante au Québec 1878-1929," RHAF, 33, 2, September 1979, 187-195.
103. House of Commons Debates, 4 May 1917, 1114-6.
104. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," 128-9.
105. These efforts are described in detail in Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1114-6.
106. Labor World, 30 September 1916; TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 107.
107. F.A. Acland, Deputy-Minister of Labour, and Clerk of the Commission of Conciliation and Enquiry to L.J.L. Rousseau, 24 July 1916, in Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1115.
108. J.L. Rousseau to the Clerk of the Commission of Conciliation and Enquiry, 28 July 1917, in Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1115-6.
109. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 107; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1119.
110. The union viewed the situation as no different than when a union represented workers employed in 500 different shops. J.L. Rousseau to the Clerk of the Commission of Conciliation and Enquiry, 28 July 1917, in Canada, Compte rendu officiel des débats de la Chambre des communes, 4 May 1917, 1148. It is not clear that Crothers informed the union that it had to apply for a separate board to deal with each company. Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1119.
111. Labor World, 15 July 1916; 30 September 1916; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1119.
112. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 109.

113. Labor World, 15 July 1916.
114. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 111.
115. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 107-9.
116. NA, RG 27, Vol. 304, Strike 5.
117. Quebec Chronical 14 August 1916, in NA, RG 27, Vol. 304, Strike 5.
118. NA, RG 27, Vol. 304, Strike 5, contains a copy of the agreement.
119. Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 1917, 1119.
120. Labor World, 23 September 1916.
121. Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy," 133; Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante," 132-6.
122. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 107.
123. Labor World, 30 September 1916; TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 108-110.
124. TLC, Proceedings, 1916, 181.
125. Rosenberg, Canada's Jews, 386-7; Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 99-100.
126. Rosenberg, Canada's Jews, 177; Frank R. Scott and H.M. Cassidy, Labour Conditions in the Men's Clothing Industry, Toronto, 1935, 5.
127. Rosenberg, Canada's Jews, 386-7; Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 99-100.
128. Rosenberg, Canada's Jews, 177-8.
129. Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History," 46; and Irving Abella, "Portrait of a Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman," Labour/Le Travailleur, 2, 1977, 186.

130. Gerald Tulchinsky, Taking Root. The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community, Toronto, 1992, 214.
131. David Rome, Our Forerunners -- At Work. Epilogue. Notes on the Twentieth Century, Montreal, 1978, 141.
132. Jacques Rouillard "Les travailleurs juifs de la confection a Montreal (1910-80)" in Labour/ Le Travailleur, Autumn Spring 1981-82, Vol. 8/9, 257.
133. Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 207-11.
134. Steven Fraser, Labor Will Rule. Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor, New York, 1991, 43-44.
135. Fraser, Labor Will Rule, 201.
136. Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 216.
137. Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 101.
138. Rosenberg, Canada's Jews, 387. The figures are for 1931.
139. In 1917, when five union representatives were named to a permanent conciliation committee, three were French-Canadian, two were Jewish. NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 32, Memorandum of Agreement, 22 October 1917, p. 1; In 1925, Michael Buhay described the fur workers as under French-Canadian leadership. The Worker, 3 October 1925.
140. Abella, "Portrait of a Jewish Revolutionary," 186-7.
141. These were John W. Peck and Company and Fashion Craft. NA, RG 27, Vol. 304, Strike 17, Strike 18; Montreal Gazette, 13 January 1917; Advance, 9 March 1917.
142. Advance, 9 March 1917.
143. Montreal Gazette, 13 January 1917; NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 34. Report by W. J. Jeffers to Department of Labour, 23 February 1917.
144. Cohen founded Montreal's Jewish Times in 1897, he was involved in the Jewish school question, and he was identified

with a number of charitable activities. See Bernard Figler, Rabbi Dr. Herman Abramowitz. Lazarus Cohen. Lyon Cohen, Ottawa 1968, 92-180.

145. Montreal Gazette, 13 January 1917.

146. La Patrie, 25 January 1917.

147. Labor World, 17 February 1917.

148. Advance, 9 March 1917.

149. For an example see La Patrie, 25 January 1917.

150. Montreal Gazette, 13 January 1917.

151. La Patrie, 25 January 1917.

152. Advance, 25 May 1917; La Patrie, 25 January 1917.

153. Montreal Star, 31 January 1917.

154. Advance, 9 March 1917.

155. Montreal Star, 8 February 1917; NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 34.

156. NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 35.

157. Advance, 3 August 1917; On the youth of French-Canadian women garment workers, see Documentary History of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 1916-18, New York, 1919, 88.

158. This statement should be viewed with caution. Alfred Wood, the vice-president of Semi-Ready Company, in a base attempt to inflame anti-Semitic and anti-German sentiment simultaneously, characterized the strikers as "German-Jewish", and estimated that seventy per cent were of enemy nationality or decent. Apart from being a base appeal to racial prejudice, the statement was false as most of the strikers were Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Montreal Star, 15 January 1917.

159. Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, Notes on Early Montreal Jewish Labor History supplementary to On Our

Forerunners -- At Work, New Series, Nos 9 and 10, 1980, compiled by David Rome, np.

160. Montreal Star, 15 January 1917.

161. Montreal Star, 22 January 1917; Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 217.

162. Ladies Garment Worker, June 1917, 15.

163. Labor World, 10 February 1917.

164. Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1917; The temperature sometimes reached -27F, Advance 20 July 1917.

165. La Patrie, 12 February 1917.

166. La Patrie, 5 February 1917.

167. Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1917.

168. La Patrie, 5 February 1917.

169. Labor World, 17 March 1917.

170. Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 223; La Patrie, 23 February, 7 March 1917.

171. La Patrie, 17 February 1917; Montreal Gazette, 19 February 1917.

172. Montreal Gazette, 23 February 1917.

173. Montreal Gazette, 13 January 1917.

174. Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 219; Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 101; Rome, On Our Forerunners -- At Work, 126; Documentary History, 1916-18, 90-1.

175. La Patrie, 1, 5 February 1917; unidentified newspaper clipping in NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 34.

176. Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, Notes on Early Montreal Jewish Labor History, 1980, compiled by David Rome, np.
177. Tulchinsky, Taking Root, 225.
178. Jacobs, for example, proposed an arbitration board consisting of Mayor Martin, some of the City Commissioners and McGill professor and writer Stephen Leacock. La Patrie, 15 February 1917.
179. Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1917.
180. Montreal Gazette, 5 February 1917.
181. Labor World, 17 February 1917.
182. Advance, 9 March 1917.
183. Labour Gazette, April 1917, 277-8; Advance, 16, 27 March 1917.
184. Advance, 18 May 1917.
185. Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein's Jewish Montreal", 101.
186. Ladies Garment Worker, June 1917, 13-18, April 1918, 23, 28; ILGWU, Proceedings, 1918, 14-16.
187. Montreal Gazette, 2 February 1917.
188. Advance, 23 November 1917.
189. Ruth Frager, Sweatshop Strife. Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto 1900-1939, Toronto, 1992, 99; Linda Kealey, "Women's Labour Militancy in Canada, 1900-1920," Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Kingston, 1991, 6.
190. Workers who were women and gentiles were not considered "an easily organizable [sic] element." ILGWU, Proceedings, 1918, 14-16. For a discussion of ethnic and gender divisions amongst garment workers in Toronto see Frager, Sweatshop Strife, 77-149.

191. Frager, Sweatshop Strife, 102-3.
192. NA, RG 27, Vol. 306, Strike 41.
193. Mercedes Stedman, "Skill and Gender in the Canadian clothing industry, 1890-1940." in Craig Heron and Robert Story, eds., On The Job. Confronting the Labour Process in Canada, Kingston and Montreal, 1986, 163.
194. Rome, On Our Forerunners - At Work, 157.
195. Labor World, 18 November 1916.
196. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol.38, File 1918-24, Mark Irish to Flavelle, 3 May 1918.
197. Labor World, 9 June 1917.
198. Labor World, 13 January 1917.
199. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol.38, File 1918-24, Mark Irish to Flavelle, 3 May 1918.
- Occupations of Women, 53-4, 74-5. 211. Price, Changes in the Industrial
201. NA, RG 27, Vol. 308, Strike 42, Clipping from correspondent's report, nd.
202. Elizabeth Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918, Toronto, 1974, 90-160; Labor World, 3 June 1916.
203. Labor World, 18 November 1916.
204. Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 123.
205. Labor World, 6, 20 January 1917.
206. Labor World, 20 January 1917.
207. NA, Flavelle Papers, Vol. 38, File 1915-1917, Mark Irish to Joseph Flavelle, 24 January 1917; Labor World, 9 September 1916.
208. Labor World, 20 January 1917.

209. Carnegie, The History of Munitions Supply in Canada, 252.
210. Carnegie, History of Munitions Supply in Canada, 208-209.
211. Labor World, 9 June 1917.
212. NA, Flavelle Papers, MG 30 A 16, Vol. 6 File 64, Memorandum from Moore and McClelland to Hon. J.H. Thomas, 17 May 1917.
213. NA, Flavelle Papers, MG 30 A 16, Vol. 6, File 64, 'Memorandum re Munitions Contracts, Fair Wages Clause, etc.' F.A. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labour to R.L. Borden, 11 June 1917, 2.
214. Labor World, 9 March 1918.
215. Labor World, 22 June 1918.
216. Labor World, 16 June, 14 July 1917, 12, 26 January, 9 February, 16 March 1918.
217. Myer Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained," 165-168. On Gideon Robertson see James Foy, "Gideon Robertson," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1971.
218. Naylor, The New Democracy, 36-8.
219. Labor World, 8 June 1918.
220. Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained," 220-221; Naylor, The New Democracy, 38; Labor World, 10 August 1918.
221. Lavoie, Les débuts du mouvement ouvrier à Sherbrooke, 97.
222. La Patrie, 30 August 1916.
223. This figure is taken from Kealey, "1919," 17.
224. Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained," 174.



225. Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, 126; Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks. The Early Years of the Communist Party in Canada, Montreal, 1981, 22; Norman Penner, The Canadian Left. A critical Analysis, Scarborough, 1977, 58-9.

226. Logan, Trade Unions In Canada. Their Development and Functioning, Toronto, 1948, 147-8, 148 fn 24; Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained," 214-215; Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 63; James Naylor, "Defining the "New Democracy": Canadian Workers, the State, and Reconstruction, 1917-1922," Paper presented to the One Hundred and Fifth Annual Meeting American Historical Association, New York, December 1990, 18.

227. Kerrigan charged that AFL President Gompers had intervened directly to stop the strike. Labor World, 3 August 1918.

228. Labor World, 28 September 1918.

229. "Report of Royal Commission Appointed To Inquire Into The Alleged Unrest Existing in the Shipbuilding Industry in the Province of Quebec," in Labour Gazette, November 1918, 964-7; Craig Heron, Working in Steel. The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935, Toronto, 1988, 137-8.

230. Labour Gazette, November 1918, 955-9; NA, RG 27, Vol. 309, Strike 125.

231. Labor World, 12 October 1918.

232. P.C. 2525.

233. P.C. 2381.

234. P.C. 2384.

235. Labor World, 26 October 1918.

236. Labor World, 19 October 1918.

## Chapter 2

### The Workers' Revolt in Quebec

"On se serait cru en pleine guerre civile."

La Patrie, 13 December 1918, commenting on crowd actions during first day of a Montreal municipal workers strike.

With the end of the war in November 1918, workers were freed from the restraints on strike action imposed by both the federal government and by some international union leaders. The massive union recruitment campaign of the last years of the war grew to new and larger proportions in 1919.<sup>1</sup> This growth was prompted in part by fears of a return to the greater economic insecurity and joblessness of the pre-war economy, a concern heightened by growing unemployment and announcements of impending wage reductions as wartime production ceased or wound down in the months following the armistice.<sup>2</sup> The result was an unprecedented level of organization and strike action that lasted until the start of the depression of the 1920s.

Post-war militancy was most evident in Montreal, where there were at least 68 strikes in 1919. But it also reached

other parts of Quebec where there were at least 14 disputes. Catholic unions hardly participated at all in the 1919 strike wave.<sup>3</sup> Only three walk-outs, two by the same union, were conducted by Catholic organizations.<sup>4</sup> As during the war, militancy in the form of a strike or a strike threat, particularly in the early months of 1919, worked to the advantage of workers who won most of their struggles, encouraging others to undertake similar action. There was also a continued desire to build stronger, more effective organizations, and to use more forceful tactics, even a general strike. Workers also extended the campaign to establish collective bargaining on an industry wide basis, usually through the establishment of joint councils or through informal common fronts. Labour's post-war offense also revealed continuing divisions within the international union movement.

#### The 1918 Municipal Workers Strike

The most dramatic and immediate expression of the post-war labour militancy was the two-day strike of some 1,500 municipal workers in Montreal in December 1918. This dispute erupted against a background of hostility towards an undemocratic civic administration imposed in 1918 by the

provincial government. After decades of growth and the annexation of smaller and very heavily indebted municipalities, the City of Montreal was deeply in debt. To ensure fiscal restraint, the provincial government placed the city under a five man Administrative Commission. This was done at the behest of the Bank of Montreal, the city's principal creditor and one of the symbols of English-Canadian financial capital at a time when French-Canadian workers expected to exert considerable influence over municipal authorities. Mayor Médéric Martin and the elected municipal councillors retained their offices but had little authority.

To head the trusteeship, Premier Lomer Gouin chose Ernest Décary, a notary who administered the investments of wealthy families.<sup>5</sup> Alphonse Verville, a Liberal Member of Parliament, originally elected for the Labor Party and one time president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, was named to the Administrative Commission to represent the working class. But he had little influence within this Commission and his appointment meant that he rapidly lost any remaining prestige among workers.<sup>6</sup> In a city where Mayor Médéric Martin won the support of most francophone workers by appealing to their nationalism and by promising to promote their class interests, many French Canadian workers were convinced that the

trusteeship left them without effective representation at the municipal level.

Soon after the establishment of the Administrative Commission a large number of municipal workers joined the labour movement. In September 1918, with the help of the trades and labour council and the Tramway workers union, police organized under a TLCC charter as a Federal Labor Union.<sup>7</sup> This was done quickly and discreetly with some leading advocates remaining in the background to avoid retaliation, since at least two members of the force were demoted for joining the union.<sup>8</sup> The next day firemen decided to join the International union. Local AFL organizers also signed up the incinerator workers.<sup>9</sup>

The unions were organized just as the Administrative Commission was reorganizing municipal services with the aid of a firm of efficiency experts who redefined job assignments and delineated lines of authority. The police and fire departments were included in a new Department of Public Safety.<sup>10</sup> On the grounds of economy or to eliminate corruption, the new Director of Public Safety closed eleven police stations,<sup>11</sup> fired a number of constables for incompetence, demoted some officers and forced others to resign.<sup>12</sup> Police and

firefighters organized to protect themselves from what they considered arbitrary dismissals made without inquiry and without any notice, and that most often appeared unfair.<sup>13</sup> One civic union leader, Alphéus Mathieu, declared that in most cases "la rancune et le préjugé" rather than incompetence had been the principal motive for the dismissals.<sup>14</sup> The police union also charged that "les promotions se font par favoritisme, comme faveur aux amis ou, ce qui est pis, pour des considérations pécuniaires".<sup>15</sup> Members of the police union were also unhappy that their new chiefs were hired from outside their force.<sup>16</sup> The Director of Public Safety was the former fire chief, Joseph Tremblay.<sup>17</sup> As his deputy director, he chose his former deputy fire chief, Arthur Mann, an unpopular move because Mann did not speak French fluently.<sup>18</sup> The new chief detective, J.-A.-A. Bélanger, had made his career in a small suburban force and in the federal police.<sup>19</sup>

Wages were also an important issue. During the war, inflation had substantially eroded municipal workers' wages. The police claimed that in 1913 they were promised that their base salary would be raised to \$1200 a year but that their maximum salary had not yet attained that figure. Requests for higher salaries were turned down on the grounds that the City could not afford them. The police union claimed that salaries

were 20 per cent to 40 per cent lower than in Canadian and American cities of comparable size.<sup>20</sup> Resentment was exacerbated by the fact that high civil servants, including Tremblay and Mann, were very well paid by comparison with other cities. In addition, Tremblay was also drawing a pension for his years as chief of the fire department, while Mann kept the position of deputy fire chief so that he could get his pension in eight or nine months time.<sup>21</sup>

There were other issues as well. Most municipal employees, including police, firefighters, incinerator and aqueduct workers, worked a seven day week.<sup>22</sup> They were also forced to do unpaid overtime.<sup>23</sup> Police worked a twelve hour shift each day and were required, if they made any arrests, to then act as witnesses in court after their regular hours.<sup>24</sup> Firefighters remained at their stations twenty four hours a day, sleeping in their work clothes, with only a few hours home each week with their families. These hours, and the low salaries, encouraged a high turnover in the fire department.<sup>25</sup> Police, firemen and aqueduct workers also complained that they were not supplied with the boots and uniforms "auquels ils ont droit de s'attendre d'avoir d'après la coutume établie". The police felt that they were not clothed to command respect. The

secretary of the Firemen's Union complained that "Nous sommes vêtus comme des mendiants".<sup>26</sup>

Municipal workers presented demands that addressed all these concerns. They included new salary scales, recognition, a union shop, consideration of merit and seniority in promotions, an adequate supply of uniforms, time and a half for overtime and fifteen days holidays a year for police and firemen. Firemen demanded a double shift system, that is to have two twelve hour shifts, one during the day and the other at night, alternating every fifteen days.<sup>27</sup>

The Administrative Commission refused to negotiate. Union leaders were asked to wait until the new budget was presented to city council in December to see what salaries their members would receive.<sup>28</sup> Exasperated, the Police union asked the federal Minister of Labour for a conciliation board under the IDIA. But this required the consent of both parties and the Administrative Commission refused.<sup>29</sup> It seemed to the unions that they were not taken seriously. Indeed one Commissioner declared "Nous n'avons pas et nous n'avons pas le temps de s'occuper de cette affaire".<sup>30</sup>



Frustrated that Décary would not even hear their grievances, the operating engineers at the waterworks department threatened to strike, forcing Décary to agree to conciliation under the Lemieux Act.<sup>31</sup> While a minority report by the labour representative favoured the engineers' demands,<sup>32</sup> the majority report awarded additional holidays and overtime pay but refused a pay increase. The engineers believed that the Administrative Commission had unjustly influenced two of the conciliators. Moreover, a foreman had tried to obtain sworn promises from the workers that they would accept the board's report.<sup>33</sup> Rejecting the recommendations, the engineers wanted to negotiate with Décary who then consistently refused to deal with them.

The experience of the engineers was not lost on the police union which had until then opposed strike action: "en principe, notre union est contre une mesure aussi radicale".<sup>34</sup> It then began to see it as their only recourse:

Nous ne voulons pas la grève. Une preuve c'est que nous sommes bien disposés, tout pressés que nous soyons, à attendre que l'étude du budget soit terminée. Mais si la commission ne nous rend pas justice, alors nous serons forcés de prendre la manière forte.<sup>35</sup>

When the proposed budget was made public in early December, the unions rejected the city's meagre offers. Décary then

offered conciliation if the unions would accept the recommendations of a board as binding.<sup>36</sup> Because of the experience of the aqueduct workers, this was now out of the question.<sup>37</sup> As police union president Albert Carle replied:

Vous avez pris connaissance du rapport des arbitres dans le cas des ingénieurs de l'aqueduc? Cela nous suffit. Il y a assez longtemps que l'on se sert de l'arbitrage pour jouer la comédie.<sup>38</sup>

Relations between the unions and their Director of Public Safety deteriorated further when he fired 53 firefighters, ostensibly for incompetence, at a time when the department was short fifty persons. The union saw this as an act of discrimination against union members.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Tremblay then rejected the demand for a double shift as it would mean increasing the force by fifteen percent.<sup>40</sup>

This coincided with serious criticism of the executive of the Department of Public Safety from other quarters. A Committee of Sixteen, made up of reformers who wanted to suppress the sex trade, denounced the police chiefs for tolerating prostitution.<sup>41</sup> Corruption charges were also levelled against Tremblay, Mann and Bélanger.<sup>42</sup> Décary refused to dismiss these men or to make public the explanations

provided by Tremblay and Mann.<sup>43</sup> The police union later alleged that all three had criminal records.<sup>44</sup>

Once the budget was announced, the civic workers' unions, representing police, firefighters, garbage collectors, and engineers with the waterworks department, formed a common front to deal with the Administrative Commission. On Saturday 7 December, after Décary did no more than plead with firefighters and police representatives to help place Montreal "sur une base d'affaires", members of all four unions marched arm in arm in two parades led by a band from their headquarters to their meeting hall, cheered along the way by onlookers who thought that a strike had already begun.<sup>45</sup> Unhappy with the tarnished reputation of their forces and the anti-union positions of the department heads, the members of the police and firemen's unions voted non confidence in Tremblay, Mann and Bélanger, and demanded their dismissal:

Cette manière radicale d'agir mettra fin à un malaise qui dure depuis trop longtemps parmi les hommes. Nous voulons du sang neuf. Nous voulons enfin que le corps de la police et des pompiers conservent le bon renom qu'ils ont toujours eu.<sup>46</sup>

The members of the common front then voted, with only one dissenting vote, to strike together on Wednesday 11 December.<sup>47</sup> Also invited to this meeting, tramway workers

promised that in the event of a walkout they would vote on a sympathy strike.<sup>48</sup>

On 9 December with negotiations going nowhere and becoming increasingly acrimonious,<sup>49</sup> union leaders from all four organizations sought the help of Mayor Médéric Martin. He had consistently supported the municipal workers, encouraging them to organize, expressing concern for their grievances, and supporting many of their demands.<sup>50</sup> Martin was no doubt pleased to side with the civic workers, at least in part because it provided an opportunity to discredit the Administrative Commission that had been given many of his powers. At the request of Martin, the unions postponed their strike 24 hours. He hoped to get Premier Lomer Gouin personally involved in the negotiations. On the evening of 10 December Gouin met with union officials who again rejected his suggestion of arbitration. Gouin then promised, according to police union president Carle, that Décary would present a new offer to all four unions the next morning. Carle expressed considerable hope to the membership that Gouin would solve the dispute.

Sir Lomer Gouin a promis satisfaction... il ne peut nous mentir, sinon, il nous fera croire que la tyrannie est maîtresse chez nous et que nous ne sommes que des esclaves.

The next day Décary conceded the double shift for firefighters but refused to increase the wage offer, or to hear the demands of the incinerator or aqueduct workers. He ended the meeting by declaring "Maintenant que vous connaissez nos conditions, faites ce que vous voudrez". That evening, union leaders met again with Premier Gouin but to no avail.<sup>51</sup>

Frantic last minute efforts were made to avert the strike. Premier Gouin again asked union leaders on 11 December to accept arbitration.<sup>52</sup> Delegates from the four unions visited Montreal Archbishop Paul Bruchési in the late afternoon, but declined his offer to arbitrate. They felt that they had compromised enough and would not change the plan to strike at noon the next day unless their demands were met.<sup>53</sup> But there was no further movement on either side. At noon on 12 December a signal was sent to each station, a phone call of two rings, and the strike began amid general enthusiasm.

The twenty four hour strike delay "souleva l'ire et le mecontentement de plusieurs" union members who feared that they would lose both momentum and the initiative.<sup>54</sup> And indeed Décary was preparing for a test of strength with the unions. He had used the time to hire strikebreakers, and to secure support from the business community: "Notre projet de défense

et de protection de la ville a été soumis à plusieurs institutions financières, commerciales et d'assurances et il a été approuvé."<sup>55</sup> The City of Westmount promised to help.<sup>56</sup> Men were hired and volunteers were signed up on 11 and 12 December.<sup>57</sup> On the morning of 11 December Décary tried to promote to inspector twenty one police captains to have at least one prominent officer in each station. But most, if not all, of the captains quickly declined the offer to the applause and cheers of the membership assembled at the meeting hall.<sup>58</sup>

The union announced that if the City had hoped to rely on the provincial police, it would be disappointed since they promised only to answer calls of theft or assault but not to respond to riots or disorder.<sup>59</sup> The drivers of the city's road department were to drive the fire engines but declined the job and joined a union.<sup>60</sup> Other municipal workers refused to replace the strikers in any way.<sup>61</sup> Décary also asked for military assistance, and was assured that sufficient numbers of soldiers would be available to help put out fires.<sup>62</sup> After Décary consulted with military officials, soldiers were ordered to return to their barracks. The president of the Firefighters' union warned that if the army intervened "c'est la qu'apparaîtra le trouble".<sup>63</sup>

The number of men that the city secured to replace striking employees is difficult to determine. Newspaper accounts vary. Décary claimed that he had enough to keep the aqueduct working to avoid a shortage of water and volunteer patrols to cover the whole city.<sup>64</sup> The Montreal Gazette reported that "It is believed that some five hundred men are to be employed as detectives and a thousand men will be engaged for patrol duties."<sup>65</sup> La Patrie reported that the Thiel Detective agency had sworn in more than 1000 men the night of the 11th.<sup>66</sup> Another article stated that Tremblay engaged 200 more men on the afternoon of the 12th.<sup>67</sup> The Administrative Commission counted on businessmen, merchants and industrialists to use their own personnel to protect their property. Some corporations offered substantial support. The Canadian Pacific Railway placed large numbers of its special agents as volunteer police.<sup>68</sup> The Canadian Fire Underwriters Association and insurance companies supplied many of the volunteer firefighters. Bell Telephone provided operators to answer police switchboards. The Canadian Club of Westmount urged its members to offer their services to Décary, while the Board of Trade also organized a corps of volunteers.<sup>69</sup>

While business organized to support the Administrative Commission, the city's working class showed a remarkable degree of solidarity with the strikers. As the strike began Director of Public Safety Tremblay declared that in case of fire, one should pull the nearest alarm and phone the central alarm bureau. This was taken as a challenge, the first false alarm was sounded shortly after the strike began at 12:35.<sup>70</sup> Throughout the rest of the day, 304 alarms were raised. Only six were genuine.<sup>71</sup> About a hundred of the alarms were destroyed. In working-class districts crowds of sympathizers assembled at fire stations and blocked the doors to prevent the volunteers from emerging. In other cases, the crowds booed when the volunteers rushed to answer a call.

One historian has claimed that there was extensive looting of stores.<sup>72</sup> In fact most the violence was aimed at the volunteer firefighters. In addition, many observers claimed that it was sympathizers rather than strikers who were responsible for most of it. When a wagon driven by the district chief and another man from Station # 4 Chaboullez Square answered a false alarm at Sherbrooke and St.Denis, the volunteer was attacked by strikers and had to flee with his face full of blood. At five in the evening this scene was repeated, though this time the volunteer was not harmed, only



stripped of equipment. The angry crowds only permitted district chiefs to drive the fire trucks.<sup>73</sup> In the evening, a crowd forced the remaining volunteers to flee and proceeded to sack the fire station. A truck was run into the street to block the tramway. The building and its entire contents, including machinery, hoses, and tires, were smashed and thrown onto the street. Even the firemen's personal belongings were destroyed. Only the horses were left unharmed. This was all done in high good spirits, with singing and shouting while some five or six hundred local residents looked on. The scene ended at eleven when a firefighter appeared to ask the crowd to stop, arguing that they were doing the strikers' cause more harm than good.<sup>74</sup>

At Station #14, at the corner of Rachel and St. Dominique, a large crowd refused to allow the volunteers to go on duty and prevented the captain, who had remained at his post with his two daughters, from leaving until a late hour.<sup>75</sup> A stage was set up in front of the station for speeches by strikers and their supporters.<sup>76</sup> At Station #16, near Lafontaine Park, the volunteers were forcibly ejected. At Station #23, in Saint-Henri, the police captain who had remained on duty was severely beaten. Two volunteers also had to retreat quickly from the station. At Station #5, on Ontario Street, the

volunteers and two special constables were chased out of the station.<sup>77</sup>

A crowd even attacked Décary's centre of operations at Station #20 at Craig and Cheneville. The protestors set the doors on fire, then once inside, fought their way up the stairs and forced the volunteer firemen to flee. The three Thiel detective agents who were there to protect them were beaten and sent to hospital. The crowd was then chased away by a hundred soldiers who then remained to protect the building.<sup>78</sup>

The violence was a reaction to the anti-labour activities of an undemocratic civic administration. For a city without police protection, very little other violence was reported. Amid the extensive newspaper coverage of these events, papers such as the Montreal Gazette and Le Devoir assigned only a single line noting that there were a few store robberies and that pickpockets were in action. Most of the violence was directed at specific targets, usually fire halls and the replacement firemen. There was a single major report of looting by a crowd assembled outside a fire station. At Station #13, a tramway car was attacked, had its windows broken and was left to stop traffic for several hours. A stone

was then thrown through a store window and the crowd rushed in to loot. Others turned their attention to the neighbouring movie theatre which was severely damaged. On hearing of this incident, Carle and a number of other policemen rushed to the scene to make several arrests.<sup>79</sup>

At a strikers meeting that night Mayor Martin entered the hall to a round of applause.<sup>80</sup> Throughout the strike Martin refused to read the Riot Act, saying that he would not do so for a few black eyes. Martin urged the strikers to organize their own voluntary patrols to prevent disorder.<sup>81</sup> Police union president Carle also asked the strikers to protect anyone in danger.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, striking firefighters did help put out fires and the police union appears to have organized its own patrols.

In the early hours of 13 December Décary met with military authorities to assure that 200 soldiers would be provided for protection that day. Militiamen with clubs protected some of the fire stations and armed soldiers were stationed at the waterworks, while other soldiers were kept in reserve and helped put out fires.<sup>83</sup> Since Martin had not read the Riot Act, the Montreal Gazette claimed that the soldiers "were simply leant to civic authorities" and acted "simply as

good citizens." Many of the soldiers, however, were not happy to be used during a strike, as it was an "experience, which they did not seem to relish".<sup>84</sup>

Numerous efforts were made to end the conflict. On 12 December the civic workers unions asked the MTLT for its help. The next morning J.T. Foster, Gustave Francq and other trades and labour council leaders met with Décary who agreed to their offer of mediation.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the business community organized. A Citizens Protective Association was formed on the morning of the 13th at a meeting that included representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Montreal branch of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, the Canadian Fire Underwriters Association, the Montreal Canadian Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Montreal Publicity Association and the Merchant Retailers Association.<sup>86</sup> This meeting was overwhelmingly hostile to the strikers. One observer described its general tone:

Not for some time has there been such a spontaneous outbreak of public opinion .... The dominant note of the meeting was that there must be no negotiations with the strikers, but that they must be met and fought to the end by such voluntary forces as could be secured until it could be proved that the city was to rule, and not the union.

Every reference to taking steps to defeat the unions was greeted with applause. Most speakers wanted a fight to the

finish and hoped that they could crush the strikers with the help of the army.<sup>87</sup> One speaker expressed alarm that since the previous evening striking police were patrolling the city armed.<sup>88</sup> Only a few advocated a negotiated solution. Adélard Fortier, the president of the Montreal Dairy Company, who had been considered as a candidate for Mayor by the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal in 1916, and one of the few francophones at the meeting, was one of the rare dissenters. Arguing that the strikers were less interested in money than in justice, Fortier wanted a delegation from the meeting to meet the strike leaders to arrive at a settlement. Fortier met with such hostility that the chair had to intervene to get him a hearing.<sup>89</sup>

In the end the Citizens Protective Association established a 50 member Committee of Public Safety (CPS) to decide on what measures to take. This committee was clearly representative of Montreal capital. The chair was William Allan Black, the president of the Montreal Board of Trade. The vice-chairs were both manufacturers, Frederick William Stewart, also Director of the City Improvement League, and Alfred Lambert. When the CPS met union representatives, they said that the business community wanted to give the civic employees a "fair, square deal". It urged the union to accept

a board of arbitration "provided by this body of independent citizens" and that would include members chosen by both the Citizens Protective Association and the unions. If this offer was rejected, the CPS would "take such legal and military steps as might seem necessary to cope with the situation". In this case, Montreal workers faced resistance from employers in the form of a united front similar to the one created later in Winnipeg during the general strike. Surprised at this initiative, police union president Carle feared that the city would plead poverty to refuse to pay any increases awarded. The CPS pledged itself to find the funds to pay whatever wages were decided upon if the city did not have them. Carle promised to present the offer to the membership.<sup>90</sup>

The strike also forced Liberal Premier Lomer Gouin and Catholic Archbishop Bruchési of Montreal to participate directly in the search for settlement. Unable to reach Gouin, Médéric Martin called on Séverin Létourneau, Liberal MLA for Hochelaga and the Party's organizer for Montreal.<sup>91</sup> Létourneau persuaded both Gouin and Bruchési to ask Décary to concede the dismissal of the three high ranking police officials, Tremblay, Mann and Bélanger.<sup>92</sup> Décary agreed if the strike was called off. He also accepted to submit the questions of salary and working conditions to arbitration. Décary would not,

however, do this publicly or directly to union leaders. His offer was made in a letter to Archbishop Bruchési, who then went to the strikers' meeting to inform strike leaders. Since the earlier concession of the double shift for the firefighters was not mentioned, the letter was sent to Décary's home for an addendum on this matter. Finally, after the CPA met with Décary and with union leaders, arbitration was accepted on the basis offered by the CPA, and the strikers returned to work.<sup>93</sup>

This was a victory for the strikers on two counts. They won the dismissal of the chiefs of police and acceptance of the double shift for firefighters. All other issues were referred to arbitration. The outcome was greeted enthusiastically. Union leaders were certain that the board of arbitration would meet their demands. And by forcing concession on the part of the city that they had shown their power.<sup>94</sup> Police detectives were reported as being "d'un enthousiasme délirant", and firemen celebrated by singing, shouting and blowing the horns on their fire trucks.<sup>95</sup>

The settlement came as a shock to leaders of the trades and labour council who were actively attempting to get their own mediation efforts under way when the strike was called

off. The civic unions had agreed that the five members of the board of arbitration would be chosen from among the members of the employer based Citizens Protective Association, two to be nominated by the Association, two nominated by the unions, and the fifth to be named by agreement among these four.<sup>96</sup> The Association chose Grant Hall, a vice-president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Alfred Lambert. The unions chose F.W. Stewart and Adélard Fortier, a choice that Dalphond of the Firemen's Union said would assure them that they would get "entière justice". W.A. Black was chosen to preside over the board.<sup>97</sup> In accepting arbitration by a board consisting entirely of employers, the civic unions displayed a remarkable degree of deference, but they may also have believed that the business community had the authority to guarantee that the funds would be found for the wage increases. Astonished at this outcome, trades and labour council leaders attributed the confidence expressed in the CPS to the inexperience of the civic union leaders who were new to the labour movement.<sup>98</sup>

The final settlement, delivered in February 1919, was a disappointment. Wages were held down. It gave police and firemen less than one third of the original demand of a \$500 increase. Its authors were alarmed at the solidarity between different groups of civic workers and by the support of



working-class sympathizers. It conceded the right of municipal workers to form associations but without ties to the labour movement: "[Ils] ne devrait pas être liés par des organisation, qui, d'une manière quelconque pourraient les restreindre."<sup>99</sup> There was a particular fear that police might support other striking workers. Indeed a number of voices, the Fédération des propriétaires, for example, had earlier expressed the fear that police could even strike in sympathy with other AFL workers.<sup>100</sup> Concerning civic employees, the report declared that:

leur premier devoir consistant dans la protection de toutes les classes de la société, sans distinction, en tous temps et dans toutes les circonstances.<sup>101</sup>

Civic unions were to sever all ties with each other and with the labour movement. This last requirement came as a particular shock and was ignored by the unions who maintained affiliations to their unions and to the MTLC.

What conclusions can be drawn out from this series of events? The first is that far from being a simple withdrawal of services, this strike appears to be akin to a rebellion. Certainly business leaders viewed any dispute involving police this way. By the nature of their occupation, police were subject to a kind of semi-military hierarchical structure and

discipline, and employers usually counted on them to be neutral if not allies during labour disputes. But it also resembled a revolt because of the support that the strikers received as large numbers of sympathetic workers took active and even violent exception to the anti-labour policies of the new Administrative Commission, and to the preparations it made in the hope of breaking the strike. While the initial demands of the civic workers were varied, and included a sense of indignation at the erosion of their wages by wartime inflation, the dispute became a battle over the right to bargain collectively. It was a conflict where workers reacted forcefully against Décary's refusal to bargain with the newly organized unions, particularly since the civic administration was considered undemocratic because it was appointed rather than elected.

Secondly, this was an example of the trend towards larger confrontations between capital and labour. The civic unions formed a united front against the Administrative Commission. Montreal's capitalists quickly established an ad hoc association to confront the strikers. Montreal employers were divided in their response. Many voiced the opinion the new civic unions should be crushed, while others, perhaps in sectors of the economy where relations with unions were more

amicable, were willing to accept labour organization. It was the last faction that prevailed and that attempted to establish a basis for friendly coexistence, albeit on capital's terms. Their strategy was one of concession, backed-up by the threat of military repression. While this strategy was in marked contrast to that the employers during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, it was similar to that of the employer based Citizens' Committee of 100 in the Winnipeg civic dispute of 1918.

Finally, the outcome revealed a stunning degree of deference and naivete among civic union leaders as they placed their trust in an all employer arbitration board. Perhaps the presence of Fortier, a member of the French-Canadian bourgeoisie who had been wooed as a candidate for mayor by the FCOM in 1915, as one of the unions' representatives provided some degree of reassurance. If so, it reveals a high sense of ethnic solidarity. The outcome also showed how little thought was given to the efforts of the MTLC whose leaders expected to play a central role in resolving the dispute. While stunned, labour council leaders downplayed the incident attributing it to new union recruits who had not yet developed the required skills in union-management negotiating. It is also worth noting that civic union leaders placed more trust in

businessmen than in Church leaders, having rejected Montreal Archbishop Bruchési's offer to arbitrate, albeit one that was made before the start of the strike. There was perhaps less of a willingness, among francophone Catholics to accept clerical intervention in Montreal than in Quebec City where such a tradition went back at least to the beginning of the century.

#### 1919: Growing Labour Militancy

The last months of the war had marked the beginning of a massive union recruitment campaign that by 1919 had extended throughout Quebec, and drew in workers from a number of mass production industries. Montreal's meat packers organized a local in 1918. In 1919 rubber workers formed unions in Montreal, Granby and St. Jérôme. There was a renewed effort to organize and gain recognition for the employees of Dominion Textile in Montreal, Magog and Montmorency. The garment unions renewed their efforts, trying to organize shops that had been established outside Montreal to avoid unionization. The ILGWU tried to organize shirtmakers. The Teamsters established four new locals in Montreal in 1918 and added another one in 1919. Among the new groups of workers that joined the labour movement in 1919, there were seamen, gas workers and laundry workers just to name a few examples.<sup>102</sup>

Strikers often received tangible and open support in the community, as in the case of striking municipal workers. Several shops in Montreal refused deliveries by strikebreakers during a dispute in April at the Dominion Express Company.<sup>103</sup> During a strike of 800 employees of the Montreal Light Heat and Power Company in the same month, strike sympathizers disarmed the private detectives hired to protect strikebreakers.<sup>104</sup>

A qualitative change was evident in workers' aspirations that went beyond demands for a better and more secure standard of living to include a redistribution of power in the workplace and in society. They challenged economic and political elites from a keen sense of their exploitation and of the disparities in wealth and influence that it produced. This workers' offensive clearly encouraged established craft union leaders. J.T. Foster, president of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council, and the machinist's business agent, declared that workers were increasingly discontented because employers were making enormous profits by exploiting them.<sup>105</sup> Benjamin Drolet, a cigarmaker and labour columnist for La Patrie, considered "que la classe ouvrière ne retournera plus aux conditions d'avant-guerre: elle veut avoir son mot à dire

dans la direction des industries."<sup>106</sup> Even Gustave Francq, in a vehemently anti-bolshevik diatribe, declared that workers were on the threshold of a "transformation des masses".<sup>107</sup> Francq believed that the proletariat would no longer tolerate a position of servitude to capitalists as it had in the past.<sup>108</sup>

The war had accelerated the class struggle, as there was an:

irrésistible poussée des consciences justement révoltées par un régime par trop inégalitaire. Peu à peu la lumière se fit dans les esprits et les conditions économiques dans lesquelles l'ouvrier languissait lui apparurent de plus en plus intolérables. Dès ce jour, la lutte des classes commença et c'est cette lutte qui se continue aujourd'hui, plus âpre que jamais...<sup>109</sup>

Francq stated that the working class now wanted "a share in the management of industries,"<sup>110</sup> to deal with capital as an equal, and to receive its legitimate share of the national wealth.<sup>111</sup> And workers through their unions were asserting their right to a share of influence in parliament and to legislation to reflect their interests.<sup>112</sup>

The expectation of an imminent transformation of society was not accompanied by a questioning of the sexual division of labour. Male trade unionists viewed women as secondary wage earners and feared that they would remain in jobs that they had entered during the war but that had been formerly monopolized by men. In February 1919, when the first women

delegates from the newly established waitresses' union arrived at the trades and labour council, the painters' union introduced a resolution asking the federal government to fire and replace all women working in enterprises where men had previously been employed. The council endorsed the resolution adding an exception for widows and women having dependents, in effect targeting both single and married working women, denying their right to compete for jobs with men either to live independently or to supplement an inadequate male wage.<sup>113</sup> The council recognized that some women were the main bread winners for themselves or their families but affirmed the ideal of the family wage. Moreover, this distinction was enforced during and after the war in Montreal's two large railway shops; a contemporary observer explained that "organized labour insisted that no man's work be given to a woman unless she was in need for her own subsistence or for the support of dependents." The latter referred mostly to widows supporting families or soldiers' wives supporting sick husbands. In the railway shops most women did in fact fall into this category as reflected by the unusually large proportion of married women who made up 75% of the total in 1919.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the hostility to women's employment in non-traditional jobs, efforts to recruit women and to encourage their participation in labour organization reached a new scale in 1919. Large numbers of women joined unions as efforts were renewed in the textile, garment, and shoe industries, and campaigns were undertaken in previously little organized sectors among rubber workers, meatpackers, waitresses, and office workers. In all of these industries women were elected to local executives, or as delegates to conventions or the labour council. Although the presence of women as union officers was not new, the scale of participation was. Sometimes women formed separate locals, as was done among fur dressers and dryers, ladies' clothing workers, and tobacco workers. Labour men and women offered organizing support, and unions made serious efforts to recruit women wage earners. Business agents in some unions were hired specifically to work among female workers. In early 1919 the ILGWU made a serious attempt to bridge ethnic and gender divisions. First it hired Joseph Métivier, a veteran of the stone cutters' union, to organize francophone women.<sup>115</sup> The need for a female organizer was acknowledged a few months later by the ILGWU when Anita Gastonier was named to organize shirt workers.<sup>116</sup> The cap makers also appointed a francophone organizer, Mme Rompré.<sup>117</sup> Some unions had female international organizers. The Cap



Makers sent Carolyn Wolfe from New York to help during a lockout in late 1919.<sup>118</sup>

Strike and lockout files compiled by the federal Department of Labour reveal that women were involved in at least 27 of the 79 strikes in 1919 on which it kept records. This is almost certainly to underestimate the number. Men and women usually took strike action together and frequently supported each other's struggles. Women telephone operators at police headquarters walked off the job during the 1918 municipal workers dispute.<sup>119</sup> There was one glove workers' strike that involved only women,<sup>120</sup> and, in several garment, textile, and rubber strikes women predominated. There was a women's strike involving 73 women and three men in the shirt department of John W. Peck.<sup>121</sup> One hundred and twenty one women and eleven men walked out at Royal Silk Dress before a union was formed.<sup>122</sup> At the Acme Glove Company the 250 women and 150 men were satisfied with their employers' offer but went on strike in sympathy for workers at another company where two thirds of the strikers were women.<sup>123</sup> There was a strike at the Adanac glove company over the discharge of two women for union activity.<sup>124</sup> In another glove workers' dispute, 37 women and four men took action, without authorization or approval from the union, demanding the discharge of a foreman for

intimidation.<sup>125</sup> The largest strikes of women were in the textile and rubber industries. Women also used other tactics besides strikes to win changes in their working conditions. The unions for women retail clerks worked with the barbers' union to organize public demonstrations in support of an early closing law.<sup>126</sup>

Organization was not restricted to wage earning women, as the wives and other female relatives of male union members organized auxiliaries to help support union activities. The carpenters' local 134 in Montreal established a women's auxiliary in 1918, which renewed its activity during the building trades strike in the fall of 1919.<sup>127</sup> In October 1919 a parallel organization to the Women's Labor Leagues in other parts of the country, the Ligue auxiliaire des femmes d'unionistes, was formed. Its purpose was to support the union label, to see that the wages of organized workers were spent on union products, to promote unionism, and to investigate and denounce profiteering merchants.<sup>128</sup> Members studied how they could help their husbands' trade union activities. In particular, women were asked to encourage their husbands to attend union meetings.<sup>129</sup> Labour journalists often placed an emphasis on the moral support that women could provide:

L'aide morale que la femme peut donner à l'homme dans sa lutte pour le bien-être des siens est

certainement une des forces les plus profitables pour l'organisation. Le mari, le père, qui se sent soutenu par les siens dans la lutte qu'il doit entreprendre et mener à bonne fin pour obtenir les améliorations qui lui sont nécessaires dans sa situation, est un grand facteur. Au contraire, lorsque l'ouvrier trouve chez lui, dans la personne des êtres qui lui sont chers, des ennemis de son organisation ou des indifférents, ça le décourage et il devient insouciant aux intérêts de son local. Le mal est pire quand la femme, craintive de nature, combat les idées du mari.<sup>130</sup>

Male trade unionists recognized the need for wider support, to include female family members in their struggles, and promoted the Ligue as a means to improve the living and working conditions of family members. The Ligue also served as a social organization for women much as the labour clubs did for men, as entertainment, music and song were used to attract participants to evenings with labour speakers.<sup>131</sup> A request by the Ligue for affiliation to the labour council suggests a desire for a larger role. They were rebuffed, advised to affiliate with the Women's Trade Union Label League of the United States and Canada.<sup>132</sup> While the organization of more women in trade unions reduced male exclusivity, the council insisted on admitting only wage earning workers. The Ligue's activities included lobbying. For example, a delegation of forty women led by Ligue president Emma Bouchard protested to civic authorities against both the lack of water and the refusal to negotiate during a waterworkers' strike. In 1921

the Ligue was involved in a campaign for a legislated eight-hour day for women,<sup>133</sup> and in organizing women workers.<sup>134</sup>

Organizational growth was only one barometer of working class militancy. Even unorganized workers displayed a high degree of militancy. In April 1919, 1200 unorganized employees of the Canadian Sugar Refineries walked off the job, marched in procession to join striking teamsters, and only afterwards did they seek out a union business agent to form a union local and draw up their list of demands.<sup>135</sup> Many of the disputes in this period demonstrated a growing distance between international union leaders and the rank and file. In April 1919, painters won the eight-hour day and increased wages after a three week strike that was not authorized either by their international or their business agent.<sup>136</sup> That same month, 600 teamsters walked off the job a week before the official strike date. Despite orders from union officials to return to work, these carters attempted to incite fellow union members at other companies to join them.<sup>137</sup> Contrary to the recommendation of union officials who had a verbal agreement with the William Davies Company, workers walked out on strike until their contract was signed.<sup>138</sup> A Building Trades Council had been established before the war but, revitalized in 1919, it affirmed its right to act independently of international

union head offices and promoted the use of sympathetic strikes.<sup>139</sup>

As the wave of militancy rolled through industrial Quebec, strikers were seldom alone in their struggles. More than once violent crowd actions erupted. Such actions were most evident in struggles directed against unpopular governments and measures that trod on the democratic sentiments of French-Canadian workers, but they were also used in struggles against private sector employers. To Montreal Trades and Labor Council leaders, however, such actions had no place in the labour movement, which they argued promoted discipline and channelled workers grievances into acceptable channels. Benjamin Drolet, the president of the Cigarmakers local and labour chronicler for La Patrie, claimed that "c'est le travail organisé qui cherche à contrôler tous les mouvements à les conduire par des canaux pacifiques et sûrs loin des sables mouvants de la violence et des principes de l'anarchie".<sup>140</sup> But when a strike of some 4,000 teamsters was declared in April, the strikers went "à l'assaut des renards," and took control of the streets of Montreal to stop all deliveries. Working carters were forced to stop, told of the strike, and accompanied to the Labor Temple to join the union. If a driver resisted, he was pulled down from his rig, his

horses were unleashed and his cargo unloaded onto the streets.<sup>141</sup> These tactics were condemned by union and trades and labour council leaders. In this case the council reaffirmed its insistence on the rule of law, and defended the police who accompanied strikebreakers on deliveries on the grounds that they were doing their duty to protect property and persons.<sup>142</sup>

Some police, however, supported the teamsters. When asked for protection by non union carters, they first asked to see their union badges. Alarmed by police sympathies and the carters tactics, D.K. Trotter, secretary of the Association of Montreal Building and Construction Industries, warned in an open letter addressed to the citizens of Montreal:

Will our members have to organize as they are seriously considering, for the protection of their workers. Will all the citizens have to form a "big union" for the protection of our property? Or shall we ask the Mayor of Seattle to help us out.<sup>143</sup>

At the request of employers, municipal authorities gave strict orders to police to stop all intimidation. Soon afterwards 36 strikers were arrested.<sup>144</sup> A week later, however, just before a compromise settlement was reached, the police union declared that its members would no longer accompany strikebreakers.<sup>145</sup>

Growing labour militancy was also reflected in expressions of socialist sentiment. At a 1918 labour party convention, delegates expressed their support for the October revolution and, to the horror of Labor World editor Gustave Francq, discussed the use of violence.<sup>146</sup> On May Day in 1919 there were some 3,000 marchers in a parade on St. Catherine Street singing the International, including a large delegation of men's clothing workers celebrating successful contract negotiations that had won the eight-hour day without a strike. While the Montreal Trades and Labor Council remained dominated by conservative craft union leaders throughout 1919, socialists were stronger in the local labour movement than their presence on the council would indicate, especially as large numbers of socialist garment workers, and machinists in the British based Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), were not represented on the council. These groups were the backbone of the Montreal branch of the One Big Union which was established in 1919 and, after, disintegrating, was revived the next year.<sup>147</sup> The 800 members of the ASE joined the OBU when the international dissolved its North American locals in 1920.<sup>148</sup>

In Quebec, the labour revolt took on new proportions at the start of June 1919. Leading the strike movement in

Montreal were the workers at the Canadian Vickers Shipyards. The Canadian Vickers dispute was part of a larger strike movement in the shipbuilding industry and would be the core of the general strike movement in Montreal, one that trades and labour council executive members attributed not only to radical elements but also to "outsiders."<sup>149</sup> There was some truth to this claim, as one of the principal promoters of the sympathetic strike movement was R.J. Johns, an OBU supporter from Winnipeg who was in Montreal for the negotiations for Division 4 of the AFL Railway Employees Department.<sup>150</sup> And the Canadian Vickers strike began days after the general strike in Toronto was launched to support striking metal workers. On 2 June when Harry Kirwin, the president of the MTF and a member of the Toronto General Strike Committee, arrived in Montreal, the members of the MTF at the Canadian Vickers shipyards walked off the job.<sup>151</sup> A principal demand of many of the strikers and one of the unifying themes in the general strike movement was the demand for an eight-hour day.

The strike movement quickly gathered momentum. On 3 June some 1,800 boilermakers at Canadian Vickers voted to lay down their tools.<sup>152</sup> The same day, 500 barbers, 40 glassworkers and 2,300 workers at the Canadian Consolidated Rubber, mostly women, also went on strike. The next day all the other trades



at the Consolidated Rubber Plant left work.<sup>153</sup> Under the presidency of OBU supporter William Baugh, also president of the MTF in Montreal, a general strike committee was formed to coordinate action among all the workers on strike at Canadian Vickers. The members of that committee expressed their distance from their unions' business agents in a frequently repeated statement that "this is the affair of the men on the job and the union officers have nothing to do with it."<sup>154</sup>

The strike movement continued to gather strength as 300 glovemakers went on strike on 6 June, followed by 355 employees of the Columbus Rubber Company the next day.<sup>155</sup> By the middle of the month the strike movement seemed to be taking on even greater proportions. On 15 June 3,500 textile workers went on strike. The next day 200 meat cutters and 360 electricians walked off the job.<sup>156</sup> The "Federation of militants", as one activist described the general strike committee at Canadian Vickers, established links with the textile workers as well as with the 150 employees of Jenkes Valve Company. This cooperation resulted in the production of a joint publication for six weeks.<sup>157</sup> The Building Trades Council was also considering strike action to secure the eight-hour day and to support striking electricians.<sup>158</sup> The workers in Division 4 of the AFL's Railway Employees

Department were unhappy at the slow pace of negotiations and wanted to show their support for workers in Winnipeg.<sup>159</sup> Union leaders and the strike committee in Montreal made plans to call a strike on 18 June without waiting for approval from international union headquarters.<sup>160</sup> By the middle of June in Montreal, no less than 12,000 workers were on strike and another 15,000 were ready to go out if their demands were rejected.<sup>161</sup>

The momentum of the labour revolt began to falter over the issue of the general strike. Serious disagreements over tactics as well as fundamental ideological differences broke out. Opposed to a general strike international unions and the leaders of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council invited their own "outside influences," as AFL union roadmen arrived in Montreal in an attempt to counter the expansion of the movement. W.J. Coley, a roadman for the electricians then in Montreal, publicly opposed the strike movement and called for each union to fight its own battles.<sup>162</sup> When the issue of support for the Winnipeg general strike came up at the council in early June, President Foster maintained that the council had no authority to call any kind of strike, that only individual unions had this power.<sup>163</sup> This argument was based on an insistence that each union had complete autonomy in the

area of job actions, and that strikes could not be called without the sanction of the international headquarters if required by a union's constitution. General strikes were also rejected because they conflicted with the sanctity of contracts. The establishment of the orderly collective bargaining system, desired by council leaders, required the observance of agreements.

To be sure, council leaders in Montreal were uneasy about the situation in Winnipeg. Labor World advised that it was best to withhold judgement until all the facts were known but would not blame Winnipeg workers who were defending their right to bargain collectively against intransigent employers.<sup>164</sup> President Foster feared that the Winnipeg strike was being used to destroy the whole labour movement.<sup>165</sup> He was convinced that a defeat for workers in Winnipeg would soon be felt in Montreal. As pressure mounted to show solidarity with Winnipeg workers, the council found a resolution that did not offend the AFL or craft unions, and that would carry all factions within its ranks. It voted its support for all workers on strike for the 44 hour week and the principle of collective bargaining.<sup>166</sup>

Fundamentally, however, the craft union leaders were opposed to general strikes. Debate was not limited to union meetings. As the strike wave gathered strength in June, La Patrie printed numerous interviews with francophone union leaders denouncing the OBU, bolshevism, and the general strike. Many leaders clearly believed the three issues to be linked. These statements came from trades and labour council executive members and from the leaders of many of the newly organized unions that had recently engaged in strike action, including the teamsters and the municipal workers.<sup>167</sup> Conservative international union leaders also used xenophobic statements to distinguish themselves from socialists in the labour movement. Both Foster and cigarmaker Benjamin Drolet argued that bolshevism and radicalism was supported primarily by European immigrants. Calling for more restrictive immigration policies Foster claimed that bolshevism had little attraction among French Canadian workers who were "loyaux et respectueux [des] lois".<sup>168</sup>

The craft unionists' hostility towards socialists became more intense when the latter promoted the general strike or gave open support to the OBU. The general strike tactic threatened craft unionism as it amounted to a unilateral setting aside of some of the rules and conventions that bound

locals to their international headquarters. They also refused to abandon structures that had taken years to build and that in their view had proven effective, for a new and untried form of organization. Like many Ontario unionists Montreal craft union leaders preferred closer co-operation through joint councils which allowed for a united front within an industry while respecting craft jurisdictions.<sup>169</sup>

The pressure from the international unions to end the strike movement in Montreal mounted. On 16 June the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen threatened to take away the charter of any local that walked out in sympathy with workers in Winnipeg.<sup>170</sup> Charles Dickie, the secretary of Division 4 of the railway shop workers, ordered the Montreal leaders to await his return from a conference in Atlantic City before calling a strike. On his return, Dickie announced that if there was to be a strike it would not be for another three weeks.<sup>171</sup> The trades and labor council leaders intervened on 18 June in several disputes to bring them to an end. Foster convinced the Building Trades Council to postpone its walkout until Labour Day. On 19 June the council deplored the repression in Winnipeg where strike leaders had just been arrested, but again refused the request by the Canadian Vickers shipyard workers for a general strike in Montreal.<sup>172</sup>

While many of the strikes continued, the momentum of the movement had been halted.

Montreal was the centre of most strike activity, but there were also disputes across the province. In Hull, firefighters had to strike in June 1919 to win the right to belong to an international organization.<sup>173</sup> A dispute involving some 850 shipyard workers in Trois-Rivières began on 17 June, while another 900 walked out in Lévis in July. Strike activity reached its peak in June but continued through the rest of the year and into 1920. Troops were called in when 1,100 workers at the Dominion Textile Plant in Montmorency walked out to support some 6,000 striking textile workers in Montreal and Magog. There were also strikes by about 2,000 rubber workers in Granby, St. Jérôme, and Montreal in September and October 1919.

The record of strike activity indicates a high level of labour militancy in Quebec, but what conclusions can be drawn about the attachment to craft unionism of Quebec workers? International craft unions certainly played a role in opposing the strike movement, preventing its growth and reversing its momentum. Support for the general strike in June 1919 was much weaker in Montreal than in many western centres or than in

Toronto. But Quebec workers also showed a desire to establish organizations that could bargain more effectively than craft unions and that would include unskilled workers. Often these larger bodies took the form of joint councils that respected the integrity of each separate craft but which could act like an industrial union. This was the case in the large Angus and Point Saint Charles railway shops with the establishment in 1917 of Division 4. It was also the case throughout Quebec shipyards where the MTF took effective action. There were also more informal common fronts such as that of Montreal's municipal workers. And certainly during the war some of the most notable strikes were carried on by industrial unions such as the Western Federation of Miners and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Craft unionism, however, remained a strong force that could undermine attempts to establish effective joint councils. On Labour Day 1919, the Montreal Building Trades Council, revived after years of inactivity, declared a general construction strike for recognition as the bargaining agent for the whole industry. It could not enforce its decision, however, as a number of member locals, especially among the weaker plasterers and painters, voted to ignore its directive, apparently unhappy at the timing of the walkout as the

building season was about to close.<sup>174</sup> Only the strongest international building trade unions, the carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, still hoped to secure an industry wide agreement. In addition, most bricklayers belonged to a secular national union that was not supportive of industry wide struggles.<sup>175</sup> After several weeks on strike each of the unions signed separate agreements either with individual employers or with the Builders' Exchange.<sup>176</sup>

In the metal trades in Montreal, a Metal Trades Council was established at the Canada Car Company, but not for the whole industry. As one observer explained, rivalries and craft particularism helped to undermine its establishment. The boilermakers stuck to policy established by their international headquarters and refused to join a federated council. The molders would not act in unison with other crafts as they felt bound by a collective agreement that ran until September 1919. The International Association of Machinists was ready to participate but remained weak in Montreal since its rival, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, represented a large number of machinists. Faced with these difficulties, Montreal's pattern makers abandoned efforts to form a joint council and decided to fight for the eight-hour day on their own.<sup>177</sup> This was in contrast to Winnipeg and Toronto, where



general strikes were called to support Metal Trades Councils, and to Amherst N.S. where there was a strike in support of a general metal workers' union. The 4,000 workers at Canada Car Company, for their part, won recognition of their council and an eight-hour day after a three day strike early in May 1919.

In 1919, workers won almost twice as many disputes as they lost.<sup>178</sup> Many of the victories, however, involved smaller groups of strikers. The results in the largest strikes, those involving over a thousand workers, were less encouraging. There were two early victories, one by the carters, although they had difficulty enforcing the agreement on a multitude of employers, and one by the Metal Trades Federation at Canada Car and Foundry. Canadian Vickers shipyard workers, the leaders of the general strike movement, returned to work with minor gains.<sup>179</sup> Rubber workers, textile workers, and wire workers, on the other hand, were roundly defeated. In the general construction strike in September, the defection of some locals and the employers' refusal to deal with the Building Trades Council dashed hopes for uniform conditions, although some of the stronger building trades did sign a contract with the Builder's Exchange for the first time since at least 1914. In the region around Quebec City, in addition to intransigent employers, workers confronted the repressive

face of the state - specifically the militia - in two key disputes at Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon and at Dominion Textile in Montmorency. Despite these reverses, the international unions, outside of the Quebec City region, were hardly on the defensive as they entered 1920. Montreal workers had the self confidence to threaten a vote on a general strike in January 1920 in support of striking waterworks workers, raising fears among international union leaders that Montreal would witness a conflict similar to the Winnipeg General Strike.<sup>180</sup>

#### The 1920 Montreal Waterworkers' Strike

During a second major confrontation after the war with the undemocratic Administrative Commission, a strike of some 250 employees in the waterworks department in January 1920, despite the reluctance of the trades and labor council leadership Montreal workers threatened a general strike.

The main issues in the waterworkers' strike were wages and classification, as work was being re-organized by a firm of experts. The unions representing engineers, firemen, oilers, and coal passers wanted to establish a uniform city-wide scale. They drew up a new schedule of wages similar to

the one awarded railway shopmen by the Railway War Board, and presented it to all employers in the Montreal district. For some trades, the request represented increases of forty per cent.<sup>181</sup> They also presented demands for the city's outside employees of the City's waterworks department.<sup>182</sup>

To the unions, it seemed that the Administrative Commission was not seriously interested in negotiating. When they presented their demands to Décary in July 1919, he promised that there would be further consultations before the next budget was drawn up, but they never heard from him. Once the budget was presented to council it revealed that only paltry increases were being offered. The unions again tried to initiate negotiations but these gave little reason for optimism. At a meeting early in December a member of the scientific management consulting firm questioned the strength of the unions. He wondered if they would accept an increase based on the rise in the cost of living since 1914. Though welcomed by the unions, the city rejected this amount as too high and asked union officials for schedules of wages paid in North American cities of comparable size. But even the lowest was higher than the city was willing to pay.

Décary then turned the matter to Commissioner Verville, who conceded the forty-eight hour week<sup>183</sup> but could not settle the wage issue.<sup>184</sup> Throughout negotiations, the unions made it clear that they would strike if a settlement was not reached before their contract expired at midnight on 31 December 1919. Neither side was interested in conciliation. The previous year the engineers had rejected the majority recommendations of a board established under the Lemieux Act and had been very unhappy with the outcome of arbitration by the employer based Committee of Public Safety. For his part, Décary never suggested conciliation and had refused it to other civic workers who asked for it.<sup>185</sup>

On 30 December Décary met with union officials in a last ditch attempt to avert a strike.<sup>186</sup> The city claimed that it paid the same wages as other local employers, but the unions dismissed this as "extremely erroneous". The city asked the unions to submit contracts of Montreal companies paying higher wages, and if they proved their case, the city would make any further increase retroactive.<sup>187</sup> With the unions unwilling to extend the strike deadline Décary declared that any men not satisfied with his offer could notify him the next day and they would be replaced. He posted the same ultimatum in each plant.<sup>188</sup> Union officials returned the next day with copies of

two local agreements but were asked for more contracts.<sup>189</sup> By this time Décary was looking for replacements.<sup>190</sup> Men were being engaged and beds were being put in the pumping stations for them that morning.<sup>191</sup>

The strike began on midnight on New Years Eve. One union member remained in each plant to look after machinery until the replacements arrived.<sup>192</sup> Décary personally took charge of affairs. Determined to defeat the strikers, he declared that he would not take them back and offered permanent jobs to anyone who would replace them. The business community provided active support. Engineering firms, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Harbour Commission, the utility companies supplied engineers and other workers. Large numbers of police were stationed in improvised barracks in all the pumping stations, and they patrolled the surrounding streets in case of demonstrations by strike sympathizers such as had occurred during the 1918 municipal workers' dispute.<sup>193</sup>

Décary faced a much more difficult task keeping the pumps going than he had anticipated. Many parts of the city experienced a water shortage and it took more than ten days to restore service in some quarters.<sup>194</sup> Private water companies supplied some parts of the city while a cart system carried

water to the upper levels of the city.<sup>195</sup> Blaming the difficulty in restoring service on the strikers, Décary said that the condition of the plants was "absolutely criminal" either as the result of negligence or deliberate calculation.<sup>196</sup> He found some of the pumps broken, the furnaces dirty, and no coal on hand.<sup>197</sup> As Décary tried to re-establish the water pressure, the machinery kept breaking down. On 5 January the pumping stations were closed to visitors because Décary suspected sabotage. The union retorted that the poor condition of the plants was due to the policy of retrenchment that had depleted the staff leaving too few repairmen and that, given the state of the machinery and the ineffectiveness of the boilers, it was all they could do to maintain the pressure needed for the reservoirs.<sup>198</sup> Testimony before a Royal Commission later established that the plants were left in their normal condition.

A week into the dispute, a delegation from the trades and labour council offered to mediate. It considered Décary's position arbitrary while conceding that the strikers had made mistakes and had used poor tactics, especially by not extending the strike deadline when there was still the possibility of negotiations. Still, they felt that there should be grounds for a settlement. Décary, who was beginning

to re-establish the water supply, was adamant that he would never take the strikers back.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, Décary had support in business and government circles. The Montreal Board of Trade expressed "great satisfaction" at Décary's efforts,<sup>200</sup> and organized "a citizens committee to aid the civic authorities to preserve law and order and to see that all public services are carried out properly."<sup>201</sup> He also reportedly had the full backing of Premier Sir Lomer Gouin.<sup>202</sup>

Montreal labour was reported as being in an explosive mood at the prospect that Décary might succeed in replacing the strikers.<sup>203</sup> Certainly support for the civic employees was growing. There were pro-strike meetings, such as one in St. Jean-Baptiste ward where Commissioner Alphonse Verville was attacked for deserting "his post as friend of the poor man."<sup>204</sup> A delegation from the Ligue auxiliaire des femmes d'unionistes de Montréal complained to Décary about his refusal to negotiate.<sup>205</sup> La Patrie reported that the strikers were seeking support from other unions and that these were inclined to help.<sup>206</sup> Sam J. McGuire, president of one of the unions involved, declared:

This strike is only starting the pot to boil and within the next few days there will be developments along other lines. The reason no other workers have been called out on a sympathy strike is that we are afraid of a repetition of the Winnipeg trouble.

Among the men now on strike are a number of radicals and it is with the greatest of difficulty the executive of the union have been able to hold them in check.<sup>207</sup>

On 11 January, 300 to 400 delegates attended one of the largest meetings ever held by the trades and labour council. The same council that had refused sympathetic action during the Winnipeg general strike, threatened to take a vote on a general strike among all organized workers in Montreal, whether affiliated to the council or not, unless the provincial government intervened. There was a great deal of anger directed at the undemocratic and anti-labour Administrative Commission. The resolutions passed by the council called for the immediate replacement of the Administrative Commission by an elected body, and for a board of arbitration to investigate the conditions and wage scales of all civic workers. As a minimum the council would accept a Royal Commission to investigate the administration of the city under the trusteeship and to discover the real reasons for the "discontent which actually prevails among municipal employees." Otherwise the MFLC would conduct a vote and if there was a two thirds majority in favour it would declare a general strike.<sup>208</sup>



Over the next ten days, a number of labour delegations met with Premier Gouin to press for his intervention and the re-instatement of the strikers. The threat of a general strike so concerned an important group of employers that they sought a solution agreeable to both sides.<sup>209</sup> When a group of prominent businessmen, including the president of the Montreal Tramways Company, A.E. Robert, building contractor Peter Lyall, and Joseph Quintal, president of the Chamber of Commerce, met the Premier on 20 January, they hoped he could arrange a quick settlement.<sup>210</sup> Under pressure from Gouin, Décary accepted a Royal Commission, but only to establish blame in the dispute. Décary insisted that if he were found to be in the wrong he would resign, but if the strikers were at fault he would not take them back.<sup>211</sup> The MTLC executive announced that it would accept a Royal Commission but only if it helped to choose labour's representatives.<sup>212</sup>

On 21 January the provincial government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the events leading up to the strike and to help find a solution to the impasse. A prominent lawyer, Aimé Geoffrion, presided over the commission that included the MTLC's president, J.T. Foster, and its vice-president Joseph Gauthier, as well as two businessmen, CPR vice-president Grant Hall and Joseph Quintal. The commission

was given a week to deliver its findings.<sup>213</sup> The unanimous report was drafted to allow for a settlement without a loss of dignity by either side. It described the pre-strike negotiations without ascribing blame and concluded that the dispute was the result of a misunderstanding.<sup>214</sup> When the Administrative Commission then agreed to take back most of the strikers but not their leaders Foster commented bitterly that:

We are sitting on a volcano and are reluctant to make any move which might precipitate trouble. We have been, and are, doing our best to keep things in hand, but we are not getting any assistance.<sup>215</sup>

It took several more days of discussion and the personal intervention of Premier Gouin to reach a settlement. Officially all the men would return to work by 15 February on the conditions offered by the City before the strike.<sup>216</sup> In fact, Décary would still not take back union president, Sam McGuire, because he had questioned the honesty of the Commissioners in his testimony before the Royal Commission. McGuire quietly resigned from the city's employ to become business agent for his union.<sup>217</sup>

The city performed its part of the bargain poorly. There was an understanding that the men would be replaced in shifts to avoid friction with strikebreakers.<sup>218</sup> When this was

ignored, six union coal passers walked out rather than work with men who had replaced them during the dispute. A delay in taking back many of the strikers prompted another strike threat.<sup>219</sup> The last men were rehired on 23 February after Foster called Décary to urge him live up to the agreement.<sup>220</sup> In February a new scale of wages was negotiated that was only slightly higher than the old one.<sup>221</sup> Two months later some of the workers had still not received their increase prompting another strike threat.<sup>222</sup> In May Décary declared that he was willing to hear from a committee of employees but refused to recognize business agent McGuire adding that the waterworks would be run as an open shop.<sup>223</sup>

J.T. Foster and the MTLC executive went to great lengths to avoid a vote on a general strike, an outcome that they considered a serious possibility. They delayed taking a vote during the ten days before the Geoffrion Commission was established, and agreed to an inquiry that dealt with far less than called for by the original MTLC resolutions. While Foster called the settlement "very satisfactory," he also admitted that "I stood more abuse through it all from my own people than from anyone else".<sup>224</sup>

This strike threat highlighted some of the divisions within the Montreal labour movement. The call for an immediate general strike early in January was led by Alfred Mathieu and Henri Julien, both leading figures in the labour clubs. Later in February, Alfred Mathieu was fiercely critical of the council executive for its "lack of energy," its apathy and indolence, because President Foster had worked hard to avert a strike vote. Mathieu declared that a general strike should have been called early in January to bring Commissioner Décary and Premier Gouin "down from their pedestals" and to force them to take organized labour seriously. Mathieu clearly favoured using the general strike as a political weapon as he wanted to teach the provincial Liberal government a lesson.<sup>225</sup> The hostility of the most militant proponents of a general strike was directed at the Administrative Commission and the provincial government which had deprived Montreal of its autonomy. These were French-Canadian workers who felt that the undemocratic trusteeship was aimed directly at reducing their influence and control at city hall. As well some of the anglophone socialists who supported the OBU and the general strike movement in May and June, including Richard Kerrigan and William Baugh who had led the Canadian Vickers general strike committee, sided on this occasion with Foster and those who wanted to avoid direct action.<sup>226</sup>

### The Defeat of the Strike Movement

Strike activity continued at a high level into 1920, until the recession that started in the summer brought soaring unemployment, wage reductions, and an anti-union offensive by employers. Ironically, given the shortage of work, some employers also seized the occasion to lengthen the work day, rolling back another of the gains their workers had won in previous years. Competition for work was made worse because New England textile and shoe factories were also laying off workers and this recession marked the end of a demand for labour that had attracted men and women from Quebec since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Now the trains were filled with families from New England mills returning to the Quebec countryside, a devastating problem for rural areas that depended on these earnings.<sup>227</sup>

The turnaround in labour's fortunes came quickly and without a dramatic confrontation. As late as July 1920, recently organized workers in Montreal still hoped to make gains.<sup>228</sup> A strike of some 400 steel workers failed, however, and the union collapsed in the face of employer resistance. One employer, the Steel Company of Canada, refused arbitration

and offered to meet with its own employees but only if they abandoned their union and returned to work.<sup>229</sup> Many other unions of newly organized workers also collapsed. Soon other employers found pretexts to repudiate contracts won by some of the stronger organizations established in the previous years. The Metal Trades Council at Canada Car and Foundry negotiated a new agreement in April 1920 that included a closed shop for most trades,<sup>230</sup> but under new American management, because of an unauthorized strike by 34 rivet heaters that was quickly repudiated by the unions the company locked-out its 3000 employees in August 1920.<sup>231</sup>

The company ignored offers from the Metal Trades Council to replace the strikers and re-opened as an open shop, giving workers a verbal assurance that it would observe the other terms and conditions of the now defunct collective agreement.<sup>232</sup> Other employers, such as those engaged in job printing, also joined the open shop campaign in 1921. From 1920, striking workers, particularly those in construction and garment making, faced the increased use of injunctions to curb picketing.

Wage reductions were imposed on unionized workers from October 1920, and they continued through the next several

years. In 1921, Montreal meat packers, boot and shoe workers, garment workers, Canadian Vickers shipyard workers, structural iron workers in Montreal and Quebec, papermakers in Jonquière, Kénogami, Cap-de-la-Madeleine and Hull, all went on strike against wage reductions but returned on the employers' terms.<sup>233</sup> Others accepted reductions without a fight. Railway shop workers accepted wage cuts in 1921 and again in 1922 following the recommendations of a government conciliation board.<sup>234</sup> Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the number of strikes declined dramatically, and that there fewer attempts to organize new groups of workers until the recession lifted in 1925.

One of the significant aspects of the labour offensive had been the organization of public and "para-public" sector workers. These unions now came under fierce attack. Montreal's lay Catholic school teachers were among the first to be targeted. Complaining of favouritism in hiring and promotion, and earning wages that had been substantially eroded by inflation during the war, they joined the American Federation of Teachers and the Montreal Trades and Labor Council in September and October 1919.<sup>235</sup> While they had considerable support from the public and from the press,<sup>236</sup> the response from the Montreal Catholic School Commission, an appointed

body whose members were named by the Archbishop, the provincial government and the City of Montreal, was instantly hostile. Union members were subjected to a vicious campaign. Their religious convictions were questioned, they were accused of bolshevism for joining the labour council, and the Archbishop publicly declared that teachers should not form a labour organization. The union collapsed at the end of the school term in June 1920 when 68 teachers, the most active union supporters, were fired. In this case, the Catholic Church's interest in, and control over, education precluded it from tolerating a union of any sort, let alone a secular international one, among its teachers.<sup>237</sup>

Montreal municipal unions also came under attack. While Montreal workers had objected to the undemocratic trusteeship and hoped for better treatment from the new council elected in November 1921, they were sorely disappointed as the majority of aldermen were decidedly hostile to organized labour. The city objected to a union of any sort in the police force, the fire department, and among aqueduct workers.<sup>238</sup> The police union bore the brunt of an anti-union assault, as business leaders feared that unionized police would sympathize with other workers during industrial disputes.<sup>239</sup> The city's campaign lasted several years. It included the dismissal of



union officials and orders first to officers than to constables to quit the union. For its part the union launched a court battle that lasted until 1927 for the right of police to organize. The police union did manage to resist and maintain close ties to the labour movement, keeping its TLCC charter and its membership in the Montreal Trades and Labor Council.<sup>240</sup> Some unions established during the heady organizing years of 1918 and 1919 endured but survival often involved a constant battle.

### Conclusion

The postwar labour revolt in Quebec resembled the upsurge in other parts of Canada in a number of ways. Quebec workers, men and women from all ethnic backgrounds demonstrated the same desire to organize unions, and to act in concert through joint councils, by undertaking simultaneous strike action and by threats of a general strike. There was an unprecedented level of strike activity that revealed a remarkable degree of solidarity. Crowd actions suggest that this sentiment was shared well beyond the membership of labour organizations. The labour revolt was, however, ultimately unsuccessful. While this was mainly because of employer intransigence and the high levels of unemployment in the depression of the 1920s, it also

faltered on profound divisions within the Quebec working class.

As in other regions, although not of the same proportions, there was a division between craft unionists who favoured American Federation of Labor organizations and supporters of the One Big Union, and division over the issue of support for the 1919 general strike. In Quebec, however, the working class was more fragmented than elsewhere and these divisions were particularly important factors in limiting the revolt.

While women organized and engaged in militant action on a new scale, male workers seem to have been overtly hostile to women's paid work, particularly in non-traditional areas. Perhaps this can be explained by the strength of conservative nationalist ideology regarding women's proper sphere, as proscribed by the Church and Catholic intellectuals such as Henri Bourassa.<sup>241</sup>

In Montreal, ideological, political and ethnic divisions further fragmented the labour movement. Many French-Canadian workers demonstrated an aversion to socialism, while the left in the labour movement was made up largely of anglophone and

European immigrant workers. While French-Canadian workers, on the whole did not espouse socialism and those in Catholic unions were quiescent, francophone members of the international unions in Montreal did demonstrate a militancy evident, for instance, in the civic workers strike in 1918, and a desire in the waterworkers strike of 1920 to use direct action to bring their influence to bear on the provincial government. Francophone workers in Montreal had different aims. They tended to focus on the provincial government that was depriving Montreal workers of their political rights and influence, whereas anglophone socialists focused on the general strike movement in May and June 1919. Led by a secondary leadership of socialists who had little influence at the labour council, the general strike movement was part of a wider attempt to confront capital. Clearly it was both these groups, the militant francophone labourists and the socialist advocates of a general strike, that posed a threat to Montreal Trades and Labor Council leaders who insisted on the separation of industrial and political action.

While more limited than elsewhere, the workers' revolt is nevertheless significant. The organizational vehicles for the revolt were secular international unions. It was this labour movement, associated with class conflict and considered

militant towards employers, rather than the Catholic unions that attracted most francophone Catholic workers and that remained the predominant expression of Quebec labour. It was because of the revolt that Catholic Church provided the funds, the personnel, the prestige and the press to push for Catholic unions during these years.

## Endnotes

1. Because some 35% to 45% of union locals in Quebec did not answer the federal Department of Labour's request for this information in any given year, figures for union membership seriously underestimate the total number of trade unionists. These figures nonetheless give an indication of spectacular growth of these years.

Year	Number of locals reporting	Reported membership
1917	171 out of 309	28,005
1918	201 out of 366	48,570
1919	277 out of 428	61,097

Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1918, 208; 1919, 216; 1920; 274.

2. Labor World, 18, 25 January 1918.

3. These calculations are based on material in the Labour Gazette and the NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout Records.

4. Two of the Catholic union strikes were by carriage makers in Montreal, while the third was by roofers and plumbers in Quebec City. Labour Gazette, March 1290; NA, RG 27, Vol. 317, Strike 316, Strike 317.

5. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, XXIII, Montréal, 49-50, 139.

6. La Patrie, 5, 6, 7, 8 May 1919.

7. La Patrie, 9, 11 September 1918.

8. Labor World, 14 September 1918.

9. La Patrie, 11, 12 September 1918.

10. La Patrie, 14 May 1918.

11. La Patrie, 3 July 1918.

12. La Patrie, 31 July 1918.

13. Le Devoir, 8 November 1918.

14. La Patrie, 7 September 1918.
15. La Patrie, 9 November 1918. The charge that bribes were required for entry into the force and for promotion within it was not new. The Cannon Royal Commission in 1910 had found that this was the case. In August 1918, Médéric Martin had also demanded an inquiry alleging that promotions in the police department were being bought and sold. La Patrie, 13 August 1918.
16. La Patrie, 10 September 1918.
17. La Patrie, 14 May 1918.
18. La Patrie, 29 June 1918; Le Devoir, 9 December 1918.
19. La Patrie, 31 July 1918.
20. La Patrie, 9 November 1918.
21. La Patrie, 4 July 1918.
22. La Patrie, 26 August 1918.
23. La Patrie, 9 November 1918.
24. La Patrie, 26 August 1918.
25. Le Devoir, 8 November 1918; Montreal Gazette, 6 December 1918.
26. La Patrie, 4 November 1918.
27. Le Devoir, 7, 8 November 1918.
28. La Patrie, 29, 30 November 1918.
29. Le Devoir, 28 November 1918.
30. La Patrie, 21 November 1918.
31. Le Devoir, 31 October 1918.
32. Montreal Gazette, 10 December 1918.

34. La Patrie, 29 November 1918.
35. Le Devoir, 29 November 1918.
36. La Patrie, 6 December 1918.
37. Montreal Gazette, 10 December 1918.
38. Le Devoir, 10 December 1918.
39. La Patrie, 3 December 1918; Le Devoir, 4 December 1918.
40. La Patrie, 6 December 1918.
41. Le Devoir, 7 November 1918; On the Committee of Sixteen see Andr  e L  vesque, "Le mouvement de r  formes sociales et la marginalisation des prostitu  es    Montr  al, 1865-1925," R  sistance et Transgression, Montr  al, 1985, 87-122.
42. Le Devoir, 26 November 1918; One allegation against Tremblay involved donations collected among Montreal firemen several months earlier for the City's four hospitals, but which had not been delivered. Tremblay claimed that he had not had time to distribute the money. The secretary of the Firemen's Union rejected this explanation. La Patrie, 5 December 1918.
43. Le Devoir, 4 December 1918.
44. Le Devoir, 9 December 1918.
45. Le Devoir, 9 December 1918; La Patrie, 9 December 1918.
46. La Patrie, 5 December 1918.
47. Le Devoir, 9 December 1918.
48. Montreal Gazette, 9 December 1918.
49. Commissioner D  cary claimed the unions wanted to choose their own department heads. Police union president Carle replied that the Commissioners were "un tas de menteurs." Le Devoir, 10 December 1918.
50. La Patrie, 10 September 1918.

51. La Patrie, 11 December 1918.
52. La Patrie, 11 December 1918.
53. Montreal Gazette, 12 December 1918.
54. La Patrie, 11 December 1918.
55. La Patrie, 12 December 1918.
56. Le Devoir, 10 December 1918.
57. Montreal Gazette, 12 December 1918.
58. Le Devoir, 10 December 1918; Montreal Gazette, 12 December 1918.
59. La Patrie, 12 December 1918.
60. Montreal Gazette, 12 December 1918.
61. La Patrie, 12 December 1918.
62. Le Devoir, 11 December 1918.
63. Le Devoir, 9 December 1918.
64. Le Devoir, 11 December 1918.
65. Montreal Gazette, 11 December 1918.
66. La Patrie, 12 December 1918.
67. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
68. La Patrie, 13 December 1918.
69. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
70. Le Devoir, 12 December 1918.
71. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
72. Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty, Montreal, 1974, 133.



73. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
74. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
75. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
76. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
77. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
78. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918; La Patrie, 13, 14 December 1918.
79. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918; Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
80. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
81. Montreal Gazette, 13 December 1918.
82. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
83. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
84. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
85. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
86. La Patrie, 13 December 1918.
87. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
88. La Patrie, 13 December 1918.
89. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
90. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
91. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
92. La Patrie, 16 December 1918.
93. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
94. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.

95. La Patrie, 14 December 1918.
96. Montreal Gazette, 14 December 1918.
97. La Patrie, 18 December 1918.
98. La Patrie, 20 December 1918; Labour World, 21 December 1918.
99. La Patrie, 3 February 1919.
100. Le Devoir, 8 November, 9 December 1918.
101. La Patrie, 3 February 1919.
102. For meat packers see Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1919, 128; For rubber workers see Montreal Gazette, 3 June 1919; Labor World, 21 June 1919; and NA, RG 27, Vol. 318, Strike 391; For textile workers see Labor World, 5 April, 24 May 1919, and Deux grève de l'"International". Aux chantiers Davie et à la Dominion Textile, Québec, 1919, 3-4; On garment workers see Advance, 5 December 1919; On shirtmakers see Labor World, 21 June 1919; For teamsters, seamen, gas workers and laundry workers see Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1919, 130; 1920, 172-7.
103. Montreal Gazette, 15 April 1919.
104. Montreal Gazette, 14, 15 April 1919.
105. La Patrie, 7 July 1919.
106. La Patrie, 25 March 1919.
107. Gustave Francq, Bolchévisme ou syndicalisme, lequel?, Montréal, 1919, 31.
108. Labor World, 26 April 1919.
109. Labor World, 8 March 1919.
110. Labor World, 12 April 1919.
111. Labor World, 22 March 1919.

112. Labor World, 8 March 1919.
113. Labor World, 8 February 1919.
114. Price, Changes in the Industrial Occupations of Women, 39-40.
115. Labor World, 12 April 1919
116. Labor World, 21 June 1919.
117. Labor World, 19 March 1921.
118. Montreal Star, 1 December 1919.
119. Le Devoir, 13 December 1918.
120. This was a strike of twenty five glove workers to force an employer to honour an agreement. See NA, RG 27, Vol. 317, Strike 289.
121. NA, RG 27, Vol. 311, Strike 49.
122. Labor World, 17 May 1919.
123. Labor World, 31 May 1919; For the number of strikers see NA, 123. La Patrie, 25 October 1919; On the Women's Labour Leagues see Linda Kealey, "No Special Protection - No Sympathy: Women's Labour Activism in the Canadian Labour Revolt of 1919," in Deian R. Hopkin and Gregory S. Kealey, eds. Class, Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada 1850-1930, Aberystwyth, 1989, 134-159; Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred?, Toronto, 1983, 120-2; Joan RG 27, Vol. 313, Strike 154, J.A. Demers to Department of Labour, 31 May 1919, and Hudson Bay Knitting Co. to Department of Labour, 31 May 1919.
124. Labor World, 21 June 1919.
125. NA, RG 27, Vol. 315, Strike 215, J.A. Demers to Department of Labour, 8 July 1919.
126. La Patrie, 3 April, 22 May 1919.
127. Labor World, 4 May 1918; La Patrie, 25 October 1919.

Sangster, Dreams of Equality. Women On The Canadian Left, 1920-1950, Toronto, 1989, 20, 26, 28-9, 34-5; Naylor, The New Democracy, 138, 142-5.

129. Labor World, 13 August 1921.

130. Labor World, 28 August 1920.

131. See, for example, Labor World, 1 May 1920.

132. Labor World, 22 November 1919.

133. Labor World, 8 January, 19 February 1921.

134. Labor World, 7 May 1921.

135. Labor World, 26 April 1919.

136. NA, Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout Records, RG 27, vol. 311, Strike 62, Asch Ltd. to Department of Labour, 17 April 1919.

137. Montreal Gazette, 16, 24 April 1919.

138. NA, Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout Records, RG 27, vol. 315, Strike 217, William Davies Company to Department of Labour, 25 June 1919.

139. Montreal Gazette, 5 May 1919.

140. La Patrie, 6 February 1919.

141. Montreal Gazette, 16, 22, 24 April 1919.

142. Montreal Gazette, 19, 23 April 1919.

143. Montreal Gazette, 23, 24 April 1919.

144. Montreal Gazette, 23 April 1919; Montreal Star, 24 April 1919.

145. La Patrie, 28 April 1919; Montreal Star 29 April 1919; Montreal Gazette, 30 April 1919.

146. La Patrie, 16 December 1918.

147. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 160-1.
148. NA, MG 27 II D19 Arthur Sifton Papers, Vol. 9, RCMP Report C.I.B. Division, 21 October 1920, 18-19.
149. Montreal Gazette, 4, 11 June 1919. In shipbuilding there were strikes in Welland and Toronto in May 1919. Naylor, The New Democracy, 50. Shipyard workers in Trois-Rivières walked off the job later in June 1919 while those in Lévis did so in July.
150. Montreal Gazette, 24, 28, 31 May 1919; Montreal Herald, 3 June 1919; Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), 28.
151. Montreal Herald, 3 June 1919.
152. Montreal Gazette, 24, 31 May 1919; Kealey, "1919", 28; Montreal Herald, 3 June 1919.
153. Montreal Gazette, 4, 11 June 1919.
154. Montreal Star, 4 June 1919; Montreal Gazette, 12 July 1919.
155. Labour Gazette, July 1919, 779; NA, RG 27, Vol. 314, Strike, 188.
156. Labour Gazette, July 1919, 798-9.
157. Alex Gauld in The Worker, 5 September 1923.
158. Montreal Star, 27 June 1919; Montreal Gazette, 28 June 1919.
159. La Patrie, 21 May 1919.
160. Montreal Star, 18 June 1919; AFL, Railway Employees Department, Proceedings, 1920, 69.
161. La Patrie, 16, 17 June 1919.
162. La Patrie, 16 June 1919.
163. Montreal Gazette, 6 June 1919.

164. Labor World, 24 May 1919.
165. La Patrie, 21 June 1919.
166. Montreal Gazette, 5, 6 June 1919; Labor World, 7 June 1919.
167. See, for example, La Patrie, 2, 3 June 1919.
168. La Patrie, 18 January, 27 March, 17 April 1919; Montreal Star, 4 June 1919.
169. Naylor, The New Democracy, 48-52, 64-69.
170. Le groupe de recherche sur l'histoire des mouvement politiques ouvriers de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Chronologie des mouvement politiques ouvriers de la fin du 19e siècle jusqu'à 1919, Montréal, 1976, 277.
171. Montreal Star, 18 June 1919; La Patrie, 25 June 1919.
172. Montreal Gazette, 20 June 1919.
173. La Patrie, 2 June 1919.
174. Montreal Star, 9 September 1919.
175. Montreal Gazette, 6 September 1919; Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, 94.
176. La Patrie, 6, 8 July 1919; Montreal Star, 11 July, 9 September 1919; La Presse, 3 September 1919.
177. Pattern Makers Journal, May 1919, 14-15.
178. According to figures compiled from the Labour Gazette and the Department of Labour Strike and Lock-out files.
179. Vickers shipyard workers gained both a wage increase and reduced hours in a compromise that left them far from satisfied. Hours were reduced from 50 to 47 and a half a week and skilled workers received a 7 cent an hour increase. Ottawa Citizen, 12 July 1919 in NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout Files, vol. 314, Strike 189; Montreal Star, 14 July 1919; W. Baugh to Department of Labour, 9 August 1919

in NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout Files, vol. 314, Strike 189.

180. TLCC, Proceedings, 1920, 113.

181. Montreal Star, 11 November 1919.

182. Montreal Star, 30 January 1920.

183. Montreal Star, 23, 24, 29 January 1920.

184. Montreal Star, 6 January 1920.

185. Montreal Star, 23 January 1920.

186. Montreal Star, 23 January 1920.

187. Montreal Star, 2, 29 January 1920.

188. Montreal Star, 2, 24 January 1920.

189. Montreal Star, 23, 29 January 1920.

190. Montreal Star, 30 January 1920.

191. Montreal Star, 24 January 1920.

192. Montreal Star, 5 January 1920.

193. Montreal Gazette, 3 January 1920.

194. Montreal Gazette, 10 January 1920.

195. Montreal Star, 2, 3 January 1920.

196. Montreal Star, 5 January 1920.

197. Montreal Star, 2 January 1920.

198. Montreal Star, 5 January 1920; Montreal Gazette, 7 January 1920.

199. Montreal Star, 7 January 1920.

200. Montreal Star, 8 January 1920.

201. Montreal Star, 3 January 1920; Montreal Gazette, 7 January 1920.
202. Montreal Star, 7 January 1920.
203. Montreal Star, 6 January 1920.
204. Montreal Gazette, 7 January 1920.
205. Montreal Gazette, 10 January 1920.
206. La Patrie, 8 January 1920.
207. Montreal Star, 6 January 1920.
208. Montreal Star, 12 January 1920; La Patrie, 12 January 1920.
209. La Patrie, 8 January 1920; Montreal Star, 16 January 1920.
210. Montreal Gazette, 21 January 1920.
211. Montreal Star, 16 January 1920.
212. Montreal Star, 17 January 1920.
213. Montreal Gazette, 22 January 1920.
214. Montreal Star, 29 January 1920.
215. Montreal Gazette, 30 January 1920.
216. Montreal Star, 3 February 1920.
217. Montreal Gazette, 4 February 1920; Montreal Star, 8 May 1920.
218. Montreal Gazette, 4 February 1920.
219. Montreal Star, 5 February 1920.
220. Montreal Star, 20 February 1920.
221. Montreal Star, 24 February 1920.



222. Montreal Star, 8 May 1920.
223. Montreal Star, 10 May 1920.
224. Montreal Star, 16 January, 20 February 1920.
225. Montreal Star, 6 February 1920.
226. Montreal Star, 12, 16 January 1920; La Patrie, 12 January 1920.
227. Labor World, 30 July 1921; Yolande Lavoie, "Les mouvements migratoires des Canadiens entre leur pays et les États-Unis au XIX<sup>e</sup> et au XX<sup>e</sup> siècles." in Hubert Charbonneau, La population Québec. Études rétrospectives, du Québec, 79-80; Yves Roby, Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre 1776-1930, Sillery, 1990, 286-7; Jacques Rouillard, Ah Les États! Les travailleurs canadiens-français dans l'industrie textile de la Nouvelle-Angleterre d'après le témoignage des derniers migrants. Montréal, 1985, 79-80.
228. NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout files, Vol. 322, Strike 293.
229. Labor World, 21 August 1920; Craig Heron, Working in Steel. The Early Years In Canada, 1883-1935, Toronto, 1988, 133-4.
230. Montreal Gazette, 24 August 1920.
231. Tom Naylor, The History of Canadian Business 1967-1914, Vol. II, Industrial Development, Toronto, 1975, 293; Windsor Star, August 24, 1920 in NA, Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout files, RG 27, vol. 323, Strike 324; Montreal Star, 20 August 1920.
232. NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout files, vol. 323, Strike 324, Theo. Bertrand to Department of Labour, 11 September 1920.
233. Labour Gazette, 1921.
234. Labour Gazette, July 1922, 771-2, April 1923, 404; Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, 129.

235. For an account of these early organizing efforts see Rodolphe Chartrand, Une certaine alliance. 60 ans...et après? Histoire de l'Alliance des professeurs de Montréal, Montréal, 1980, 15-25. For an account of wage increases during the war see La Patrie, 18 October 1919; Factum. Respectueusement dédié à l'Honorable Premier Ministre Sir Lomer Gouin, nd. in Montreal Catholic School Commission Archives (MCSCA), Associations syndicales et autres, Association de Bien-Etre des instituteurs et institutrice de Montréal 1919-1920, 3.

236. They submitted a petition supporting their demands with over 10,000 names to their employer, the Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC). Eudore Gobeil to MCSC, nd. in MCSCA, Associations syndicales et autres, Association du Bien-Etre des instituteurs et institutrices de Montréal, Généralité, 1919 à 1920. They were also encouraged by La Patrie, for example. See La Patrie, 9 October 1919.

237. Labor World, 5 June 1920.

238. La Patrie, 21 February 1923.

239. La Patrie, 20 March, 15 July 1922.

240. La Patrie, 14 April, 6 June, 29, 30 November, 3 December, 1923; Labour Organization in Canada, 1923, 217; 1925, 204-5; 1927, 235; TLCC, Proceedings, 1927, 135.

241. On Henri Bourassa see Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'," Journal of Canadian Studies, X, (November 1975) 3-11; On the Church's attitude towards feminism see Marie Lavigne, Yolande Pinard et Jennifer Stoddart, "La Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste et les revendications féministes au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle," in Pinard et Stoddart, Travailleuses et féministes, 199-216.

## Chapter 3

## Labour Political Action in Quebec

Les survivants [de la guerre en Europe] veulent la gloire de mieux vivre et leurs syndicats, de plus en plus puissants, par le nombre de leurs adhérents, revendiquent dans l'arène parlementaire le droit de légiférer d'une façon conforme à leurs intérêts matériels.... Aussi... veulent-ils passer outre et prendre en leurs propres mains la surveillance de leurs intérêts. Ils se rappellent que l'on n'est jamais si bien servi que par soi-même.

Labor World, 8 March 1919.

Trade union growth and increasing strike activity of the years 1916 to 1919 was accompanied by a renewed interest in independent political action. Indeed, the success of workplace struggles encouraged workers to try to extend their political influence at every level of government. There were three factors that were particularly important in defining the nature of Quebec labour politics at this time. First, ethnic differences divided workers. While French Canadian workers had a tradition of labourism, very few became socialists. Most socialists were Anglo-Celt and European immigrants. Secondly, while labourists insisted on keeping politics and unionism separate, when craft integrity was challenged by industrial unionism in the form of support for the One Big Union, they fought socialist influence both within their unions and in the Labor Party. Thirdly, labourism in Quebec was characterized by

a long tradition of close links with the Liberal Party. In the final analysis, the workers' revolt in Quebec was limited by the inability of Quebec workers to put forward an effective and unified voice at the political level.

Since its inception in 1904 the Labor Party had been dominated by craft union leaders closely associated with the MTLC.<sup>1</sup> Usually there was an inter-locking directorship between the two bodies. In 1916, for instance, trades and labour council corresponding-secretary Gustave Francq was also secretary of the Labor Party. Its one representative in Parliament was Alphonse Verville, a plumber and former president of the TLCC, who had represented the riding of Maisonneuve since 1906. Narcisse Arcand, an organizer for the UBCJ, and Joseph Ainey, a carpenter, and Montreal City controller from 1910 to 1918, were also important members. Ainey, Verville and Francq had all at one time been president of the MTLC. The close link between the Labor Party and the trades and labour council was also evident because, in practice, both the decision to contest an election, and the choice of candidates, usually involved both organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Independent political action reflected a desire by workers for fairer representation in government.<sup>3</sup> It seemed that they were scarcely represented at any level of decision

making and that most legislation either ignored or hurt working class interests. It was not, however, enough simply to elect more labouring people. Most of these craft union leaders wanted a party led by those who had proven themselves through years of union work. They also wanted elected representatives to maintain close ties to the labour movement. Joseph Ainey, the Labor Party's representative on Montreal's Board of Control was highly praised because he continued to work closely with international union leaders. To ensure that political action would be independent of established political parties, the Labor Party members were required to sever any formal links with other parties. Members were prohibited from working for electoral candidates unless they had been endorsed by the Labor Party.<sup>4</sup>

The platform of the Labor Party contained a large number of reforms aimed at all levels of government, many of them identical to those that had long been made by the MTLC and TLCC. These included social welfare measures such as old age pensions and state health insurance. Others were intended to improve working conditions by legislating an eight hour work day and an end to the employment of children under 14. The Labor Party wanted changes in the relations between employers and workers: a law to make employers responsible for industrial accidents; and the abolition of the Master and

Servants' Act. The Labor Party also advocated a progressive income tax. It wanted to replace private banks with a public financial institution, and advocated the nationalization or municipalization of all public utilities. While it did not condemn capitalism, these measures aimed at increasing government control over the economy and at reducing the concentration of economic power in private hands and eliminating certain monopolies. Advocacy of these measures prompted Catholic union promoters to describe the Labor Party as socialist.

While many of the reforms were intended to improve living and working conditions, there was an underlying desire to permit workers to participate fully in political life. For Quebec labourists, one reason why workers were poorly represented was because the school system did not prepare them to make electoral choices that reflected their class interests. Better public education, they believed, would lead to a more active, informed, and independent political activity. It was no accident that free and compulsory instruction was the first item in its platform. In 1911 the Labor Party added the establishment of a provincial ministry of education to its list of desired reforms. These were perhaps the demands that alarmed and most directly challenged the interests of the Catholic Church that considered any

increase in state intervention in this realm to be a direct threat to its control over Catholic education in the province.<sup>5</sup>

If workers were not adequately represented in governments this was because of a political system that impeded their involvement. At least nine of the 42 planks in the Labor Party program called for reform of the electoral system. Some were clearly intended to remove obstacles to working class participation: universal suffrage, the abolition of property qualifications for office, and the proclamation of voting day as a statutory holiday. Others were considered changes that would increase working-class representation. These included proportional representation, compulsory voting, and a law to prevent electors from exercising more than one vote if they owned property in more than one location. They also demanded a measure of direct democracy in the referendum, and wanted to abolish appointed bodies such as the Senate and Quebec's Legislative Council. The Labor Party did not foresee or desire gaining power for workers alone. Labourists hoped to share in influence and in decision making power with other elements in society. The Labour Party envisaged a series of dramatic reforms to capitalist society. In contrast, the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) championed a revolutionary transformation of society to

eradicate capitalism.

By 1914 labourism had deep roots among French-Canadian trade unionists. The driving force behind the establishment of the first short lived Labor Party in 1899 was a labour reporter and former typographer, J.A. Rodier. After the crushing defeat of its one candidate in the 1900 federal elections the party disintegrated.<sup>6</sup> Revived in 1904, most of its leading members were francophones, as were most of its candidates who ran in predominantly French-Canadian working-class ridings. This was also the case for most of its elected representatives, Alphonse Verville for example. This is not to say that the organization was homogenous. Labourism and the Labor Party also found active support among Anglo-Celt and European immigrants, such as Gustave Francq who was born in Belgium.

On the other hand, socialist parties attracted few French Canadians, despite the existence of a French-section of the Socialist Party of Canada led by Albert Saint-Martin. Support for the SPC, or for the Social-Democratic Party, came primarily from Anglo-Celt and European immigrants who organized on language lines. For example, there were Jewish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Italian, German, Russian, and Polish socialist political organizations in Montreal. While it is



difficult to estimate the membership of these organizations, in Montreal there were about 3,000 socialists who marched in the 1914 May Day parade closely followed by a compact corp of some 2,000 unemployed workers.<sup>7</sup>

Left-wing political activity was particularly important to the Jewish immigrant working-class where there was a remarkable degree of diversity. In Montreal, there were Anarchists, Poale Zionists, most of whom were socialist, Bundists, usually immigrants from Poland or Russia who were secular non-Zionist socialists, social democrats, and social revolutionaries.<sup>8</sup> This wide range of positions helped spawn a number of organizations. The Bundists formed a chapter of the Workman's Circle in Montreal in 1907. This was a mutual benefit organization that offered unemployment, sickness, old age and death benefits to its members who numbered about a thousand at one point in the 1920s. The labour Zionists had their own fraternal organization, the Farband.<sup>9</sup> Anarchist bookshops often became meeting places, cultural centres for their clientele.<sup>10</sup> There were sections of both the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social-Democratic Party. These organizations organized numerous youth clubs and groups, held meetings, invited speakers, engaged in lively debates, raised money for causes such as strike support and relief for the victims of pogroms in the Ukraine, and helped organize unions.

There was also a vigorous yiddish labour press in Montreal that included the short lived Folkszeitung published in 1912 by a leading figure in Poale Zion, Arbeiter Zeitung that printed three issues in 1914, Dos Folk established in 1917, Der Chaver that came out in 1918, and Der Yiddisher Arbeiter published by the Workman's Circle from 1919 until it was replaced by Arbeit in 1922.<sup>11</sup>

By the early years of the First World War Labor Party support had fallen to a low ebb. Participation required membership in an affiliated organization, such as the trades and labour council, a union or a labour club. The party had grown until 1911 when there were at least 10 affiliated clubs and its greatest successes were the election of Alphonse Verville to Parliament in 1906, and of Joseph Ainey to the Montreal Board of Control in 1910.<sup>12</sup> Its influence declined markedly when most of its affiliated clubs broke away from the Labor Party so that they could endorse their own candidates in the 1912 municipal elections. Most of these clubs then joined the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal when it was formed in 1914. Quickly surpassing the Labor Party in membership,<sup>13</sup> the FCOM claimed to speak for the class and national interests of French-Canadian workers. At the start of the war, only two clubs maintained links to the Labor Party.

The weakness of the Labor Party was evident in the municipal and provincial elections of 1916. It fielded few candidates and offered them little in the way of assistance. It ran a single candidate for councillor in the civic elections, Adolphe Gariepy, the secretary of the Cigarmakers Union, who received 10 percent of the vote.<sup>14</sup> In the provincial contest, it chose two candidates. When one withdrew before voting day, the party's central committee was blamed for providing too little help. The other candidate, David Giroux, a bricklayer and former MTLC president, ran in Dorion but lost with 14 percent of the vote despite the tacit support of the Conservative Party which did not field a candidate. Giroux requested neither the financial nor organizational assistance of the Labor Party preferring to rely on the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Labor Club.<sup>15</sup> This poor showing suggests that by 1916 the Labor Party was ineffectual and without much voter support despite the continued re-election of Ainey and Verville. This state of affairs produced considerable frustration, and there was agreement among its members that changes were needed to revitalize the party.<sup>16</sup>

Gustave Francq recognized that one reason for the failure of the party was the inability of socialists, trade unionists and unorganized workers to work together. Some socialists wanted to work more closely with labourists. Yet

most members of the Labor Party, such as Francq, insisted on keeping their distance, not only refusing to admit socialist organizations but also ignoring repeated invitations to participate in the annual May Day celebrations. This division dated back to 1907 when Albert Saint-Martin, the leader of the French section of the SPC, was expelled from the Labor Party.<sup>17</sup> Saint-Martin was cast out for belonging to another political party, a decision prompted by his determination to march in the May Day parade.<sup>18</sup> Labourists objected to the socialists' support for revolution<sup>19</sup> and they feared that closer ties would kill any chance of electoral success.<sup>20</sup> There was, in fact, continuous factional fighting between the two groups. Some socialists, for their part, had little respect for the Labor Party. Michael Buhay, a member of the SDP and a leading figure in the ILGWU, and machinist Richard Kerrigan considered the Labor Party the property of an unprincipled clique who used it mainly to gain government patronage appointments for its leading members. Socialists in the trades and labour council believed that "depuis quinze ans [il] n'a absolument rien fait qui peut montrer qu'il avait quelque souci des intérêts de la classe ouvrière."<sup>21</sup> Some felt that the Labor Party was hindered by its close association with the trades and labour council where too many delegates supported traditional political parties.<sup>22</sup> Kerrigan wanted the council to affiliate to the Social-Democratic Party.<sup>23</sup>

In April and May 1917 an attempt was made to heal the division between the Labor Party and the FCOM. Discussions fell through, however, when most of the labour clubs withdrew rather than abandon the Fédération's constitution for that of the Labor Party.<sup>24</sup> There was then little indication that the Labor Party would be able to broaden its base of support.

One of the characteristics of the Labour Party by the start of the Great War was that some of its leading figures were close to the Liberal Party. When the idea of a Labour Party was first raised in the 1890s it was because workers were disappointed with the recently elected provincial and federal Liberal governments. For this reason and because of the weakness of the Conservative Party in Quebec the Quebec Labour Party represented a challenge to the Liberals. In 1905 Labour Party secretary Albert Saint-Martin ran against provincial Liberal Premier Lomer Gouin in a by-election. In 1906, TLCC president Alphonse Verville won his seat by defeating a prominent Liberal and was at first determined to maintain his independence in Parliament. On a number of issues, including the Lord's Day Alliance Bill, Verville joined Nationalists such as Henri Bourassa against the Laurier government. When Labour Party candidate Joseph Ainey rejected Liberal overtures during a federal by-election in the Montreal riding of Saint-Marie shortly after Verville's victory, the

Liberals decided that Ainey and the Labour Party had to be defeated. For this task they recruited cigar manufacturer Médéric Martin who prevailed in part because he alleged that his opponent was anticlerical and socialist. This halted the Labour Party's momentum and soon the Liberals were able to co-opt prominent labourists. Hoping to win government support for a legislated eight-hour day, Verville soon sat with the Liberals and received that party's support in return.<sup>25</sup> Finally the Liberals secured these ties by offering a measure of patronage. For example, Joseph Ainey was later hired by the Quebec Department of Labour.

It is not surprising then that in 1917 with the continued decline of the Labour Party, the fact that most workers, even most union members, failed to support most Labour Party candidates, some labourists such as Gustave Francq wondered whether more working-class representation could be secured by presenting Liberal-Labour candidates. Francq favoured the Liberal Party because he claimed that it had traditionally been the party of the working man until it abandoned its platform to gain the approval of manufacturers.<sup>26</sup> It was conscription in 1917 that led to a renewed attempt at political action.

### Conscription

Conscription produced a massive extra-parliamentary opposition movement in Quebec. French Canadians of all political stripes, and from all classes, were virtually unanimous in their opposition to conscription. In May and June 1917 large anti-conscriptionist rallies were held throughout Quebec, union leaders appearing alongside both Liberal politicians and nationalist leaders such as Armand Lavergne.<sup>27</sup>

In Montreal, however, socialists and the labour clubs played a much more active role than the labour council in mobilizing working-class opposition to the measure through public demonstrations. Violent opposition went on night after night through the summer of 1917, sometimes attracting crowds of 10 to 15 thousand, crowds that sometimes attacked soldiers in the streets and that broke the windows of newspapers supporting the government.<sup>28</sup> Speeches by anti-conscriptionist orators in Montreal became increasingly vehement. Members of the Constitutional Club, such as Paul-Émile Mongeau and Alphonse Bernier, rose briefly to prominence on calls for armed resistance and a general strike to resist the Military Service Act. This group had links to the Fédération des clubs ouvriers municipaux de Montréal rather than a base in the trade unions. Mongeau and Bernier were joined by francophone

socialists in urging a general strike against conscription to start on Labour Day. And indeed when the strike did not materialize, they denounced those international union leaders, such as Gustave Francq and Joseph Ainey, who opposed a general strike.<sup>29</sup>

Arguing that it wished to maintain working-class unity, the Montreal Trades and Labor Council did not even permit positions on conscription to be expressed in the Labour Day parade. The council limited its participation in the movement to a strongly worded resolution expressing its opposition to conscription and to the organization of a single large anti-conscriptionist rally in cooperation with Mayor Médéric Martin.<sup>30</sup> It has been suggested that the MTLC played such a minor role because international union leaders were split over the issue even among francophones, with Ainey and Verville opposing and Francq supporting compulsory military service.<sup>31</sup> A desire to avoid fomenting civil disturbances was also a factor. It was this consideration that led Joseph Ainey to confine his role to writing an anti-conscriptionist pamphlet and to speaking on the issue at union meetings.<sup>32</sup>

Violent demonstrations were not confined to Montreal. For example in early September 1917 crowds of 400 to 500 made their way through working-class Shawinigan for two weeks to



protest against the Military Service Act.<sup>33</sup> Resistance did not end with the 1917 federal elections. To avoid the draft many men ignored the Act, some fleeing into the woods. In Quebec City in early spring 1918 attempts by the Dominion Police to enforce the Military Service Act and to look for draft resisters provoked three days of riots in the working-class districts of Saint-Roch and Saint-Sauveur. The federal government further inflamed passions by sending a battalion of Toronto soldiers to put down the riots, killing four civilians in the process.<sup>34</sup>

Quebec delegates to the 1917 TLC convention, like their Western counterparts, were fiercely critical of the Congress executive recommendation not to oppose the Military Service Act. There was, however, considerable ethnic division on the issue. Anglophone socialists from Montreal, such as journeyman tailor Geo. Sangster and machinist Tom Cassidy voiced support for the Farmillo amendment that called for the conscription of wealth before the conscription of manpower. French Canadians opposed this win-the-war proposal because it gave conditional support for conscription of men. Carpenter Narcisse Arcand proposed an alternative amendment that called for a delay in the application of the Military Service Act until after the federal elections in December 1917, and for a campaign to get candidates to promise to vote for repeal. While defeated it

was supported by most francophones who spoke during the debate. There was also some support from Quebec francophones for a general strike. Boot and shoe worker and FCOM president Gédéon Martel, and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen's Armand Néagle both declared that their locals wanted a general strike.<sup>35</sup> Outside the TLCC convention, there were also calls for such a protest. Alphonse Verville suggested that workers might take an eight day holiday.<sup>36</sup> L'Unioniste, a short lived organ of the Quebec and Lévis Trades and Labor Council, appeared to approve of a general work stoppage.<sup>37</sup> In fact, while one of the officers of this body advocated the measure, it did not have the support of the council as a whole.<sup>38</sup>

Not all francophone workers were prepared to take such action over the conscription issue. At the 1917 TLCC convention, boot and shoe worker Zotique Lespérance, and carpenters, Narcisse Arcand, Arthur Martel, and P. Laurier all expressed their opposition to a general strike.<sup>39</sup> Gustave Francq summed up the reasons for this position. First, he argued, international union leadership in the United States would oppose such action. Francq did not elaborate on the reasons for its position, but AFL leaders, including Samuel Gompers, had taken a firmly pro-conscription stand. Nor would they have sanctioned a political strike. Second, Francq explained, workers should not squander their economic power on

a political matter, especially since some of the most vocal promoters of direct action in Montreal were not workers but professionals and merchants. These proponents were asking wage earners to pay the price for opposition to compulsory enlistment without suffering any economic hardship themselves.<sup>40</sup> And finally, in a statement that underlined the labour council's preference for orderly, legal and peaceful opposition, he stressed that once a measure was passed into law it should be obeyed.<sup>41</sup> Francq, alone among francophone delegates, also declared his support for conscription. This so infuriated the members of his International Typographical Union local that they removed him as their labour council delegate, forcing him to resign as council secretary.<sup>42</sup> The Montreal Trades and Labor Council was, however, favourable to political action. It had, before the 1917 convention, voted to ask the "Congress to take the initiative for the foundation of ... a National Labor Party."<sup>43</sup>

The shape of postwar labour political action in Quebec was largely decided by the 1917 Trades and Labor Congress of Canada convention when it opted against a general strike and voted to support the formation of a Canadian Labor Party along the lines of the British Labour Party. While a national labour party was to be established at a later date, it called for the immediate formation of provincial sections. The TLC called for

cooperation among a wide range of working-class organizations, including trade unionists, socialists, members of the cooperative movement, and labour clubs. In November 1917 representatives from most of Quebec's larger and smaller industrial centres met to establish the Quebec Section of the Canadian Labor Party (QSCLP). The founding convention adopted a social reform platform that included a government monopoly over banking and nationalization of utilities and natural resources, and that allowed for direct affiliation of trade unions, labour clubs, and socialist parties. The program was essentially that of the old Quebec Labor Party with some additional articles inspired by the Ontario ILP platform. Major additions included: unemployment insurance, mothers' allowances, and "Liberté industrielle pour ceux qui travaillent et libération en politique de tous ceux à qui l'on a depuis si longtemps refusé de rendre justice."<sup>44</sup> In both the composition of its membership and in its platform, the QSCLP stood to the left of the old Labor Party.

Party officials reported considerable enthusiasm and a growing membership in the months following the convention.<sup>45</sup> The QSCLP represented a remarkable and unprecedented level of cooperation among working class groups from across the province, bringing together erstwhile political foes in a fragile coalition. For example, labourist Joseph Ainey was

chosen as president while Joseph Schubert, the leader of the Social Democratic Party in Montreal, was elected treasurer.<sup>46</sup> When the Montreal Labor Party was formed in May 1918, a trade unionist acceptable to all factions, Joseph Métivier, became president while the rest of the executive was distinctly socialist. Other officers included Adélarde Lanouette of the Peoples' Power League and a recently elected municipal councillor in Verdun, Bella Hall, Rose Henderson and Ulrike Binette, later the OBU's paid francophone organizer in Montreal.<sup>47</sup> The new party was also an ethnically mixed organization whose leadership included French Canadians, Anglo-Celts, and Jewish immigrants. While the old Labor Party was an exclusively male affair, women were now a significant presence in the organization.

With only an embryonic organization, and with a number of founding delegates unwilling to draw votes away from the anti-conscriptionist Laurier-Liberals, the QSCLP did not contest the 1917 federal elections.<sup>48</sup> The FCOM, on the other hand, perhaps hoping to capitalize on its prominence in the anti-conscriptionist movement, initially refused to join and intended to run a number of their own labour candidates, including Alphonse Bernier, Alfred Mathieu, and FCOM president Gédéon Martel.<sup>49</sup> Three prospective FCOM candidates were officially listed by Walter Rollo, national leader of the

Labor Party during these elections, but they refused to acknowledge his leadership. This was probably because many labour candidates outside Quebec waged a Win-the-War campaign that called for conscription of wealth and manpower.<sup>50</sup> FCOM candidates also faced unexpected hostility from Liberal organizers, forcing some to withdraw. Martel alone remained in the race, only to be crushed with three per cent of the vote.<sup>51</sup> The poor showing in these elections irreparably damaged the prestige of Martel and the FCOM. Martel soon resigned as president. Previously a force in municipal politics, the FCOM remained neutral in the 1918 municipal elections; soon afterwards in April 1918, it joined the Labor Party that was growing and gaining support.<sup>52</sup> From then on the FCOM appears to have played a much smaller, almost negligible role.

#### Politics from 1918 to 1920

As its first test the QSCLP chose to pit its president Joseph Ainey against incumbent mayor Médéric Martin in the 1918 Montreal municipal elections. The campaign was dominated by the issue of the recently imposed trusteeship over Montreal. The annexation of numerous heavily indebted municipalities crippled the city's finances at the same time as it had to provide essential services such as roads and

sewers to many new areas. When the Administrative Commission was established the Board of Control was abolished and the powers of the mayor and City Council were much reduced. A three quarter vote from City Council was needed to veto an Administrative Commission measure. This meant that the anglophone minority with more than a quarter of the council seats could, if it wished, block any French-Canadian opposition to the provincial appointees.<sup>53</sup> Montreal's autonomy became one of the dominant issues for the city's working class for years to come.

Ainey had the support of the MTLC, the Labor Party and a number of unions against an incumbent mayor who campaigned, in part, on the theme that he too was a worker and a union member who maintained his membership in the Cigarmaker's union. Martin, however, had a long history of antagonism with the MTLC and the Labor Party. Labor World characterized him as a bourgeois who usually ignored the interests of workers when they conflicted with those of employers.<sup>54</sup> The francophone Ainey presented a program largely inspired by the municipal reform movement that had first won him political office, and that had considerable support among middle-class voters who disliked populist "bosses" such as Médéric Martin and their electoral machines.<sup>55</sup> While opposed to the trusteeship Ainey promised "Harmonie et bonne entente entre le Conseil et le

Bureau des Administrateurs," pledged to run the municipality "sur des bases d'affaires," and to reduce patronage by establishing a civil service commission.<sup>56</sup> Martin claimed to represent the French-Canadian working class against the trusts, the English minority and the provincial government.<sup>57</sup> This appeal to the nationalism of the working class helped Martin win re-election by a vote of 42,857 to 35,587.<sup>58</sup> Even though the contest was between two francophone candidates voters appear to have divided along ethnic lines. While it is impossible to provide an exact ethnic breakdown of the results, French Canadian wards voted largely for Martin while Ainey carried most of the predominantly anglophone ones.<sup>59</sup>

Political activity flourished during labour's industrial offensive in 1919 and 1920 as numerous new labour clubs were established in many working-class neighbourhoods and suburbs around Montreal. To Gustave Francq, it seemed that workers were finally asserting their right to a share of influence in parliament and to legislation that reflected their interests.<sup>60</sup>

When provincial elections were held in June 1919, at the height of the strike wave, the QSCLP presented two candidates, Adélard Laurendeau in Maisonneuve, and Alfred Mathieu in Sainte Marie. Both were painters at the Canadian Pacific



Railway's Angus shops, and both were members of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen (BRC). They ran on the labour party platform and stressed the need for more working class representation in the legislature.<sup>61</sup> Overall the ruling Liberals faced little opposition in these elections, since the provincial Conservatives were decimated when their federal counterparts imposed conscription. They were so weak that a majority of government members were re-elected by acclamation. In many contests, Liberals ran against each other. In Montreal, however, there was a high level of discontent towards the Gouin government because of cuts in services and the anti-labour policies of the Administrative Commission.<sup>62</sup> A key element in Lacombe's and Mathieu's campaign was to assert the right of Montreal workers to choose their own administrators. The importance of municipal affairs was also evident in other issues. Mathieu chose to challenge Napoleon Seguin, a cabinet minister because he had raised no objection in 1918 when electoral deposits for municipal candidates were raised from \$200 to \$500, a move that certainly made running for office more difficult for working-class candidates.<sup>63</sup> Mathieu also raised the question of the provincial government's responsibility for what he called the financial scandals in Maisonneuve, annexed to Montreal in 1918 with its enormous debt and numerous industrial tax exemptions.<sup>64</sup>

There were at least three other trade unionists who presented themselves in these elections in Montreal, two of them running against each other in the riding of Dorion. One ran as a Liberal. This was L.N. Cadieux de Courville, a member of the International Typographical Union's Jacques Cartier local 145.<sup>65</sup> The other was Aurèle Lacombe the president of Montreal's tramway workers union who ran as an independent labour candidate. Lacombe ran without political affiliation on the grounds that he opposed political platforms. He too stressed the need for working class representation and promised to champion Montreal's autonomy from the provincial government. For the rest, he claimed simply that he would be for the workers and would support good measures and oppose bad ones. In his campaign he emphasized his record as a successful union organizer. In 1918, he had organized and secured wage increases for 3,500 streetcar workers, had helped to organize Montreal's civic employees, and in 1919 he had helped the employees of the Montreal Light Heat and Power Company form a union.<sup>66</sup> His independent status reduced the opposition of the local clergy; one parish priest allowed him to use the steps of the Church's presbytery to address a crowd that had gathered to hear his opponent.<sup>67</sup> The third was Alfred Jolivet, president of the Saint-Henri local of the BRC who ran as a labour candidate in Hochelaga, although the sources do not reveal whether he ran for the QSCLP or as an independent.<sup>68</sup>

The antagonism towards Gouin's government was expressed on election day when Laurendeau and Lacombe were elected, while Mathieu lost narrowly in Saint-Marie, a result he attributed to corrupt electoral practices.<sup>69</sup> Gustave Francq attributed these successes to the support that the candidates received from trade unions, and in Adélard Laurendeau's case in particular to the support of the workers at the Angus and other large metal working shops in his division.<sup>70</sup>

Political action was not limited to Montreal or its working-class suburbs. Interest in labour political action in 1917 drew delegates to the founding convention of the QSCLP from many of the major industrial centres in the province, including Chicoutimi, Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Sorel, St. Hyacinthe, Montreal, Valleyfield and Hull.<sup>71</sup> In 1918, they also came from Thetford Mines, Sherbrooke, St-Jean, and Ste Anne-de-Bellevue.<sup>72</sup> At the municipal level, labour representatives were elected in towns such as Thetford Mines, Sorel, Lachine, Verdun and Montreal.<sup>73</sup> The Trades and Labor Council in Hull chose a QSCLP candidate for the 1921 federal elections, although he withdrew before the election.<sup>74</sup>

Nor were the national and Catholic unions averse to political action in these elections of 1919. Despite some

opposition within its ranks, the Conseil central national des métiers du district de Québec held a convention in the working-class riding of Saint-Sauveur to choose E.A. Lortie, a vociferous opponent of international unionism, as a candidate, and contributed funds to his campaign. Lortie and his supporters sought the endorsement of Liberal Premier Taschereau on the grounds that there should be a working-class representative within the government, but Taschereau refused. Lortie narrowly lost to the Liberal incumbent.<sup>75</sup>

The modest labour victories in Quebec and larger ones in other provinces encouraged workers to believe that they could challenge the established parties and to seek closer links with other organized groups such as farmers. Cooperation between workers and farmers was discussed at the Maisonneuve Labor Club in 1919.<sup>76</sup> In June 1920, M. Sauvage, the secretary of the Fermiers-Unis addressed the Sainte Marie Labor Club on the farmer's program and their desire to work with the Labor Party. This led to a request to the executive committee of the QSCLP to study the possibility of a campaign among field workers and farmers.<sup>77</sup> In 1920 a brief note in Labor World expressed the hope that workers and farmers in Quebec would work together in the forthcoming federal elections to defeat the old parties.<sup>78</sup> Despite these contacts there is no indication that the hoped for cooperation ever developed.

Political activity continued at a high level into 1920. In April the QSCLP ran a strong campaign in a federal by-election in Saint-Jacques riding. Labourist Alphéus Mathieu, president of the old Labor Party in 1916, received almost 40% of the vote against Fernand Rinfret, the well known editor of the Liberal party organ Le Canada.<sup>79</sup> Working-class interest was also evident in the size of political gatherings. In August 1920 in Sainte Marie riding in Montreal, federal QSCLP candidate Joseph Gauthier held meetings attended by as many as 2000 workers.<sup>80</sup> Sometimes constituency conventions were marked by intense local and personal rivalries. In January 1920 a federal constituency convention at the Maisonneuve Labor Club attracted over a thousand delegates. It chose Maisonneuve Labor Club president Ovid Proulx by one vote over Zoel Tardiff, a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen and executive member of Division 4 railway shop craft workers who worked at the CPR Angus shops. When one of Proulx's votes was found to be illegal, the QSCLP executive called another convention. The second meeting chose Tardiff but only after Proulx and more than 300 supporters stormed out in protest, claiming that the convention had been improperly scheduled and that many of those present lived outside the riding.<sup>81</sup> There was also a great deal of debate within the labour clubs on a wide range of municipal and provincial issues, including the allocation of liquor licences for instance.<sup>82</sup> The growing

interest in political action also attracted the participation of incumbent middle class politicians in working class areas, such as in Longueuil south of Montreal.<sup>83</sup>

Socialists also engaged in electoral battles with increasing voter support. Social-Democrat Michael Buhay ran against Liberal Sam Jacobs in George-Étienne Cartier in 1917, and came second with about ten per cent of the vote, about 600 ballots.<sup>84</sup> In the 1918 municipal elections, with the endorsement of the MTLC, Buhay received almost 38 per cent of the vote in Saint Louis ward, losing to Lyon W. Jacobs.<sup>85</sup> The downtown Jewish working-class district was not the only area where socialists were active. Socialist Adélard Lanouette was elected to Verdun city council on a Labor Party ticket in March 1918.

### Factionalism

The unity of labourists and socialists in the QSCLP was fragile, however. The new structure of the QSCLP meant that leaders of the trades and labour council could no longer play the dominant role that they had assumed in the old Quebec Labor Party. The strength of socialist support within the QSCLP was evident at the 1918 convention where about 175 delegates from roughly 60 organizations represented some

16,000 workers.<sup>86</sup> They amended the party program so that one of its objectives was that workers obtain "le plein produit de leur travail." They protested against the recent federal "ordre-en-Conseil anti-socialiste," of March and April 1918, and called for the lifting of the censorship of the socialist press, immediate freedom for all political prisoners, and the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Siberia. Some of the resolutions horrified conservative craft union leaders. They sent messages of support to the leaders of the German revolution and to those of the Soviets in Russia. They even discussed the use of violence.<sup>87</sup>

Labourists such as Gustave Francq, Alphétus Mathieu and L.M. Dupont put up a fierce opposition and at one point threatened to withdraw from the party.<sup>88</sup> The 1918 convention clearly defined the different position of the two main camps. Labor World lamented that the Labor Party had not discussed the recent British Labour Party manifesto Labour and the New Social Order that offered a form of democratic socialism through a program of legislative reforms.<sup>89</sup> In 1919 Francq wrote a pamphlet that vehemently attacked the socialists' support for the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> Albert Saint-Martin responded to criticisms such as these with a pamphlet, entitled T'as mentis, defending the new workers' state.<sup>91</sup>

The most bitter factional dispute between craft unionist and socialists erupted when the Montreal Labor Party endorsed the One Big Union on 1 June 1919 shortly after the trades and labour council had condemned it by an overwhelming majority of 73 to 3.<sup>92</sup> International union leaders opposed the OBU not only as a secessionist movement that threatened to divide workers, but also because it meant abandoning organizations that had proven their effectiveness and that had taken great efforts to establish. Francq called OBU advocates "des démolisseurs" for wanting to destroy the craft unions without having anything concrete with which to replace them.<sup>93</sup> They complained that support for the OBU in the Labor Party came not from organized workers but primarily from socialists who were not trade union members. Moreover, they argued that the Labor Party had no right to vote on trade union matters.<sup>94</sup> Indeed in 1919, the Montreal Labor Party became a forum for socialists critical of conservative craft union leaders.<sup>95</sup>

The OBU was considered a serious threat by international union leaders in Montreal despite the fact that the Montreal unit established in 1919 disintegrated and had to be revived. It then remained a centre for socialist activity through 1920.<sup>96</sup> Most of its support came from garment workers, who did not abandon their international unions, and from machinists, as 800 members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in



Montreal joined the OBU when the British-based international union dissolved its North American locals in 1920.<sup>97</sup> Some OBU supporters were "silent members" who could not openly proclaim their position. Most OBU support came from immigrant socialists from Great Britain and continental Europe, and despite the efforts of francophone OBU organizer Ulrick Binette, and Rose Henderson's optimism that there was a great potential for a breakthrough among francophones, the OBU attracted few French-Canadian members.<sup>98</sup> The Montreal Labor Party endorsement of the OBU came just as international union leaders were faced with the general strike movement of June 1919, and support for the OBU among council members was reported to be growing at the height of the strike wave.

Through the summer and fall of 1919, international unions mounted a successful campaign to have the Montreal Labor Party censured at the annual Quebec section of the Canadian Labor Party convention in November and continued their work against the OBU through 1920.<sup>99</sup> At the 1919 QSCLP convention the craft unionists also weakened the influence of the socialists by adopting a measure of proportional representation within the party. Up until then the smaller socialists clubs were entitled to the same representation as larger unions. In addition craft unionists won most of the executive positions.<sup>100</sup>

### The Charter Commission

In 1920 and 1921, international union leaders Gustave Francq and J.T. Foster directed their efforts at reforming Montreal's municipal government. The Administrative Commission established in 1918 was a temporary measure. In 1920, to write a new civic charter, the provincial government set up a commission comprised of sixteen members, two each chosen by eight public bodies, including the Board of Trade, the Chambre de commerce, and the Montreal Trades and Labor Council who chose Francq and Foster as its delegates. When it was announced that it would include representatives from organized labour, the Catholic unions quickly established a labour council in Montreal and demanded inclusion. Gustave Francq pointed out indignantly that Catholic unions hardly had any members in the city, but the government complied nonetheless.<sup>101</sup> While this was otherwise a period of intense rivalry between the two movements, their respective delegates worked well together. Alfred Charpentier, later the president of the Catholic labour movement, pointed to the cooperation on this commission as an example of a "cartel", a common front on a single issue.<sup>102</sup>

This was a chance for international union leaders to promote many of the electoral changes long advocated by the

labour party and the MTLC. And indeed, Foster and Francq appear to have been very successful in convincing the other members to adopt their proposals. When the commission's proposed charter was released it included women suffrage, although this was quickly vetoed by the provincial government. Other measures that were retained included: the abolition of the property qualification for municipal office, a process for the recall of elected officials during their term of office, and the replacement of the ward system with its single member plurality, by a form of proportional representation. Montreal would be divided into three districts that would each choose five members. Francq believed that with these reforms, every class in society, including workers, would be represented. Without property qualifications there would be no impediment to working class candidates. Abolishing the ward system would allow councillors to act in the interest of the whole city rather than for their district alone. Elected representatives would be more independent of local cliques and factions, eliminating the patronage associated with the ward system.<sup>103</sup>

While the Charter Commission project was supported by the MTLC, the Labor Party and a number of labour clubs, it also had the approval of other elements of Montreal society, many of whom had been associated with municipal reform movements, and by figures from both the established political parties.

Indeed middle class reformers were pleased because the Commission advocated a city manager administration. It was promoted by The Montreal Gazette and La Presse, by Conservative Sir Hormidas Laporte who had represented the Chambre de Commerce on the Charter Commission and by Liberal Senator Raoul Dandurand.<sup>104</sup>

The Commission proposals, however, raised considerable opposition. Proportional representation would undermine sitting and aspiring council members who depended on a local base of support. Incumbent politicians were unhappy that it would reduce the number of councillors from 20 to 15. Under the proposed system, the mayor would be chosen by the municipal council, a threat to Médéric Martin whose success lay in direct appeals to the electorate. The strength of the opposition and, perhaps, the nature of the reforms meant that the provincial government was unwilling to impose the new charter. Robert Rumilly has suggested that to prevent Médéric Martin from campaigning against the provincial government, Premier Gouin had another project prepared, one that included the direct election of the mayor and that retained the ward system with an enlarged 35 member municipal council. The provincial government then submitted the rival charters to a referendum.<sup>105</sup>

During the ensuing campaign, Francq became a leading spokesperson for the Commission charter, appearing at numerous public meetings and promoting proportional representation in Labor World. He was also attacked by Médéric Martin, an effective demagogue who argued that the reduction in representatives, proportional representation, and the abandonment of the direct election of the mayor, would reduce the influence of workers and French Canadians.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, and despite the support it received from the Catholic unions, Martin and his supporters denounced proportional representation as a socialist and masonic measure responsible for the secularization of education in France.<sup>107</sup> This kind of cynical manipulation was typical of the way Martin campaigned.<sup>108</sup> In response to such tactics, Francq could only complain that his opponents were speaking out of both sides of their mouths at once. To audiences of labouring people, they claimed that proportional representation would favour large vested interests, while they raised the fear among middle class Catholics that it would mean working class control.<sup>109</sup>

When Martin's project won the referendum it seemed that the city divided along linguistic lines with anglophone districts in favour of the Commission charter and proportional representation and francophone ones favouring retention of the ward system.<sup>110</sup> The MTLC deplored Martin's tactic of fomenting

racial and religious prejudice in the campaign. For Francq what was most evident, however, was that the worst defeat came in working class areas. He guessed that at least three quarters of Montreal's 40,000 international union members could vote in the referendum. His charter received 26,000 votes, and 8,000 of these came from middle class anglophone areas. He concluded that international union members had renounced the reforms demanded by organized labour, and rejected their own representatives. Such defeats, he argued, undermined the influence of international union leaders, making it difficult to lobby governments on workers' behalf. J.T. Foster drew a similar lesson. He wanted MTLC delegates to reflect the opinions of their members when they voted to support reforms such as were included in the defeated charter. Otherwise, it left their representatives in a "delicate" position.<sup>111</sup>

When municipal elections were held a few months later, it was clear that some conservative craft union leaders were turning away from independent political action. The Montreal Labor Party chose Luc Rochefort, a member of the Sainte Marie Labor Club and a bank clerk to challenge incumbent Médéric Martin. Rochefort received a good deal of labourist support. He had the support of MTLC and its president Alfred Mathieu.<sup>112</sup> His nomination papers were signed by several

trades and labour council leaders and business agents, both anglophone and francophone, including craft union stalwarts such as L.M. Dupont, and the AFL's paid francophone organizer for Quebec Alcée Bastien.<sup>113</sup> Rochefort campaigned on two issues of direct concern to workers: he promised extensive public works to relieve unemployment, and to build low cost housing. Rochefort was relatively unknown, however, and had little chance against Martin. Even his Sainte Marie Labor Club split over these elections. Rochefort was endorsed by the club but a break-away group supporting Martin, seized control of the club's accounts and minute books causing a dispute that ended in the courts.<sup>114</sup> Rochefort lost with 23,383 votes to Martin's 55,905. The Labor Party did manage, however, to get carpenter Arthur Vaillancourt of the Sainte-Marie lodge of Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, who had been president of the FCOM in 1917, elected to municipal council in Mercier-Maisonneuve.<sup>115</sup>

But other craft union leaders, such as Gustave Francq, were abandoning independent political action and distancing themselves from the Labor Party. He opposed the choice of a candidate who had no chance of winning and who was not a union member. Francq claimed that during this election he could not openly endorse either candidate in the columns of Labor World. This was because the AFL recommended that its members vote for

candidates carrying a union card, and Médéric Martin was still a member of the Cigarmakers' union in good standing, while the MTLC forbade its members to work against any Labor Party candidate. Francq hoped that this situation would not be repeated and he was distinctly favourable to Martin during the campaign.<sup>116</sup> It was intolerable to Francq that delegates to the MTLC had to support Labor Party candidates without having a say in their choice. Labor World reported that "Le conflit qui existe actuellement entre les trade-unionistes purs et simples et les membres du Parti Ouvrier s'envenime de jour en jour."<sup>117</sup> Since Rochefort was far from being a socialist, there was clearly a growing additional division, this time among those who were now turning away from independent political action and labourists based both in the clubs and in the unions.

The abandonment of independent political action by some leading craft unionists in Quebec reflected a trend that was visible across Canada in 1920 and 1921. In 1919 the election of a Farmer-Labour government in Ontario was greeted with euphoria. This turned to disappointment and disillusionment in June 1920 when this coalition broke a strike by over 2,000 Ontario Hydro workers who were fighting for the eight-hour day.<sup>118</sup> At its 1920 convention, the TLCC distanced itself from the labour parties on the grounds that many party members and



elected representatives knew little about the labour movement while others were opposed to Congress policies and leadership, a reference both to some revolutionary socialists and to OBU supporters. In these circumstances the Congress felt that it should speak on its own behalf when lobbying for legislative change.<sup>119</sup> They may also have been retreating from political engagement because the workers' revolt had effectively been defeated by then.

The QSCLP presented five candidates in the 1921 federal elections. In Maisonneuve, it ran Zoel Tardiff, of the BRC at the CPR Angus Shops and a member of the executive of Division 4 railway workers. J. Cyriac Gauthier president of the Fédération des travailleurs du port de Montréal ran in Saint Denis. Joseph Gauthier, president of International Typographical Union local 145, had won the QSCLP nomination in Sainte Marie but decided to enter a provincial by-election instead. MFLC president Alfred Mathieu ran in Laurier-Outremont so that he could challenge former premier Lomer Gouin who was entering federal politics. Two of the candidates, Rose Henderson in Saint-Laurent Saint-George and Adéland Lanouette in Sainte-Anne, were socialists, the latter receiving an endorsement from the Socialist Party.<sup>120</sup> All five candidates lost their deposits receiving no more than six percent of the vote. Socialist Michael Buhay did somewhat

better in Cartier with over ten percent of the vote.<sup>121</sup> The Liberals were favoured by the desire to defeat the Unionists who were associated with conscription and the post war depression. But it also seemed that the support that labour candidates received in 1919 and 1920 had disappeared.

The timing of the election had much to do with labour's poor showing. Interest in electoral action had followed the growth of trade union membership and the success of strike action. The arrival of the depression during the summer of 1920 ushered in a period of industrial defeats. The massive loss of members and locals created a mood a defeatism among union activists that made it difficult to sustain the momentum that was needed for better electoral results.

Labourists such as Francq began to lose interest in political action when the Labor Party was not closely controlled by conservative international union leaders. In 1921 the Montreal trades and labour council was quick to follow the new line of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and to distance itself from the Labor Party. While Francq expressed an implicit preference for working closely with the Liberal government, the Labor World officially took a Gompersist position and advised workers to vote for the candidates holding union cards.<sup>122</sup>

### Lib-Labism

Another division within the fragile Labor Party coalition was over the question of working with the Liberal government. Labourism in Quebec had for years been characterized by ties to the Liberal Party and this continued to be the case in the postwar period.<sup>123</sup> The 1918 Montreal municipal campaign between the Labor Party's Joseph Ainey and Médéric Martin took on the appearance of a feud within the Liberal Party. A Liberal, Martin directed his attacks as much against Premier Lomer Gouin's government for placing Montreal under trusteeship, as against his opponent. Ainey, considered the only candidate who could compete for the working-class votes that were needed to defeat Martin, received the backing of Premier Gouin's organization. While Ainey promised to work constructively with the Administrative Commission, Martin characterized Ainey as the creature of Gouin's government and of the anglophone minority.<sup>124</sup>

After the provincial elections of 1919, both independent labour MLA Aurèle Lacombe and the Labor Party's Adélard Laurendeau immediately sat on the government benches with the Liberals. Laurendeau and Lacombe also attended Liberal Party caucus meetings. Laurendeau argued that to get anything done he had to support the government on legislative matters that

did not conflict with Labor Party principles.<sup>125</sup> This was the classic position of Labour politicians who were being absorbed by a traditional political party. This was also the reason that Alphonse Verville had given to support the Laurier Liberals.<sup>126</sup>

When Joseph Gauthier, vice-president of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council, and president of the Jacques Cartier International Typographical Union local 145, won a provincial by-election in Sainte Marie in 1921, it was with the active support of Médéric Martin on a Liberal-Labour ticket. Later in 1921, Aurèle Lacombe was rewarded with a seat in the provincial cabinet as a representative of the working class, a move that was welcomed by Montreal labourists. Council leaders were clearly pleased at the election of representatives who would sit with the ruling Liberals. In the opinion of Gustave Francq, it was possible to be a good trade unionist without faithfully supporting the Labor Party.<sup>127</sup> An observer of Quebec labour scene, labour Member of Parliament for Winnipeg J.S. Woodsworth, criticized this "vicious practice" of negotiating and working with established political parties. He considered that one of the problems facing attempts at political action was that Quebec labour leaders were not very advanced in their ideals, and that labour candidates often ran on little more than a desire for

more working-class representation.<sup>128</sup> Indeed there was little to distinguish some labourists from progressive liberals except the insistence on this representation. Establishing a separate identity was made even more difficult when the federal Liberal party added a number of social reforms long sought by labourists to their platform in 1919.<sup>129</sup> In an April 1920 federal by-election, Labor Party candidate Alphéus Mathieu even declared that there was no difference between the federal Liberal and Labor Party platforms.<sup>130</sup> While Mathieu had the support of labour clubs in Maisonneuve and Saint-Henri, and financial aid from the MTLIC,<sup>131</sup> he claimed that he was running because the old Liberals had been eliminated at the nominating convention to make room for Fernand Rinfret, editor of Le Canada, who was parachuted into the riding. The imposition of a candidate from outside split the Liberals. A large faction, composed of merchants, businessmen and professionals, threw its support behind the Labor Party's Mathieu.<sup>132</sup> QSCLP MLA Adélarde Laurendeau refused to support Mathieu who should not, he said, have been chosen because he was the candidate of the discontented Liberals.<sup>133</sup>

Lib-Labism did not go unchallenged within the Labor Party. There was an anti-Liberal opposition within some of the labour clubs, partly as a result of the government's establishment of the trusteeship for the City of Montreal.

This was represented by Alfred Mathieu, who had been critical of the trades and labour council leadership during the waterworks workers' strike and who was a determined opponent of the provincial Liberal government. It was Mathieu's Sainte Marie Labor Club that was most critical of Labor Party MLA Laurendeau's support for the Liberals. Mathieu, president of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council in 1921, and of the Sainte Marie Labor Club, ran on a QSCLP ticket against Liberal-Labour incumbent Joseph Gauthier in the provincial election of 1923. To the ire of Gustave Francq, Mathieu was able to draw enough votes away from Gauthier to ensure the victory of Conservative Party candidate Camilien Houde, his opponent of working-class origin in Sainte Marie (and both a future mayor of Montreal and leader of the Quebec Conservative Party in the late 1920s).<sup>134</sup>

Socialists also disdained Lib-Labism. In the 1918 mayoral contest, socialist Michael Buhay did not care for the moderate Joseph Ainey any more than he did for Médéric Martin.<sup>135</sup> Michael Buhay objected when the trades and labour council congratulated Premier Gouin for promoting Aurèle Lacombe to the Cabinet.<sup>136</sup>

The alliance with the Liberals proved disastrous for labourism in Quebec. In the depression of the 1920s, the

provincial Liberal government, which was primarily concerned with keeping a balance budget, did little for workers in the face of mounting unemployment. When an International Typographical Union strike in 1922 interrupted the publication of the legislature's daily working papers, Liberal Premier Taschereau denounced international unionism and resorted to strikebreakers supplied by a Catholic press.<sup>137</sup> Organized labour's few representatives were neither forceful critics nor very influential within the Liberal party during a period when provincial government policies alienated workers. By the 1923 provincial elections, Quebec workers were so displeased with the governing Liberals that many turned to the Conservatives who swept most of the province's urban ridings although Liberal Premier Taschereau remained in power with the support of rural voters. Conservatives won 13 of the 15 seats on the Island of Montreal<sup>138</sup> defeating not only Joseph Gauthier, Aurèle Lacombe, and Adélard Laurendeau but two additional QSCLP candidates also. One observer noted a decline in urban voter turnout, a trend which probably hurt labour candidates.<sup>139</sup>

### Women in the Labor Party

Quebec labourists supported a number of measures that could appeal to women, such as suffrage, a mothers' allowance, and a minimum wage. One of the strongest voices for these reforms was Eva Circé-Côté a francophone feminist and assistant librarian at Montreal's municipal library, who wrote a weekly column in the Labor World under the pseudonym Julien Saint-Michael. Circé-Côté had a constant concern about women's economic exploitation and called for protective legislation, better working conditions, and more educational opportunities for women. Her male pseudonym allowed her to identify in her column with men and with organized labour, but she also assumed the voice of the young modern woman worker, defending women's right to work, denouncing sexual harassment in the workplace, and challenging the notion that men should be head of the household. Her commitment to equality and democracy led her to answer an article attacking women's suffrage written by Henri Bourassa, the influential editor of Le Devoir and a conservative Catholic. As her biographer has noted, she was a modern figure in a Quebec usually depicted as attached to conservative and rural values.<sup>140</sup> Within the Labor Party the presence of Rose Henderson, a veteran of the suffrage movement, provided a link with anglophone women's groups. The Labor Party was also sufficiently interested to send a



representative to a Quebec woman's conference in 1921.<sup>141</sup>

The women who were most prominent in formal political organizations of the left in Montreal were at odds with conservative international union leaders in the factional disputes of this period. Most of these women were socialists and included Annie Buller and Mrs. Ray Mendelssohn who were members of the Social Democratic Party. There was also Beckie Buhay who had worked to organize the Amalgamated Clothing Workers during the war, and Mrs. S. Larocque who addressed a meeting of the unemployed in 1919 and presided over May Day celebrations. Rose Henderson and Bella Hall were on the first executive of the Montreal Labor Party. Those women who had assumed prominent public roles during the labour revolt and whose involvement reached beyond the supporting role played by auxiliaries were strong supporters of industrial unionism, the general strike and the OBU. Beckie Buhay, Mrs. Ray Mendelssohn and Rose Henderson all addressed a rally in support of the Winnipeg General Strike, and Buhay became a member of the defence committee to raise funds for the arrested leaders in Winnipeg. Rose Henderson campaigned for the OBU, while Buhay and Buller were respectively secretary and vice-president of the OBU General Workers Unit in Montreal.<sup>142</sup> Henderson, Buhay, Larocque and Mendelssohn all spoke in favour of the motion supporting the revolutionary industrial union at the Montreal

Labor Party in June 1919.<sup>143</sup>

There was a facet of labourism that reduced the role that women could legitimately play in the Labor Party in the eyes of international union leaders who supported political action. Many labourists, such as Gustave Francq, believed that a labour party should be controlled by organized labour and that candidates for public office should be chosen from among those who had made their mark in the labour movement over long years, proving both their ability and their commitment.<sup>144</sup> As women had been poorly organized and hardly represented in union hierarchies even where they formed large numbers in the membership, few women could meet this standard.

The fact that Quebec refused to grant women's suffrage until the 1940s may help explain why there was no broad based attempt by labour to mobilize working class women for the provincial elections in 1919. But little effort was made when the right of most Quebec women to vote in federal elections was recognized in 1920.<sup>145</sup> During a 1920 federal by-election in Saint-Jacques in Montreal, a short note in the Labor World queried why labourists remained indifferent to the organization of women, and appealed to women in the riding "qu'elles présentent la discussion avec courage sur le terrain ouvrier." Even this concern seems to have been prompted not so

much by labour efforts, but by the work of the Liberal candidate to secure the support of women's groups.<sup>146</sup>

Few of the socialist women were francophones. Participation in labour politics may have been more difficult for francophone Catholic women who faced the multiple hostility of the Church to the Labor Party, international unionism and to feminism. Eva Circé-Côté, for instance, wrote under a male pseudonym and came under attack in the Catholic press, in particular by L'Action catholique.<sup>147</sup> Outside of trade unions, francophone women were active in the Ligue auxiliaire des femmes d'unionistes organized in October 1919. While the purpose was to support the union label and to promote unionism,<sup>148</sup> the Ligue's political activism extended to lobbying. A delegation of forty women from the Ligue, led by president Emma Bouchard, protested to civic authorities against both the lack of water and the refusal to negotiate during the 1920 waterworkers' strike. In 1921 the Ligue was involved in a campaign for a legislated eight hour work day for wage earning women.<sup>149</sup>

### The Emergence of the Communist Party

Revolutionary socialists first established a Communist Party in 1919. It announced its arrival on May Day in Montreal with the distribution of pamphlets calling for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This organization quickly collapsed when police arrested its leaders. Nonetheless, throughout 1919 and 1920 former members of the SPC and SDP formed a number of communist factions often with ties to similar organizations in the United States. In Montreal in 1920 Annie Buller and Bella Hall opened the Labour College to provide a forum for communists and other reformers. In 1921 many of communist groups came together to form the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). There were at least three delegates from Montreal at the founding convention in the barn in Guelph: Michael Buhay, a tailor and leading figure in the ILGWU; Jack Margolese who was active in the ACW; and plumber and steamfitter Alex Gauld.<sup>150</sup>

First established as an underground organization, in 1922 the CPC formed the Workers' Party of Canada as an open political party. The CPC attracted many of the former members of the SPC and of the SDP in Montreal including Becky Buhay, Bella Hall, Annie Buller and Ulric Binette. Montreal remained a centre of CPC activity despite a small membership of about

a hundred. Much of the party's effort in Montreal during the 1920's was channelled into a movement of the unemployed and the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) that worked for autonomy in Canada from the American international unions, and for the amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions. The TUEL focused primarily on railway shopmen and the garment industries.<sup>151</sup> The Communists in Montreal were mostly immigrants, largely from the Jewish community. The Party failed, however, to recruit many French Canadian members.<sup>152</sup>

There was a small group of francophone socialists around Albert Saint-Martin. In 1923 they tried to affiliate directly to the Communist International. Refused on the grounds that there already was a Communist Party in Canada, Saint-Martin's group then affiliated to the Worker's Party, probably also in 1923, but soon left. Saint-Martin preferred to keep his distance and to work independently.<sup>153</sup> In 1925, he established his Université ouvrière as a forum for the presentation of conferences on a wide range of themes from communism to literature. One reason that few French Canadians joined Saint-Martin's group, and even fewer joined the CPC, was that this process was usually accompanied by a loss of faith and an abandonment of religious practice.<sup>154</sup> In general Communists encountered considerable hostility from francophone workers who remained practising Catholics.

### Labourism in Decline

In the 1920s, the QSCLP steadily declined, a process that was particularly clear after mid-decade. While some craft union leaders, such as Gustave Francq, lost interest in independent labour politics, there was still a number of labourists and socialists in the MTLC who remained active within the QSCLP. These included QSCLP president H.A. Foucher, socialists Richard Kerrigan, and Joseph Schubert. While the council maintained its affiliation, it withdrew from active support for the QSCLP. Though the MTLC had provided financial support to labour candidates in 1920,<sup>155</sup> it refused to do so a few years later. In 1924 when the Labor Party asked for a donation to support Joseph Schubert's campaign for municipal office, the Council replied that it had relinquished jurisdiction in political matters to the Labor Party. In addition, it argued that it could not give money for Labor Party candidates who were members of the MTLC and at the same time refuse it to candidates who were members of the MTLC but not of the Labor Party.<sup>156</sup>

During the 1920s, the QSCLP continued to be fraught with factionalism. This time, however, the division was between the CPC and a common front of labourists and non-communist

socialists, such as Joseph Schubert. In 1923, following a policy of forming a united front with other labour political organizations,<sup>157</sup> the Workers' Party affiliated to the QSCLP.<sup>158</sup> The Quebec party accepted the application at the urging of the Canadian Labor Party executive, and became the first provincial section to do so.<sup>159</sup> Gustave Francq later claimed that the admission of the Workers' Party caused many of the moderates, including most of the French Canadian members, to abandon the QSCLP.

These tensions between the Communists and their opponents were most evident over support for the Soviet Union and trade union policy. CPC opposition to the leadership of the international unions led many unions to decide in 1924 to purge the Communists from their executives.<sup>160</sup> Some of the fiercest factional disputes were in Montreal's garment unions. The ACW, for instance, was led by Communists in 1922 but after a long, and sometimes violent struggle, the right gained control in 1927.<sup>161</sup> A leading figure in the right wing of the needle trades was Joseph Schubert, earlier an underground member of the CPC.<sup>162</sup> It was Schubert who also led the right within the ILGWU, and within the Workman's Circle, where the left led by Michael Buhay had considerable support. When Schubert ran for City Council in 1924, he won the nomination at the Saint Louis Labor Club by a single vote over Buhay.<sup>163</sup>

Through the rest of the decade the Saint Louis Labor Club opposed communist influence within the QSCLP.<sup>164</sup>

In 1925, a number of international unions, led by the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen (BRC) resolved to expel the CPC from the Canadian Labor Party, beginning in Quebec.<sup>165</sup> At the 1925 Quebec City QSCLP, L.A. Beaudry, the president of the Sainte-Marie Lodge of the BRC, presented a resolution to expel all Communist organizations, described as the "plus terrible ennemi" of the AFL unions for their subservience to Moscow, their advocacy of world revolution, and their attempts to steer the labour movement towards the Third International.<sup>166</sup> The Brotherhood made every effort to send a large delegation,<sup>167</sup> and instructed its members on how to vote.<sup>168</sup> Michael Buhay protested that the Communists had never advocated revolution or any other measure contrary to the Labor Party constitution at any of its meetings. When the resolution passed narrowly by three votes, many of the Communists stormed out of the convention hall.<sup>169</sup> They tried unsuccessfully to get the national CLP executive to force the QSCLP to readmit them.<sup>170</sup> For the rest of the decade, Communists would seek re-admission, but to no avail.

In 1924 the Labor Party was still active in electoral politics. It had a degree of success in the municipal



elections of 1924 when its two aldermanic candidates, F.J. Hogan, a merchant, and Joseph Schubert,<sup>171</sup> were elected. It also gave its moral support to two former police union officials fired for union activity, although neither was elected. The Labor Party soon became dissatisfied with Hogan's performance and withheld support for him at the next elections.<sup>172</sup> Schubert, on the other hand, appears to have represented a social-democratic current and continued to be re-elected for the Labor Party, at times by acclamation, until he retired in 1942. In 1925, the QSCLP still claimed an affiliated membership of over 5,000, and ran two candidates in the federal elections in Montreal.<sup>173</sup> It did not field a candidate in either the federal elections of 1926 or the provincial contest of 1927. During the rest of the decade, the party had neither the strength nor the support to put up candidates outside of the municipal arena.<sup>174</sup>

#### Anti-Semitism, anti-socialism and the Catholic Press

Socialism had, through the years under study, come under attack from a number of quarters, including the federal government, but there was an additional aspect to the campaign against socialism in Quebec. A number of newspapers, including several established by the Catholic clergy, increasingly incorporated anti-Jewish arguments into their attacks. In

November 1919 L'Action catholique in an attack on Gustave Francq, mistakenly insinuated that he was Jewish.<sup>175</sup> It was common for anti-Semitic comments to be fired at AFL president Samuel Gompers. Le Progrès du Saguenay, for instance, on the occasion of the 1920 AFL convention in Montreal argued that his brand of international unionism was "voué au socialisme," and made a personal attack on him:

Le vieux bonze de l'Internationale, Gompers, est venu a Montréal... Charabia, radotage, grandiloquant.... le bonhomme... hien mon vieux... Vieil utopiste prêchant à des aveugles... Quels cadre à faire la binette du vieux juif Gompers.<sup>176</sup>

In August 1920 an article in La Tribune in Saint-Hyacinthe argued that the international unions were a product of freemasonry because the leader of the AFL was Jewish.<sup>177</sup> The myth that there was a Judeo-masonic and bolshevist conspiracy to destroy Christian society was a frequently repeated theme, particularly in the pages of Quebec City's L'Action catholique.<sup>178</sup> Jewish labour leaders prominent in socialist politics were also targeted. When Social-Democrat Michael Buhay ran in the 1917 federal elections, his campaign manager, Joseph Schubert complained about a grossly slanderous report on one of his speeches in L'Action catholique. Schubert reportedly

aurait déclaré qu'il est vrai, comme le dit M. Bourassa, que nombre de Juifs en Russie ont exploité le bas peuple pendant des siècles et que leur crime aurait mérité châtements.

In fact, the newspaper's correspondent could not understand Schubert's speech as it was delivered in Yiddish.<sup>179</sup> Schubert was again singled out after his election to Montreal city council in 1924 by the Montreal's La Croix, a weekly that presented the Jewish nation as a well organized and formidable force that promoted revolution and were "les maîtres de Russie."<sup>180</sup> It tried to discredit the Montreal Trades and Labor Council on the grounds that the "socialiste" Schubert was one of its vice-presidents, as well as its delegate to the 1925 TLCC convention, claiming that the congress was in the service of socialists. It then linked Schubert to TLCC resolutions claiming that one of these called for Canada to open its doors "aux agents juifs de Moscou."<sup>181</sup>

### Conclusion

Independent political action had been an important facet of the international unions since the beginning of the century. Growing labour organization and labour militancy helped to renew political activity in the hope of increasing working class political influence. Strongest at the peak of the strike wave in 1919, as unions came under attack during the depression that started in 1920, political action had less success. The inability to present a unified, distinct and independent voice at the political level contributed

significantly to the decline of labourism.

The formation of the QSCLP united labourists and socialists in an unprecedented coalition, one that adopted a program to the left of the old Quebec Labour Party. This union of all left-wing factions was a fragile achievement, however, threatened by a number of divisions. In 1919, there was a bitter antagonism between labourists and socialists, particularly over the question of industrial organization in the form of the OBU, and between those who hoped to gain influence by working with the governing Liberals, and those who wanted to avoid such alliances. Among women, francophone Catholics were most active in the Ligue auxiliaire des femmes d'unionistes while anglophone and Jewish women were more engaged in socialist politics and the promotion of the One Big Union. The failure of labourism among francophones is closely related to the QSCLP's inability to remain distinct from the governing Liberals. This close association hurt labourism as workers vented their anger at a provincial Liberal government that disenfranchised Montrealers at the municipal level and later ignored the suffering caused by unemployment.

There was a close link between ethnicity, political divisions and the failure of labourism in Quebec. When J.S. Woodsworth campaigned for the QSCLP in 1923 provincial

elections, he cited the ethnic divisions between English, French and Jewish workers that made co-operation difficult and brought about defeat.<sup>182</sup> Indeed among French-Canadian workers, labourism was clearly in decline by 1923 and disappeared altogether by the end of the decade. There were fewer francophones on the executive of the QSCLP in each year during the late 1920's.<sup>183</sup> When David Lewis, later a leading figure in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the New Democratic Party, described the Montreal Labor Party as he found it in 1930, he said that francophones were seldom seen.<sup>184</sup> The case of Alfred Mathieu is representative of this decline and of a shift to right-wing populism. By the mid twenties, Mathieu who had been president of the QSCLP and the MTLC in 1921, was appearing on Conservative party platforms and was later elected to City Hall as a Houdiste alderman.<sup>185</sup> In the long run, the decline of labourism among francophone workers meant that when the social-democratic left re-organized under the banner of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1932, there was no longer a French-Canadian base of support on which to build.

On the other hand, in the growing Jewish immigrant community, socialism, both social-democratic and revolutionary, remained alive and vital. It was in Saint Louis ward in the heart of the garment district that the Montreal

Labor Party elected Joseph Schubert, a socialist, and a leading figure in both the Workmen's Circle and in the ILGWU, to city council in 1924. When Schubert retired in 1942, Communist Michael Buhay replaced him on city council. It was also in this area that Fred Rose would win the federal riding of Cartier for the Labor Progressive Party in 1943 and 1945.

One reason that has been offered to explain why left wing political parties had so little success in Quebec after 1930 was that the francophone community did not benefit from the immigration of a large number of politically conscious immigrants from Britain and Europe. Such immigrants made up as much as 95 percent of the CPC in the 1920's. The language barrier was also a factor as most publications produced by left-wing parties in English Canada would not be read in Quebec. The composition of the French Canadian proletariat, with a larger proportion of unskilled workers, may also have worked against their presence in a political movement traditionally dominated by skilled craft union members.

The abandonment of labourism by francophone workers may also have been due to increased hostility on the part of the Catholic Church. From the beginning of the century the Church had opposed independent labour politics. This campaign may have become even more intense after 1920 with the formation of

the explicitly atheist CPC. The clergy did not differentiate between left-wing parties, and in the 1930s even the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was linked by a Montreal Cardinal with the Communists.<sup>186</sup> After the establishment of the Catholic unions in 1920, there were certainly more Catholic union organizers and chaplains militantly opposing the international unions and the Labor Party. The labour clubs continued to exist into the 1930's but many had by then established closer ties to the Church and to the Conservative Party, and a number began to express strong pro-fascist sympathies.<sup>187</sup>

## Endnotes

1. A short lived Labour Party was first established in Montreal in 1899 but had to be revived a few years later.
2. Labor World, 25 March 1916, 17 June 1917.
3. For the Labour Party's constitution and program see le Groupe de chercheurs de l'Université du Québec à Montréal sur l'histoire des travailleurs québécois, L'Action politique des ouvriers Québécois (fin du XIXe siècle à 1919), Montréal, 1976, 39-41, 46-48. On labourism see Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984) 45-76; and James Naylor, "Ontario Workers and the Decline of Labourism," in Roger Hall et al eds. Patterns of the Past. Interpreting Ontario's History, Toronto, 1988, 278-300.
4. On this point about severing ties with traditional political parties and the regulation see L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 23, 73.
5. André Siegfried, Le Canada. Les deux races, Paris, 1907, 280.
6. Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière, 1899-1915," 274-5.
7. Claude Larivière, Le 1er Mai fête internationale des travailleurs, Montréal, 1975, 36-37.
8. B.G. Sack, Canadian Jews - Early In This Century, Montreal, 1975, 39-40.
9. Rome, On Our Forerunners - At Work. Epilogue, 105.
10. Rome, On Our Forerunners - At Work. Epilogue, 109-115.
11. Rome, On Our Forerunners - At Work. Epilogue, 113; André Beaulieu et Jean Hamelin, dir., La Presse Québécoise des origines à nos jours. Tome cinquième, 1911-1919, Québec, 1982, 52-3, 125-6, 300-1.
12. On the labour clubs see Jacques Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière, 1899-1915," in Fernand Dumont et al. (dir.), Idéologies au Canada français, 1900-1929, Québec, 1974, 267-312.
13. L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 23.



14. Labor World 25 March 1916; La Patrie, 24 March 1916; Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 169.
15. Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 175-6; Labor World, 20 May, 10 June, 1 July 1916.
16. Labor World, 10 June, 14 October 1916.
17. Labor World, 21 July 1917; L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 23.
18. Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, 85.
19. Labor World, 21 July 1917.
20. Labor World, 17 June, 1, 8 July, 14 October 1916.
21. Labor World, 8 September 1917; Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 218, 224.
22. Labor World, 25 March, 20 May, 10, 17 June 1916.
23. Labor World, 21 July 1917.
24. Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 202, 205.
25. Rouillard, "L'Action politique ouvrière," 276-83; Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf, 100-1, 104-5.
26. Labor World, 15, 22 April 1916.
27. La Patrie, 25 May 1917.
28. Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 168-179. On the conscription crisis in Montreal see Bernard Dansereau, "Le mouvement ouvrier montréalais et la crise de la Conscription, 1916-1918," Mémoire de maîtrise, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1994.
29. La Patrie, 4 September 1917.
30. Labor World, 16 June 1917; Roback, "Quebec Workers in the Twentieth Century," 170; Dansereau, "Le mouvement ouvrier montréalais et la crise de la conscription," 76, 84.

31. L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 23-4.
32. For Ainey's pamphlet see L'action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 94-95; La Patrie, 25 February 1918.
33. Provencher, Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre, 31.
34. Provencher, Québec sous la loi des mesures de guerre, 41-140; Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 226-30.
35. TLCC, Proceedings, 1917, 142-9.
36. Dansereau, "Le mouvement ouvrier montréalais et la crise de la conscription," 88.
37. See L'Unioniste, 30 June 1917.
38. Labor World, 7 July 1917.
39. TLCC, Proceedings, 1917, 146, 148-9.
40. Labor World, 29 September 1917.
41. La Patrie, 21 September 1917.
42. Labor World, 13 October 1917; Dansereau, "Le mouvement ouvrier montréalais et la crise de la conscription," 95.
43. Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 220; Labor World, 8 September 1917.
44. For the constitution and program of the QSCLP see Labor World, 10 November 1917; and L'Action politique des ouvriers Québécois, 98-101.
45. Labor World, 19 January 1918.
46. Labor World, 10 November 1917.
47. Labor World, 18 May 1918.
48. Labor World, 27 October, 3, 10, November 1917; La Presse, 5 November 1917.

49. La Patrie, 15, 22 October 1917: Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 238.
50. Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930, Kingston, 1968, 134; The Canadian Annual Review, 1917, 632.
51. Liberals decided that they had made a mistake to tolerate the anti-conscriptionists' attacks on Laurier and Premier Gouin in the preceding months. La Patrie, 15 October 1917; In a bizarre incident, the campaign manager for Alfred Mathieu, Paul-Émile Mongeau claimed to have been drugged to prevent him from depositing Mathieu's election papers, while Mathieu issued a statement denying that he had been paid to withdraw from the race. La Patrie, 22 November 1917; La Presse 18 December 1917; Le Devoir, 20 December 1917.
52. Chronologie des mouvement politiques ouvriers, 239, 242, 244.
53. La Patrie, 1 April 1918.
54. Labor World, 9 March 1918.
55. Annick Germain, "L'émergence d'une scène politique: mouvement ouvrier et mouvements de réforme urbaine à Montréal au tournant du siècle - Essai d'interprétation," RHAF, 37, 2, septembre 1983, 192-196.
56. L'Action politique des ouvriers québécois, 102.
57. La Patrie, 1, 4 March, 1, 3 April 1918.
58. Labor World, 6 April 1918.
59. La Patrie, 3 April 1918.
60. Labor World, 8 March 1919.
61. La Patrie, 7, 12 June 1919.
62. Rumilly, Histoire de Montréal, Vol. 4, 11-12.
63. La Patrie, 5, 7, 12 June 1919; Labor World, 9, 23 February 1918.

64. La Patrie, 7 June 1919; Rumilly, Histoire de Montreal, Tome 3, 498; On Maisonneuve's indebtedness and its annexation to Montreal see Paul-André Linteau, Maisonneuve. Comment des promoteurs fabriquent une ville 1883-1918, Montréal, 1981.
65. Labor World, 21 June 1919.
66. La Patrie, 2 June 1919.
67. La Patrie, 19 June 1919.
68. Labor World, 21 June 1919.
69. La Patrie, 6, 14 August, 2, 3, 16 September 1919.
70. Labor World, 28 June 1919.
71. La Presse, 5 November 1917.
72. Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 255; La Patrie, 16 August 1918.
73. At Thetford the secretary of the Western Federation of Miners J.-Lacasse Rousseau was mayor from 1920 to 1923. Labor World noted on May 1, 1920 that organized labor had three representatives at City Hall in Sorel.
74. La Patrie, 12 November 1921.
75. Le Soleil, 4, 9, 10, 13, 18, 24 June 1919.
76. La Patrie, 6 November 1919.
77. Labor World, 19 June 1920.
78. Labor World, 17 April 1920.
79. La Patrie, 8 April 1920.
80. Labor World, 7 August 1920.
81. La Patrie, 17, 30 January 1920.
82. La Patrie, 11 May 1920.

83. La Patrie, 14 February 1920.
84. Bernard Figler, Sam Jacobs. Member of Parliament, Ottawa, 1959, 61.
85. La Patrie, 22 March, 3 April 1918.
86. Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 255; La Patrie, 16 December 1918.
87. La Patrie, 16 December 1918; Labor World, 21 December 1918; Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 255-6.
88. La Patrie, 16 December 1918; Labor World, 21 December 1918; Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 255-6.
89. Labor World, 28 December 1918.
90. Gustave Francq, Bolshévisme ou syndicalisme, lequel, Montréal, 1919.
91. For the text of Saint-Martin's pamphlet see Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, 218-262.
92. Labor World, 7 June 1919.
93. Labor World, 3 May 1919.
94. Labor World, 7 June 1919.
95. This led the MTLG representative to the Montreal Labour Party, R. Lynch, to recommend that the Council cease its affiliation if the officers of the craft unions continued to be insulted and vilified. To strengthen their representation, the Council appointed Gustave Francq as its delegate to the Montreal Labour Party. Labor World, 17 May 1919.
96. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 160-1.
97. NA, Arthur Sifton Papers, MG 27 II D19, Vol. 9, RCMP Report C.I.B. Division, 21 October 1920, 18-19.
98. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 118-9, 160-1; NA, Arthur Sifton Papers, MG 27 II D19, Vol. 9, RCMP Report C.I.B. Division, 26 August 1920, 13-14.

99. For a report on this convention see Labor World, 22 November 1919.
100. La Presse, 17 November 1919.
101. Labor World, 7 February 1920.
102. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 56.
103. Labor World 22 January 1921. Some of these measures were identical ones on the labour party platform. Others, such as the division of the city into three districts each with five members, had long been promoted by Francq. See La Patrie, 17 December 1915 for example.
104. Rumilly, Histoire de Montréal, Vol. 4, 28-31; Gauvin, "The Reformer and the Machine," 23.
105. Rumilly, Histoire de Montréal, Vol. 4, 28-31.
106. Labor World, 12 March, 23 April 1921; La Patrie, 12 April 1921.
107. La Patrie, 28, 29 April 1921.
108. Gauvin, "The Reformer and the Machine," 22.
109. Labor World, 22 January 1921.
110. La Patrie, 17 May 1921; Rumilly, Histoire de Montreal, Vol. 4, 31.
111. Labor World, 21 May 1921.
112. La Patrie, 5, 6 October 1921.
113. La Patrie, 4 October 1921.
114. La Patrie, 1 October 1921.
115. La Patrie, 19 October 1921; Chronologie des mouvements politiques ouvriers, 242.
116. Labor World, 8, 15, 22 October 1921.

- 117. Labor World, 29 October 1921.
- 118. Naylor, The New Democracy, 230-2.
- 119. TLCC, Proceedings, 1920, 28.
- 120. La Patrie, 5 October 1921.
- 121. La Patrie, 7 December 1921.
- 122. Labor World, 4 December 1921.
- 123. On labourism and its affinity to liberalism see Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class."
- 124. La Patrie, 1, 4 March 1918, 1, 3 April 1918.
- 125. Labor World, 8 October 1921.
- 126. On Alphonse Verville see Patricia Karen Malloy, "Alphonse Verville, {{Liberal-Labour}} Member of Parliament, 1906-1914", Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1970.
- 127. Labor World, 8 October 1921.
- 128. The Worker, 1 March 1923.
- 129. Labor World, 3 April 1920.
- 130. La Patrie, 1 April 1920.
- 131. La Patrie, 3, 5 April 1920.
- 132. La Patrie, 20 March, 3 April 1920.
- 133. La Patrie, 22, 27 April 1920.
- 134. Labor World, 3 February 1923.
- 135. Labor World, 9 March 1918.
- 136. Labor World, 8 October 1921.

137. On this incident, see Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 299-302.
138. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Quebec, Vol. 26, 228-9.
139. La Patrie, 6 February 1923.
140. Andr  e L  vesque, "La citoyenne selon Eva Circ  -C  t  ," in L  vesque, R  sistance et Transgression, 47-66; On Henri Bourassa, see Trofimenkoff, "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'."
141. Labor World, 22 January 1921.
142. Kealey, "Women's Activism in the Canadian Labour Revolt of 1919", 134-159; on Mrs. S. Larocque see Labor World, 25 January 1919, 3 May 1919.
143. Labor World, 7 June 1919.
144. For Francq's preference for a labour party controlled by trade unions see Labor World, 29 October 1921; on his view that candidates for public office first prove themselves in the ranks of organized labour see Labor World 24 September 1921. This was a point that had long been stressed by Labor World. For instance see Labor World, 18 March, 15 April 1916, 21 June 1917.
145. The franchise remained far from universal. For example, members of the First Nations were still denied the right to vote.
146. Labor World, 20 March 1920; the candidate, Fernand Rinfret, had earlier given a conference on women's emancipation, Labor World, 10 January 1920. During the election Rinfret was supported by the Club liberal des femmes and its president Mme. F.L. B  ique, Rumilly, Histoire de la province de Qu  bec, vol. XXIV, 203.
147. See her reply in Labor World, 16 August 1919.
148. La Patrie, 25 October 1919.
149. Labor World, 8 January 1921, 19 February 1921.



150. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 43-4, 63, 71; Canada's Party of Socialism History of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, 1982, 23 fn 43; Tim Buck, Yours in the Struggle. Reminiscences of Tim Buck, Toronto, 1977, 98. On the Labour College see Marcel Fournier, Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec (1920-1950) Laval, 1979, 14-16; Louise Watson, She Never Was Afraid. The Biography of Annie Buller, Toronto, 1976, 11-14.
151. The Worker, 3 October 1925.
152. Fournier, Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec, 14; Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, 137; University of Toronto Library, Robert S. Kenny Collection, "Proceedings of the 5th Convention of the Communist Party of Canada" mimeographed text, 1927, 5; The Worker, 22 October 1927, 1 June 1929.
153. Larivière, Albert Saint-Martin, 135-6; Fournier, Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec, 21; Buck, Thirty Years, 29-30.
154. Fournier, Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec, 22-8.
155. La Patrie, 3, 5 April 1920.
156. Labor World, 5 April 1924.
157. Robin, Radical Politics, 225.
158. William Rodney, Soldiers of the International, A History Of the Communist Party of Canada 1919-1929, Toronto, 1968, 98.
159. The Worker, 24 November 1923.
160. Robin, Radical Politics, 256-260.
161. The Worker, 9 October 1925, 29 May 1926, 17 September 1927.
162. The Worker, 18 December 1926; For Schubert's position see TLCC, Proceedings, 1924, 108.
163. Labor World, 2 February 1924, 10 May 1924.
164. See for example The Worker, 18 December 1926.

165. The Worker, 5 December 1925.
166. La Presse, 16 November 1925.
167. Robin, Radical Politics, 258.
168. La Presse, 16 November 1925.
169. The Worker, 5 December 1925; La Presse, 16 November 1925; Labor World, 21 November 1925.
170. Robin, 259.
171. Labor World, 2 February, 10 May 1924.
172. Labor World, 11 April 1925.
173. Labor World, 21 November 1925.
174. Charpentier, "L'action politique ouvrier", 93-95.
175. Labor World, 6 December 1919.
176. This series of quotes was reproduced in Labor World, 19 June 1920; For the original see Le progrès du Saguenay, 10 June 1920.
177. Labor World, 21 August 1920.
178. Richard A. Jones, "L'Action catholique, 1920-1921," dans Fernand Dumont et al. <dir.> Idéologie au Canada français 1900-1929, 332-342.
179. L'Action catholique, 7 December 1917. This clipping is from the Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Joseph Schubert Papers.
180. On La Croix see Phillipe Reid, "La Croix, 1923-1924," dans Fernand Dumont et al. <dir> Idéologie au Canada français 1900-1929, 45-84.
181. La Croix, 12 September 1925. This clipping is from the Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Joseph Schubert Papers
182. The Worker, 1 March 1923.

183. Department of Labour, Labour Organizations in Canada, 1926, 1927, 1928.
184. David Lewis, The Good Fight, Political Memoirs 1909-1958, Toronto, 457.
185. Rumilly, Histoire de Montreal, Vol. 4, 113, 141.
186. Walter D. Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-61, Toronto, 1969, 211.
187. Fournier, Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec, 64-65. The process by which many labour clubs turned towards the Conservative Party remains obscure, as is much of the history of these clubs during the 1920s.

## Chapter 4

The Rivalry Between the International Unions  
and the National and Catholic Unions,  
1914-1919

Il y avait bien, - depuis un certain temps, - des rumeurs inquiétantes. On entendait parler de grèves séditeuses, voir politiques, comme à Winnipeg.... tout cela, c'est purement et simplement l'esprit soi-disant neutre des unions internationales qui l'a rendu possible.

...

D'autre part, les unions catholiques purement canadiennes, loin d'être une menace pour les intérêts des patrons canadiens et un danger pour la cause de l'ordre dans ce pays, offrent, au contraire, toutes les garanties désirables pour la cause de la justice, de la concorde et de la paix industrielle.

Deux grèves de l'"Internationale" L'Action  
social catholique, 1919.<sup>1</sup>

During the war years, the Catholic Church in Quebec renewed and intensified the process, initiated a few years earlier, of developing a Catholic labour movement. This project emerged out of an increasing concern among the Catholic clergy for social problems arising from industrialization and urbanization, combined with a fear of international unions who were associated with socialism, class conflict, and state intervention in such realms as education. The growth of religiously neutral unions during the war, the increased industrial militancy, and a renewed and more radical

attempt at political action in 1917, all seemed to underline the need for greater clerical direction of working class organizations. The establishment of a Catholic labour movement of proportions to challenge and rival the international unions throughout Quebec, meant that the wartime and postwar periods were punctuated by a string of critical inter-union conflicts as they competed for the allegiance of Quebec workers. While Catholic union promoters set about to transform many of Quebec's national unions into Catholic organizations, their project also required considerable efforts to prevent the organization and expansion of international unions.

The Catholic labour movement drew its inspiration in part from a number of papal encyclicals. The first and most influential one to deal with labour relations was Rerum novarum, published in 1891, although the Church in Quebec would take some years before applying its dictums by undertaking Catholic social action to deal with problems associated with industrialization. Rerum novarum was written to express the Church's concern for the poor living and working conditions that most working people were forced to bear and because of a fear of socialism.<sup>2</sup> It declared that the "first and most fundamental principle, therefore, when we undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property."<sup>3</sup> It decried the

assumption that capital and labour, rich and poor, were naturally hostile towards each other, stating that they were interdependent, and defined their proper relationship as one where there were "relative rights and mutual duties" towards each other.<sup>4</sup> Rerum novarum went beyond acknowledging that workers had a right to form unions to encourage them to do so, provided that they were established with religion as a base, on the grounds that the Church alone could provide practical solutions to the social problem. It also acknowledged that the state had a role to play in providing protective legislation to prevent certain abuses in the workplace, and in regulating labour relations to obviate conflict and attempt to prevent strikes.

The encyclical Singulari quadam, issued by Pope Pius X in 1912, provided Catholic union promoters in Quebec with additional arguments for a specifically Catholic labour movement. A key statement from this document, and one that was frequently cited by Catholic union promoters, was that questions of wages, working hours, and strikes, were not purely economic matters, but were also moral questions that had to be resolved according to rules of morality and the judgement of religion. It also stated that religiously neutral unions could expose Catholics to grave perils.<sup>5</sup> In Quebec, this point was developed, in particular, by Father Joseph-

Papin Archambault, the director of Montreal's École sociale populaire, a Jesuit organization established in 1911, charged with developing and applying the Church's social doctrines. It regularly published pamphlets on a wide range of social issues and had a specific mandate to train Catholic trade union activists.<sup>6</sup> Archambault argued that as unions touched on moral and religious matters, a religiously mixed membership could compromise the integrity of a Catholic member's faith and the loyal observance of the Church's law and precepts.<sup>7</sup> Archambault also argued that the papal encyclical permitted Catholics to join religiously neutral organizations under some circumstances but that this decision rested with the bishops of each diocese and that Catholics in Quebec should follow the teachings of their diocesan leaders on this question.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest labour organizations to have ties to the Church were the three largest national boot and shoe workers unions in Quebec City. In 1901, following the intervention of the archbishop in a bitter strike, they modified their rules and constitutions to conform to Catholic social teachings, and accepted the presence of chaplains appointed by the archbishop at their meetings.<sup>9</sup> Complying to these changes with reluctance in some cases, they were the most autonomous and militant organizations with ties to the Church before World War One. Jacques Rouillard argues that they were not yet strictly

Catholic unions as they did not restrict their membership to Catholic workers. Before the war, a number of specifically Catholic unions were established directly by interested clergy.<sup>10</sup> The first such Catholic union, the *Fédération ouvrière de Chicoutimi* was formed in 1907 and became the *Fédération ouvrière mutuelle du Nord* in 1912. A *Corporation ouvrière catholique des Trois-Rivières* was established in 1913 and in Montreal, four Catholic unions were set up a year later. Some of these early organizations operated primarily as mutual benefit societies, and to offer education promoting Catholic social values, rather than to take action to improve the wages and working conditions of their members. According to Fraser Isbester they were seldom established for economic reasons, and had a wide variety of forms and practices with no central organization apart from ties to the Church.<sup>11</sup>

In many cases, such as in Chicoutimi and Trois-Rivières, Catholic unions were established to counter international union organizing drives. Occasionally, such as in Chicoutimi, they were established with employer approval, while in others, such as in Trois-Rivières, the clergy sought the active support of employers. By 1915, even including Quebec City's boot and shoe workers, there was a handful of Catholic unions, claiming a relatively small membership of about 8,000. That year an independent union in Hull was persuaded by local



parish priests to become a Catholic organization, adding another 1,500 members to the movement.<sup>12</sup>

While Catholic unions hindered the growth of international unions in a number of centres, the strongest opposition to international unions before the First World War probably came more from religiously neutral national unions, many of which were expelled from the TLCC at the Berlin Convention in 1902.

### Thetford Mines

The first major inter-union conflict during the war erupted among asbestos miners at Thetford Mines in 1915. Described in detail by Fernand Dumont, this is one of the best documented examples of a Catholic union endeavouring to prevent the establishment of an international union.<sup>13</sup> Thetford Mines, a one industry town with five large mines and an equal number of small ones, was the most important centre in the asbestos mining region that stretched for roughly a forty mile radius in the Eastern Townships.<sup>14</sup> The workforce of roughly 3,000<sup>15</sup> in 1914 grew during the war to number between 5,000 and 6,000 by 1919. Ethnically diverse, it was comprised of both French and English Canadians, as well as Eastern European and Italian immigrants.<sup>16</sup>

The question of wages was a major concern among workers at Thetford. The wage scale was decided by the larger companies in conference, with the smaller ones following suit.<sup>17</sup> Wages were cut shortly after the outbreak of the war, and did not increase as demand expanded in response to the needs of military production. The miners considered the manager of the Jacob Asbestos mine as the instigator of the wage reductions at all the other companies. Fragmentation along ethnic lines was encouraged by at least one of the larger companies, Jacob Asbestos, which seems to have paid different wage scales to Russian compared to French Canadian workers.<sup>18</sup>

In October 1915 there was a strike initiated by a group of Russian workers in this mine who were able to convince the miners in all the other mines to join a general walkout some 2,000 strong. With the help of the mayor and a municipal councillor, demands were then drawn up and presented to the mine managers. They included a return to pre-war wages, an end to compulsory use of the company store at some mines, and that all strikers be rehired without discrimination. The dispute was settled after five days when the employers conceded to the wage demands, but not, it would seem, on any other issue.<sup>19</sup>

The strike ended before any union was established. The

two Russian workers who led the strike wanted to organize a local of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and it was probably these men who soon secured international union organizers from Montreal, such as Arthur Martel, Narcisse Arcand and G.R. Brunet.<sup>20</sup> The prospect of an international union prompted some local notables and the clergy to take immediate action. The alarm was raised by Alfred Frenette who had recently purchased the local newspaper, Le Canadien. He immediately undertook a massive campaign for a Catholic organization and against the international unions that lasted through several months. Frenette was well acquainted with Catholic unionism, as he was among the founders and had been an executive member of the Corporation ouvrière catholique in Trois-Rivières.<sup>21</sup> In Thetford, however, Frenette was clearly identified with the local establishment, that is, not only with the clergy but with the mining companies also. International union supporters reported that he openly stated that he feared the loss of printing contracts with the mine owners if an international union were established.<sup>22</sup>

At a meeting called by strike leaders soon after the end of the October 1915 dispute to discuss the establishment of a union, Frenette addressed the crowd on the advantages of a Catholic organization but had little impact. A vote between those who favoured a Catholic association, an international

union, or no organization at all, was almost unanimous in its support for an AFL union.<sup>23</sup> Catholic union promoters then called for help and the stage was soon set for a head on confrontation between supporters of the two movements.

The following week, Mgr Paul-Eugène Roy, the auxiliary Bishop of the diocese, and abbé Maxime Fortin, the recently appointed director of Catholic social action for the diocese of Quebec, arrived in Thetford. In a meeting disturbed by the heckling of international union supporters Roy addressed the workers of Thetford on Sunday, October 31, 1915, calling for their adherence to a Catholic union.<sup>24</sup> The next day Roy responded by storming an international union meeting to confront the organizers and ordered those workers who did not wish to join a Catholic union to leave the hall, perhaps hoping that the remainder would be favourably disposed towards joining a Catholic union once he rid the gathering of the most determined international union supporters. Only some 200 of the 1,500 in attendance left. In the following weeks both a Catholic organization and a number of international unions, including a local of the WFM, were formally established.<sup>25</sup>

The chaplain of the Catholic union in Thetford did his utmost to destroy the WFM. In December 1915 he sought the help of the mine owners, hoping that they would declare themselves

openly for the Catholic union, and suggested that they could gradually fire the more influential members of the international union. He also had the Catholic union address a petition to the companies asking for an increase of 25 cents per day to forestall the international union that was preparing to demand 75 cents. This suggestion of a 25 cent increase was later taken up by the companies and played a role in undermining a strike by the WFM in August 1916.<sup>26</sup> By February 1916 the chaplain was providing strikebreakers to the Jacob Asbestos mine at the request of the mine manager who wished to replace striking Russian workers. All of these steps were taken with the full knowledge of abbé Fortin. The parish priest in Thetford also noted approvingly that the Russians at the Jacob Asbestos mine were being slowly fired and replaced.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these difficulties the WFM commanded the support of most organized miners in Thetford. Through 1916 it continued to organize, make demands, request a conciliation board under the IDIA, and to prepare for a strike.<sup>28</sup> During the same period, the Chaplain of the Catholic union urged its members to resist appeals from the international union and to remain at work during the walkout. When some newspapers suggested that the rival organizations would form a united front against the mine owners, the Catholic union issued a

declaration that they deplored the aims and actions of the international union, and that "les membres de ce conseil se déclarent satisfaits de la condition actuelle des ouvriers et sont reconnaissants envers les patrons de ce qu'ils ont déjà fait pour les ouvriers." Moreover they resolved that they would do all they could to support the employers in the event of a strike. The 900 members of the WFM went on strike in August. After several weeks the union capitulated and offered to return to work if there was no discrimination against the strikers. Determined not to take back the strike leaders, the company held out for a complete capitulation.<sup>29</sup>

The local clergy remained adamantly opposed to any international union initiative. The WFM had petitioned in 1916 for a Federal Department of Labour inquiry into working conditions. Indeed, one of the main complaints was the dangerous conditions and the number of accidents and deaths in the mines. Any chance of such action was undermined when the Catholic union, through the parish priest, wrote to the Minister of Labour opposing such an inquiry. The 1916 strike left a legacy of bitterness and division as the rivalry continued. All labour organization in Thetford declined in subsequent years and throughout the 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

In 1916 there was one other occasion where an

international union faced a Catholic rival. A strike of members of the International Typographical Union at L'Action catholique in Quebec City was defeated when abbé Fortin established a Catholic union in its place.<sup>31</sup>

Religious authorities attempted to exert considerable pressure on Catholic workers in response to a campaign by international unions to organize workers outside of Montreal. In December 1916 at a celebration of the first anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic union in Thetford abbé Fortin insisted that "les membres s'abstiennent de toute théorie ou de tout acte ne concordant pas avec les enseignements et les ordres de l'autorité religieuse compétente."<sup>32</sup> In January 1917, when a large number of carpenters working on the construction of paper mills in Trois-Rivières abandoned the Catholic union for the UBCJ, the Corporation ouvrière catholique consulted Mgr. Lapointe of Chicoutimi who had established the first Catholic unions.<sup>33</sup> In May 1917 religious authorities in Trois-Rivières and in Grand-Mère expressly forbid their parishioners to attend international union organizing meetings "sous peine de chatiment." This provoked the Labor World to insist that the international unions were not adversaries of the Catholic clergy.<sup>34</sup> It was the insistence on following the teachings of the religious authorities that probably prompted one worker to

write to Mgr. Lapointe in September 1917 defending both his faith and his membership in an international union:

L'Internationale ne m'a pas perverti et je ferai remarquer à Votre Grandeur, avec tout le respect que je lui dois, que le fait d'appartenir à l'Union des Charpentiers et Menuisiers ne signifie pas l'obéissance aveugle à tous les ordres de l'Internationale. La lutte pour la vie n'entraîne pas nécessairement la désobéissance aux saintes lois de l'Eglise...<sup>35</sup>

Catholic workers could not be forced to join Catholic unions or withdraw from neutral ones in the sense that membership in a religiously neutral organization was not a sin, but they were presented with the choice as being a matter of whether or not they were good Catholics.<sup>36</sup> Most French Canadians were practising Catholics and international union members often objected to the idea that membership in the AFL and good religious observance were incompatible. Even Alfred Charpentier, who would later play a leading role in the Catholic labour movement, stated that he would not have tolerated any criticism of his religious convictions when he was a member of an international union.<sup>37</sup> When abbé Maxime Fortin declared before a Royal Commission that AFL organizers were preaching revolutionary, anti-religious, and anti-clerical doctrines, the trades and labour council of the international unions in Quebec City wanted to know exactly who he had in mind. It was with indignation that its corresponding-secretary asked "[c]omme nous nous sentions visés, je crois que vous aurez le courage de préciser vos



accusations? n<sup>38</sup>

### Inter-union rivalry in shipbuilding

Conflicts of a magnitude and importance to equal or rival that among asbestos workers emerged later in the war in 1918. This time, it was the shipbuilding industry that became the area of most intense rivalry. The attempt in 1918 by international unions to organize all the yards on the St. Laurence river was one of the most ambitious campaigns outside of Montreal in the last years of the war. In this drive there were clashes with Catholic unions at shipyards in Trois-Rivières and Lévis. Indeed it represented perhaps the principal threat to the expanding Catholic union movement. While situated in predominately francophone communities the shipbuilding workforce did not reflect the local demography. While most wartime vessels were built in steel there was also a revival of wooden shipbuilding which required the help of skilled labour from the Maritimes as this part of the industry had almost disappeared in Quebec.

The aim of the MTF's organizing drive was ultimately to standardize conditions and wages throughout the industry. In 1918 the international unions presented demands for a nine-hour day, standard overtime rates, and a closed shop at

shipyards across the province. Demands with respect to wages, however, varied considerably indicating a recognition that local conditions, existing wage differentials, and the strength of organization still made uniform wages a longer term goal. The lowest demand for an hourly minimum wage of 45 cents for skilled workers was made at Trois-Rivières.<sup>39</sup> At most yards in Quebec City and Lévis the demand was for a minimum wage of 50 cents.<sup>40</sup> Since this was already the standard minimum rate at some yards in Montreal, boilermakers at one firm first asked for 55 cents but then wanted 68 cents, in effect hoping for parity with members of the same trade in the railway shops. The boilermakers raised their demand after the announcement by the Canadian Railway War Board in July 1918 that workers in Division 4 would receive the same terms and conditions provided under the McAdoo award in the United States.<sup>41</sup>

In Montreal, the international unions were well established in many of the shipyards. But elsewhere few if any of the shipbuilding companies were willing to recognize a union or negotiate. In compliance with the Order-in-Council extending the IDIA to workers in munitions industries the international unions in the shipyards petitioned the Federal Department of Labour for Boards of Conciliation that would either help reach a settlement or place the workers in a legal

position to strike. In July 1918 the Department of Labour received a flood of requests for boards under the IDIA, three from Quebec City and Lauzon, including one from the workers at the Davie Shipbuilding and Repair yards, one from Frazer-Brace in Montreal and two for workers at companies in Trois-Rivières.<sup>42</sup> On July 26, a strike of 250 international union members erupted at the Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon. Faced with this flood of requests and a strike, the Federal government established a Royal Commission to inquire into alleged unrest in the shipyards in Quebec. This allowed the federal government to avoid establishing a separate IDIA board for each dispute. The establishment of a single commission had been suggested to the Minister of Labour by W.G. Powlesland, Canadian vice-president of the blacksmiths union, who may have hoped that it would lead to more uniform settlements and that it would be a step towards collective bargaining on an industry-wide basis.<sup>43</sup> International unions certainly sought to increase the scope of the investigation to include as many yards as possible.

While the Royal Commission was sitting, it was also asked to investigate disputes at an additional company in Montreal and at several yards, including the government docks in Sorel.<sup>44</sup> In an industry crucial to the war effort and dependent on government contracts, the federal government

could encourage or force collective bargaining. The timing of this drive suggests that this would be a test of the federal government statement of principles in July 1918 recognizing the right of workers to form unions.

The Royal Commission was composed in the same manner as a board established under the IDIA. The Commission was chaired by F.S. Maclellan, a judge of the Superior Court and chair of the Labour Appeals Board. Employers were represented by F.S. Robb of the Shipping Federation, while the third commissioner, J.M. Walsh of the Quebec and Lévis Trades and Labor Council was drawn from the ranks of the international unions.<sup>45</sup> The Royal Commission had powers similar to an IDIA board to investigate the disputes, recommend settlements, and to publish its report.<sup>46</sup> In addition, it also undertook to recommend bargaining agents where inter-union rivalry was a factor.

The international union drive in Quebec's shipyards, and the establishment of the Royal Commission, occurred soon after most of Quebec City's national unions agreed to become specifically Catholic organizations. During the war Catholic social activists, such as abbé Maxime Fortin and Father J.-P. Archambault, had renewed the attempt to create a movement along Catholic lines. They concluded that the previous

practice of establishing new Catholic organizations under clerical direction was inadequate, and adopted a strategy of converting religiously neutral national organizations into Catholic ones. Fortin believed that the first step in this process was to form an elite core of supporters among established union leaders through study circles and closed retreats. These leaders would gradually promote Catholic social doctrine within their organizations and foster support for close formal ties to a Catholic labour movement.<sup>47</sup> This was most successful in Quebec City where more than half of the labour organizations were national unions ideologically opposed to international unionism. In 1917 most of these national unions in Quebec City asked to become specifically Catholic in nature, accepting the social doctrines of the Church in their constitutions and the presence of a Chaplain designated by the Archbishop at their meetings. In 1918 the two central councils of the national unions, the National Central Labor Council of the District of Quebec, and the Canadian Federation of Labor affiliated Council of National Unions, also requested chaplains and were soon merged to form the National Central Council of Trades of the District of Quebec.

The expansion of the international unions in 1918 represented an important challenge to the Catholic union

movement in Quebec City. While federal Department of Labour figures for union membership must be cited with caution, they are indicative of the general trend. In 1918, the Quebec and Lévis Trades and Labor Council representing the international unions claimed 10,200 members, more than double the previous year's figure of 4,600. At the same time membership in the national and Catholic unions stagnated. Affiliates to their local council had 6,400 members in 1918, down slightly from the year before when there were 6,600.<sup>48</sup> Both groups embarked on campaigns for supremacy in the Quebec City district that would last through 1919. The shipyard disputes and particularly the one at Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon, across the St. Lawrence river from Quebec City, were of pivotal importance to the prestige of the rival movements.

There had been a history of division among organized workers at the Davie yard during the war, although the available sources provide slightly different versions of the events that led to the establishment of a Catholic union. According to a study of the Catholic unions written in 1925, a national union affiliated to the Canadian Federation of Labour had been established in November 1916. The affiliation was broken in 1917 when the local union refused to pay a \$500.00 contribution on the grounds "qu'ils pouvaient administrer tout aussi bien leur argent que ceux de Toronto."

During 1917, a few members of the union moved closer to the Catholic movement and accepted Church direction, receiving a chaplain in October 1917.<sup>49</sup> Other sources, however, make no mention of the Canadian Federation of Labor. There had been a local of the IAM in Lauzon since at least since 1914.<sup>50</sup> A local of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders was established in September 1916. According to the Report On Labour Organization in Canada, it was the boilermakers local that supplied the nucleus for a national union established on March 10, 1917, and that this international union then passed out of existence.<sup>51</sup> Jacques Rouillard states that the Lauzon union answered abbé Fortin's call to national unions on May 10, 1917 to become specifically Catholic organizations.<sup>52</sup>

Whatever its exact origins, Catholic union promoters succeeded in persuading a union at Lauzon to transform itself into a Catholic union and to get rid of its secular affiliations.<sup>53</sup> From the start, however, there was a faction opposed to ties to the Church.<sup>54</sup> This was probably at the root of the divisions that weakened the union and left it with only a few members by September 1917.<sup>55</sup> The Union nationale catholique des ouvriers de la Rive-Sud had about a dozen members when it was established and had little success attracting members. Recruitment was very slow over the winter

of 1917-1918 despite an intensive organizing campaign. At the same time the opponents of Catholic unionism were also organizing.<sup>56</sup>

This was the situation in March 1918 when the Catholic union was suddenly promoted by George Davie, the general manager of the company, to forestall the establishment of international unions. Davie signed an agreement taking effect March 21, 1918 with the Union nationale catholique des ouvriers de la Rive-Sud. A wage scale was accepted by the Catholic union on May 11, 1918 taking effect three days later.<sup>57</sup> On May 14, George Davie posted a notice in the yard stating that:

It has been brought to my notice that there are certain parties in this yard who are trying to form a union. I have recognized the National Union of South Shore Labourers, and any employees of this plant trying to organize or cause friction through dealing with other unions, which are not recognized by this company, will be immediately discharged.<sup>58</sup>

The firing of Alfred Bourget, the local organizer for the international unions, in February 1918 suggests that discriminating against international union organizers was not a new policy.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless on May 23, the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders presented their demands for recognition, increased wages and a nine-hour day. The Blacksmiths followed suit with similar demands on June 22. In the name of some 290 workers both these unions and the Carpenters applied to the



Federal Department of Labour for a Board of Conciliation on July 12, 1918.<sup>60</sup> In July the Catholic union, with the prior approval of George Davie, posted notices in the shipyards that on July 17 every worker had to have a Catholic union card or they would be instantly fired. Most of the international union members ignored this threat. On Monday July 22 a rumour circulated that some members of the international union were soon to be fired. Three days later, ten workers were dismissed prompting 240 workers to strike the following day demanding their immediate reinstatement.<sup>61</sup>

Davie started hiring replacements immediately. Montreal's Labor World suggests that in this he was helped by the local clergy which used its influence to recruit members for the Catholic union. Certainly Labor World reflected the concern of the international unions when it stated that "La compagnie s'est assurée un allié puissant dans le clergé de la rive sud du Saint-Laurent."<sup>62</sup>

The importance of employer support for the Catholic union at Davie Shipbuilding is underlined by the fact that international unions did not apparently face any significant threat from rival organizations in other shipyards in the Quebec district. At two other Quebec shipyards where disputes were investigated by the commission, Quinlan and Robertson,

and Quebec Shipbuilding and Repair, there was no mention of any rivalry and at the recommendation of the Royal Commission contracts were signed with international unions.<sup>63</sup> Nor was there any on the docks of the Federal Marine Department in Quebec City, where members of the AFL's MTF also went on strike just a few days after the workers at Davie.

The Maclellan Royal Commission began more than a week of hearings in Quebec on August 8, 1918, and hoped to end the strike at Davie Shipbuilding as soon as possible.<sup>64</sup> The concern of the Commission's chair to settle the strike rather than address the issues was immediately evident. On the first day, with 150 to 200 of the strikers present, the chair of the Commission asked Davie if he would allow the strikers to return to work pending the outcome of the investigation. Davie replied that he would not reinstate the ten dismissed men and would take back only those whose positions had not been filled by the 102 replacements hired since the beginning of the dispute. The chair nonetheless urged the strikers to return to work, arguing that this would improve their position, and promising that the case of the ten dismissed employees would be fully investigated. Realizing that this meant abandoning their only leverage, the international union members ignored the suggestion.<sup>65</sup> Commissioner Walsh maintained that the dismissed men should have been immediately reinstated pending

the outcome of the investigation.<sup>66</sup>

The investigation into the dismissals at Davie revealed how closely the company and the Catholic union worked to undermine international union organizing efforts. While there were additional charges against two of the dismissed workers, the ten were fired ostensibly for working poorly, that is for losing time on the job and for poor productivity.<sup>67</sup> The evidence, however, makes it clear that Davie was acting on his threat to fire AFL union activists. The superintendent of the yard testified that these workers were wasting time engaging in discussions with other workmen, while Davie stated that men were "losing their time canvassing other men to join their" union. In fact these workers were also singled out because of reports that they had criticized their employer. Davie stated in his testimony "and am I to be criticized by 10 men. Never, sir. I cannot stand it from anybody." The allegations that the dismissed workers were critical of Davie were made in reports written by the company detective who was merely repeating charges made in letters he received from Catholic union members and from anonymous sources.<sup>68</sup> Members of the Catholic union, then, were feeding the names of AFL union promoters to the company detective.

On the charge that the dismissed international union

activists had been working poorly, several foremen testified that these employees were among the best workers, were not neglectful of their duty, that they knew of no charges against them, and were surprised when they heard of the discharges. Nor had any of these workers ever been reprimanded by either a foreman or the superintendent. In addition no attempt had been made to establish whether the allegations in the letters were true.<sup>69</sup> Despite such testimony, two of the commissioners, Thomas Robb and F.S. Maclellan, were unwilling to dismiss an employer assertion. They accepted the testimony of Davie, the superintendent, and of the company detective, and declared the dismissals to be justified.<sup>70</sup>

The other major issue facing the commissioners was the question of recognition in the Davie yards. The company argued that the presence of two unions would lead to strife and reduce production. Davie Shipbuilding claimed it could not deal with the international unions because it already recognized the Union nationale catholique des ouvriers de la Rive-Sud. There was, at this time, no legal machinery to establish the bargaining agent in case of inter-union rivalry. In this case, the Commission attempted to establish which organization had majority support. Unfortunately, the exact process was not described in the reports, but the Commission examined the company pay-roll and the books of both unions.

There were 707 workers listed in the company books, a figure that may have included the 102 who were hired after the start of the strike. The 250 strikers were counted as members of international unions, while the other 457 were counted as members of the Catholic union.<sup>71</sup> Since membership in the Catholic union was a condition of employment, this hardly appears to have been a free expression of the workers' preferences. As a result of the investigation, the Commissioners invited the Catholic union to sign a new agreement with Davie Shipbuilding for the duration of the war.<sup>72</sup>

The Royal Commission also dealt with wages and hours at the Davie yard. The Catholic union opposed a reduction in the length of the ten-hour work day.<sup>73</sup> The Commission nonetheless reduced the regular work day to nine hours, apparently at the insistence of commissioner Walsh. There were also workers employed at Davie Shipbuilding, probably members of the Catholic union, who came before the commission to testify that they were satisfied with the existing wages.<sup>74</sup> The collective agreement signed as a result of the Royal Commission provided for no change in the pay scale established in May 1918.<sup>75</sup> The pay scale provided for lower minimum wages than any other agreements established at the recommendation of the commission. For carpenters, the only trade for which a

comparison can be made from wages listed in the Royal Commission report, the minimum at Davie was 43 cents while it was no less than 45 cents in any other agreement, including those of the other two shipbuilding companies in Quebec City.<sup>76</sup>

While the situation at Davie Shipbuilding was the most critical, it was only one of many examined by the Royal Commission. In Trois-Rivières the commission investigated disputes at two companies, Tidewater Shipbuilders and Three-Rivers Shipyard, and initially neither appeared to involve inter-union rivalry. However it later became apparent that such rivalry was an issue. In September 1918, when the Commission invited representatives from both companies and the UBCJ to appear before the commissioners and to suggest an agreement, the companies were willing to recognize the Corporation ouvrière catholique (COC) but not the UBCJ. On further investigation, the majority report of the Commission claimed, without explaining how, that it had found that the COC was much stronger than the UBCJ in both yards. Finally, both companies signed agreements with the COC.<sup>77</sup>

Labor World expressed astonishment at this outcome and asked "Par quel subterfuge la Corporation Ouvrière Catholique réussit-elle à transiger avec le secrétaire" of the

Commission. The COC had not appeared at the hearings, and had signed a contract after the international unions had done all the work. It also claimed that the COC contract established conditions that were "nullement conformes à celles qui avaient été réclamées" by the international union, that the COC accepted a compromise that left the workers with less than they would have gained with the international unions. This may have referred more to articles in the constitution of the COC than to the provisions of the contract which appear to meet a number of basic international union demands and is similar to other international union contracts. The contracts provided for the nine-hour day, extra pay for overtime, and a minimum wage of 45 cents an hour for shipwrights, carpenters, joiners, and caulkers. The COC constitution, however, recognized the right of the employer, as the property owner, to employ, hire and fire as the employer wished, at the same time as it denied workers the right to strike.<sup>78</sup>

The Commissioners issued two reports, one signed by all three, and a minority report written by Walsh that criticized many of the decisions, opinions and recommendations listed in the majority report. Walsh gave no explanation as to why he signed the majority report. Given his objections to many of its findings, his action appears bizarre. Commissioner Walsh's minority report opposed the signing of agreements with the

Catholic unions. He argued that the international unions represented most of the workers in the shipyards as a whole, and should be recognized throughout the industry. This, he argued, would help the attempt to standardize wages and conditions, and to facilitate the movement of labour from one yard to another. Walsh also complained that the other commissioners would not recommend the recognition of international unions or any other organization at private and government yards in Sorel.<sup>79</sup> The two other commissioners based their decision on the grounds that the international unions did not represent as many workers as they claimed.<sup>80</sup>

Walsh objected to recognition of Catholic unions on other grounds. One was that at least some of these organizations confined membership to Catholics.<sup>81</sup> The majority report also recommended that unions be required to register under the Trade Union Act. This was a move supported by Catholic unions and the majority report noted that the Union nationale des ouvriers de la Rive-Sud had already registered.<sup>82</sup> Walsh, on the other hand, repeated international opposition to this suggestion.<sup>83</sup>

The international unions were dissatisfied with the Royal Commission as well as with the actions of the federal government towards its own employees. When 160 workers



belonging to MTF at government docks in Quebec City went on strike, just days after those at Davie Shipbuilding, the federal Department of the Marine refused to negotiate, broke the strike, and rehired few of the strikers.<sup>84</sup> This represented a second important defeat for the international unions in the Quebec district shortly before the end of the war. It also made clear that the government was ignoring its own war labour policy that called on employers to recognize unions.

It was, however, the failure to resolve the dispute at Davie that prompted the most anger. Walsh's minority report argued that the signing of agreements with the Catholic unions would lead to further and more serious industrial unrest.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, international union leaders threatened a general strike in all shipyards along the St. Lawrence in September 1918 if the Davie dispute was not settled to their satisfaction.<sup>86</sup> However, a few days later an order-in-council banned strikes as illegal and international unions apparently accepted this as no new strikes were declared in shipyards in 1918.

With the end of the war, the inter-union rivalry erupted once again. The contracts that were signed at the recommendation of the Royal Commission were for the duration

of the war. Thus the armistice removed one obstacle to renewed attempts to gain control of the yards where Catholic unions had agreements. This time the international unions clearly desired an industry wide agreement for Eastern Canada. In February 1919, the MTF with jurisdiction over shipbuilding yards and marine engineering plants in the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence and Atlantic Coast, decided to push for the scale of wages in effect on the Pacific Coast. It began to make efforts to bring about a joint conference with employers, in the words of machinist J.A. McClelland, "similar to what obtains with the railroads."<sup>87</sup>

In March 1919 the MTF submitted a proposed agreement to all the shipyards east of Port Arthur, and asked the Minister of Labour to invite the managers of all the yards to joint meetings in Ottawa. By this time the MTF hoped to negotiate an agreement similar to the recent Shipbuilding Labor Adjustment Board, also called the Macy Board, in the United States<sup>88</sup> which, early in 1919, established a standard eight-hour day and a uniform wage scale with 80 cents an hour as a minimum wage for all marine metal trades in American shipyards.<sup>89</sup>

In Ottawa, meetings involving the Minister of Labour and the Minister of the Marine were held with a number of shipyard managers in the first week of April and again in the first

week of May, but they led to no general agreement.<sup>90</sup> The MTF then decided to negotiate separately with each yard.<sup>91</sup> While these meetings produced agreements in some yards in Ontario, they did not for several in Quebec. Some shipbuilding companies in Quebec, outside of Montreal, even declined to participate in the discussions. It was to gain this agreement that workers at the Canadian Vickers plant in Montreal went on strike for six weeks in June and July 1919.<sup>92</sup>

In Trois-Rivières, international unions easily gained recognition at Tidewater Shipbuilding, after a one day strike over the firing of four international union officials on 27 March 1919. While friction between the Corporation ouvrière catholique and the international unions remained a factor among the 600 workers, the International unions had the support of a large majority, and not one Catholic union member tried to cross the picket line. The strike ended when the officials were re-instated. The company claimed, however, that it could not concede on wage demands because its contract was based on the old wage scale, but it agreed to participate in the meetings in Ottawa in April and eventually signed a one year contract.<sup>93</sup> At the other shipyard in Trois-Rivières and in Lauzon, Catholic unions combined with employer hostility, represented formidable obstacles to the ambitions of the MTF.

At Three Rivers Shipyard, the other yard to recognize the Corporation ouvrière catholique in 1918, employer resistance to the international unions made it much more difficult for the latter to achieve recognition. On the morning of April 25 when the international union leaders presented their demands for the re-instatement of two recently dismissed union members, for recognition and an agreement, the yard superintendent refused to deal with them on the grounds that they were not company employees. This led to a strike later that day as pickets roped off access to the yard. When the foremen gathered in company offices across the street from the yard, the strikers notified the police that the next day they would also close the offices to both the foremen and the office staff. The fair wage officer for the Federal Department of Labour reported that inter-union rivalry was at the core of this dispute, and that the AFL unions believed that they represented the majority.<sup>94</sup> That evening at a meeting called by the Catholic union to discuss the situation, the curate of the cathedral, Father Massicotte, addressed the gathering giving "de sages conseils", while "les chefs nationaux ont déclaré qu'ils sont satisfaits du salaire et des conditions de travail et de la façon dont ils sont traités par la Three-Rivers Ship-Yard" and have no reason to strike.<sup>95</sup>

The Fair Wage Officer mediated to get the two sides

talking. They eventually reached a verbal agreement that did not address any of the issues involved but which offered a process for the settlement of grievances. Company officials refused even to meet the strike committee until the ropes surrounding the yard were removed. After several days, it was agreed that the ropes would be taken down if the company delayed reopening the yard for 24 hours. This allowed the parties to meet. The next day the general manager of the company also returned from another company yard in New Orleans. Arthur Martel, the business agent for the carpenters, the general manager, and a federal government fair wage officer agreed that all the strikers would return to work the next morning without discrimination. Any grievances were to be addressed first to a company representative and, if that did not resolve the matter, then the union would appoint a committee of two to meet with that same representative and the general manager to settle the dispute.

This arrangement was accepted by the strikers that evening.<sup>96</sup> This was a verbal agreement that gave no assurance of a satisfactory outcome for the unions. The Fair Wage Officer reported that "[T]he company agrees to accept a committee appointed by the International Unions to adjust all difficulties if any."<sup>97</sup> In this case, however, the company had no intention of making any concessions once the yard reopened.

The company president invited everyone willing to work to report to the yard and stated that the firm would have somebody to protect them.<sup>98</sup> The company then claimed that it did not know why there had been a strike and that there was no need for an agreement.<sup>99</sup> The two dismissed men were not reinstated.<sup>100</sup>

Less than two months later in June, in an attempt to avoid dealing with the MTF, Three Rivers Shipyards signed a contract with the Corporation ouvrière catholique fixing wages from June 1, 1919.<sup>101</sup> The MTF for its part wanted exclusive recognition,<sup>102</sup> a contract and insisted that the new wage scale be retroactive to April 2.<sup>103</sup> It appears that the workers continued to support the latter body, since the result was a strike of 900 workers from June 17 to June 26, 1919. During the strike the company once again tried to re-open the yards for those who were willing to work, and once again the COC declared that it was willing to accept this offer.<sup>104</sup> This time the attempt failed and the company was forced to cancel the contract with the Catholic union signing instead with the MTF.<sup>105</sup> This victory over the Catholic unions at the two yards in Trois-Rivières in 1919 gave the MTF and the AFL considerable prestige.

The Metal Trades Federation was able to renew its

contracts at both these yards in Trois-Rivières in 1920 in the face of considerable employer antipathy and continued activity by the Corporation ouvrière catholique. After negotiations between the Metal Trades Federation and Three Rivers Shipyards, the company tried to lock-out its workforce at the end of April 1920, objecting to what it called outside interference by international union headquarters in Kansas. The lockout was unsuccessful and the company soon signed an agreement.<sup>106</sup> At Tidewater Shipbuilding a strike was needed in 1920 to renew the contract for another year.<sup>107</sup> Referring to this dispute, Labor World stated that "La cause de la grève est l'indifférence de quelques-uns pour l'union internationale et le travail sournois fait par des personnes qui sont intéressées à diviser les ouvriers pour mieux les contrôler dans l'intérêt de leurs affaires personnelles",<sup>108</sup> a thinly veiled reference to the Catholic clergy. Certainly the Bien Public, a Catholic newspaper, continued to promote the COC.

The victories in Trois-Rivières meant that international unions represented organized workers in all but one of Quebec's major shipyards. By the end of July 1919 the MTF had succeeded in winning substantial increases in most of Eastern Canada. At shipyards in Ontario, Montreal and Halifax, wage rates in the new contracts ranged from 70 cents an hour for mechanics to 85 cents for blacksmiths on heavy fires, one of

the highest paid positions, with helpers receiving a minimum of 45 to 57 cents an hour. The Canadian Vickers strike was settled in mid July, giving electricians, carpenters and joiners a minimum of 70 cents while the metal trades, blacksmiths and machinists, received a minimum of 75 cents.<sup>109</sup> Blacksmiths on heavy fires received a minimum of 77 and a half cents.<sup>110</sup> Labourers got 45 cents.<sup>111</sup> In Trois-Rivières, where wages were described as the lowest in Canada with the exception of the Davie yard at Lauzon, they were 55 to 75 cents for mechanics and 45 cents for helpers.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, the scale of wages at Davie Shipbuilding, where the Catholic union predominated, was much lower, 45 cents for carpenters and joiners, 55 cents for blacksmiths, while labourers made 32 and a half cents an hour. There was a maximum of 63 cents for blacksmiths on heavy fires.<sup>113</sup> George Davie refused to participate in the discussions with the MTF in Ottawa in April and May 1919 on the grounds that he already had an agreement with the Catholic Union. While the Catholic union signed a new contract in July 1919 and boasted that all union demands were granted on wages and hours, the wages hardly increased, if at all, from the 1918 contract.<sup>114</sup> There was, then, a substantial difference in wages and the MTF, which still had a presence in some parts of the Davie operations, wanted at least the same wages as



elsewhere. In addition, at Canadian Vickers and at both shipyards in Trois-Rivières there was a 48 hour workweek.<sup>115</sup> At Davie, in contrast, there was a nine-hour day and 54 hour week.<sup>116</sup>

In July 1919 the MTF at Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon and Quebec City launched a strike for higher wages, shorter hours and recognition. Given that this was the only shipyard where a Catholic union remained, the dispute here was one of pivotal importance. The strike began two weeks after the settlement at Canadian Vickers and ten days after the end of the strike in Trois-Rivières. At the time of the strike, the Davie yards employed a much larger workforce than in 1918, as there were some 2,200 workers in four yards, but the dispute did not affect all of Davie's operations. Yard number 1 in Lauzon, a steel shipbuilding and repair yard, was the largest, employing about 1200 workers who were Catholic union members and who did not go on strike. Yard 2 was a small repair yard. At Yard number 4, across the street from Yard 1, there were about 700 workers, mostly shipwrights and carpenters, who specialized in the construction of wooden vessels which were finished at the Louise Docks in Quebec City by another 200 workers.<sup>117</sup> The strike involved the 900 workers at Yard 4 and the Louise docks in Quebec,<sup>118</sup> where most were members of the AFL.<sup>119</sup>

As the strike began, pickets set up an enormous rope around yard 4 where company offices were located, and even George Davie only entered escorted by international union pickets.<sup>120</sup> There was also an effective picket at the Louise dock.<sup>121</sup> Davie immediately asked for and received a military detachment to protect the Catholic union men, and in the view of W.G. Powlesland of the blacksmiths, to intimidate the strikers.<sup>122</sup>

On July 29, the day after the strike was declared, soldiers with machine guns and rifles were ordered to guard the plant<sup>123</sup> but were soon removed as the picketers were orderly.<sup>124</sup> International union leaders attempted without much success to gain the sympathy of Catholic union members in Yard 1. They held an open air meeting at the gates of Yard 1. Nearly a thousand workers turned out, but they met organized opposition from Catholic union leaders who blew tin horns, shouted through megaphones, sang songs and made a racket.<sup>125</sup> When Narcisse Arcand, of the UBCJ, attempted to address this crowd, he was drowned out by the sound of "O Canada" and "Nous voulons Dieu".<sup>126</sup>

The strike also involved picket line confrontations between members of the Catholic and international unions.<sup>127</sup> During the strike, members of the Catholic union who had been

working in yard 4, with the assistance of reinforcements from Yard 1, attempted repeatedly to break through the picket line. During one attempt they cut the rope which was then replaced by a wire cable. Some of the clashes involved fist fights but Catholic union members were forced to withdraw each time.<sup>128</sup> On the third failure to get through, the company turned to the courts filing complaints for intimidation.<sup>129</sup> Subpoenas were issued to 85 strikers who were charged with obstructing the road and preventing men from returning to work. The judge warned the arrested men that by barring the entrance to the yard they were violating the law and that they would have to remove their obstruction and allow any one who wanted to go to work or they would face three months in prison or a heavy fine.<sup>130</sup> At about the same time, on August 6, the mayor of the town of Lauzon requested the militia, and threatened to send it in if Catholic union workers were not allowed to cross the picket lines the next morning.<sup>131</sup> According to one international union representative, it was because of the "court order," that the cable was removed on the morning of the seventh, allowing Catholic union members into the yard to work.<sup>132</sup>

The 1919 strike by the MTF at the Davie shipyards in Lauzon was lost. As the Catholic union men entered Yard 4 the morning of the August 7, Catholic union president Joseph

Pelletier invited international union picketers to join the Catholic union, even suggesting that they keep their AFL cards if they wished, a bizarre proposal that was received in silence.<sup>133</sup> The AFL later announced that it would blacklist the Davie yards,<sup>134</sup> and most strikers left to find work elsewhere.<sup>135</sup> L'Action catholique also claimed that it took the intervention of Gideon Robertson, the Federal Minister of Labour, and Tom Moore, the president of the TLCC, to convince MTF leaders to lift their blockade of the shipyard gates.<sup>136</sup>

#### The Dominion Textile Strike at Montmorency

A second pivotal strike in the Quebec City district, at the Dominion Textile factory in Montmorency, started on 28 July 1919, the same day as the one at Davie Shipbuilding. This dispute, and another at the company's plant in Magog that started on July 14, were erroneously described by the Labour Gazette as sympathetic actions in support of Dominion Textile workers in Montreal who had walked out earlier on June 15, 1919.<sup>137</sup> But they each involved similar demands for a 40% wage increase,<sup>138</sup> an eight-hour day, and recognition of the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA). These were among the largest and longest confrontations during this period. The dispute in Montreal involved over 3,500 women and men for over two months. At Montmorency there were 1,100 strikers while at

Magog another 600 employees were involved.<sup>139</sup>

During the strike, pickets at Montmorency blocked all entrances, thus barring everyone, including the manager, from entering. Dominion Textile hired private detectives to intimidate the pickets. These guards brandished guns and pretended to fire on the strikers, although in fact they fired into the air. As at the Davie shipyards, and perhaps following the example of events in that strike, attempts by foremen to enter the plant on August 6 provoked confrontations that led to the arrest of five strikers for intimidation. The arrested strikers claimed that all was calm until these incidents that were provoked by the company, and that the intimidation came from the employers.<sup>140</sup> The arrested men, however, appeared before the same judge as did the workers from Davie Shipbuilding. Judge Choquette told the accused men to warn others not to remain near the Dominion Textile factory nor to gather into a crowd or they would be held responsible for whatever happened.<sup>141</sup> The incident on August 6 also provided a

pretext to call in the militia. The next day about fifty soldiers guarded the factory as it opened its doors for work. This did not end the strike but from then on, the number of strike breakers slowly increased. There were about 330 back at work on August 12. Many of the men reportedly preferred to

work in the woods while the women and girls entered domestic service rather than return to the plant.<sup>142</sup>

The international union called off the strike at Dominion Textile on August 17 without securing most of its demands for shorter hours, a union shop, or an end to fines and subcontracting. Nonetheless union officials maintained that Dominion Textile had made some concessions. According to Oscar Nantel, secretary of local 2003 of UTWA, the strike in Montreal ended after negotiations with the company through an employee of the general office. Nantel claimed that the company agreed to reinstate all strikers without exception, that it recognized the right of its employees to name committees in each department, and that it promised to negotiate other increases with these committees as well as implement a 10% increase as of October 1.<sup>143</sup> Horace Rivière, also of local 2003, wrote that the company had agreed to raise the wages of the lowest paid workers in Montreal.<sup>144</sup>

But Dominion Textile did not live up to all its promises. Rivière complained that the company reneged on its promise to take back all the strikers.<sup>145</sup> While these comments referred to the dispute in Montreal, a similar compromise had been promised in Montmorency. L'Action catholique reported that international union organizers claimed that the union was

recognized and that wage increases would soon follow. Here too, however, the company refused to take back the strike leaders. L'Action catholique gloated that this strike was a disaster for the workers, "c'est leur faute; ils ont eu à choisir entre une union catholique et l'union internationale. Ils ont préféré s'embrigader dans cette dernière."<sup>146</sup> Evidently, Catholic union promoters had attempted without success to prevent the establishment of the international union before the strike was declared.

#### Catholic union arguments

There were a number of themes that ran through attacks on the international unions by the Catholic unions and their promoters in 1919. The campaign against international unions usually emphasized the danger they posed for the religious and patriotic convictions of their members. The strikes at Davie Shipbuilding and Dominion Textile provided concrete examples of those concerns. These ideas were articulated in a number of pamphlets published in 1919 and in articles in the Catholic press. In Quebec City during the strikes at Davie Shipbuilding and Dominion Textile, it was perhaps L'Action catholique, the organ for the Catholic Social Action movement in the Quebec diocese that articulated them most clearly in a series of articles, five of which were reprinted with a preface as a

pamphlet under the title Deux grève de l'"Internationale". While unsigned, these articles were almost certainly the work of editorial writer abbé Maxime Fortin. These writings, the ones he chose to reprint in pamphlet form in particular, provide an excellent example of the ideas that he promoted not only as a journalist but as chaplain to the National Central Council of Trades of the District of Quebec and to numerous unions. These were the ideas that Catholic union members heard at their meetings in 1919. It is also clear that leading unionists, like the officers of the Catholic union at Davie shipyard, accepted and publicly repeated many of these arguments. As the prominent figure in the Catholic labour movement during these years, Fortin's influence was felt not only in his diocese, through his correspondence with parish priests and union chaplains on labour matters, but further afield as well.<sup>147</sup>

L'Action catholique argued that Catholic unions were necessary to counter the growing threat of socialism clearly present in Canada in seditious and political strikes such as the Winnipeg General Strike and in organizations such as the One Big Union.<sup>148</sup> While it accepted implicitly that there was a distinction to be made between different organizations and tendencies within neutral unions, between the OBU and the TLCC, this difference was a matter of degree: "Les syndicats



internationaux, c'est la révolution en germe; le "One Big-Union" c'est la révolution rendue à maturité."<sup>149</sup> Seditious activity, it claimed, was made possible by the religiously neutral spirit of the international unions.<sup>150</sup> It argued that the TLCC supported reforms that verged on socialism or that were contrary to the teachings of the Church.<sup>151</sup> This likely referred to such policies as the nationalization of public utilities, and support for free and compulsory public education. It also warned that one should not believe that Quebec workers were immune to such seditious and revolutionary tendencies, that the danger was imminent, that "la révolution s'en vient ici comme partout,"<sup>152</sup> since "le feu prend vite dans la poudre".<sup>153</sup> The Catholic unions' mission, on the other hand, was to oppose all revolutionary forces.<sup>154</sup> L'Action catholique also cited Father Archambault who had recently affirmed that Catholic unions were the only bulwark against bolshevism in Canada.<sup>155</sup>

As Catholic union promoters considered labour relations primarily a moral question, the main thrust of their arguments was that the international unions were immoral. L'Action catholique claimed that most international union leaders called for class war and made violent attacks on capitalism.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, it argued that international unions considered the employer an enemy, an exploiter, and "le

marâtre qu'une plus juste organisation de la société pendrait haut et court".<sup>157</sup> The assumption was that international unions threatened the employer's legitimate property rights. As an example, it argued that Davie Shipbuilding had a right to employ only members of the Catholic union since "Charbonnier est maître chez lui."<sup>158</sup>

L'Action catholique also condemned the international unionists' belief in social equality. They ridiculed international unions who preached that workers should have "autant de bonheur, de jouissance et de repos" as their employer. Far from considering inequality an injustice, Catholic unionists believed in a hierarchical social structure, and that "la naissance, les talents et les circonstances rendent inéluctable l'inégalité qui existe entre les hommes."<sup>159</sup> The Catholic union at Lauzon echoed this view when it commented disapprovingly that international unions, through their participation in, and support for, the Berne convention of the International Labour Organization in 1919, believed "that all workmen, man or woman, negro or white, in the five parts of the world should get the same wage".<sup>160</sup> One reason international unionists held such egalitarian views was that they were materialistic: "tout leur horizon est sur la terre," while Catholic union members, no matter what their station in life, had "foi en une vie meilleure," an

afterlife.<sup>161</sup> Catholic unions would protect "l'ordre social lui-même."<sup>162</sup>

The Catholic union promoters argued that not only were the goals of the international unions immoral but so too were the methods that they used because they were dishonest, violent and illegal. International union leaders, they said, were skilful at making deliberately false or tendentious statements,<sup>163</sup> making false promises about the wage increases they would secure for workers,<sup>164</sup> and about the advantages of international organizations, that is, the importance of its larger membership and the material, especially monetary, help it could provide during a strike. L'Action catholique asked, for instance, what had happened to the money that was to be spent to win the strike at Dominion Textile in Montmorency? And what good were the three or four million members of the AFL to these workers and to those at Davie Shipbuilding? It concluded that events in these two strikes "ont mis à jour bien des mensonges et donné le coup de mort à des vantardises qui ont fait jadis, le succès des organizations internationales."<sup>165</sup> They also felt that the means used during these strikes were also reprehensible. The strikers had no right either to prevent others from working during the strike, or to impede them by brute force.<sup>166</sup> The UTWA and MTF used violence to terrorize their adversaries.<sup>167</sup> L'Action

catholique described the actions of the strikers in the picket line confrontations as "des exploits d'apaches".<sup>168</sup>

Moreover, L'Action catholique asserted that these strikes at Davie Shipbuilding and Dominion Textile were not justified. This was not a condemnation of strike action in itself but an assertion that these strikes failed to meet the necessary preconditions for a moral and justifiable strike. There were four preconditions that it listed: the demands had to rest on an undeniably just ground, that all the principal means of reaching a settlement had to be used before declaring a strike, there had to be a good chance of success, that the benefits to be gained were substantial enough to warrant risking the loss involved if it failed. In the Davie case, it felt that the two demands, recognition and uniform salaries with other shipyards, were both unjust. It was immoral to ask for recognition when this meant renouncing an existing contract. On the question of wage demands, it claimed that no more could be asked of Davie Shipbuilding than that it pay the wages that prevailed in the district. In this case, L'Action catholique went on, if Davie Shipbuilding had to pay the same wages as elsewhere, it would not be able to compete with those yards that were closer to natural resources.<sup>169</sup> At Dominion Textile the strikers were too poor to sustain a long strike against a rich corporation and were clearly going to lose.

L'Action catholique believed that international union leaders deliberately deceived the strikers and knew they were leading their members into strikes that would fail.<sup>170</sup> Since the two strikes were unjustified according to several of the criteria, L'Action catholique claimed that Catholics could not in good conscience vote for them or participate in them.

L'Action catholique asserted that it was the neutral nature of the international unions that led to such abuse of the strike weapon; that sooner or later international unions "conduisent leurs membres à faire des grèves que la morale défend." Such immoral behaviour was likely because control of the international labour movement "échape aux catholiques". The Catholic press further asserted that most international union leaders and agents had little conscience,<sup>171</sup> and did not consider questions of justice. They had a utilitarian morality, "ils se contentent d'examiner si leurs agissements leur sont ou non avantageux. C'est une morale facile - trop facile pour les catholiques."<sup>172</sup> In short, neutral unions acknowledged no moral authority<sup>173</sup> and were "sans foi ni loi".<sup>174</sup> Catholic unions, on the other hand, were established to enlighten the conscience of Catholic workers, and to avoid unjust strikes. The chaplains were present at meetings to tell workers what was just and what was allowed, as well as what was unjust and forbidden.<sup>175</sup>

Another of the problems with international unions, according to L'Action catholique, was poor leadership. International union organizers were "des fous furieux et des hommes sans intelligence et sans conscience,"<sup>176</sup> who made demagogic speeches.<sup>177</sup> It believed that international union leaders deliberately deceived the strikers at Davie Shipbuilding and knew they were leading their members into a walkout that would fail. In both disputes, they pushed workers into actions that led to disaster.<sup>178</sup> Workers who listened to and followed such leaders shared the blame for the disastrous results. Catholic union promoters had warned the workers in Montmorency of what was coming and had offered to help improve their working conditions. These offers, they complained, had been refused and the workers had preferred to follow the advice of people they had never seen or known rather than the council of persons whom they could be sure would promote their interests.<sup>179</sup>

Catholic unions and their promoters argued that there was poor leadership from international union leaders because they were not from the community. This argument could refer to direction from international union headquarters in the United States, but it also suggested that Canadian and even francophone international union leaders from outside the immediate community, from Montreal for example, did not

reflect local interests or have an understanding of local concerns. The Catholic union statement referred to the "chefs étrangers."<sup>180</sup> Of the four international union officers handling the strike three were francophones. There was Narcisse Arcand of the UBCJ from Montreal, while Omer Fleurie was the local business agent for the UBCJ in Quebec City. The others were M. Ducharme who represented the International Association of Machinists, and G. Powlesland for the blacksmiths.<sup>181</sup> The Catholic union statement claimed they were paid to agitate.<sup>182</sup> This too was an implied reason why they did not promote the interests of their members.

Many of the arguments were directed in particular against international union leaders and organizers who worked "dans notre milieu." It probably made this distinction between those operating in Quebec and elsewhere because of the good relations that the AFL maintained with some Catholic leaders in the United States, and the support that TLCC unions received from some Canadian Catholic quarters outside of Quebec. Such a distinction helped maintain the argument that international union leaders in Quebec were "violemment anticléricaux."<sup>183</sup> As examples it frequently named Gustave Francq and Labor World.<sup>184</sup>

L'Action catholique considered the disputes at Davie

Shipbuilding and Dominion Textile to be turning points for public opinion and argued that up until these strikes many workers, and the public at large, remained sceptical about the claims of Catholic union promoters that the international unions also constituted a danger for their material interests.<sup>185</sup> These two strikes meant a substantial loss of wages to the workers. L'Action catholique estimated that \$75,000 in salaries was lost by the workers at Davie, and at least as much again by those at Dominion Textile in Montmorency. The loss of these earnings had disastrous consequences for working class families. They hurt the community, causing considerable harm to retailers, suppliers, and to the general prosperity of the parish, as well as having a considerable effect on the cost of living.<sup>186</sup>

The Catholic union in Lauzon echoed many of these views. It asserted that "Nos familles sont heureuses du salaire que nous gagnons."<sup>187</sup> It complained: "Is it ridiculous enough for strangers to come to Lauzon and preach strikes and revolutions amongst employees of a company that is the wealth and prosperity of our locality..." This was particularly the case, it argued, since this employer respected the religious institutions of his workers. Though Protestant, George Davie had recently allowed a Catholic religious procession to pass through Yard 1, to celebrate the Saint-Sacrament.<sup>188</sup>



It was also argued that international unions represented a danger to the patriotic convictions of their Canadian members.<sup>189</sup> American firms could undermine Canadian competitors by buying the support of an international union. L'Action catholique cited a case in British Columbia from a few years earlier where miners were ordered on strike from Seattle to favour American workers and mine owners.<sup>190</sup> This probably referred to the 1903 Royal Commission that described a complex and non-existent conspiracy on the part of international unions, such as the WFM, to destroy industry in Western Canada. L'Action catholique argued that the international union's strike promoters would not have acted any differently if they were paid by Davie's competitors to destroy the shipbuilding industry in Lauzon, and that one could believe that this was the case.<sup>191</sup> The Catholic union statement claimed that the MTF was motivated by "malice".<sup>192</sup> There were important disadvantages to international organization and American control while the much boasted benefits were non-existent.

The pamphlet Deux grèves de l'Internationale contrasted the dangers of the international unions with the moral and material benefits of Catholic unions. Improved conditions could be obtained, it argued, by just means and with even greater success. As an example of the benefits a Catholic

organization could procure for its members it pointed to the "Union des Ouvriers de la Rive Sud qui, à force de démontrer leur utilité, obtiennent de ceux qui les emploient d'être reconnues volontairement."<sup>193</sup> L'Action catholique repeated the claim made by abbé Fortin to the Mathers Commission in June 1919, that Catholic unions in Quebec City and the surrounding district had made greater gains than their opponents in recent years. In the previous five years, without having to go on strike, they claimed to have secured increases of 30% while international unions had gained only 25%.<sup>194</sup> Abbé Fortin boasted that Catholic unions in Quebec City during the war had resolved their disputes without strikes.<sup>195</sup>

These arguments were intended not only for workers but for employers.<sup>196</sup> L'Action catholique felt that these two strikes should have convinced employers that Catholic unions were a good thing,<sup>197</sup> and made them understand the benefits of Catholic unions.<sup>198</sup> Rather than view employers as an enemy and an exploiter, Catholic unions considered them as associates in industrial production, and recognized their position as owners and heads of enterprises. Rather than seek constant wage increases and shorter hours, as the international unions did, Catholic unions believed that there were limits that an employer could pay. And while believing in a reasonable work day, Catholic unions asserted that there were seasons and

countries where it would be harmful to shorten the work day.<sup>199</sup> Capital and labour, it maintained, were both necessary and should work together, and Catholic unions offered the best guarantee for justice, concord and industrial peace.<sup>200</sup> It insisted that Catholic unions should not be feared by employers, that they would protect industry, commerce and the social order,<sup>201</sup> and indeed that capitalists would invest in Quebec because of the labour organizations chosen by its workers.<sup>202</sup> Abbé Fortin declared to the Mathers Commission that the sooner the AFL and the international unions withdrew some of their organizers from Quebec the better for industrial peace, for workers, for local industry, for everyone.<sup>203</sup>

Finally, to what extent were these arguments resonate among francophone workers? The nationalist arguments would have been familiar. For a significant minority of Quebec workers, concentrated particularly in Quebec City, there was already a long tradition of opposition to international unionism and significant support for the idea that Canadian workers should run their own labour organizations. The condemnation of the TLCC unions and their leaders as socialist and for their promotion of class war and social equality was certainly echoed by the leaders of the Catholic unions at Davie shipyards. These contention may have been accepted by those who believed that their Catholic faith required that

they accept the teachings of the Church on social issues, especially since their faith was considered an integral part of their national identity.

Many of the national union leaders who accepted the mantle of Catholic unionism may also have done so for practical reasons, quite apart from the considerable material resources that the Church could offer. Catholic union promoters such as Fortin were offering an experiment in the industrial relations of social harmony. They argued that better wages and improved working conditions could be achieved without recourse to a strike, often a costly and risky affair with potentially dangerous consequences for strikers and their organizations, as the events during the Dominion Textile dispute in Montmorency demonstrated. As chaplain to the Catholic unions and as director of diocesan Catholic Social Action abbé Maxime Fortin could approach employers who might otherwise refuse to deal with a union. This could force some employers to defend poor wages and bad working conditions to a respected third party and might well win important concessions. Certainly the Catholic unions avoided some of the more overt manifestations of class conflict in 1919. During that year Fortin was able to ensure that there was only a single Catholic union dispute in the area under his jurisdiction. This does not mean that all Catholic union

members willingly agreed to forfeit strike action, even on a temporary basis. Sometimes Fortin had to be heavy handed with the members of his own movement. Unhappy with a contract offer, Quebec City firefighters only refrained from striking in December 1918 because Fortin threatened to resign as chaplain and to publicly denounce their actions. Even then almost a third of the force voted to strike.<sup>204</sup> Nonetheless, it was a remarkable achievement that abbé Maxime Fortin was able to convince Quebec City's national and Catholic unions to almost completely refrain from industrial conflict when such activity was reaching unprecedented levels throughout Canada.

#### Rivalry in Quebec City

International union leaders were embittered by this campaign by Catholic union leaders, the local clergy and the Catholic press. The *Chronique Québécoise* by Floriantus in the Labor World attributed the conflict at Davie to the

fausses représentations de certains personnages qui se servent de leurs habits ecclésiastiques et profitent de la confiance que les fidèles reposent en eux pour jeter l'émoi dans leur âme, ces derniers essaient par tous les moyens à jeter du louche sur les unions internationales et leurs officiers.

International union supporters believed they had no way of getting their message across in the Quebec daily press, while L'Action catholique supported the Catholic union with

vehemence and energy. Quebec's international union members also deplored that the strikers at Davie and Montmorency were compared "aux bolchévistes et aux socialistes radicaux," a charge denied by Floriantus, Quebec columnist for Labor World, who said that while some workers may heat up and say such things, the leaders condemned them.<sup>205</sup>

Throughout 1919, the executives of all the international union locals in the Quebec City district met periodically to discuss what had become in the words of one journalist "a regular war" between the Catholic and the international unions. Both movements were aggressively recruiting new members: "Never before in Quebec's history of labour," he wrote, "has canvassing been so keen to enlist new members."<sup>206</sup> Each movement claimed to be larger than its rival.<sup>207</sup> While the repudiation of the COC in the two shipyards in Trois-Rivières was a major victory for the internationals, the defeats at Davie Shipbuilding and at Dominion Textile represented severe setbacks.

The intensity of this rivalry was reflected in the Labour Day celebrations in 1919. Traditionally an expression of working class solidarity, national and international unions in Quebec City had put aside their differences to celebrate it together in the past. In 1919 the national and Catholic unions

refused to parade with the internationals, leading to separate Labour Day celebrations.<sup>208</sup> The Catholic unions wanted to demonstrate their growing power through a show of strength. The national and Catholic unions had also acquired exclusive use of the exhibition grounds in Quebec where participants usually convened after the parade for an afternoon of amusements.<sup>209</sup> The international unions, after their procession through Quebec, had to retire to the Kent House in Montmorency.<sup>210</sup>

The two movements also organized very different parades in 1919. The national and Catholic unions celebrated with more fanfare, with representatives from organizations throughout the province, including religiously neutral national unions, such as the Bricklayers who were not members of the TLCC. In all, there were 31 labour organizations,<sup>211</sup> including Thetford miners, the COC, and Montreal's Catholic shoe workers' union. The procession also included many other groups that were clearly not labour organizations, some religious, such as the young Zouaves, and others that probably crossed class lines, such as the Quebec Automobile Club. The international union parade listed 38 labour organizations from the Quebec district in its procession program, and included some national unions affiliated to the TLCC.<sup>212</sup> For the first time the internationals admitted only international union or TLCC

affiliate members with cards in good standing.<sup>213</sup> These separate Labour Day celebrations became a normal feature in Quebec City. Montreal's Catholic unions would not celebrated Labour Day until 1921. That year and in 1922, they did not parade, but organized a pilgrimage, special mass and picnic with races and entertainment.<sup>214</sup>

Catholic union promoters hoped to isolate French-Canadian international union members and to portray them not only as anti-Catholic but as unpatriotic as well. A number of Catholic Union organizers and partisans were able to mount a coup within the Quebec Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society. They used their positions as officers of the Society to eliminate international union members from the Society's ranks. International union members were barred from participating in the Saint-Jean-Baptiste celebrations in Quebec City in 1919 and in subsequent years. This view that membership in an AFL organization compromised the identity of French-Canadian members was not, however, shared by all nationalists. The Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society in the nearby suburb of Limoilou did invite them to parade in 1919. The international unions' local council in Quebec City declared that it would attend with all its affiliates to show that while they were international union members:



nous n'avons cependant pas abandonné notre nationalité, notre foi, et encore moins notre religion, et nous n'avons jamais été influencés à le faire, comme beaucoup de gens de la "Nationale" le pensent.<sup>215</sup>

Clearly international members considered themselves good Catholics and patriotic French Canadians.

Following the defeats at Davie Shipbuilding and Dominion Textile, international unions reduced their attempts to attract new groups of workers in Quebec City without, however, completely abandoning the field.<sup>216</sup> For example, AFL organizer Alcée Bastien was organizing teamsters in Quebec city in December 1919,<sup>217</sup> and there was also an attempt to raid the Catholic union at Quebec City's tramway company that was abandoned after some months in May 1920.<sup>218</sup> The AFL's Federated Trades and Labor Council of Quebec and District had 36 local unions in August 1919,<sup>219</sup> although some of these were in poor shape because of the Catholic unions attacks.<sup>220</sup> At the same time the Catholic and national unions in Quebec City continued to grow. With 30 local unions in 1918, there were an additional 14 new unions and 2,000 more members by 1920.<sup>221</sup>

Quebec City was the stronghold of the national and Catholic movement, both in numbers and in vitality. In 1918, when the decision was taken to prepare for the establishment of a National Catholic union congress, it was the National

Central Council of Trades of the District of Quebec that issued the invitation to Catholic organizations across the province of Quebec. A temporary congress was established so that Catholic unions could meet annually in convention before the establishment of a permanent congress in 1921. It was at these congresses that the Catholic unions started to define their position as a movement on a number of specific labour and social issues, staking out a position that was a distinct contrast with international union aims and methods. Many of the resolutions that were passed at these first conventions demonstrate the influence of the national and Catholic unions' clerical promoters. The first resolution at the 1918 congress dealt with education. It opposed uniform textbooks, the abolition of fees, compulsory instruction, and a secular school system, all reforms that were being demanded by the international unions.<sup>222</sup>

At the same gathering it also expressed its opposition to the concept of a closed shop. Abbé Fortin insisted that workers should be free not to join a union, that non-union workers could not be excluded from a workplace, and that employers should be able to freely choose their employees.<sup>223</sup> At its September 1919 congress the Catholic unions expressed their opposition to the eight-hour day. It considered that standardized hours of work and uniform wages were both

socialistic.<sup>224</sup> At the same congress it also passed a resolution against sympathy strikes.<sup>225</sup>

Catholic union activities in the Eastern Townships, Montreal and Hull

In the face of international union expansion between 1916 and 1920, many Catholic union promoters were primarily concerned with preventing the establishment of more religiously neutral unions. This was especially the case in industrial centres south of the St. Lawrence river. The international unions had long had locals in some smaller industrial centres south of Montreal, such as St. Hyacinthe, and in the Eastern Townships. Despite the setback in 1916 to the WFM in Thetford, the international unions expanded significantly during the war, especially among metal workers in munitions factories, in the building trades among carpenters and electricians, and among municipal employees. Workers in these industries conducted a number of strikes during the war. This was the case for employees producing shells at a plant in Sherbrooke in 1915 and again in 1917. Sherbrooke's firefighters and police also took strike action in 1916. Sherbrooke's carpenters also went on strike in 1917, as did calico printers at the Dominion Textile plant in Magog.<sup>226</sup>

Catholic unionism in much of the Eastern Townships was a response to the international union organizing campaign which saw workers respond in large numbers in 1917.<sup>227</sup> The initiative came from the Church hierarchy in the hope of stemming and reversing the growth of international unions. In 1917, each diocese appointed a priest who would be responsible for labour organization. Local clergy worked to counter the international unions who were active in the small towns of Windsor Mills, Bromptonville, East-Angus and Magog, eventually establishing workers' circles and unions in the last two centres.<sup>228</sup> Outside of the asbestos industry, the establishment of Catholic unions in the Eastern Townships dated from the summer of 1919.

While a study group was formed in June 1918,<sup>229</sup> the first Catholic union was established in Sherbrooke in July 1919 among knitting mill workers employed at Julius Kaiser & Company. Between August 1919 and 1920 a study group and several more unions were established for police and firemen, among the workers at the woollen goods manufacturer Paton and Company, for hardware store clerks,<sup>230</sup> and for barbers.<sup>231</sup> A central council was established in November 1920.<sup>232</sup>

In Granby attempts were made to organize Catholic unions soon after the end of the war. At that time employers were

approached but, according to the parish priest, Father R.T. Lamoureux, they did not yet understand the need for these organizations. Lamoureux claimed that international union organizers arrived the week of June 8, 1919. Whether or not this was the first appearance of international union organizers in 1919, international unions were soon organized among rubber workers, tobacco workers and wood workers. In response Father Lamoureux began a series of sermons on Sunday June 15, "sur la nature, les caractères et les dangers, au point de vue religieux, moral, social, national et économique, de l'Internationale, et sur le remède tout trouvé dans l'union ouvrière catholique."<sup>233</sup> When international union organizers, Arthur Biron and J.A. Larose went to address a meeting in Granby in July 1919 they were painfully surprised by the personal attacks on their character from the parish priest, since both were "connus à Montréal comme étant de parfaits honnêtes gens et de sincères catholiques."<sup>234</sup>

In a short history of the Catholic unions in Granby published in 1922, Lamoureux stated that the international unions declared a sympathy strike at the Canadian Consolidated Rubber factory on June 15. Lamoureux then organized a large meeting to hear abbé Edmour Hébert, the director of the Oeuvres sociales for the diocese of Montreal, and this was immediately followed by the establishment of the Corporation

ouvrière catholique de Granby. It did such good work, he claimed, that the strike failed and the international disappeared.<sup>235</sup> There is no record of a dispute in June 1919 at Granby in either the Labour Gazette or the Department of Labour strike and lockout files. But it is possible that there was a sympathy strike as there was a walk-out by workers of the same company at the Canadian Consolidated Rubber in Montreal from June 2 to 18.<sup>236</sup> Or Lamoureux may be referring to a series of strikes later in 1919 at Canadian Consolidated Rubber plants in Montreal, St. Jérôme and Granby. This series of strikes started at the plant in Granby on September 19, 1919. The walk out in Granby also ended later than those at other locations, on October 25, 1919. At St. Jérôme the strike lasted from September 23 to October 10, while in Montreal it erupted on September 30 and ended October 15.

The demand at Granby and St. Jérôme was for an increase in wages since these workers did not get the 17 1/2 percent increase that the company's employees in Montreal received after the June 1919 strike.<sup>237</sup> The strike in Montreal in September and October was over the company's dismissal of the union president.<sup>238</sup> The timing of the firing suggests that it was in retaliation for the strikes in Granby and St. Jérôme. Nonetheless both of these disputes were listed in the Labour Gazette as sympathy strikes, possibly because that was how

they were described by a biased local correspondent for the federal Department of Labour who also attributed the strikes to "outside influences". Perhaps because of Lamoureux's resistance, the walk out was less successful at Granby than in other plants, bringing out on strike only about 218 of the 500 workers.<sup>239</sup> The COCG organized three unions among carpenters, tobacco workers and rubber workers, exactly those workers organized by the international unions. In concluding his account Father Lamoureux boasted that "Ajoutons que les manufacturiers ont été contents de voir les ouvriers s'organiser en unions catholiques."<sup>240</sup>

In Saint-Hyacinthe, national and Catholic unions were also established in 1919 in order to prevent the organization of more neutral unions. The first were the carpenters who were organized in May 1919 with about 30 members, followed by engineers in October 1919. The sheet metal workers and the plumbers with 28 members were organized in January 1920. Bakers and painters followed suit in June and July 1920 respectively.<sup>241</sup>

In Montreal, Catholic unions had made little progress during the war. The École sociale populaire lead by Arthur Saint-Pierre organized four Catholic unions in 1914 but all but one, the carriage makers, disappeared during the war.

Catholic union promoters concluded that their establishment was premature, and the Leon XIII study group was set up in 1918 to form a Catholic lay elite among labour leaders through study sessions and retreats. In 1918 retreats at the Villa Saint-Martin were organized for labour leaders and priests committed to Catholic unionism. The most important convert was Alfred Charpentier, who had been an active member of the international bricklayers union before 1915. The École sociale populaire also invited well known clerical leaders from Europe to speak on Catholic unionism.<sup>242</sup>

In 1918 and 1919 some Catholic unions were established in Montreal. A union for store clerks was established in November 1918.<sup>243</sup> A local was established with employer support among the employees of Dupuis Frères department store in August 1919.<sup>244</sup> Catholic unions made headway in a few garment firms, also with employer support. In October 1919, a Catholic union was established at the Semi-Ready Tailoring, one of the larger garment factories in the industry,<sup>245</sup> which had a history of even greater hostility towards the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and immigrant workers than other large firms in the industry. The president of Semi-Ready had stated during the 1917 garment workers strike that his company would remove the "foreign element" from its shop.<sup>246</sup> None of these moves succeeded in fully removing support for Amalgamated Clothing



Workers. The skilled cutters and operators went on strike in June 1920. Members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, they demanded collective bargaining and the removal of a spy system that collected the names of members who were then fired.<sup>247</sup> In 1920, a second Catholic garment workers local was established at the invitation of the employer among women employed at another company, Hampton.<sup>248</sup>

In November 1919 the members of the Cercle Leon XIII who worked in construction began to establish a core of individual supporters. The Catholic unions hired an organizer for the building trades in 1919, and a Catholic plumbers' union was established in December 1919, followed by a Catholic carpenters union in January 1920.<sup>249</sup> While it is not clear what role, if any, the Catholic union played during the 1919 general building trades strike by the international unions, some building trades organizers, such as John Bruce of the plumbers union, were already decrying the Catholic union campaign during the last months of 1919.

The first sector to be seriously targeted by the Catholic union promoters in 1919 in Montreal was the shoe industry. This was a sound choice as this was an industry with a history of national unionism in Montreal. Indeed in 1918, there had been a failed attempt to create a national Union industrielle

de la chaussure with the hope of organizing women that the BSWIU had not yet recruited.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, the three boot and shoe workers unions in Quebec City were among the oldest, strongest and best organized Catholic unions, and provided experienced organizers, such as Gaudiose Hébert, J. Létourneau and P. Lortie, who arrived in Montreal from Quebec City in March 1919 to undertake this campaign. Since shoe workers often moved back and forth between Quebec City and Montreal in search of work, the Catholic unions of Quebec insisted that workers in Montreal maintain membership in the Catholic union if they hoped to return to find work in union shops in Quebec City. In this case, abbé Hébert, the chaplain of the Catholic unions in Montreal, was able to gain the support of workers in one factory by successfully intervening to secure the reinstatement of a fired employee.

For the most part, however, Hébert organized through the employers rather than the shoe workers. The Union nationale des ouvriers en chaussures was established in Montreal in June 1919, and claimed a thousand members within a few months as abbé Hébert secured recognition from several employers.<sup>251</sup> When he approached employers seeking support, many were pleased to find an ally against the international unions. In July 1919 abbé Hébert wrote to abbé Fortin that:

Tous les patrons des autres unions en formation ont été vus par moi et sont disposés à reconnaître l'union catholique et à régler toute difficulté avec les représentants de l'Union... Les patrons que j'ai vus ne veulent pas reconnaître les unions internationales et veulent m'aider auprès des autres patrons à fonder partout des unions catholiques parmi les employés catholiques et même simplement de langue française si c'est mon desir.<sup>252</sup>

For employers in the boot and shoe industry in Montreal, the principal attraction of the Catholic unions was the open shop, and they soon began to refuse to abide by Boot and Shoe Workers International Union contracts.<sup>253</sup> In September 1919, this led to the first strike involving inter-union rivalry in Montreal in the post-war period. The George A. Slater Company was hiring men "qui, sous prétexte qu'ils appartenaient à l'union internationale, combattaient ouvertement la B&SW."<sup>254</sup> For the previous ten years the company had had a contract with the BSWIU, and the union claimed that it was still in force. For its part the company would not maintain its agreement with the international union when the Catholic union agreed to an open shop. The presence of rival organizations provided an opportunity to refuse recognition, and the owner stated that he would not recognize any union until the workers could all accept the same one. The six day strike involving some 75 to 90 workers<sup>255</sup> proved to be a losing battle. The union sent the strikers back to work but withdrew permission to use the union label.<sup>256</sup> The international union was considerably weakened and numerous employers also began to place more workers on

individual contracts.<sup>257</sup>

While Montreal followed the Quebec City example, adopting the strategy established by abbé Fortin to form an elite of Catholic working class leaders, the circumstances in Montreal were very different. Not only was the working class composed of significant numbers of non-Catholic workers but there were fewer independent or national unions whose leaders could be attracted to join an alliance with the Church against the international unions. Montreal's national union council had disappeared during the previous depression in 1916. A study circle was formed in 1918. Though there were few influential labour leaders among its members it included Alfred Charpentier. Born into a union family, Charpentier had been an active member of the International Bricklayers Union in Montreal, elected secretary of local 2 in 1908, and president in 1911.<sup>258</sup> He remained a member until 1915 when seven months of unemployment forced him to accept work as a firefighter for the City of Montreal, a position he would keep for twenty five years.<sup>259</sup> According to his own account, in 1915 he wanted to nationalize the Canadian labour movement, although it was only in 1918 that he became convinced of the need for a Catholic labour movement.<sup>260</sup>

In 1918 and 1919, Charpentier worked to attract

established organizations into the Catholic union fold. His actions provide some indication of Catholic union strategy during this period. When the bricklayers union broke ties with the international in the Fall of 1918, Alfred Charpentier once again became a member. Charpentier wanted to get the leaders, who were both Catholic and religiously neutral in labour matters, to attend the meetings of the Leon XIII Study Circle. To facilitate their entry into the movement Charpentier proposed to abbé Hébert and the Leon XIII study group that they change the criteria for membership. He proposed that national unions be considered Catholic organizations without insisting that they include Catholic in their name or adopt a constitutional declaration of their adherence to Catholic union principles, as long as their constitutions were approved by the bishop and they accepted a chaplain. Charpentier abandoned his attempt to attract the bricklayers in August 1919 when this suggestion was condemned by abbé Hébert.<sup>261</sup> Charpentier also joined the Firefighters Union in January 1919 to spend a year and a half trying to disaffiliate them from the international. When he failed, he resigned from the union in August 1920.<sup>262</sup>

Some of the difficulty facing Catholic union organizers in the Montreal area is revealed in the history of the Corporation ouvrière catholique in Lachine, a working class

suburb on Montreal Island. At the end of July 1919 and with the support of the mayor, a small core of ten supporters began to work towards the establishment of Catholic unions. The Corporation Ouvrière catholique de Lachine was formed in February or March 1920. It established three unions, one for iron workers, one for construction workers, and one for retail clerks. Even though the parish priest worked with zeal to promote it, and it received a welcome reception from employers,<sup>263</sup> this corporation attracted only 30 members at its peak.<sup>264</sup> This was in part because its many who joined were discouraged by continual assaults from members of the international unions and of a labour club.<sup>265</sup>

In Hull the Catholic unions were also expanding in 1919. The Association ouvrière catholique de Hull divided itself into five unions with a central council and hired a full time business agent<sup>266</sup> who was able to secure a number of agreements.<sup>267</sup> One contract that the association signed was with the Hull Iron and Steel Company during a strike by a religiously neutral organization for higher wages in June 1919. While the Catholic Association claimed that its intervention in this dispute secured higher wages and the reinstatement of dismissed leaders, the Association also conceded a longer nine-hour workday when the workers had previously worked eight hours.<sup>268</sup>

### Conclusion

There was a genuine desire on the part of Catholic union promoters for fair wages and decent working conditions, to improve the material wellbeing of Catholic union members. But during the war years and immediate post war period these goals were accompanied by the need to destroy and replace the international unions. The immediate object in many cases seems to have been a desire to prevent the spread of socialism and to obviate class conflict. The result was a high level of inter-union conflict and a large number of occasions when Catholic and national organizations worked with varying degrees of support from employers who wished to avoid dealing with an international union. Given this desire to work in harmony with employers, and their opposition to a wide range of international union aims and methods, from the eight-hour day, to industry wide agreements, and sympathy strikes, it is hardly surprising that Gustave Francq in November 1919 should declare that Catholic unions were "[d]es syndicats jaunes" and that "nous sommes convaincus que les syndicats confessionnels ... partout où ils existent n'ont jamais réussi à améliorer d'une manière générale la situation de la classe ouvrière."<sup>269</sup>

## Endnotes

1. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale". Aux chantier Davie et à la Dominion Textile, Québec, Ed. de l'Action sociale catholique, 1919, V, 29.
2. "Rerum Novarum", English translation published in John A. Ryan and Joseph Husslein, eds., The Church and Labor, New York, 1920, 57-94. (Henceforth Rerum Novarum)
3. Rerum Novarum, 65.
4. Rerum Novarum, 58.
5. See for example L'Action catholique, 13 August 1919, reprinted in Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 20; and Joseph-Papin Archambault, Une digue contre le bolshévisme: les syndicats catholiques, Montréal, Éditions de la Vie nouvelle, 1919.
6. On the École sociale populaire see Jean-Claude St-Amand, "La propagande de l'École sociale populaire en faveur du syndicalisme Catholique 1911-1949," RHAF, 32, 2, septembre 1978, 203-228.
7. Archambault, Une digue, 14-5, 18-9.
8. Archambault, Une digue, 16-21.
9. Jacques Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec: Des origines à nos jours, Montréal, 1989, 95.
10. This brief description of the Catholic unions is based on Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions in Canada"; Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux; Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec.
11. Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 88.
12. Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 88; Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 198.
13. Fernand Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" in Pierre Elliott Trudeau, ed. La Grève de l'Amiante, Édition du Jour, Montréal, 1970, 123-164; This strike is also described in Collectif, Thetford Mines à ciel



ouvert. Histoire d'une ville minière 1891-1992, Thetford Mines, Ville de Thetford Mines, 1994, 296-302.

14. This was how it was described in 1919 and seems to apply to the war years as well. Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, Evidence given by D.H. Pennington, Quebec City, 11 June 1919, 4017-18. (Henceforth cited as Mathers Commission)

15. This figure is from Jean Gérin-Lajoie "Histoire financière de l'industrie de l'amiante," in Trudeau, (dir.). La grève de l'amiante, 105.

16. The Russian and Italian workers accounted for about ten percent of the work force in 1919, but this was considerably less than during the early war years. Mathers Commission, Evidence given by D.H. Pennington, Quebec City, 11 June 1919, 4017-8.

17. Mathers Commission, Evidence given by D.H. Pennington, Quebec City, 11 June 1919, 4017-8.

18. See Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 125-6.

19. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 126-7; Le Canadien, 21 October 1915.

20. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 127; Le Canadien, 4 November, 2 December 1915.

21. Le Canadien, 27 October, 11, 25 November 1915.

22. Le Canadien, 18, 25 November 1915.

23. Le Canadien, 27 October 1915.

24. Le Canadien, 11 November 1915.

25. Sr. M.-Amadeus Welton, Mgr Paul-Eugène Roy Archevêque de Québec, Québec, 1941, 159; Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 196; Le Canadien, 4 November 1915.

26. During the 1916 strike, the Minister of Labour cited this increase as a reason the WFM should refrain from further wage demands. See chapter 1.

27. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 128-9.
28. Labor World, 5 August 1916.
29. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 129-31.
30. Dumont, "Histoire du syndicalisme dans l'industrie de l'amiante" 128-34.
31. Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec, 99.
32. Labor World, 23 December 1916.
33. Robert Parisé, Le Fondateur du syndicalisme catholique au Québec. Mgr Eugène Lapointe: Sa pensée et son action syndicale, Québec, 1978, 8.
34. Labor World, 26 May 1917.
35. As quoted in Parisé, Mgr Eugène Lapointe, 42.
36. Alan Brockway Latham, The Catholic and National Unions of Canada, Toronto, 1930, 77.
37. Alfred Charpentier, Cinquante ans d'action ouvrière. Les mémoires d'Alfred Charpentier, Québec, 1971, 15.
38. Archives de la Confédération des syndicats nationaux (henceforth CSNA), Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'abbé Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, Gaud. DesBiens to Maxime Fortin, 12 June 1919; For Fortin's statement see Mathers Commission, Evidence given by Maxime Fortin, Quebec City, 11 June 1919, 4061.
39. "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Alleged Unrest Existing in the Shipbuilding Industry in the Province of Quebec," in Labour Gazette, November 1918, 960. (Henceforth cited as "Maclellan Commission Report")
40. "Maclellan Commission Report," 959.
41. "Maclellan Commission Report," 963.

42. The request from Trois-Rivière was not recorded as a request for a board but as a letter to the Minister. "Royal Commission Report", 961. It was described as a request for a Board of Arbitration by Labor World, 12 October 1918; Labour Gazette, August 1918, 573-4.
43. The Blacksmiths Journal, 1919, 41.
44. "Maclellan Commission Report," 962-3.
45. "Maclellan Commission Report," 954.
46. On the similarities between Conciliation Boards and Royal Commissions see Jeremy Webber, "Living Wage and Living Profit: Wage Determination by Conciliation Boards under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907-1925," in Canadian Perspectives on Law and Society: Issues in Legal History, W. Wesley Pue and Barry Wright, eds. Ottawa, 1988.
47. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 206-9.
48. Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1918, 206; 1920, 270.
49. M.-Ludovic Maltais, Les Syndicats Catholiques Canadiens, Washington, 1925, 49-50.
50. Report On Labour Organization In Canada, 1915, 139.
51. Report On Labour Organization In Canada, 1918, 97-8.
52. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 215; Michel Têtu, "Les premiers syndicats catholiques canadiens (1900-1921)," Doctorat ès lettres, Université Laval, 1961, 214.
53. Latham, Catholic and National Unions, 48.
54. Mathers Commission, Evidence by Gaspard Langlois, Quebec, Quebec, 11 June 1919, 4057.
55. Maltais, Syndicats Catholiques Canadiens, 49.
56. Maltais, Syndicats Catholiques Canadiens, 50. Maltais is vague about when the AFL began organizing, stating that it was "depuis quelque mois". The implication seems to be that they arrived after the Catholic union was established. The majority

report of the Royal Commission states that the international union began organizing in March or April 1918. This seems unlikely given the testimony that there was a faction opposed to the Catholic union from the start, and given that Alfred Bourget the international union organizer was dismissed from the Davie yards in February 1918.

57. "Maclellan Commission Report," 956.

58. "Maclellan Commission Report," 958.

59. "Maclellan Commission Report", 958.

60. "Maclellan Commission Report," 956-7.

61. "Maclellan Commission Report," 965.

62. Labor World, 3 August 1918.

63. See "Maclellan Commission Report," 959-60.

64. Transcripts of the testimony have not survived, but much of the proceedings can be reconstructed from the majority and minority reports.

65. "Maclellan Commission Report," 958.

66. "Maclellan Commission Report," 966.

67. "Maclellan Commission Report," 957.

68. "Maclellan Commission Report," 965.

69. "Maclellan Commission Report," 965.

70. "Maclellan Commission Report," 958-9.

71. Between July 26 and August 9, 1919 the Catholic union took in 125 new members. "Maclellan Commission Report," 957.

72. "Maclellan Commission Report," 959.

73. Mathers Commission, Evidence given by Joseph Pelletier, Quebec City, 11 June 1919, 4051-2.

74. Le Soleil, 7 September 1918.
75. "Maclellan Commission Report," 959.
76. Copies of the collective agreements were published with the report. See "Maclellan Commission Report," 967-971.
77. "Maclellan Commission Report," 960-1.
78. Labor World, 12 October 1918.
79. "Maclellan Commission Report," 966.
80. "Maclellan Commission Report," 963.
81. "Maclellan Commission Report," 967. In Trois-Rivières, for instance, the COC confined membership to practising Catholics.
82. "Maclellan Commission Report," 964.
83. "Maclellan Commission Report," 967.
84. The Blacksmiths Journal, January 1919, 25.
85. "Maclellan Commission Report," 966.
86. Labor World, 12 October 1918.
87. Machinists Monthly Journal, April 1919, 330.
88. The Blacksmiths Journal, April 1919, 17.
89. Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932, New York 1966, Vol. IV. p. 439; Montreal Gazette, 5 May 1919.
90. Montreal Gazette, 5 May 1919.
91. The Blacksmiths Journal, June 1919, 19.
92. The Blacksmiths Journal, July 1919, 21.
93. Montreal Gazette, 28 March 1919; Quebec Telegraph, 28 March 1918; Labor World, 24 April 1920.

94. It is difficult to establish the relative strength of the organizations. Estimates vary depending on the source and the sympathies of the reporter. Some reports state that the Catholic union had the larger membership. Of the 850 workers, reports of AFL strength seem to vary from 300 to "over 400" according to the labour Department correspondent, who seems to be by no means sympathetic to the international unions.

95. Le Soleil, 25 April 1919.

96. NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout Files, Vol. 311, Strike 85, Theo. Bertrand to F. A. Acland, 30 April 1919.

97. NA, RG 27, Vol. 311, Strike 85, Théo. Bertrand to Department of Labour, 3 May 1919.

98. NA, RG 27, Vol. 311, Strike 85, Jos. Ryan to Dept of Labour, 1 May 1919.

99. NA, RG 27, Vol. 311, Strike 85, MacAdams to Dept. of Labour, 2 May 1919.

100. According to Montreal Gazette 2 May 1919 and an unidentified newspaper clipping in NA, RG 27, Vol. 311, Strike 85.

101. One newspaper report claimed that the COC seemed to have a majority at the time the contract was signed, but that since then the majority of the workers claimed to be members of the international union. Montreal Gazette, 27 June 1919.

102. Montreal Gazette, 27 June 1919.

103. Unidentified newspaper clipping in NA, RG 27, Vol. 316, Strike 250, 27 June 1919.

104. Montreal Gazette, 24 June 1919.

105. NA, RG 27, Vol. 316, Strike 250, Bertrand to Dept. of Labour, 21 July 1919.

106. Quebec Chronicle, 30 April 1920.

107. NA, RG 27, Vol. 319, Strike 100.

108. Labor World, 29 May 1920.
109. MMJ, December 1919, 1081.
110. The Blacksmiths Journal, August 1919, 17.
111. Ottawa Citizen, 12 July 1919 in NA, RG 27, Vol. 314, Strike 189.
112. Statement by the Marine Trades Federation of Quebec and Levis in the Quebec Telegraph, 7 August 1919.
113. Quebec Telegraph, 29 July 1919. According to a statement by the MTF the rate at Davie was 43 cents for mechanics. Quebec Telegraph, 7 August 1919.
114. Le Soleil, 11 August 1919.
115. The Blacksmiths Journal, August 1919, 17; NA, RG 27, Vol. 320, Strike 132, H.L. Clifford to Department of Labour, 12 May 1920; NA, RG 27, Vol. 319, Strike 100, L. Youville to Department of Labour, 12 May 1919.
116. Mathers Commission, Evidence given by Joseph Pelletier, Quebec City, June 11, 1919, 4051.
117. L'Action catholique, 31 July 1919; The Blacksmiths Journal, September 1919, 35.
118. The Labour Gazette lists 900 as the number of strikers.
119. L'Action catholique, 29 July 1919.
120. L'Action catholique, 31 July 1919.
121. Quebec Telegraph, 29 July 1919.
122. Quebec Chronicle, 31 July 1919; The Blacksmiths Journal, September 1919, 35.
123. Labor World, 2 August 1919.
124. Quebec Chronicle, 31 July 1919.
125. The Blacksmiths Journal, September 1919, 36.

126. L'Action catholique, 4 August 1919.
127. Le Soleil, 1 August 1919.
128. L'Action catholique, 4 August 1919.
129. Le Soleil, 1 August 1919; La Presse, 1 August 1919.
130. The Blacksmiths Journal, September 1919, 35; Quebec Chronicle, 2 August 1919.
131. Le Soleil, 6 August 1919.
132. The Blacksmiths Journal, September 1919, 35; Quebec Chronicle, 2 August 1919.
133. Quebec Telegraph, 7 august 1919.
134. Quebec Chronicle, 8 August 1919.
135. Quebec Telegraph, 8 August 1919.
136. Deux grève de l'Internationale, " 2.
137. See for example, Montreal Gazette, 4 July 1919, and Labour Gazette, September 1919, 1131.
138. Le Soleil 28 July 1919.
139. Le Soleil, 8 August 1919.
140. Le Soleil, 7 August 1919.
141. Le Soleil, 8 August 1919.
142. Le Soleil, 12 August 1919.
143. NA, RG 27, Vol. 315, Strike 216, Oscar Nantel to the Director of the Labour Gazette, 15 October 1919.
144. NA, RG 27, Vol. 315, Strike 216, Horace Rivière to Théo. Bertrand, 28 August 1919.



145. NA, RG 27, Vol. 315, Strike 216, Horace Rivière to Théo. Bertrand, 28 August 1919.

146. Deux grève de l'"Internationale", 3-4.

147. Neither the articles in L'Action catholique nor the pamphlet are signed. The Semaine sociale du Canada published in 1920, however, includes an insert facing page 69, a list of available publications, that attributes the pamphlet to abbé Maxime Fortin. Abbé E. Hébert also refers to Fortin as the author of articles on Lauzon and Saint Grégoire in a letter to Fortin. CSNA, Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'abbé Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, E. Hébert to abbé Maxime Fortin, nd; On L'Action catholique, see Richard Jones, "L'Action catholique, 1920-1921," in Dumont et al (dir.), Idéologie au Canada français 1900-1929, 313-344.

148. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", V.

149. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 30.

150. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", V.

151. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", IV.

152. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 30.

153. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", V.

154. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", fn.1, p. 19.

155. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 30.

156. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", IV.

157. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 25.

158. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 7.

159. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 25.

160. Le Soleil, 11 August 1919; Quebec Chronicle, 12 August 1919.

161. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 25.

162. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 28.
163. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 9.
164. This concern for veracity did not prevent it from falsely claiming that workers in Trois-Rivières received the same wages as at Lauzon. See L'Action catholique, 31 July 1919.
165. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 22.
166. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 17.
167. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 24.
168. L'Action catholique, 31 July 1919.
169. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 13-14. This argument had also been made by George Davie before the Maclellan Royal Commission in 1918. See "Maclellan Commission Report," 956.
170. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 15-16.
171. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", IV.
172. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 14.
173. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 29.
174. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 27.
175. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 15.
176. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 12.
177. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", IV.
178. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 15.
179. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 17.
180. Le Soleil, 11 August 1919. The French version was signed "Un employé". The English version in the Quebec Telegraph 12

August 1919 appeared under the signatures of three Catholic union officials.

181. Quebec Chronicle, 29 July 1919.

182. Le Soleil, 11 August 1919.

183. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", IV.

184. See for example L'Action catholique, 22, 24 October, 6 December 1919.

185. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", III-IV.

186. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 12.

187. Le Soleil, 11 August 1919.

188. Quebec Chronicle, 12 August 1919.

189. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", III.

190. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", V.

191. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 6, 14.

192. Quebec Chronicle, 12 August 1919.

193. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 26.

194. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 23.

195. While it is difficult to assess Fortin's boast as to the wage increases, there was at least one strike by a union that was considered to be in the Catholic union fold in 1918. This was a dispute involving the Fraternite Nationale des Cordoniers-Machinist. NA, RG 27, Vol. 308, Strike 46; Certainly Fortin went to great efforts to discourage strikes. He claimed that it was his personal intervention on three separate occasions that prevented Quebec firefighters from voting to strike in 1918. CSNA, File Pompiers....(Union de Quebec) 1918, Max. Fortin to Mgr. C.O. Gagnon, 19 December 1918.

196. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", V.

197. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 24.
198. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", VI.
199. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 25.
200. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 29.
201. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 28.
202. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 29.
203. Deux grèves de l'"Internationale", 11.
204. CSNA, File Correspondance abbé Fortin 1918-1919, Affidavit signed by abbé Fortin, 14 April 1919.
205. Labor World, 16 August 1919.
206. Montreal Gazette, 19 August 1919.
207. Le Soleil, 16 August 1919.
208. Montreal Gazette, 19 August 1919.
209. Le Soleil, 16 August 1919.
210. Le Soleil, 20 August 1919.
211. This figure includes organizations that may not have been unions, such as the Quebec foremen's association.
212. Le Soleil, 30 August 1919.
213. Le Soleil, 2 September 1919.
214. Le Devoir, 31 August 1921; La Patrie, 21 July 1922.
215. Labor World, 5 July 1919.
216. Labor World explained that AFL organizations were not inactive in Quebec City but had judged the moment inopportune for an organizing campaign similar to the one in Montreal. Labor World, 28 February 1920.

217. Labor World, 27 December 1919.
218. Labor World, 29 May 1920.
219. Le Soleil, 18 August 1919,
220. On Local 511 of the plumbers for example see Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, December 1919, 12.
221. Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 99.
222. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 217, 255.
223. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 211-212.
224. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 240-1.
225. Latham, Catholic and National Unions, 60.
226. Lavoie, Les Débuts du mouvement ouvrier à Sherbrooke, 97.
227. Programme-Souvenir du Premier Congrès de la Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada, Montréal, 1922, 51 (Henceforth cited as Programme Souvenir du CTCC); Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 97.
228. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 51, 53.
229. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 215.
230. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 51; Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 97.
231. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 215.
232. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 51; Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 97.
233. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 63.
234. Labor World, 2 August 1919.
235. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 63.

236. NA, RG 27, Vol. 314, Strike 188.
237. Montreal Star, 2 October 1919.
238. Montreal Star, 1 October 1919.
239. Montreal Star, 2 October 1919; NA, RG 27, Vol. 318, Strike 385, John H. Frye to Department of Labour, 9 December 1919.
240. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 63.
241. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 59, 61.
242. Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 91-6.
243. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 214.
244. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXIV, 126; Latham, Catholic and National Unions, 47.
245. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 27; CSNA, Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'abbé Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, E. Hébert to Maxime Fortin, nd.
246. Montreal Gazette, 15 January 1917.
247. Advance, 25 June, 2 July 1920.
248. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 27; Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 283.
249. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 29.
250. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 110.
251. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 27; CSNA, Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'Abbé Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, E. Hébert to Maxime Fortin, 8 July 1919.
252. As quoted in Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 283.
253. La Patrie, 3 September 1919.

254. Labor World, 6 September 1919.

255. The six day strike involved only some 75 to 90 workers of the 350 workers employed in the factory. 90 is the union figure, the company claimed only 75 went out. NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and lockout files, vol. 317, strike 348, C. McKercher to Department of Labour, 19 September 1919; George A. Slater Limited to Department of Labour, 18 September 1919. This is typical of strikes in the shoe industry that often involve only some skilled trades but not the whole work force see Jacques Ferland, "Syndicalisme <<parcelaire>> et syndicalisme <<collectif>> Interprétation socio-technique des conflits ouvriers dans deux industries québécoises (1880-1914)," Labour/Le travail, 19 Spring 1987, 49-88.

256. NA, RG 27, Vol. 317, Strike 348, C. McKercher to Department of Labour, 19 September 1919.

257. La Patrie, 3 September 1919.

258. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 10.

259. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 13.

260. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 17, 37.

261. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 48-9, 51; This incident is described by abbe Hébert in CSNA, Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'abbe Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, E. Hébert to abbe Maxime Fortin, nd.

262. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 457-8.

263. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 55, 57, 59.

264. Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 99.

265. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 57.

266. Brian Hogan, "Church and Union: The Case of Hull, 1912-1921. An Introduction to R. P. Joseph Bonhomme omi, 'Note historiques sur l'association ouvrière de Hull.'" Labour/Le Travailleur, 7, Spring 1981, 135.

267. Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 135-136 fn18.

268. Joseph Bonhomme, omi, "Notes historiques sur l'association ouvrière de Hull," in Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 145-146, and Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 135-6 fn 18.

269. Labor World, 1 November 1919.



## Chapter 5

The Rivalry Between the International and  
Catholic Unions in Quebec, 1920-1925.

"Il faut être très prudent dans cette campagne, [against the National and Catholic unions] car derrière les Syndicats Catholiques, il y a un pouvoir et une force qu'il est très difficile de séparer du côté matériel de ces organisations."

Gustave Francq, editor of  
Labor World, 20 November 1920

Through 1920 international unions faced continued challenges from Catholic unions. In Montreal, in particular, Catholic organizations prepared an offensive of unprecedented proportions for the second half of 1920. This attack also coincided with the beginning of the depression of the 1920s. While Catholic unions competed for the allegiance of workers, growing unemployment provided employers with the opportunity to mount an offensive on the international unions, breaking contracts and reducing wages. Thus attacked on two fronts, by Catholic unions and by employers, the international unions were forced into decline.

Jacques Rouillard maintains that the Catholic unions in the post war period were significantly different from the organizations established in the years before 1917. After the

war Rouillard maintains that they were more oriented towards ensuring the respect of workers rights through collective agreements with employers.<sup>1</sup> But the record indicates that many of the newly formed Catholic unions in the post war period were primarily intent on replacing international unions, and on reducing and preventing class conflict.

#### The 1920 AFL convention and the Semaine Sociale

Through most of 1919, Catholic unions were less of a concern to international union leaders in Montreal than in the rest of Quebec. It was in 1920 that Catholic organizations mounted a serious challenge in the international union's stronghold. Growing anxiety prompted the Montreal Trades and Labor Council executive committee in December 1919 to call for a propaganda and education campaign with lectures, conferences, and public meetings to promote international unions.<sup>2</sup> Through March and April 1920, the Montreal Building Trades Council and its affiliates, especially the plumbers and the carpenters, organized a series of meetings to counter the Catholic union campaign.

The Trades and Labor Congress of Canada also realized that the threat required a larger effort. The 1919 TLCC convention established a special committee to consider how to

respond to the Catholic unions, as well as to the One Big Union. This committee organized a three day meeting in May 1920 in Ottawa for international union representatives in Canada. It recommended that each AFL and TLCC union maintain as large a core of organizers in Canada as their resources would permit. It also called for the production and distribution of more written material to promote their movement, since little of what was produced by the international unions was in French. Montreal's bilingual Monde ouvrier/Labor World with an initial print-run of 8,500 in 1916 and a circulation of 3,500 in 1921 was read by active trade unionists but may have reached few outside the ranks of the AFL, while francophone workers were being flooded with pamphlets published by the Catholic unions. The TLCC hoped to establish an information bureau to coordinate its efforts.<sup>3</sup> It did not, however, have sufficient funds of its own to finance this undertaking. Estimating that 50,000 dollars was required for the task, the TLCC decided to ask the AFL and the international unions to contribute to a "Special Literature Campaign Fund".<sup>4</sup>

Canadian international union leaders made a case for support and resources at the AFL convention in June 1920. Held that year in Montreal, there was a hope that the opening procession, the presence of numerous international union

leaders, the speeches and debates, and the much greater than usual amount of coverage in the Quebec daily press, would exert a strong influence in reinforcing the movement. The provincial TLCC executive claimed that it:

will go a long way to show the strength and vim of the American Federation of Labor, remove many prejudices, steady some faltering minds and stimulate the zeal of those who devote themselves to the betterment of conditions for the laboring classes.<sup>5</sup>

Alfred Charpentier, by this time a convert to Catholic unionism, believed that the AFL held the convention in Canada to try to steer the TLCC away from what the AFL considered to be two disquieting trends, support for political action and a growing nationalist sentiment within the Congress. He added that it chose Montreal because of its concern about the growth of the Catholic unions:

Le développement du syndicalisme catholique en notre province lui a causé une vive inquiétude: elle craint que les bastions de son trade-unionisme traditionnel ne soient mis en danger. Elle vient donc chez nous pour les renforcer, ces bastions, en travaillant au développement des unions internationales existantes et à la création de groupements nouveaux.<sup>6</sup>

The hostility of the Quebec Catholic hierarchy towards the international unions was evident to some observers even at the opening ceremonies. For some years it had become customary to invite the local Catholic bishop to address this function. Mgr Bruchési declined this invitation and did not even send a representative.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of the Catholic unions was brought to the attention of the delegates by J.A. McClelland, the TLCC fraternal delegate and a member of the TLCC special committee on rival organizations. In his address McClelland explained that the Catholic unions were causing "a tremendous amount of concern" in Quebec.<sup>8</sup> He asked the AFL to name a committee to investigate the situation, warning that "they will find a condition, that is to say the least, appalling". Finally he called on the AFL to "use whatever means may be necessary in order to stop, or to put an end to the work of the Catholic Labor Unions..."<sup>9</sup>

Public expressions of this sort were often used by Catholic union promoters as evidence of international union hostility towards the Catholic unions and towards the Church. McClelland's comments would be cited by Archbishop Bruchési, among others, a short time later.<sup>10</sup> A few days after McClelland's speech, perhaps to control the damage, TLCC president Tom Moore stated that international unions "ne s'oppose à aucune religion," that no member "ne peut craindre de perdre sa foi," and that "Nous n'entrenons (sic) de querelle avec aucune Église, et nous n'avons d'animosité envers aucune d'elles..."<sup>11</sup> Moore was expressing an opinion common among TLCC leaders who believed that there was no reason for the conflict, and who were surprised by the

hostility of the Catholic Church in Quebec. They also often referred to the better relationship between the AFL and the American Church hierarchy.

There was an effort at the AFL convention to ameliorate relations with the Quebec ecclesiastical hierarchy. This was undertaken by an American priest Father Peter E. Dietz, who was a central figure in establishing a closer relationship between the AFL and the American Catholic authorities. Dietz wanted to identify the Catholic Church with the labour movement so as to exert a Christian influence, specifically to reinforce the anti-socialist tendencies within the AFL. Dietz promoted AFL membership among Catholics in the United States.<sup>12</sup> He organized the Militia of Christ for Social Service, a Catholic caucus within the AFL that aimed to influence the annual conventions where much of his time was spent lobbying behind the scenes.<sup>13</sup> Dietz did not believe a Catholic union movement feasible in the United States, and argued that it was "misguided" in Canada. Holding the 1920 AFL convention in Montreal provided Dietz with the opportunity to try to reconcile international unions and the Catholic Church in Quebec, and to attempt to unify the Canadian labour movement. This was not his first foray into Canadian affairs for he had already attempted this task once in 1914 at the request of international union leaders.<sup>14</sup>

When Dietz renewed his attempt in 1920, it was despite the misgivings of AFL leaders. Dietz approached Samuel Gompers in March 1920 with the idea of organizing a meeting between Archbishop Bruchési and AFL officials. Gompers did not reply and other American international union leaders were sceptical. Many American union leaders had already concluded that it was better to ignore the conflict between Catholic and socialist union members in the United States in order to avoid a division that involved religious views, and they may have felt that this was the best approach to the conflict in Quebec as well. Dietz nonetheless persuaded Bruchési to meet a delegation from the international unions. The presence of TLCC Secretary-Treasurer Paddy Draper at this meeting suggests that there was at least some support from Canadian union officials. The meeting did little, however, to dispel the hostility of the Church hierarchy towards the AFL. After failing to set up a meeting with Mgr. Roy and abbé Fortin in Quebec City, Dietz finally abandoned his efforts towards the end of 1921.<sup>15</sup>

While the good relationship between the Catholic clergy and the AFL in the United States provided an argument for international union promoters in Canada, it was met with several rejoinders. The first was that even though neither the AFL nor the TLCC considered labour issues from a moral standpoint and both were vehicles for materialist ideas, there

were still significant differences between the two organizations.<sup>16</sup> According to Charpentier socialist tendencies were stronger in Canadian international unions than in the AFL,<sup>17</sup> the TLCC was more "contaminé par leurs principes subversifs".<sup>18</sup> He explained that "en dépit de la gangrène matérialiste qui les ronge, les unions américaines, en très grand nombres, sont opiniâtrement antisocialistes," and opposed independent labour political action.<sup>19</sup> Charpentier claimed that the TLCC, on the other hand, especially in Quebec, was led by socialists, anti-clericals, and free masons.<sup>20</sup> Catholic union promoters pointed to examples such as Gustave Francq.<sup>21</sup> Even before World War One, the Labor Party was "nul autre que socialiste,"<sup>22</sup> according to Charpentier, and had long harboured anti-clerical and free thinking elements. With the creation of the Quebec section of the Canadian Labor Party in 1917, it joined forces with even more radical socialists in an organization sponsored by the TLCC. Charpentier noted that the AFL disapproved of the 1917 TLCC decision to support independent political action.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the AFL in the United States was a national organization identified with patriotic causes, while Canadian international unions were subservient to foreign leaders. There was also the argument that since Catholics were a minority in the United States, Catholic unions were less



viable and might be subject to considerably greater hostility. Combined with the anti-socialist position of the AFL, this made acceptance of the AFL the best policy for the American Church, according to Alfred Charpentier.<sup>24</sup>

The AFL convention was followed within days by the first *Semaine sociale*, a week of lectures to be held annually on a specific social problem in a different Quebec city.<sup>25</sup> The topics of the first three, Rerum Novarum in 1920, Syndicalism in 1921, and Capital and Labour in 1922, reflected the Church's pressing concern for labour. They were also meant to give the Catholic labour movement considerable impetus.

The *Semaine sociale* was also as much a nationalist as it was a religious event.<sup>26</sup> It was scheduled to coincide with the Saint-Jean-Baptiste celebrations. The main event of the *Semaine sociale* in the afternoon of 24 June was the unveiling of a monument to Dollard des Ormaux at Lafontaine Park. When the Dollard monument committee invited the MTLG to send a delegation to the unveiling ceremony there was fear on the part of some francophone delegates that their representatives "serait à la remorque des organisations nationales". One delegate, F.A. Foucher of the fur workers' union asked the council not to participate in any future patriotic demonstrations. Another delegate, Charriau, opposed

participation because of the presence of the national and Catholic unions at the ceremony. He also feared a secret intention to celebrate labour day on the Saint-Jean-Baptiste, probably referring to the "Grande manifestation ouvrière" planned for Lafontaine Park for the evening after the unveiling when speeches would be delivered by Catholic union leader Gaudiose Hébert, abbé Maxime Fortin from Quebec City, and Nationalist leader Henri Bourassa.<sup>27</sup> Clearly concerned over the attempt to reinforce the identification of the Catholic unions with French-Canadian nationalism the MTLC sent a delegation. The MTLC did not want the Catholic unions to monopolize these celebrations.

During the Semaine sociale there were a number of lectures on Catholic unionism. But the most serious attacks on the international unions came from Mgr Bruchési in his addresses to the opening and closing ceremonies when the Archbishop revealed his thoughts on a number of labour matters, and expressed his hostility to the international unions in no uncertain terms. While some of his comments did not name the AFL or international unions, his target was clear. He said that there were groups with dangerous programmes, and expressed concern over resolutions passed at recent labour conventions.<sup>28</sup> Bruchési claimed that while socialism was not an imminent prospect in Quebec there were

other errors to fight. In particular there was the threat of class war: that there was "continuellement... des menaces de guerre entre le capital et le travail, entre les patrons et les ouvriers."<sup>29</sup> He was concerned at the large number of strikes that there had been in recent years. Bruchési was especially concerned over strikes by some groups of municipal workers. He referred to "la grève de ceux qui par état, par devoir et par conscience, sont chargé de protéger la vie, la propriété de leurs concitoyens." This was a clear reference to recent disputes involving police, firefighters, and perhaps waterworks employees, too. Bruchési declared that strikes in the public service could not be tolerated and called for legislation to prevent "cette grève que les lois devraient interdire sous les peines les plus sévères."<sup>30</sup>

Bruchési also condemned the formation of a union among Montreal Catholic school teachers. Bruchési opposed their right to organize a union and to bargain collectively, let alone to strike. The Archbishop had already scuttled one attempt to establish a Catholic union among teachers. The Union des Instituteurs catholiques de l'Isle de Montréal was formed in October 1918,<sup>31</sup> and when it had the support of three quarters of the teachers, it approached Mgr. Bruchési for approval. Bruchési vetoed the move. Since any Catholic labour organization required the approval of the local bishop, the

teachers had no choice but to accept his decision.<sup>32</sup> It was after this refusal that the teachers turned to the American Federation of Teachers, sought the support of local international union leaders, and joined the MTLCL. In October 1919 a new secular union was formed, demands were formulated and presented to the provincial government.<sup>33</sup> This provoked a fierce response from the Montreal Catholic School Commission that refused to meet the union's representatives and quickly set about to destroy the new organization. With the support of the Archbishop and of the school commission, a new employees association was established by teachers who would accept the leadership of the Church hierarchy and who would work submissively with the school commission. This was the Alliance catholiques des professeurs de Montréal.<sup>34</sup> In June 1920, shortly before the Semaine sociale, the School Commission fired 68 of the most active union members.<sup>35</sup>

Bruchési explained that he was not opposed to a union for workers who worked to enrich an employer,<sup>36</sup> but asked the teachers to abandon their union and any thought of organizing, on the grounds that they worked for the public and the nation.<sup>37</sup> He only approved of pedagogical circles, the meek associations such as there had been in past. Bruchési acknowledged that the teachers were underpaid and conceded that they had a right to ask for a salary increase. According

to Bruchési one of the problems was that the school commission could not raise salaries without a tax increase requiring the approval of the provincial government and that property owners would oppose it. To find a solution to this problem he asked the teachers to place their trust in those who "protected" them, that is the school commissioners, directors, inspectors, the bishops, and the superintendent who together constituted the provincial Conseil de l'instruction publique. Bruchési also appeared to offer an olive branch. He asked the school commissioners to forget what had happened, to give justice to all and not to fire any teachers.<sup>38</sup> Despite this offer there were still teachers out of work in September after the start of the new school year.<sup>39</sup> In the end, however, it appears that those that did not leave Montreal for positions elsewhere were eventually reinstated if they agreed to renounce their union.<sup>40</sup>

Given the importance to the Church of control over the school system it is hardly surprising that Bruchési's strongest and most specific condemnation was reserved for an international teacher's union. Such an affiliation after his veto of a Catholic teacher's union was a direct challenge to his authority. The teachers sought the support of the international labour movement because of the success that other public sector workers achieved in Montreal since the end

of the war. The MTLC provided all the lobbying support that it could, making representations to the school commissioners and to the provincial government, but it was no match for the combined force of the school commission and the Church. The destruction of the teachers union represented a major defeat for the international union movement and represented one of the first severe setbacks in 1920.

Bruchési's broadest attack on the international union was left to the end of the conference. In closing, Bruchési reportedly asked Montreal's workers to abandon the AFL.<sup>41</sup> He hoped that the AFL would be replaced by Catholic unions and that the AFL would remain where it belonged in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Catholic union offensive

The Semaine sociale in Montreal was a prelude for the major Catholic union offensive in Montreal in the second half of 1920. The Catholic unions had already established the Conseil central des Syndicats catholiques de Montréal in February 1920. Seven unions attended the founding meeting: the carriage makers, the National Shoe Workers Union, the two construction trades unions, the plumbers and carpenters, the syndicats des employés de magasins (which had two locals, a

central section, and a section for the workers at Dupuis Frères department store) and the syndicats des employés de manufactures, (section Semi-Ready). The small number of organizations reveals the limited extent of Catholic union penetration in Montreal at that date. There were also representatives from the Cercle Leon XIII study group, and from the Cercle catholique des Voyageurs.<sup>43</sup> The Alliance Catholic des Professeurs de Montreal was also invited but did not attend.

According to one scholar, the establishment of the Conseil central was originally scheduled for June,<sup>44</sup> suggesting that it was meant to coincide with the Semaine sociale. It was formed earlier because of a request by the City of Montreal for inclusion of a labour delegation, among several public bodies, in a provincially appointed Commission charged with reshaping Montreal's municipal government.<sup>45</sup> The Catholic unions wanted official recognition and the appointment of two of its representatives to the Civic Charter Commission, placing it on an equal footing with the international unions, a move that offered visibility and prestige.

In July 1920 abbé Hébert founded the Secretariat des syndicats catholiques de Montréal to promote Catholic

unionism. Such secretariats were established in numerous other centres, including Quebec City, and remained dependent on financial support from the local archdiocese.<sup>46</sup> It was the Secretariat, rather than the Conseil central, that hired organizers, produced and published material for distribution, and that owned the building used by the Catholic labour council and its unions for meetings. One historian, Jean-Guy de Guise, has argued that the establishment of the Secretariat reflected a lack of confidence on the part of ecclesiastical authorities vis-a-vis Catholic unions.<sup>47</sup> Gérard Tremblay, a young journalist at Le Devoir, was hired to head the organization in Montreal. By the end of August the Secretariat in Montreal had hired four organizers: bricklayer Jean-Baptiste Delisle, plumbers G. Hogue and René Binette, and hardware store clerk J.B. Beaudoin.<sup>48</sup> In October it added Martial Dieumegarde as general organizer and business agent for its plumbers union.<sup>49</sup> The Secretariat immediately undertook to produce and publish 25 tracts, each to be published in 50,000 copies and distributed free at church doors on Sundays all over Montreal from September 1920 until March 1921.<sup>50</sup> It also issued material for publication by the local press.

Catholic union promoters attempted to convince locals to abandon the MTLC and to affiliate with the Conseil fédéré des



unions nationales catholiques. Charpentier, for example, was working on bricklayers and firefighters. Labor World claimed that some unions had accepted the idea of national unions hoping that it would benefit their members but left after a few unhappy experiences and "commencent à reprendre le chemin du Conseil des Métiers."<sup>51</sup> This may have referred to Montreal's National Shoe Workers Union that left the Catholic movement in 1920. It did not, however, return to the MTLC.

If attracting established locals was one of the principal strategies in the first half of 1920, the Catholic movement was soon establishing numerous rival unions in the hope of gaining new footholds. In the last months of 1920 a large number of new organizations were set up among workers in manufacturing, transportation and among municipal employees where AFL and TLCC unions were well established: these included a Catholic Tramway Workers union, a union at the Canadian Pacific Railway's Angus shops, and one at Canada Car & Foundry. These raids coincided with the beginning of the depression in mid-1920. Higher unemployment meant that the ranks of unions were being thinned by lay-offs while employers used the downturn to break contracts and to reduce wages. In this climate there were many workers who were dissatisfied with existing organizations, and were more vulnerable to enticements from rival ones.

Catholic unions were established at companies where unions were under serious attack from employers. In August 1920 the Canada Car & Foundry Company, under new management and seeking concessions on hours from the Metal Trades Federation (MTF), used an unauthorized strike by 34 rivet heaters as a pretext to lock out 3,000 workers for more than two weeks at its Dominion shops, and to repudiate its contract with the MTF.<sup>52</sup> The Company also came to a verbal agreement with a delegation of workers led by Catholic union chaplain abbé Hébert.<sup>53</sup> It reopened as an open shop,<sup>54</sup> promising to operate on the same conditions as before until May 1921. When a Catholic union was established shortly afterwards the company declared that it would deal with the new organization as a guarantee that the verbal agreement would be respected.<sup>55</sup> L'Action catholique admitted that abbé Hébert undertook to organize the workers in this company at the request of its directors.<sup>56</sup> Labor World in early October conceded the Laurier Lodge of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen had been weakened, and had to deny that it had disappeared.<sup>57</sup>

The sources do not always describe the process by which the national and Catholic unions gained members at the expense of international unions. On 1 September 1920 thirty members of the International Union of Wire, Wood and Metal Lathers Union Local 315 went on strike against fifteen firms. They had been

making 75 cents an hour and demanded \$1.00. The strike lasted nine days ending on 13 September. According to the Department of Labour fair wage officer: "The men were working 8 hours a day before the strike but since the strike the union has lapsed and joined a national union and have accepted to work 9 hours," at 80 cents an hour till 1 February 1921 and then at 90 cents after that date.<sup>58</sup> It is not clear whether the Catholic unions approached the company, the strikers, or both, but the intervention involved the concession of longer hours.

#### The building trades

The first major battle with the Catholic unions in the building trades resulted in a long and bitter strike by the Plumbers', Gas and Steam Fitters' local 144 in Montreal. In this case the Catholic plumbers' union and the employers joined forces against the international plumbers' union. It was perhaps with this conflict in mind that Gerald Tremblay, the head of the Catholic union Secretariat in Montreal, later admitted that organizing among the construction trades was particularly difficult.<sup>59</sup>

It is hardly surprising that the Master Plumbers Association (MPA), a member of the Builders' Exchange, expressed its satisfaction at the growth of the Catholic

Plumbers union in 1920.<sup>60</sup> In a number of ways, the Catholic unions resembled the kind of organization building contractors had long hoped for. The Building Trades Association in Montreal was opposed to international unionism and determined not to sign any agreement unless a union was "local in inception".<sup>61</sup> Building trades employers were also among those who repeatedly called for the incorporation of trade unions.<sup>62</sup> They also rejected the eight-hour day because of the short building season.<sup>63</sup> On all three counts Catholic unions would be preferable; they were local, supported incorporation, and showed a marked willingness to accept longer hours, even opposing the demand for an eight-hour day. Employers also wanted organizations that would keep wages down.<sup>64</sup> And the Catholic union would accept lower wages than the international union demanded.

In 1920, Montreal's international union plumbers in Local 144 hoped to improve considerably on the previous agreement accepted after the 1919 general construction strike. This dispute had won them hourly wages of 75 cents, and an eight-hour day based on a five and a half day workweek.<sup>65</sup> This time they demanded a one year contract to run from 1 August 1920 with a dollar an hour, double time for overtime, a closed shop, limits on the employment of apprentices, and the freedom to take part in sympathetic strike action.<sup>66</sup> Shortly before

the strike Local 144 reduced its demands to 90 cents for plumbers and 65 cents for helpers, time and a half for the ninth hour followed by double time.<sup>67</sup>

The MPA, however, signed a one year contract with the Catholic Workers' Syndicates to run from 1 May 1920. The MPA declared that the Catholic union agreement was the only one it would sign until it expired a year later. The first clause, "It is thoroughly understood by both parties to this agreement that the principle of the 'open shop' must remain inviolate, and that the 'closed shop' is not tolerated under any conditions," particularly pleased the Master Plumbers.<sup>68</sup> The contract established a three tiered pay scale of 60, 65 and 75 cents an hour depending on experience.<sup>69</sup> This was considerably lower than the 90 cents that local 144 was demanding. Labor World decried the Catholic unionists as "standpatters" who did not amount to much in the labour movement and reserved most of its criticism and scorn for provisions on classification, apprenticeship and hours. The status of the employee, whether class one, two, or three, was to be determined by the employer. In addition, all details of apprenticeship were left to the employers. The agreement specified a nine-hour day<sup>70</sup> and there was a provision for time and a half for overtime,<sup>71</sup> but it also allowed any worker to voluntarily work longer than nine hours on single time. An editorial in Labor World

concluded that the Catholic plumbers' organization might as well be branded as an employer's union.<sup>72</sup>

The MPA believed that it was in a strong position for a fight,<sup>73</sup> boasting that its membership employed 95 per cent of the city's plumbers.<sup>74</sup> It argued that it was a good time for a strike.<sup>75</sup> One member noted that business was slow, while another did not expect serious trouble because of the high level of unemployment. Nonetheless, it established a \$20,000 fund to support its open shop drive,<sup>76</sup> and appointed law and finance committees to deal with any trouble that might arise.<sup>77</sup>

In the face of these preparations, the international union bided its time. It hoped to divide employers, to by-pass the Association, and to sign up individual firms before a strike, but had little success.<sup>78</sup> The employer front held up until some 600 plumbers walked off their jobs at the beginning of October, usually a period of intense work.<sup>79</sup> A number of firms immediately signed individual agreements.<sup>80</sup> Within a few days, local 144 business agent J.B. Blais reported that about half the original number of strikers were back at work with 43 firms, including some of the largest in the city.<sup>81</sup> Local 144 had chosen its timing carefully and employers gave a number of reasons to explain their capitulation: some contractors had to

finish work by a fixed date, those building residences felt "morally" bound to complete them before winter set in, there was a ten day rush every year at this time as people put their furnaces into shape for the winter.<sup>82</sup> Some companies signed a contract because they feared losing their skilled workers.<sup>83</sup> The Catholic union promised to supply all the plumbers that were needed, but clearly it could not do so.

Even while some employers came to terms with local 144, the MPA settled in for a long struggle, declaring that it would stand by the Catholic union contract as a "question of honour". The strike committee arranged for the distribution of "loyal" workers,<sup>84</sup> and it received the support of general contractors who promised to help prevent interference with working plumbers and not to press for the completion of contracts as they would under normal conditions.<sup>85</sup>

A memoir by the secretary of the Catholic union secretariat of Montreal suggests that the international union approached the Catholic organization to join forces with them against the employers, but that it "refusa nettement de faire cause commune avec l'Union internationale." The memoir goes on to state that this refusal prompted local 144 to try to destroy the Catholic union.<sup>86</sup> Within a few days of the start of the strike the Master Plumbers Association conferred with

the executive of the Catholic Union which promised to abide loyally by the agreement.<sup>87</sup> It was the close cooperation between the Catholic union and the MPA that led to accusations that the Catholic union was funded by the Association.

For its part, local 144 maintained pressure on the employers by picketing job sites where Catholic union members were employed and business agent Blais visited the homes of working plumbers to convince them to stop.<sup>88</sup> At first the employers ferried the Catholic union plumbers to work and back home by truck, prompting Labor World to taunt the Catholic union plumbers with their "peu de fierté". After several weeks the Catholic union took over this task, and Labor World suggested that this was paid for by the MPA.<sup>89</sup> In November 1920 the Central Council of the Catholic and National Syndicats complained to Montreal's chief of police of assaults on its members and asked for police protection. Five arrest warrants were issued.<sup>90</sup>

The MPA was ready to use other weapons to its arsenal besides a close association with the Catholic union. Inspired by reports of injunctions obtained by employers in the open shop drive in the United States,<sup>91</sup> the MPA sought an injunction to stop the alleged interference and intimidation. The petition even asserted that picketing was illegal.<sup>92</sup> A



temporary injunction was issued against Blais and other members of the organization,<sup>93</sup> although a compromise was reached that permitted the plumbers to continue to picket pending a final settlement of the issue in the courts.<sup>94</sup> One observer commented that the use of injunctions was a new development as far as Montreal was concerned.<sup>95</sup>

The plumbers strike dragged on against the remaining employers for some months into 1921. By April international headquarters no longer issued strike pay, and assessments were levied on working plumbers to be divided among the remaining strikers. Blais claimed that employers representing five-sixths of the original strikers had signed individual agreements, and that the few who were still holding out had always been anti-labor.<sup>96</sup> The union refused to declare the strike off stating that the busy time would come and employers would come to terms.<sup>97</sup> According to the Labour Gazette the strike ended on 16 May 1921 with a compromise. Blais reported a settlement at 80 cents an hour with a 44 hour week. Overtime was to be paid at a rate of double time for new work and time and a half for the first three hours on jobbing work.<sup>98</sup> This was by no means a victory over the Catholic union since there was no closed shop and the MPA renewed its agreement with the Catholic union at the same wage scale as during the previous year.<sup>99</sup>

Catholic building trades unions managed to establish themselves in Montreal by asking for lower wages than AFL unions,<sup>100</sup> and by offering to work longer hours. In December 1921 the Catholic plumbers union still had a contract with master plumbers at 60, 70 and 75 cents an hour.<sup>101</sup> In 1922 the Catholic plumbers union accepted a five cents an hour reduction and gained preference in hiring. It also maintained its 49-50 hour week.<sup>102</sup> In 1923 it signed a two year agreement with the master plumbers that gave a five cents an hour increase.<sup>103</sup>

Montreal's Catholic carpenter's union also hoped to gain from a close relationship with building contractors. In March 1921 it wrote to employers asking for their support.<sup>104</sup> In 1922 the Catholic carpenters union made arrangements with several large contractors to give preference to Catholic union members. The Catholic union then advertised that it could place 50 or 60 carpenters.<sup>105</sup>

While some elements in the construction industry developed a relationship with Catholic unions the Builder's Exchange remained aloof. In April 1922 the Catholic construction unions in Montreal asked the Builders' Exchange to sign a contract with them rather than with the international unions. The Builders' Exchange, however, refused

to negotiate with either the Building Trades Council<sup>106</sup> or the Catholic unions preferring to recognize neither and to keep an open shop but leaving its members free to enter collective agreements if they wished. Gustave Francq argued that while lower than those demanded by the international unions, the Exchange felt that even the wages expected by the Catholic unions were higher than building contractors intended to pay. Indeed the Montreal Builders' Exchange soon unilaterally reduced wages by 10 to 30 percent.<sup>107</sup> Francq blamed the Catholic unions for dividing workers, making it easier for employers to impose wage reductions:

A quoi cela leur a-t-il servi de chercher a détruire les Unions Internationales puisqu'ils sont traités de la même façon que ces dernières? Tout ce qu'ils ont réussi à faire c'est de diviser les rangs de la classe ouvrière et d'aider un certain groupe de patrons à exploiter plus facilement les travailleurs. Ils sont directement responsables des réductions de salaires...

Francq believed that the Builders Exchange had encouraged the Catholic unions, even financed them, when it suited their purposes but that when they felt they could get labour still cheaper or when Catholic unions raised their heads to ask for something, they were thrown aside.<sup>108</sup>

### Leather workers

Some employers in the leather industry in Montreal also preferred national or Catholic unions. In May 1920, when an international union representing suitcase workers threatened to strike for higher wages, the president of Lamontagne Ltd. claimed that he had no objection to a union but hoped to convince them to join a national organization.<sup>109</sup> In October 1920 a Catholic union was established for the workers at this company.<sup>110</sup> In November international organizations representing saddlers and suitcase makers were reported to be loosing members to the Catholic unions.<sup>111</sup>

### Boot and shoe workers

AFL unions also faced rivalry from organizations that were spawned by the Catholic labour movement but that had since severed its links with them. Some months into 1920, the Catholic Shoe Workers union in Montreal came under the influence of a faction hostile to clerical direction and left the Catholic labour movement.<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the exact circumstances surrounding its departure are obscure, one source referring only to "certain incidents."<sup>113</sup> In July 1920 it joined the secular Canadian Federation of Labor.<sup>114</sup> The recession hit the boot and shoe industry in July 1920 as many

of the large factories closed throwing thousands out of work.<sup>115</sup> In October 1920 manufacturers began to insist on wage concessions.<sup>116</sup> For instance, Daoust, Lalonde & Company asked its workers, who belonged to both national and international organizations, to accept lower wages and longer hours. The national union accepted the cuts.<sup>117</sup> This was reported to be the first wage reduction among unionized workers in Montreal.<sup>118</sup> Upper leather cutters and sole leather cutters, represented by the Boot and Shoe Workers International Union (BSWIU), refused, went on strike on 1 November, but lost the dispute.<sup>119</sup> This was soon followed by wage reductions at other shoe manufacturers. The BSWIU attempted to resist concessions and declared a number of strikes against wage reductions. There was one of 200 workers in St-Hyacinthe, and of 225 in Montreal, all employed by Ames, Holden & McCready against a reduction in wages and for recognition in November 1921, but they both failed.<sup>120</sup> There was another strike of 21 leather cutters at Tetrault Shoes in December 1921 against a reduction in wages. This time the strikers were replaced.<sup>121</sup>

International union members observed that wages were lowered once the workers in an industry were divided.<sup>122</sup> Wage reductions were not only attributable to the national union campaign, as some international union leaders maintained, but the rivalry combined with an employer attack during a

depression seriously weakened the BSWIU. Facing a formidable rival in an industry characterized in 1921 by short bursts of intense demand followed by longer periods of unemployment, the BSWIU went into considerable decline. A few years earlier in Montreal it had more than 40 closed shops but by May 1921 there were only three left.<sup>123</sup>

The Montreal National Shoe Workers Union returned to the Catholic movement in November 1921.<sup>124</sup> Latham, who wrote on the Catholic unions in 1930, claimed that it did so because the Manufacturers' Association promised recognition and a hiring preference.<sup>125</sup> Catholic union promoters maintained "excellent" relations with the Association des manufactures de chaussures at a time when jobs were scarce.<sup>126</sup>

#### Pulp and paper workers

In 1921 there was also inter-union rivalry during strikes in Quebec's expanding pulp and paper industry. In this case the rivalry was of long standing since this was the sector with the earliest history of Catholic unionism. International union organizers pointed to this rivalry to explain why their Quebec members earned lower wages than those in Ontario.<sup>127</sup>

There were two principal international unions, the Paper

Makers, who were highly skilled machine tenders,<sup>128</sup> and the Pulp and Sulphide Workers representing the unskilled.<sup>129</sup> These two organizations often worked closely together. There were also other crafts in the mills including machinists, steamfitters, and carpenters. Employers in this industry in Quebec resisted recognition. With a number of companies the unions came to verbal agreements, however, and they could claim by 1913 that several mills worked an eight-hour day. These included E.B. Eddy Company and J.R. Booth Company in Hull, Price Brothers Mills in Jonqui re and K nagogami, the Wayagamack Paper Company in Trois-Rivi res, Belgo-Canadian at Shawinigan Falls and Canada Paper Company at Grand-M re.<sup>130</sup> Before 1930, there was only a single written contract at the St.Maurice Paper Company at Cap-de-la-Madeleine near Trois-Rivi res in 1918.<sup>131</sup>

A Catholic union was first formed in the Chicoutimi region in 1907 by Mgr. Lapointe. The F d ration ouvri re mutuelle du Nord (FMON) was strongly established at the Compagnie de Pulp de Chicoutimi with employer support and its success depended in large measure on the good personal relations between Mgr Lapointe and the owner Alfred Dubuc. It was most successful among unskilled workers from local parishes who rarely had previous experience of labour organization. Skilled workers were often recruited in other

parts of Canada or in the United States, were often not Catholic, and generally preferred AFL unions.<sup>132</sup> One of the most contentious issues for the clergy and for some Catholic workers was Sunday work. International union members preferred to start the weekly 24 hour shutdown at 7 am Sunday morning, the usual practice in the industry, rather than at midnight as the clergy wanted.<sup>133</sup> The FOMN was not an aggressive organization. On the one occasion in 1918 when one of its representatives threatened a strike, Mgr Lapointe reprimanded the official involved.<sup>134</sup>

The Catholic union engaged in some hard battles aimed at excluding international unions from the region. It sought to organize Price Brothers but without employer backing it could make no headway in these mills.<sup>135</sup> Jacques Rouillard asserts that some companies preferred to deal with an International rather than a Catholic union. To support this claim, he notes that Price Brothers declined to displace AFL unions with Catholic organizations.<sup>136</sup> William Price may have been concerned about clerical influence in labour relations, as Rouillard maintains, but this was in large part because of the close relationship between Lapointe and the rival Dubuc interests.<sup>137</sup> Even Mgr Lapointe realized that far from preferring international unions, Price was hostile towards them and opposed to any kind of organization.<sup>138</sup> Prices'



declared position was to maintain an open shop and to fire any worker that went on strike.<sup>139</sup>

The disputes in 1921 were defensive actions against wage cuts. There were substantial wage increase throughout the industry between 1917 and 1919.<sup>140</sup> After 1920, however, the price of newsprint declined.<sup>141</sup> In April 1921 manufacturers in Canada and the United States proposed 30% wage reductions, a 9 hour day, and the elimination of overtime. This led to strikes in April and May 1921 that stopped virtually all paper production in Canada and the United States.<sup>142</sup> In Quebec, the disputes involved mills in Jonqui re, K nogami, Hull, Trois-Rivi res and Cap-de-la-Madeleine.

In one of these disputes the Catholic union helped to undermine international union resistance. The dispute at the paper mills of Price Brothers at Jonqui re and K nogami started earlier than most others on 19 April 1921. On 1 April 1921 the company had cut the wages of carpenters, millwrights and groundwood men. When international unions refused to accept the reductions,<sup>143</sup> Price Brothers shut down its operations, locking-out some 830 workers,<sup>144</sup> and declared that the strikers could only return if they renounced the union and accepted the wage reduction.<sup>145</sup> The company also had influential allies among local notables. Municipal

officials,<sup>146</sup> and the clergy both campaigned actively to pressure the strikers to return to work,<sup>147</sup> while the Catholic union replaced the strikers with its own members.<sup>148</sup> The bitterness of the dispute led to acts of sabotage and arson in June 1921.<sup>149</sup> Most of the strikers were either replaced or returned to work on the company's terms.<sup>150</sup> The international unions lost the strike and organization died out at Price for several years afterwards.<sup>151</sup> When Catholic union promoters gloated over this result, Gustave Francq warned that such defeats would also affect them:

Chaque fois que les membres d'une union internationale sont obligés d'accepter une réduction de salaire, les membres des syndicats catholiques qui travaillent généralement pour un salaire moindre que ceux-ci subissent inévitablement la même réduction. Que nous le voulions ou que nous ne le voulons pas, nous sommes tous solidaires les uns des autres et ce qui fait mal à l'un fait également mal à l'autre.<sup>152</sup>

Indeed Catholic union members in the pulp and paper industry were also facing wage cuts.

Catholic unions did not try in every case to undermine the international unions during these conflicts in the pulp and paper industry. In Hull there appears to have been some co-operation when the wage cuts were first announced. At the E.B. Eddy Company, paper makers had an international union while pulp workers and match workers, mostly women, had a Catholic organization. When the company gave 24 hours notice

of wage cuts at the beginning of May both Catholic and international unions initially rejected the reductions. There were joint meetings with speakers from both movements, including the Catholic union chaplain, Father Bonhomme, and international organizer of the Pulp and Sulphide Workers Union, Maurice Labelle.<sup>153</sup> Relations soon soured, however, as the two movements pursued very different approaches to the company demands. The Brotherhood of Paper Makers immediately went on strike.<sup>154</sup> The company threatened to keep the paper plant closed indefinitely if they refused the concessions.<sup>155</sup> The members of the Catholic union remained at work.<sup>156</sup> The company had intended to lock out all its workers until the Catholic union quickly accepted the wage cuts. Its members stayed on the job at the old scale, pending a settlement of the dispute elsewhere, at which point they would receive the same wages as in other mills.<sup>157</sup> It was after the Catholic unionists accepted the cuts and the offer to keep working that international union promoters attacked the intervention of the clergy and the Catholic union.<sup>158</sup>

The E.B. Eddy Company expected a quick settlement to the dispute, and a compromise was worked out during its third week. The Paper Makers returned on the same conditions as before and both parties agreed to accept the outcome of discussions between the international unions and the

International Association of Paper Makers.<sup>159</sup> Catholic union promoters boasted that they reached the same results without a strike.<sup>160</sup>

The compromise amounted to a reprieve. A settlement between the international unions and 11 companies was arrived at through arbitration in the United States.<sup>161</sup> In August the arbitration board announced a 10% reduction for skilled workers and a 25% reduction for the unskilled.<sup>162</sup> This was a decided retreat for the international union and applied at other mills in Quebec besides E.B. Eddy. In Hull, at the mills of the J.R. Booth firm, where international unions did not face any Catholic organizations, the company had also agreed to accept this decision.<sup>163</sup> So had the St. Maurice Paper Company in Cap-de-la-Madeleine after a lockout lasting from 11 May to 4 July 1921.<sup>164</sup> Some companies, however, refused to accept arbitration. The International Paper Company, for instance, with a number of plants in Quebec, re-opened with its strike-bound operations with non-union workers.<sup>165</sup>

### The printing trades

The printing trades also witnessed fierce inter-union rivalry during the 1920's. The International Typographical Union (ITU) decided to fight for a wage increase and the 44

hour week in 1921 in both the United States and Canada, poor timing as the recession hit the printing industry from 1921 to 1924. It was also when many employers throughout the continent were embarking on an open shop drive.<sup>166</sup> This led to a number of strikes in Montreal, Quebec City and Ottawa mostly in the commercial printing industry.<sup>167</sup>

On 1 July 1921 about three hundred job printers, members of the ITU, went on strike in Montreal for a weekly wage of 40 dollars and a 44 hour week.<sup>168</sup> The employing printers of Montreal joined the open shop campaign and adopted a formal agreement among themselves to adhere to the 48 hour position and not to employ men from other shops without the permission of the employers organization.<sup>169</sup> Some companies imported scabs from the United States and advertised for workers in New Brunswick while others insisted that printers sign individual contracts.<sup>170</sup> This strike lasted from 1921 to 1924.

The Catholic labour movement in Montreal tried to use the strike to replace ITU members. Within a few weeks, it established new Catholic printing trades unions, one for typographers on 4 August 1921 and a second for pressers on 23 August 1921.<sup>171</sup> The Catholic union planned to ask the master printers to sign a collective agreement for a 48 hour week at \$36.00, the hours and conditions that employers in the struck

shops had already imposed.<sup>172</sup> The ITU representative in Quebec reported that:

[...] since the declaration of the strike [...], we had to face the national movement more than ever. These unions have seized the advantage and are trying to get the most profitable results from the strike by taking over the struck shops and introducing their label if possible into these shops as a substitute for the allied trades label. They have been successful in a few shops, but most of our important printers have refused to deal with them - they would rather stay "open shops".<sup>173</sup>

If most employers were no more sympathetic to a Catholic than to a neutral organization, this was not the case for the Catholic press. When the 44 hour movement hit Ottawa at the beginning of June 1921, there was a strike by members of the ITU at Le Droit, a French language newspaper owned by the Catholic Oblate Order.<sup>174</sup> It continued to publish, partly with the assistance of L'Action catholique which did some of Le Droit's composing work in its shops. In September 1921 management at Le Droit established the Catholic union made up mostly of apprentices.<sup>175</sup> The Chaplain of the Catholic unions in Hull, Father Bonhomme, had long wanted a Catholic organization at the Ottawa based daily and this was one of the instances where the Catholic unions extended their influence outside of Quebec.<sup>176</sup>

On 26 August 1921 a strike was declared at Montreal's Le Devoir. Accounts of the origins of this dispute differ slightly. George Pelletier, the managing editor, explained

that Le Devoir, along with other French language dailies, had signed an agreement with the ITU to cover their newspaper operations. They had, however, closed their job printing department, L'Imprimerie Populaire, on 1 July 1921 and re-opened it on 15 August as an open shop.<sup>177</sup> The president of ITU local 145 claimed that a strike was declared when Le Devoir refused to dismiss four printers who would not pay the union's special assessment to support the strikers.<sup>178</sup> The dispute also involved a breach of ITU regulations when part of l'Imprimerie Populaire's material was used for another shop.<sup>179</sup> Le Devoir kept publishing with the help of students at the deaf-mute institute, where the Clercs de Saint-Viateur taught typography.<sup>180</sup> When ITU members walked out, Le Devoir declared it would also operate its newspaper operations as an open shop.<sup>181</sup> Within six weeks, however, there was a Catholic union at Le Devoir as it began sporting a Catholic printing trades union label above its labour column.<sup>182</sup>

At other printing shops, there were also some Catholic members of the ITU who joined the Catholic union to avoid paying the assessment of ten percent of their wages.<sup>183</sup> Defections such as these produced another small strike of eight men and two women at the Garden City Press in Gardenvale Quebec in January 1922. While the company had a verbal agreement to abide by ITU conditions, the owner was unwilling

to fire those who defected the Catholic union.<sup>184</sup> Catholic union actions also prompted expressions of anger from J.W. Hays, Vice-President of the ITU, who declared that "If the Catholic Church or any other church or any other organization sought to interfere in Labor matters the I.T.U. would teach them a lesson."<sup>185</sup>

It was the extension of this strike to the shops of Le Soleil and The Telegraph in Quebec City in February 1922 that has received the most attention from historians. These shops did most of the printing for the provincial legislature and the interruption of this work led to a long debate on international unionism in the legislature and a violent attack by Premier Taschereau. The national and Catholic union at the shops of L'Action catholique immediately offered to do the work. On 17 February, two days after the strike began, the Catholic unions in Quebec resolved that:

The Central Council of the Catholic and National Syndicates takes advantage of the occasion to make an appeal to all the employers who have the interests of society at heart asking them to give preference to Catholic and National Labor Syndicates with a view of hastening the arrival of the day when Canadian unions will be free for ever from the United States leadership.<sup>186</sup>

Premier Tachereau's attack on international unionism, however, soon convinced the ITU strikers to do the printing for the legislature and the work was returned to its original shops.



International union arguments

Through 1920, some of the Catholic union campaigns met with considerable resistance. AFL union members felt that the attacks on their organizations were unfair and dishonest, a "misinformation campaign" in the words of one activist,<sup>187</sup> while another described them as "prétextes faux et surtout jésuitiques."<sup>188</sup> The BTC and the UBCJ organized public meetings in March and April. According to Horace Rivière, UTWA Local 2007 in Montreal packed a Catholic union organizing meeting and "put it all over the priest that tried to talk against the UTWA."<sup>189</sup> When Catholic union organizers began to recruit workers at the CPR Angus shops, AFL militants attended Catholic union organizing meetings to respond directly and immediately to criticism of their organizations.<sup>190</sup> During one confrontation in the a parish hall, international union supporters interrupted the speeches with questions. When the speakers, including abbé Hébert, then left the podium they were buttonholed and grilled.<sup>191</sup> At another meeting, prayers were called to prevent an AFL militant from reaching the platform to address the gathering, forcing him to kneel along with all the others in a hall.<sup>192</sup>

It was in October and November 1920, during the early months of the plumbers strike and while rival unions were

being established in a number of industries, that the international unions responded systematically to Catholic union claims and arguments. This was done in a series of articles and editorials, mostly in the columns of Labor World, and perhaps also in the provincial organ of the UBCJ, the Charpentier-menuisier.<sup>193</sup> There were, however, few other vehicles for the international unions to reach francophone readers, especially as few international union journals published anything in French. Some daily newspapers, such as La Patrie, were sympathetic to AFL unions to the extent that they included labour columns written by a local international union leader. But few of these provided a forum to respond to Catholic union promoters and in 1920 some papers, notably La Patrie and La Presse, became distinctly less friendly to the international union movement.

Much of this campaign was conducted by Gustave Francq who was determined to defend his conception of trade unionism against members of the clergy and other Catholic union promoters. This was not the first time that he responded to such critics. When the WFM was organizing in Thetford in 1916, Francq answered attacks on the international unions by the local newspaper Le Canadien.<sup>194</sup> During the bitter 1919 strikes at the Davie shipyards in Lauzon and at Dominion Textile in Montmorency, Francq disputed the criticisms levelled by

L'Action catholique, even engaging in an exchange of articles over the charge that AFL organizers were anti-clerical.<sup>195</sup> At the closing of the 1920 Semaine sociale in Montreal he responded to Archbishop Bruchési's appeal to Catholic workers to abandon the AFL.<sup>196</sup> In 1920 when the Secretariat des Syndicats catholiques et nationaux de Montréal issued a series of 25 tracts criticizing international unions, Francq attacked and ridiculed many of the ideas presented by the tracts' authors.<sup>197</sup>

The international unions argued that they were more effective at defending the economic and material interests of workers, that they were the only ones capable of obtaining fair wages and fair working conditions.<sup>198</sup> The key to these improvements was solidarity, their strength came from their ability to unite all workers. This was why AFL organizations "rejette toute division dans ses rangs, elle ne connaît aucune question de langues, de race ou de religion, qui divise ailleurs les ouvriers."<sup>199</sup> The Catholic union movement, on the other hand, weakened workers by creating divisions on religious lines that had nothing to do with class interests. AFL leaders contended that it was because of these divisions that Quebec workers faced conditions that were worse than elsewhere.<sup>200</sup>

To organize on religious lines was also impossible to achieve in practice because of the diverse nature of the population, particularly in Montreal. Recognizing that Quebec's cosmopolitan population meant that Catholic organizations could not represent all workers, Henri Bourassa suggested that protestant and non-francophone workers could be organized into "annexes" to the Catholic and national unions. In response, Francq rejected the idea of such "annexes" as unjust since their members would not have the same rights and privileges as Catholics. He later also warned that isolating workers in separate organizations could lead to "une véritable guerre de religion" in a country with Canada's religious diversity.<sup>201</sup> International union leaders also argued that confessional unionism could lead to conflict when the employer was of a different religion.<sup>202</sup>

The Catholic unions also divided workers by appealing to national sentiment, accusing the international unions of subservience to American headquarters and arguing that Canadians should manage their own organizations. International union advocates answered that there were important advantages to be gained from the international connection. AFL unions were stronger and had proven their effectiveness. There was also access to a larger strike fund, often the key to winning a dispute. Since capital and finance were international, so

must workers organize in this way.<sup>203</sup> This was a period when unions were bargaining increasingly on an industry wide basis in Canada and the United States. Catholic unions claimed that Canadian dues were sent to the United States for the benefit of American workers. AFL supporters claimed that they received good value for their dues. One AFL member also noted that Catholic organizations also sent money out of the country.<sup>204</sup> To the accusation of subservience to American headquarters, International unions countered the argument by claiming that they did control their own affairs while deriving considerable benefits from international ties. According to Francq, it was only when it came to declaring a strike that a Canadian affiliate needed permission from its international headquarters. He implied that this was a sensible control to prevent rash or precipitous actions.<sup>205</sup>

While Catholic unions were open to all Catholics, AFL militants accused some Catholic union promoters of xenophobia for attacking non-francophone immigrants. At one Catholic union meeting in Montreal insults were directed "à toutes les races de langues étrangères".<sup>206</sup> They were also criticized for anti-Semitism. Eva Circé-Côté, writing in Labor World under the pseudonym Julien Saint-Michel, stated that Catholic associations have a "haine des Juifs ... alors qu'un des articles de notre credo démocratique est la fraternité

universelle."<sup>207</sup>

While AFL organizations were effective, Catholic unions had done little to benefit the working class. The Catholic unions were a destructive movement, a "Campagne défaitiste" that tried to undo the work of the international unions. Catholic unions denigrated International union leaders in the same fashion as OBU supporters.<sup>208</sup> Labor World did not blame Catholic unions if they organized the unorganized but objected when they tried to attract those who are already organized.<sup>209</sup> In most centres where Catholic unions were being newly established, including Montreal, the major thrust was to replace developing or well established AFL unions. François Gervais who worked at the CPR Angus shops, argued that if Catholic union promoters, such as Hébert, were sincere they would fight capitalists instead of attacking other unions.<sup>210</sup> The Catholic union campaign in 1919 and 1920 came at a time when AFL or TLCC organizations were recruiting new groups of workers and making inroads into smaller industrial towns in Quebec. This prompted one fur worker to observe in September 1920 that Catholic unions appeared at the moment when they were least needed.<sup>211</sup>

This argument was also used by Gustave Francq on the occasion of the establishment of Catholic Tramway Workers

union at the end of August or beginning of September 1920. Until 1918 tramway workers had attempted repeatedly to form a union without success for 15 years. Each time the company had fired the organizers and supporters. When the workers asked for an arbitration board under the IDIA, the company refused on the grounds that the request did not come from its employees. Francq asked where abbé Hébert had been during all this time, pointing out that he had shown no interest in labour while the clergy high and low "qui se voilaient la face quand ils entendaient parler d'union ouvrière et condamnaient impitoyablement toute tentative d'organisation." Since an international union was organized among tramway workers in February 1918, it had gained increased wages and significantly improved working conditions. Francq observed that Hébert knew that the decision of a recent arbitration board was not popular among streetcar workers and that the timing was good for a raid that could add 3,000 members to the Catholic movement. The danger, Francq went on, was that this division would weaken the union and allow the company to return to the wages and conditions of earlier years.<sup>212</sup>

Many of the international union arguments amounted to a refusal to accept the Quebec clergy's interpretation of the two encyclicals, Rerum novarum and Singulari quadam.<sup>213</sup> There was seldom, if ever, any explicit reference to the

encyclicals, perhaps to avoid any discussion of religious matters. A basic area of disagreement was the idea that trade union issues were fundamentally moral or religious ones. Trade union leaders such as Francq believed that economic and religious matters should be kept separate.

The Quebec Church had a long tradition of suspicion of neutral associations and organizations with a mixed Catholic and non-Catholic membership that was reinforced by Singulari quadam. International unions, on the other hand, maintained that AFL membership was compatible with Catholic faith and convictions, that it was possible to be a good Catholic and a good international union member at the same time. They argued that rubbing shoulder with members of other religions was not dangerous because discussion of religious issues was forbidden at union meetings. While Catholics could not be excommunicated for membership, they were placed under considerable pressure to abandon neutral unions. François Gervais asked abbé Hébert if international unions "étaient défendues par l'Église. Il répondit que oui."<sup>214</sup> When F. Lafortune of Ottawa was named general organizer for leather workers for Canada and visited Montreal in November 1920 it was reported that:

Canadien-français, catholique pratiquant, il se propose de faire l'organisation à travers la province de Québec des travailleurs en cuir, et pourra faire comprendre aux ouvriers de la province de Québec que faire partie d'une union internationale ne peut aucunement influencer leurs



sentiments religieux. Né et élève dans une province dont la majorité de la population est protestante, ses convictions religieuses n'ont souffert aucunement d'avoir courtoisé les confrères non catholiques durant l'espace de temps donné à son organisation.<sup>215</sup>

International union leaders also pointed out that Catholic union organizers were often former members of the international unions. For them to contend that international unions "a des principes qui répugnent à la foi des Canadiens,"<sup>216</sup> was inconsistent. They also pointed out the inconsistency of maintaining that international unions should be accepted by the Church in the United States but discouraged in Quebec.<sup>217</sup>

The international unions rejected the idea that the Church should oversee labour organization and guide its activities. These arguments amounted to an assertion that only autonomous working class institutions free of clerical interference and under working class leadership could be effective. Rerum novarum inspired Catholic social action but international union leaders saw no reason why late comers who had previously displayed little sympathy for workers organizations should provide leadership to a movement that was slowly established in the face of clerical opposition. Moreover, craft union leaders, such as those who controlled the MTLC, valued experience in the labour movement and emphasized the importance of proving one's ability and

dedication through years of service. Catholic unions were led by an element foreign to the labour movement.<sup>218</sup> The priests promoting Catholic unions and the chaplains who played an active role in them at this time knew little of labour organization. They did not know how to conduct negotiations. This inexperience could have disastrous results, leading to unnecessary strikes. As an example, AFL members pointed to the 1920 Asbestos strike where the chaplain rejected the idea of conciliation. Francq argued that in an international union this would not have occurred. Since all means of settling the dispute had to be exhausted before approval would be given for a walkout by international headquarters.<sup>219</sup> Inexperienced and incompetent leadership was only one reason to reject clerical leadership. There was also a danger in placing trust in someone who did not share the same experience. Carpenter Arthur Martel argued that because of their celibacy, the clergy knew nothing of the needs breadwinners who had to support a family.<sup>220</sup>

Another problem was that the Catholic Church had its own economic interests to promote and protect. It did not share the same relationship to employers as workers. Often members of the clergy had more in common and identified more with employers than with workers. Without explicitly referring to the clergy, this was clearly what Jean Prollo meant when he

stated that:

D'autres, dans l'espoir de faire luire leur inutile vanité, voudraient faire croire aux travailleurs que, hors le mouvement sous leurs contrôle, il n'y a pas de justice n'y (sic) de bien être pour le travailleur, mais avec l'arrière pensée d'espérer pouvoir contrôler le mouvement ouvrier et le faire servir à leur profit ou à celui de leur classe. Ce dernier est plus dangereux que le premier, parce qu'il dispose d'un élément de propagande pour qui tous les moyens justifient la fin. Mettre les ouvriers en infériorité devant leurs employeurs a toujours été la tactique de cet élément, vu qu'en échange de leurs vilénies, ils peuvent garder un certain prestige sur leurs (moutons) pardon sur leurs membres. Ils en tirent non seulement un profit moral, mais ne dédaignent pas un certain profit matériel.<sup>221</sup>

International union members believed that employers were pleased at the development of a less effective, less threatening, and less demanding labour movement. Some observers also suggested that the Catholic unions were established specifically to help employers. Lynch argued that Catholic union promoters "sèment la discorde dans les rangs des ouvriers pour faire l'affaire des exploiters et des profiteurs...", while another member stated that the Catholic unions were created "pour favoriser le patronat qui seul profite de la division des travailleurs".<sup>222</sup> Employers were "très reconnaissant" towards Catholic organizations,<sup>223</sup> hence all the favourable reports in the Capitalist press.<sup>224</sup> The close relationship to employers was characteristic of Catholic unions elsewhere as well. When Catholic union promoters praised Belgium's Catholic labour movement it prompted one international union partisan, Arthur Louis Bonny, to publish

a number of documents on the actions of Belgium's Catholic unions and that described their leaders as "jaunes."<sup>225</sup>

Some statements suggest that international union leaders believed that Catholic union promoters also had political interests to protect. Barber L.G.N. Pagé described Catholic unions as the political tools of the clergy.<sup>226</sup> Certainly the Church objected to the educational reforms demanded by the international unions, and one of the first acts by the Catholic unions when they met in convention was to oppose international union demands on education.

There was also a suggestion that Catholic union organizers had their own personal interests to promote. One article described them as paid from many sources.<sup>227</sup> AFL union promoters also levelled charges that their adversaries were sometimes former members of the international unions who left because they were unhappy at their lack of influence,<sup>228</sup> who were unable to use the movement for their personal benefit, or who had been expelled.<sup>229</sup>

Many of the differences between the two movements reflected opposing views on class conflict. Catholic union promoters opposed class conflict, especially as manifested in the large number of strikes, and believed that by replacing

international unions with Catholic organizations they could establish harmony between workers and employers. Within the international unions there were socialists who hoped that class conflict would lead to revolutionary change in society and to the eradication of capitalism. Socialists, however, were a minority among both the membership and leadership of these organizations. Gustave Francq may have been more representative of moderate craft unions leaders. Francq argued that class conflict was a reality and implied that it was not provoked by workers or their organizations. Rather it was forced on them by employers who refused to concede workers' rights or a decent standard of living.<sup>230</sup> For Francq Catholic union attempts to reconcile the two classes through a Catholic labour movement in fact succeeded only in establishing organizations that did little for workers. This was evident, for example, in that Catholic union promoters such as Alfred Charpentier placed considerable emphasis on reminding workers of their duties towards their employers. Francq argued that workers did not have to be told by their own organizations of their duties, employers did enough of that.<sup>231</sup> What is remarkable, however, is that Francq's conception of strike action was very close to that of the Catholic union movement. It was a weapon to be used as a last resort after all means of conciliation had been exhausted.<sup>232</sup> Francq also wanted labour and capital to co-operate to avoid "une rébellion insensée"

such as had occurred during the Russian Revolution. The only alternative to revolution, he believed, was social reform as prescribed by the moderate wing of the trade union movement. He wanted the moderates from both labour and capital to work together to mitigate the effects of class conflict and to keep it within strictly peaceful bounds.<sup>233</sup>

The campaign against Catholic unions exhausted

The Catholic union offensive in Montreal came at a time when AFL unions were increasingly under attack. It coincided with higher levels of unemployment, an employer offensive that saw wages cut and an open shop campaign. There were several complaints of attacks on international unions from several large daily newspapers in Montreal,<sup>234</sup> including previously sympathetic ones such as La Presse.<sup>235</sup> The Catholic unions appeared to be making headway at a time when the post war expansion of the international unions had come to an end. Particularly alarming were the claims that Catholic unions had 40,000 members, that all but four or five international unions had disappeared from Quebec City, and that they represented a majority of the workers in all the smaller industrial centres of the province. While it was rightly pointed out that these claims were exaggerated,<sup>236</sup> the international unions were clearly on the defensive.

In the fall of 1920, the national and Quebec provincial executives of the TLCC met with the president of the MTLC to set up a central organizational structure to co-ordinate the campaign against the Catholic unions. The MTLC also hoped to revive the union label committee.<sup>237</sup> These initiatives accomplished little and local unions began to demand that the MTLC take a more active role in combatting the Catholic unions.<sup>238</sup> At one particularly large Council meeting, L.N.G. Pagé wanted to know "où on en était avec cette campagne de propagande".<sup>239</sup> Some unions, such as the painters, wanted the Council to help them secure more organizers from their internationals, a demand the Council executive refused on the grounds that each union was autonomous and that the campaign to fight the Catholic unions was primarily the responsibility of individual organizations.<sup>240</sup>

Council leaders, for their part, believed they were not given the support or resources an effective campaign required. Of the funds solicited by the TLCC for its special campaign, only one union contributed \$500. When Gompers went to the ITU convention in Quebec City in August 1921 he met with international union leaders in Montreal. Francq explained that the situation was serious and threatened to withdraw from the International labour movement if more support was not forthcoming.<sup>241</sup> Francq failed to convince the AFL president to

provide more funds but did not follow through on his threat to resign. If the international unions did not undertake a systematic campaign to destroy the Catholic labour movement, it was because the TLCC did not have the resources, while for the AFL the Catholic unions were a threat only in Quebec.<sup>242</sup>

Attacks from both Catholic unions and employers left the international unions discouraged late in 1921 when the CTCC was established. Montreal newspapers reported that there was a general sense of defeat, even of alarm at the MTLC.<sup>243</sup> One MTLC delegate noted that while TLCC organizations stagnated in Montreal and still had a presence in Quebec City, he feared that the movement was "almost extinct in the smaller places in the province."<sup>244</sup> Francq acknowledged that international unions were continually losing ground.<sup>245</sup> There were few organizers to be seen in Montreal any more, business agents often failed to attend MTLC meetings, and seldom reported on the condition of their unions. Even Council meetings were characterized by internal squabbling.<sup>246</sup> The organizing committee had failed to do anything.<sup>247</sup>

The TLCC did little of a concrete nature to oppose Catholic unions after 1920.<sup>248</sup> One researcher, Émile Vallée argued that because of the delicate situation caused by clerical intervention and support the TLCC decided after the



establishment of the CTCC to avoid openly discussing opposition to Catholic unions, and left it to individual unions to decide on what actions to take.<sup>249</sup> Rouillard argues that they decided that it was better to do nothing than to be accused of anti-clericalism, that the Labor World campaign did more harm than good.<sup>250</sup>

Certainly only a small number of international union leaders responded openly to the Catholic unions' clerical promoters.<sup>251</sup> Few others were willing to take on the Catholic press and the clergy in the same manner. But Francq avoided discussing any religious issues focusing on labour relations in his replies. In the 1960s when Émile Vallée studied the rivalry between the two movements, he concluded that Francq's views on religious issues were beyond reproach and that his opinions were not anti-clerical.<sup>252</sup> Francq did not oppose the Catholic religion.<sup>253</sup> He recognized the spiritual role of religion, but he objected to Church control of unions.<sup>254</sup>

Nonetheless, Francq became the focus of criticism for opponents and the subject of a letter writing campaign.<sup>255</sup> Francq found that any criticism of the clergy was very difficult. It was easy for opponents to label him as anti-clerical. Francq warned that "Il faut être très prudent dans cette campagne, car derrière les Syndicats Catholiques, il y

a un pouvoir et une force qu'il est très difficile de séparer du côté matériel de ces organisations."<sup>256</sup> Towards the end of 1921, Francq deflected demands for a renewed campaign by arguing that the Catholic unions should not cause such great concern. If they protected workers they would thrive, and if they did not then they would self-destruct and disappear. The international union movement should be primarily interested in promoting its own organizations to show that they were stronger and more effective at defending their members. Finally in a statement that may have expressed both his exasperation at the thought of renewing a difficult campaign and his distaste for Catholic union arguments, Francq added that if they lost members to the cry of race and religion, then so much the better.<sup>257</sup>

#### Rivalry to 1925

There were fewer strikes involving inter-union rivalry after 1921 but this had more to do with a reluctance to undertake strike action and the weakened position of the international unions than any reluctance on the part of Catholic unions to replace striking international union members. With higher levels of unemployment employers may not have needed the help of Catholic unions to resist international union demands, although they could still be used

as a threat. When some 400 workers at Tetrault Shoes in Montreal walked off the shop floor in December 1923 over the dismissal of three union activists<sup>258</sup> Tetrault wrote to each of the strikers that the officers of the Catholic union had approached him with an offer to replace the striking workers. He indicated that he would accept the offer if they did not return to work as he had no intention of dealing with the BSWIU.<sup>259</sup> In the end while Tetrault would not meet BSWIU officials, he reinstated the three fired workers after meeting a committee of his own employees bringing the eight and a half day dispute to a close.<sup>260</sup> The incident is significant because it reveals that Catholic unions continued to offer to replace striking international union members.

There were a few occasions when the international unions tried to raid Catholic organizations. In 1919, a neutral union was established to rival the Catholic carriage makers in Montreal.<sup>261</sup> In 1920 Labor World claimed that a wage increase for Quebec City streetcar drivers who were members of a Catholic union was a response to attempts by the international unions to organize them, that it was meant to prevent them from making inroads.<sup>262</sup> There were, however, no cases of international union members offering to replace striking Catholic union members.<sup>263</sup>

Catholic unions did not limit their appeals to private sector employers as they also appealed for support from public and para-public bodies. From 1920 on, the Catholic unions at their annual conventions passed resolutions calling on municipalities and school boards to give construction contracts to employers that gave preference in hiring to Catholic union members.<sup>264</sup> They may have hoped that the presence of priests on Catholic school boards would help their cause. The international unions, however, responded convincingly that their members should not be excluded from such work as they too contributed to municipal and school taxes.

While Catholic unions may not have received special consideration from such public and para-public bodies, they came to rely increasingly on the direct patronage of the Church, which commissioned a great deal of construction work each year. In 1922, the CTCC convention passed a resolution asking Catholic religious institutions for preference.<sup>265</sup> Abbé Boileau, named chaplain to the Catholic unions in Montreal in 1923, considered convincing such institutions to accept this principle to be his primary task.<sup>266</sup> To the dismay of Catholic union promoters religious communities were not always willing to comply so Quebec Bishops were asked for a strong statement of support in 1925.<sup>267</sup> In 1925 they asked all under their

authority to give these unions preference. Clauses to ensure that contractors used Catholic union members were inserted into contracts.<sup>268</sup> The policy of using only members of Catholic unions on church construction projects was one of the most serious causes of annoyance to the international unions during these years.<sup>269</sup>

For the most part, inter-union rivalry was limited to conflicts between AFL and Catholic unions. One exception was in the building trades, particularly in Montreal. In 1925, 12 of the 23 Canadian Federation of Labor locals were in Quebec. The Canadian Federation of Bricklayers, Masons, Plasterers and other Building Trades accounted for nine of these, seven of them in Montreal.<sup>270</sup> There was also a strike in 1924 because of a conflict between two international building trades unions. In this case members of the UBCJ refused to work with members of the British based Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.<sup>271</sup>

In other areas, Catholic union activists kept working through study groups. In the summer of 1922, Alfred Charpentier joined a group of Montreal police for a closed retreat at Brocquerie de Boucherville. He decided to organize a closed retreat as an annual event for firefighters beginning in 1923. In 1925 he established the Groupe Jeanne d'Arc des

retraitants pompiers to study and spread the social teachings of the Church among the firefighters, and to encourage them to disaffiliate from the international and join the Catholic union movement.<sup>272</sup>

Despite the rivalry there are indications that international unions approached Catholic unions on a number of occasions in the hope of working together but that these overtures were usually repulsed. The international union suggested cooperation during the 1920 plumbers strike in Montreal. In Hull, Father Bonhomme wrote that "Les syndicats catholiques n'ont jamais voulu s'unir aux syndicats neutres pour la revendication de leur droits, malgré les nombreuses invitations des neutres."<sup>273</sup> One of the papal encyclicals on labour relations, Singulari quadam provided for co-operation between Catholic organizations and those composed of non-Catholic through a "cartel", that is a united front limited to a single issue.<sup>274</sup> Charpentier says that in March 1920 the Catholic unions in Montreal formed a cartel with the international unions to demand the adoption of a new form of civic administration in Montreal.<sup>275</sup> While hardly a cartel, there is one other occasion when a degree of cooperation was worked out. During an Ottawa Plumbers' strike the Canadian general organizer John Bruce reported that, along with business agent J.B. Blais, he met the officers of the national

Catholic unions in Montreal in July 1921 and convinced them to stop sending strikebreakers to Ottawa.<sup>276</sup> Generally, however, Catholic unions resisted establishing closer relations to the international unions because they wanted to distinguish themselves from their rivals and because they were intent on destroying and replacing them. In November 1921 Charpentier stated that Catholic unions would establish friendly relations with non Catholic Canadian unions in other provinces once the Catholic unions "seront en force", that is once they had replaced international organizations.<sup>277</sup>

#### National and Catholic union membership and militancy to 1925

The period from 1920 to 1925 was a difficult one for organized labour in Quebec. Overall membership in all trade unions peaked in 1919 and 1920 and then declined to remain fairly stagnant after 1922. As a whole, however, the labour movement was still at least two to three times larger in 1925 than it had been in 1914.<sup>278</sup> But how successful was the Catholic union campaign at establishing a viable alternative to the international unions? To what extent were Catholic union members drawn from the international unions? And during the depression of the 1920s, how militant were the Catholic unions compared to religiously neutral labour organizations?

Any accurate assessment of overall Catholic union membership is impossible. Despite claims that membership continued to grow until the establishment of the CTCC in 1921, Catholic unions were equally hard hit from the start of the depression in the summer of 1920. At its founding convention, the CTCC had four central councils, in Quebec, Montreal, Hull, and Granby, 80 unions, 8 study groups and claimed 45,000 members in 21 cities.<sup>279</sup> These numbers were vastly inflated. Alfred Charpentier later claimed that the CTCC boasted of 26,000 members in 1921 but admitted that even this figure was too large:

La vérité me force à reconnaître que les effectifs déclarés en 1921 [par la CTCC] étaient soufflés de plusieurs milliers, résultant de chiffres exagérés fournis par les groupements fondateurs, et que, parmi les quatre-vingts syndicats mentionnés, nombre d'entre eux n'étaient pas d'authentiques syndicats, mais des organismes éphémères bâtis à la course pour la circonstance. Par ailleurs, la terrible crise d'alors avait commencé depuis deux ans à décimer nos rangs...<sup>280</sup>

Jacques Rouillard estimated that the CTCC had 17,600 members in 1922, but this figure must be treated with caution. Each year the federal Department of Labour asked unions to report on the size of their membership. Compliance was voluntary, however, and many unions failed to complete and return the Department forms. In 1922, a good one for returns, about 60 per cent of the Catholic unions did, giving a total reported membership of 10,631. Rouillard arrived at his estimate by



multiplying the average membership for each reporting local by the total number of member locals.<sup>281</sup> It is clear from Charpentier's statement, and from other evidence, that a number of organizations had few members and were barely surviving. For example, the Corporation ouvière catholique de Lachine had three unions but the combined membership never totalled more than 30, far from the 166 members per union that was the average for those that did report.<sup>282</sup> We do not know whether the Corporation catholique de Lachine reported its membership, but if weak or floundering organizations were the least likely to reply, then this might also inflate the final total.

Rather than assume that locals that did not report were similar in size to those that did, perhaps one could assume that all unions, both Catholic and international, experienced the same factors that determined whether a local sent in the report or not. If so, then comparing reported union membership would at least give a rough indication of relative strength, if not total membership. Comparing the total reported union membership for CTCC unions against total reported union membership suggests that in 1921 the CTCC had 15.4 per cent of the total. Between 1921 and 1925, the percentage ranged from a high of 20 per cent in 1922 to a low of 14.3 per cent in 1925. The average over the period

1921 to 1925 was 17.3 per cent.<sup>283</sup> This figure is significantly lower than Rouillard's. He concluded that the CTCC unions represented 27 per cent of Quebec's organized workers in the period 1920 to 1930.<sup>284</sup>

It is clear that there were significant regional and local variations to Catholic union strength in the early 1920s. Catholic unions remained strongest in Quebec City where the older national unions had a tradition of defending members' interests, and where there had been steady growth in 1918 and 1919. By 1923 there were more Catholic union members in Quebec City than the rest of the province combined.<sup>285</sup> This does not mean that the international unions disappeared. They continued to maintain a significant presence.<sup>286</sup>

Notwithstanding the campaigns in 1919 and 1920, Catholic organizations failed to thrive in a number of other smaller industrial centres. In many areas of the province Catholic unions declined for a number of reasons apart from the depression. This was particularly the case for some that had a record of close ties to employers, had undermined international union organizing drives or strikes, and had failed to develop into stronger defenders of their members' interests. In 1923 Chicoutimi workers wanted nothing to do

with the FMON, considering it a creature of the company.<sup>287</sup> By 1923, the Corporation ouvrière catholique in Trois-Rivières had never called a strike.<sup>288</sup> Both organizations peaked before the war, and in 1923 they were left with only about 300 members each. In Thetford Mines, where a Catholic union did strike, the record of collaboration with employers and hostility towards the international union kept the miners fractured and divided, and any form of organization soon disappeared. By 1922 most of the Catholic unions in the Eastern Townships and south of Montreal were in decline.<sup>289</sup> In Granby, French-Canadian workers preferred the AFL over Catholic unions,<sup>290</sup> and by 1925, the Catholic unions had disappeared, while there was still a vigorous international movement.<sup>291</sup> In St-Hyacinthe the depression in 1920 prevented any further organizing before Catholic unions were firmly established.<sup>292</sup> Only in Sherbrooke did the Catholic movement take root by 1925.<sup>293</sup> It also remained active in Hull. Membership there peaked at 1,500 in 1919, but it retained as many as 900 members by 1925.<sup>294</sup> Overall, however, the general picture is of decline and decay. On the other hand, despite the depression, international unions remained important in smaller centres and represented the majority of union members outside of Montreal.<sup>295</sup>

Marie-Ludovic Maltais a writer sympathetic to the

Catholic unions wrote in 1925 that their growth in Montreal was very slow,<sup>296</sup> but it was there that they steadily increased their membership. In 1919, with five out of six Catholic unions reporting, there was a total reported membership of 987. By 1925 with 24 out of 25 locals reporting, the figure had grown to 4,103. This was 10.2 per cent of the total reported union membership in Montreal, although this figure is high as a large number of international unions failed to send in their reports. Only 131 of the city's 188 locals did so.<sup>297</sup> The establishment of the Catholic labour movement in Montreal must be considered a modest success, one that laid the basis for later expansion. In this case employer and Church support was crucial. One of the largest organizations, Montreal's National Shoe Workers' Union, returned to the Catholic fold when employers promised recognition and a hiring preference. And clerical support was important for growth in the construction and printing trades.

It is also difficult to determine with any sense of precision how many Catholic union members were new recruits to the labour movement as opposed to international union converts. In Montreal there were defections to the Catholic unions in a number of workplaces as numerous new locals were established starting in 1920 but in few instances, however,

is it possible to estimate how many workers this involved. One of their key Catholic union successes was in the boot and shoe industry. In Quebec City much of the growth in 1918 and 1919 resulted from a vigorous campaign to organize previously unorganized workers. The defeats at Dominion Textile and at Davie Shipbuilding seriously undermined the prestige of the international unions, facilitating Catholic union raids at least until the start of the depression. Membership figures appear to confirm this trend. They suggest that the international unions grew significantly from 1917 to 1919 and then declined starting in 1920, a year earlier than in Montreal. At the same time, the number of international union locals remained constant from 1919 to at least 1921.<sup>298</sup> There was at least one significant wholesale defection to Catholic unionism, the members of the Quebec City police force.<sup>299</sup>

In the newer industries and communities, in the Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean region, and in the Mauricie, for instance, many of the Catholic union members were people who came originally from rural parishes with little previous experience of unionism of any kind. In these cases, the Catholic unions had an initial advantage that they squandered when their organizations failed to develop into more aggressive defenders of their members interests. In the

industrial centres south of the St-Lawrence River there is no indication that Catholic union campaigns succeeded in drawing many members from rival unions. In many cases Catholic organizing drives quickly followed the appearance of TLCC organizers. This was the case in Thetford, for example, where the Catholic union members were recruited before they joined an international union.

What about Catholic union militancy during this period? The Catholic unions engaged in few strikes in 1917 and 1918. In 1919 Catholic unions were also quiescent, initiating only three strikes. The virtual absence of labour conflict cannot be attributed to the inexperience of a new movement.<sup>300</sup> This explanation might do for the Catholic union chaplains who needed some time before they would acknowledge the need for strike action, but it does not suffice to explain why Catholic union members avoided this tactic. The older national organizations that entered the Catholic movement in 1917 had traditions of militancy going back decades in some cases. As for new recruits, one of the hallmarks of the post-war strike wave was that many disputes were undertaken by newly organized groups of workers without a history of aggressive actions, sometimes with little encouragement from union leadership and occasionally against their leaders' recommendations. This suggests that abbé Fortin was not

boasting idly when he claimed to have had considerable success in preventing strike action. On the contrary, it speaks to his prestige and influence among the rank and file at union meetings, as well as with the secular union leadership. Nor was Fortin alone according to Catholic union claims. In 1921, the secretary of the Montreal Secretariat of Catholic unions stated that the chaplain had helped to prevent a number of strikes in the preceding years.<sup>301</sup> This aversion to work stoppages probably helped foster a close relationship with some employers. For instance Alfred Dubuc, owner of the Compagnie de pulpe de Chicoutimi, paid for the closing banquet for the Catholic union conference in 1920.<sup>302</sup> Avoiding walk-outs did not mean that members of these organizations, and their chaplains, could not at times argue forcefully for better wages and working conditions for their members. To what extent Fortin and other Catholic union promoters were able to secure improvements by moral suasion, and without the threat of a strike, however, remains to be evaluated.

In 1920 Catholic unions engaged in a much larger number of strikes. Of the seventy-nine disputes that occurred in Quebec, at least eleven involved Catholic unions. These shop-floor disputes were over a wide range of issues, including discrimination for union activity, demands for

increased wages, and, in the case of Quebec coal carters, opposition to the use of a three-ton truck for deliveries. In 1921, in Quebec City a civic workers strike led by a Catholic organization drew considerable community sympathy.<sup>303</sup> Of the 122 strikes that occurred in Quebec during the years 1921 to 1925, Catholic unions waged at least 17, about 14 per cent.<sup>304</sup> Is it possible to form conclusions about Catholic union militancy from these figures? This is difficult because of the uncertainty surrounding Catholic union membership figures. Certainly the level of strike activity would be low if one accepts Rouillard's estimate of Catholic union membership at 27 per cent of all union members. Compared to an average of 17.3 per cent calculated on reported union membership, the discrepancy is much smaller. While the national and Catholic unions were quiescent during 1918 and 1919, years of mounting labour militancy in the rest of Quebec and Canada, during the depression when militancy throughout the labour movement was in decline there was less perceptible difference in the Catholic unions propensity to strike. After years of restraint there may have been greater pressure from the rank and file to use what was in effect their most important weapon.

It is clear that from 1920 to 1925 the Catholic unions



simultaneously pursued two strategies. They remained determined to undermine and replace the international unions and to do so they were prepared to willingly collaborate with employers. At the same time they also proved more willing to defend members interests through strike action, ironically engaging in what they had considered one manifestation of class conflict. It is clear, however, that Catholic union clerical activists felt no contradiction between the promotion of intra-class cooperation and a genuine concern for workers' living and working conditions.

### Conclusion

If the war years and 1919 represented a period when the Catholic union movement attempted to conquer the industrial centres outside Montreal, in 1920 they embarked on an assault of the international-unionist stronghold. The international unions mounted a campaign to defend their organizations but abandoned it in less than a year. International union leaders found it difficult to attack the social teachings of the Church articulated by respected members of the clergy and at every level of the Church hierarchy. The campaign left international union leaders open to the charge of anti-clericalism. This was the case even though they limited their response to attempts to

counter the arguments and trade union strategy of the Catholic unions' clerical promoters, avoiding personal attacks and any reference to their religious duties, and carefully distinguishing between the Church's teachings and Church doctrine.

During these years, the Catholic labour movement first hoped to undermine and replace the international unions. In this struggle they accepted lower wages than international unions were demanding, in the construction and printing trades for instance, and were willing to replace international union members during strikes by plumbers, typographers, pulp and paper workers and shoe workers. In some of these conflicts they worked closely with employers to undermine international unions. The years 1920 and 1921 were those of greatest rivalry if only because there were fewer strikes during the later years of the depression, and employers were able to undercut the gains of earlier years without any aid from Catholic unions. Catholic unions remained willing to work with employers to undermine international unions, and to replace striking international union members right through to 1925 even if fewer possibilities presented themselves. They also retained policies and practices that could prove appealing to employers. For instance, they had a very limited concept of

what constituted a legitimate closed shop.

At the same time, Catholic unions became increasingly willing to strike to defend or advance their members' interests. Overall, this strategy probably secured more lasting results. The Catholic unions remained strong in Quebec City where the national unions had a tradition of protecting workers interests. Outside of Quebec City and Montreal, where Catholic unions had helped undermine international union strikes or organizing efforts, the Catholic organizations declined and disappeared. In some regions, such as in the Chicoutimi Lac Saint-Jean area, around Trois-Rivières, and in some of the growing industrial town of the eastern townships, many of the Catholic union members were probably from rural parishes with little experience of unionism. The Catholic unions had an initial advantage with some of these workers but appear to have squandered it during the early 1920s as many of the new organizations proved to be of little help defending or advancing workers interests. In Montreal, with a vigorous international union movement, the Catholic unions had to offer real advantages, either in the form of preference for work on Church construction projects, preference in hiring by employers as in the shoe industry, or by more effectively defending their members' interests.

## Endnotes

1. Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux, 1979, 229.
2. Labor World, 6 December 1919.
3. Labor World, 23 October 1920; TLCC Proceedings, 1920 68-9. On circulation figures for Labor World, see André E. Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier/ The Labor World (1916-1926): an Analysis of Thought and a detailed Index," D.E.S. Thesis, University of Montreal, 1971, 24-25.
4. TLCC Proceedings, 1920, 68-9; Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 268-9.
5. TLCC, Proceedings, 1920, 114-5. The AFL convention was held from June 7 to June 19, 1920
6. Charpentier, Dans les serres de l'Aigle, 26-7.
7. Le Devoir, 7 June 1920.
8. Le Devoir, 14 June 1920.
9. Le Devoir, 15 June 1920.
10. See Semaine sociale, 1920, 194, 205.
11. La Patrie, 16 June 1920.
12. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 263-5, 270.
13. Mary Harrita Fox, Peter E. Dietz, Labor Priest, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1953, 95.
14. Fox, Peter E. Dietz, 81.
15. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 269-271; Fox, Peter E. Dietz, 74, 84.
16. Charpentier, Dans les serres de l'Aigle, 28-9; Alfred Charpentier, Cinquante ans d'action ouvrière. Les mémoires d'Alfred Charpentier, Québec, 1971, 31-2.
17. Émile Vallée, "Les unions internationales et la concurrence des syndicats confessionnels au Québec," M.A.

Thesis, Université Laval, 1966, 18. See Charpentier, Ma conversion au syndicalisme catholique, 64.

18. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 33.

19. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 31.

20. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 32.

21. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 17.

22. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 57.

23. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 444.

24. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 33.

25. Michael Oliver, The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism 1920-1925, Montreal, 1991, 68.

26. Oliver, The Passionate Debate, 68.

27. Labor World, 19 June 1920; Anglophone delegates either raised no objection or supported participation. Le Devoir, 18 June 1920; Montreal Gazette, 18 June 1920.

28. Semaine sociale, 1920, 206.

29. Semaine sociale, 1920, 8.

30. Semaine sociale, 1920, 9.

31. Chartrand, Une certaine alliance: 60 ans...et après?, 18.

32. Labor World, 7 December 1918.

33. Chartrand, Une certaine alliance, 21.

34. Chartrand, Une certaine alliance, 24.

35. Chartrand, Une certaine alliance, 25.

36. Bruchesi's remarks on this issue were not published in the Semaine Sociale, 1920, 206. There is a full report of his remarks to teachers in Le Devoir, 26 June 1920.

37. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Quebec, Vol. XXIV, 216.

38. Le Devoir, 26 June 1920.

39. Montreal Star, 5 November 1920.

40. Chartrand, Une certaine alliance, 25.

41. This is how his remarks were described in at least one French language newspaper quoted in Labor World, 3 July 1920. The published version of his remarks do not mention this specific formulation but they are not complete. See Semaine Sociale du Canada, Montreal, 1920, 202, fn 1.

42. Semaine sociale, 1920, 206.

43. Jean-Guy de Guise, "Monographie du Conseil Central des Syndicats Nationaux de Montréal de 1920 à 1955," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Université de Montréal, 1962, 24.

44. de Guise, "Monographie du Conseil Central," p.23 fn. This is according to "certain" unnamed but knowledgeable sources.

45. de Guise, "Monographie du Conseil Central," p.23 fn.

46. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 503-4 fn 7.

47. de Guise, "Monographie du Conseil Central," 22. De Guise seems to have spoken to many who were involved at the start of the Catholic union movement. This was their opinion but unfortunately he does not name his sources.

48. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 52.

49. La Patrie, 25 September 1920.

50. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 54. Seven people wrote the tracts, Gerald Tremblay, the two chaplains, abbé Edmour Hébert, abbé Edmond Lacroix, organizers J.B. Beaudoin, L.G.

Hogue, and Jean-Baptiste Delisle, Martial Dieumegarde, and Alfred Charpentier.

51. Labor World, 19 June 1920. Unfortunately it did not cite specific examples. The National Shoe Workers Union left but joined the Canadian Federation of Labour.

52. Montreal Star, 23 August 1920.

53. La Patrie, 15 September 1920.

54. Montreal Star, 23 August 1920.

55. La Patrie, 15 September 1920.

56. Labor World, 2 October 1920.

57. Labor World, 9 October 1920.

58. NA, RG 27, vol. 323, Strike 368, Théo. Bertrand to Department of Labour, 19 November 1920.

59. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 29.

60. Montreal Gazette, 9 October 1920.

61. Labor World, 19 April 1919.

62. Labor World, 19 April 1919, 7 February 1920.

63. Labor World, 3 May 1919, 12 July 1919.

64. Labor World, 7 February 1920. J.P. Anglin, for instance, called for machinery to control wages.

65. NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout files, Vol. 323, Strike 351, Blais to Department of Labour, 7 October 1920. Blais used the ambiguous term "prevailing" in describing the hours, suggesting that it may not have been uniform.

66. Montreal Gazette, 6 July 1920.

67. Montreal Star, 4, 5 October 1920.

68. Montreal Gazette, 6 July 1920.

69. Montreal Gazette, 6 October 1920.
70. Labor World, 10 July 1920.
71. Montreal Gazette, 5 July 1920.
72. Labor World, 10 July 1920.
73. Montreal Gazette, 6 July 1920.
74. Montreal Gazette, 22 July 1920.
75. Montreal Star, 5 October 1920.
76. Labor World, 31 July 1920.
77. Montreal Gazette, 22 July 1920.
78. Montreal Gazette, 22 July 1920.
79. Montreal Gazette, 6 October 1920.
80. Montreal Star, 4 October 1920.
81. Montreal Star, 8 October 1920.
82. Montreal Gazette, 6 October 1920.
83. Labor World, 9 October 1920.
84. Montreal Gazette, 6 October 1920.
85. Montreal Gazette, 9 October 1920.
86. La Patrie, 7 April 1921.
87. Montreal Gazette, 9 October 1920.
88. Montreal Gazette, 4 November 1920.
89. Labor World, 6 November 1920.



90. La Patrie, 7 April 1921; Toronto Mail and Empire, 30 November 1920 in NA, Department of Labour, RG 27, Strike and Lockout files, Vol. 323, Strike 351.
91. Montreal Gazette, 9 October 1920.
92. Montreal Gazette, 4 November 1920.
93. Labor World, 6 November 1920.
94. Montreal Herald, 12 November 1920.
95. Montreal Gazette, 4 November 1920.
96. Labor World, 6 November 1920.
97. NA, RG 27, Vol. 323, Strike 351; T. Bertrand to Department of Labour, 15 April 1921.
98. NA, RG 27, Vol. 323, Strike 351, J.B. Blais to Department of Labour, 1 June 1921.
99. La Patrie, 9 December 1921.
100. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 24.
101. La Patrie, 9 December 1921.
102. La Patrie, 14 March 1922; 15 April 1922.
103. La Patrie, 1 May 1923.
104. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 284.
105. La Patrie, 11 April 1922.
106. Labor World, 15 April 1922.
107. La Patrie, 5 May 1922.
108. Labor World, 15 April 1922.
109. La Patrie, 15, 17 May 1920.
110. La Patrie, 16 October 1920.

111. Labor World, 6 November 1920.

112. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 27; La Patrie, 12 November 1920; This union participated in the establishment of the Catholic union council in February 1920 and appears to have left in May or June. The faction hostile to clerical direction was led by Cléophas Thibeau and Vallerand, SCNA, Box 1650, File Correspondance de l'abbé Maxime Fortin aumonier de la CTCC 1917-1921, Edmour Hébert to Maxime Fortin, 31 May 1920; Gérald Tremblay to Maxime Fortin, 2 November 1920.

113. La Patrie, 5 November 1921.

114. La Patrie, 29 July 1920.

115. La Patrie, 14, 15, 28 July 1920.

116. La Patrie, 25 October, 10, 18 November 1920.

117. NA, RG 27, Vol. 323, Strike 375, J. Daoust to Deputy Minister, Department of Labour, 11 November 1920.

118. Windsor Star, 30 October 1920 in NA, RG 27, Vol. 323, Strike, 375.

119. NA, RG 27, Vol. 323, Strike 375, J. Daoust to Deputy Minister, Department of Labour, 11 November 1920; Joseph Daoust to Deputy Minister, Department of Labour, 4 March 1921; Theo. Bertrand to Department of Labour, 28 February 1921.

120. Montreal Star, 16 November 1921.

121. NA, RG 27, Vol. 324, Strike 400A.

122. Labor World, 23 October 1920.

123. Montreal Star, 16 November 1921.

124. La Patrie, 12 November 1921.

125. According to Latham, The Catholic and National Labour Unions of Canada, 47; and Francis Dermot Barrett, "An Ecological Analysis of the National and Catholic Labour Movement in Quebec," Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1953, 212. At the time it returned to the Catholic labour movement, abbé Hébert offered the hope

that manufacturers would adopt preferential hiring of Catholic union members. La Patrie, 12 November 1921. It was in April 1922 that the manufacturers announced that they would fill positions through the union business agent. La Patrie, 7 April 1922.

126. This is the term used to describe the relations in La Patrie, 8 March 1922.

127. William E. Greening, A History of the Paper Makers Union In Canada, Cornwall, 1952, 37-38.

128. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 7-8.

129. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 9.

130. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 15.

131. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 38.

132. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 84; Parisé, Mgr Eugène Lapointe, 40 fn 4.

133. William F. Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec (1896-1914), Quebec, 1966, 169; Greening, Paper Makers Union, 11.

134. Gilbert Vanasse, Histoire de la Fédération des travailleurs du papier et de la forêt. Tome 1 (1907-1958), Montréal, 1986, 48.

135. See Parisé, Mgr Eugène Lapointe, 40 fn 4.

136. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 282.

137. Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth, 169.

138. Eug. Lapointe, "Une leçon opportune," in Le Bien Public, 16 June 1921, 17-18.

139. Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth, 170.

140. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 16.

141. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 19.

142. Le Devoir, 17 August 1921; Montreal Gazette, 17 August 1921.
143. NA, RG 27, Vol. 325, Strike 71, G.F. Cullet to Department of Labour, 26 April 1921.
144. NA, RG 27, Vol.325, Strike 71, G.F. Cullet to Department of Labour, 26 april 1921. The company claimed that 430 men were on strike while another 400 were out of work because of the shut-down.
145. Labor World, 18 June 1921.
146. Montreal Gazette, 26 April 1921.
147. Labor World, 18 June 1921.
148. Letter signed P. Johnston to the editor of the Labor World, 9 July 1921.
149. See Quebec Chronicle, 16 June 1921.
150. NA, RG 27, Vol. 325, Strike 71, G.F. Cullet to Department of Labour, 14 June 1921.
151. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 39.
152. Labor World, 18 June 1921.
153. Ottawa Journal, 2 May 1921; Ottawa Citizen, 3 May 1921; Ottawa Journal 4 May 1921.
154. NA, RG 27, Vol. 325, Strike 89, E.B Eddy Co. to Department of Labour, 5 May 1921; Le Bien Public, 9 June 1921.
155. Ottawa Citizen, 16 May 1921.
156. NA, RG 27, Vol. 325, Strike 89, E.B Eddy Co. to Department of Labour, 5 May 1921; Le Bien Public, 9 June 1921.
157. Ottawa Citizen, 16 May 1921. At first the Catholic union members were to receive the old scale until May 15 when they would receive the best wages offered. The company may have expected that the dispute would be over by then. As May 15

passed, the company extended its offer to keep paying the old wages until a settlement was reached elsewhere.

158. Le Bien Public, 9 June 1921.

159. Ottawa Citizen, 18 May 1921.

160. Ottawa Journal, 18 May 1921.

161. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 19; Montreal Gazette, 17 August 1921.

162. Le Devoir, 17 August 1921. The settlement called for reductions of ten percent for skilled workers and 16 and two thirds for the unskilled. In fact, the reduction was higher for the lower paid workers. Greening, Paper Makers Union, 19-20.

163. Ottawa Citizen, 18 May 1921; Ottawa Citizen, 2 May 1921.

164. NA, RG 27, Vol. 327, Strike 170, G.A. Louthood to F.A. Acland, 19 June 1921.

165. Montreal Gazette, 17 August 1921.

166. Montreal Star, 12 August 1921.

167. In Montreal the strike involved contract shops rather than newspapers. The printers on the daily English papers in Montreal, members of local 176, had signed a five year contract that ran until September 15, 1922. The francophone printers in local 145 decided not to go on strike until the contract of local 176 expired, so that they would not leap ahead of them.

168. Montreal Gazette, 1 July 1921.

169. Montreal Gazette, 6 July 1921.

170. Montreal Gazette, 8 July 1922.

171. Luc Desrochers "Les Travailleurs de l'imprimerie at la Fédération Catholique des Métiers de l'Imprimerie du Canada. 1921-1941." Unpublished M.A Thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1986, 89, 94.

172. La Patrie, 22 August 1921.
173. As quoted in Desrochers, "Les Travailleurs de l'imprimerie," 91.
174. Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 146 fn 5.
175. Desrochers, "Les Travailleurs de l'imprimerie," 95-100.
176. Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 146 fn 5.
177. Montreal Gazette, 27 August 1921.
178. "Bulletin of the Montreal Employing Printers," 29 August 1921 in NA, RG 27, Vol. 327, Strike 162.
179. Le Devoir, 27 August 1921.
180. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Quebec, Vol. XXV, 168.
181. Montreal Gazette, 27 August 1921.
182. For its first appearance see Le Devoir, 8 October 1921.
183. J.J. Harpell to Thos. Black, 4 January 1922 in Pulp and Paper Magazine, 12 January 1922, 25.
184. Thos. Black to The Board of Directors, Garden City Press, 17 December 1921, in Pulp and Paper Magazine, 12 January 1922, 24.
185. Thos. Black to Mr. Harpell, 10 January 1922, in Pulp and Paper Magazine, 12 January 1922, 26.
186. Montreal Gazette, 23 February 1922.
187. Labor World, 23 October 1920.
188. Labor World, 30 October 1920.
189. The Textile Worker, May 1920, 88.
190. Labor World, 23 October 1920.

191. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
192. Labor World, 18 December 1920.
193. The Charpentier-menuisier has not survived, but for an example of its contents see the article reproduced in Labor World.
194. Labor World, 5 August 1916.
195. Labor World, 8, 22, 29 November, 6, 13, 20 December 1919.
196. Labor World, 3 July 1920.
197. For some examples see Labor World, 9, 16, 23 October 1920.
198. Labor World, 6 December 1919.
199. Labor World, 13 March 1920.
200. Labor World, 13 March 1920.
201. Bourassa's suggestion was part of a speech given to the Fédération ouvrière catholique de Chicoutimi on 19 October 1919. Francq reported that parts of the speech were reproduced in the Progrès du Saguenay. Labor World, 8 November 1919; 24 July 1920.
202. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 40.
203. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 90.
204. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
205. Labor World, 27 November 1920.
206. Labor World, 23 October 1920.
207. Labor World, 23 October 1920.
208. Labor World, 23 October 1920.
209. Labor World, 19 June 1920.

- 210. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
- 211. Letter signed A.R. in Labor World, 25 September 1920.
- 212. Labor World, 11 September 1920.
- 213. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 47.
- 214. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
- 215. Labor World, 6 November 1920.
- 216. Labor World, 4 September 1920.
- 217. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
- 218. Labor World, 19 June 1920.
- 219. This strike was frequently cited by international union supporters. For example, François Gervais, a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen at the CPR Angus shops, demanded that abbé Hébert explain why the Catholic union at Thetford had not accepted the offer of conciliation. Labor World, 4 December 1920. For Francq's views on this incident see Labor World, 27 November 1920.
- 220. Labor World, 20 March 1920.
- 221. Labor World, 9 October 1920.
- 222. Labor World, 13 March, 3 April 1920.
- 223. Labor world, 3 April 1920.
- 224. Labor World, 4 December 1920.
- 225. Labor World, 13 November 1920.
- 226. Labor World, 10 September 1921.
- 227. Labor World, 4 September 1920.
- 228. Labor World, 19 June 1920.
- 229. Labor World, 4 September 1920.



230. Labor World, 28 August 1920.
231. Labor World, 23 October 1920. Francq was responding to a pamphlet by Alfred Charpentier, la Question ouvrière, tract numéro 5, Montréal, 1920.
232. Labor World, 27 November 1920.
233. Francq, Bolchevisme ou syndicalisme. Lequel? 24-5; Labor World, 19 July 1919, 25 September 1920.
234. Labor World, 23 October 1920.
235. Labor World, 9 October 1920.
236. Labor World, 20 November, 4 December 1920.
237. Labor World, 6 November 1920.
238. Labor World, 9 October 1920.
239. Labor World, 20 November 1920.
240. Labor World, 20 November 1920.
241. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 272-3; Montreal Gazette, 2 September 1921.
242. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 275.
243. Labor World, 10 September 1921.
244. Montreal Gazette, 2 September 1921.
245. Le Devoir, 2 September 1921.
246. Montreal Gazette, 2 September 1921.
247. Le Devoir, 2 September 1921; Labor World, 10 September 1921.
248. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 279.
249. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 37.

250. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 275.
251. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 97.
252. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 41.
253. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 44.
254. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 43.
255. In 1920 Francq was flooded with letters complaining that he was disrespectful towards the Church and the clergy. La Patrie printed a number of open letters denouncing him. Leblanc, "Le Monde Ouvrier/ The Labor World (1916-1926): an Analysis of Thought and a detailed Index," 46.
256. Labor World, 20 November 1920.
257. Labor World, 10 September 1921.
258. Montreal Star, 12 December 1923.
259. Labor World, 15 December 1923.
260. La Presse, 26 December 1923; RG 27, Vol. 332, Strike 101, Albert Tetrault to Department of Labour, 20 December 1923.
261. Labor World, 11 October 1919.
262. Labor World, 29 May 1920.
263. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 81.
264. Maltais, Les Syndicats catholiques canadiens, 116.
265. Maltais, Les Syndicats catholiques canadiens, 118.
266. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 81.
267. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 238.
268. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 83.
269. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 81.

270. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 31-32.
271. NA, RG 27, Vol. 332, Strike 14.
272. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 71-72.
273. Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 148.
274. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 43.
275. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 56.
276. Plumbers', Gas and Steam Fitters' Journal, June 1921, 14; August 1921, 13.
277. La Patrie, 12 November 1921.
278. For membership figures during these years see Gérald Bernier et Robert Boily, dir., Le Québec en chiffres de 1850 à nos jours, Montréal, 1986, 302. Estimated union membership points to a doubling in size while reported union membership suggests that it more than tripled.
279. The claim to have 45,000 members is reported in Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux au Québec, 233.
280. Charpentier, Cinquante ans, 79-80.
281. Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux, 233; Bernier et Boily, dir., Le Québec en chiffres, 316.
282. The figures for the COC de Lachine unions is from Isbester, "History of the National Catholic Unions," 99; The average number of members for locals that did report is calculated from Bernier et Boily, dir., Le Québec en chiffres, 316.
283. Total reported provincial union membership      Reported CTCC membership      CTCC membership as a percentage of total union membership
- |              |        |      |
|--------------|--------|------|
| 1921: 52,060 | 8,003  | 15.4 |
| 1922: 52,804 | 10,631 | 20.0 |
| 1923: 60,511 | 11,852 | 19.6 |
| 1924: 54,670 | 9,468  | 17.3 |
| 1925: 54,242 | 7,747  | 14.3 |
- Bernier et Boily, dir., Le Québec en chiffres, 316.

284. Unfortunately, in this case Rouillard did not explain his methodology. Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux, 243.
285. Isbester, "National Catholic Unions," 120.
286. Vallée, "Les unions internationales," 89.
287. See the letter from Mgr. Labrecque to Mgr. Lapointe, 3 August 1923, in Parisé, Mgr Eugène Lapointe, 47.
288. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 192.
289. Isbester, "National Catholic Unions," 120.
290. Isbester, "National Catholic Unions," 98.
291. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 49.
292. Programme-Souvenir du CTCC, 1922, 59, 61.
293. Latham, Catholic and National Labour Unions, 49.
294. Hogan, "The Case of Hull," 145-6 fn 4.
295. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 236.
296. Maltais, Les Syndicats catholiques canadiens, 81.
297. Bernier et Boily, dir., Le Québec en chiffres, 306, 317. The percentage is my own calculation.
298. The decline in 1920 may have been due as much to the depression and the manner in which statistics were collected as to members who switched movements. Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1918, 206; 1920, 270, 276; 1921, 266.
299. Quebec City police had a TLCC union in 1919 but had joined the Catholic labour movement by the time they went on strike in 1921. Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1920, 178; NA, RG 27, Vol. 326, Strike 159.
300. For the years after 1921 Rouillard argues that the "jeunesse" of the CTCC was a factor that limited strike action, Rouillard Les syndicats nationaux, 243.
301. La Patrie, 7 April 1921.
302. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Vol. XXIV, 221-2.

303. The figure for the total number of disputes in 1920 is from Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," 17; For the eleven Catholic union strikes in 1920 see NA, RG 27, Vol. 319, Strikes 35, 41, 43, 65, 77; Vol. 320, Strikes 134, 135; Vol. 322, Strike 299; Vol. 323, Strike 360; Le Soleil, 1 May, 15 November 1920; On the Quebec civic workers strike see Rouillard, Histoire de la CSN, 95-6.

304. The figure for the total number of strikes in Quebec during the years 1921-1925 is from Gregory S. Kealey, "The Parameters of Class Conflict: Strikes in Canada, 1891-1930," in Hopkin and Kealey eds., Class, Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada, 234: The number of Catholic union disputes is from my own review of the NA, RG 27, Strike and Lock-out files 1921 to 1925. My figure of 14 per cent is very close to Rouillard's calculation of 13 per cent for the period 1920 to 1930. Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux, 243.

### Conclusion

This study of the international unions in Quebec contributes to our understanding of working class militancy during the First World War and the post-war labour revolt. The years 1916 to 1921 witnessed an unprecedented degree of labour organizing and militancy in Quebec. This was sparked, in part, by the conditions fostered by the war, though its impact was not immediate. Through 1914 and 1915, a depression meant that most workers earned reduced wages, worked shorter hours, or were unemployed. In Montreal, the labour clubs associated with the FCOM, and the Socialist Parties organized along language lines, mobilized thousands of the jobless to demand work and relief. Orders for munitions and uniforms only began to relieve this crisis towards the end of 1915 and in 1916. Over time, the war economy brought fuller employment, but it was accompanied by rampant inflation that eroded real wages that were often already too low to provide a decent living for working class families, and by a sense of exploitation as capitalists made allegedly huge profits while workers were asked to make sacrifices for the war effort. These conditions encouraged working men and women to unionize to an unprecedented degree and to undertake a series of strikes in major sectors of manufacturing related either to munitions production or to the provisioning of Canada's growing army.

There were major disputes in mining, men's clothing, and in shipbuilding. By 1918 larger numbers of workers were organizing outside munitions production. It was this wartime organizing and militancy that laid the basis for the post-war labour revolt.

After the war there was a determination not to return to pre-war conditions. In contrast to most periods in our history, workers believed that they could reshape their relations with employers and the state. The evidence supports Kealey's claim that there was at this time a "clarion cry for change." This thesis fits into the current that sees the revolt as a national uprising. But while many elements of the revolt in Quebec were similar to those elsewhere in Canada, there were crucial differences. For example, there was a much weaker degree of support for the OBU and for socialism. Kealey has argued that Canadian workers believed that "[t]he capitalist system could not be reformed. Production for profit must cease; production for use must begin," but this does not capture the sentiments of most Quebec workers.<sup>1</sup> There were socialists who expressed this position but they were a minority, and rare exceptions among francophones. This lends support to the idea that the degree of radicalism varied across Canada. In Quebec there was militancy but the extent to which a socialist alternative was articulated was less than in

Western Canada or even in Ontario. What most workers wanted probably varied enormously and was not always articulated as a unified program. There were, however, common elements that shaped their aspirations. Economic wellbeing was high among their concerns. Likely they all shared a desire for secure employment, a greater share in the profits from their work so that they and their families could enjoy a better and decent standard of living. They also wanted more influence in their workplaces, more say in how they did their jobs. They hoped to secure these aims primarily through more effective collective bargaining. Many also wanted more influence in government with the hope of securing better social and labour legislation. Some even dreamed of reforms to the education system and state ownership of monopolies in the provision of essential public services. There was the labourist hope that wealth and both political and economic power could be more equitably shared by all classes in society.

Quebec workers were attracted to the international unions because they offered the best opportunity to secure these changes. They had had some spectacular successes organizing in places where unions had failed in the past, such as among the employees of the Montreal Tramway Company, or securing dramatic gains in wages and working condition, for instance in the railway shops, and in many shipyards. In the last months



of 1918 and into 1919, large numbers of workers were able to force employers to recognize their unions, to negotiate with them and to offer real improvements in wages and working conditions. The international unions continued to grow as new groups of workers joined their ranks in unprecedented numbers including some, such as school teachers, whom seasoned activists had never before contemplated organizing. The post-war period witnessed a level of strike activity of new proportions. There were notable walk-outs in municipal services, in manufacturing, once again in shipbuilding, and in the building trades. On occasion these were accompanied by crowd actions that revealed widespread and active support in working class districts. This was most notably the case for municipal workers in Montreal in November 1918. Some witnessed the use of militant tactics, by teamsters who forcibly halted all trucking in Montreal, for example, that were at odds with the orderly, disciplined kind of industrial action sanctioned by most craft union leaders. These were strikes that often included large numbers of newly organized francophone workers.

Despite the impressive show of industrial strength, the labour revolt in Quebec was ultimately unsuccessful. Even in 1919 workers in some industries never made a breakthrough. This was the case at monopolistic Dominion Textile for

example. In a number of smaller workplaces employers also proved to be stronger than their organized employees. Almost any hope of success disappeared when the labour movement was weakened by the high level of unemployment in the depression of the 1920s. The revolt also faltered on profound divisions within the Quebec working class, one of the central themes of this thesis. Indeed, during the years 1914 to 1925, the Quebec labour movement was fraught with divisions. There was the rivalry between the secular, mostly American based unions, often affiliated with the TLCC, and the emerging Catholic and national organizations. While this division is the one most studied by historians it was not the only cleavage among the provinces' organized workers. Within the international labour movement there was a great variety of positions over a wide range of matters: the aims of the labour movement, the effectiveness of different kinds of industrial and political organization and strategy, and the appropriateness of tactics such as the general strike that were condemned by TLCC leaders.

The degree of fragmentation was a reflection of a movement that drew its members from a remarkably diverse number of working class communities. This should hardly be surprising given the demographic composition of a society where workers spoke a number of languages and practised

several religions. Quebec workers, like most in Canada, also came from a variety of backgrounds. Industrial and clerical workers might have come from families with a proletarian tradition that could go back from one to several generations either in Quebec, other parts of Canada, the United States, or in Europe. Others were recruited after a migration from the local countryside, or from peasant or rural societies in Europe. Some of these workers came from an exclusively agricultural setting while others arrived with a trade. Others, as in the case of some French Canadian and Italian workers who moved back and forth from their farms to industrial workplaces had previous experience of a national or international migration.<sup>2</sup> The flow of people searching for work or refuge in Quebec, many from Great Britain or Europe, meant that immigrants arrived with a wide range of political ideas and commitments, many of which they endeavoured to apply in the labour movement in Quebec. This was equally the case for the native born who migrated temporarily to the United States before returning. Impressionistic evidence suggests that many francophone labour leaders spent formative years working in American industry.<sup>3</sup>

Gender also determined much about a worker's trade union or workplace experience. Men and women usually did different kinds of paid work, and were expected to have different

commitments at home and on the job. Women were restricted to fewer occupations, were paid less, and had less opportunity to choose a lifetime of employment. This in turn meant that they were less well organized, and had little influence in union hierarchies when they were.

This diversity had a strong influence on the course of the post-war labour revolt in Quebec. There were moments of impressive solidarity among workers from a number of backgrounds. Ethnic, religious and linguistic differences did not necessarily lead to division. Common aims and experiences could bring workers from a number of different groups together. Ethnic cohesion could unite workers from one community and provide a strong base for the organization of co-workers in other communities. This was the case in the garment industry, for example, where unions such as the ACW owed much of their strength to the commitment to labour organization among Jewish workers, who then initiated efforts to organize French Canadian and Italian co-workers. There was also, however, a remarkable degree of fragmentation, although national origin, language, or religion did not necessarily establish the boundaries that separated union members, or did not do so alone. Divisions often also involved different political positions, some that divided a single linguistic or ethnic community, others that could unite some but not all of

the members of different religious and linguistic groups.

Some of the most bitter internal conflicts within the international unions were waged in 1919 over organization and tactics. There was a division between craft unionists and supporters of the One Big Union. Compared to western Canada, however, the OBU in Quebec never posed a serious threat to TLCC and AFL unions. For francophones, whether they were experienced trade unionists or new recruits, the OBU was rejected in large part because it was associated with socialism. Nor should it be surprising that francophone workers preferred to preserve international organizations, regarded as effective and aggressive towards employers, and that had a considerable degree of success in disputes during the last years of the war and at the start of 1919, when the major alternative that was offered to them came from a more conservative Catholic labour movement. A number of anglophone and Jewish socialists might approve of the western experiment in principle, but most were unwilling to abandon their international unions, preferring to work for greater working-class unity and more effective forms of organization through joint councils or informal alliances.

There was a more serious conflict over a general strike movement in Montreal in June 1919, one that coincided with the

Winnipeg and Toronto general strikes, albeit not on the same scale. The idea of a general strike divided workers as most of Montreal's craft union leaders deplored the tactic. Such an action was at odds with their desire for a stable, orderly collective bargaining process that would result in binding agreements in the form of written contracts. Wanting to remain within the bounds of TLCC policy and legality, craft unionists such as J.T. Foster and Gustave Francq successfully stifled attempts to widen the movement that was led by a secondary leadership of anglophone socialists based primarily at the giant Canadian Vickers shipyards. Few francophones expressed support for a general strike in June 1919, and indeed many denounced it. Francophone labourists were, however, prepared to force a vote on a general strike a few months later in January 1920 when the provincially appointed Administrative Commission in Montreal fired and replaced striking waterworks workers. This threat to use industrial power as a political weapon was motivated both by desire to protect collective bargaining rights and a desire to force the municipal and provincial governments to give greater consideration to labour's demands. Both anglophone socialists and francophone labourist, then, were willing in different contexts and with different adversaries to push the bounds of acceptable practice as defined by the TLCC.

This thesis also places a large emphasis on the political role of organized labour. Conscription in 1917 prompted a new and unprecedented degree of cooperation between labourists and socialists, and marked the growing involvement of socialist women in a new Quebec labour party. After the war, political activity increased. Francophone workers directed their resentment towards the Quebec government because of the imposition in 1918 of a trusteeship in Montreal that curbed both their local political influence and spending on municipal public works. Opposition to the trusteeship was one of the principal planks of the labour candidates in the 1919 provincial elections and helps to account for the election of two labour MLAs, one independent, the other on a QSCLP ticket.

Often political activity was intensely local, focused on district labour clubs, and it resulted in a measure of success, at the municipal as well as at the provincial level. Overall, the political impact of the QSCLP was small, peaking in 1919 and 1920, and its fortunes declined rapidly before the 1921 federal elections as the depression left organized labour in disarray. The QSCLP, and the Montreal Labor Party, moreover, were not free from factional fighting for long. In 1918, there was a dispute between the admirers of the German and Russian revolutions and those like Gustave Francq who wanted a party committed exclusively to electoral and

constitutional change and modelled after the British Labour Party. The most serious dispute erupted in 1919 when socialists in the Montreal Labor Party, many without trade union membership, endorsed the principles of the OBU only to be condemned by the QSCLP a few months later.

By 1921 disputes with the socialists led some long time labourists, such as Francq, to abandon the QSCLP and to move closer to the new political position of the TLCC. Close ties between labourists and the ruling provincial Liberals also undermined the QSCLP among francophone workers. Labourists were drawn into the Liberal party when workers required effective critics of the Liberal government anti-labour policies. Most significant, the decline in the 1920s was a long term set back, as labourism among francophones had virtually disappeared by the 1930s when the social democratic left in Canada regrouped under the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. In 1923 when urban workers wished to express their dissatisfaction with the Liberals, they also turned against the governments' labour allies and voted for the provincial Conservative Party which was then incorporating populist candidates of working class origins such as Camilien Houde. The provincial elections of 1919, held at the height of the strike wave, represented the last successful effort at independent political action by francophone workers at the



provincial or federal levels for decades to come. In 1923 following the defeat of all the QSCLP candidates, at least one observer, Independent Labor Party MP J.S. Woodsworth pointed to the difficulty in producing unity of action among anglophone, francophone and Jewish workers. In the long run, it was only in the Jewish immigrant community that socialist and social-democratic activity remained important.

During the trade union growth and militancy of the labour revolt, women became more active as union members, in strikes, on the street and in crowds supporting striking workers, in union hierarchies and in the Labor Party. There were important efforts to organize large groups of women, for example in the needle trades and in the textile industry. Trade unionists' wives also organized auxiliaries to support strikes by men, to organize working women and to lobby for better labour legislation for women. Many male trade unionists, however, remained hostile towards women's waged labour. In particular, there was resentment when women entered new sectors, especially when encouraged to do so by the federal government during the war. Nor is there much evidence that men tried to encourage women to engage in politics, even at the level of the ballot box after they received the right to vote federally. And few francophone women were actively involved in the labour party compared to Anglo-Celt and Jewish women many

of whom were socialist supporters of the OBU and the general strike, and at odds with conservative male craft union leaders.

A significant contribution of this thesis is its examination of the inter-union rivalry that characterized the birth of the Catholic labour movement. Indeed a major impediment to the growth of the international labour movement during the period from 1914 to 1925 was the emergence of Catholic unions as serious rivals. Some degree of fragmentation characterized most working class communities. What was unique in Quebec was the construction of a religiously based alternative labour movement among francophone Catholics. While the first Catholic organizations pre-dated the First World War, it was the growth and the militancy of the international unions during the years 1915 to 1919 that prompted clerical authorities to establish a secure foundation for the Catholic labour movement. The turning point came in 1917 when Catholic union activists were able to convince most of Quebec City's national unions to join their project and to adhere to Catholic social doctrine. It was the weakness of the national unions in the face of this same TLCC expansion that made an alliance attractive because of the material and organizational support the Church had to offer. Accepting this support involved a compromise. The national

unions had to surrender a measure of their autonomy to clerical authorities and adhere to a program that sought to avoid class conflict, as well as eschewing socialism and opposing state intervention in areas of importance to the Church, particularly education.

Despite the constraints imposed by the clergy the national and Catholic labour movement could count on the nationalist appeal for a Canadian based organization that operated in French under French-Canadian leadership. Nationalism was hardly the exclusive preserve of the national and Catholic unions, however. For example, both the FCOM and Montreal's populist mayor Médéric Martin were able in different ways to mobilize large numbers of francophone workers by appealing simultaneously to their class and national identity.

This thesis constitutes a significant revision to our understanding of the crucial formative years of this movement. Jacques Rouillard states that the reputation of Catholic unions as being "syndicats jaunes," willing to accept any compromise with employers, is an image projected by the international unions and is wrong.<sup>4</sup> He argues Catholic unions were mainly intent on protecting workers' rights through collective bargaining.<sup>5</sup> This study reveals that it was, in

fact, during the last years of the war and during the post-war labour revolt that Catholic union promoters conducted a major experiment in the industrial relations of social harmony. This project involved two major thrusts. First it involved an attempt to replace strikes with more harmonious relations with employers. Secondly it often meant working with employers to destroy and replace international unions that were viewed as the principal promoters of class conflict.

The campaign against strikes was most pronounced in 1918 and 1919. During these years of mounting labour militancy in Quebec, the national and Catholic unions were quiescent, engaging in very few disputes. It is clear that chaplains played an important role in discouraging such action during this period. To understand why Catholic union members abandoned militancy it is important to highlight the Catholic union arguments during the crucial year 1919. While some of the secular union leaders clearly accepted these arguments, Catholic union members may also have shared the desire to find an alternative to strike action, always a risky business against employers who most frequently had the upper hand. In 1920 Catholic unions suddenly engaged in a larger number of disputes and continued to do so through the early 1920s. Catholic unions found that strikes were necessary to preserve and enhance the interests of their members.

The establishment of the Catholic union movement also depended on halting the massive expansion of international unions in Quebec during the war and in 1919. Catholic union promoters, the most influential at the time being Quebec City's abbé Fortin, believed TLCC demands to be excessive, in some cases immoral, and argued that their tactics often cost workers more than the benefits were worth. Catholic union promoters attacked international union leaders and members as anti-clerical, anti-national, and even anti-religious. If francophone, they were portrayed as being neither good Catholics nor patriotic French Canadians. In practice, they endeavoured to undermine international organizations, often willingly and actively helping employers break strikes. This made inter-union rivalry an important factor in the defeat of the labour revolt outside of Montreal. By the end of 1919, international unions prevailed in Trois-Rivières but had been defeated in Thetford, at Davie shipbuilding in Lauzon, at Dominion Textile in Saint-Grégoire de Montmorency, and in numerous towns in the Eastern Townships. While employer intransigence, and the use of the militia in two cases, were perhaps the determining causes of these setbacks, it is clear that the Church's social activists, Catholic unions, and the local clergy, also often played a crucial role in these defeats. The willingness to work with employers often on their terms continued into the 1920s. There were a number of

instances when Catholic unions replaced striking international unionists and accepted lower wages and poorer conditions than the international unionists were demanding. It is clear, however, that they felt no contradiction between the promotion of intra-class cooperation, especially to defeat international union strikes, and a genuine concern for workers' living and working conditions. They believed that these were complementary and compatible objectives.

At the start of the depression of 1920, the Catholic union movement also began an offensive in the international union stronghold of Montreal, helping to divide workers who were already facing an employer offensive. Far from organizing in sectors ignored by the TLCC, they deliberately organized the same occupations in an attempt to destroy the international unions.<sup>6</sup> Facing large scale unemployment, and an open shop campaign in some sectors of the economy, trade union membership and labour militancy, as measured by strike activity, declined rapidly. It is significant that the international unions remained larger in 1925 than they had been in 1914. Nonetheless, for the secular unions, the 1920s marked a period of retrenchment with little organizing, and little attention paid to the emerging mass production and service industries.

This depression also hit the Catholic labour movement very hard. Growth then depended largely on Church patronage in construction projects. Nonetheless, the national and Catholic unions now had a base for future expansion and a continued rivalry with the international unions. The period from 1917 to 1921 marked the firm establishment of the Catholic and national movement as the main rival of the TLCC unions until the advent of the CIO in the late 1930s.

## Endnotes

1. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," 12; David Bercuson is the chief proponent of the idea that the Winnipeg General Strike and the One Big Union were manifestations of a specifically western labour radicalism, and that workers in the west were on the whole more radical than in central or eastern Canada. See Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Fools and Wise Men; and "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier."
2. Bruno Ramirez, Par monts et par yaux: Migrants canadiens-français et italiens dans l'économie nord-atlantique, 1860-1914, Montréal, 1991.
3. This was the case for example for bricklayer and one time MTLC president David Giroux. Gérard Tremblay to Maxime Fortin, 2 November 1920, Correspondance de l'abbé Max Fortin aumônier de la CTCC, 1917-1921, SCNA; one time MTLC president Alfred Mathieu. La Patrie, 7 October 1920; and J.C. Molinari, president of the Musicians Union in Montreal. Conversation with his son Guido Molinari, Toronto, 18 September 1996.
4. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 281.
5. Rouillard, Syndicats nationaux, 229.
6. This is contrary to Terry Copp's assertion that Catholic unions in Montreal were concentrated in industries that the international unions had failed to organize. Copp, Anatomy of Poverty, 137.



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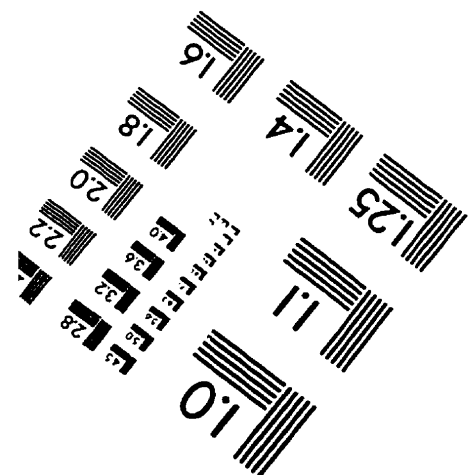
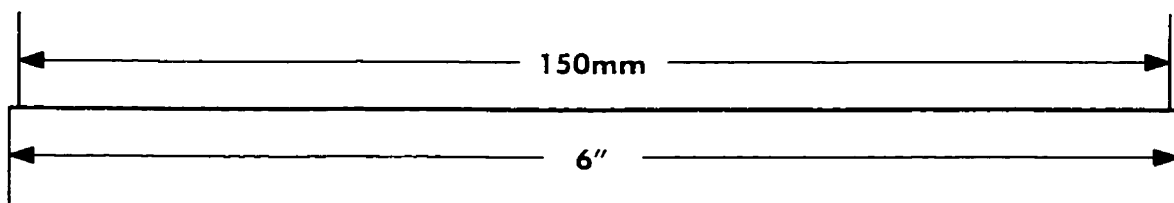
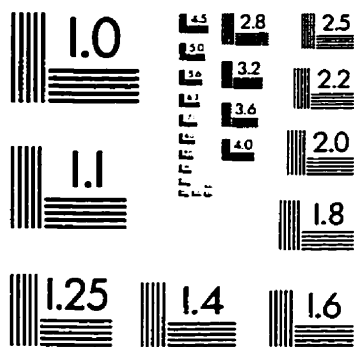
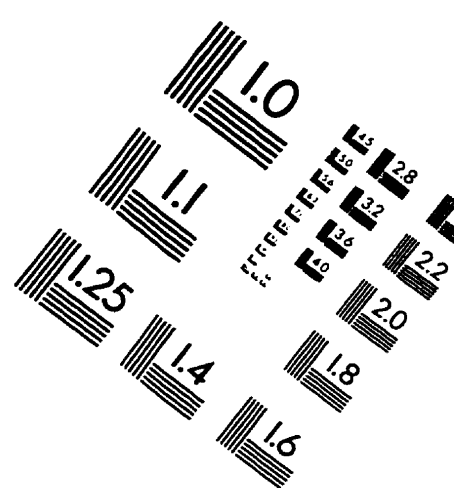
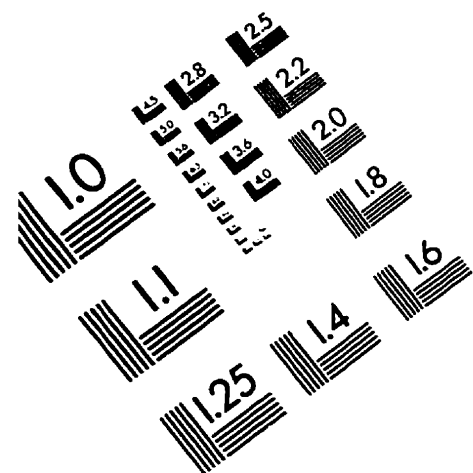
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