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CLASS CONFLICT AND COLLECTIVE ACTION
IN THE WORKING CLASS OF VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA,

1900 - 1919

by

James Robert Conley, M.A.

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

August 18, 1986

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis,

"Class Conflict and Collective Action
in the Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia,
1900 - 1919

submitted by

James Robert Conley

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Through a case study of workers in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919, the historical problem of the sources of the 1918-19 Canadian labour revolt is examined from the perspective of a sociological conception of class conflict in capitalism, emphasizing antagonistic class interests, class formation, and collective action. Using archival, daily press, labour press, and government sources, data were systematically gathered on three forms of working-class collective action: routine contention by the trades and labour council, contentious gatherings, and strikes. The core of the thesis is a comparative analysis of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction (social practices of the labour market, work, the consumption market, and consumption), and unionization and strikes in nine industries: lumber; salmon fishing and canning; metal manufacturing; shipbuilding; consumer goods manufacturing; external transport; local transport and public utilities; construction; trade, services and the state. This analysis shows that "crafts in crisis" (crafts threatened by transformations in the labour process, such as metal tradesmen), and "frontier labourers" (migratory resource workers, such as loggers) were the primary bases of worker radicalism, while "factory operatives" and "settled urban workers" played minor roles in the western labour revolt. It also shows that workers' contentious action was primarily over interests deriving from the labour market and from repression of their organizations by

employers, and that racial and ethnic, gender, and skill divisions impeded class formation. Overt conflict within the working-class along these lines was infrequent, but they affected mobilization: unions were strongest in industries employing skilled, male members of the dominant, 'British' ethnic group. Finally, the analysis shows how experiences of opportunity, repression, and power in strategic interaction between workers and employers shaped the history of working-class contention. In particular, the opportunities for remobilization provided by wartime labour shortages, continuing employer repression of unions, and the experience of growing power achieved through strike action were necessary conditions of the 1918-19 labour revolt. Divisions within the working-class were then temporally submerged in broadly based mobilizations and contentious actions, such as general strikes and the One Big Union.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: 1918-1919

In 1918 and 1919, growing support for general strikes (often for political objectives), and support for the One Big Union (OBU) indicated that the labour movement in Vancouver was becoming increasingly radical. In January 1918, a general strike to protest the two year sentence given Duncan Kerr, a unionist who refused to be conscripted, was only narrowly defeated in a referendum vote of unions belonging to the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC).¹ As Table 1-1 shows, support for the general strike was strongest in unions of transportation workers (waterfront workers, teamsters, and street railwaymen), in the local of machinists at contract shops, among a few unions in consumer goods manufacturing (garment workers, butchers, cigarmakers), and some of the small construction unions (iron workers, tile layers, pile drivers). A general strike was proposed again in July, this time in

1. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1; University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, Minutes of Executive Board Meetings (hereafter VTLC Executive Minutes), Jan. 17, 1918; M. Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (hereafter, Radical Politics), p. 151; D. Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada (hereafter, Compassionate Rebel), p. 36.

Table 1-1

Referendum Vote on Duncan Kerr General Strike, 1918

Union	For	Against	% For
METAL TRADES			
Machinists 777	29	33	46.8
Moulders 281	8	25	24.2
Pattern makers	7	13	35.0
CONSUMER GOODS			
Boot & shoe workers	7	12	36.8
Garment workers	14	14	50.0
Bookbinders	1	6	14.3
Printing press assistants	2	10	16.7
Typographers	34	77	30.6
Butchers	48	48	50.0
Cigarmakers	23	17	57.5
TRANSPORTATION			
Longshoremen	107	51	67.7
Longshoremen's Auxiliary	54	27	66.7
Street Railway Employees	259	311	45.4
Teamsters	81	51	61.4
CONSTRUCTION			
Bricklayers	0	12	0.0
Carpenters (ASCJ)	24	63	27.6
Painters 138	17	30	36.2
Plasterers	4	7	36.4
Plumbers	11	24	31.4
Sheet metal workers	8	17	32.0
Structural iron workers	21	0	100.0
Tile layers & helpers	9	0	100.0
Pile drivers & wooden bridgemen	31	12	72.1
TRADE, SERVICES, STATE			
Civic employees	23	46	33.3
Moving picture operators	6	18	25.0
TOTAL	828	924	47.3

Source: VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918.

3

support of striking street railway and electrical employees of the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER). Representatives of numerous unions declared the readiness of their members to strike, and only blacksmiths, plumbers, and street railwaymen expressed opposition.²

Advocates of the general strike finally got their chance in August, 1918, when Albert 'Ginger' Goodwin, a labour leader who was living in the woods on Vancouver Island to avoid being drafted, was shot and killed by a Dominion policeman. Labour considered it murder,³ and delegates to the VTLC voted 117 to 1 to call a one-day general strike, or "holiday," beginning at noon, August 2, the day of Goodwin's funeral. By one o'clock, over 3000 workers were on strike, and before the day was out, about 5600 workers had joined the walkout. The strongest supporters and most numerous strikers were members of metal trades unions (except moulders), most workers at steel shipyards (but fewer at wooden yards), waterfront workers, and street railway, electrical, and shop employees of the BCER. Only two small unions (tailors and railway mail clerks) expressed strong opposition to the

2. Boot and shoe workers, garment workers, shipwrights, and shipyard labourers' unions expressed no opinion. The street railwaymen opposed it because they did not think the situation was sufficiently desperate to justify a general strike. They were right, as the BCER strike was soon settled. VTLC Executive Minutes, July 7, 1918; Steeves, *Compassionate Rebel*, p. 38. A general strike was next proposed in support of striking postal workers, but they returned to work before a vote could be taken. Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, *Minutes of Regular Meetings* (hereafter, *VTLC Minutes*), July 30, 1918, in *B.C. Federationist*, August 1, 1918, p. 1. See Appendix A on sources for VTLC Minutes.

3. Goodwin was hunting small game at the time, and the constable's justification of self-defense was accepted by the authorities.

strike.

Many returned soldiers were enraged by this strike over "a slacker [who] dodged his duty and got caught," and reportedly egged on by some Vancouver businessmen, they rioted at the Labour Temple. The rioters destroyed files, forced longshoreman George Thomas and VTLC official Victor Midgely to kneel and kiss a Union Jack, and would have thrown the latter out the second floor window if the telephone receptionist, Frances Foxcroft, had not barred their way.⁴ The soldiers then turned to the street railwaymen, and demonstrated outside the street car barns until service was partially restored later in the evening. The next day, they attacked the longshoremen's hall while strike leaders and leaders of the returned soldiers conferred. The latter demanded that the strike leaders leave the province, which was of course refused, but it was finally agreed that the VTLC would take steps to determine whether workers supported its action in calling the strike. Therefore in the following week, all union delegates to the council resigned, but the re-election of nearly all in succeeding weeks indicated that active union members supported the strike.⁵

4. A tragic-comic aspect of this incident was revealed a few days later, when Midgely had his father-in-law arrested for uttering threats: he had addressed the crowd at the Labor Temple, allegedly advising that Midgely be hanged, or run out of town on a rail. See Vancouver Daily Province (hereafter, Province), Aug. 6, 1918.

5. Province, Aug. 2, 3, 5, 1918; Vancouver Sun (hereafter, Sun), Aug. 3, 4, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 9, 1918, pp. 1, 5; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 1, 8, 15, 29, 1918; VTLC Executive Minutes, Aug. 8, 1918. For other accounts of the strike, see Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, pp. 39-41; Robin, Radical Politics, p. 152; P. Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia (hereafter, No Power Greater), pp.

The radical mood continued in 1919. For instance, at the end of April, John Brodie, president of the Vancouver local of the International Brotherhood of Clerks and Freight Handlers, expressed the feelings of Vancouver workers to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations:

To speak personally, five years ago I have stood in Vancouver streets and existed on five cents a day, but tomorrow if I had to come to the same thing there would be nothing doing, because my foot would be through the first window I came to and I would take out my goods. That is the spirit of labour today. They want a fair show and a fair deal, and that is all any working man is clamoring for.

Other labour representatives at the Mathers Commission also stated radical views; for example C.C. Rouse of the Blacksmiths Union suggested a Soviet form of government, observing that "The working classes are beginning to realize more and more every day that they produce all wealth, and therefore, they should enjoy the absolute fruits of that production."⁶ Neither Rouse nor Brodie was a prominent labour leader in Vancouver (they were sufficiently radical to refuse to testify before the Mathers Commission), and their views were not isolated. For example, in May, 1919, twenty workers at the J. Hanbury and Company lumber mill in Vancouver walked into the owner's private office, and demanded to be shown the books, so they could determine the company's profits for the past year. These rank and file militants got their

72-74; E. Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers Union* (hereafter, *Long Distance Feeling*), pp. 54-55.

6. Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, *Minutes of Evidence* (hereafter, *Mathers Commission, Evidence*), Vol. 1, pp. 452-53, 574, 576.

wish. According to Special Agent No. 11 of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, "the action of these employees in Vancouver is indicative of the temper of the employees in every other industry."⁷ It was soon to find expression in a month-long general strike in sympathy with the Winnipeg General Strike.

The general strike in Winnipeg began on May 15, over the refusal of building contractors and contract metal shops to negotiate with the Building Trades Council and Metal Trades Council. About 24,000 workers in Winnipeg, of whom only half belonged to unions, joined the strike.⁸ Strikes in sympathy with Winnipeg soon developed, especially in the West.⁹

The Winnipeg general strike was not welcomed in Vancouver, because it came in the midst of the formation of the One Big Union (OBU), which had been launched at the recent Western Labour Conference in Calgary.¹⁰

7. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Department of Labour, Strike and Lockout Files, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), Special Agent No. 11, May 22, 1919.

8. For accounts of the Winnipeg strike, see D.C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike; D.J. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike (hereafter, Confrontation at Winnipeg); K. McNaught and D.J. Bercuson, The Winnipeg Strike: 1919; N. Penner, ed., Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike. Estimates of the number of strikers range from 22,000 to 35,000.

9. Masters, op. cit., pp. 91-95; G. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," pp. 28-33.

10. See PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), F. Horrigan to Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) Commissioner, May 21, 1919; RNWMP Secret Agent No. 24, reports of May 26, 27, 1919. On the Western Labour Conference, see Phillips, No Power Greater, pp. 78-79; Robin, Radical Politics, pp. 173-77; Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 82-86.

Nevertheless, the radical leaders of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC) felt compelled to do something, and on May 22, they recommended that a general strike be called in Vancouver if the military were used to break the strike in Winnipeg; in the meantime locals were to hold special meetings on the issue. A few days later, the executive telegraphed Prime Minister Borden in Ottawa and Minister of Labour Robertson in Winnipeg, stating that "Unless the government recede from its position in opposing collective bargaining through joint councils and its determination to replace striking postal workers at Winnipeg and other places the workers in this city will declare a general strike." On May 28, it asked for a vote by affiliated union locals on a strike to begin June 3.¹¹

The vote on the general strike was 3305 workers and 22 unions in favor, and 2499 workers and 15 unions opposed.¹² Consequently, on June 3, 1919, approximately ten thousand workers within a five mile radius of Vancouver began a strike that was to last for a month.¹³ Within the first three days, thirty-seven union locals had gone out on strike,

11. VTLC Executive Minutes, May 22, 27, 28, 1919.

12. VTLC Minutes, July 3, 1919; Sun, July 4, 1919; Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, p. 93. The strike vote was not released at the time, on the grounds that it would only provide aid and comfort to workers' enemies. Province, June 3, 1919; Sun, June 3, 1919. No breakdown of the vote by union is available.

13. On June 19, 1919, the Vancouver World reported that 8000 to 10000 workers were on strike; the British Columbia Department of Labor arrived at a figure of 9731 strikers, on the basis of reports from fifty-six firms in Vancouver. Annual Report, 1919, p. 75. Mass meetings of strikers regularly attracted 4000 to 5000 men and women. See, for example, Sun, June 23, 1919.

while another eleven were exempt from the strike call, and ten had not taken votes.¹⁴

The demands set forth by the VTLC were: the reinstatement of postal workers in Winnipeg (who had been dismissed for joining the strike); pensions for soldiers and their dependants, and a \$2000 gratuity for those who had served overseas; nationalization of cold storage plants etc., to end the hoarding of foodstuffs; a six hour day in industries where unemployment was prevalent. The main issue was "the right of collective bargaining through any organization that the workers deem most suited to their needs," which was "a political question" affecting all Canadian workers because it was being denied by employers in Winnipeg, with the support of the federal government.¹⁵ By the end of the first week, the conditions for ending the strike were that everyone fired for striking be reinstated, and that the government accept the principle of collective bargaining as interpreted by

14. Province, June 6, 1919; Sun, June 6, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8. A few days later, forty-one locals were on strike. Province, June 11, 1919; Sun, June 11, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 13, 1919, p. 1.

15. B.C. Federationist, May 30, 1919, p. 1, June 6, 1919, p. 1; Province, May 30, 1919; Sun, May 30, 1919. The government stated that it would support reasonable collective bargaining, which meant bargaining by craft unions, but not by joint councils of workers in one industry, or industrial bodies such as OBU. Joint councils, such as the Metal Trades Council, were important sources of local militancy in this period, largely outside the control of international union headquarters. See D. Montgomery, "Immigrants, Industrial Unions, and Social Reconstruction in the United States, 1916-1923," pp. 104-05.

workers.¹⁶

The strike began uneventfully, as workers in the various industries of Vancouver stopped work and went home (Table 0-2). Workers from nearly every industry joined the strike initially, but the strongest support came from metal manufacturing and shipbuilding workers, and transportation workers. Support was weakest in consumer goods manufacturing, and trade, services and the state,¹⁷ but even in the industries where support was strongest, several important groups of workers failed to join the walkout.¹⁸ Other unions joined the strike in the following days.¹⁹ To avoid confrontations with the authorities, there were no mass rallies or marches. Workers were repeatedly urged by strike leaders to keep the peace, and an 800-man Labor Defence Committee

16. Province, June 11, 1919; Sun, June 11, 1919; World, June 16, 1919. After the City dismissed its striking outside employees, their reinstatement also became a strike objective. See Province, June 16, 1919.

17. In consumer goods, tailors, garment workers, boot and shoe workers, female sugar refinery employees, and printers did not strike, or did so only briefly. Most trade, services and state employees were exempted from the strike, probably with mixed motives: partly because they provided services essential to the strikers as well as the rest of the population; partly because in several cases (hotel and restaurant employees, city hall employees, policemen and firemen), locals had voted against the strike, and were judged by the strike committee as unlikely to support it.

18. These included metal trades workers in railway shops, railway running trades, and clerks and freight handlers employed by railways other than the CPR.

19. CPR clerks and freight handlers, telephone operators, outside civic employees, and soft drink dispensers were all out by the middle of June.

Table 1-2

Participants in Vancouver General Strike,
as of June 5, 1919, by Industry

LUMBER

On strike: Mill workers

METAL MANUFACTURING

On strike: Auto Machinists	Foundry employees	Moulders
Blacksmiths	Machinists	Pattern makers

SHIPBUILDING

On strike: Boilermakers	Caulkers	Shipyard labourers
(2 locals)	Shipwrights	

CONSUMER GOODS MANUFACTURING

On strike: Brewery workers	Cigarmakers
Butchers	Sugar refinery workers

Exempt: Bakers

TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

On strike: Electrical workers	Marine firemen	Steam engineers
Longshoremen	Seamen	Street railwaymen
Marine cooks and	Teamsters and	Warehousemen
stewards	chauffeurs	

Exempt: Bakery salesmen	Ice wagon drivers	Telephone operators
Gas Workers	Milk wagon drivers	

CONSTRUCTION

On strike: Bricklayers	Painters	Sheet metal workers
Carpenters	Pile drivers	Tile layers
(4 locals)	Plasterers	
Lathers	Plumbers	

TRADE, SERVICES, STATE

On strike: None

Exempt: Civic employees	Hotel and restaurant	Policemen
(cemetery &	employees	Retail clerks
waterworks)	Hospital employees	Soft drink dispensers
Firemen	Laundry workers	Theatre employees

Source: B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8.

had already been established to keep order and prevent trouble.²⁰

The strike escalated on June 5, when street railway employees reversed their previous position, and decided to cease work. To make up for the street car service, the city decided to permit jitneys (private automobiles that carried fare-paying passengers) on city streets. This was seen as an attempt to break the strike, and when city council unanimously refused a VTLC ultimatum to ban jitneys, the previously exempted telephone operators were called out on strike on June 13.²¹

Meanwhile, opponents of the general strike were organizing. Mayor Gale of Vancouver denounced the strike and appealed for law and order.²² Various "citizens' committees" were formed, ostensibly for that purpose, and a special effort was made to mobilize returned soldiers against the strike. The Returned Citizens Law and Order League, composed mainly of professional men, was formed on June 6, three days after the beginning of the strike, and over 200 of 1000 members claimed by the organization were sworn in as special constables on June 10.²³ The largest veterans' organization, the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA), remained neutral until June 12, when it declared against the strike, which it saw as the work of the "Bolshevist element." The returned soldiers also emphasized the role of the

20. Province, June 4, 11, 19, 1919; World, June 4, 1919.

21. VTLC Minutes, June 5, 12, 1919; Sun, June 13, 1919, Province June 13, 1919; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 58-61.

22. Province, June 6, 7, 1919; Sun, June 6, 7, 1919.

23. Province, June 7, 9, 10, 11, 1919; Sun, June 7, 11, 1919.

"dangerous leadership" of the VTLC in the "sympathetic strike staged in connection with the shooting of a draft evader in August, 1918."²⁴ As in Winnipeg, returned soldiers were divided, and some supported the strike.²⁵ For example, the Ex-Soldiers and Sailors Labor Council passed a resolution supporting the strike at the beginning of June, and the Campaigners of the Great War and Comrades of the Great War also endorsed it.²⁶

Vancouver's capitalist class also organized. On June 9, "a large number of representative business men and women" formed a Citizens' Protective League. It soon merged with the Loyal Citizens' League to form the Citizens' League, with the goal of assisting the Mayor in maintaining law and order, and operating essential utilities and industries.²⁷ The rhetoric of strike opponents became increasingly inflammatory (for example, the Returned Citizens' Law and Order League was soon calling the strike "a Rank, Real Revolution ... to overthrow

24. See the ad of the Returned Citizens' Law and Order League, in Province, June 11, 1919; on the GWVA, Province, June 13, 1919; Sun, June 13, 1919.

25. Opinions were divided even in the Returned Citizens Law and Order League, with blame for the trouble being placed on the federal government for failing to act on profiteering, as well as on the "red spirit" in labour.

26. Province, June 3, 9, 1919; World, June 16, 1919.

27. The new organization claimed a membership of 1500 to 2000. It recruited strikebreakers for the telephone company, and supplied men to clean streets and remove garbage. Sun, June 10, 12, 21, 1919; Province, June 11, 14, 1919.

our present constitutional government"²⁸) leading printers at the Sun and Province newspapers to walk out for several days in the middle of June.²⁹

In New Westminster, meanwhile, some members of Vancouver unions, such as pattern makers, moulders, electrical linemen, and telephone operators, had gone on strike at the same time as Vancouver.³⁰ The Trades and Labor Council (NWTLC) had originally decided against endorsing the Winnipeg General Strike, but a strike vote of affiliated unions resulted in a majority of 419 workers and five unions in favor of striking, and 219 workers and six unions opposed (with 160 workers and three unions neutral). It was then decided to strike if coercion was

28. Province, June 14, 1919. The Citizens' League adopted the same rhetoric of revolution and Bolshevism. Province, June 16, 25, 1919.

29. Printers had voted in favor of the general strike, but the seventy-one to fifty-one vote did not meet the three quarters majority required by the union constitution for a strike. Since they could not strike, printers resolved unanimously to form a committee "to ensure the publication of the strikers' views, and that deliberate misrepresentation be prevented, under penalty of cessation of work." Printers at the Sun walked out on June 14 to protest an editorial on the strike, and printers at the Province followed suit on June 16, after refusing to set advertisements for the Citizen's League, and the Returned Citizens Law and Order League. Printers at the World stayed at work, because management secured amendments to the former ad, and rejected the latter as inflammatory (it was later released as a bulletin on the purported evils of Bolshevism entitled "Anarchy Chaos Death and Famine [sic]"). When contacted by the newspapers, the ITU executive ordered the Vancouver printers back to work, and after some protest, they obeyed on June 18, ending their action in the general strike. Sun, June 4, 1919; World, June 4, 18, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 1; Province, June 13, 14, 18, 1919; Victoria Colonist, June 17, 1919.

30. New Westminster British Columbian (hereafter, British Columbian) June 4, 6, 13, 17, 1919; Sun, June 5, 8, 9, 1919; Province, June 14, 1919.

used against the strikers in Winnipeg, and a strike committee was established.³¹ Consequently, after the arrest of the strike leaders in Winnipeg on June 17, the strike committee called a general strike beginning on June 18.³² About 500 to 600 strikers, nearly half of them street railway employees, answered the strike call. The only unionized workers not to strike were printers, postal workers, barbers, teamsters, civic employees, and retail clerks.³³ As in Vancouver, a citizens' committee was formed in opposition to the strike, and returned soldiers in New Westminster were divided.³⁴ The shutdown of the street railway was the most effective part of the strike, so when the street railwaymen decided on June 22 to pull out, the strike committee declared the objective of protesting the arrests in Winnipeg achieved, and called off the strike on June 23. Nearly all strikers returned to work in the next

31. Two of the neutral unions were evidently willing to strike if called on to do so; only two unions (printers and postal workers) refused to strike even if called. It was later reported, however, that seven or eight unions were opposed to the strike. Province, June 12, 16, 1919; Sun, June 12, 1919; British Columbian, June 16, 1919. The choice of the printers' delegate, R.A. Stoney, as head of the strike committee shows how lukewarm the New Westminster unions were about a general strike.

32. The only opposition came from Stoney, who resigned as committee chairman. ~

33. Retail clerks, and milk, bread, and ice wagon drivers were exempted from the strike call. The Dept. of Labour erroneously reported that shipyard labourers did not strike, but other reports indicate that about 150 did strike. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221); Province, June 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 1919; British Columbian, June 18, 19, 1919; Sun, June 19, 20, 21, 1919.

34. A mass meeting of the New Westminster GWVA on June 20 passed a resolution that production for profit was the source of industrial unrest. World, June 18, 1919; Sun, June 20, 1919; Province, June 20, 1919.

two or three days.³⁵

After the Winnipeg strike was called off on June 26, the strike in Vancouver began to disintegrate.³⁶ The strike committee planned on ending the strike on June 27, but a mass meeting of strikers on June 26 voted that it continue until the leaders arrested in Winnipeg were released; at a larger mass meeting the next day, unionized strikers voted 3788 to 748 to stay on strike as long as discrimination was practiced against any worker.³⁷ The number of strikers returning to work without the permission of the general strike committee nonetheless grew, and individual unions began to approach their employers about the conditions of a return to work. The demand that strikers be rehired without discrimination was the main obstacle to ending the strike. In particular, the refusal of the telephone company to give all striking operators their old jobs back prolonged the strike until the operators and electrical workers declared on July 2 that they could carry on their fight alone.³⁸ The general strike was accordingly called off on July 3, and most strikers who had not already done so returned to work in the

35. Province, June 23, 26, 1919; Sun, June 23, 24, 1919; British Columbian, June 23, 25, 1919; World, June 25, 1919.

36. There were reports of strikers returning to work throughout the strike. More ominously, the rank and file of strikers were reportedly becoming dissatisfied with the lack of information from the strike leaders. Province, June 19, 1919. Because of the hostility of the source to the strike, this report should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt.

37. Province, June 26, 27, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 27, 1919, p. 1; Sun, June 27, 28, 1919.

38. Province, June 30, 1919.

next few days.³⁹

After the general strike, the formation of the One Big Union resumed. The objectives of the OBU were stated in the preamble to its constitution, formulated at the founding convention in June. After paragraphs describing "the inevitable class struggle" in "modern industrial society," and the growing concentration of capital which made necessary the extension of workers' organization, the document concluded:⁴⁰

The One Big Union, therefore, seeks to organize the wage worker, not according to craft, but according to industry; according to class and class needs; and calls on all workers to organize irrespective of nationality, sex, or craft into a workers' organization, so that they may be enabled to more successfully carry on the everyday fight over wages, hours of work, etc., and prepare ourselves for the day when production for profit shall be replaced by production for use.

Although the OBU was led by revolutionaries who looked forward to the abolition of capitalism, the OBU preamble referred to it blandly and deterministically as "the social change which economic developments will produce whether they [workers] seek it or not," and was vague about how this was to happen.⁴¹

The VTLC was one of the earliest supporters of the OBU, and

39. Province, July 3, 4, 7, 1919; Sun, July 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 1919; B.C. Federationist, July 4, 1919, p. 1. (The operators and electrical workers held out until the middle of the month. See below, Chapter 11.)

40. Canada, Department of Labour, Report on Labour Organization in Canada (hereafter, Report on Labour Organization), 1919, p. 26.

41. See Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 127-28.

forty-nine unions with 16,844 members in the Vancouver area voted 8301 for the OBU, and 2545 against it, in the referendum in April and May (Table 1-3). A proposal for a general strike for a six-hour day was less popular, receiving 4417 votes in favor and 3352 against.⁴² Over half the votes in favor of the OBU came from the lumber and shipbuilding industries, where loggers and boilermakers in particular voted by huge majorities in favor of the OBU (only shipwrights were opposed). Metal tradesmen and helpers also voted heavily for the OBU, while contributing only a small proportion of the favorable votes. Construction workers and external transportation workers each contributed about a tenth of the OBU votes, while voting about two to one in favor. The only industry in which a majority opposed the OBU was consumer goods manufacturing, where many unions did not even hold votes.⁴³ Several major individual unions were strong opponents of the OBU: railway shop machinists, printers, railway clerks, street railway employees in New Westminster (those in Vancouver did not hold a vote).

Some OBU units had been formed during the general strike, but not until its end did the work of organizing the new union begin in earnest. Units of metal trades workers, engineers and millmen,

42. In Vancouver itself, the vote was 8099 to 2406 for the OBU, and 4245 to 3184 for the six-hour day. In New Westminster, only street railwaymen and shipyard labourers voted. Outside the area covered by this study, oil refinery workers at Ioco voted 108 to 26 in favor of the OBU, and carpenters in Port Coquitlam voted 61 to 9 in favor. University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, One Big Union vertical file 213 (hereafter OBU v.f. 213).

43. Cigarmakers, bakers, tailors, and boot and shoe workers did not vote on the OBU.

Table 1-3

OBU Vote in Vancouver Area, by Industry and Union

	For	Against	% For	Membership
LUMBER				
Mill & factory workers	127	26	83.0	230
Steam engineers	236	43	84.6	629
B.C. Loggers' Union	2809	32	98.9	5500
METAL MANUFACTURING				
Blacksmiths	106	13	89.1	182
Machinists 720 (auto repair)	16	3	84.2	19
Machinists 182 (railway)	14	40	25.9	100
Machinists no. 1 (contract shops)	175	41	81.0	500
Moulders 281	70	41	63.1	122
Foundry employees	34	4	89.5	38
Pattern makers	16	22	42.1	41
SHIPBUILDING				
Boilermakers	1045	173	85.8	1646
Caulkers	37	15	71.2	134
Shipwrights	64	86	42.7	204
Shipyard labourers				
-Vancouver	261	37	87.6	523
-New Westminster	98	5	95.1	110
CONSUMER GOODS				
Brewery workers	28	14	66.7	45
Butchers & meat cutters	165	82	66.8	289
Warehousemen (11)	124	46	72.9	243
Garment workers	3	19	13.6	32
Jewelry workers	4	63	6.0	77
Printers	24	182	11.7	232
Upholsterers	17	12	58.6	33
EXTERNAL TRANSPORTATION				
Longshoremen	701	337	67.5	1329
Marine firemen & oilers	183	11	94.3	286
Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees	5	45	10.0	50
B.C. Coast Stewards	Yes	-	-	186
Railway Clerks, No. 630	48	118	28.9	167

Table 1-3 (continued)

	For	Against	% For	Membership
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES				
Electrical workers	170	103	62.3	450
Gas Workers	59	9	86.8	100
Street railway employees, New Westminster	48	116	29.3	164
Teamsters	317	121	72.4	728
CONSTRUCTION				
Carpenters				
UBCJ 617	165	149	52.5	425
ASCJ	291	84	77.6	375
UBCJ 1777				
N. Vancouver	56	18	75.6	102
Central Park	16	4	80.0	20
Iron Workers 97	19	13	59.4	49
Painters 138	121	37	76.6	326
Pile Drivers	54	34	61.4	185
Plasterers	11	3	78.6	39
Plumbers	89	87	50.6	225
TRADE, SERVICES, STATE				
Barbers	4	26	13.3	130
City Fire Fighters	85	57	59.9	142
Civic Employees 28	189	57	76.8	300
Hotel & Restaurant Workers	84	85	49.7	315
Laundry Workers	80	-	100.0	111
Moving picture operators	-	18	0.0	40
Musicians (2)	opposed		-	-
Retail Clerks	33	14	70.2	47
Stage employees	unanimous		100.0	-
TOTAL	8301	2545	76.5	17220

Source: University of British Columbia, Library, Special Collections, One Big Union vertical file 213.

Notes: (1) Union to which sugar refinery workers belonged.
 (2) Vote reported as 22 for, 47 against, in VTLC Minutes, May 8, 1913.

transport workers, construction workers, marine firemen and oilers, food supply workers, general workers, pile drivers and wooden bridgemen, and loggers were formed in Vancouver.⁴⁴ Some unions, such as loggers and laundry workers, apparently prospered within the OBU, and others, such as teamsters, held their own in competition with international unions. Because of the failure of the general strike, and because of pressure from the international unions, employers, and the state, many unions that had voted in favor of the OBU failed to join it. These included longshoremen, railway clerks and freight handlers, marine stewards, painters, and civic employees. Others who did join the new OBU units, such as workers in the metal trades and shipbuilding, soon found that employers had suddenly become willing to enter into closed shop agreements with the unions they had formerly spurned, and they had to leave the OBU and rejoin an international union in order to get their old jobs back.

A period of bitter factionalism thus ensued, as the OBU and the international unions fought for control of the Vancouver labour movement for the rest of 1919 and into 1920. The VTLC had gone over to the OBU, so a new one was organized on August 7. It attracted some of the smaller unions that had remained loyal to the internationals, such as tailors, garment workers, and boot and shoe workers, but most unions, including some that voted against the OBU, either stayed with the OBU VTLC, or steered clear of both. The internationals gradually regained

 44. In Port Mann, railway workers (shopmen) joined the OBU, as did oil refinery workers at Ioco. Report on Labour Organization, 1919, pp. 37-38.

the upper hand, aided by employers, and by a federal government that refused to grant any legitimacy to the OBU.⁴⁵ They were also aided by dissension within the OBU over the form the organization should take, which led to the secession of the large Lumber Workers Industrial Union in January 1921, and the subsequent paralysis and demise of the OBU.⁴⁶

The events of 1918-1919 in Vancouver (support for and participation in the general strikes and the OBU) are generally considered indicators of working-class radicalism. They pose both historical and sociological problems. What were the sources of radicalism in the working class in Vancouver in the early twentieth

45. VTLC (International) Minutes, Aug. 7 to Dec. 18, 1919; Phillips, No Power Greater, pp. 82-83. In his discussion of the counterattack against the OBU, D. Bercuson (Fools and Wise Men, pp. 155-57) gives the erroneous impression that the new international VTLC easily established itself, and gained the support of unions that had tried to stay neutral. In fact, only twenty-one unions (many of them small) joined the new council by the end of 1919. On September 4, it claimed a membership in affiliated unions of 5000, compared to 2000 in the OBU VTLC, but that is a partisan claim that should be treated with caution. (It is not always taken that way: M. Robin, in Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, p. 190, repeats the figure uncritically.) To check this claim, I estimated the maximum membership of the international VTLC, on the assumption that every member of the unions which affiliated with the new council between August 7 and September 4 remained with the international union, or joined the new international locals formed to replace those that seceded to the OBU. On that assumption, which is the most favorable to the council's claim, and is unrealistic (because it includes all the members of several large unions, such as the boilermakers, machinists, and engineers, that voted heavily in favor of the OBU, and joined it after the strike), there were 3979, 4457, or 4848 members in affiliated unions on September 4, 1919, depending on the source used. Sources for the estimates were: Province, June 3, 1919; number of members in good standing at time of OBU vote, OBU v.f. 213; B.C. Federationist, July 18, 1919, p. 3 (VTLC per capita statistics for June, 1919).

46. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 165-70; Phillips, No Power Greater, p. 86; Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel, pp. 57-59.

century? What were the foundations of workers' collective action? Can a Marxist interpretation, concentrating on relations between the working class and the capitalist class account for it? Those questions are addressed in this thesis. In Chapter 2, two competing interpretations of the sources of the early twentieth century Canadian working-class revolt, which I call the crisis of the craftsman and frontier labourer interpretations, are critically reviewed. In Chapter 3, the sociological questions are addressed theoretically, and a framework for conceptualizing class conflict and working-class collective action is constructed. Capital accumulation, working-class social reproduction, and workers' contentious collective actions are examined for Vancouver as a whole between 1900 and 1919 in Chapter 4. The next nine chapters provide a detailed analysis of the same topics for each of the main industrial sectors in the Vancouver area, forming the basis for the conclusions presented in the final chapter.

Chapter 2

WESTERN CANADIAN WORKERS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Labour History in the Shadow of 1919

The historiography of western Canadian workers has largely been dominated by the shadow of 1919. From Masters' early study of the Winnipeg General Strike to a recent issue of Canada's journal of labour studies, Canadian historians have been preoccupied with the course of events leading up to the epic conflicts of 1919: above all the Winnipeg General Strike, but also the Western Labour Conference in Calgary, and the subsequent formation of the One Big Union have been seen as the pivotal events of the western labour revolt.¹ This concentration on 1919 and Winnipeg has not been limited to historians: sociologists searching for examples of overt class conflict in Canada have always had the same preoccupation.² Up to a point, this is as it should be.

1. Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring, 1984). Studies of the Winnipeg General Strike have been legion: see the references cited in the Introduction, footnote 8. There have also been articles too numerous to mention.

2. E.g. D. Forcese, The Canadian Class Structure, pp. 115-17; A. Hunter, Class Tells: On Social Inequality in Canada, pp. 198-202; J. Rinehart, The Tyranny of Work, pp. 41-42.

Regardless of the interpretation given to the events of 1919, it was a turning point in Canadian labour history, after which things were never quite the same again.

One aspect of the preoccupation with 1919 which needs to be corrected, however, is the amount of attention paid to the general strike in Winnipeg. There are good reasons for this, of course: it was the first city-wide general strike in the country, it was the focus of the government's repressive response, and the other sympathy strikes were reactions to the Winnipeg strike. The strikes in sympathy with Winnipeg are certainly mentioned in the literature, but reasonably detailed discussions of the Vancouver general sympathy strike, for example, are few and far between.³

When attention has turned from the Winnipeg general strike to the more general topic of the "western labour revolt" exemplified by the Western Labour Conference and the One Big Union (OBU) in 1919, and by the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) in earlier years, scholars have focussed not on urban workers but on "frontier labourers."⁴ Miners, loggers, and railway construction workers have

3. See P. Phillips, *No Power Greater*, pp. 80-81; B. Bernard, *Long Distance Feeling*, pp. 55-62 (the best published account, but it naturally focusses on the role of telephone workers); Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," pp. 32-33.

4. The idea that most interpretations of western working class history "focus on the 'frontier' character of western industrialism" is from P. Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State 1900-1911* (hereafter, *An Impartial Umpire*), p. 118.

been the center of attention, while workers in western cities outside Winnipeg have largely been ignored. This thesis is an attempt to correct that imbalance by examining the conditions and collective action of workers in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919. Vancouver was the largest city in western Canada after Winnipeg, its general strike was the largest outside that city, it was a major center of socialist and OBU agitation, and it was a kind of headquarters for the frontier labourers of B.C.

In the literature on Western Canadian workers, the western labour revolt has generally been interpreted as a regional phenomenon.⁵ Its roots have been seen to lie in the frontier conditions of western Canada, and above all in the migrant workers of the resource frontier. Implicit in this interpretation is a contrast between radical western Canadian resource workers on the one hand, and conservative, settled eastern Canadian workers.⁶ The eastern half of that comparison has been challenged recently by a new generation of social historians, who have argued that not all eastern Canadian workers were as conservative as western radicals and western labour historians have believed. Specifically, they have maintained that eastern craftsmen were undergoing a crisis as their skills, their control over the workplace, and in general, their culture were threatened by changes in industrial

5. G. Friesen, "'Yours in Revolt': The Socialist Party of Canada and the Western Canadian Labour Movement."

6. For a recent version of this argument, see D. Drache, "The Formation and Fragmentation of the Canadian Working Class."

capitalism that began in the late nineteenth century. They have gone on to suggest that this "crisis of the craftsman" was not limited to eastern Canada, and possibly had a role to play in the development of radicalism among the largely neglected urban workers of western Canada. We thus have two contrasting interpretations of working class history in western Canada: "crisis of the craftsman" and "frontier labourer." In the remainder of this chapter, the main ideas of the frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsman interpretations of Canadian working class history will be presented through a review of the pertinent literature.

2.1 Western Canadian Exceptionalism?

The labour and socialist movements in western Canada have been the subject of a substantial historical literature which seeks to explain why, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the explosion of working-class radicalism that culminated in the events of 1919 occurred there. In explaining why western workers were radical, the assumption has always been that (as western workers themselves believed) eastern Canadian workers were not. It has thus been a literature on western exceptionalism.⁷

The combination of circumstances that have been emphasized in the frontier labourer interpretation of worker radicalism in western

7. See N. Reilly, "Introduction to Papers from the Winnipeg General Strike Symposium, March 1983," p. 7.

Canada are stated well by D.J. Bercuson: "The radical character of the western labour movement was a reflection of the shifting patterns of immigration, industrial development, class polarization, political alignment and broad economic conditions that affected the west in its early years."⁸ An outline of the frontier labourer interpretation can be derived from an examination of each of these conditions.⁹

In the early twentieth century, the western Canadian industrial frontier was settled by immigrants from eastern Canada,¹⁰ Britain, the United States, Europe, and Asia. Settlement by immigrants has had a twofold significance in the frontier labourer literature. In the first place, the frustrated expectations of the immigrants who settled the west have been seen as the critical source of the western labour revolt, especially by Bercuson and by C. Schwantes.¹¹ Bercuson is the strongest advocate of this view: "Workers who had come for opportunity and advancement found living and working conditions that equaled those of

8. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, p. 252.

9. "Broad economic conditions" will be considered with patterns of industrial development.

10. One of the indicators of Canadian regionalism is regional variation in the terminology used to refer to Canada's regions: when discussing western Canada, I will follow western usage, and refer to everything east of the lakehead as "eastern Canada."

11. D.J. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier, 1897-1919 (hereafter, "Labour Radicalism"), pp. 163-65; *Fools and Wise Men*, pp. 44, 55-6; C. Schwantes, *Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917* (hereafter, *Radical Heritage*).

other societies in the throes of industrial development".¹² How immigrants reacted to these harsh conditions depended on expectations formed in the societies they left; therefore immigrants from industrially advanced societies like Britain and the United States furnished much of the radical leadership because they were deprived in Canada of rights they enjoyed at home.¹³ Because Bercuson does not have any data on immigrants' expectations, his imputation of relative deprivation remains speculative, however.¹⁴

In the second place, immigrants arrived with more than just expectations of "opportunity and advancement"; they were also bearing "Ideological baggage." As a result, an interpretation of labour radicalism in terms of immigrant expectations becomes hopelessly confused with the radical ideologies and forms of organization brought by immigrant workers, which may have been just as important to their

12. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, p. 32.

13. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism," p. 165.

14. For an imaginative attempt to discover immigrants' expectations, by examining literature promoting immigration, see Schwantes, *Radical Heritage*, pp. 7-11. Yet, as T. Skocpol (*States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, p. 115) observes, "relative deprivation is an aggregate-psychological state for which it is almost impossible to find direct historical evidence," and so even Schwantes' efforts are unconvincing, especially because he concentrates on literature promoting agriculture. The success of promotional literature should not be taken for granted either. Communication between migrants and those who have not yet come can ensure that later arrivals have realistic expectations. See D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era*, pp. 98-100, on East European immigrants in the United States.

collective action.¹⁵ Thus, the conditions of east European immigrants may have improved absolutely in Canada, but the socialist traditions they brought with them led them toward radical activity anyway.¹⁶ Regardless of their expectations, when they came to British Columbia, British immigrants carried the ideologies and experiences of "new unionism" and socialism, and Americans brought the 'syndicalism' of the WFM and IWW.¹⁷ The two aspects of immigration thus need to be handled with care. For example, the absolute improvement of condition that work on the western frontier offered to Italian or Chinese labourers might explain their non-radicalism, but their temporary, "sojourner" status, the contract labour systems under which they often worked, and in the case of the Chinese, their political and economic subordination, go a long way to explain low levels of collective action in general.¹⁸ In

15. Thus, Bercuson develops his relative deprivation interpretation in an ad hoc and contradictory way, shifting from relative to absolute deprivation, then to radical ideologies brought by immigrants.

16. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, pp. 41-42; cf. A.R. McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (hereafter, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*), p. 72, 77, 102; D. Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (hereafter, *Dangerous Foreigners*).

17. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism," pp. 165-66; *Fools and Wise Men*, pp. 32-34; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, pp. 15-19, 77.

18. W.P. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, pp. 16-17; P.S. Li, "A Historical Approach to Ethnic Stratification: The Case of the Chinese in Canada, 1858-1930"; Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*; R.F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930." Expectations can also change, so that absolute improvement compared to living standards before immigration soon recedes before relative impoverishment compared to other workers in Canada.

order to understand why workers were radical or not, it would be better to look at the structural conditions that shaped the interests and solidarities of particular groups of workers, and their opportunities to mobilize and act collectively, rather than speculate about their expectations.

The second major element of the frontier labourer interpretation is the resource-based industrial development of western Canada. Outside of agriculture, the main bases for the western economy (especially in British Columbia) were its mines, forests, and fisheries. ~~Two~~ consequences of this resource dependence have been seen as sources of worker radicalism: economic instability, and the formation of a resource proletariat. In his fine conventional history of the labour movement in British Columbia, P. Phillips betrays the concerns of an economist by concentrating on those conditions.¹⁹ He emphasizes two aspects of economic instability. First, he argues that the unstable markets for resource production made employers hostile to unions and workers

19. Phillips, No Power Greater; cf. "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement." Phillips' stress on the economic conditions shaping the B.C. labour movement gives his work a distinctive place among the histories of western Canadian labour. Mention should also be made of S. Jamieson's "Regional Factors in Industrial Conflict: The Case of British Columbia." Jamieson seeks to explain levels of industrial conflict, rather than radicalism, but he also focusses on the frontier society, the unstable resource economy, the influence of American wage and living standards, and the role of construction industry workers as wage leaders. His "regional factors" are intended to explain post-World War II strike patterns, but some of them may apply to pre-World War I patterns as well.

insecure.²⁰ Second, he locates the timing of 'explosions' of unionization and radicalism in the boom and bust cycle of economic growth in British Columbia's resource economy: workers' confidence in the status quo was shaken by depressions, leading to the adoption of new tactics and radical ideologies in the subsequent expansion.

Phillips' emphasis on the resource economy leads into the third major element of the frontier labourer interpretation of western labour radicalism, namely the formation of a resource proletariat. For example, in Bercuson's account, worker radicalism developed primarily in the isolated, class-polarized mining towns and camps where work was harsh and dangerous, diversions few, and opportunities for social mobility slight, especially for the unskilled.²¹ They in turn radicalized the entire labour movement, including urban craft workers.

Much of the frontier labourer interpretation thus rests on a contrast between settled, relatively well off, and conservative workers in cities, on the one hand, and migratory, volatile, and radical workers

20. Bercuson ("Labour Radicalism," pp. 158-61) notes that this argument is weak, because it doesn't work in the case of the mining industry, which had stable although seasonal markets. That does not mean, of course, that it may not be applicable to other industries, and help explain radicalism in them.

21. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism," pp. 169-71; *Fools and Wise Men*, pp. 1-19, 253. For Bercuson, this explanation is secondary, because the harsh, class-polarized conditions of the mining frontier are a source of radicalism only when combined with the frustrated expectations of immigrants. He supports this conclusion by comparing settled Nova Scotia mining communities and the more radical "pioneer immigrant" mining towns of the west. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism," pp. 156, 163-64 168-69, 174. (He has been criticized, however, for exaggerating the differences in radicalism between the two. See C. Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class (hereafter, "Labourism"), p. 70, fn. 99.)

in extractive industries dominated by large concentrations of capital and "ruthless entrepreneurs, on the other hand."²² This contrast is generally flawed by a relatively superficial view of city workers. For example, Bercuson sees urban workers as sharply divided between skilled labour aristocrats organized in conservative and exclusive craft unions on the one hand, and unskilled workers whose conditions were not very different from miners, on the other hand.²³ As Kealey has suggested, a more thorough investigation of the work world of skilled workers, such as machinists, might lead to a better understanding of the different roles played by urban workers in western labour radicalism, and reveal similarities to workers' revolts occurring elsewhere at the same time.²⁴

Even though the development of radicalism in the urban working class in western Canada is attributed primarily to the influence of radical frontier labourers, exponents of the frontier labourer interpretation do not entirely ignore sources of radicalism in cities. Several writers agree that the fierce hostility of employers to unions was a major source of radicalism, but disagree about the reasons for this hostility. Its sources have been seen to lie in the frontier psychology of self-made men, in the weak market position of western capitalists (forcing them to hold down wages), and in the normal desire of industrial capitalists to rid themselves of unions whenever they are

22. See Schwantes, *Radical Heritage*, especially pp. 33, 109, 118-19, 126; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, pp. 37, 77, 116.

23. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism," p. 171; *Fools and Wise Men*, p. 52.

24. See G. Kealey, "Review of David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*."

strong enough to do so.²⁵ Although the personalities of individual capitalists and the market positions of particular industries may be important in some cases, frontier conditions are probably a poor explanation of resistance to unions, since western employers were joined by their eastern and American counterparts in open shop drives, importation of strikebreakers, and similar efforts to smash unions during this period.²⁶ In any case, an assessment of the various explanations for the hostility of city employers to unions will require a more detailed examination of urban class conflict than has previously been done.

Finally the political interests of western workers have been seen as a source of labour radicalism in the frontier labourer literature. Radicalism developed in the west rather than the east

25. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, pp. 26-28; *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, pp. 41-42, 55, 180, (on self-made men); *ibid*, pp. 191-92 (on weak market position); "Labour Radicalism," pp. 161-62 (on normal hostility of employers). The latter is not really a frontier explanation. Cf. Phillips, "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement," on the "short-term outlook" towards labour of small, weak western capitalists; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, p. 7, on "the merchant's concern for immediate profit and rapid growth"; H.C. Pentland, "The Western Canadian Labour Movement, 1897-1919," p. 66, on "the unrestrained aggressiveness of corporate capitalism". S. Jamieson, in *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1966*, Ch. 2, points to profit levels, market position and the capacity of employers to resist unions as determinants of their responses.

26. See B. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (hereafter, *Culture in Conflict*), pp. 22-25; M. Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921*, pp. 150-56; M. Bliss, *A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911*, Ch. 4; D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labor Struggle*, pp. 57-63.

because workers in the western resource economy did not benefit from the National Policy, while eastern manufacturing workers did, and formed a class alliance with industrial capitalists around tariffs.²⁷

Furthermore, in contrast to eastern workers, western workers faced problems such as competition from Asian immigrants, unemployment, economic instability, and large concentrations of capital, that could only be remedied by political action. Because governments preoccupied with economic growth were generally unsympathetic, worker politics soon became radical.²⁸ The movement to radical politics, industrial unionism, and tactics like the general strike was also promoted by the repressive responses of employers and the state to strikes by fishermen, miners, and railway construction workers.

Out of all these conditions grew western labour radicalism. From their experiences of economic instability, harsh living and working conditions in class-polarized resource towns, and the hostility of employers to unions, western Canadian workers influenced by the ideologies brought by immigrants turned away from craft unionism to socialist politics and radical industrial unionism. This is a compelling interpretation of western labour radicalism, but with minor exceptions, the frontier labourer literature has consisted of fairly

27. Phillips, "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement"; Pentland, "Western Canadian Labour Movement," p. 67. Cf. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, Ch. 4; G. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (hereafter, *Toronto Workers*), Ch. 9.

28. Phillips, *No Power Greater*; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, p. 7.

conventional labour history, concentrating on the activities of labour and socialist organizations and their leaders. Workers' experiences of class and class conflict (especially in cities) have been in the background. The problems to which such an approach leads can be shown by examining a critique of the use of the concept of class to understand the history of British Columbia.

In an important essay, W.P. Ward argues that historians of labour in British Columbia have been mistaken to see in strikes, industrial unionism, and socialist political movements indicators of the class consciousness of B.C. workers.²⁹ On the contrary, Ward argues, low levels of unionization and of electoral support for labour and socialist parties indicate that working-class consciousness in British Columbia was weak. He concludes that there was "a lack of broad sympathy among working men and women for the various goals of the working class movement."³⁰ Instead of class, Ward argues, "the major cleavages in British Columbia's social structure, at least until World War II, were those based upon race." Evidence offered for that proposition includes the widespread beliefs of whites in the inferiority of Asians and native Indians, franchise restrictions (showing the "second-class status" of Asians and Indians), patterns of racial residential segregation, the existence of separate institutions, racial

29. I am not certain that they have in fact done so, and Ward even says that they "have implied, if not stated" what he attributes to them. "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939 (hereafter, "Class and Race)," p. 582.

30. "Class and Race," pp. 582-87.

endogamy, and occupational segregation.³¹

Ward's essay is valuable for its reiteration of the importance of race in the social structure of B.C., but his discussion of "class" is an empirical and conceptual muddle, and it consequently misses the mark. As Ward rightly notes, "we lack a systematic, comprehensive investigation of the working-class condition in British Columbia", largely because historians of labour in B.C. have not explicitly linked their history to an analysis of class.³² This is an important obstacle to any assessment of the relative roles of class and race in the B.C. social structure, but it is compounded by Ward's failure to appreciate evidence of class cleavages of the same type as the evidence he offers for the importance of race: an electoral system biased against "the propertyless, transient and alien," residential segregation (how many workers lived in Shaughnessy Heights?), separate institutions (how many workers belonged to the Terminal City Club?), or occupations. Instead of information on class cleavages, failures of working-class mobilization and political action are offered as indicators of the unimportance of "class" in British Columbia. But as Ward admits, regardless of the state of working-class consciousness, there were

31. "Class and Race," pp. 590-96. The term "white" will be used here to denote persons of European descent, because it was the term in use at the time covered by this study, and it reflects the centrality of perceived skin colour in assigning people to racial groups at that time. Cf. A. Muszynski, "The Organization of Women and Ethnic Minorities in a Resource Industry: A Case Study of the Unionization of Shoreworkers in the B.C. Fishing Industry 1937-1949," p. 105, fn. 2, for similar reasoning.

32. W.P. Ward, "Race and Class in British Columbia: A Reply," p. 52.

serious obstacles to the formation of unions and the success of working class political parties.³³ With respect to consciousness, Ward for some reason thinks that if workers have individual goals or individual motives, they cannot also be class conscious; that if they migrate to an area in order to make high wages, they cannot be class conscious; that if they are conscious of race, they cannot also be conscious of class. Although those motives and beliefs may well have been obstacles to working class mobilization, their existence does not imply that "class" is inapplicable as a central category for the analysis of the social structure of B.C. The only reason Ward believes they are is evidently a consequence of a fundamental confusion about the concept of class.

The main problem with Ward's discussion of class is conceptual. Specifically, Ward confuses class cleavages and class consciousness, by in effect arguing that class exists only if class consciousness exists.³⁴ It is necessary to distinguish between, first, class cleavages, which can be shown historically to have existed, as objective

33. Nonetheless, Ward turns immediately from the weakness of unions and the electoral failures of socialist and labour parties to speculation on why workers were not class conscious. And when he encounters evidence that could be taken to indicate increased levels of working-class consciousness, such as the sharp rise in union membership in 1918 and 1919, he discounts it, because those were "exceptional years of great social and political strain."

34. He finds his justification for this in E.P. Thompson's conception of class, which Ward calls "a subjective [sic] condition experienced by all members of a community" (p. 582). As has recently been shown in an eloquent defense of Thompson's historical practice, nothing could be farther from his conception of class. See E. Meiksins Wood, "The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and His Critics" (hereafter, *Thompson and His Critics*).

conditions experienced by members of a society; second, the formation of groups or social solidarities within classes on opposite sides of those cleavages; and third, the mobilization of members of those groups as historical actors. When he considers class, but not when he considers race, Ward addresses himself to only the last of those three aspects. In this thesis, we will address all three. Before doing that, however, we turn to an alternative interpretation of working-class history in the early twentieth century.

2.2 Crisis of the Craftsman?

As mentioned earlier, an alternative to the frontier labourer interpretation of "the Canadian labour revolt"³⁵ is to be found in the work of a new generation of Canadian social historians who examine working-class history explicitly in terms of class relations within capitalism. In their analysis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century history of workers in Canada, they give a pre-eminent place to changes in the organization of capitalist production which threatened craft workers' control within the production process, their control over the labour market, and in general, their culture.³⁶

35. G. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt." The title is indicative of the changed perspective: the labour revolt is not seen as localized in western Canada.

36. I have adopted the term "crisis of the craftsman" from C. Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early

Three developments deriving from the concentration and centralization of capital at the turn of the century transformed the relations between capitalists and workers in Canada. First, a national labour market was created to fill the growing labour requirements of expanding industries. Second, the industrial workplace was transformed, as capitalist employers introduced new methods of production and forms of management control that deprived craft workers of their control over production. Finally, the state took on an increasingly interventionist role in labour disputes.³⁷ The most important of these changes was the challenge to craftsmen entailed in changing methods of production. From the crisis of the craftsman arose new issues of class struggle, and new forms of working-class organization and strategy.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the growing size and complexity of capitalist enterprises led to the breakdown of personal control over production by entrepreneurs, in an economic environment of intensifying competition.³⁸ In order to compete and maintain profit

Twentieth Century" (hereafter, "Crisis of the Craftsman"). Other examples of this literature include Kealey, *Toronto Workers*; Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*; W. Roberts, *Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1914*.

37. G. Kealey, "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects in the 1980s" (hereafter, "Labour and Working-Class History") p. 72; B. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (hereafter, *Working-Class Experience*), pp. 136-44.

38. Emphasis on the importance of size is found in R. Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (hereafter, *Contested Terrain*), pp. 27-30, and D. Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (hereafter, *Managers and Workers*), Ch. 1; a stress on increased competitiveness is added by D. Gordon, R. Edwards, and M.

levels, industrial capitalists instituted new methods of production and control that would increase production and reduce costs. Along with mechanization, these new methods of what Nelson calls "systematic management" included cost-accounting, standardization and specialization of work tasks, centralization of planning in the hands of managers, and new forms of incentive pay.³⁹

In both intention and effect, mechanization and systematic management constituted an attack on craftsmen's controls over production. The "autonomous craftsmen" of the nineteenth century had controlled production by means of both their technical knowledge, and a workplace culture of 'manly' dignity and mutuality, which was later embodied in union work rules. Craftsmen exercised control over the pace of work, apprenticeship, pay, and even hiring and firing.⁴⁰ The

Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (hereafter, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*), pp. 94-99. These works are of course not from the Canadian "crisis of the craftsman" literature, one of the limitations of which has been a failure to go beyond noting the concentration and centralization of capital, or the development of monopoly capitalism.

39. Although Braverman put F.W. Taylor's scientific management at the center of his analysis of the transformations being discussed here, other more historically informed accounts have shown that scientific management experiments were only a small part of a wider transformation. See Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*; Nelson, *Managers and Workers*, pp. 48-78; B. Palmer "Class, Conception and Conflict: The Thrust for Efficiency, Managerial Views of Labor and the Working-Class Rebellion, 1903-22," p. 32; Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, pp. 98-104; Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, pp. 32-33. For a detailed discussion of these changes in Hamilton moulding and machine shops see Heron, "Crisis of the Craftsman," pp. 18-33.

40. See Montgomery's influential essay, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," Ch. 1 of *Workers' Control in America*; cf. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, Ch. 3 (and Ch. 2 for the

challenge to craft autonomy and control appeared as a process of deskilling. As a result of mechanization and specialization, work was subdivided, and all-round craftsmen were replaced by lower-paid specialists who performed only one detailed task; apprenticeship rules broke down, and competition within the new national labour market increased; the pace of work quickened, wages declined, and hours of work lengthened. To make all this possible, employers attacked the unions that buttressed workplace controls.⁴¹

The attack on craft control did not occur in all industries, nor were all crafts threatened equally or in the same ways. The technologically advanced manufacturing industries were the most strongly affected, and within them, the largest plants were at the forefront of the attack on the crafts (small shops still remained dependent on craft skills).⁴² Of all the crafts, the metal trades faced the strongest challenge. Some crafts, such as electricians, were actually fostered by the technological changes that were then occurring, and others, such as printers, were able to preserve their control over production despite technological changes.⁴³

41. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, p. 19; Heron, "Crisis of the Craftsman," pp. 15-16.

42. Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, p. 92; Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, p. 140.

43. See W. Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen: Politics and Trade Unionism Among Toronto Skilled Building Trades Workers, 1896-1914," for a discussion of trades under attack, trades fostered by new technology, and trades able to maintain craft traditions. A similar distinction between "threatened crafts," "new occupations" (not limited

The crisis for the crafts was the challenge to their control; consequently, it was a new, predominant issue in class conflict: "The custom of workers' control, widely regarded as a right, had become deeply embedded in working class culture. The fight, initially to maintain and later to extend this control, became the major locus of class struggle in the opening decades of the twentieth century."⁴⁴ In a rash of "control strikes" in the early twentieth century, craftsmen in central Canada fought to preserve their job and labour market control.⁴⁵ The threat to crafts was not only expressed in strikes: especially for crafts that were losing the battle for control, this new stage of class struggle led to the redefinition of workers' objectives, and to the search for new forms of organization to replace exclusivist craft unions. Thus, the impetus to radicalism in the decades leading up to 1919 came from threatened craft workers, not just from frontier labourers, as many craftsmen seeking to transcend craft unionism were

to crafts), and "survivor crafts" is made in E. Shorter and C. Tilly, *Strikes in France*, pp. 215-18. See also a fine discussion of the various ways in which crafts were confronted by industrialization in I. McKay, "Capital and Labour in the Halifax Baking and Confectionery Industry During the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century," p. 65.

44. G. Kealey, "'The Honest Workingman' and Workers' Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860-1892," p. 62.

45. C. Heron and B. Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-14" (hereafter, "Prism of the Strike"). Cf. I. McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," where skilled craftsmen did not play the same dominant role as in Ontario. They should also be compared with Shorter and Tilly's results: job control was not an important strike issue for "craft survivors," or for the new occupations; it was significant only for threatened crafts. *Strikes in France*, p. 218.

led to radical industrial unionism and socialism.⁴⁶ Craft workers were not exclusivist labour aristocrats, as it sometimes appears in the frontier labourer interpretation of western radicalism; instead, they were threatened by turn-of-the-century changes in capitalism, and out of the struggles of craftsmen in crisis grew radicalism.⁴⁷

We cannot leave the crisis of the craftsman literature without making some critical remarks about its emphasis on working-class culture. On the one hand, this has had beneficial effects. By concentrating on the detailed examination of a variety of evidence according to the method of "thick description" borrowed from anthropology, these social historians have avoided the errors of a "platonist Marxism" that always measured working class consciousness and action against a pre-defined ideal type, and therefore often slipped from interpreting the contours of existing working class consciousness to explaining why it was not what it should have been.⁴⁸ On the other hand, this anthropological focus on culture has led to the neglect of

46. See Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, Ch. 4; L. Petersen "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900-1925" (hereafter, "One Big Union in International Perspective"), pp. 44, 58-62. Petersen also documents the importance of frontier labourers in radical industrial unionism.

47. Of course not all crafts became radical. For example, Heron ("Crisis of the Craftsman," p. 9) argues that metal crafts failed to transcend craft exclusivism. On the concept of labour aristocracy, see Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, p. 240, where he argues that it should be restricted to workers who had a role in the capitalist authority structure. I will follow that usage here.

48. On "thick description," see C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Ch. 1; on platonist Marxism, see E.P. Thompson, "Testing Class Struggle"; B. Palmer, "Classifying Culture."

some of the "hard" questions about the working class. Even presumably basic questions about workers, such as their number, their occupational distribution, and their social and geographical mobility have been ignored. As Tilly has argued, the "sociological" questions need to be reintroduced.⁴⁹ The concentration of the new social historians on culture has had the salutary effect of examining workers' history in the context of their experience within and outside the workplace. In addition to the relatively undifferentiated concept of working-class culture, a sociological conception of its underpinnings is needed; to provide such a conception is one of the objectives of this thesis.

Frontier Labourers or Crafts in Crisis?

The value of the frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsman interpretations of the radicalism of western workers can be assessed by comparing them on each of the three dimensions of their explanations of worker radicalism. For the frontier labourer interpretation, these are three aspects of the industrial frontier. First, there were conditions of the frontier economy and the capitalist class in such an economy, such as the boom and bust cycle of British Columbia's resource-based economy. Second, there were the conditions of workers in this frontier economy, especially the geographically mobile resource labourers working

49. Tilly, "Sociology, Meet History." This is now admitted by these historians: see Kealey, "Labour and Working Class History"; Palmer, "Classifying Culture." For an ambitious discussion of the use of culture in social history, identifying many of its ambiguities, see I. McKay, "History, Anthropology, and the Concept of Culture."

in isolated, class-polarized camps and towns. Third, conditions affecting the mobilization and collective action of workers, such as their isolation from the influence of eastern craft unions, or the confirmation of radical ideologies in the experience of bitter strikes, have been seen as sources of radicalism.

Like the frontier labourer interpretation of worker radicalism in western Canada, the crisis of the craftsman interpretation directs research to three dimensions of capitalist society in the early twentieth century. First, historians adopting this interpretation have examined the transformations occurring in the structure of capitalist industry, principally the concentration of capital, and the resulting managerial revolution and transformation of the labour process. Second, they have studied in great detail the workplace control and culture of craftsmen, and the challenge to this culture from mechanization and systematic management. Third, they have dealt with the dimension of mobilization and collective action, as craft workers confronted the limitations of craft unionism in the face of this challenge, engaged in control strikes, and moved toward socialism and industrial unionism. All three dimensions will have to be considered in any attempt to assess the merits of the crisis of the craftsman interpretation, and compare it with the frontier labourer interpretation of working-class radicalism.

A study of the working class in the Vancouver area provides an opportunity to assess the claims of the frontier labourer and crafts in crisis interpretations of western labour history. Several commentators on regional or frontier interpretations of western radicalism have

pointed out that they have been flawed by the absence of anything more than casual comparisons with the history of eastern Canadian workers.⁵⁰ Similarly, suggestions that craftsmen in crisis may have had an important role in the western labour revolt have not gone beyond the occasional reference to working-class leaders who were ~~craft~~ craft workers. Those deficiencies cannot be wholly remedied in this thesis, but an alternative can be provided, by means of comparisons between industries and groups of workers in Vancouver.

Workers in Vancouver can be classified in four categories related to the frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsman interpretations of the western labour revolt: frontier labourers, craftsmen, settled urban workers, and factory operatives. Frontier labourers were unskilled migratory labourers, who were employed in seasonal work in isolated camps at least part of the time. They were usually single males, and could be white or Asian, although the frontier labourer literature concentrates on the former as the social base for radicalism. As we will see, Vancouver was a center of the migratory labour market for frontier labourers, and they can be considered a transient part of the Vancouver working class. Craft workers were by definition skilled workers, whose skill was not limited to one firm or place. They were therefore mobile and possessed at least some job autonomy or control based on that skill and mobility. Although it was not primarily a manufacturing city, Vancouver also contained a sizable

50. For example, see G. Kealey, "H.C. Pentland and Working Class Studies," p. 89.

number of craft workers, especially in the metal and building trades. "Crafts in crisis" were those whose skill and job control were under attack from systematic management reforms, job specialization, and mechanization, threatening craftsmen⁵¹ with deskilling, loss of job autonomy, loss of labour market control, or replacement by less skilled workers. Other crafts, which did not face such threats, can be called "secure crafts," and crafts which were recently created by technological changes, "new crafts."

The other two categories of workers constitute rough opposites of craftsmen and frontier labourers. Factory operatives were workers who laboured in a factory-like setting performing unskilled or semiskilled (but rarely skilled) labour. They worked in a mechanized production process or performed repetitive tasks by hand, typically under close supervision over output and quality. Lacking both skill and job autonomy, they were the fully proletarianized opposites of craft workers. Settled urban workers were unskilled or semi-skilled workers who were neither factory operatives nor frontier labourers. Unlike craft workers, they were not skilled; unlike factory operatives, they did not work in factories; unlike frontier labourers, they were resident in the city, not mobile.⁵² Factory operatives and settled urban workers

51. They almost invariably were men, so I will use this term instead of craftspeople.

52. This is admittedly something of a residual category, defined more by what the workers in it were not than by what they were. They were too diverse for much analytic weight to be given this category, but they are included to provide a control to frontier labourers: was the mobilization and collective action of settled urban workers all that

thus provide controls for our comparison of the frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsmen interpretations.

different from that of frontier labourers, or of presumably equally settled craft workers?

Chapter 5

CLASS CONFLICT: CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AND WORKING-CLASS SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

In common with several other writers on the methodology of historical sociology, V. Bonnell argues that one of its distinctive features is explicit and self-conscious attention to conceptualization and theory.¹ She distinguishes two ways in which the distinctive sociological approach to history is practised. In "history mediated by concepts," sociological concepts are used as heuristic devices to guide the historical researcher in "the selection, organization, and interpretation" of historical evidence.² In "history mediated by theory," historical evidence is used to test or illustrate a theory or model.³ The first approach, which will be adopted here, is closer to

1. V. Bonnell, "The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology."

2. For example, see C. Tilly, L. Tilly, and R. Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930*; T. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*.

3. See, for example, N. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1770-1840*; J. Paige, *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World*; I. Wallerstein, *The Modern*

the practice of historians than the second. It requires a dialogue between general concepts and historical particularity, so that theory is modified and developed in its encounter with history.⁴ The result should be historically grounded theories, and theoretically enriched histories.

The theoretical starting point for this study in historical sociology will be a Marxist theory of social classes and class conflict in capitalist societies, whose fundamental tenet is that classes and class conflict are derived from relations of production. On the basis of those production relations, conflicting interests exist between classes, and solidarities are formed within them; as a consequence, members of classes engage in collective action that brings about historical change. Three key problems thus follow from the Marxist theory of class conflict in capitalism: the problem of the sources of antagonistic class interests, the problem of class formation, and the problem of class mobilization and collective action. These problems will be discussed in the first section of this chapter.⁵

World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century.

4. See E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*; A. Stinchcombe, *Theoretical Methods in Social History*; for a useful corrective to some of Stinchcombe's excesses, see Tilly, "Sociology, Meet History."

5. Although they do not take the approach advocated here, two recent works that examine the work of social historians from a theoretical or sociological perspective have also focussed on the centrality of questions of class formation and class struggle. See E. Melgins Wood, "The Politics of Theory and The Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and his Critics (hereafter, "Thompson and his Critics"); H.J. Kaye, "History and Social Theory: Notes on the Contribution of British Marxist"

The approach taken here to the key problems of a Marxist theory of social class and class conflict will show, I hope, the results of the dialogue of history and theory.⁶ We saw in the last chapter how social historians have interpreted class struggle at the turn of the twentieth century as an encounter between a new phase of capital accumulation and the culture of skilled craftsmen. One of the major weaknesses of that literature was a failure to address some of the sociological questions concerning the working class. One of its strengths, however, was close attention to the texture of working-class life, and the ways in which that shaped workers' interests, class formation, and collective action. In contrast, Marxist theories of class in sociology have been stronger (perhaps too strong) in addressing questions of the structure of the working class, and relations between classes, but they have been much weaker in placing those within the context of workers' lives.⁷ It is the purpose of the present chapter to develop, from the strengths of historical analysis, concepts for a sociological analysis of class

 Historiography to Our Understanding of Class." Cf. D. Stark, "Class Struggle and the Transformation of the Labour Process: A Relational Approach," for a similar call for the analysis of class struggle, instead of classification.

6. It is one of the polite fictions of enterprises like this that one's theory has emerged from an encounter with previous literature, and is only then brought into contact with data. I hope it is not profane to reveal that the approach developed here came out of an attempt to interpret the collective action of B.C. salmon fishermen. See my paper, "Relations of Production and Collective Action in the B.C. Salmon Fishery," and Ch. 6 below.

7. This criticism applies mainly to theories of social class. Sociologists interested in women's wage and domestic labour, for example, have not been so one-sided.

struggle in capitalist societies that overcomes the one-sidedness of Marxist analyses of class in sociology.

In the second section of the chapter, the concept of cycles of working-class social reproduction will be introduced to overcome the one-sidedness of sociological theorizing on class, and to provide sociological underpinnings for the historical analysis of working-class culture. In the third section, this concept will be used to address the first two problems of class analysis, that is, class interests and class formation. The source of antagonistic interests between capitalists and workers (and sometimes within the working class itself) will be located in contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction in the labour market, the workplace, the consumption market, and consumption practices. Class formation will be conceived as an open-ended process in which capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction cycles shape the formation of collectivities within the working class. In the fourth and last section, class action for social change will be examined as a problem of working-class mobilization and collective action. In each section, we seek to develop a theoretical analysis of class conflict in capitalism, and to draw from it concrete research problems for the study of the Vancouver working class.

3.1 Problems in the Theory of Class Conflict

The assumption from which this discussion starts is that social

class is an analytic category for the interpretation of social conflict and social change. As such, it is a relational category, that is, classes are defined as the poles of a social relationship which is identified as the source of antagonisms that give rise to conflicts and change.⁸

In contemporary sociology, the two main contending theories of class and class conflict are Marxian and Weberian. Marxian theories of class conflict define classes at opposite poles of relations of production, or in Marx's words, "the specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers," in a context of ownership and non-ownership of the means of production.⁹ In the Weberian conception, classes are defined primarily with respect to market positions, or competitive power in the market.¹⁰ In this thesis, a Marxian conception of class is adopted, and Weberian concerns with market relationships incorporated within it.

8. See Marx and Engels' "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 108. For more recent statements, see E.O. Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure" (hereafter, "Marxist Conceptions"), p. 323; Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (hereafter, *Class Structure*), p. 77; Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (hereafter, *Marxism and Class Theory*), p. 3; R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (hereafter, *Class Conflict in Industrial Society*), pp. ix, 76.

9. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. III, Book III, 'The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole' (hereafter, *Capital III*), p. 791; cf. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Vol. I (hereafter, *Capital I*), pp. 209, 226-28.

10. See Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 927; Giddens, *Class Structure*, pp. 101-06.

If social class is a category for understanding class conflict and social change, then any theory of class must concern itself with three main problems. First, it must identify the source of the antagonistic interests of the classes in the relationship between them. What are the classes struggling over? Second, it must address the problem of class formation, or of social relations within classes. How do the classes, defined as opposite poles of a social relationship creating antagonistic interests, become collectivities which are socially distinct from other collectivities, and possess at least some internal solidarity? It need not be assumed, of course, that those social collectivities are coextensive with classes defined in the first sense, although they must bear some relation if the theory is any good.¹¹ Finally, if classes, or groups within them, are conceived as conscious historical actors, seeking to produce social change, a theory must examine the problem of class mobilization: how do members of a class come to act collectively in pursuit of their interests? How are interests turned into objectives, collectivities into collective actors? In the remainder of this section, each problem will be examined with a view to showing the inadequacy of existing Marxist approaches, and the need for the approach taken here.

11. See C. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (hereafter, *Question of Class Struggle*), pp. 23-25, for a brief, but insightful discussion.

Antagonistic Class Interests

The foundation of any Marxist theory of class in capitalist societies is the wage labour relationship, whose logical and historical premise is that members of the capitalist class own the means of production, and members of the working class do not. In the wage labour relationship, a capitalist employer hires a wage worker to produce a commodity that is to be sold at a profit for the capitalist; in return, the worker receives a wage. This relation of production is the basis for the opposed interests of the capitalist and working classes, and thus a source of class conflict and social change in capitalist societies.¹²

A question that is not asked frequently enough is why the wage labour relationship is the basis for antagonistic interests. It is probably not asked because, for a Marxist, the answer is obvious: exploitation.¹³ Capitalists extract surplus labour from workers. That should be sufficient grounds for antagonistic interests between capitalists and workers, should it not? Two reasons suggest it is not. First, as Marx himself took pains to point out, in capitalism the extraction of surplus labour takes the form of surplus value, and is

12. Because this thesis is principally concerned with workers and capitalists, the presence in capitalist societies of other classes (notably simple commodity producers and the petty bourgeoisie) will be ignored for now.

13. For example, see Poulantzas (Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, p. 209): "the criterion of ownership of the means of production only assumes the significance it does in so far as it corresponds to a determinate relation of exploitation."

thereby disguised and hidden.¹⁴ Second, even if that was not the case, it is not certain that exploitation, conceived as the extraction of surplus labour, would be a sufficient source of conflicting interests, at least as long as the labourer's standard of living is improving.¹⁵

Of course, at least part of the time Marx believed he had shown that the standard of living of workers in capitalism would not improve. "Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation...."¹⁶ This leads to an alternative conception of the source of antagonistic interests in capitalism, namely contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' needs.¹⁷ This

14. Marx, Capital I, Ch. 1, section 4 (cf. Ch. 19); G.A. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence, Ch. 5.

15. See A. Przeworski, "Material Bases of Consent: Economics and Politics in a Hegemonic System" (hereafter, "Material Bases of Consent"). It is easy to assume that exploitation is a source of antagonistic interests, because no one likes to be exploited. But that is largely a reaction to the term, and Marx was always careful to point out that exploitation was shorn of moral connotations in his theory.

16. Capital I, p. 715. That Marx did not in fact show that workers would become impoverished in capitalism is irrelevant to the present discussion. Certainly he provided plenty of theoretical material to show why workers in industrialized capitalist societies have not become impoverished in any absolute sense. For an intelligent discussion, see B. Rowthorn, "Marx's Theory of Wages."

17. See Engels' discussion, in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, of the contradiction between the forces and relations of production, one of whose manifestations is a contradiction between the shortening of labour time made possible by development of the productive forces in capitalism on the one hand, and the creation within capitalism of overwork for some workers, and unemployment for others. Cf. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History, Ch. 11, for something similar.

second type of answer is preferable to the first, because it can be used to understand historical transformations of capitalism,¹⁸ but the concept of "needs" requires further elucidation. Neither type of answer is adequate so long as an analysis of the working class comparable to the analysis Marx made of capital accumulation is lacking.

The one-sidedness of most analyses of the constitution of antagonistic interests in capitalist relations of production can be illustrated by examining E.O. Wright's discussion of forms of economic class struggle. On the basis of a sophisticated "decomposition of the working day into value components," Wright shows how different forms of economic class struggle can be seen as conflicts over components of necessary and surplus labour.¹⁹ Wright fails to show why conflict should occur over these components, however, because he only examines the capitalist side of the antagonism. He has written an excellent essay on the contradictions of capital accumulation, and its resulting restructurings, so we know that Wright has a theory of why capitalists should be seeking to decrease necessary labour time and increase surplus labour time, deskill labour, and so on, and even if he had not done so, virtually any work in Marxian economics, starting with Capital itself,

18. See, for example, Gordon, Edwards and Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*.

19. Wright, "The Value Controversy and Social Research," pp. 65-73. This example is chosen not because of its weaknesses, but because of its analytic strengths (although as a defense of the labour theory of value it is unconvincing).

would have provided similar answers.²⁰ But we would have to look much harder to discover the sources of workers' interests in fighting over the components of the working day. Instead of a theoretical analysis of working-class interests, there is either an unstated assumption of human needs and capacities which are unsatisfied in capitalism,²¹ or an unstated utilitarianism that assumes, for example, that given the choice between more pay and less, or shorter hours and longer hours, workers will choose the former.²² Neither of these answers is satisfactory, because each is ahistorical. In order to understand workers' socially formed needs and interests, it is necessary to locate them historically in the context of their lives: it is the great strength of working-class social history's emphasis on workers' culture that it does just that. But as we have seen, this conception needs some sociological underpinnings; in the next section, an analysis of the working-class

20. Wright, "Historical Transformations of Capitalist Crisis Tendencies" (hereafter, "Crisis Tendencies"), Ch. 3 of *Class, Crisis and the State*.

21. The classic statement of this position is Marx's discussion of alienation in the "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts". For a recent, and well-argued defence of the necessity of a concept of human nature in Marxism, see N. Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*. Giddens also argues that a conception of interests requires a "philosophical anthropology," but he refrains from developing it. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (hereafter, *Central Problems in Social Theory*), pp. 188-90.

22. As Max Weber long ago discovered, things become more complicated when the choice is between longer hours with more wages, and shorter hours with less wages. Weber, *General Economic History*, pp. 260-61, quoted in Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, p. 321, who also refers us to an example in Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (hereafter, *Grundrisse*), pp. 325-26.

analogous to Marx's analysis of capital accumulation will start to provide them. Before doing that, however, we must examine problems in the analysis of class formation.

Class Formation

The problem of class formation is that of the constitution of collectivities around the lines of conflict that define classes. Whereas the question of antagonistic class interests concerns the relations between classes, class formation concerns social relations within classes, in which collectivities are formed, or cohesive groups established. As it is conceived here, class formation is not a one-way process of growing working-class solidarity; it is an open-ended process of the making, unmaking, and remaking of a class. It can be as much a process of the creation of divisions within the working class, as of solidarities, and it can include the constitution of groups which cross class boundaries, as much as of groups within the class. For that reason, it may be better to speak of "group formation" within the working class, leaving open the question of the extent to which the groups correspond to the membership of the class.

Marx assumed a uniform trend to working class solidarity in capitalism, as a result of tendencies to class polarization, and the homogenization of the working class. The formation of the working class as a cohesive group was thus primarily a result of the development of

capitalism itself.²³ Subsequent Marxists have recognized counter-tendencies leading to divisions within the working class, but theorists of class have generally responded by turning questions of class formation into definitions of the location of classes in relations of production.

Any Marxist discussion of class must define classes with reference to their economic location in capitalist production relations, with respect to effective ownership and non-ownership of means of production.²⁴ But that minimal definition of class locations seems insufficient for Marxists who seek to answer historical questions of class formation by means of structural definitions. Consequently, concepts of more esoteric economic conditions such as productive and non-productive labour are introduced, and then "political" and "ideological" determinations, such as positions in the authority structure of the enterprise or roles in the division of mental and manual labour, are added.²⁵ As one enters the labyrinths of these

23. This is best seen in Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", but see as well, Capital I, p. 715, where the passage quoted earlier (above, page 56) continues: "... but with this grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself."

24. For example, see Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History, pp. 63-77.

25. E.g. Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, pp. 209-81; G. Carchedi, On the Economic Identification of Social Classes; for a sympathetic review of this literature see E.O. Wright, "Marxist Conceptions"; for an unsympathetic review, see Parkin, Marxism and Class Theory, Ch. 2. As Parkin ungraciously points out, there has been considerable smuggling of Weberian ideas under new names in this literature. Perhaps this is the appropriate place, then, to declare

exegetical exercises, it is easy to lose sight of the main question, which is to discover the boundaries of groups which are capable of being mobilized in class struggles. A more promising Marxist solution is that of Przeworski: starting from a broad definition of the working class (in terms of wage labour) he conceives the formation of its boundaries as a historical process whose results depend on class struggle.²⁶ Following that perspective, the working class will be defined here to include "both those who are selling their labour power and those not directly involved in but dependent on that sale," i.e., wage workers and their dependants.²⁷

Weberian sociologists have generally paid more attention to group formation within and between classes than Marxists.²⁸ Several strands of Weberian work are of particular significance to group formation in the working class. One has been concerned with operations of social closure, especially with respect to ethnicity.²⁹ As developed

that I am importing some Weberian goods, and ready to pay the duties.

26. A. Przeworski, "Proletariat into a Class: The Process of Class Formation."

27. J. Gardiner, "Women in the Labour Process and Class Structure," pp. 157-58.

28. The work of Marxist economists developing the concept of segmented labour markets is also important. See R. Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (hereafter, *Contested Terrain*), Ch. 9; cf. J. Rubery, "Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organisation, and Low Pay," for a critique of that literature's one-sided concentration on the creation of segmented labour markets by capitalists' actions, neglecting the actions of workers.

29. See Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*, Ch. 3; G. Neuwirth, "A Weberian Outline of a Theory of Community: Its Application to the 'Dark Ghetto.'"

by Parkin, however, this line of thought belongs more in the study of collective action than class formation, or (as in Przeworski) in the study of the effects of collective action on class formation.³⁰ A second strand has followed Weber's concept of social classes, and focussed on the implications of social mobility for class formation.³¹ This and other conditions pointed out by sociologists influenced by Weber, such as the division of authority and of labour in the workplace, and the formation of status groups based on styles of consumption, can be integrated into the framework of working-class social reproduction being developed here, and so will be considered where appropriate in the next section.

Classes as Historical Actors

The final problem in the study of social classes and class conflict in capitalism is the question of how classes become historical actors. How do the groups formed around the relations of production which constitute antagonistic interests come to act on those interests? This problem might be (and usually is) posed as a question of class consciousness, in which members of the working class become conscious of

30. See the accusation of excessive voluntarism levelled by Giddens against Parkin, in "Classes, Capitalism, and the State," p. 887.

31. Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 302; Giddens, *Class Structure*, p. 107; J.H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, Ch. 1. The idea that occupational and class mobility has a bearing on class formation has much to recommend it, but because there are no data available on social mobility in Vancouver in the early twentieth century, it will be largely ignored here.

their membership in the class, conscious that their interests are opposed to those of capitalists, and finally conscious in a revolutionary way of the necessity of overthrowing capitalism and instituting a new social order.³² Following from Lenin's distinction between spontaneous, trade union consciousness of opposition to capitalists, and revolutionary consciousness brought to the working class by a political party,³³ the study of working-class consciousness has often turned on the role of political parties.³⁴ Alternatively, since revolutionary consciousness has been slow to make an appearance within the western working class, the attention of Marxist and non-Marxist sociologists has turned to the question of why that consciousness has not developed, arriving at answers that usually have something to do with ideology.

Although both approaches have much to recommend them, neither is particularly fruitful if divorced from the lives and collective actions.

32. See the more or less Leninist schema of types of class consciousness proposed by Giddens, *Class Structure*, pp. 112-17. As Giddens notes, a certain level of class (or group) consciousness is already implied in the idea of class (or group) formation, or class structuration, to use his term.

33. This distinction from "What is to be Done?" is usually all that is taken from Lenin; for a demonstration of the sophistication of his thinking on the problem of class consciousness, see N. Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 1, Theory and Practice in the Democratic Revolution*, esp. pp. 238-45.

34. Studies of the history of the working-class in British Columbia have focussed on this question, although not from a Leninist, or even Marxist perspective: see for example, R.A. Johnson, "'No Compromise--No Political Trading': The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia."

of workers. The former easily leads to a theoretical substitution of "the party" for workers' consciousness;³⁵ the latter is prone to asking why workers have not lived up to the ideal type of working-class consciousness, rather than to investigating their actual conduct and thought.³⁶

An alternative, more fruitful approach, also deriving from Marxism, is that class consciousness arises from the experience of class struggle. The concept of class struggle, or class conflict, is by no means unproblematic, however.³⁷ At one extreme, it becomes simply a metaphor, in which "classes" are like pieces on the chessboard of history, making moves and countermoves: the bourgeoisie does this, the proletariat that. This kind of schematic history is too far removed from historical reality to be of much use, and it does not tell us much about how class action happens.³⁸ Opponents of the use of the concept

35. This tendency is most strongly present in G. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*.

36. See the remarks already made on "platonist Marxism," above, page 43. Concentration on working-class political parties and neglect of what workers were doing and thinking may go together. For a British Columbia example, see M. Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, esp. p. 185: in a history that is devoted almost entirely to organizations, Robin dismisses "average" workers as probably thinking "very little," because they did not live up to his ideal of radicalism or working-class consciousness.

37. Raymond Williams makes a useful distinction between the two: class conflict is the nearly constant conflict of workers and capitalists around antagonistic interests in various spheres of life; class struggle is more episodic, conscious class action. See R. Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 135-35.

38. See Thompson's criticism of this tendency, in "The Peculiarities of the English," in *The Poverty of Theory*, pp. 85-86.

of class and class conflict quite rightly point out that on close examination, they cannot discover the existence of classes as single unified actors, and so dismiss the whole project.³⁹ At the other extreme, anything members of a class do is taken as an expression of class conflict, depriving the concepts of class and class conflict of analytic value. To avoid these two problems, I propose to examine class conflict as collective action by members of the working class based on the antagonistic interests of workers and capitalists that are founded by capitalist production relations.⁴⁰ Then the action of workers in consciously producing historical change becomes a problem in mobilization and collective action. The concept of class consciousness is not abandoned, but rather than being sought as either an attribute of individuals, or as a property of political organizations and leaders, it is to be sought in the collective actions of workers: in the objectives for which workers were mobilized, and in the extent of their actions.⁴¹

39. For a Canadian example, which misses the mark, because its targets are not doing that, see D.J. Bercuson, "Through the Looking Glass of Culture: An Essay on the New Labour History and Working-Class Culture in Recent Canadian Historical Writing."

40. Using this conception of class conflict does not imply that all working-class collective action is class conflict. Actions based on other antagonistic interests (such as between ethnic groups within the working-class) will be considered other forms of working-class contention. This will be developed below.

41. See P. Stearns, "Measuring the Evolution of Strike Movements," p. 10: "The larger strike shows more organizing ability and more group or class consciousness than the smaller strike." He goes on to suggest that strikes that extend across more than one employer, or beyond one locality, reveal more class consciousness and organization than more limited strikes. Other types of collective action, of course, may indicate other forms of consciousness in the working class.

If class consciousness develops in class struggle, then the responses to, and outcomes of, workers' collective action should be expressed in subsequent collective action embracing larger parts of the working class and broader class objectives. That, after all, is why sociologists are interested in class consciousness: for its effects in collective action. Accordingly, to address the historical problem of the interpretation of the development of working-class radicalism in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919, radicalism is defined here in terms of the objectives of collective action, and the breadth of working-class mobilization. A working-class organization or collective action was radical to the extent that its objectives were anti-capitalist, that is, were in favor of changing the social system from capitalism to socialism, and to the extent that it mobilized broad segments of the working class.⁴² Workers were radical to the extent that they supported or participated in such actions or organizations.⁴³

42. The more workers an action or organization mobilized, and the more diverse they were, the more radical that action or organization. For example, an organization that mobilized skilled and unskilled workers, or men and women, or whites and Asians, was more radical than one that mobilized only the former in each pair.

43. The events of 1918-19 described in Chapter 1 are paradigms of working-class radicalism in this sense and participation in them will be used to indicate the radicalism of workers in individual trades and industries.

3.2 Cycles of Working Class Social Reproduction

In the previous section, Marxist analyses of the wage labour relationship were criticized ~~for~~ being one-sided. Beginning with Marx himself in *Capital*, most Marxist attempts to understand the operation of capitalism, and class struggle in it, have concentrated on the reproduction cycle of capital, in its simple and expanded forms. This has been justified by the centrality of the dynamic of capital accumulation to capitalist society. But as historical studies have shown, capital accumulation is affected by class struggle (and thus by the working class), and as M. Lebowitz has shown with respect to Marx's *Capital*, any theoretical analysis which looks only at the reproduction of capital is one-sided and flawed.⁴⁴

We can begin to construct a conception of working class reproduction by first outlining Marx's analysis of the simple and

44. The conception of working-class social reproduction cycles which follows is enormously indebted to Lebowitz's "The One-Sidedness of Capital," despite reservations about its Hegelianism. It has also been influenced by a developing tendency to examine workers and class in terms of life cycles. H. Friedmann, in "Simple Commodity Production and Wage Labour in the American Plains" has developed this in studying simple commodity producers who are also at times wage labourers. D. Bertaux (*Destins Personnels et Structure de Classe*, cited by Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State*, p. 93), has argued that class positions should be considered as trajectories of positions through which an individual passes in the course of a work career. This idea is used empirically in D. Bertaux and I. Bertaux-Wiame, "Artisanal Bakery in France: How it Lives and why it Survives." None of these authors is responsible, of course, for the uses to which I put their ideas here.

expanded reproduction of capital. For Marx, the circulation of capital is represented in the formula "M-C-C'-M'." A sum of money (M) is exchanged by the capitalist for commodities (C), consisting of means of production and labour power, which are used to produce new commodities (C') that are sold for more money than was originally advanced (M'), thereby realizing the value created in the production process (C-C'). Capital accumulation occurs when the process is repeated on an expanded scale, that is when profits are reinvested in the form of additional means of production and labour power.⁴⁵

Marx occasionally hints at an analogous process of reproduction of labour, but nearly always from the point of view of the reproduction of capital:

Since the value of the labour power -- i.e. the adequate selling price of the commodity -- is determined by the quantity of labour required for its reproduction, and this quantity of labour itself is here determined by that needed for the production of the necessary means of subsistence of the labourer, hence for the maintenance of his existence, the wages become the revenue on which the labourer has to live.

Here, and in many other places in Capital, Vol. II, Marx is considering the reproduction of labour power in the same way as the reproduction of any other commodity, in terms of his labour theory of value.⁴⁶ However, in other places, there are ideas that can form the basis of a sociological conception of the reproduction of labour. For example, in

45. Marx, Capital I, Ch. 23-24.

46. Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. II, Book II, The Process of Circulation of Capital (hereafter, Capital II), p. 384.

discussing wages as revenue for labourers, Marx comments that "not only labour-power is continually reproduced thereby but also the class of wage labourers as such"; later, he states: "...the labourer spends his wages to maintain himself and his family and thus his labour-power. In order to be able to live on and act again as a buyer of commodities he must sell his labour-power."⁴⁷ There are two ways these remarks, and the many like them, can be understood. On the one hand, they can be taken, as Marx does, from the point of view of capital: if capitalism is to continue to exist, it is necessary that a class of labourers dispossessed of means of production, and consequently forced to sell their labour power to capital again and again, be reproduced.⁴⁸ On the other hand, they can be developed from the point of view of labour, as we will now do, and by so doing, further develop our understanding of class and class conflict.

Let us start, as Marx does, from the economic reproduction of labour power. The process may be represented as a simple circulation of commodities: "C-M-C", or specifically, "Lp-W-Ac-Lp". In this schema, "Lp" stands for "labour power", "W" for "wages," and "Ac" for "articles of consumption." Workers exchange their labour power for money wages that are used to buy articles of consumption; by consuming them workers

47. Capital II, pp. 392, 449.

48. This is most notably developed by Marx in "Results of the Immediate Production Process"; cf. Capital, Vol. II, p. 385.

recreate their labour power to be sold again.⁴⁹ The circulation of labour power is more than just a moment in the metamorphosis of value, however; it is also a complex web of social relationships and social practices which take different forms and are reproduced and transformed in different ways in different times, places, and social groups.

If we look at it socially, rather than only economically, we can consider the circulation of labour power as three phases of a working-class cycle of social reproduction: Lp-W, in which workers sell their labour power (the labour market); W-Ac, in which workers use their wages to buy articles of consumption (the consumption goods market); Ac-Lp, in which articles of consumption are consumed, and labour power is recreated (consumption). There is actually another phase of working-class social reproduction, between the sale of labour power and the payment of wages, namely work or production.⁵⁰ Capitalists buy workers' labour power in order to use it, typically to produce commodities, and wages are not generally paid until after work has been performed. If "P" is taken to stand for "production," then the cycle of working-class social reproduction can be reformulated as: "Lp-P-W-Ac-Lp." The four phases of that cycle are the labour market,

49. See Marx, *Capital* II, pp. 59-60, 77, for the simple circulation of labour power, and p. 96, where the labourer's individual consumption is considered productive consumption (labour power being the product).

50. This phase is hidden when the reproduction of labour power is treated economically, as the circulation of value, because it is irrelevant to it.

work, the consumption market, and consumption.⁵¹

The concept of social reproduction cycles will be used in the next section to address the two main issues in any theory of class in a capitalist society: the constitution of antagonistic interests between capitalists and workers, and class formation, that is, the establishment of solidarities in the working class. It will also serve as a framework for integrating (rather than ignoring or only juxtaposing) significant elements of Weberian theories of class into a Marxian theory.⁵² In the section after that, the bearing of working-class social reproduction

51. I use the terms "cycle" and "phase," with their connotations of temporality, with some reservations, but they are still the best I can think of. "Cycle," with its implication of circularity and repetition, is appropriate to a process that is constantly repeated. "Phase," with its implication of a succession of forms in which something appears (phases of the moon, for example), is appropriate to the extent that the parts of the working-class social reproduction cycle do take place at different times, often in different places, and often with different persons. For example, a male building labourer might be hired by a downtown employment agent in the morning (labour market), work under a foreman all day at a construction site five miles away (work), return to his home and family at the end of the day to eat and rest (consumption), receive his wages from the timekeeper at the contractors' office at the end of the week (completing the labour market transaction), go drinking with his friends at a neighbourhood tavern (consumption), while his wife pays the landlord and does the grocery shopping (consumption market). As we will see, one point of developing the concept of cycles of working-class social reproduction is to bring out variations in these dimensions, and to facilitate comparison between different groups of workers.

52. The conception I have developed here resembles Weber's conception of "types of class struggle": "Social actions that directly determine the class situation of the worker and the entrepreneur are: the labor market, the commodities market, and the capitalistic enterprise." The resemblance is complete if we add Weber's conception of status in terms of the "consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life," *Economy and Society*, pp. 930, 937. My conception of class is not Weberian, however, because it does not start from market situation, but from relations of production.

cycles on a sociological conception of collective action will be demonstrated.

3.3 Objects of Contention and Class Formation

It was argued previously that the antagonistic interests of capitalists and workers had their source in contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' needs, but that the concept of "needs" had to be decomposed (above, page 57). It was also argued previously that class formation had to be located in workers' lives, not just in the dynamics of capital accumulation. In the present section, the concept of working-class social reproduction will be used to provide an historical conception of workers' needs, and the interests that follow from them. We will also seek to locate tendencies of class (or group) formation in workers' social reproduction cycles. Before turning to an examination of antagonistic interests and class formation at each phase of working-class social reproduction, some general remarks are in order, first on the concept of historically variable needs and interests, then on class formation.

Marx begins his discussion of the circuit of industrial capital with the free labourer, possessing no means of production or subsistence, and a liberty to sell his or her labour power.⁵³ He

53. Capital I, Ch. 6.

emphasizes, however that the worker enters the labour market in order to meet consumption needs: "The form of circulation through which his commodity, labour-power, passes, is that of the simple circulation of commodities for the mere satisfaction of needs, for the purpose of consumption...."⁵⁴ Those needs, Marx adds, always have a social and historical component.⁵⁵

the number and extent of [the worker's] so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed.

In short, workers appear on the labour market with historically and socially-defined consumption needs and wants, which are not the same as merely physiological or biological needs. It is from that basis that workers' antagonistic interests to capitalists are constituted (at least initially). The question that remains is how those needs are historically formed and changed, and how they are related to workers' interests.⁵⁶

The source of changing consumption needs can be found in the

54. Marx, Capital II, p. 445, my emphasis.

55. Capital I, p. 168. For an astute discussion of Marx's analysis of the social and moral component of the value of labour power, from which the present author has benefitted greatly, see B. Rowthorn, "Marx's Theory of Wages," especially pp. 205-12.

56. Marx gives an answer in the quote above, but that is not adequate, since it only states a starting point: what we need is an explanation of change.

relation between workers' social reproduction and capital accumulation. As Rowthorn demonstrates, when markets are expanding and profits rising in capitalist booms, there is a tendency for labour shortages to occur, and for wages to rise.⁵⁷ When booms give way to depressions, as they invariably do, there is pressure for wage reductions, and what has been called a "ratchet effect" comes into play. Workers have become accustomed to the real wages and consumption levels realized during the boom, and will resist their reduction. Because of that resistance, and because of changes in the production process that make it more efficient, capitalists may not find it necessary to reduce wages to pre-boom levels in order to restore profitability and accumulation. Capital accumulation and its contradictions thus provide the basis for changing consumption needs, for a tendency for workers' standards of living to rise, and for the antagonistic interests of workers and capitalists.⁵⁸

The argument made with respect to consumption needs can be transposed to other phases of workers' social reproduction. As Humphries argues, human needs derive from "the maintenance and reproduction of the individual in certain definite relationships with

57. Thus Marx calls this "the most favourable situation for the working class." "Wage Labour and Capital," p. 167.

58. This discussion is based on B. Rowthorn's excellent "Marx's Theory of Wages," pp. 212, 217-21. In *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns*, pp. 5-6, J. Foster makes a similar argument.

his community."⁵⁹ When capitalism changes in response to its own contradictions, it causes changes in every aspect of workers' lives. As the capitalist organization of production changes, social relationships and standards to which workers are accustomed, and which they have come to regard as needs (or perhaps as rights) come under pressure to change.⁶⁰ In that way, capital accumulation and workers' interests, based on changing needs, are contradictory.⁶¹ This idea can be reformulated in terms of contradictions between capital accumulation and working-class social reproduction.

Contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction can be identified at different levels of analysis. At the most general level, capital accumulation is itself contradictory, that is, it runs up against barriers of its own making, obstacles to its

59. J. Humphries, "Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working-Class Family" (hereafter, "Persistence of the Working-Class Family"), p. 476.

60. This again is an important contribution of social history, where the confrontation between the pre-existing standards and values of workers, and the imperatives of capitalism, have been given a central place in the history of the working class.

61. Following both Giddens and Therborn, interests are here conceived to depend upon the ends of action, whether those ends are defined as wants, as Giddens does, or historically variable needs, as I do. See Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, p. 189: "Wants (or 'wanting') are the basis of interests: to say that A has an interest in a given course of action, occurrence, or state of affairs, is to say that the course of action, etc. facilitates the possibility of A achieving his or her wants." Cf. Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, p. 10: "'interests' by themselves do not explain anything. Interest is a normative concept indicating the most rational course of action in a predefined game, that is, in a situation in which gain and loss have already been defined." To use Therborn's terminology, I am suggesting here that workers' social reproduction cycles define the 'game.'

further expansion which are the result of its own past expansion. These show up most dramatically in economic crises, which often precede major transformations of the structure of accumulation; they appear less dramatically in business cycles.⁶² At a less general level are the obstacles to profitability and expansion faced by individual capitalists, or by industries in a particular locality, because of competitive disadvantages, such as high transportation costs. At either level, when capital accumulation is impeded, capitalists will generally take individual or collective measures whose objective is to overcome these obstacles, and restore and maintain profitability and accumulation. Marx has offered two ways in which that can be done: increasing absolute surplus value by increasing the exploitation of labour through longer hours or lower wages, or increasing relative surplus value by restructuring the production process.⁶³

Regardless of the particular methods adopted by capitalists to counter impediments to capital accumulation, those methods generally have an impact on workers' social reproduction. At the most general level are large-scale changes in the structure of accumulation, such as occurred between the 1890s and 1920s, affecting the organization of production, the labour market, and (with the development of mass

62. See Wright, "Crisis Tendencies"; Gordon, Edwards and Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*.

63. Capital I, Part 5. Although, following Marx, I have stated these alternatives in value terms, they could be reformulated without assuming the labour theory of value.

consumption) the consumption market and consumption practices.⁶⁴ At the less general levels of individual localities or individual capitalists, efforts to lower wages, lengthen hours, import labour, change production methods, or concentrate capital in larger units affect the working conditions, job security, hours, real wages, and consumption practices to which particular groups of workers are accustomed. To the extent that those changes mean that workers can no longer live as they used to, capital accumulation is in contradiction with the social reproduction cycles of workers.⁶⁵ The content of these contradictions depends on workers' particular cycles of social reproduction, as well as on the specific measures taken by capitalists. By examining both, antagonistic interests constituted by contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction can be located at each phase of the working-class reproduction cycle. We will call the particular antagonistic interests constituted by contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction "objects of contention" between workers and capitalists. Objects of contention are what class

64. See J. Cronin, "Stages, Cycles, and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest."

65. I have stressed the antagonism of interests derived from new measures taken by capitalists to counter impediments to capital accumulation, because that furnishes much of the dynamic of class conflict. However, it is not only when there are changes that the interests of workers are antagonistic to those of capitalists: for example, if in order to maintain profitability capitalists pay wages that are insufficient to meet the levels of consumption to which workers are accustomed in their current social reproduction cycle, then the interests of capitalists and workers are opposed.

struggle is over.⁶⁶

Capital accumulation affects not only workers' interests; it shapes their social organization (or group formation) as well. New production techniques create some skill divisions and dissolve others; the size of productive units concentrates workers in one workplace or scatters them over many; wage differentials select for different groups of workers with different consumption requirements, and so on. Similarly, because their consumption practices, labour market positions, and so on (in short, their social reproduction cycles) may be different, groups of workers are formed with different experiences and identities. By the same token, common experiences of conflicting interests with capitalists, of depressions and booms, and of collective action and its results, may lead to the formation of broader groups within the working class. Class formation is an open-ended process, so it is not possible to lay down in advance what lines it will take. Instead, for each phase of working-class social reproduction, we will try to specify some of the tendencies for and against solidarities and divisions within the working class. The objective is to provide guidance to research, to indicate what kinds of solidarities and divisions to look for.⁶⁷

Several research problems follow from our theoretical

66. I use this inelegant term instead of something like "issues" of class struggle because I want to stress that we are not dealing with the goals of collective actors (which I will call "objectives"), but with the conflicts of interest which underlie them.

67. In "Thompson and his Critics" (p. 63), Melksins Wood stresses the necessity of treating class formation as an open, empirical question (without herself offering any guidelines).

arguments. We have argued that the antagonistic interests of capitalists and workers in capitalist societies derive from contradictions between the requirements of capital accumulation and the requirements of workers' social reproduction. We have also argued that capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction cycles jointly shape group formation within the working class. It is therefore necessary, in the first place, to investigate capital accumulation in the Vancouver area. What obstacles to profitability and expansion existed for capital as a whole and for particular industries in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919? To overcome those obstacles, what measures were taken by capitalists that might affect working-class social reproduction cycles and create objects of contention? What effects did those changes have on the size of establishments and the division of labour, and thereby on class formation?⁶⁸

In the second place, it is necessary to investigate workers' social reproduction cycles to determine what objects of contention existed between capitalists and workers, or within the working class, and to ascertain tendencies of class formation. We seek to infer workers' interests from their social reproduction cycles, and to

68. The main sources used for the investigation of capital accumulation in this study have been industry publications (such as trade journals, and booster publications), the daily press, the labour press, Royal Commissions, and secondary sources, when available. Since this is primarily a study in workers' collective action, not economic history, no primary archival sources on individual companies have been used. Consequently, when ascertaining the obstacles to capital accumulation we have had to rely, to a greater extent than is perhaps desirable, on statements made by capitalists rather than on more objective sources, such as company books.

identify contradictions between those interests and the measures taken by capitalists to overcome obstacles to capital accumulation.⁶⁹ We also seek to locate tendencies of class formation at each phase of social reproduction, that is, to discover solidarities and divisions within the working class in consumption, labour market, work, and consumption market practices. In the remainder of this section, we will expand on both ideas, showing how contradictions arise and collectivities may be created at each phase of the cycle of working-class social reproduction.⁷⁰

Consumption

The separation between production and consumption in capitalism is basic to the consideration of objects of contention and class formation in the consumption phase of working-class social reproduction.⁷¹ Typically, working-class consumption practices occur

69. In inferring interests from social reproduction cycles, it will be necessary to make up for gaps in information with some assumptions, such as that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, workers have an interest in more wages rather than less, shorter hours rather than longer, and more job autonomy rather than less.

70. Sources of information on each phase are: a) consumption practices: the daily press, Royal Commissions, and secondary sources; b) labour market: the daily and labour press, Royal Commissions, and government reports; c) work: same sources as capital accumulation; d) consumption market: same sources as consumption practices. There is no information on the consumption and consumption market practices of workers in most occupations or industries; it is assumed that this means there was nothing distinctive about those workers' consumption patterns.

71. This separation derives in part from workers in capitalism being free to sell their labour power, i.e., not being bound to any particular employers.

outside of direct capitalist control, and separate from the workplace, usually (but not exclusively) in households.⁷² We will examine its implications first for objects of contention, then for class formation.

On the one hand, the separation between production and consumption allows capitalists to disclaim responsibility for workers' consumption. It is a truism that a capitalist will maintain his plant and feed his work animals during shutdowns, but lay off his workers and let them fend for themselves.⁷³ On the other hand, it means that workers are free outside the time for which they have sold their labour power to capitalists. Consequently, they typically have considerable autonomy in their consumption practices, and their use of this autonomy may conflict with the interests of capital. Objects of contention arise when the different significance of workers' consumption practices for capital accumulation, and for workers' social reproduction, leads to efforts by capitalists or the state to control those consumption practices, and by workers to protect their autonomy.⁷⁴

From the perspective of capital accumulation, workers' consumption is simply the production and reproduction of labour power at

72. See D. Harvey, "Labour, Capital, and Class Struggle Around the Built Environment in Capitalist Societies."

73. This separation was exemplified in Vancouver in 1901, when questions were raised about how workmen, who mostly lived on the other side of the city, were going to get to the new Pacific Coast Lumber Company mill. Suggestions that the mill construct houses for them nearby were simply refused, the company saying that how workers got to the plant was not its concern. Province, Jan. 24, 1902.

74. See Humphries, "Persistence of the Working-Class Family," for one example.

a certain level of skill and discipline, which will subsequently be purchased and put to work in the production process.⁷⁵ From the point of view of working-class social reproduction, however, consumption is practically life itself. The significance of their consumption practices, for workers, is not primarily to prepare them for work; on the contrary they work in order to live.⁷⁶ Contradictions arise from these contrasting perspectives when workers' consumption practices (such as drinking) are seen by capitalists to interfere with the reproduction of labour power, that is, with the quality of the commodity they are purchasing.⁷⁷ Other objects of contention stemming from similar differences in perspective might be found in schooling, entertainment

75. It is from this point of view (of the reproduction of capital) that sociologists and others have emphasized the role of schools, the family, and other institutions as agencies of domination and reproduction. The topic of workers' consumption as a market for capitalists producing consumer goods will be taken up in the consumption market phase.

76. Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital," p. 153.

77. One example, familiar to all students of "Saint Monday," arose in Vancouver in 1910, when several aldermen and businessmen sought the early closing of bars to protect employers from the effects of late-night drinking by their workers. According to Alderman McBride, "The employers of the city must be considered as no man is fit to do a day's work after loafing about a hotel until 1 o'clock in the morning." A few months earlier, Alderman Ramsay argued for early closing because "the real harm came from the [working-class consumption] practice of treating during the late hours." *Province* June 3, 4, 1910, August 16, 1910. On the practice of skilled craftsmen failing to turn up for work on Monday because they were continuing or recovering from a weekend's drinking, see E.P. Thompson "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," pp. 72-76; G. Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, pp. 53-54. For more on working class saloons, see P. DeLoottinville "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889"; J.M. Kingsdale "The 'Poor Man's Club': Social Functions of the Urban Working Class Saloon."

and recreation,⁷⁸ domestic arrangements, and the like, which were often areas in which middle class reform and rescue work encountered the opposition of workers defending the autonomy of their consumption practices.⁷⁹ Because of the separation of production and consumption in capitalism, however, we should expect contention directly between capitalists and workers over working-class consumption practices to be rare.

We expect that contention to be rare because of the effects of the separation of production and consumption on class formation. In the consumption phase of working-class social reproduction, the formation of collectivities within the working class is based on historically formed levels, standards, and styles of consumption.⁸⁰ The experiences of

78. For example, employers of Chinese workers in Vancouver raised an alarm about the effects of their gambling habits on the supply of labour. Province, July 19, 1918.

79. See, for example, the resistance of seamen to sailors homes run by reformers in Eastern Canada in J. Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada*, Ch. 5. As we will see there was a similar response in Vancouver to sailors and loggers homes, which were intended to promote sobriety and thrift.

80. In other words, consumption is not just a matter of "how much?" but also of "what and how?" It should be noted here that although the previous discussion followed Marx in emphasizing the consumption of commodities, there is more to working-class consumption than that. As feminist sociologists and historians have pointed out, much of wage workers' consumption is provided by the domestic labour of women who are not producing commodities. See Humphries, "Persistence of the Working-Class Family," p. 474. In addition, religious practices, workmen's clubs, soccer matches between unions, and so on are not consumption of commodities. It might be argued that working-class consumption practices like these are a basis for resistance to the commodification of social relations in capitalism, in the name of human needs having priority over market considerations. We might also speculate that the increasing commodification of leisure activities

workers in this respect have both unifying and divisive effects. Since the real incomes of workers are lower than those of capitalists, their consumption levels and standards are different, and to that extent class formation is promoted.⁸¹ But this does not really serve to distinguish the working class from other classes, such as the petty bourgeoisie, or simple commodity producers (or even very small capitalists), whose levels and styles of consumption may not be far removed from those of workers. Furthermore, to the extent that there is income stratification within the working class, levels of consumption will be different, and even at the same levels, styles of consumption may differ.

Consequently, status groups may be formed within the working class. With what he calls "some oversimplification," Weber states that "status groups are identified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life."⁸² There are two aspects to Weber's concept of status groups: on the one hand common patterns of consumption, and on the other hand the association of those patterns with an "effective claim to social esteem" or honor.⁸³

would affect working-class formation.

81. That difference was expressed starkly by the secretary of the Vancouver Metal Trades Council, Fred Walsh, in 1919: "Is there any reason why the worker(s) should walk? They build automobiles, and they ride in smelly street cars; they build mansions on Shaughnessy Heights and live in shacks in the outlying districts." Mathers Commission Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 550.

82. This is a simplification, because for Weber style of life includes occupation and education as well as consumption. Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 937, 305-06.

83. This useful distinction is made by Gliddens, *Class Structure*, pp. 80, 109.

2

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Common consumption patterns are the basis for group formation, while their positive and negative evaluation may be regarded as a factor reinforcing social boundaries between the groups so formed. These groups may be formed within the working class, or they may unite workers with members of other classes.⁸⁴

Status groups can be located in the working class by examining differences in consumption practices along lines of ethnicity and race, gender, and domesticity. Different consumption practices characterize different ethnic groups by definition, and to the extent they involve different standards of consumption, they may be the basis for and result of segmentation in the labour market.⁸⁵ Gender differences in consumption practices were manifested in the segregation of men's and women's consumption activities. For example, the culture of skilled craft workers was definitely a masculine one that excluded women from its sphere; the same was likely true of less skilled workers as well.⁸⁶ Even within the realm of that masculine culture, a third difference in domestic consumption practices might exist, between settled, married, and 'respectable' workers, and migratory, single male workers, whose

84. F. Parkin, Max Weber, p. 98.

85. As Weber suggests, and as we will find as we proceed through the phases of working-class social reproduction, solidarities and divisions based on consumption may reinforce and be reinforced by solidarities and divisions at other phases of social reproduction. See Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 932-38.

86. See Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, Ch. 2.

consumption practices were frequently not respectable.⁸⁷

Labour Market.

A consequence of the separation of workers from means of production in capitalism is that, in order to secure the money with which to buy articles of consumption, workers must appear in the labour market to sell their labour power for wages. Objects of contention in the labour market are first, the price the worker receives for his labour power (wages), and the length of time for which the capitalist may use that labour power (hours), and second, control over the labour market. Although it probably seems too obvious to need elaboration, we can gain some insight into wages and hours as objects of contention in capitalism by looking at them from the perspectives of capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction.

From the perspective of capital accumulation, it is the case that, all other things being equal, two determinants of profits are workers' wages and hours of work.⁸⁸ Assuming that he wishes to maintain a normal rate of profit, it is not in any capitalist's interests that

87. By "domesticity" or "domestic consumption practices" is meant the practices by which workers meet the consumption needs which, for some, occur in families and neighborhoods: eating, sleeping, companionship, sex. A logger who sleeps off a binge on the floor in the back room of a skid road tavern has a different domestic lifestyle than a printer with a house in South Vancouver, a family, and a membership in the Sons of England.

88. Those "other things" include the intensity of work, and the productivity of labour. See virtually any discussion of the rates of surplus value and of profit in Marxian economics, e.g. Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit"; Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development, Ch. 4.

wages rise or hours fall, or that his workers' wages be more than, or hours less than, those of his competitors' workers.⁸⁹ If all other things are not equal between an individual capitalist and his competitors (e.g., different levels of productivity due to different technical conditions of production), then it may be in that capitalist's interest to attempt to maintain a lower level of wages than his competitors, or he may be able to pay higher wages.

From the point of view of workers' social reproduction, wages and hours can be regarded in terms of the sale of labour power as a commodity much like any other, or in terms of working-class consumption practices.⁹⁰ From the first perspective, workers want to get the best price they can for the only commodity they own; capitalists, as buyers, want to get the cheapest price.⁹¹ From the same perspective, because workers want to keep their commodity in good condition, to prevent it being worn out prematurely, they are interested in limiting hours of work. From the second perspective, however, labour power is not seen as a commodity to be treated like any other commodity, because a minimum

89. I am not, let it be noted, speaking in terms of real wages. Real wages are relevant to workers' social reproduction, and to capital as a whole, but not to individual capitalists, for whom the money wage is what counts.

90. Both perspectives are implicit in Marx's definitions of the value of labour power. Again, see Rowthorn, "Marx's Theory of Wages."

91. That is how Morris A. Phelps, a shipyard labourer, saw it in 1919: "... If you were employing me naturally I sell my working power as high as I can, and naturally you give me the least that you can give; I mean to say that it is the whole system, therefore the system itself antagonizes the one to the other." Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 597.

level of wages is required to maintain an acceptable standard of living.⁹² Similarly, hours are seen in terms of the time required for those consumption practices, that is, in terms of human needs.⁹³

It is necessary to look at wages and hours in both ways, because only then can we understand differences in workers' conduct.⁹⁴ Both viewpoints exist for workers; we may speculate that which one comes to the fore depends in part on the condition of the labour market. When

92. It is worth quoting a shipwright (and labour leader), J.W. Wilkinson, at length, because his testimony clearly shows this connection: "The chief thing that the average workman wants, I believe, is security, particularly to earn bread and food and clothing and shelter for himself, his wife and his children. The great bugbear which hangs over the lives of most workmen is that they cannot feel certain that they will be able to earn sufficient of the things of life, even though they are willing and thoroughly able to do so. They just feel that they are like a piece of merchandise, and that their chances of life are a gamble consisting in the possibility of someone coming along tomorrow to buy them for a day or hire their labour just for a little while, having no personal interest in them whatever more (sic) than if they were a piece of wood or a piece of brick, or some other inanimate object." Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 469; for similar, see *ibid.*, pp. 507-08, 543.

93. As Marx eloquently states: "Time is the room of human development. A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals, and so forth, is absorbed by his labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden." "Wages, Price and Profit," pp. 219-20.

94. For example, the length of working day meant different things to different heavy construction workers in Vancouver, depending on their social reproduction cycle. As we will see later, labourers who were resident in Vancouver, and worked regularly for the city or for contractors on public works, had an interest in the eight-hour day, so they could spend time with their families, or in leisure with other workers, etc. In contrast, for Italian migrant labourers whose goal in Canada was to make as much money as possible, then return to Italy, a limitation on hours was a restriction on how much money they could make, and thus an obstacle to their social reproduction. See below, Chapter 12.

labour is scarce, workers will regard their labour power as a commodity, to be sold at the highest possible price. When there is a surplus of labour, and pressure to lower wages, workers will object to the commodification of their labour power, and focus on consumption needs as the proper measure of wages.⁹⁵ This is another way in which a tendency toward decommodification arises from working-class social reproduction: because workers' social reproduction is based on consumption, human needs are seen to take priority over "laws of supply and demand" in the labour market.

A tendency to decommodification is also revealed when control of the labour market is an object of contention between capitalists and workers. We argued that it is in the interests of capitalists to reduce wages and lengthen hours, or at least to prevent increased wages and shorter hours, but not how they might do it. They can do it directly, i.e., cut the wages or lengthen the hours of workers currently employed, or they can do it by employing workers whose labour power is less scarce or less valuable than those currently employed. Assuming that their skill levels are the same,⁹⁶ the value of workers' labour power will vary because of different standards of consumption or different costs of meeting those standards. The main sources of cheap and plentiful labour have generally been the unemployed, subordinate ethnic groups, and

95. This is another way of stating the "ratchet effect" discussed earlier. See above, page 74.

96. Deskillling will be considered in the next section.

women.⁹⁷

Labour market control is an object of contention between employers and workers, as workers try to insulate themselves from labour market competition by wresting control over employment away from employers, and putting it in the hands of unions or other agencies seen to be operating in their own interests. To the extent that they are trying to remove labour power from the sphere of ordinary market transactions, and substitute other principles of employment, a tendency to decommmodification exists. Attempts to control the labour market generally seek to monopolize employment for workers belonging to a particular category, defined by membership in an organization such as a union (closed shops⁹⁸), by meeting individualistic performance qualifications (e.g., licensing requirements), or by membership in a status group defined by religion, race, language, etc. Weber suggests

97. As we will see, in early twentieth century Vancouver, Asian workers had lower consumption requirements than most white workers (in part because of their customary standards of consumption, in part because most were single males), and they were plentiful until immigration restrictions were imposed. Workers from southern and eastern Europe were also a source of cheap labour because they had lower standards of consumption, and were single males who did not need a "family wage." The main effect of the family wage, however, was on women, who could be paid less because they were typically part of a family with other sources of income. As we will see, the wages received by many women workers in Vancouver in the early twentieth century were insufficient to maintain a single woman living on her own at what was considered to be an acceptable standard of living. These wages were about the same proportion of the wages of white male workers in the same industries as were the wages of Asian males relative to those of white males.

98. Since it was not made at the period under study, the distinction made in industrial relations between the closed shops (in which employees are hired through the union), and union shops (in which all employees must be or become union members) will be ignored here.

that any criterion which falls to hand may be used as a mechanism of social closure to exclude real or potential competitors from jobs. But as Parkin points out, the dominant class often furnishes the criteria for exclusion, since the workers who are excluded usually suffer under some political disability that weakens their organizational and defensive capacities (which is one reason why they are low-wage competitors in the first place).⁹⁹ Control of the labour market can thus be transformed from an object of contention between capitalists to one between workers. In that case, class formation is affected.

In their discussion of working class formation, Marx and Engels start from the competition of workers, "an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition."¹⁰⁰ They locate this competition at the beginning of capitalist development, but it is better regarded as a constant tendency throughout capitalist development, against which tendencies to working-class solidarity struggle. The sources of this competition lie in the mobility of workers in the national and international labour market, and the frequent presence of a "reserve army" of unemployed in capitalist societies. As we have seen, labour market competition is likely to

99. Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 341-43; Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*, pp. 90-97. This was certainly true of Asian immigrants, and to a lesser extent, immigrants from Europe, in British Columbia in the early twentieth century, and one response of workers was to try to exclude them from jobs. See P. Phillips, "Identifying the Enemy: Racism, Regionalism and Segmentation in the B.C. Labour Movement"; D. Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*.

100. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p. 116.

occur on ethnic and perhaps gender lines, when women and subordinated ethnic groups appear as competitors to male members of the dominant ethnic group, because of their lower social reproduction costs or more limited labour market opportunities.

Such competition between groups has contradictory effects on working-class formation. On the one hand it is divisive, because it usually leads the dominant group to try to monopolize employment opportunities. Yet on the other hand, the very fact of labour market competition from identifiably different groups of workers, and collective action to enforce social closure, can be sources of cohesion for the dominant group, as it unites against the threat to its position. That cohesion may then form the basis for collective action against the capitalist class.¹⁰¹ By the same token, the experience of exclusion could be a basis for cohesion in the subordinate group, although probably a weaker one, because of the political and economic oppression from which they suffer. Labour market competition is a contradictory process for working-class cohesion, since it unifies and divides the working class at the same time.

Common labour market experiences can thus be a source of social cohesion and division in the labour market. Workers could be expected to feel a sense of common fate and identity to the extent that they shared common employment histories and labour market positions.

101. Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*, Ch. 6, develops this idea in his concept of "dual closure." For suggestions that anti-Asian agitation may have had this effect in both B.C. and eastern Canada, see Phillips, *No Power Greater*, p. 23; Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, p. 178.

Research is consequently directed to similarities and differences among workers in wage rates, typical patterns of geographical and occupational mobility, job turnover, and labour market institutions.¹⁰² Much depends, however, on the extent to which these common experiences brought workers into contact with one another, isolated them individually, or divided them from other workers who did not share these experiences.¹⁰³

Work

The theoretical starting point for the analysis of the workplace as a "contested terrain" is that in the labour market transaction the capitalist does not buy labour; he buys labour power, or "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description."¹⁰⁴ Labour power is the capacity to labour, but it is not the act of labour, and the problem for the capitalist is to ensure that

102. By "labour market institutions" is meant the social organization of the labour market. For example, printers got jobs through the union, which also controlled the placement of substitutes (cf. Hobsbawm, "The Aristocracy of Labour Revisited," p. 240, on the effects of unionism in reinforcing the collective consciousness of craftsmen); longshoremen were employed casually, and hired either through the union, or through the dockside 'shape-up'; loggers got work through hotelkeepers or employment agents; Asians were typically employed through labour contractors.

103. As we will see, the casual labour market of dock workers served to unify them, whereas the common experience of temporary work by women isolated them.

104. Marx, Capital I, p. 164.

the capacity is realized as labour creating use-values.¹⁰⁵ Why is this a problem? In order to provide a theoretically adequate answer it is necessary, as in the other phases of working-class social reproduction, to examine the labour process from the perspectives of both capital and labour.¹⁰⁶

If wages and hours of work are held constant (since they are labour market objects of contention), and the amount of work actually performed by the worker is variable, then it is in the capitalist's interest to exercise control over the labour process. This can be accomplished by increasing the intensity of work through a reduction in the time required for any given operation, or in the interruptions between operations; by reducing the amount of output that cannot be sold because of inadequate quality, or the waste of inputs; or finally by increasing the care with which fixed capital is used.¹⁰⁷ Thus, in order

105. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, pp. 56-58; Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, pp. 11-22; Friedman, *Industry and Labour*, pp. 77-78; B. Rowthorn, *Capitalism, Conflict, and Inflation*, pp. 42-43; G. Hodgson, "Critique of Wright 1. Labour and Profits," p. 94. Both of the latter argue that the importance of the labour process for Marxists derives from this distinction, not (as Wright argues in "The Value Controversy and Social Research") from the labour theory of value.

106. This is why, contrary to Dahrendorf (*Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*), "authority" in "imperatively coordinated associations" is not adequate as a ground for class division. As Giddens (*Class Structure*, p. 72) observes, Dahrendorf does not provide grounds for viewing authority as a basis for antagonistic interests. He neglects the dynamism in capitalist enterprise which makes for the revolutionizing of systems of control and he is unable to say what makes for workers' resistance and thus an opposition of interests.

107. I. Steedman, *Marx After Sraffa*, pp. 77-78; cf. D. Nelson, *Managers and Workers*, pp. 36, 43, on the functions of foremen (or supervisors): the manner and timing of production, the cost and quality of work,

to overcome limits on profits due to higher wages and shorter hours, capitalists have restructured the labour process. Historically this has been done through technological changes that increase the productivity of labour and lower skill requirements, and through supervisory regimes such as scientific management that weaken workers' controls over production and increase the intensity of work.

To understand workers' interests in contesting capitalist control in the workplace, we must turn to their social reproduction cycles. It is only within the assumptions of an economic analysis of value that the capitalist buys labour power; in fact he hires workers, and workers come to work with their own purposes, wants, needs, and conceptions of work, none of which are necessarily those of the capitalist.¹⁰⁸ Once again, social historians have very effectively shown the conflicts that arise between the demands of capitalist production, and the culture of workers, especially those who have not yet become accustomed to industrial discipline,¹⁰⁹ and craft workers confronting changes in the capitalist production process at the end of

hiring and disciplining the workforce.

108. For example, workers come to work with conceptions of proper standards of conduct by supervisors and other workers. Thus in 1913, waitresses struck at a Vancouver cafe because the cook was using abusive and vulgar language. When the owner retaliated by publishing the strikers' names and calling them "Amazons," they responded with a libel suit. They were asserting a conception of themselves, and of appropriate standards of conduct. B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1913, p. 4; Province, Jan. 23, 1914. Compare the idea of 'manly conduct' among craft workers.

109. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism"; H. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919."

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁰ But even workers habituated to capitalist discipline have a stake in existing work practices: their jobs, their self-conceptions, and the autonomy they have managed to 'negotiate' within the workplace may depend on them. Consequently when initiatives by capitalists to increase control over production impinge on existing work practices, there is a conflict of interests.

Changes in the capitalist production process also affect class formation. Marx expected two tendencies in capitalist production to lead to solidarity in the working class: the concentration of workers in cities and factories, and the homogenization of labour at a common semi-skilled, machine-tending level.¹¹¹ There does appear to be a relation between factory size and the development of a factory proletariat, on the one hand, and class formation, on the other, but it is not necessarily the one Marx expected.¹¹²

Marx was mistaken, moreover, to view the homogenization of labour as the only tendency in capitalist production, no matter how

110. See above, Ch. 1.

111. "... with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level." Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," p. 116.

112. See Shorter and Tilly, *Strikes in France*, Ch. 8.

important it may be in some periods.¹¹³ There are also tendencies to segmentation in the workplace, associated with the division of labour and of authority.¹¹⁴ Because not all skills are obliterated by technological change, and some are even created, group formation can occur along lines of skill. The different conditions of mental and manual (or white collar and blue collar) work are also bases for the creation of divided solidarities in the workplace. Finally, divisions of authority in the workplace can lead to the formation of a labour aristocracy of employees with powers over other workers in areas such as discipline, hiring and firing, and control over the pace of work. If that power is sufficient, such employees may even exclude themselves, or be excluded from the working class.¹¹⁵

To discover the bases for group formation in the workplace, then, it is necessary to look at both the size of workplaces and the extent of divisions of skill and authority in the labour process in

113. For example, Gordon, Edwards and Reich identify the period being studied in this thesis as one of the homogenization of labour. *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, Ch. 4.

114. See Giddens, *Class Structure*, pp. 108-09; for a broadly similar identification of lines of division in the workplace, see Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, pp. 224-250. Poulantzas is using these dimensions to define the structural class location of the new petty bourgeoisie, whereas like Giddens, I am using them as sources of group formation in the working class.

115. For example, in 1917, the Metal Trades Council in Vancouver considered a class boundary when it debated a resolution excluding "any foreman or employer of labor who has the [power of] hiring and firing of men" from being a delegate to the council. City Archives of Vancouver, Add. Mss. 558, Metal Trades Council Minutes (hereafter, MTC Minutes), Nov. 14, 1917.

them. If those divisions are combined, as they generally are, with corresponding divisions in the labour market, consumption market and consumption practices, we may find the segmentation of the working-class.

Consumption Market

In the consumption market phase of working-class social reproduction, the money wage received by workers is converted into a real wage by the purchase of articles of consumption. The consumption goods market has not been the object of as much inquiry from a class perspective as has work or the labour market, but it is nonetheless possible to make a beginning by examining the consumption market from the perspectives of capitalists and workers.

For capitalists in what Marx calls "Department II" (that is, for consumer goods producers), the market for articles of consumption is where the value created in production is realized as profit. That means, of course, that articles of consumption are sold to the working class (and other classes) as commodities, which are produced only if there is a market for them, and it is profitable to produce for that market. As a consequence consumption goods are distributed on the basis of ability to pay, not on the basis of need.

Capital accumulation thus results in a tendency to commodification, as capital seeks new markets in which to realize profits. In contrast, the working-class social reproduction cycle, which revolves around the satisfaction of consumption needs, gives rise

to the opposite tendency. Just as in the labour market, workers resist certain consequences of the commodification of labour power, so in the consumption market, they have an interest in the decommodification of the provision of consumption goods, removing them from the sphere of ordinary market transactions, and thereby from calculations of profitability, and price variations due to supply and demand.¹¹⁶ As in the labour market, this interest in decommodification is first revealed in the transition to capitalism, when consumers who have been outside the full sway of commercial transactions for the necessities of life resist the incursions of national markets.¹¹⁷ It appears later in the socialist slogan "Production for use, not for profit."¹¹⁸ We would expect that commodification would be an object of contention whenever the provision of a service or a product as a commodity subject to capitalists' calculations of profitability did not meet workers' needs. Objects of contention would arise when goods were not available, were of poor quality,¹¹⁹ were not available at a price workers could afford, or

116. This is argued by C. Offe, cited in A. Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief But Critical Introduction*, p. 86.

117. As, for example, in eighteenth century food riots in which the "moral economy of the crowd" contested the commodity economy of merchants and traders. See E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century"; C. Tilly, "The Web of Contention in Eighteenth Century Cities."

118. See for example, by Morris Phelps, a shipyard labourer, who stated in 1919: "... as long as there is production for profit and not for use, men must naturally be discontented." Mathers Commission, *Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 596; for similar, see *ibid.*, pp. 504, 556.

119. For example, when food was adulterated. See Marx, *Capital*, I, Ch. 10, sec. 3, on the adulteration of bread in England. After the

when goods or services which were formerly free came to have a price.¹²⁰

Consumption market objects of contention are thus closely tied to the entire working-class social reproduction cycle, because each of its phases shapes the relations of workers to the consumption market.¹²¹ That is most obvious in the case of the consumption phase: workers' consumption practices determine their relation to and demands in the consumption market. The relationship works in the opposite direction as well: workers' consumption practices are shaped by the capitalist market, especially at the end of the 1900-1919 period, when mass production began to make more consumer goods available to at least some workers. Likewise, in the labour market, the amount of wages determines workers' "effective demand" in the consumption market. In inflationary times, when the cost of living is rising, and especially when it is rising faster than wages, the inability of workers to meet their consumption needs might be a source of consumption market contention. The relation between the labour market and the consumption

publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* in 1906, conditions in the meat packing industry became an issue in North America, leading to calls in the VTLC for a boycott of the "meat trust." Pure milk was also an issue. See M. Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921*, pp. 119-23.

120. For some examples of workers in Vancouver seeking decommodification in the provision of recreation facilities, see R.A.J. McDonald, "'Holy Retreat' or 'Practical Breathing Spot'? Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910-1913" (hereafter, "Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park", p. 152.

121. See McDonald, "Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park," pp. 149-53, for a fine discussion of this relationship.

market appears in other forms as well. For example workers may find their consumption market monopolized, as in company towns and in the "truck system" through which workers are forced to buy provisions from their employer.¹²² This is the other side of the separation of production and consumption in capitalism: although that separation ordinarily makes workers' consumption subject to the vagaries of the market, it also leaves them at liberty to buy what they like, from whom they like. Workers may consequently be disposed to defend encroachments on that autonomy by monopoly.

Finally, even the work phase of social reproduction affects consumption market contention, for example, because the separation between work and residence makes workers dependent on public transportation.¹²³ Most of the time, however, we would not expect work to be closely related to consumption market objects of contention.

An important issue that arises in this connection (and in connection with consumption in general) is whether objects of contention in the consumption market constitute antagonistic class interests. The relation of the capitalist producer of consumer goods to the workers who

122. Another example is the contract labour system in which Chinese and Japanese workers in B.C. were employed through labour contractors who also provided them with board and lodging (and made their profits on the latter transactions). See below, Ch. 5.

123. See above, page 81. Hours of work could also affect the consumption market and be a source of contention. For example, in 1902, a proposed bylaw for the early closing of restaurants in Vancouver was protested by longshoremen, because they often worked until one or two in the morning, and ate afterwards; if the bylaw passed, they would have to stop at midnight to eat. Independent, May 17, 1902.

buy his products is not a relation of capitalist and worker, as it was in the labour market or work phases, but a relation of seller and buyer.¹²⁴ Workers' relationships with capitalist producers of consumer goods are typically mediated by others: "money ... spent by the labourers for articles of consumption ... passes through many channels (shopkeepers, house owners, tax collectors, unproductive labourers, such as physicians, etc., who are needed by the labourer himself)...."¹²⁵ To the extent that the effects of capitalist calculations of profitability are contradictions between what workers need (because of their social reproduction cycles), and what they can obtain in the consumption market, we can consider the interests of workers and capitalists in the consumption market to be antagonistic. However, to the extent that the relationship between the two classes in the consumption market is indirect, and class relations are not "transparent," we can expect that it would be difficult for workers to mobilize, as workers, over consumption market objects of contention.¹²⁶

Since workers appear in the consumption market as consumers, not

124. See Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 419. Marx goes on to dismiss this as irrelevant to the essential relation between industrial capitalist and worker, but for our purposes, it is very relevant.

125. Marx, *Capital* II, p. 462. Cf. Engels for similar: "The worker appears before the shopkeeper as a buyer, that is, as the owner of money or credit, and hence not at all in his capacity as a worker ... cheating may hit him, and the poorer class as a whole, harder than it hits the richer social classes, but it is not an evil which hits him exclusively, which is peculiar to his class." "The Housing Question," p. 306.

126. On the significance of the transparency of class relations for "class action," see Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 929.

workers, the formation of workers as a class is probably weak in this phase of their social reproduction cycle.¹²⁷ The consumption goods market in a capitalist society might affect working-class formation in other ways, which would probably be felt most strongly in the residential patterns resulting from the housing market.¹²⁸ To the extent that the cost and availability of housing force workers to live a great distance from work, the separation of production and consumption is accentuated, weakening working-class solidarity. To the extent that homogeneous working-class neighborhoods are formed, working-class solidarity would be heightened. By the same token, the correspondence of residential segregation with other forms of segmentation in the working class would strengthen those divisions.¹²⁹

At each of the phases of working-class social reproduction we have now specified objects of contention, and tendencies of class formation. Since this is an exercise in "history mediated by concepts," these objects of contention and tendencies of class formation are presented as structural possibilities deriving from capital accumulation

127. We could even speculate that this weakness of class formation might be reinforced by the domestic division of labour in working-class families, i.e. if women are the main actors in the consumption goods market, then consumption market position might not be linked with class formation tendencies at work and in the labour market, assuming that those women are not in the wage labour force

128. Markets for other consumption goods will be considered only to the extent that some working-class group is distinct with respect to them.

129. Each of these factors was at work in Vancouver: because housing was cheaper on the outskirts, some workers were dispersed to the suburbs; others were concentrated downtown, and Asians were residentially segregated. See Chapter 4.

and workers' social reproduction. It remains to be seen how and under what conditions they were realized, if at all, in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919.

3.4 Mobilization and Collective Action

Now that the interests that divide workers and capitalists, and the formation of collectivities in the working class have been examined, we turn to the question of how the groups so formed come to act on those interests. This is a question of mobilization and collective action, which will be approached by way of Charles Tilly's analysis of collective action. In this section we will briefly outline a model of mobilization and collective action, indicating how it will be used here to guide research into working-class collective action (see Figure 3-1 for a model of mobilization and collective action adapted from Tilly).¹³⁰

Tilly's model of collective action begins from interests and organization. The analysis of interests and solidarities in the preceding section represents a specification of those components for the

130. C. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 56, Fig. 3-2. Tilly's ideas on collective action are being used here in the sense of "history mediated by concepts"; thus even though Tilly makes some attempts at formulating a testable theory, I am using his ideas as a framework for "the selection, organization, and interpretation" of historical evidence.

Figure 3-1

study of working-class collective action.¹³¹ Three elements of the model remain to be specified: mobilization, collective action, and the conditions which, for Tilly, affect the occurrence of collective action by a group: opportunity and threat, repression and facilitation, and power.¹³² Let us review each of these elements of the model as a guide to formulating research problems.

Starting with what we wish to understand, Tilly defines collective action as people "acting together in pursuit of common interests."¹³³ Since by this definition, collective action encompasses vast areas of social life, and we are interested in collective action in which workers are seeking social change, we will concentrate here on collective action which is contentious. "Contentious action" is collective action in which a visible claim is made that, "if realized would affect the interests of some specific person(s) or groups(s) outside" the participants in the action.¹³⁴ A visible claim is some demand, request, objection, protest, grievance, etc., which the participants in the action make known to persons outside the gathering

131. Tilly also assumes that the best guide to the long-term interests of populations from which collective actors come is their relationship to the means of production. From *Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 61.

132. I have simplified Tilly's model, for ease and brevity of exposition.

133. From *Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 7.

134. Tilly, From *Mobilization to Revolution*, pp. 7, 275.

itself.¹³⁵ In other words, in contentious action, the participants make known to another party through some form of action, an objective that affects that other party. There are thus four things we wish to know about ~~any~~ contentious action: the participants in the action, the form of the action, its objective, and its target (the party affected).¹³⁶

Since we are studying working-class collective action, we are primarily interested in action in which workers are the participants. A collective action will be considered "working class" if at least one third of the participants in it were members of the working class.¹³⁷

135. The claim can be made 'visible' by means of its public expressions, correspondence with the party to whom it is directed, or any other action which shows that the participants in the action are making a demand on others. Even if the demand is not explicitly stated, if its meaning is known to contemporaries, then a claim is considered to have been made visible. For example, mass picketing, with its implicit (but recognized) demand that strikebreakers cease work, accompanied by an underlying threat of violence if the demand is not complied with, is an instance of contentious action. A claim's visibility to contemporaries is not equivalent to its "observability" for historical researchers, because of gaps in the historical record. Nonetheless, because they are contentious and visible to contemporaries, contentious actions stand the best chance of being reported in the surviving sources.

136. Attentive readers may have noticed a shift in terminology from interests to objectives. This is done to deal with the problem of choosing between inferring interests from social position, and inferring interests from people's utterances and actions. See Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, pp. 60-61. Objects of contention represent interests in the first sense, and the stated objectives of collective actors will represent interests in the second sense.

137. In the absence of data on the participants themselves, the action will be counted as working class if one third of the identified leaders of the event or (in the absence of data on that) one third of the leaders of the organization that sponsored the meeting or mobilized the actors are working class. Much of the attribution of working-class participation must consist of informed inference, for example, that a gathering of "strike sympathizers" during a 1903 longshoremen's strike was probably working class in composition, or that an evening street

Participants are persons "who can reasonably be presumed to have intentionally participated"¹³⁸ in the action; thus bystanders or spectators are excluded. Participation is indicated by expressing assent for a demand or grievance in word or deed, such as cheering, applause, voting on a resolution or engaging in violent acts. Simple appearance in an event which can reasonably be expected to be subject to repressive measures also constitutes evidence of participation.¹³⁹

Forms of action through which claims are made can vary widely; in this study, data have been systematically gathered on three types of action: routine union contention, contentious gatherings, and strikes.¹⁴⁰ Routine trade union contention consists of activities at meetings of unions in which contentious claims or demands are made. The contentious activities of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC) will represent routine trade union contention in Vancouver for the

meeting on the corner of Carrall and Cordova is likely to be attended principally by workers, in the absence of information to the contrary.

138. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* p. 277.

139. For example, the 500 or so persons who assembled on the Powell St. grounds on Feb. 4, 1912 in defiance of a City of Vancouver ban on outdoor meetings were participating in a collective action because they almost certainly knew that they were likely to be violently dispersed by the police. The five to ten thousand onlookers who came to the action certainly knew what to expect (they were not disappointed: after ordering it to disperse, the police charged the crowd and beat its members with batons). Since the meeting was organized by the VTLC and the Industrial Workers of the World, both working-class organizations, the participants can be inferred to have been members of the working class. Vancouver Province, Feb. 5, 1912; Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser (hereafter, News-Advertiser), Feb. 6, 1912.

140. For details on sources, indicators, and coding, see Appendix A.

1900-1919 period.¹⁴¹ A contentious gathering is, in Tilly's definition, "an occasion on which a number of people gather in a publicly accessible place and visibly make claims which would, if realized, bear on the interests of some other persons."¹⁴² In other words, contentious gatherings are distinguished from other forms of contentious action by the participants meeting and acting in a publicly accessible place.¹⁴³ Instances of contentious gatherings include public meetings of protest, demonstrations, riots and mass picketing.¹⁴⁴ Finally, a strike is "a temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand."¹⁴⁵ In order to take advantage of better

141. The VTLC met twice a month or more often throughout the period, so the record of its meetings, which is fairly complete, documents the ordinary week-by-week ways in which organized workers in Vancouver, through their union delegates, advanced claims on other organizations, on various levels of the state, and on persons inside and outside the working class.

142. C. Tilly, "The Web of Contention in Eighteenth Century Cities," p. 49.

143. "Publicly accessible place" means that anyone who is interested in the subject of the gathering may attend. Gatherings in streets and parks qualify simply by the nature of the location; gatherings in halls, arenas and theatres qualify only if no restriction was placed on who might come into the meeting. (This condition is met even if people are subsequently ejected from the meeting, for example, for disrupting it.) Most meetings of unions are not contentious gatherings because admission is restricted to members of the union, but, for example, a meeting organized by one of the carpenters' unions and open to all carpenters would be considered publicly accessible.

144. Public meetings that form part of election campaigns will not be considered instances of contentious gatherings, unless demands are made in addition to the usual calls for the defeat of the opposing candidate.

145. J.J. Griffin, *Strikes: A Study in Quantitative Economics*, quoted in R. Hyman, *Strikes*, p. 17. Strikes will not be distinguished from lockouts here, because lockouts usually occur in anticipation of

reporting of strikes than of contentious gatherings outside the city, and to provide a wider field for comparison, data on strikes were gathered for the greater Vancouver area, while data on VTLC contention and contentious gatherings, were gathered only for Vancouver proper.¹⁴⁶

The objective of a contentious action is whatever the participants state as their claim, demand, grievance, etc., or what can reasonably be inferred to be their objective if it is not explicitly stated. Objectives can be classified in the same way as objects of contention, that is, according to the phases of workers' social reproduction cycles on which they have a bearing. In addition to consumption, labour market, work, and consumption market objectives, however, workers pursued both political objectives, and objectives that arose from responses to past mobilization or collective action. "Political objectives" are objectives relating to state power, justice, taxation, war, etc., in so far as they do not have a direct bearing on workers' social reproduction cycles. "Mobilization objectives" are objectives which have a bearing on the conditions of repression, toleration or facilitation under which members of the working class

collective action by workers, because once they are under way there is little or no difference between them, and because workers and employers often disagree on whether a particular work stoppage is a strike or a lockout. Hyman, op. cit., pp. 17-18; Shorter and Tilly, Strikes in France, p. 373.

146. All strikes involving more than five strikers, lasting at least one hour, and occurring in Vancouver, North Vancouver, South Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, New Westminster, or Port Moody between 1900 and 1919 were included in this investigation.

attempt to organize and act collectively.¹⁴⁷

Finally, contentious actions must, by definition, have a target: a party or parties whose interests are directly affected by the objective. In order to be contentious, demands must be made explicitly or implicitly with reference to some other groups or persons, rather than just being the expression of a desire or want on the part of the participants in the action.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, opposition and conflict over the claim is likely. The target is being asked to do something it would not otherwise do, or refrain from doing something that it would otherwise do.

In order to act collectively in any form, people must mobilize. Mobilization refers to "the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action."¹⁴⁹ Collective action consists of those collectively controlled resources being put to use for collective ends. Two critical elements of mobilization are thus resources, and the degree to which they are under collective control. Resources available to be mobilized for collective purposes are present

147. Examples include protests against censorship and the suppression of working class organizations during the war, objections to the use of police or militia against strikers, and demands that employers recognize and negotiate with workers' chosen representatives.

148. For example, in 1909 and 1910 in Vancouver, neighborhood or ward associations made many demands and requests for civic improvements such as sewers, parks, paved streets, and street cars. Those objectives are not contentious because they only express a desire for those services; if however they were combined with condemnation of the civic administration or opposition to some other group in the city, then they would be contentious claims.

149. From Mobilization to Revolution, p. 7.

at each phase of the working-class social reproduction cycle.

In the consumption phase, the major resource possessed by some workers is the social esteem deriving from their level and style of consumption. This is a resource to the extent that it gives workers who possess it a status in the community that leads the targets of collective action, or other parties who may react to it to treat their claims and actions more favorably than they might otherwise do. Thus we would expect collective action by respectable members of the dominant ethnic group to be treated more tolerantly than that by members of a despised subordinate ethnic group. This resource comes under collective control principally through the informal norms and sanctions of the status group, but it may also come under more formal control, in union rules prohibiting drunkenness, for example. It is probably a fragile resource, however, with little power to compel, because it depends on the evaluations of others, not on the workers who possess it. Thus it would be available, and usable, for only very limited purposes, well within the framework of the established social order.¹⁵⁰

In the labour market phase, workers possess their main resource for collective action: their labour power, or specifically, their ability to withdraw it, and so bring production to a standstill. The terms on which they sell their labour power also affects resources for collective action: the higher their wages, the more money they will have

150. Working-class consumption practices can also have implications for the use of resources available at other phases of social reproduction. For example, the leisure that would otherwise be available for collective action by women is often taken up in domestic labour.

available to finance strike funds (or maintain themselves during strikes), hire halls and offices, and so on; the shorter their hours, the more leisure time they have to devote to collective actions. The main way in which workers' labour power comes under collective control is through unionization, so union membership and the continuity of union organization will be used as indicators of workers' mobilization in this phase of social reproduction.¹⁵¹ The uses to which the labour power resource can be put are more varied than the uses of status, since it depends not on others, but on the ability and willingness of workers to stay off work. There is more to it than just that, however, since the effectiveness of a withdrawal of labour power depends on preventing one's own labour power being replaced by that of others.

The capacity of workers to prevent others from replacing them in strikes depends in part on their position in the third phase of working-class social reproduction, the workplace. The more critical the workers' skills for a particular production process, the more effective will be the withdrawal of their labour power. Skilled workers may also be able to find other work more easily, or even go individually or cooperatively into business for themselves, and compete with the employers who are the target of their actions. Other resources in the workplace available to skilled or unskilled workers include the capacity to disrupt production, for example, through work stoppages at technically or economically critical times, through sabotage, or through

151. As we will see unions were involved in most strikes, and were the principal sponsors of working-class contentious gatherings.

slowdowns. The extent to which such resources are under collective control is partly a matter of formal organization in unions, and partly a matter of informal work groups. Aside from the use of skill as a resource helping to prevent strikers from being replaced, workplace resources are probably most effectively used in resistance to employers' changes in the process of production (against speedups, for example).¹⁵²

Finally, in the consumption market, the main resource workers possess is their purchasing power, which they have the ability to withdraw in consumer boycotts. Because of the separation of production and consumption, this resource is difficult to bring under collective control, but unions have tried to do so through the union label on consumer goods, and the "unfair list" of employers whose services and products union workers are urged to boycott. Utilization of this resource is largely limited to workers in the consumer goods and services industries, although workers in other industries can try to do something similar by persuading employers or the state to buy union-made products. In either case, it is not as strong a resource as those found in the labour market and work phases of social reproduction, because like consumption status, its use depends more on the actions of others than on the actions of the workers benefitting from its use.

The resources available to workers in the four phases of their social reproduction do not exhaust the possibilities. Other resources

152. See Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, p. 104.

might include votes, political influence, and physical force. They will have to be considered external to the model, and to the extent that they are used in actual collective action, the model will be considered incomplete.¹⁵³

Intervening between mobilization and collective action, and even shaping mobilization itself, are the conditions of strategic interaction affecting the occurrence of collective action by a group: opportunity and threat, repression and facilitation, and power.¹⁵⁴ First, the occurrence of collective action is affected by opportunities and threats. An opportunity is the vulnerability of another party to claims that would realize the collective actors' interests; a threat is a challenge or claim by another party that would harm the collective actors' interests.¹⁵⁵ Tilly argues that opportunity and threat are practically the same as power: "power" refers to objective outcomes of past interactions between parties; "opportunity and threat" refers to the collective actor's perceptions of power. The two ideas are certainly linked (vulnerability refers to weakness), but it does not

153. Political mobilization will not be examined here, confirming for historical sociology the adage that social history is history with the politics left out. Politics have largely been left out of this thesis for two reasons: because one researcher can only do so much, and because the politics of B.C. labour have already been extensively researched, but the history of their other collective action has not.

154. The term "strategic interaction" is here used in a wider sense than that discussed by Tilly (From Mobilization to Revolution, pp. 29-35), but the idea is basically the same, namely to point to the conditions that people take into account in choosing to act collectively.

155. Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, pp. 55, 133-42.

follow that a party which has been strong in the past will continue to be strong. Opportunity and vulnerability are relative to the resources possessed by the collective actor and its opponent. An opponent who is in a losing streak is not necessarily vulnerable to the particular kind of resources possessed by a challenger. Since the major resource possessed by workers is their labour power, the opportunity for workers' collective action can be defined in terms of the labour market: a tight labour market, that is, labour scarcity, represents an opportunity, because when they cannot replace their workers, employers are vulnerable to demands backed up by the withdrawal of their workers' labour power.¹⁵⁶ Conversely, a surplus of labour represents an opportunity for employers and a threat to workers.¹⁵⁷ Threats also include the stated intentions or actions of employers, the state, or other persons or groups (including other workers) which would adversely affect interests arising from some or all workers' customary cycles of social reproduction.

Second, facilitation and repression refer to the actions not of the group engaging in the collective action, but of other groups or agents who respond to the action, such as employers, the state, or other workers. Repression is action that raises the cost of collective

156. Like good strategists, however, we must be flexible, and look for other opportunities as they arise.

157. Threat and opportunity can be closely related, since the perception of future threat can heighten a group's perception of current opportunity. As we will see, the prospect that the labour market would be flooded after World War I contributed to a sense of urgency in workers' actions during the last years of the war.

action, or makes it more difficult for its objective to be achieved; facilitation is action that lowers those costs, or makes collective action easier.¹⁵⁸ Facilitation or repression can be directed either at the collective actor's mobilization, or at its action. Examples of repression acting on mobilization include employers firing anyone who joins a union, or the government banning an organization. Repression of collective action can include responses ranging from verbal condemnation of the action to the use of strikebreakers in strikes, or arrests, and violence in contentious gatherings. Mobilization is facilitated when workers are given assistance to organize (such as the provision of an organizer by another union), and collective action is facilitated when workers are given assistance in making their claim or in carrying out the action, for example donations to support strikers, help on a picket line, or a sympathetic strike.¹⁵⁹ The response which is made to an organization or event may depend on the the group acting (i.e., the collective actor), on the type of action, or on the objective; for example, any collective action by some groups might be repressed, whereas only some types of action might be repressed for other groups.

In addition to the determinants of responses to collective action, an important question is their role in shaping future collective

158. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, pp. 55, 100. To these we might add a third response: toleration is action that neither raises nor lowers those costs (in practice, toleration is the absence of the other two responses).

159. A tolerant response to mobilization or collective action is indicated when no action is taken, such as when police allow a demonstration to proceed without interference.

action. We would expect, from Marxist theories of the development of working-class consciousness, that repression of working-class mobilization and collective action would contribute to the development of class consciousness, and therefore to collective actions embracing broader sections of the working class and more radical objectives.

Third and last, in Tilly's model power is defined by the outcomes of collective action: a group whose interests prevail over the interests of another party when those interests conflict is the more powerful party.¹⁶⁰ A group of workers who realize favorable outcomes to their collective action can be considered to be powerful, at least up to that time.¹⁶¹ The outcome of a collective action is favorable if the objectives of the actors are met, wholly or in large part. Power can thus be used to interpret the course of collective action. Marxist theories which argue that class consciousness derives from the experience of class conflict would lead us to expect that the failures of collective actions by small groups of workers for limited economic goals would lead them to more radical objectives and broader forms of mobilization in future collective action. Whether and how this would be

160. From Mobilization to Revolution, p. 115. Cf. Weber, Economy and Society, p. 53. In this case, we can hardly use power to explain the outcomes of past collective actions, because it is equivalent to those outcomes. However, we could presumably use a collective actor's power, as indicated by the outcomes of its previous actions, to explain the results of subsequent collective actions. I have already indicated why I do not find that useful (above page 116).

161. An organized group of workers can be considered especially powerful if they are able to achieve their objectives without resorting to militant collective action, such as strikes.

the case is a matter for research into the histories of collective action by particular groups of workers, to which we now turn.

Chapter 4

CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, AND WORKING-CLASS CONTENTION IN VANCOUVER, 1900 - 1919

The previous chapters have outlined the historical and theoretical problems which this thesis is seeking to answer. In the present chapter, we will begin to answer those questions through an overview of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and mobilization and collective action in Vancouver from 1900 to 1919. The principal historical problem examined here concerns the sources of labour radicalism in Vancouver, and in particular, the roles of craftsmen and labourers in the development of that radicalism. The sociological problems concern first, the effects of structures of capital accumulation and working-class social reproduction in shaping objects of contention, tendencies of class formation, and collective action resources at each phase of working-class social reproduction. The second sociological problem consists of determining the relation of the last three elements to various aspects of working-class mobilization and collective action. The third sociological problem concerns the relationship between conditions of strategic interaction (opportunity and threat, facilitation and

repression, and power), and workers' mobilization and collective action. In this and subsequent chapters, capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and mobilization and collective action will each be examined in turn.

4.1 Stages of Capital Accumulation in Vancouver, 1900-1919

Between the incorporation of Vancouver as a city in 1886, and the end of the wartime boom in 1919, the lower mainland of British Columbia experienced seven stages of economic development, five of which were within the time span of this study (see Table 4-1).¹ After the initial period of speculative "internal development" based principally upon its establishment as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Vancouver entered on a phase of slow growth during the 1890s depression. It was followed by a period of industrial expansion that McDonald calls "the emergence of a metropolis" beginning with the Klondike gold rush in 1898, and ending in 1907. During this first twentieth century period of capital accumulation, Vancouver took over from Victoria the role of financial, commercial, managerial, and transportation capital of British Columbia, and the lower mainland.

1. This periodization is based on R.A.J. McDonald, "Business Leaders in Early Vancouver, 1886-1914" (hereafter, "Business Leaders"); E.A. Bartlett, "Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Vancouver, 1901-1929" (hereafter, "Real Wages"), pp. 33-36; N. MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle for Vancouver, 1900-1914" (hereafter, "A Critical Growth Cycle").

Table 4-1

Periods of Economic Growth in Vancouver, 1890s to 1920s

	Dates	Period	Leading Industries
I	1897 - mid-1907	Establishment of a Metropolis	Salmon Lumber Trade & Finance External Transport
II	mid-1907 - 1908	Financial Panic	
III	1909 - 1912	Triumph of the Speculator	Construction Trade & Finance
IV	1913 - 1915	Pre-war Depression	
V	1916 - mid-1919	War Capitalism	Shipbuilding Metal Trades
VI	mid-1919 - 1922	Post-war depression	

became the center for processing the province's forest and fishing staples. Despite serious Eastern Canadian and American competition, a small manufacturing sector developed to supply these industries and their labour forces.

Economic expansion in the Vancouver area was interrupted in the summer of 1907 by the international "financial panic" and resulting tight money market. The market for lumber on the prairies was depressed, and local construction activity was halted.²

Recovery from the recession began in 1909, ushering in the third phase of Vancouver's twentieth century growth. During "the triumph of the speculator" from 1909 to early 1913, B.C. became an enormous outlet for speculative investment in urban real estate, and in mining and timber properties. At the same time, the province virtually became a gigantic railway construction camp as the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern lines were pushed through to completion. Vancouver was at the center of this investment and railway boom, which provided the impetus for a flurry of commercial, office and residential building in the city and its suburbs.

The stage of speculative growth in Vancouver was ended in the spring of 1913 by the pre-war depression. The construction industry crashed almost immediately, and hundreds of real estate speculators went out of business. When logging camps shut down and railway construction ended in 1914, thousands of unemployed workers poured into the city at

2. Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 33.

the same time as thousands of others were leaving it in search of jobs elsewhere. Despite the onset of war in 1914, depressed conditions continued into 1915.

Prosperity re-emerged in 1916, when the effects of the demand for war materials were finally felt in Vancouver. In the period of "war capitalism" that lasted until 1919, shipbuilding expanded very rapidly, and huge plants employing thousands of workers were established. Metal manufacturers were also beneficiaries of war capitalism, first in the manufacture of munitions, then in supplying engines and fittings to the shipbuilders. Other manufacturers also secured war contracts. The war capitalist boom continued into 1919, but as shipbuilding contracts were completed and no new ones found, and thousands of demobilized soldiers began to arrive in the city, its economy sank into another period of depression that would last until 1922.

Each period of economic expansion between 1900 and 1919 was characterized by a different leading sector of growth. During the emergence of the metropolis from the late 1890s to 1907, investment and employment grew most rapidly in the lumber industry, and in salmon canning and fishing.³ Wholesale commerce and transportation were also leaders of economic growth in this period.⁴ In the period of

3. In the salmon industry, most of the expansion, to the point of overexpansion, occurred in the 1890s, while the lumber industry was the one to experience "phenomenal growth in the early years of the new century." R.A.J. McDonald, "Victoria, Vancouver and the Economic Development of British Columbia, 1886-1914" (hereafter, "Economic Development of British Columbia"), p. 43.

4. McDonald, "Business Leaders," pp. 75-90.

speculative triumph from 1909 to 1912, the construction industry, and trade and finance were clearly the leaders in investment and employment.⁵ Finally, shipbuilding and metal manufacturing led growth in the war capitalist stage from 1916 to 1919.

Adapting Cronin, we would expect that leaders of economic expansion would be the first to feel impediments to capital accumulation, such as labour shortages and rising labour costs.⁶

Because of their expanding markets, they would also have the resources to try to overcome those impediments through changes in work processes, new employment policies, and attacks on working-class organizations. As a result, there should be more objects of contention over which conflict could occur in these industries than in others. This hypothesis will be examined in Section 3 below.

4.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

Working-class social reproduction cycles interact with capital accumulation to constitute objects of contention and tendencies in class formation. In this section, we will make a preliminary survey of the latter by examining the occupations, ethnicity and gender of Vancouver workers. Then, for an overview into objects of contention affecting the

5. McDonald, "Business Leaders," pp. 97-114.

6. J. Cronin, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*.

Vancouver working class as a whole, conditions in the labour and consumption markets will be examined.

Who comprised the working class in Vancouver in the early twentieth century? A first answer concerns where they worked and what they did.⁷ As Table 4-2 shows, in 1911 over four fifths of the workers in Vancouver were employed in five industries that each had over one eighth of the total number of workers: construction (19 per cent),⁸ domestic and personal service (15 per cent), manufacturing (20 per cent), trade and finance (19 per cent), and transportation and utilities (13 per cent).

The 1921 census shows some changes from 1911. First, the effects of the pre-war depression, the war, the post-war depression, and suburbanization show up in the presence of about 6000 fewer workers in

7. Occupational data are absent in the 1901 census, so our only data come from 1911 and 1921. It should be emphasized that the data are for the city of Vancouver only. As a result, we do not know the occupations of workers in New Westminster, nor do we know the occupations of workers in the mainly working-class suburbs, such as South Vancouver. Other inadequacies in the census data include the impossibility of distinguishing the self-employed (and perhaps even small employers) from wage-workers, and the inability of censuses to capture occupational pluralism.

8. In addition, there were 2675 labourers employed by governments, mostly on public works. If they are added to the total for construction, it rises to nearly 25 per cent.

9. The true number of workers is undoubtedly less, because it was impossible to remove real estate agents (of whom there were swarms during the speculative boom) from the total number of loan, trust and real estate officials, agents, and clerks. Even if that entire category is removed, however, we are still left with 5655 trade and finance employees, who account for 13 per cent of all workers.

Table 4-2

Industrial Distribution of the Working Class, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921, by Gender [1]

Industry	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Agriculture	320	6	326	0.8	399	4	403	1.1
Construction	7993	2	7995	18.5	2475	3	2478	6.7
Domestic/personal service	3612	2638	6250	14.5	3428	2580	6008	16.3
Fishing	148	1	149	0.3	85	-	85	0.2
Forestry	729	-	729	1.7	869	-	869	2.4
Government	3651	39	3690	8.5	1439	179	1618	4.4
Manufacturing	7765	854	8619	19.9	7326	646	7972	21.6
Mining	290	-	290	0.7	325	-	325	0.9
Office [2]	1132	1093	2225	5.1	2698	2001	4699	12.7
Trade & finance [3]	6564	729	7293	16.9	3203	1335	4538	12.3
Transportation & utilities								
-external	2163	-	2163	5.0	2590	8	2598	7.0
-local	3357	157	3514	8.1	2693	587	3280	8.7
Unspecified [4]	-	-	-	-	2110	20	2130	5.8
Total	37724	5519	43243	100.0	29640	7283	36923	100.0

Sources: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI,
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

- Notes: [1] This table has been constructed from census data by subtracting owners, managers, superintendents, and other supervisory personnel (except foremen) from census totals for each category. There is no way of distinguishing the self-employed from wage workers, so the table undoubtedly overestimates the number of employees. Census categories have also been slightly altered. For details, see the relevant chapters below.
- [2] Not including government.
- [3] Greatly exaggerates the number of employees, because of inadequacies of census data.
- [4] Nearly all (2016) were "labourers, n.o.s."

Vancouver at the later date.¹⁰ Nearly all of that decline was accounted for by construction, which employed over 5500 fewer workers in 1921 than in 1911.¹¹ Trade and finance also fell by over 2700, but this change must be taken with a grain of salt because of problems with the 1911 data that inflate the number of trade and finance workers.¹² Manufacturing also fell by over 600 workers. The only field to grow in that decade was office work, where the number of employees doubled.

Most of the wage workers in Vancouver were men. Women made up about one eighth of the wage labour force in 1911, and they were concentrated in the domestic and personal service industry, which accounted for nearly half of the total female workers. Nearly half of the female workers in Vancouver in 1911 were domestics, waitresses, laundry workers, and the like. Nearly a fifth of women workers were employed in offices, and over an eighth in trade and finance, mostly as sales clerks. Almost a sixth worked in manufacturing, mostly in a few consumer goods industries. In addition to being concentrated in a few industries, a high percentage of the labour force in the industries

10. This decline occurred despite a slight increase in the population of Vancouver between 1911 and 1921. The population of the predominantly working-class suburb of South Vancouver grew by over 16000 in this decade, so much of the decline in Vancouver may be due to the movement of workers to the suburbs. See Table 4-3.

11. In the 1921 census, there is a category of "labourers, n.o.s." that is not present in the 1911 census. There were over 2000 of them, and it is possible that some were construction labourers. We should also note, however, that the number of labourers employed by the city also declined by over 2000, accounting for most of the decline in that category.

12. See above, footnote 9.

employing the largest numbers of women were female: in office work nearly half, and in domestic and personal service over four tenths of the workers were women. In all other industries, they were small minorities.

In the decade after 1911, the number of female wage workers actually grew by 1764, while the number of male wage workers fell by 8084. The only "industry" in which employment for men expanded was office work. The major gains for women were in office work (up 908), trade and finance (606), and transportation and utilities (358). Only in manufacturing did employment for women decline (by 208). There were fewer female factory workers, but many more female office workers, bank clerks, sales clerks, and telephone operators. Women workers were still concentrated in a few industries in 1921. Their concentration in domestic and personal service had declined to only a third of female workers, but office work now accounted for nearly that many, and trade and finance for almost a fifth. Over four fifths of women workers were employed in these three industries, making up over two fifths of the labour force in both offices, and domestic and personal service, and three tenths in trade and finance.¹³

Despite the 'snapshot' which they represent, we can get some indication of motion from the censuses. Data on population growth make it clear that most of the workers living in Vancouver between 1900 and

13. In particular branches of employment women were even more greatly segregated in sex-stereotyped jobs; for example nearly four fifths of telephone operators in 1921 were women.

Table 4-3

Population of Vancouver and District, 1901, 1911, 1921

	1901	1911	1921
VANCOUVER			
part in Burrard	902	40297	56338
Vancouver c.	27010	60104	60879
Total	27912	100401	117217
SOUTH VANCOUVER	1520	15126	32267
POINT GREY	-	4320	13736
Total	29432	120847	163220
NORTH VANCOUVER *	365	8196	7652
GREATER VANCOUVER	29797	129043	170872
NEW WESTMINSTER	6499	13199	14495

Source: 1921 Census, Vol. 1, Table 8, pp. 215-17.

*In 1911, North Vancouver district included.

1919 were not from there (Table 4). The population of the City of Vancouver doubled between 1891 and 1901, and nearly quadrupled between 1901 and 1911. As a consequence of depression, war, and depression again, the population grew by only one sixth between 1911 and 1921.¹⁴ Growth rates like these did not come from natural increase, and like the rest of the population, Vancouver's working class was composed primarily of migrants.

Most of the migrants to the Vancouver area were from what is now Canada (that is, including Newfoundland), the British Isles, and the United States, to judge by the census data on birthplace of the population.¹⁵ British immigration was particularly high between 1901 and 1911, giving the city a markedly "British" tone.¹⁶ Information on the origins of the population of Vancouver as a whole does not necessarily mean that the working class had the same origins, but in the absence of information to the contrary, it is likely that it did. In any case, it is safe to say that the working class in Vancouver was predominantly Canadian and British, with a slight American influence. European immigrants made up about five per cent of the population.

A significant and highly visible minority of residents born in

14. If the working-class suburb of South Vancouver and the more affluent suburb of Point Grey are included, the population of Greater Vancouver grew by over one third between 1911 and 1921. New Westminster, in contrast, grew much more slowly than Vancouver: its population only doubled from 1901 to 1911, and between 1911 and 1921 it grew by about a tenth.

15. See Table 4-4.

16. MacDonald, "Critical Growth Cycle," pp. 28-29.

Table 4-4

Birthplace of the Population, Vancouver and District,
1901, 1911, 1921

	1901		1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Canada &						
Newfoundland	26130	62.1	44591	44.4	57859	49.3
British Isles	6682	15.9	30689	30.6	36859	31.4
United States	2877	6.8	10401	10.4	7649	6.5
China	2803	6.7	3364	3.4	5815	5.0
Japan	1563	3.7	1841	1.8	2981	2.5
Europe	1409	3.3	6600	6.6	4603	3.9
Australia &						
New Zealand	169	0.4	692	0.7	605	0.5
India	50	0.1	681	0.7	318	0.3
Other &						
Unknown	362	0.9	1542	1.5	528	0.5
Total	42060	100.0	100401	100.0	117217	100.0

Source: Canada, 1901 Census, Vol. 1, Table XIV, p. 418;
1911 Census, Vol. 2, Table XVI, p. 427;
1921 Census, Vol. 2, Table 54, p. 365.

Note: 1901 data for Burrard census district (no separate data
for Vancouver alone; 1911 and 1921 for Vancouver city.

Asia lived in the city and surrounding area, making up about six to ten per cent of the population. Peak periods of Asian immigration were 1899-1900, 1906-07 (when a large number of Japanese, Chinese, and Sikh immigrants arrived), and 1910-14.¹⁷ Asians in Vancouver were predominantly working class or petty bourgeois,¹⁸ and the former were concentrated in a small number of industries: Japanese in fishing and the lumber industry, Chinese in salmon canning, the lumber industry, domestic service, restaurants, and laundries.¹⁹ They were nearly all male, although Japanese women began to arrive in significant numbers beginning in 1908.²⁰

To summarize, from the census we get a picture of a predominantly 'British,' male Vancouver working class, employed in 1911 in construction, manufacturing, transportation and utilities, and trade and finance. With the collapse of construction, and the increase in office work, the male working class in Vancouver was more "white collar" in 1921 than in 1911, while the female working class continued to be concentrated in a few occupations, mostly in service and white collar work. In addition to the minority of women workers, there was also an

17. Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 55-56, 64-65, 79-80, 109.

18. Because of limited labour market opportunities, many Asian workers formed small businesses. Li, "Ethnic Stratification," pp. 328-29; "Chinese Immigrants on the Canadian Prairie," pp. 534-36.

19. See Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 16, 110-11, for a brief overview. For details, see the chapters on those industries below.

20. Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 15-16, 80, 109; K. Adachi, *The Enemy Who Never Was*, Ch. 4.

important minority of mostly male Asian workers, who were also concentrated in a few industries and occupations. The distributions of workers by occupation, gender, and ethnicity revealed by the census provided the basis for the formation of collectivities within the Vancouver working class, and thus affected the capacity of workers to act collectively. The other structural bases for working-class collective action were workers' interests, formed by contradictions between their cycles of social reproduction and processes of capital accumulation. Conditions in the labour market, and in the consumption market (specifically housing, and the cost of living) shaped objects of contention for the Vancouver working class as a whole.

Labour Market

The broad outlines of labour market conditions can be anticipated from the boom and bust cycle of economic growth described in the first section, but each economic period had special features that shaped both workers' interests and their opportunity to act collectively.²¹

In the "establishment of a metropolis" period, the labour market in Vancouver fluctuated in three different phases. From 1900 to the end of 1902, there were seasonal labour shortages, especially in logging.²²

21. Information on labour market conditions was obtained in part from Bartlett, "Real Wages," pp. 33-36, and supplemented by other sources noted separately.

22. World, June 22, 1900; Province, Dec. 20, 1901, March 31, 1902, April 22, 1902, May 12, 1902, July 17, 1902, Aug. 13, 1902, Nov. 29, 1902,

From mid-1903 to the end of 1905, there were persistent labour surpluses and even a minor trade depression in the autumn of 1903.²³ In 1906 and early 1907, however, labour was again scarce.²⁴

The financial panic in 1907 led to unemployment by the summer, but the most serious problems did not occur until the winters of 1907-08, and 1908-09. Then the ranks of the local unemployed were swelled by seasonally unemployed workers from the interior of the province who migrated to Vancouver to take advantage of the warm climate, and cheap hotels and cafes.²⁵

As the period of the triumph of the speculator began in the spring of 1909, the labour market became tighter, especially for labourers and building tradesmen.²⁶ Workers poured into the Vancouver area in 1910 and 1911, but labour shortages persisted into 1912.²⁷ Unemployment continued to be a problem in the winters, however, because of slowdowns in building and influxes of unemployed from the interior

Dec. 20, 1902.

23. Labour Gazette IV (1903-04) pp. 35, 1013, 1120, 1225; V (1904-05), pp. 50, 256, 480, 832, 1086.

24. Lumberman and Contractor, April, 1906, p. 15, Nov. 1906, p. 14, Dec. 1906, p. 20, March 1907, pp. 19, 31; Province, July 25, 1906, Oct. 10, 11, 1906, July 13, 1907.

25. Province, Sept. 2, 1908, Nov. 4, 1908; Western Wage Earner, April 1909, p. 16; P. Roy, "Vancouver: 'The Mecca of the Unemployed,' 1907-1929" (hereafter "Mecca of the Unemployed"), p. 393.

26. Western Wage Earner, April, 1909, p. 16.

27. Province, Dec. 3, 14, 17, 1909, Jan. 6, 1910, Sept. 8, 1910, Nov. 24, 1910, Jan. 12, 1911, April 17, 1911, July 18, 1911, Dec. 8, 15, 29, 1911; World, April 8, 1911; Roy, "Mecca of the Unemployed" p. 395.

and the prairies.

In the spring of 1913, unemployment again became severe. It began in the building trades, extended to other industries in the summer, and worsened in the fall and winter, when the seasonally unemployed migrated as usual to Vancouver.²⁸ Large numbers of unemployed continued to arrive in 1914 and 1915; meanwhile many Vancouver workers were enlisting or leaving the city to escape unemployment. Craftsmen took jobs as labourers, and female workers and workmen's wives became domestics.²⁹ Workers were demoralized, demobilized, and made defenceless by their desperate situation.³⁰

As the war capitalist boom finally got underway in 1916, labour shortages reappeared in some industries, especially lumber and railway construction.³¹ Seasonal unemployment persisted in the winter; but during 1917 labour became even scarcer than in the previous year. Shortages of lumber workers, shipbuilding workers, and general labourers

28. B.C. Federationist, June 13, 1913, p. 1; Province, July 11, 1913.

29. Province, Feb. 14, 1914; B.C. Federationist, March 13, 1914, p. 3; June 26, 1914, p. 1, Aug. 14, 1914, p. 1, Oct. 23, 1914, p. 1, Nov. 6, 1914, p. 1, Nov. 27, 1914, p. 4, Feb. 12, 1915, p. 1; March 26, 1915, p. 1; April 9, 1915, p. 1; Labour Gazette XV (1914-15), pp. 183, 793; Province, Nov. 14, 1914; Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC), Attorney General's Correspondence, 1911-1918, Roll 66, file 8560-14-14, pp. 8-15 and 67-73, Malcolm R.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, Sept. 4, 1914, and Dec. 23, 1914.

30. B.C. Federationist, May 21, 1915, p. 1.

31. Province, March 31, 1916, May 31, 1916, Oct. 10, 1916, Nov 17, 1916; Western Lumberman, May 1916, p. 25, Sept. 1916, p. 26, Dec. 1916, p. 25.

became even more pronounced in 1918,³² but there were layoffs in the shipyards that summer, and a surplus of labour again by December. By the summer of 1919 conditions had sufficiently deteriorated that, in the words of Royal Commissioners investigating a shipyard dispute, there was "an alarmingly large body of unemployed men in Vancouver and this at a time when owing to the season of the year the maximum of work should be available."³³ Carpenters, other craftsmen, and clerks were particularly hard hit, and growing unemployment among returned soldiers gave rise to fears that the postwar demobilization would result in a major unemployment crisis in Vancouver.³⁴

The labour market in Vancouver was thus unstable, with both seasonal and cyclical shortages and surpluses. Labour market fluctuations could affect collective action by constituting objects of contention (such as unemployment), or by creating opportunities and threats. In the third section of this chapter, we will examine the relation between labour market conditions and collective action by Vancouver workers.

32. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 22, 1916, p. 4; Province, April 30, 1917, May 29, 1917, Aug. 7, 1917, Sept. 22, 1917, Jan. 18, 1918, Feb. 6, 1918, March 26, 1918, April 6, 12, 1918, June 11, 1918; Pacific Coast Lumberman, Feb. 1918, p. 15.

33. Province, April 24, 1918, Aug. 10, 1918, Feb. 22, 1919, April 9, 1919, Oct. 28, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 30, 1918, p. 1, Dec. 13, 1918, pp. 1, 4; Sun, Dec. 11, 1918, July 8, 1919; B.C., Dept. of Labor, Annual Report for 1918, p. 45; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), p. 905.

34. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 24, 1919, p. 8, Feb. 28, 1919, p. 8, March 7, 1919, p. 1, April 11, 1919, pp. 1, 11; Province, April 10, 1919, July 26, 1919, Aug. 8, 1919, Nov 27, 1919.

Housing

From the late nineteenth century, Vancouver was known as a "city of houses," that is of single family homes, in contrast to the row and semi-detached housing of eastern Canadian cities. Like the rest of the population, members of the working class wanted a house, and the suburbs that developed with extension of the street railway system were expected to bring the ideal within reach of all but unskilled workers.³⁵

Realization of the ideal of the single family home was limited for workers by the operation of the capitalist real estate market, however.³⁶ Beginning in the 1880s, land outside the downtown core was owned by real estate speculators, and after the 1890s depression, individual lot prices rose to "boom time levels." As the pace of population growth quickened after 1904, they rose even higher. Cheap lands that were not divided into individual lots remained beyond the means of ordinary wage earners, and much of the real estate market

35. D. Holdsworth, "House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West Coast Urbanism, 1886-1929," pp. 190-192 (hereafter: "House and Home"). Referring to the 1897 to 1912 period, P. Roy (Vancouver: An Illustrated History (hereafter, Vancouver), p. 66) writes of "Vancouver's pride in being a city of homes where even men of modest means could expect to own their own single family dwelling on its own lot." "Men of modest means" included skilled, semi-skilled, and white collar workers, and the petty bourgeoisie. See D. McCririck "Opportunity and the Workingman: A Study of Land Accessibility and the Growth of Blue Collar Suburbs in Early Vancouver" (hereafter, "Opportunity and the Workingman"), p. 8.

36. The next three paragraphs are based primarily on McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman."

consisted of exchanges among speculators.³⁷ Unless they went to extraordinary lengths, workers could not afford even small individual lots when land prices continued to rise during the 1909-1912 speculative boom.³⁸ Home ownership in working-class districts declined, and increasing numbers of working-class families were forced to rent out rooms. For example, in the working-class East End and Grandview the percentage of tenants on the voters' list nearly doubled between 1904 and 1911, from 20.7 to 38.0; in Mount Pleasant it rose from 15.0 to 25.5.³⁹ The collapse of the economic boom in 1913 was the final blow to working-class home ownership, causing many workers to lose the homes they had been struggling to pay for.⁴⁰

What were the implications of working-class home ownership for collective action? C. Cassidy of the Stonecutters Union argued in 1912 that owning land "tends to make more secure and happy and contented working men." He also stated that a law was needed to protect workingmen from fake investment opportunities.⁴¹ It has been suggested

37. See MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle," pp. 33-34, for examples of the inflation of real estate prices.

38. For example, people were living in tents in Kitsalano, paying for their lots by installment and hoping to be able to build a house in the future. Province, Nov. 4, 1913.

39. McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman," p. 73. Voters' lists tended to understate the number of tenants. On renting out rooms, see Labour Gazette XI (1910), p. 182, cited in Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 51.

40. Mathers Commission, Evidence, p. 535.

41. PABC, British Columbia, Provincial Labor Commission, Transcript of Proceedings (hereafter, B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings), GR 684,

that like wealthier individuals, workers joined the scramble during the speculative boom, which resulted in the dissolution of class consciousness, at least among the more settled, well-off workers.⁴² The question cannot readily be answered, but perhaps it does not need to be, because joining in a "real estate craze" does not put one outside the working-class. Its temporary effect may have been to reduce the resources workers had available for collective action.⁴³ When the speculative boom collapsed, however, and workers lost their investments in land, savings (as in the collapse of Dominion Trust in 1914), or houses, they might be more prepared to recognize flaws in the system, and see the need for concerted action against it.

Housing shortages and rising rents also characterized the speculative real estate market in Vancouver. Housing shortages were noted by observers in 1904, 1906, 1907, and 1919. As a result, workers were forced to live in tenements, double up with others, or move farther

Vol. 1, p. 151; cf. Vol. 3, p. 112.

42. M. Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933* (hereafter, *Rush for Spoils*), pp. 117-18, argues that workers joined the "acquisitive epidemic"; Ward, "Class and Race," pp. 588-89, argues more generally that workers migrated to B.C. to at least speculate on the value of their labour power.

43. For example, after testifying that married, settled workers in Vancouver tended to invest any spare money in land, J.W. Wilkinson of the carpenters' union added that from his own experience the consequence was that "they can't stand a month's strike because they would be up against the next payment." In the 1911 carpenters' strike, "the next payment became a night mare [sic]" with the union executive. B.C. Labor Commission, *Proceedings*, Vol. 3, p. 168.

into the suburbs.⁴⁴ With the exception of 1908 and 1909, rents in the city rose rapidly and steadily from 1900 to 1911.⁴⁵ Only the pre-war depression and resulting exodus of workers from the city relieved the housing crisis.⁴⁶ Rents fell until 1915, but by 1918 they were rising again, although not to the boom levels of 1912.⁴⁷

Cost of Living

Rents were not the only element in the rising cost of living in early twentieth century Vancouver: prices of food, clothing, fuel, and other staples were also affected. In her study of real wages in Vancouver, Bartlett found that price increases between 1900 and 1920 fell into four periods. From 1900 to 1911 prices rose slowly; in 1912 and 1913 they fluctuated; in 1914 and 1915 prices fell; after 1915 they rose dramatically, until the second quarter of 1920. The price of food in particular rose substantially during and immediately after the

44. Labour Gazette V (1904), pp. 372-73, 379-80; Province, Jan. 19, 1907, June 29, 1907, April 4, 1919.

45. For example, the rent on a "typical six-roomed dwelling with sanitary conveniences in a "workingmen's section" rose from \$12-15 in 1900 to \$14-16 in 1905, and \$25-30 in 1912. Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 48-49; Canada, Board of Inquiry Into the Cost of Living in Canada, Report (hereafter: Cost of Living Report), Vol II., pp. 389, 403, 405. Rents for dwellings without sanitary conveniences rose slightly less.

46. B.C. Federationist, March 13, 1914, p. 3; Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 550, cited in Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 52.

47. Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 48-49; Province, Aug. 17, 23, 1918; Nov. 27, 1918; Dec. 19, 1918.

war. 48

The effect of price changes on workers' social reproduction depends on their wages. Bartlett found that the real wages of skilled trades rose between 1901 and 1905, then fell until 1910 and 1911. In the latter two years, money wages rose, but not as fast as the cost of living. Real wages increased again until 1915, in part because of falling prices during the 1913-15 recession. Workers who were unemployed or working short time of course did not benefit to the same extent from falling prices as did skilled workers employed full time. Finally, the inflation of the war capitalist period beginning in 1916 cut sharply into real wages, and they fell to their lowest point in either 1918 or 1919 (depending on the index used).⁴⁹

Changes in the labour and consumption markets thus gave rise to objects of contention for workers, as their social reproduction cycles were buffeted by a volatile labour market and rising prices for most of the period. Both also affected class formation in several ways. In the labour market, the seasonal and cyclical alternation of shortages and

48. Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 48-49. Her pre-1910 data consist of only two observations, from 1900 (converted to 1901 by extrapolation) and 1905, so any fluctuations during that decade have been missed. For example, price decreases were reported during the 1907-08 recession. Labour Gazette VIII (1908), p. 809; IX (1909), p. 709, cited in Bartlett, *ibid*.

49. It should be stressed that Bartlett's wage data are mainly for skilled workers: building trades, metal trades, printers, and railway running trades. Out of twenty-one occupations, the only unskilled or semi-skilled workers are building labourers, telegraphers, railway sectionmen, and street railway motormen and conductors. We can perhaps assume that the wages of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers followed the same trends, but it is only an assumption.

surpluses created a singularly mobile working class, with the consequences that its membership was unstable, but also subject to outside influences. Common experiences of unemployment and wage cuts in depressions, especially in the pre-war depression, may have contributed to a sense of class awareness.⁵⁰

The consumption market also shaped class formation in two ways: through residential segregation of the working class or of groups within it, and through the dispersal of workers to the suburbs. In the first decade of the twentieth century, there was a clear class and ethnic pattern to Vancouver districts. Chinese and Japanese residents were concentrated immediately east of downtown,⁵¹ and near them lived recent immigrants of all nationalities, often single men who were probably frontier labourers. Dwellings were crowded, and buildings dilapidated in this east end district.⁵² Better-off workers lived in suburbs to the east and south, such as Grandview, Fairview, and Kitsalano, which were settled by skilled workers, salesmen and clerks. Outside the city limits, areas such as District Lot 301 (or Hillcrest), Hastings Townsite, Cedar Cottage, and above all, South Vancouver were settled primarily by workers. Wealthier, middle class Vancouverites settled

50. Ward, in "Class and Race," p. 588, suggests that the fluidity of the labour market "no doubt hindered the spread of group awareness among wage workers." It could just as well contribute to it, however, by breaking down barriers between occupations. The effects of mobility on class formation, and on mobilization need to be distinguished.

51. There were also many Japanese in Steveston, southwest of the city.

52. See Province, Sept. 28, 30 1911, Jan. 29, 1912, for reports on housing in the East End.

first in the West End, then in Shaughnessy Heights and Point Grey in the 1910s.⁵³

The residential pattern just described had several implications for class formation. First, workers were segregated from wealthy, middle class Vancouver, but white collar and blue collar workers were not residentially segregated. Second, non-British immigrants and migrant, frontier labourers were isolated from the rest of the working class. Third, workers were dispersed across the city and its suburbs, not concentrated in a few districts, accentuating the separation between production and consumption.⁵⁴ This residential dispersal may have made it difficult for workers to mobilize around issues not connected to work and the labour market.

Conditions in the labour market and consumption market in Vancouver both created objects of contention and affected class formation. For those to form the basis of collective action depended on

53. A.E. Robertson, "The Pursuit of Power, Profit and Privacy: A Study of Vancouver's West End Elite, 1886-1914" (hereafter, "Power, Profit and Privacy"), Ch. 1; Roy, Vancouver, pp. 60-63, 67-68; McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman," pp. 7-8, 19.

54. Kealey has suggested that in the era before automobiles were available to workers, there was a close relationship between workplace and residence, which contributed to class formation. "Canadian Labour Revolt," p. 41. In Vancouver at least, this does not appear to have been the case. The development of working-class suburbs was made possible by the extension of the street car service, which meant that "For all practical purposes, anyone living within an eight mile radius of downtown could get there in thirty-five minutes." MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle," p. 35. Providing they could get through muddy streets to the street car stop, workers could live in the suburbs and still work in the industrial core of the city around False Creek. Of course, some workers lived in the suburbs and worked there too, such as at the sawmills in Marpole.

other conditions, to which we now turn.

4.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

In the preceding sections we have outlined some of the background conditions for working-class contentious action: the periods of capital accumulation, with their leading sectors, and their marked boom and bust cycle; some aspects of workers' social reproduction cycles, such as their industrial distribution, the division of labour between men and women, and the ethnic divisions in the class. We have also examined how objects of contention were created by the contradictions between workers' consumption and consumption market needs and the capitalist labour and housing markets. In the present section, we will try first to establish preliminary links between those conditions and the mobilization and collective action of Vancouver workers, and second to investigate relationships between the different aspects of collective action.

Mobilization

Unions were the principal organizations mobilizing workers for collective action in Vancouver. They were involved in the majority of strikes, the VTLC was composed of delegates from most of the city's unions, and even contentious gatherings were organized by unions more often than by any other body. In 191 (81 per cent) of the 236 strikes

for which data are available, unions were involved from the start, and in another 10 (4 per cent), strikers became unionized after they had gone on strike. Of the strikes by unionized workers, over 80 per cent (158) involved international unions. Purely Canadian unions were implicated in about 6 per cent of strikes (12), and radical industrial unions, such as the IWW, in half that percentage.

Contentious gatherings were most frequently sponsored by unions or political parties. In only seventy-one of the 150 contentious gatherings in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919 were participants explicitly mobilized by an organization. Of those contentious gatherings with sponsors, over a third (25) were sponsored by unions, over a fifth (16) by political parties, and nearly another tenth (6) by more than one type of organization (usually a union and a political party). Other sponsors included ethnic associations (8), and returned soldiers' associations (5).⁵⁵

The relationship between mobilization and the background conditions described in the previous sections is best shown in relation to the labour market. Indicators of working-class mobilization are the number of union locals, their total membership, and the number of locals formed and dissolved (see Tables 4-5 and 4-6).⁵⁶

The first period of economic growth began with a big spurt in

55. Eleven others were sponsored by miscellaneous other organizations.

56. The following discussion will focus on Vancouver, where fluctuations in mobilization were more marked than in New Westminster, which had few union locals. Many workers in New Westminster belonged to Vancouver union locals when there was no local in their city.

Table 4-5

Number of Union Locals, Vancouver and New Westminster, 1902-1919

Year	Number of union locals		Locals formed & dissolved in Vancouver		
	Vancouver	New Westminster	gains	losses	change
1900	-	-	7	-	-
1901	-	-	8	-	-
1902	42	5	10	-	-
1903	-	-	10	2	+8
1904	51	6	1	6	-5
1905	-	-	1	4	-3
1906	-	-	4	0	+4
1907	55	4	6	0	+6
1908	-	-	5	1	+4
1909	-	-	5	5	0
1910	-	-	11	0	+11
1911	77	13	-	-	-
1912	81	14	9	5	+4
1913	82	21	9	6	+3
1914	69	18	3	16	-13
1915	58	13	3	13	-10
1916	56	11	5	7	-2
1917	71	12	19	3	+16
1918	88	15	22	6	+16
1919	90	16	23	21	+1

Sources: For number of union locals: Labour Gazette III (1903) pp. 1017-19, IV (1904), pp. 1275-77, VII (1907), pp. 1461-63; Canada, Department of Labour, Reports on Labour Organization, 1911-1919.

For locals formed and dissolved: Labour Gazette, VTLC Minutes, B.C. Federationist. Because the sources differ, the results do not necessarily correspond with the total number of union locals in Vancouver.

Note: Union locals in North Vancouver and South Vancouver are included under Vancouver; one in Port Mann is included under New Westminster from 1917 to 1919.

District councils and similar federations of union locals are not included in either part of the table.

Table 4-6

Union Membership, Vancouver and New Westminster, 1911-1919

VANCOUVER

Year	Locals Reporting Membership	Total Membership	Members Per Local
1911	52	7277	140
1912	39	8011	205
1913	48	7538	157
1914	34	5165	152
1915	39	4557	117
1916	43	3788	88
1917	56	9704	173
1918	66	15585	236
1919	61	13312	218
(OBU)	4	17894	4474

NEW WESTMINSTER

Year	Locals Reporting Membership	Total Membership	Members Per Local
1911	12	668	56
1912	12	489	41
1913	15	1015	68
1914	9	546	61
1915	8	402	50
1916	10	516	52
1917	11	745	68
1918	12	642	54
1919	11	919	84
(OBU)	-	-	-

Source: Canada, Dept. of Labour, Report on Labour Organization, 1911-1919.

mobilization from 1900 to 1903, when thirty-five union locals were formed in Vancouver. A minor demobilization occurred in 1904-05, when only two locals were formed, and ten dissolved. This was most likely a result of repression of the 1903 strikes of CPR clerks, freight handlers, and other transportation workers, and the open shop campaigns that started about that time, exacerbated by the short recession from mid-1903 to the end of 1905. The labour shortages of 1906 and early 1907 were reflected in ten new locals and no dissolutions. Unionization progressed right through the 1907-08 recession, reinforcing the conclusion that it was employer repression that led to the declines of 1904-05. In 1909, however, dissolutions rose to equal the number of new locals, indicating that the effects of the recession may have been delayed by a year.

The speculative boom was well under way by 1910, and the mobilization of workers increased correspondingly. There were eleven new locals and no dissolutions in 1910, and in 1911 there were seventy-six unions in Vancouver, with a membership of well over 7000. Many new locals were formed in 1912 and 1913, but the number of dissolutions also rose, until in 1914, at least sixteen locals disappeared. Demobilization continued in 1915 with thirteen dissolutions, and even in 1916, as the war capitalist boom finally started, there was still an excess of dissolutions over new locals. Membership followed the same trend, and by 1916 the average number of members per local had fallen to less than half its 1912 level.

With the onset of the war capitalist boom, a tremendous surge of

working-class mobilization began. Nineteen new locals were formed in 1917, and twenty-two in 1918, resulting in net gains of sixteen locals in each year. Union membership exploded from less than 4000 in 1916 to over 15000 in 1918. Factionalism within the labour movement over the One Big Union (OBU) in 1919 led to large numbers of locals being formed and dissolved, as International union locals left their parent bodies to form OBU units, and new "International locals were formed.⁵⁷

Mobilization of workers into unions in Vancouver thus followed the tempo of the labour market, with a one year lag. It seems that it took that long for workers to use improved economic conditions to rebuild their organizations. Demobilization was a consequence of employer repression or of a depressed economy. Minor recessions, such as in 1907-08, do not seem to have had much affect on existing union locals, although as we will see attempts to establish new locals rarely got off the ground under those conditions. It took a major depression, as in 1913-15, to lead to large-scale demobilization, although there was again a one-year delay before economic conditions were reflected in organizational strength. The only other major demobilization occurred in the years after the failed strikes of 1903, when a minor recession was combined with employer repression.

57. Membership data for 1919 appear to be greatly exaggerated, as a result of competing OBU and International locals claiming the same workers as members.

Opportunity and Threat

In addition to affecting mobilization, the labour market affected the balance of opportunities and threats, and through them, the incidence of collective action. Between 1900 and 1919, there were 270 strikes in the Vancouver area, 150 contentious gatherings in the city of Vancouver, and 585 instances of contentious claims by the VTLC. The number and size of strikes by year is shown in Table 4-7, and the number of contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions in Table 4-8.

Strikes were most frequent during periods of strong economic growth. In particular, three four-year periods accounted for most of the strikes, strikers, and striker-days. In the first period, from 1900 to 1903, seventy-three strikes accounted for 27 per cent of the total number of strikes, 26 per cent of all strikers, and 30 per cent of all striker-days. In the second period, the strike wave was considerably smaller: forty-four strikes between 1909 and 1912 accounted for 16 per cent of strikes, 10 per cent of strikers, and 22 per cent of striker-days. Finally, the third period was the culmination of early twentieth century militancy: ninety-six strikes from 1916 to 1919 accounted for 36 per cent of strikes, 51 per cent of strikers, and 38 per cent of striker-days. These three strike waves together made up 79 per cent of the strikes, 87 per cent of the strikers, and 91 per cent of the striker-days in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919. As we have seen (above, page 134), they were also periods of labour shortage. From this we can conclude that tight labour market did represent an

Table 4-7

Strikes in Greater Vancouver and New Westminster, 1900-1919

Year	Strikes		Strikers		Striker-days	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1900	12	4.4	7920	11.0	217818	15.2
1901	10	3.7	3618	5.0	72718	5.1
1902	22	8.1	1274	1.8	7299	0.5
1903	29	10.7	6052	8.4	127841	8.9
1904	4	1.5	153	0.2	5653	0.4
1905	11	4.1	390	0.5	3350	0.2
1906	10	3.7	271	0.4	15929	1.1
1907	12	4.4	1387	1.9	39788	2.8
1908	3	1.1	461	0.6	25625	1.8
1909	9	3.3	448	0.2	6221	0.4
1910	9	3.3	1345	1.9	59450	4.2
1911	10	3.7	4538	6.3	225419	15.8
1912	16	5.9	790	1.1	30029	2.1
1913	9	3.3	6283	8.7	13152	0.9
1914	2	0.7	25	0.0	450	0.0
1915	6	2.2	611	0.8	30239	2.1
1916	10	3.7	352	0.5	7970	0.6
1917	30	11.1	6221	8.6	76650	5.4
1918	40	14.8	18287	25.3	140451	9.8
1919	16	5.9	11729	16.3	324554	22.7
Total	270	100.0	72155	100.0	1430696	100.0

Table 4-8

Contentious Gatherings and VTLC Contention in Vancouver, 1900-1919

Contentious Gatherings				VTLC Contention			
Year	N	Year	N	Year	N	Year	N
1900	3	1910	6	1900	22	1910	37
1901	3	1911	12	1901	27	1911	34
1902	2	1912	24	1902	28	1912	39
1903	3	1913	7	1903	20	1913	29
1904	1	1914	4	1904	13	1914	29
1905	1	1915	12	1905	11	1915	36
1906	5	1916	3	1906	19	1916	38
1907	10	1917	19	1907	26	1917	42
1908	1	1918	18	1908	22	1918	44
1909	4	1919	12	1909	24	1919	45
Total		150		Total		585	

opportunity for workers to use their labour power as a resource for collective action (by withdrawing it in strikes).

Opportunities provided by labour shortages were mediated through the process of mobilization. Surges of union organization occurred in the second year of economic recovery after each severe recession between 1900 and 1919 (see above, page 150, on the one year lag of mobilization behind economic conditions), and strikes followed the same pattern.⁵⁸ Thus the number of strikes, strikers, and striker-days more than doubled between the last year of the 1907-1908 recession and the second year of recovery (1910); they rose even more sharply between 1915 and the second year of the war capitalist boom (1917).⁵⁹ The level of strike activity continued to rise, on all dimensions, in the third year of booms, indicating that labour shortages still presented an opportunity for workers. In 1919, however, the number of strikes and strikers fell, as a result of the worsening labour market, employer repression, and

58. It is possible that the patterns of mobilization and strikes were independent, related only by common dependence on labour market conditions, rather than mobilization being a prerequisite of increased strike activity. There is some evidence, however, to indicate that the latter is the case: the proportion of strikes that were begun by non-unionized workers was lower in each of the three strike waves than in other years. During the strike waves, only 12 per cent of strikes began without unions; in other years, 16 per cent. The difference is slight, but it is in the direction indicating that unionization occurred before strikes in those three periods (especially in the last two - in the 1900-1903 period, 15 per cent of strikes were by non-unionized workers).

59. The number of strikes in 1909 was triple the number in 1908, but they were smaller, as indicated by the lower number of strikers and striker-days. Similarly, in 1916, there were more strikes than in 1915, but they were smaller.

inter-union factionalism.⁶⁰ From the historical pattern of mobilization and strikes, we can conclude that after a recession, workers required about a year to reorganize and replenish their resources before engaging in militant action.

Just as labour shortages furnished opportunities for workers, the labour surpluses that existed in recessions gave employers the opportunity to cut wages, lengthen hours, and introduce technological changes. Consequently they posed a threat to workers' interests. In general, the level of strikes fell during recessions, reflecting reduced opportunity, but there were still reasonably high levels of strike activity in some recession years, such as 1913 (when the number of strikers was higher than in the previous, boom year). This suggests that workers were responding to capitalist threats to their interests, and in the 1913-1915 recession over forty per cent of strike objectives were defensive.⁶¹ In general, however, workers waited for the opportunities provided by tight labour markets in economic recoveries to respond to the threatening actions of capitalists during recessions.

In contrast to strikes, the frequency of contentious gatherings

60. After the factional disputes between OBU and International unionists began in the wake of the general strike, there were only four small strikes.

61. Shorter and Tilly suggest that defensive strikes would occur in times of economic contraction. Strikes in France, pp. 86, 92. Out of sixteen strike objectives, opposition to wage reductions appeared six times from 1913 to 1915, and opposition to longer hours once. In the other recessions, defensive objectives (including opposition to the open shop, in addition to the objectives already cited) were less than one fifth of all objectives.

and VTLC contention did not vary in any close relation to capital accumulation or labour market conditions. Particularly if we remove all contentious gatherings linked to strikes from our list, we find that there were only a few years with more than two or three gatherings: 1906-07; 1912, 1915, and 1917-19.⁶² In 1906-07, agitation over Asian immigration was the focus of contentious gatherings; in 1912 it was free speech demonstrations; in 1915 demonstrations by the unemployed for relief, and in 1917-19, a wide variety of demonstrations and meetings over conscription and civil rights, and for demands by returned soldiers and soldiers' dependants. If they were related at all to economic conditions, contentious gatherings appear to have been responses to threats to workers' labour market position, such as that the growing number of Asian immigrants would flood the labour market in 1906-07,⁶³ or that conscription would become industrial conscription in 1917.⁶⁴ Frequent contentious gatherings in other years were in response to threats to workers' mobilization or consumption resulting from the repression of workers' meetings in 1912, from civic relief policies in

62. Over a third (51) of the contentious gatherings were linked to strikes, indicating the central place of strikes in working-class collective action. The revised distribution of contentious gatherings not linked to strikes is:

1900-0	1904-1	1908-1	1912-22	1916-3
1901-2	1905-1	1909-4	1913-2	1917-15
1902-0	1906-4	1910-2	1914-3	1918-7
1903-0	1907-10	1911-4	1915-10	1919-8.

63. Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 65.

64. See for example, *Province*, Jan. 8, 1917, *B.C. Federationist*, Jan. 12, 1917, p. 1, for reports of speeches at an anti-conscription meeting.

1915, and from niggardly Patriotic Fund allowances to soldiers' dependants in 1918. More significant than the effects of the threats was their source: in each of these cases, the source of the threats to workers' interests lay in policies of some level of the state. The tempo of contentious gatherings was thus shaped as much by politics as by economics.

The frequency of VTLC contention was even more remotely connected to the labour market. Its overall pattern reflected a gradually rising level of contentiousness on the part of trades council delegates. Thus, the number of contentious claims roughly doubled in the course of the twenty years from 1900 to 1919.⁶⁵ This rising level of VTLC contentiousness corresponded to the growing mobilization of the Vancouver working class. Thus, years in which the number of VTLC contentions declined sharply from the preceding year (compare 1904-05 with 1903, and 1913-14 with 1912) were also years of working-class demobilization, in which union dissolutions greatly outnumbered the formation of new unions (see Table 4-5). As unions were weakened by repression or recession, they became preoccupied with merely maintaining their existence, and their delegates to the VTLC became less demanding. Conversely, years of exceptional working-class mobilization and strike militancy were also years when the VTLC made the most demands: 1900-03, 1909-12, and 1916-19 together accounted for nearly 70 per cent of all

65. Data for 1900 are incomplete, so we cannot state this definitely.

VTLC contention.⁶⁶

In conclusion, the labour market was the best indicator of opportunities for strikes in the Vancouver area, but was less significant for the incidence of other forms of contentious action. Threats deriving from state policies were more important sources of contentious gatherings, and perhaps of VTLC contention as well.⁶⁷ The latter was affected indirectly by the labour market, through its effects on working-class mobilization.

Parties to Collective Action

There are always at least two parties to contentious collective action, the participants in the making of a contentious claim (that is, the collective actors themselves), and the party which is being asked to do something in response to the collective actor's objectives, that is, the target of the action.⁶⁸ Targets and participants will be examined in turn, in order to investigate the effects of capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction on workers' contentious action.

66. The exact figures are: 1900-03: 97 (16.6 per cent); 1909-12: 134 (22.9 per cent); 1916-19: 169 (28.9 per cent); total: 400 (68.4 per cent).

67. As we will see in the next section, most contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions were aimed at the state.

68. The target of the action, and the target of the claim are not always the same. For example, if workers demand that the state enact a minimum wage law, the target of the action is the state, but the parties whose interests will be affected are employers. We will provide data on the latter when we discuss objectives.

Targets

The targets of collective action in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919 corresponded to the form of action (Table 4-9). Nearly all strikes were aimed at employers; in contrast employers were almost never the direct targets of contentious gatherings and VTLC contention.⁶⁹

Instead, most contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions were aimed at the state. Other workers were the second most frequent targets of these forms of action, with nearly a quarter of the contentious gatherings, but a minuscule proportion of VTLC contention. Most of the contentious gatherings directed at other workers were in connection with strikes, usually in the form of mass pickets to intimidate strikebreakers.

Contentious gatherings aimed at the state were concentrated in 1907, 1912, 1915, and 1917-19, occurring then because of threats whose source lay in state policies (see above, page 155). Nearly half the demands on other workers were made by strikers during the 1911 building trades general strike, and by opponents of the 1918 Goodwin protest strike.

As was mentioned above, most VTLC contention was also aimed at the state. The municipal government was the most frequent target of claims on the state.⁷⁰ Claims on municipal governments averaged about

69. As we will see, however, many claims made on the state and other workers had a bearing on employers' interests.

70. Claims on the state were distributed as follows: municipal government - 210 (41.3 per cent); federal government - 150 (29.5 per cent); provincial government - 127 (25.0 per cent); more than one level - 14 (2.8 per cent); level unknown - 7 (1.4 per cent).

Table 4-9

Targets of Collective Action, Vancouver, 1900-1919

Target	Strikes		Contentious Gatherings		VTLC Contention	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employer	266	98.5	5	3.3	17	2.9
State	4	1.5	91	60.7	508	86.8
Other workers	-	-	35	23.3	20	3.4
Other	-	-	9	6.0	24	4.1
Mixed	-	-	10	6.7	9	1.5
Unknown	-	-	-	-	7	1.2
Total	270	100.0	150	100.0	585	100.0

eight per year from 1900 to 1909, doubled to eighteen a year from 1910 to 1913, then declined to the level of the first decade. Beginning in 1914, the federal government became an increasingly frequent target of VTLC demands: over half of the 150 claims directed at the federal government occurred during 1914-19. The province was also most often a target during the war, but it was never as important as the other two levels of government for the VTLC. Before 1914, the trades council acted mainly as a guardian of the municipal political interests of Vancouver workers, but the political and economic conditions of the war forced it to widen its horizons to include higher levels of government, especially the federal government. That broadening of the horizons of VTLC contention was a sign of the increasing radicalism of the Vancouver working class.

All but four strikes were directed at employers. The number of strikes, strikers, and striker-days, classified according to the industry of the strikers' employer, is shown in Table 4-10. Measured by the frequency of strikes, most conflict occurred in the transportation and construction industries, which together accounted for over half of all strikes. The number of strikers and striker-days gives a better indication of the intensity of conflict, however. On those measures, the descending rank order of industries was: salmon, interindustry (general strikes), building trades, shipbuilding, external transportation, local transportation and public utilities, metal, lumber and consumer goods manufacturing, trade and finance, services, and the

Table 4-10

Frequency and Size of Strikes by Employers' Industry,
Vancouver Area, 1900-1919

Industry	Strikes		Strikers		Striker-days	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lumber	20	7.4	1846	2.6	33565	2.3
Salmon	9	2.3	22468	31.1	335418	23.4
Metal Mfg.	14	5.2	624	0.9	62864	4.4
Shipbuilding	18	6.7	9631	13.3	86134	6.0
Consumer Goods						
Mfg. (1)	20	7.4	1168	1.6	31519	2.2
External						
Transport	64	23.7	5861	8.1	141205	9.9
Local Transport						
& Utilities	18	6.7	3659	5.1	49544	3.5
Building Trades	60	22.2	7428	10.3	304821	21.3
Heavy Constr.	5	1.9	583	0.8	3641	0.3
Trade & Finance	4	1.5	49	0.1	318	0.0
Service	13	4.8	478	0.7	31477	2.2
State	12	4.4	1595	2.2	13331	0.9
Fishing (2)	4	1.5	359	0.5	25290	1.8
Interindustry	5	1.9	16272	22.5	309095	21.6
Unknown	4	1.5	164	0.2	1844	0.1
Total	270	100.0	72185	100.0	1430666	100.0

Notes: (1) Including oil refining.
(2) Halibut fishing.

state.

The relation of strikes to objects of contention arising from capital accumulation will be investigated in great detail in subsequent chapters, but for now it is worth looking at the relationship between the distribution of strikes by employers' industries, and the leading sectors of economic development described previously (see above, page 124, and Table 4-1). We argued that industries which were leaders of economic expansion would experience more objects of contention, and therefore more industrial conflict than other industries.

The relationship between leading sectors of the economy and industries with the highest levels of ~~strike~~ activity was largely in line with our expectations. In the period of the establishment of a metropolis (1900-1906), half of all strikes, and over nine tenths of all strikers and striker-days were in the salmon and transport industries. In the 1909-1912 triumph of the speculator, nearly half of all strikes, nearly two thirds of all strikers, and over seven tenths of all striker-days were in the building trades.⁷¹ Finally, in the war capitalist boom (once general strikes for political or solidaristic objectives are omitted from consideration), less than one sixth of its strikes, but almost half of the period's strikers, and over a third of

71. If strikes against employers in heavy construction and the state (all of the latter involving workers on sewer or road construction) are added to the building trades, the building boom in Vancouver and district accounted for half of all strikes, nearly eight tenths of all strikers, and three quarters of all striker-days in the period.

its striker-days occurred in shipbuilding.⁷² In short, some of the industries that led economic growth in the Vancouver area also led in strike activity.

The correspondence between leading sectors and strikes was far from perfect, however. The lumber industry was a leading sector in the first period, but there was little industrial conflict in it before the wartime strike wave. Trade and finance was also a leading sector in the first period, and in 1909-1912, but at neither time did it experience strikes. Finally, metal manufacturing was a leader of growth in the war capitalist boom, but it did not rank among the top five industries in strike activity. Either economic expansion did not create objects of contention in these industries, or conditions of group formation, mobilization, or collective action deterred their workers from striking.⁷³

Collective Actors

The other parties to collective action were the collective actors themselves. The easiest way to analyze them is in terms of four

72. The reduced concentration of strike activity in this leading sector shows the widespread extent of strike militancy in the war capitalist period.

73. Other industries also contradicted our expectations by having high levels of strike activity when they were not leading sectors. For example, the building trades were struck frequently in every period until 1915, and external transport was a strike leader in all five economic periods. During war capitalism, the lumber industry, and local transportation and utilities had unexpectedly high levels of industrial conflict.

characteristics linked to social reproduction cycles: occupation, skill, ethnicity, and gender.⁷⁴

Occupation

Collective actors were generally identified as members of a particular occupation only in strikes. Strikers' occupations were classified by the same categories as employers' industry, and consequently, the pattern of strikes is the same for both in most cases. There were some important exceptions, however, because the workers in the same occupations worked in different industries. Metal workers were the principal exception, because in addition to working for metal manufacturers (contract shops), they were employed in railway shops and shipyards. Metal tradesmen engaged in thirty strikes between 1900 and 1919, but only thirteen were against contract shops; ten were against transportation companies, and five against shipbuilders.⁷⁵ Most of their strikes were before 1905 and after 1915, but the most important disputes, as we will see, were in 1908 against the CPR, and in 1910 against contract shops.

Other exceptions were found in strikes by local transportation workers (mostly teamsters) against employers in external transport, trade and finance, and various other industries, as well as against

74. Data were not gathered on the participants in VTLC contentions, i.e. on trades council delegates, so nothing can be said on that here. In general the delegates to the council represented skilled trades, were men, and were of 'British' descent.

75. The other two were "other."

local transportation employers. Heavy construction workers struck against the state as often as against contractors, and office and sales workers never struck against employers in trade and finance.⁷⁶

When they engaged in contentious gatherings, workers in Vancouver did not act as members of an industry or trade. In over half of the cases, the occupation of participants in contentious gatherings was not known. Of those cases in which participants' occupations were identified, the most frequent classifications were unemployed (10 per cent of all gatherings), and returned soldiers or soldiers' dependants (13 per cent). In the quarter of all gatherings in which participants were identified as members of some trade or industry, most (nearly 70 per cent) occurred in connection with a strike.

Skill

In crisis of the craftsman interpretations of Canadian labour history, skilled workers are seen as sources of working-class militancy and radicalism.⁷⁷ In Vancouver, skilled workers were not leaders in the volume of strikes. Of the strikes for which skill data were available, slightly over one third were by craft workers, over half were by semi-skilled or unskilled workers, and about one eighth involved both craft and non-craft workers. Non-craft workers acting alone accounted for more than six times as many strikers, and nearly three times as many

76. Two minor strikes were by newsboys against newspaper publishers; one major strike was by clerks against the CPR.

77. See Heron and Palmer, "Prism of the Strike."

striker-days as did craft workers acting alone.⁷⁸ Strikes in which craft and non-craft workers acted together comprised about the same proportion of strikers and striker-days as strikes by only non-craft workers. Although they were few, the strikes involving craft and non-craft workers were large, and they were concentrated in a few years during the war. There had been few strikes involving craft and non-craft workers before 1916, but from 1917-18 their number and size rose sharply, because of strikes in shipyards and general strikes.⁷⁹ The war again appears to be a time of exceptional mobilization of Vancouver workers, especially the unskilled and semi-skilled. Data on the size of strikes shows that the years of most intense strike activity were generally ones in which the volume of strikes by non-craft workers, or by both craft and non-craft workers were at their peaks. Strike waves in Vancouver were thus associated with increased militancy by non-craft workers, or upsurges in strike solidarity across skill lines.

78. The exact figures were:

	Strikes			Strikers			Striker-days	
	N	%		N	%		N	%
Crafts only	91	33.7		5503	7.6		208761	14.6
Non-crafts only	142	52.6		34845	48.3		581285	40.6
Both	32	11.9		31923	44.2		640650	44.8
Total	265	100.0		72271	100.0		1430696	100.0

Only in length did strikes by craft workers exceed those by non-crafts: over half the total days on strike were in strikes by crafts; four tenths in strikes by non-crafts, and less than a tenth in both striking together. Craft workers had the resources to hold out in strikes, that less skilled workers lacked.

79. Nearly half of the twenty-one strikes by crafts and non-crafts were in shipbuilding.

This lends support to the idea that strike waves occurred when new groups of workers were mobilized by the labour movement or new forms of organization were adopted because of changes in the structure of industry.

The contentious gathering was a form of action used more by unskilled workers than by the skilled. Of the forty contentious gatherings in which the skill of participants was known, thirty-six were by non-craft workers, three were by craftsmen, and one involved both. Non-craft workers engaged in contentious gatherings, especially in connection with strikes, because they lacked the resources (chiefly skill) possessed by craft workers to keep away strikebreakers in strikes, and to put pressure on governments.

Ethnicity

The dominance of workers of English-Canadian, British, and American backgrounds in the Vancouver working class was reflected in the ethnicity of collective actors. In 84 per cent of strikes, and 87 per cent of contentious gatherings, the ethnicity of participants was not reported. It is safe to assume that it was not reported because it was not considered worth mentioning, that is, because the participants were from the dominant ethnic group.⁸⁰ If this assumption is correct, then the vast majority of collective actions were by workers from British,

80. This is a fair assumption, because of the racial preoccupations of Vancouver newspapers, which pointed out very forcefully when "foreigners" or "Asiatics" engaged in strikes or other militant forms of collective action.

Canadian, and American backgrounds.

Other workers did engage in collective action, despite the predominance of those of British background, but they rarely acted alone. There were only fourteen generally very small strikes by Asians acting alone, most of them by factory operatives in the lumber industry.⁸¹ Europeans acting alone struck only five times.⁸² This lack of action by subordinate ethnic groups resulted from a lack of resources, weak mobilization, and consequently a lack of power. As we will see, Asian and European immigrants rarely had the capacity to hold out for long in strikes, because they were poor and their labour market opportunities were limited. Furthermore, their work was generally seasonal, and they could not afford to lose much time by striking.

Most of the strike activity by workers of subordinate ethnicities was in conjunction with members of the dominant group. Strikes by workers in the "mixed ethnicity" category amounted to only 5 per cent of the total number, but 47 per cent of strikers, and 46 per cent of striker-days.⁸³ Most of those fourteen strikes occurred in two

81. Nine of the strikes were in saw or shingle mills, and three others in salmon canneries. Strikes involving Asians and workers of other ethnicities were in the same industries.

82. Strikes by Asians accounted for 5 per cent of strikes, but less than 1 per cent of strikers and striker-days. Strikes by Europeans constituted 2 per cent of strikes, 1 per cent of strikers, and less than 1 per cent of striker-days.

83. The large size of these strikes is mostly attributable to the fishermen's strikes of 1900, 1901, and 1903, and the general strike of 1919, each of which involved workers from several ethnic or racial groups, of which the dominant group was most numerous.

periods: 1900 to 1903 (six), and 1916 to 1919 (four), again indicating that they were periods of exceptional solidarity.

In contrast to strikes, when workers of subordinate ethnic groups engaged in contentious gatherings, they did so on their own. European workers engaged in twelve contentious gatherings, Asians in seven, and a mixture of ethnic groups in only four. But these subordinate ethnic groups lacked social status and political resources, and so could not make themselves effectively heard. This was especially true of Asians, with the exception of Sikhs, who made use of their position as British subjects to protest discrimination in Canada.⁸⁴ Similarly, most of the contentious gatherings by Europeans were either in connection with strikes (five), or were desperate demands by the unemployed for relief in 1914 and 1915 (five).⁸⁵

Gender

Most wage workers in Vancouver were men; so were most strikers.⁸⁶ Nine out of ten strikes in the Vancouver area between 1900

84. Sikhs engaged in all four of the contentious gatherings by Asians which had the state as their target. For the specific incidents, see Province, April 17, 1911, Jan. 30, 1912, May 6, 1912, June 1, 1914.

85. For the demonstrations and riot by unemployed "foreigners," see Province, Nov. 10, 1914, April 7, 8, 1915; Sun, Nov. 11, 1914, April 7, 1915; B.C. Federationist, April 9, 1915, p. 1; Roy, "Macca of the Unemployed," pp. 399-401.

86. Through what now seems an unbelievable oversight, contentious gatherings were not coded for the gender of participants. My impression is that few involved women; those that did occurred during the war, and were concerned with the cost of living and allowances for soldiers' dependants.

and 1919 were by men alone; only five strikes were by women alone,⁸⁷ and another eighteen involved both women and men.⁸⁸ Strikes involving women were concentrated in 1902-03, and 1916-19 (nearly half occurred during the latter four years). The rising frequency of strikes involving women in the war capitalist boom provides another indication that the working class was becoming more broadly mobilized during those years.

To summarize our findings on the parties to working-class contentious actions, most contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions were aimed at the state, while most strikes were aimed at employers. The rank order of strike activity by industry was: salmon canning, the building trades, shipbuilding, transportation and utilities, metal, lumber and consumer goods manufacturing, and services, trade and finance, and the state. Non-craft workers outnumbered craft workers in both strike activity and incidence of contentious gatherings. Nearly all working-class contentious action was by male workers of the dominant, British ethnic group, but during World War I, women and members of subordinate ethnic groups participated to a greater extent than previously. The relationship between levels of strike activity on the one hand, and the industry, skill, ethnicity and gender of strikers

87. Less than 2 per cent of strikers and less than 1 per cent of striker-days were accounted for by those five strikes.

88. They comprised 7 per cent of all strikes, 17 per cent of strikers, and 26 per cent of striker-days. The high percentage of strikers and striker-days is because of the general strikes of 1919, and the number of women participating in strikes was generally small.

on the other hand have only been indicated; in the chapters following this one, the reasons for differences on these dimensions will be explored more fully.

Objectives

According to Shorter and Tilly, the worst way to find out what strikers want is to listen to what they say they want.⁸⁹ As a warning not to take strikers' demands at face value, their dictum is apt. Strike demands are shaped by more than just the grievances of rank and file strikers, and the reasons for a strike are often more complex than the stated ones. The unstated sources of strikes cannot be ignored, which is why we will look closely at objects of contention between workers and capitalists in chapters on individual industries. Yet however much real grievances may be displaced for ideological, tactical or other reasons, the stated objectives are a significant element in strikes. They are the banner under which the strikers march (sometimes literally),⁹⁰ they are the stake of negotiations between the parties to the strike, they affect the responses to the strike by outside parties, and they are the only criterion for assessing the strike's outcome. The same considerations apply to the objectives of the other types of

89. Shorter and Tilly, *Strikes in France*, p. 66.

90. In 1900, striking sockeye salmon fishermen marched in Steveston behind a white banner with "25" lettered in red. They were striking for a minimum price of 25 cents a fish. *World*, July 10, 1900; *Province*, July 10, 1900. In a strike by labourers on public works in Vancouver in 1910, strikers paraded behind a placard reading, "We are on strike for eight hours and 35 cents per hour." *News-Advertiser*, July 21, 1910.

collective action, which will be examined after we deal with strike objectives.

"Bread and butter" wage and hour issues were the most frequently stated strike objectives in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919, making up over half of all strike objectives (Table 4-11).⁹¹ They were the most frequent strike objectives in nearly every year from 1900 to 1919. Most of those demands were for increased wages, after which shorter hours were the next most frequent objective.

A relationship between strike activity and the trend of real wages existed for at least two of the three periods in which the former was at a high level. In 1910 and 1911, when money wage increases were falling to keep up to price increases, the level of strike activity was high, and wages and hours comprised nearly half of all objectives. Likewise, in 1916-19 real wages were falling, there was substantial industrial conflict, and well over half of all objectives concerned wages and hours. It seems that the strike was the main form of contention in which Vancouver workers sought to deal with inflation.

After wages and hours, the next most frequent category of strike objectives was union security and solidarity with other strikers. Union security objectives (such as union recognition and discrimination against union members) made up over a tenth of all strike objectives,

91. As many as two objectives were counted for each strike, and 72 strikes had two or more objectives. The total number of strike objectives was 338 (objectives were unknown in four strikes).

Table 4-11

Objectives of Strikes in Vancouver and District,
1900-1919

Objective	N	%
Wages and hours	172	50.9
Union and solidarity	73	21.6
Labour market control	60	17.8
Job control	21	6.2
Other	12	3.6
Total	338	100.0

Note: As many as two objectives were counted for each strike.

appearing in strikes thirty-nine times.⁹² Solidarity strikes occurred when workers stopped work not because of their own grievances against employers, but in order to help other striking workers win their demands. The thirty-four solidarity objectives were evenly divided between sympathy strikes and 'hot cargo' strikes in which workers refused to replace strikers, work with strikebreakers, or utilize materials handled by strikebreakers.

Strikes involving union and solidarity objectives occurred most frequently in the militant 1900 to 1903 period, when they comprised a third of all objectives.⁹³ They were almost entirely absent in strikes between 1903 and 1917, but became prominent again from 1917 to 1919, when they accounted for one quarter of all strike objectives.⁹⁴ The two strike waves that bracket the 1900-1919 period were thus marked by working-class solidarity and struggles over the right to form unions and bargain collectively.⁹⁵ They were also periods of widespread

92. Union security issues were distributed as follows: Union recognition - seventeen strikes; discrimination against union members - eleven strikes; dismissal of employees for other reasons (usually connected with speaking out or organizing on some collective grievance) - seven strikes; the failure of employers to sign, or to live up to an agreement - four strikes.

93. Forty per cent of all union and solidarity issues occurred between 1900 and 1903.

94. The four strikes with political objectives also occurred in this period, indicating that the strike was becoming a general-purpose tactic.

95. Seven of the eight strikes in Vancouver which were the source of solidarity strikes in 1900-03 had at least one union and solidarity objective, as did four of the nine originating strikes in 1916-19.

mobilization, suggesting that newly unionized groups of workers were battling with hostile employers over collective bargaining rights.

The third most frequent type of strike objective was labour market control, which comprised nearly a fifth of all objectives. The employment of union members was the most common labour market control objective: demand for the closed shop was a goal twenty times, opposition to the open shop fourteen times, and opposition to the employment of non-unionists thirteen times.⁹⁶ In only two strikes was restriction of the employment of members of a different ethnic or racial group an objective of the strikers (both against the employment of Asians), while in another five cases they objected to an employee on grounds other than ethnicity or union membership.⁹⁷ The principal contentious method by which workers controlled the labour market was the limitation of employment to union members. The union is again revealed as the central institution of working-class contention in the Vancouver

96. Jurisdictional disputes between unions were an issue in four more strikes, and employment practices such as decasualization, seniority, or job security were at issue twice. Because union recognition often had the implication that only union members would be employed, seventeen union recognition issues could be added to these.

97. None of the latter involved objection to an employee because of his or her gender. The low frequency of the objective of ethnic exclusion in strikes is surprising, given the attribution of a highly developed race consciousness to white workers in B.C. It is of course possible that racial exclusion was achieved indirectly (for example, through limiting employment to union members), or that workers who were most affected by competition from non-white workers were unable to organize and engage in collective action over the issue. The latter seems most plausible, since both strikes against Asian workers were by white workers who were not directly affected by Asian competition: loggers and carpenters.

area in the early twentieth century.

Control of the labour process was an infrequent objective of strikes. Job control issues appeared only twenty-one times, comprising only a twentieth of all objectives.⁹⁸ On the face of it, workers in the Vancouver area were either not interested in or not capable of pursuing job control through strike action.⁹⁹

The claims made in working class contentious gatherings and in the VTLC were principally concerned with issues of mobilization, politics, and the labour market (Table 4-12). Claims over work, the consumption market, and consumption practices were a very small proportion of the total. The infrequency of consumption market claims leads to the conclusion that workers fought to preserve their real wages (in the face of a rising cost of living) primarily through strikes for higher pay.¹⁰⁰

Taken in conjunction with the data on the objectives of strikes, it is clear that the main interests expressed by Vancouver workers in

98. Eight of those concerned changes in the labour process, six were over methods of payment, four involved apprenticeship rules, and three addressed other working conditions.

99. In addition to the above, there were twelve strike objectives classified as 'other'. Four of these were political: the three general strikes discussed in the introduction, and a strike by longshoremen to protest military police activities on the docks. The other eight were miscellaneous.

100. This is no doubt attributable to the difficulties of mobilizing around cost of living issues, especially if, as Humphries has maintained with respect to nineteenth century England, working-class housewives were the "administrators of the wage." Women were generally poorly mobilized in early twentieth century Vancouver. Humphries, "Persistence of the Working-Class Family," p. 487.

Table 4-12

Objectives of Contentious Gatherings and VTLC
Contention, Vancouver, 1900-1919

Objective	Contentious Gatherings		VTLC Contention	
	N	%	N	%
Consumption practices	26	14.0	52	7.4
Labour market	35	18.8	219	31.1
Work	—	—	41	5.8
Consumption market	1	0.5	69	9.8
Mobilization	78	41.9	163	23.2
Political	42	22.6	148	21.0
Other	4	2.2	12	1.7
Total	186	100.0	704	100.0

Note: As many as two objectives were counted for each event.

their contentious action centered on the labour market and mobilization. In strikes, it will be recalled, the majority of objectives concerned the labour market: wages and hours, and labour market control. Union and solidarity issues, which can be considered as mobilization objectives, were the next most important. Job control trailed far behind as a stated objective of strikes. Regardless of what might be called the 'true' sources of strikes and other contentious action, their stated discourse revolved around the labour market and the conditions in which workers could organize and act in concert.

In addition to the relation of objectives to various phases of working-class cycles of social reproduction, to mobilization, or to politics, contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions were categorized according to the bearing of the claims on relations between the working class and the capitalist class on the one hand, or within the working class on the other hand.¹⁰¹ The "class content" of claims could be "class conflict," "ethnic conflict in the working class," "other conflict in the working class," and when there was no immediate bearing on any of the preceding, "no class content."

There was no class content to over half of the claims made in contentious gatherings and VTLC contention, that is, they did not directly concern either relations between workers and employers, or relations between different groups of workers (Table 4-13). Class

101. It was assumed that strikes would have a bearing on relations between the working class and capitalist class, so they were not coded for class content.

Table 4-13

Class Content of Contentious Gatherings and VTLC
Contention in Vancouver, 1900-1919

Class Content	Contentious Gatherings		VTLC Contention	
	N	%	N	%
Class conflict	35	23.3	162	27.7
Ethnic conflict	17	11.3	54	9.2
Other conflict	13	8.7	30	5.1
No class content	84	56.0	322	55.0
More than one	1	0.7	10	1.7
Unknown	-	-	7	1.2
Total	150	100.0	585	100.0

conflict, pitting workers against employers, was expressed in about a quarter of each type of contention. Surprisingly, in view of the emphasis given to racial conflict as a characteristic of the B.C. social structure, only a tenth of contentious gatherings and VTLC contentions involved any kind of ethnic conflict.¹⁰² Other types of conflict within the working class were expressed in a tenth of the former and a twentieth of the latter.

The class content of VTLC contention and contentious gatherings depended on the type of objective expressed in them. Labour market objectives were framed principally in terms of the interests of workers versus the interests of employers, or in terms of the interests of workers of one ethnicity against those of another ethnicity. For contentious gatherings, a third of labour market objectives were expressed as class conflict; an equal proportion expressed ethnic conflict. For VTLC contention, half expressed class conflict, and a fifth ethnic conflict. Objectives concerned with the consumption market or consumption practices were generally without class content. Over three quarters of consumption practice objectives lacked class content, and the largest proportion of the remainder expressed ethnic conflict. Consumption market objectives were nearly all without class content (nine tenths for VTLC contentions).¹⁰³

The class content of mobilization and political objectives

102. Compare Ward, "Class and Race."

103. Work objectives, which appeared only in VTLC contentions, were overwhelmingly class conflict (71 per cent).

differed again. The absence of class content was still the most frequent for mobilization objectives, at 45 per cent for contentious gatherings and 58 per cent for VTLC contention, but class conflict was also frequent (37 per cent and 28 per cent respectively), followed by other conflict in the working class (17 per cent and 10 per cent). In contrast, political objectives were generally without class content (83 per cent and 85 per cent). Ethnic conflict was involved in 10 per cent of contentious gatherings with political objectives, and class conflict in 10 per cent of VTLC contentious claims with political objectives.

The analysis of the class content of contentious action shows, in the first place, that the principal location of overt class conflict in the cycle of social reproduction of Vancouver workers was the labour market and (to a far lesser extent) work. As we expected, conflict in the consumption and consumption market phases of that cycle was not likely to be expressed in specifically class terms. Mobilization, however, emerged as an important additional source of class conflict outside the working-class cycle of social reproduction. The struggle of workers to redress grievances arising from this cycle itself gave rise to additional class conflict, as employers or the state repressed working-class organization and action. Yet political objectives generally lacked class content, indicating that the state was not seen in specifically class terms.

In the second place, the data on class content and objectives demonstrate the place of ethnic conflict among Vancouver's workers. It was not a major part of workers' contentious action. When they did

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO) TEST CHART No. 2

expressly engage in ethnic conflict, workers in Vancouver objected to members of other ethnic groups on economic, not cultural grounds, that is, because of their labour market competition, not because of their consumption practices.

Repression and Facilitation

In this section we are concerned with the responses to a collective action by parties outside the ranks of the collective actors themselves. For strikes, these were mainly employers, the state, and other workers; for contentious gatherings, the state.¹⁰⁴

The primary response of employers to strikes was hostility (Table 4-14). In the 189 strikes for which data were obtained, employers entered into negotiations with their striking employees less than four tenths of the time. In the remaining six tenths they were openly hostile.¹⁰⁵

104. Responses to the action were not coded for VTLC contention, on the assumption that outside parties would respond to the claim, not the form in which it was made. Seventy-nine per cent of VTLC contentions were in the form of simple resolutions, and another sixteen per cent were backed up by delegations to present demands in person. In less than five per cent of all claims were any further actions threatened. Contentious gatherings were more militant: forty-one per cent were indoor meetings, fourteen per cent outdoor meetings, twenty-three per cent demonstrations or marches, and seventeen per cent mass picketing or turnout actions.

105. Employer responses were coded in order of increasing hostility, with the most hostile response being coded. Thus more hostile employers generally engaged in the less hostile practices as well. In only five strikes were they satisfied with simply refusing to negotiate. Strikebreakers from British Columbia were engaged in forty-one strikes, and in a further twenty-six, strikebreakers were imported from outside the province, or hired from an ethnic group isolated from the strikers. The introduction of strikebreakers was backed up by the real or

Table 4-14

Employer and State Responses to Strikes, Vancouver Area,
1900-1919.

Employer Response			State Response		
Negotiations	72	38.1	Support	2	3.6
Hostility	72	38.1	Neutrality	32	58.2
Extreme Hostility	45	23.8	Hostility	21	38.2
Total	189	100.0	Total	55	100.0

Note: For employer responses, hostility was refusal to negotiate or use of strikebreakers; extreme hostility was dismissal or blacklisting of strikers, efforts to destroy the union, or violence against strikers. For state responses, neutrality was conciliation or, in two cases, a mixed response (some supporting, some hostile).

The hostility of employers to strikers was particularly marked in several periods.¹⁰⁶ In 1903-04, employers responded to strikes with every form of hostile response from refusal to negotiate to violence, indicating that the lesson they learnt from the post-1900 strike wave was that repression was the best response. From 1907 to 1912 (especially from 1908 to 1911), employers were again disproportionately hostile to strikes, making use of strikebreakers on a large scale. Hostile responses were also prominent from 1914 to 1916, and in 1919. The hostility of employers in 1903-04 and in 1919 appears to be a response to strike waves in the years previous; in 1907-12 and in 1914-16, employers took advantage of labour surpluses or the migration of workers into Vancouver to employ strikebreakers.

Hostile employer responses were also related to the objectives of strikes. We would expect employers to be less likely to negotiate over objectives that challenged their control over the workplace or labour market than over wage and hour objectives. Such was in fact the case. If responses to issues are counted, the proportion of hostile and very hostile responses by type of objective was, in descending order: union and solidarity, labour market control, job control, and wages and

threatened dismissal of the strikers in another twenty-seven strikes, and in eight others the employers set up blacklists to prevent strikers from getting employment elsewhere, or to prevent less resolute employers from settling with the strikers. Finally, the most hostile employers took steps to destroy the strikers' union in eight strikes, and used violence against strikers once.

106. A high level of hostility was considered to exist in any two years in succession in which over seventy per cent of employer responses were hostile or very hostile.

hours. If responses to strikes are counted, the proportion of hostile and very hostile responses were greater in strikes involving a control objective than in strikes in which only wage and hour objectives were at stake.¹⁰⁷

Employer hostility was also related to the skill level of the strikers. We would expect that they could afford to be more repressive towards unskilled strikers than toward craftsmen, because the former were more easily replaced. That was the case, as half of the strikes by craft workers met with hostile or very hostile responses, while seven tenths of strikes by non-craft workers were repressed.¹⁰⁸ The use of strikebreakers was especially prominent in hostile responses to strikes involving unskilled workers, showing the importance of skill as a resource preventing the replacement of strikers.

In contrast to employers' hostile responses to strikes, the responses of the state were ambivalent. In only one out of five strikes were actions by agents of the federal, provincial, or municipal governments (in their capacity as third parties to industrial disputes) reported. The absence of any reported response by the state could be a

107. The differences were not great, but they were consistently in the right order. Employers were hostile or very hostile to 67.3 per cent of union and solidarity objectives, and to only 59.1 per cent of wage and hour objectives. They were hostile or very hostile to 53.8 per cent of strikes in which a control issue was involved, and to only 40.2 per cent of strikes in which only wage and hour issues were involved. The differences were more marked if only very hostile responses were considered.

108. Strikers with mixed skill levels, i.e., crafts and non-crafts together, were in between. The exact percentages were: crafts - 51.7, mixed - 56.7, non-crafts - 70.0.

sign that it was neutral, or that the factors which triggered state action were absent in those strikes. In strikes where the state did intervene, conciliation was the main response (Table 4-14).¹⁰⁹ If conciliation was not the state's response to a strike, however, its response was hostile to the strikers. That hostility was expressed in active assistance to the employer by the police or other agents of the state.¹¹⁰ Violent repression was not one of the state's responses in the Vancouver area, although on more than one occasion it was threatened explicitly or implicitly (as when the militia were introduced in the 1900 salmon fishermen's strike), and it was freely used elsewhere in B.C. Even without violent repression it was clear that the state was on the side of the employers, since support for employers outnumbered support for strikers by over ten to one.

Several historians have argued that the role of the Canadian state in industrial disputes was transformed after the end of the nineteenth century. The government, they argue, became increasingly ready to intervene in disputes, and to use force when it did so.¹¹¹ In

109. Governments offered to mediate or investigate disputes in thirty strikes (55 per cent). Support was given to strikers in only two cases, and in another two cases one level of government supported the strikers while another opposed them.

110. Police actions were triggered mainly by contentious gatherings or violence by strikers. Out of eighteen strikes with contentious gatherings by strikers, thirteen (72.2 per cent) were repressed by the police; out of twenty-three with violence by strikers, there was police repression in fourteen (60.9 per cent).

111. See, for example, Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, pp. 143-44; Kealey, *Working-Class History*, p. 72.

the Vancouver area, there was no apparent trend for state intervention in ongoing strikes to increase between 1900 and 1919.¹¹² The only period in which the level of intervention rose markedly was from 1916 to 1919, when state conciliation in strikes became increasingly frequent.¹¹³ However, this unprecedented level of state intervention most likely reflects the special circumstances of wartime, and the wartime strike wave, rather than the beginning of a new trend.

Since violence was not used by the state against strikers in the Vancouver area, the use of force in labour disputes can only be considered in the form of state aid to employers, which usually consisted of police actions. Despite some dramatic examples of its use, there is no discernible trend for state aid to employers to increase during the 1900-1919 period. To fully consider the tendencies of state intervention in strikes in the Vancouver area it would be necessary to examine it more closely, and to consider intervention in disputes before work stoppages occurred, but for the moment it appears that in the Vancouver area at least, there was no tendency for state intervention or the use of force by the state to increase from 1900 to 1919.

The only people to whom strikers could look to facilitate their action were other members of the working class. In eighty-four strikes,

112. This of course does not address the question of government intervention to prevent strikes, which was the main objective of the federal Department of Labour, and of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act.

113. Conciliation was also relatively frequent in the first strike wave, from 1900 to 1903. The level of state intervention peaked at 35 per cent in 1918.

amounting to about three tenths of the strikes in the Vancouver area, strikers received some form of support from other workers. In twenty-three of those strikes, working-class support took the form of active assistance, including financial aid, and participation in contentious gatherings supporting the strikers. In another twenty-six strikes, other workers (including workers outside the Vancouver area on three occasions) helped by means of sympathy strikes. Support by other workers for strikers was most prominent in 1900-01, 1903-04, 1910-11, 1913-14, and 1916-19.¹¹⁴ This indicates again that working-class solidarity was highest during periods of strike militancy, and it also shows that solidarity was growing in the second decade of the century.

Contentious gatherings met with tolerant responses over 70 per cent of the time; that is, there was generally no reported reaction to the activity taken to make the contentious claim (Table 4-15). But if the response was not tolerant, it was some form of repression; in no cases were contentious gatherings facilitated by the state, employers, or others outside the working class. Minor repression such as peaceful attempts to prevent a meeting occurred in nineteen cases, participants were arrested in eight cases, and violence was used against participants in nine cases. Contentious gatherings were most frequently repressed in the second decade of the century, especially in 1911, 1912, and

114. A high level of support for strikes by other workers was indicated whenever, in two succeeding years, over 30 per cent of strikes received some form of aid from other workers in Vancouver. In three pairs of years (1910-11, 1916-17, and 1917-18) over 40 per cent received aid.

Table 4-15

Responses to Contentious Gatherings in Vancouver,
1900-1919

Response	N	%
Facilitation	-	-
Toleration	109	72.7
Mixed	2	1.3
Repression	36	24.0
Other	2	1.3
Unknown	1	0.7
Total	150	100.0

1915.¹¹⁵ In other years repressive responses were infrequent. With the exception of those three years, then, contentious gatherings in Vancouver were tolerated, but force was always available to be used.

In conclusion, we have found that employers' responses to strikes were generally hostile, especially at the end of strike waves, or when strikebreakers were available. The state generally took no action in strikes, and when it did, that action was most frequently conciliation. Repressive action was taken in a significant minority of strikes, however, especially when strikers engaged in contentious gatherings or violence. Contentious gatherings were usually tolerated by the state, but repression was more frequent than in strikes.¹¹⁶

Outcomes

Strikes in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919 were at least partially successful in realizing stated objectives more often than not (Table 4-12). Strikers won their demands outright in 40 per cent of the strikes for which outcomes were known, and in another 12 per cent they reached a compromise that realized at least some of their demands. If, following Tilly, the success of collective actions is considered an indicator of the power of the collective actors, then

115. In each of these years over four tenths of contentious gatherings were repressed. The highest level of repression was in the free speech fight of 1912, when nearly half (eleven out of twenty-three) contentious gatherings were repressed, violently in seven cases.

116. Nearly half of the gatherings which were repressed occurred in connection with strikes, however.

Table 4-16

Outcomes of Strikes, Vancouver Area, 1900-1919

Outcome	N	%
For strikers	118	51.5
Indefinite	20	8.7
For employers	91	39.7
Total	229	100.0

Note: The outcomes of 41 strikes were not known.

Vancouver strikers were fairly powerful.

Strikers still faced a substantial risk of defeat, however, as 40 per cent of strikes ended in favor of employers. The costs of defeat varied considerably, but they were often substantial. In a remarkable forty-seven strikes, less than a third of the strikers were re-hired within a month after they ended, or all were dismissed, and in another five strikes, between one and two thirds of the strikers were not re-hired. In short, although strikers had an even chance of at least partially winning their objectives, there was still a more than one in five chance that a considerable number would lose their jobs. Going on strike was a risky undertaking in early twentieth century Vancouver.¹¹⁷

There was no overall trend to the outcomes of strikes between 1900 and 1919. However, the years when strikes were most frequent (1902-03, 1917-18) were at or just after peaks of strike success. Vancouver workers learned from the successes of other strikes, and emulated them as a means of winning their objectives, thus generating strike waves. The strike waves ended as the success rate dropped,¹¹⁸

117. In only nine unsuccessful strikes did the strikers return to work with some concessions from the employer. In another twenty-six strikes, they returned to work under conditions imposed by the employer, but with their jobs and union intact. In four strikes, the strikers returned to work without their union, either as a condition of re-employment or because the union had disintegrated.

118. Using two-year moving averages of rates of strike success (strikes ending in favor of strikers as a proportion of all strikes for which outcomes were known), we found that success rates dropped from highs of over 70 per cent in 1900-01, and 1901-02 to only 44 per cent in 1902-03, and 21 per cent in 1903-04; in the 1916-19 strike wave a success rate of nearly 75 per cent in 1916-17 fell to 44 per cent in 1918-19. Moving averages were computed in order to remove the effects of years with very

because of repression by employers and the state,¹¹⁹ or because weak and poorly organized workers undertook strike action. Strike waves also ended with the disappearance of opportune economic conditions, as happened in the small strike wave of 1909-12.¹²⁰ Power does seem to be related to strike activity, but that power did not follow a consistent trend, because the exercise of power by workers led employers to mobilize their forces to fight unions, and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by labour surpluses to defeat strikes, and to disrupt union organizations.

The outcomes of strikes were related to the responses of employers and the state. As other researchers have found, repression works. Strikers won their demands outright or reached favorable compromises in nearly three quarters of the strikes in which employers negotiated, but employers won half the strikes in which they engaged in hostile responses, and over six tenths of the strikes in which they resorted to very hostile responses.¹²¹ In a third of the former and -----
few strikes on success rates.

119. See above, page 184, where we saw that employer responses to strikes were particularly hostile in 1903-04 and 1919. In "Stages, Cycles, and Insurgencies: The Economics of Unrest" (pp. 104-05), J. Cronin emphasizes the role of employer and state repression in ending strike waves.

120. The two-year moving average of success rates rose from 44 per cent in 1909-10 to 55 per cent in 1912-13, and held steady at 50 per cent until 1915-16. Thus declining success rates (which never attained the heights of the other periods of militancy, anyway) had nothing to do with its end.

121. Hostile responses were refusing to negotiate, and employing strikebreakers; very hostile responses were dismissing strikers, blacklisting strikers, attempting to smash the union.

nearly half of the latter, at least a third of the strikers lost their jobs.¹²² The reaction of the state to a strike also affected its outcome. Nearly two thirds of strikes (65.6 per cent) in which the state either supported the strikers (which occurred in only two cases) or engaged in conciliation were successful for the strikers, but that was true of only one fifth of strikes (21.7 per cent) in which the state response included repressive actions.

As might be expected from the hostility of employers to strikes by unskilled workers (above, page 185), strike outcomes were closely related to the skill of strikers. Strikes by skilled workers turned out in their favor nearly half the time (48.4 per cent), while for unskilled strikers, only three eighths of outcomes were favorable (37.3 per cent).¹²³ The importance of skill as a resource is shown even more when outcomes are examined in detail. Skilled strikers won their demands outright in over four tenths of their strikes (42.4 per cent), and were replaced in only one in eight (13.2 per cent). For unskilled strikers, in contrast, the chances of winning all their demands and of being replaced were equal, at about one in four (25.4 and 23.2 per cent

122. The most effective responses for employers were the employment of outside strikebreakers, and the real or threatened dismissal of the strikers; over two thirds of the strikes in which those were used were won by employers, and they accounted for nearly half of the strikes won by employers.

123. Success rates for strikes involving both skilled and unskilled were even better, at 59.3 per cent.

respectively).¹²⁴

In contrast to strikes, contentious gatherings and VTLC contention were generally not successful. The claims of the participants were granted in only one fifth of the contentious gatherings for which the outcomes are known (Table 4-17). A compromise, in which part of the demands were granted, was reached in another eighth of the events. But the claim was completely rejected over two thirds of the time. The outcomes of VTLC contention were unknown an enormous 77 per cent of the time, so any inferences from cases in which outcomes were known must be tentative in the extreme. The objectives of VTLC contention were rejected in over half of the cases for which outcomes are known, and in only three tenths of the cases were they granted. The data are probably biased in the direction of favorable outcomes, in which case VTLC contention was no more effective than contentious gatherings in achieving workers' collective goals.¹²⁵ The strike was thus the most effective weapon in the arsenal of the Vancouver working class, and as we examine capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and mobilization and collective action in the various

124. Strike outcomes were also related to gender and ethnicity. All strikes involving only women failed; only one third of strikes by men only failed. Strikes by 'British' workers, and by Asians had success rates near the overall average (45.6 and 42.9 per cent respectively; strikes by 'other Europeans' and strikes involving more than one ethnic group were successful only a fifth of the time (20.0 and 21.4 per cent).

125. The main source of data on outcomes of VTLC contention was the VTLC Minutes, and they might have tended to mention their successes more than their failures, especially when their claims were simply ignored by the target.

Table 4-17

Outcomes of Contentious Gatherings, Vancouver,
1900-1919

Outcome	N	%
Claim granted	24	19.7
Compromise	15	12.3
Claim rejected	83	68.0
Total	122	100.0

Note: The outcomes of 28 contentious
gatherings were not known.

Industries of the Vancouver area, we will concentrate on workers' strike activity.

Chapter 5

LUMBER INDUSTRY:

"The blanket stiff must be a thing of the past"¹

The lumber industry was one of the staple industries of the British Columbia economy, and one of the largest employers in the Vancouver area in the early twentieth century. In order to counter American competition in the prairie market, capitalists in the industry adopted low-wage policies, and employed a racially divided workforce. Low wages and labour market competition were therefore objects of contention, but lumber industry workers were divided by race, skill, and branch of production. Class formation was consequently impeded, and levels of mobilization and collective-action were low until the war capitalist boom, when newly organized loggers and mill workers began to press their demands on reluctant employers.

1. B.C. Federationist, July 18, 1919, p. 1.

5.1 Capital Accumulation

In response to the growing market for building materials on the newly settled prairies, the forest products industry became the leading sector of the British Columbia economy in the first part of the twentieth century. At its center were the sawmills, shingle mills, and other processing facilities on the shores of Burrard Inlet, False Creek, and the Fraser River.² In 1900, there were nineteen saw and shingle mills with a total daily capacity of over one million board feet in the Vancouver area. After an infusion of American capital beginning in 1906, the lumber industry grew to fifty-four mills with nearly two million feet capacity in 1909, and by 1918 seventy-seven companies operated one or more mills in Vancouver and district.³

The main impediments to capital accumulation in the lumber

2. J.C. Lawrence, "Markets and Capital: A History of the Lumber Industry of British Columbia (1778-1952)" (hereafter, "Markets and Capital"), pp. 72ff.; McDonald, "Economic Development of British Columbia," p. 48; for details on particular companies, see McDonald, "Business Leaders," pp. 75-80. The British Columbia lumber industry still awaits a comprehensive history.

3. British Columbia, Timber Inspector's Reports, 1900, 1909; A.B.C. Lumber Trade Directory and Yearbook, 1918. Some of these companies were very large, integrated operations: for example B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Company owned lumber, shingle, and planing mills, a sash and door factory, vast timber limits, logging railways, and a fleet of steamers. For several years it also manufactured prefabricated buildings. See G.E. Mills and D.W. Holdsworth, The B.C. Mills Prefabricated System: The Emergence of Ready-made Buildings in Western Canada, p. 131.

industry were periodic labour shortages, overexpansion, and U.S. competition. Seasonal labour shortages occurred in the summer, especially in the early years of the century, when unless they advanced their wages, mills lost men to the salmon fishery.⁴ In addition, there were shortages of loggers and mill workers when the economy was bouyant, because better-paying lines of employment opened up then. Labour shortages resulting in higher log prices or higher wages in mills were reported in 1900-02, 1906-07, and 1916-18.⁵

In addition to labour shortages, the industry suffered from a boom and bust cycle of overexpansion when prairie markets were good, then overcapacity, overproduction, and price-cutting when demand fell because of poor harvests or low agricultural prices.⁶

According to B.C. lumber manufacturers, the principal impediment to capital accumulation was U.S. competition. Because of cheaper machinery and other supplies, lower wages, and less expensive logs,

4. Canada, Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 107, 129, 361, 370.

5. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 130, World, June 22, 1900; Province, Dec. 20, 1901, Nov. 29, 1902; Lumberman and Contractor, April 1906, p. 15, Nov. 1906, p. 14, Dec. 1906, p. 20, March 1907, pp. 19, 31, April 1907, pp. 28-29, Province, July 17, 1916, Sept. 1, 1916; Labour Gazette XVI (1916), pp. 1459, 1534; Province, April 30, 1917, May 29, 1917, Aug. 7, 1917, March 26, 1918.

6. E.g. after a period of expansion, in 1904 the market was glutted, causing a 'price slaughter.' Renewed expansion in 1906-07 was followed by demoralization of the market again in 1908, when the smaller mills cut prices. The same thing happened once more when markets collapsed in 1913. See Lumberman and Contractor, June 1905, p. 20; Province, Jan. 19, 1907, March 26, 1908, Aug. 14, 1908; Labour Gazette VIII (1907), pp. 49, 391, 532, 675, 787; Western Lumberman, Aug. 1913, p. 44; Lawrence, "Markets and Capital," pp. 99-100.

mills in the American Pacific Northwest had lower costs of production than those in B.C. They had the additional advantage of a large and protected domestic market, and could use the unprotected Canadian prairie market as a dumping ground for excess production.⁷ Because the National Policy of tariffs, transportation, and prairie settlement was designed to benefit eastern Canadian capital, capital accumulation in the B.C. lumber industry was hindered.

In response to these obstacles to capital accumulation, lumber and shingle manufacturers adopted several strategies, with varying degrees of success. First, they met with some success when they combined to set prices and regulate production.⁸ Second, they unsuccessfully demanded tariffs to counter American competition.⁹ Third, and above all, they tried to compete by lowering wage costs, and they employed members of different racial groups expressly to act as checks on each others' wages. In particular, large numbers of Asian workers were employed in unskilled and semi-skilled positions in lumber and shingle mills at one half to two thirds the pay of white workers.¹⁰

7. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 101, 104-06, 108-09, 116-18, 121, 123, 130; Province, May 3, 1904, Dec. 5, 1904; B.C. Timber Inspector's Report, 1911, p. 20; Sun, Sept. 28, 1912; Lawrence, "Markets and Capital," pp. 96-98; W.A. Carrothers, "Forest Industries of British Columbia," pp. 306-11.

8. Province, Dec. 21, 1904, April 20, 1905, Sept. 15, 1905, Oct. 2, 3, 1905; Lumberman and Contractor, June 1905, p. 20.

9. Province, April 29, 1904, May 13, 18, 1904, June 3, 1904, Nov. 26, 1904, Dec. 5, 1904, Jan. 16, 24, 1905, Feb. 7, 14, 1905, July 5, 1905, Sept. 6, 1905, Oct. 2, 1905.

10. Lumberman and Contractor, March 1907, p. 18.

Fourth, changes in the production process were made in response to the lumber industry's difficulties. Considerable technological change occurred, especially in the handling of logs and lumber, but it lagged behind American mills throughout the period.¹¹ It appears that B.C. lumber manufacturers used an available supply of cheap labour to avoid making investments in new technology, and the absence of such investments made cheap labour all the more necessary in order to compete. By the mid-1910s, however, systematic management reforms that changed the supervisory regime of lumber mills began to appear. Articles on labour-costing systems and a cost-accounting system to "enable millwork factories to analyze their costs on scientific business principles" appeared in a trade journal during the war, and were put into practice in at least one medium-sized mill in the Vancouver area. The impetus for this development seems to have come mainly from the need to improve efficiency when labour was scarce and log prices high.¹²

Despite the growing importance of changes in the labour process

11. On technological change, see *Lumberman and Contractor*, Jan. 1905, p. 73, June, 1905, p. 13; June 1907, pp. 20-21, Aug. 1907, p. 19; *Western Canada Lumberman*, Jan. 1908, p. 17; *Western Lumberman*, May, 1910, pp. 35-37, Sept. 1910, p. 22, Sept. 1911, pp. 25-26, Nov. 1911, pp. 32-33, Feb. 1915, pp. 22-23; *British Columbia, Factory Inspector's Report*, 1910, p. 40. For comparisons with U.S. technology, see *Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report*, pp. 102-04, 115-16, 119, 122-23, 129-31, 361-62, *Lumberman and Contractor*, Nov. 1906, p. 14; *Western Lumberman*, Jan. 1915, pp. 20-21; Lawrence, "Markets and Capital," p. 97.

12. See *Western Lumberman*, Aug. 1914, p. 28, Jan. 1915, pp. 20-21, Aug. 1916, pp. 23-25, Jan. 1917, pp. 27-29; *Provincial Archives of British Columbia (hereafter PABC)*, Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-1918, GR 429, Roll 65, file 4988-12-14, pp. 203-04, Andrew M. Lang to W.J. Bowser, May 6, 1911.

to capitalists' strategies to overcome obstacles to growth, their main strategy continued to require low wage costs, and the principal objects of contention in the lumber industry could thus be expected to revolve around the two elements of this strategy: low wages, and racial division of the workforce. That would depend, however, on the social reproduction cycles of lumber industry workers.

5.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

Workers in the lumber industry were a large part of the labour force in the city of Vancouver, and an even larger proportion in the lower mainland as a whole. In the city of Vancouver, approximately 3500 residents worked in logging and wood manufacturing in 1911 and 1921, constituting nearly one tenth of the entire working-class labour force (Table 5-1). In the Vancouver and New Westminster census districts in 1910, 9567 wage earners were employed in 115 log and lumber products manufacturing establishments with five or more employees.¹³ Because their social reproduction cycles differed in each branch of the

13. Canada, Fifth Census of Canada, 1911 (hereafter, 1911 Census), Vol. 3, Table IX (Census of Manufactures). Log products manufacturing employed 8161 wage earners; lumber products manufacturing, 1406. The Vancouver census district included Vancouver, South Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Point Grey; New Westminster census district included New Westminster, District Lot 301, Hastings Townsite, Richmond (all in the area covered by this study), Chilliwack, Delta, Dewdney, and Yale. Sixty-six of the 89 log products establishments were located in the New Westminster census district, comprising over half the manufacturing establishments there.

Table 5-1

Lumber Industry Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%
LOGGING	729	20.9	869	25.4
SAW & SHINGLE MILLS	2328	66.6	2263	66.1
Operatives	815		469	
Labourers	1513		1647(1)	
Filers & setters	-(2)		68	
Millwrights	-(2)		79	
WOODWORKING FACTORIES	436	12.5	294	8.6
Cabinet-makers	183		59	
Coopers	29		19	
Sash & door makers	83		-(2)	
Woodworkers & turners	141		29	
Other	-(2)		187	
PULP & PAPER	-		74	2.1
TOTAL	3493	100.0	3500	100.0

Sources: 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI;

1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) Includes all labourers in saw and shingle mills, and woodworking factories.

(2) No category in that census year.

industry, workers employed in logging, saw and shingle mills, and woodworking factories will be discussed separately. For each branch, the number of workers, the size of the plants in which they worked, and differences in aspects of their social reproduction cycles associated with skill and racial group will be examined, with a view to understanding interests and group formation.¹⁴

Loggers

Loggers were the quintessential frontier labourers. Because of their migratory, unsettled life; hard, dangerous, outdoor work in isolated camps; and reputation for free-spending, hard-drinking habits in town, loggers formed a distinct group among workers in the lumber industry.¹⁵

There was not much logging in the immediate vicinity of Vancouver, but because the city was at the center of the labour market for most loggers on the B.C. coast, they formed a significant (albeit transitory) part of the local working class. In the 1911 Census, only 729 loggers were reported in the city of Vancouver; in 1921, 869 (Table 5-1). Yet on holidays, during winter shutdowns of logging camps, or when the log market was depressed, there might be many hundreds of loggers in

14. Gender was not a significant aspect of the social division of labour in the lumber industry, because there were practically no female employees.

15. Probably the best general source on loggers in this period is a novel: H.A. Grainger, *Woodsmen of the West* (originally published in 1908).

the city.¹⁶

Loggers were racially, but not ethnically, homogeneous. In contrast to the other branches of the lumber industry, only a few Asians were employed in logging camps. For example, in 1918, over 90 per cent of logging camp employees in British Columbia were white. They were nearly evenly divided between men of Canadian, British or American origin, and men of European origin (especially Scandinavian and Russian).¹⁷ Except in shingle-bolt and logging camps operated by small Japanese capitalists, where Japanese loggers were employed, Asians were generally employed only as cooks or labourers, and the actual falling, bucking, and hauling of timber was usually performed by whites.¹⁸ This section will therefore concentrate on the social reproduction of white loggers.

For most of the 1900-1919 period, loggers were hired in Vancouver for work in logging camps through hotelkeepers, employment agencies, or casual contacts with employers. When men were needed at camps, they were hired on in the city, and advanced the money to cover

16. For example, hundreds of loggers were reported to have spent the winter in Vancouver in 1904-05. See Province, Feb. 13, 1905; for other reports see *ibid.*, Dec. 11, 1902, March 12, 1903, Nov. 26, 30, 1903, Feb. 8, 1904; Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 643.

17. B.C. Dept. of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, "Statistics of Trade and Industry."

18. See Province, April 22, 1903, Aug. 7, 1903; R. Knight and M. Koizumi, *A Man of Our Times: The Life-History of a Japanese-Canadian Fisherman* (hereafter, *Man of Our Times*), pp. 31-37; Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, p. 49.

their fare to camp.¹⁹ Pay for logging work varied, depending on the state of the labour market in the Pacific Northwest, but wages in B.C. were generally about the same as those in Washington, since loggers moved back and forth across the border.²⁰

Wage labour in a logging camp was not the only employment available to loggers. They also worked seasonally as salmon fishermen and sailors, and for those seeking to avoid bosses, handlogging was an alternative.²¹ For example, in August, 1905, three to four hundred handloggers cut cedar north of Vancouver in companies of three or four men, using hand methods to fell and haul timber close to tidewater. They made good 'wages', and labour spokesmen regarded handlogging as a way of keeping up wages in logging camps. Government and industry representatives naturally disagreed, and argued that they wasted valuable timber.²²

If they opted for wage labour, loggers faced conditions at

19. Province, April 30, 1900; World, June 22, 1900; Province, Aug. 13, 1902; British Columbia Magazine, Aug. 1911, p. 811. If hired through an employment agency, the logger had to pay for the job. The advance would come from the logging operator, or a hotelkeeper.

20. Province, Nov. 7, 1903; News-Advertiser, Sept. 30, 1909.

21. On alternative work, see World, June 22, 1900 (fishing); Province, Nov. 27, 1911 (sailing); Knight and Koizumi, Man of Our Times, pp. 22-37 (fishing and logging by a Japanese worker).

22. On handlogging, see Province, Aug. 22, 26, 1905; News-Advertiser, Sept. 30, 1909; Grainger, Woodsmen of the West, p. 50; British Columbia Magazine, April 1911, p. 270. For an objection to it, see Province, March 26, 1918, p. 15: the Commissioner of Conservation for B.C. doubted that it was justified by the employment furnished to the "nomadic and irresponsible men who follow the occupation."

logging camps that the B.C. Federationist called "ville." The normal separation in capitalism between production and consumption was absent in the camps. The work was hard, wet, and dangerous, and hours were long (at least ten a day). Living accommodations were invariably bad, and they operated on the "B.C. method," in which employees paid for their food, beds, and services that they often never saw, such as medical attention.²³ Loggers had to provide their own bedding, and so were known, like other camp workers, as "blanket stiffs."²⁴

Unless they were fired at the whim of their boss, or laid off because of a glutted log market or poor winter weather, loggers quit when they were tired of the work, isolation, and living conditions, or for holidays such as Christmas.²⁵ Once paid off, they would typically take the next coastal boat to Vancouver, trade their caulk boots for "a Sunday pair," have a decent meal, get very drunk if they had not already done so on the boat down, and perhaps visit the "restricted district" of brothels on Dupont Street. Most loggers were single men, and the cheap hotels near the waterfront were at the center of their existence in Vancouver. The hotelkeeper acted as employment agent, stored loggers'

23. Camp operators became accustomed to making a profit on this system, and were dismayed when rising costs led them to lose money on it in 1918.

24. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 26, 1912, p. 2; for another graphic description of camp life, see *ibid.*, Jan. 17, 1919, p. 6. On the "B.C. method," see the interviews in U.B.C. Library, Special Collections, Orchard Papers, files 3-7, 3-9, and 3-15, and Province, March 26, 1918.

25. Province, Dec. 11, 1902, Feb. 13, 1905, Jan. 19, 1912, March 12, 1914; Labour Gazette XV (1915), p. 793.

belongings, provided a permanent address for correspondence and voter registration, and acted as banker and creditor.²⁶ When the money was gone, loggers were back on the labour market, and the cycle began anew.

Various philanthropic efforts were made to improve the lives of loggers, especially their consumption practices. For example, the Canadian Reading Camp Association endeavored to interest logging camp operators in the provision of reading tents for their men, but no real improvements in camp conditions occurred until unions forced them upon operators after World War I.²⁷ When they were faced with the unionization of loggers, operators eagerly took up "welfare work," encouraged by agencies such as the YMCA, which presented themselves as alternatives to Bolshevism.²⁸ In town, institutions such as the Strathcona Loggers and Sailors' Home were set up by "men prominent in the lumber industry" to provide migratory workers with reading and smoking rooms, a savings bank, cheque exchange, and employment

26. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 26, 1912, p. 2; Province, April 2, 1910; Report of the Collector of Voters for the Vancouver City Electoral District (1900), British Columbia Sessional Papers, 1901, pp. 693-700. Examples of heavy drinking by loggers are legion: "one of the best loggers in the country," who died from striking his head on a barroom floor, "was known to be a hard drinker, spending his money for liquor as soon as he struck town." Province, April 2, 1910; cf. Knight and Koizumi, Man of Our Times, p. 37. In 1982, an unemployed hook tender told the author of his intention of going to Vancouver to "get faceless," showing that some occupational traditions do not change.

27. Province, July 24, 1902, Aug. 4, 1903; British Columbia Magazine, Sept. 1912, pp. 641-44. The Reading Camp Association was the forerunner of Frontier College.

28. For examples, see Pacific Coast Lumberman, Sept. 1919, p. 30, Oct. 1919, p. 42, Nov. 1919, pp. 19, 40, Dec. 1919, p. 48; Western Lumberman, Dec. 1919, pp. 29-30.

bureau.²⁹ Such institutions seem to have been intended to remove loggers from the influence of hotelkeepers or working-class organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and bring them under the control of logging companies, who wanted a more reliable, sober, and docile labour force. Although employers praised their work, these exercises in paternalism had little practical effect. Their labour market mobility and tough resource work inclined loggers to an ideology of sturdy independence, which made them immune from employer paternalism, and led them to preserve the autonomy of their consumption practices.

From the analysis of the social reproduction cycles of loggers, we can impute interests in control over, and improvement in conditions of consumption (especially in camps), shorter working hours, and perhaps control over the labour market. An interest in higher wages may almost be taken as a given, since workers' consumption in capitalism depends on their wages. Group formation was favored by the racial homogeneity of loggers, their isolated workplaces, and their common patterns of geographical mobility, centering on Vancouver.³⁰

29. News-Advertiser, Nov. 17, 1909.

30. Pat Marchak has brought to my attention the existence of skill differences among loggers. They have not been mentioned, because there is little information on them. But they were present, and were reflected in wage scales, which show that fallers, buckers, and hook-tenders were paid about the same rates as skilled tradesmen working in logging camps, such as saw filers, blacksmiths and engineers. See the wage scale of the Victoria Lumber and Manufacturing Company's camp at Chemainus, in Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 1013-14. The differences are not great, however, and their significance for collective action is not known.

Saw and Shingle Mill Workers

In contrast to loggers, saw and shingle mill workers were factory operatives who, because of skill and racial differences, had diverse interests and formed a variety of solidary groups.

The saw and shingle mill branch employed about two thirds of the lumber industry's labour force. In the city of Vancouver, the well over 2000 factory operatives in saw and shingle mills in 1911 and 1921 (Table 5-1) made up over a quarter of the workers in manufacturing. They were even more numerous in the lower mainland as a whole: in the Vancouver and New Westminster census districts in 1910, eighty-nine saw and shingle mills employed 8161 operatives, well over half the wage earners employed in manufacturing.³¹

Until the shipbuilding boom during World War I, the largest concentrations of workers in manufacturing in Vancouver were in the lumber mills, many of which combined a saw mill, planing mill, shingle mill, sash and door factory, and box factory in one integrated complex. Shingle mills, in contrast, were generally small. In 1910, the average number of employees in thirty-four lumber mills in the Vancouver area visited by the factory inspector was 179, and of the 6083 workers in those mills, 4212 (69 per cent) worked in mills with 200 or more employees. In contrast, four shingle mills employed an average of 23

31. 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table IX: "log products" category.

employees each, and three of them had less than 20 employees.³²

The labour force in the mills was segmented by race and skill. As Table 5-1 shows, labourers outnumbered skilled and semi-skilled workers by about two to one in both 1911 and 1921. At the beginning of the century, most of the skilled positions were held by white workers, who comprised well over half the employees in six large sawmills in 1901, and over four tenths of the workers in four shingle mills and camps.³³ Foremen, sawyers, saw filers, shingle weavers, and steam engineers were nearly always white workers. The labourers and other unskilled workers who formed the majority in saw and shingle mills were both whites and Asians. At the beginning of the period, Asians were almost entirely restricted to unskilled jobs, but they were beginning to move into better positions. Japanese workers were generally employed in the lumber mills,³⁴ and Chinese in the shingle mills.³⁵ East Indians (known at the time as 'Hindus' but actually Sikhs) entered the industry around 1906, and moved into the most unskilled jobs in saw mills as Japanese entered better positions.³⁶

32. Computed from data in B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, pp. 9-20.

33. Computed from information in Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 100, 103, 119, 122, 123, 125, 127.

34. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 103, 107, 112, 126, 360-63.

35. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 108, 126, 128-32; News-Advertiser, Jan 22, 1903; Labour Gazette V (1904), p. 352.

36. Lumberman and Contractor, Dec. 1906, p. 20.

The main change in the social division of labour in saw mills between 1900 and 1919 was the increasing employment of Asian workers. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century the large majority of workers in many mills were Asian. For example, in 1912 half of the 200 workers at the Hanbury and Co. mill in Vancouver were Japanese and 'Hindoo,' and by 1916 only nineteen were not Asian. Similar trends were reported at other mills.³⁷ Millowners occasionally tried to reverse the trend to increasing numbers of Asian workers. In the most ambitious and well-publicized attempt, the Fraser River Mills plant at Millside imported hundreds of French-Canadian workers and their families from the Ottawa valley to replace East Indian workers in 1909.³⁸ Attempts to do away with Asian workers followed in other mills in 1912 and 1914, but they were less successful, and the number of Asians in saw and shingle mills continued to rise.³⁹ By 1918, 63 per cent of the 3447 employees of 58 sawmilling firms in B.C. were Asian, as

37. Western Wage Earner, Aug. 1910, p. 15; H. Boam, British Columbia: Its History, People, Commerce, Industry and Resources (hereafter, British Columbia), pp. 255-58; Province, March 3, 1916. The Royal City Planing Mills in New Westminster employed 86 Asian and 109 white workers in 1901, but "mostly Chinese and Japanese" worked there when it closed in 1912 (Labour Gazette XII (1912), p. 1153).

38. Province, May 6, 1909, June 19, 1909, Sept. 24, 1909, Jan. 8, 1910, March 29, 1910, May 25, 1910; News-Advertiser Sept. 28, 30, 1909; British Columbian, June 7, 1910, Aug. 2, 1910. In 1910, the company became the Canadian Western Lumber Co.

39. In 1912, the Small and Bucklin Lumber Co. tried to replace East Indians, and in 1914, the Canadian Pacific Lumber Co. attempted to operate with an all-white labour force, but failed, and the mill was closed. See Province, Dec. 28, 1912; Western Lumberman, July 1914, pp. 37-38; Sun, Aug. 21, 1914.

were 69 per cent of 1400 employees of 40 shingle mills, and 64 per cent of 524 employees of 16 planing mills.⁴⁰ Under pressure from veterans' organizations and the rising militancy of Asian workers, millowners tried to replace the latter with returned soldiers after World War I, beginning a decline in their numbers, in 1919.⁴¹

In addition to skill differences within the workplace, there were sharp differences between Asian and white mill workers in the labour market. In the first place, the wages of Asian workers were much lower than the wages of white workers. In 1901, Chinese and Japanese sawmill workers earned between 57 and 80 per cent of the wages of white sawmill labourers, and of course substantially less than the wages of semi-skilled and skilled white sawmill workers.⁴² As far as can be determined from the available wage data, the lowest paid Asian workers received about 50 to 60 per cent of the pay of the lowest paid white workers in the first decade of the century, and since white workers occupied the most skilled positions, the gap in average wages was much

40. B.C. Dept. of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, "Statistics of Trade and Industries."

41. Province, Oct. 17, 1919.

42. In one case where Japanese and whites performed the same work (sawyers at Royal City Mills in Vancouver), the former were paid 56 per cent of the latter's wage (\$1.25 versus \$2.25 a day). Semi-skilled edgemen, gang saw operators, and boom men at Royal City Planing Mills in New Westminster were paid \$1.75 to \$2.00 a day, skilled sawyers \$3.00 to \$3.50, and saw filers \$3.40. At the large Hastings Mill, sawyers got \$4.00 to \$5.00 a day, and saw filers \$7.00. In the shingle mills, workers were paid by the piece, so wage comparisons are impossible. See Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 103, 107, 122-23, 361, 363.

widespread.⁴³ By 1919, Japanese sawmill workers improved their position, so that their lowest wages were over 70 per cent of the lowest paid white workers, while the Chinese remained in about the same position as before.⁴⁴

Low wages were not the only reason for the employment of Asians in saw and shingle mills. A second reason lay in the different labour market positions of whites and Asians. Millowners and managers frequently complained of shortages of white labour, and claimed that those white workers who could be found for unskilled work at low wages were a "floating," unreliable part of the working class. In contrast, Chinese and Japanese workers had the reputation of being steady and reliable, with a low rate of turnover.⁴⁵

Two reasons for the steadiness and reliability of Asian workers were the lack of alternative work, and the contract labour or "boss system" through which Asians were employed. Instead of hiring Asian workers individually as they did whites, mills dealt with Chinese,

43. For data on wages of labourers in 1904 and 1905, see Labour Gazette V (1904), p. 601; Province, Oct. 3, 1905. A survey of 13 lumber mills in 1908 revealed that the average pay of Japanese was 43 per cent, and that of Chinese 37 per cent of the average pay of whites (Western Canada Lumberman, March 1908, p. 11).

44. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 308, 373.

45. The same contrast was drawn in the salmon canning industry; in many cases the workers were the same. See Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 102, 119, 121-23, 130, 362-63; Province, Oct. 3, 1905, Oct. 23, 1913, April 9, 1914. Although they generally found them reliable, employers were not always fully satisfied with their Asian workers. Complaints about low productivity surfaced occasionally, and as they became more scarce during the war, employers found them harder to control.

Japanese, or East Indian labour contractors who supplied the required number of men, provided their board and lodging, handled their pay, and frequently also supervised their work. They were vulnerable to exploitation by their contract boss, but Asian workers found the system hard to escape, because of the contractor's role as employment agent and boarding-house keeper. Since they were immigrant sojourners, interested in making as much as possible in a short time, Asian workers at first accepted control by labour contractors, and worked steadily for long hours at low pay for saw and shingle mills, and other employers.⁴⁶

The "unsteadiness" of low-paid white workers was in part a consequence of the existence of better-paying jobs elsewhere in the economy, which were not available to Asian workers. It also became a self-fulfilling prophecy, because once Asians were employed widely, menial jobs in mills became racially stereotyped, for example, as "Chinamen's work," and whites would refuse to do them, or to work with Asians. T. Turnbull of the carpenters' union observed in 1913, that "it is only the kind of white men that will work with Asiatics that you find these days in these mills, the kind of man that works for a few days and gets out as soon as he has a few dollars."⁴⁷

46. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 130-31, 188-89, 363; Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, pp. 17, 26-35 (on Japanese); Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 15-18 (on Chinese), 80-81 (on East Indians). Ward states that East Indians were not employed on a contract labour basis, "with few exceptions." There are reports, however, of a boss system operating among East Indian workers in sawmills, e.g., Province, July 21, 1908.

47. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. I, p. 162; cf. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 102, 122,

In contrast to the floating, unskilled, white mill workers, white sawyers, saw filers, steam engineers, millwrights, etc., held skilled and responsible positions, and comparatively high pay may have made them less migratory than the others. They also exercised authority over other workers in the mills, putting them in the position of a labour aristocracy divided by skill, pay, labour market position, and race from most other millworkers. Although they were skilled, most of these workers were factory operatives, not craftsmen, and their position in the labour process was not threatened by technological changes in the mills. For example, the replacement of manual by mechanical handling of logs eliminated only unskilled labour. Other early-twentieth century innovations, such as multi-saw edgers and trimmers, increased the productivity of the skilled or semi-skilled workers who operated them, but did not deskill them, because their skills (which consisted mainly in knowing how to saw a log to get the most usable lumber out of it) depended on mechanization.⁴⁸

Because of the racial and skill divisions between saw and shingle mill workers, there were at least five potentially solidary groups among them. Unskilled and semi-skilled Asian labourers were the most numerous, with Japanese concentrated in the saw mills, Chinese in

125, 128; Province, Oct. 23, 1913; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 365.

48. If anything, the responsibility and skill of sawyers was increased by the necessity of making ever more efficient use of increasingly expensive timber. For descriptions of the trimmer's job, showing the effects of a decade's technological change, see Province, Jan. 8, 1900, Sept. 20, 1910; British Columbian, Aug. 2, 1910.

the shingle mills, and East Indians a small minority in the saw mills. Unskilled white labourers, and skilled and semi-skilled white operatives composed two additional groups. Each group had distinct interests in the workplace and labour market. In the workplace, the authority of skilled whites over unskilled Asians and whites put them in antagonistic positions. In the labour market, the racial division of labour changed as millowners tried to lower wage costs, so more privileged groups were often threatened by the competition of lower-wage groups for their jobs, and in the short term at least, they had an interest in insulating themselves from that competition. At the same time, it was in the interests of all groups to improve their low pay, and reduce their hours of work. As we will see, skill, authority, and racial divisions were powerful obstacles to the mobilization of all millworkers for their collective interests.

Factory Woodworkers

Factory woodworking was a small branch of the lumber industry in the Vancouver area, but because its workers were skilled and racially homogeneous, they played an important role in the history of collective action.

Woodworking factories employed only 436 workers from the city of Vancouver in 1911, and even fewer (294) in 1921 (Table 5-1). In contrast to the saw mills, woodworking plants such as sash and door factories were generally small. For example, in 1910, twenty-nine sash and door

factories employed an average of only sixteen workers each.⁴⁹

The work of factory woodworkers was mostly skilled, and most of the workers were whites. For example, in 1901, the large Robertson and Hackett sash and door factory employed 80 whites and 20 Japanese; the smaller Vancouver Sash and Door employed 30 workers, all whites and nearly all skilled. As late as 1914, the Terminal Construction and Manufacturing Co. employed only whites in its sash and door factory.⁵⁰ The white workers included members of a variety of ethnic groups, but ethnic rivalries were apparently not a problem.⁵¹

Although the work of factory woodworkers was more skilled, they were less well paid, and worked longer hours than carpenters in the building trades. In addition, the mechanization of woodworking factories had the consequence that carpenters working in them were being deskilled.⁵² Factory woodworkers were consequently a craft in crisis, with interests in protecting their craft autonomy, and in achieving wage

49. B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, pp. 9-20.

50. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 122, 125; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 162, 176; Western Lumberman, Feb. 1914, pp. 29-31. In 1918, 32 woodworking firms in B.C. reported that out of 898 employees, 355 (39.5 per cent) were Asian, but the category included firms which employed a large number of unskilled workers, such as makers of prefabricated buildings, plywood and veneer, and wooden pipes and tanks. In the sash and door factories, the proportion of Asians was lower. See "Statistics of Trade and Industry," pp. 10, 26.

51. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 75.

52. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 72-76. Sash and door factories were themselves an aspect of the deskilling of the carpentry trade as a whole. See B. Reckman, "Carpentry: The Craft and the Trade."

and hour parity with other carpenters. Because they were a fairly homogeneous, skilled group, sharing the craft culture of carpenters, the factory woodworkers were comparatively well-placed to mobilize and act collectively in pursuit of those interests.

In the lumber industry, then, we find frontier labourers in logging, a craft in crisis in factory woodworking, and factory operatives in saw and shingle milling. The different social reproduction cycles of workers in the lumber industry had profound implications for collective action, because of their impact on interests and group formation. They all shared an interest in improving their living standards, in opposition to lumber capitalists' interest in keeping down wage costs, but the specific social reproduction cycles of the workers in each branch shaped their capacity to pursue that interest, and the direction in which they would do so.

Loggers and factory woodworkers were the most homogeneous, and therefore the best placed to mobilize in class ways. Saw and shingle mill workers, in contrast, were divided by skill and race, and the competition of whites and Asians boded ill for class solidarity. Yet even in that branch of the lumber industry, the possibilities for mobilization increased with the rising proportions of Japanese workers in sawmills, and of Chinese workers in shingle mills. How these implications of lumber workers' social reproduction cycles worked out in practice can only be shown by turning to the history of their mobilization and collective action.

5.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

The lumber industry's position as one of the leading sectors of economic growth in early twentieth century Vancouver was not reflected in mobilization and collective action. Numerous attempts were made to organize white loggers, sawmill workers, and shingle mill workers, but little was achieved until the war capitalist boom. Labour shortages beginning in 1916 finally provided opportunities for the successful organization of lumber industry workers, and for a small wave of strikes from 1917 to 1919. The organization of loggers was the most spectacular result of the war period, but developments in saw and shingle mills were also significant, as Chinese workers for the first time became a force for employers to reckon with, and engineers in sawmills became centers of mobilization.

Loggers

Because there was little logging in the Vancouver area, only three strikes by loggers occurred in the entire 1900-1919 period. The history of mobilization and collective action by loggers in Vancouver is thus primarily the history of their mobilization. Yet they were also weakly mobilized for most of this period. The sources of that weakness were in the labour market, consumption market, and consumption phases of their social reproduction cycles. In the labour market, loggers'

geographical and occupational mobility hindered mobilization and collective action, because when the labour market was tight, and the opportunity to mobilize existed, they just moved on if conditions at a camp were unsatisfactory. Yet when the labour market was slack, the opportunity for mobilization and collective action was gone. In the consumption market and consumption practices, the obstacle to mobilization was both the absence of separation between production and consumption at the logging camps, and their extreme geographical and temporal separation, between the camps and Vancouver. At the camps, consumption occurred under the control of camp operators (although I would expect that loggers would be able to 'negotiate' some autonomy here), and while the bunkhouse culture might promote solidarity, the isolation, and the hostility of camp operators to unions made organization difficult. The separation in space and time between weeks or months of work at a camp, and weeks of leisure in Vancouver was an obstacle to mobilization, because of the constant arrival and departure of men whose main interest in the city was in leisure and recreation, not collective action. Those activities were a source of solidarity, but they inhibited the mobilization of loggers around workplace grievances. As we will see, prohibition changed that, and contributed to the successful organization of loggers in 1918 and 1919.

The first of the obstacles to the mobilization of loggers was illustrated by a spontaneous walkout of a few loggers at a camp on the North Arm of the Fraser in 1900. They objected to the hiring of some Chinese men to work in the woods, on the grounds that they were

incompetent, dangerous, and a threat to wage levels.⁵³ The strikers appear to have found other work almost immediately, and the camp-owner, W.L. Tait, maintained that he would run his business "without being dictated to."⁵⁴

Loggers were generally in short supply early in the twentieth century, and wages were high.⁵⁵ With plenty of jobs available, loggers could easily quit at one camp if conditions were not satisfactory, and find work elsewhere. They were necessarily migratory anyway, and their ideology of independence favored such conduct. The 'strike' by loggers near Vancouver was simply a collective version of their usual practice.

Labour market conditions changed toward the end of 1903, as a log surplus led to camp closures and wage reductions. If migration to Vancouver and grievances (the wage reduction) were favorable to mobilization, then this ought to have been the time to organize a union. An attempt to organize coastal loggers begun earlier in the year by the Millworkers Union sputtered out, however, because of the demise

53. It is ironic that one of only two strikes against the employment of members of a different ethnic or racial group was by workers who were not seriously threatened by Asian competition.

54. Province, April 19, 25, 1900.

55. Wages were higher than in the state of Washington, and loggers were often attracted north by rates as high as \$3.00 a day in 1902. On labour market conditions and wages, see World, June 22, 1900; Province, Dec. 20, 1901, April 9, 18, 1902, June 24, 1902, Aug. 13, 1902, Dec. 20, 1902; M. Bergren, Tough Timber: The Loggers of B.C. - Their Story, p. 25.

of its parent body, the American Labor Union (ALU).⁵⁶ Even if the ALU had lasted, opportunities to escape wage labour through handlogging, or through timber cruising for the American capitalists who were starting to enter the industry would have made the loggers less interested in collective action than they might otherwise have been.⁵⁷ In addition, the response of Tait to the strike at his camp indicated that unionization was likely to meet with employer repression.

After the demise of the Millworkers' Union in 1903, loggers remained unmobilized until they were the object of competing organizing drives by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) between 1907 and 1915. The IWW was the most successful in overcoming the obstacles to loggers' organization. It began organizing loggers in 1907, and by 1910, the IWW's Lumber Workers local in Vancouver was said to be the largest in the country. With its system of itinerant camp delegates, and the services it provided at the Vancouver headquarters,⁵⁸ the IWW was better equipped than more conservative AFL unions to accommodate to the loggers' social

56. Province, April 22, 1903. The collapse of the ALU was a consequence of the failure of the strike by the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees against the CPR. See below, Chapter 10.

57. Timber cruisers were like prospectors, who staked out claims to timber, which they then sold to capitalists. See Province, May 12, 15, 1902.

58. The 'home away from camp' provided by IWW headquarters in Vancouver may have prompted the philanthropic efforts by lumber interests in 1909. See above, page 209.

reproduction cycles.⁵⁹ Yet it was never able to organize loggers in B.C. to the same extent as in the U.S., or to match its success in organizing railway construction workers. The employer and government repression that began in 1912, followed by the pre-war depression, led to the decline of the IWW in B.C., and the Lumber Workers local disappeared in 1914.⁶⁰

The VTLC had also decided to organize loggers in 1907, and with layoffs due to overproduction announced for the end of June, approximately 2000 loggers were expected to descend on Vancouver. The depressed market for logs and loggers continued into the summer of 1908, by which time employment in logging had been halved, wages had fallen, and a logger who failed to satisfy his boss was easily dismissed. Once again, unfavorable labour market conditions forestalled organizing efforts, and the loggers' union dropped from sight.⁶¹ In 1912, the AFL used the craft union of shingle weavers as a base for organizing loggers and other lumber workers, but its efforts in B.C. were both half-hearted

59. As J.H. McVety of the VTLC put it in 1913, "The Industrial workers of the world are kind of considered the Salvation Army of the labor movement ... No other organization has been able to do anything with the workers on railway construction." B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 255.

60. See J. Scott, Plunderbund and Proletariat, p. 26; McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries, Ch. 6, esp. pp. 101-03, 116; Canada, Dept. of Labour, Report on Labour Organization, 1912, p. 104, 1913, p. 131; 1914, p. 226. On the IWW in the lumber industry of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, see M. Dobořsky, We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World, pp. 128-30, 361-65; Schwantes, Radical Heritage, pp. 152-54.

61. Province, Feb. 27, 1907, June 4, 6, 1907, July 5, 1907, July 7, 1908, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, June 6, 20, 1907, July 4, 1907.

and coincident with the pre-war depression, so they failed.⁶² It apparently required radical and innovative leadership to organize loggers, and that would not reappear until 1918.

The beginning of the war capitalist boom in 1916 brought serious labour shortages to logging, as to other industries, resulting in both higher pay and new organizational activity.⁶³ The first two attempts to organize loggers failed,⁶⁴ but at the end of 1918, VTLC organizers succeeded in enrolling over 500 loggers and other camp workers at the first two meetings of the new B.C. Loggers Union. An executive composed mainly of radicals was elected, and the union began to spread through the logging camps, organizing "on the job" around grievances like the

62. Most of the organizers' efforts were concentrated in the state of Washington, where the Shingle Weavers Union was stronger, and the IWW more threatening than in B.C. Consequently only a few loggers were organized (only 70 loggers belonged to the Vancouver local of the Loggers and Lumber Workers Union in 1913), and the two locals that had been formed by 1914 dissolved in 1915. B.C. Federationist, May 20, 1912, p. 1, June 15, 1912, p. 1, Sept. 21, 1912, p. 1, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1, Aug. 15, 1913, p. 3; Report on Labour Organization, 1912, p. 151, 1914, pp. 181, 184, 1915, p. 223; for a summary of developments at the international level, see Fink, Labor Unions, pp. 390-91.

63. On labour shortages and wages, see Province, March 31, 1916, June 26, 1916, July 17, 1916, Nov. 1, 1916, April 30, 1917, May 29, 1917, Aug. 7, 1917, July 19, 22, 1918; Sun, March 12, 1918, May 8, 1918; Western Lumberman, May 1916, p. 25, June 1916, p. 23, Dec. 1916, p. 25, July 1917, pp. 30-31, Sept. 1917, pp. 26-27.

64. Efforts by remnants of the International Union of Timber Workers petered out in 1917, and a meeting to organize a B.C. Loggers and Lumber Workers Union in April 1918, was reportedly "captured" by the IWW. Loggers became dissatisfied with the IWW during its previous organizing drive, the Dominion Police were actively suppressing IWW activity, and the union consequently disappeared. See VTLC Minutes, Oct. 4, 18, 1917, Nov. 1, 1917; B.C. Federationist, April 26, 1918, p. 1; Province, April 22, 1918, Sun, June 20, 1918.

absence of first-aid equipment, unauthorized deduction of hospital fees, and problems collecting pay. Each camp had its own committee and delegate, and the emphasis was on union control at the workplace, rather than through a centralized structure.⁶⁵

Despite the resistance of employers, and difficulties connected with a membership dispersed in isolated camps, the loggers' union easily achieved its target of "A Thousand Members a Month": nearly 4000 members in April, 1919, over 5000 in May, 7000 in June, over 9000 in August, and 11000 in October, if union figures are to be believed. In the Vancouver area, there were about 1000 members in June, 1919.⁶⁶

In the radical events of 1918 and 1919, the loggers played an important role only in the formation of the One Big Union.⁶⁷ The

65. Sun, Dec. 11, 1918; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 19, 1918; Province, Jan. 6, 21, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 17, 24, 31, 1919, p. 1, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 1919, p. 1, March 7, 1919, p. 1, April 11, 1919, p. 12.

66. Delegates and camp committee members were fired at some camps, and attempts made to increase hours to nine or ten. Organizational problems included the absence of members of the executive and camp delegates from meetings in Vancouver, and the failure of delegates to make regular reports to union headquarters. See B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1919, p. 1, March 21, 1919, p. 8, March 28, 1919, p. 11, April 11, 1919, p. 1, May 2, 1919, p. 1. Membership figures are from B.C. Federationist, April 18, 1919, p. 1, May 9, 1919, p. 1, June 13, 1919, p. 1, July 18, 1919, p. 3, Aug. 8, 1919, p. 1, Oct. 3, 1919, p. 1. The figure of 1000 members in the Vancouver area is derived from the number for which the union was entitled to send delegates to the VTLC.

67. The loggers were not organized in the summer of 1918, and so played no part in the Goodwin protest strike. They were apparently eager to join the 1919 general sympathetic strike, but were held back by a constitutional requirement for a two-week delay before a strike vote. The general strike committee did not call on the 8000 coastal loggers to strike until June 27, when the strike was nearly over. It appears that few loggers answered the call. See Province, May 30, 1919, June 25, 27, 1919; Sun, June 25, 28, 1919; Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, pp. 52-53.

loggers were enthusiastic supporters of the OBU from its inception, and voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining it (Table 1-3).⁶⁸ After the general strike, their union affiliated with the OBU as the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU), but in the months following, and again at the end of the year, the union headquarters was torn by factional struggles between proponents of the OBU, such as its president, E. Winch, and IWW supporters.⁶⁹

The loggers ~~in the camps~~ were probably more interested in concrete objectives than in factional struggles, and the union sought improvements in nearly every phase of their social reproduction: enforcement of first aid, workers' compensation, and semi-monthly pay laws, a \$5.00 a day minimum wage, the eight hour day, time and a half for overtime, abolition of contract or piece work, and improved camp conditions, including sanitary and sufficient blankets and bedding, proper facilities for bathing and washing, and enforcement of the Health Act. The Loggers' Association (employers) refused to deal with the union, and tried to recruit non-union loggers, so the union loggers

According to the Western Lumberman (July 1919, p. 37), "Little or no trouble was experienced with the loggers."

68. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, p. 135, cites a vote of 2032 to 28 from figures in the B.C. Federationist, May 16, 1919. The vote from the OBU file is presumably the complete return. Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, p. 53, quotes a letter by E. Winch, secretary of the LWIU, in which a vote of 4376 to 34, out of a membership of 5000, is mentioned. Abstentions were evidently being counted as votes for the OBU.

69. See B.C. Federationist, Aug. 8, 1919, p. 6, Nov. 21, 1919, p. 6, Nov. 28, 1919, pp. 6-7, Dec. 5, 1919, pp. 6-7, Dec. 12, 1919, pp. 2-3, 6, Dec. 19, 1919, pp. 2-3; The Camp Worker, April 26, 1919 to June 28, 1919; The Worker, July 19, 1919, to Oct. 30, 1919; Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, pp. 56-57.

engaged in "action on the job:" camp committees would present demands, and strike if they were not met. A rash of strikes resulted.⁷⁰

Only two loggers' strikes occurred in the Vancouver area, but they exemplified the types of demands being made by the loggers, and the responses of employers. In the first, some loggers at the King Lumber Co. camp near New Westminster apparently won the LWIU schedule of conditions after striking for less than a week.⁷¹ In the second, about 120 loggers at the Capilaño Timber Co. camp near North Vancouver went on strike against the dismissal of two union organizers, and for recognition of the LWIU. The company had consistently fired camp delegates of the union, and after six weeks, it resumed operations with strikebreakers. The union finally called off the strike in mid-December.⁷²

Despite some failures due to employer opposition, LWIU success in improving living conditions in the coastal logging camps laid the basis for its continued expansion in 1920, despite persistent

70. B.C. Federationist, July 11, 18, 1919, p. 1; Aug. 8, 1919, p. 1, Sept. 5, 1919, p. 1. For a full statement of the loggers' demands, and the unfavorable reactions of employers (who thought the loggers had never had it so good), see Pacific Coast Lumberman, Aug. 1919, p. 34.

71. In October, the camp delegate reported on the construction of roomy new cabins, new cups in the dining room, a new cook and good food, and promises of sheets, a wash house, and a drying house. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 15, 1919, p. 8, Aug. 22, 1919, p. 1; Worker, Oct. 10, 1919, p. 4; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 317, file 19(337).

72. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 318, file 19(403); B.C. Federationist, Aug. 15, 1919, p. 8, Aug. 22, 1919, p. 1, Dec. 19, 1919, p. 1; Province, Aug. 26, 1919; Worker, Oct. 3, 1919, p. 2; UBC Library, Special Collections, Orchard Papers, file 3-7, interview with L.C. Rodgers, pp. 12-13.

factionalism within the executive, and conflicts with OBU leaders.⁷³

Its achievements were ultimately temporary, but they were substantial, and for the first time, loggers had forced reluctant employers to concede decent living conditions.

Why were the loggers successful in 1919, when they had so often failed to build a strong organization or win improved conditions in the past? Two conditions affecting mobilization, and one affecting loggers' social reproduction stand out.⁷⁴ The first consisted of the opportunities for collective action provided by a tight labour market. The severe labour shortages and strong demand for logs in the last three years of the war, and the overall shortage of labour, put the loggers in a powerful position. Once those conditions disappeared in the post-war recession, the LWIU weakened. Second, the overall surge of working-class mobilization in those years put in the forefront of the labour movement in Vancouver capable organizers like Victor Midgely and Ernest Winch, ideologically committed to the organization of all workers in "one big union." Others had tried to organize the loggers before, notably the IWW, but it had been outside the mainstream of the Vancouver

73. See reports on camp conditions, good and bad, in B.C. Federationist, Sept. 26, 1919, p. 1, Dec. 12, 1919, p. 1; Dec. 19, 1919, p. 2; Worker, Sept. 19, 1919, p. 8. On the subsequent expansion, factionalism, and decline of the LWIU, see Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, pp. 165-70; Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, pp. 56-60.

74. Another condition mentioned in the literature concerns changes in capital accumulation: consolidation of ownership, new methods of production, larger units of production, and year-round operation of camps. See Phillips, No Power Greater, p. 77; Steeves, Compassionate Rebel, p. 45. These developments may have been important, but I have no information to show that they were.

labour movement, and the attempts by AFL unions to organize loggers had merely been reactions to IWW successes in Washington, and were doomed to failure. In 1918 and 1919, the labour movement had been radicalized by years of depression, war, and the suppression of civil liberties, so the organization of loggers was part of a broad movement. Third, the success of the loggers' union in 1919 was due in part to the drastic change in the social reproduction cycles of loggers occasioned by prohibition. Drunkenness was an integral part of the working-class culture of loggers, and it contributed to their frontier labourer image, but its consequences for collective action were demoralization and a willingness to accept inhuman conditions.⁷⁵ The B.C. Federationist certainly thought so: prohibition, it declared, had made the coast logger a man who "insists on being dealt with like a human being." As a consequence, changes in living conditions in the camps were a principal component of loggers' demands.⁷⁶ Employers had previously seen in sobriety a way to improve the productivity of dissolute loggers; little did they realize that rather than being functional for the reproduction of labour power, a dose of asceticism could be revolutionary.⁷⁷

75. In 1913, a camp cook reported that when a logger or other camp worker finished a drinking spree, "he goes back to work humble and ready to take anything in nine cases out of ten." B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 134.

76. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 15, 1919, p. 8.

77. In a cartoon in the Pacific Coast Lumberman (Oct. 1919, p. 21), a logger is drinking from a bottle evidently supplied by a suspicious-looking bearded character, from a box labelled 'Bolshevist Dope.' The caption reads, "Will he finish the bottle?" By then, camp operators preferred that he drink something with a higher alcohol

Saw and Shingle Mill Workers

The racial division between whites and Asians hindered mobilization and collective action by saw and shingle mill workers for most of the 1900-1919 period. For skilled white mill workers, the competition of Asians at first led to mobilization, with exclusionary objectives, but their inability to stem the tide led to demobilization. For Asian mill workers, mobilization for working-class objectives was impeded by economic and political powerlessness, and by their entanglement in the contract labour system. As their numbers grew, however, Asian workers became an increasingly potent force in the mills, and were able to gain some autonomy from merchants and labour contractors of the same racial group. To show these developments, saw and shingle mill workers will be examined separately, since mobilization and collective action largely occurred separately in each branch.

Shingle Mill Workers

In the early 1900s, faltering attempts to organize unions of skilled, white mill workers failed in the face of employers' resistance to improving conditions in a rapidly growing, highly competitive industry. The unions were powerless against this resistance, in large part because of racial divisions within the workforce, and subsequent

content. A 1923 strike of loggers in the American Pacific Northwest "featured 'Carrie Nation direct action' to close down speakeasies...." D. Montgomery, "Immigrants, Industrial Unions, and Social Reconstruction in the United States, 1916-1923," p. 108.

unionization efforts met with little success. Asian workers (mostly Chinese) were outside the scope of unionization efforts until war capitalism, when they emerged as a powerful, militant force.

Skilled shingle weavers were the first mill workers to be organized, in April 1900, into a union limited to skilled white sawyers and filers.⁷⁸ Its main objectives were for improvements in safety,⁷⁹ and, as Chinese workers began to be employed as sawyers, "the preservation of the shingle industry for the whites as against cheap Oriental labour."⁸⁰ Mill owners were hostile to the union from the beginning; in 1900, for instance, workers at one mill were fired when they refused to leave the union.⁸¹ The union was weak and ineffective: it was unable to protect white workers from the low-wage competition of Chinese workers; there is no record of any success in achieving safety objectives; and the only wage increase reported during the period (in 1902) was due to labour scarcity rather than collective action.⁸² The

78. The union was a local of the Pacific Coast Shingle Weavers Union. Reorganized as a Federal Labor Union of the AFL (no. 8390) in 1903, it disappeared in 1905. Independent, May 5, 1900, July 28, 1900, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette VI (1906), p. 884.

79. It wanted safeguards on machinery, and legislative recognition of employer liability in accidents

80. Independent, Aug. 18, 1900, Sept. 5, 1903; News-Advertiser, Jan 22, 1903, Labour Gazette V (1904), p. 352. Cf. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 131-32: a saw filer at the Heaps Shingle Mill complained in 1901 about the low standard of living of Asian workers and expressed the desire to "save the country for our own race."

81. Independent, Sept. 22, 1900.

82. Province, Nov. 29, 1902.

only strike by union members, involving ten sawyers at a mill in Vancouver in 1903, fizzled out in two days, when other members of the union at the plant failed to join.⁸³ The powerlessness of the union probably contributed to its demise, and shingle weavers remained unorganized until 1912.

A local of the International Shingle Weavers Union was re-established in 1912 as part of the AFL drive to organize loggers, but it was as weak and ineffective as its predecessor, and dissolved in 1915.⁸⁴ Competition from increasing numbers of Asian workers continued to pose a threat to white shingle weavers, but the only contentious action over the issue was a brawl between some white and Japanese workers at one mill in 1909.⁸⁵

While attempts were being made to organize skilled white shingle mill workers, Asians apparently remained unorganized. Beginning in 1916, however, a strong demand for forest products, and a scarcity of

83. There was also a strike by twenty-five unorganized shingle sawyers for higher piece rates, in New Westminster in 1901. No result was reported. PAC, RG 27, Dept. of Labour Strike and Lockout Files, Vol. 2332; Labour Gazette I (1901), p. 437; Province, May 8, 1903, p. 8.

84. The union's only success came when shingle weavers at Fraser Mills escaped wage reductions in 1913, because they were organized. As the pre-war depression persisted into 1914, however, pay cuts were made. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 28, 1912, p. 1, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1, Sept. 26, 1913, p. 7, April 10, 1914, p. 5; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 3, 1912, Oct. 15, 1914.

85. In that incident, ten white and fifteen Japanese workers at Gray's Shingle Mill on the Pitt River used clubs, crowbars, and similar weapons to inflict painful, but not serious, injuries on each other. Province, Dec. 2, 1909; News-Advertiser, Dec. 2, 1909. There was also a "melee," of unspecified origin, between Japanese and Sikh workers at the Terminal Shingle Mill in Vancouver in 1912. Province, March 25, 1912.

labour provided the opportunity for mobilization and militant action by shingle mill workers, especially Chinese workers. White shingle weavers were reorganized on craft lines in New Westminster in March 1916, and in Vancouver in April 1917. Of greater significance was a movement, opposed by the labour contractors, to organize a union among Chinese mill workers in 1916.⁸⁶

The organization work culminated in a strike against over fifty shingle mills in the Vancouver area in July and August 1917, by about 200 white and 600 Chinese workers. The strike was the first industry-wide shutdown on the lower mainland, and the first time that white and Chinese workers supported each other. Like their counterparts in Washington, who were already on strike, the white shingle weavers demanded an eight hour day, and an increase in piece wages. Members of the new Chinese Labour Association supported the demand for shorter hours, and wanted a larger wage increase than the white workers. The well-organized shingle manufacturers vehemently opposed the workers' demands, and fearing that the eight hour day would spread to the sawmills and logging camps if it was granted in shingle mills, other capitalists in the industry supported them. The shingle industry therefore became the focal point of class struggle in the lumber

86. B.C. Federationist, March 24, 1916, p. 3, Aug. 25, 1916, p. 1, Nov. 10, 1916, p. 1, April 20, 1917, p. 3; Report on Labour Organization, 1916, p. 159. The International Shingle Weavers Union had been reorganized at the beginning of 1916 as a craft union, after its failure to organize lumber workers on an industrial basis in the preceding three years. Fink, Labor Unions, pp. 390-92.

industry as a whole.⁸⁷

The strike shut down four fifths of the mills in the Vancouver area on July 23rd and spread to Victoria the next day. By the middle of August, nearly all the mills had resumed operations. Some of the smaller ones had granted eight hours, but most of the large ones were still working ten hours with largely Chinese crews. The Shingle Weavers Union had still not called off the strike in October, but it was clear that the large mills had defeated them in August, and prevented the eight hour day from being established in all but a few mills.⁸⁸

The strike of shingle mill workers was lost because of racial and skill differences in the labour force. The solidarity of white and Chinese mill workers was fragile, and easily shattered by employers, who apparently lured the latter back to work by offering them the places of the whites. A shortage of Chinese workers gave them a certain amount of bargaining strength, but with fewer employment opportunities than white shingle weavers (who were able to find other jobs locally or in the U.S.), they were less capable of holding out in strikes.⁸⁹ The strikers were also weakened by the absence of practical support from other skilled workers in the shingle mills. Only a few of the saw filers

87. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(43); B.C. Federationist, July 27, 1917, pp. 1, 5; Western Lumberman, Aug. 1917, pp. 15-16; Province, July 17, 28, 1917.

88. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(43); Province, July 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 1917; Sun, July 24, 26, 27, 1917; B.C. Federationist, July 27, 1917, pp. 1, 5, Aug. 10, 1917, p. 6.

89. PAC, loc. cit., Western Lumberman, Sept. 1917, p. 16.

joined the strike, and stationary engineers failed to live up to pre-strike promises to cease work, and thereby shut down the mills, rather than see the shingle weavers defeated.⁹⁰

As war capitalist labour shortages continued, shingle manufacturers found the formerly placid Chinese workers increasingly difficult to control, and increasingly militant.⁹¹ The zenith of militancy and organization was reached in a strike against a 10 per cent wage reduction by over 1000 Chinese workers, that shut down nearly every shingle mill in the province on March 1, 1919. Attempts to replace the strikers with returned soldiers failed when sufficient numbers of the latter could not be obtained, and the strikers won their demands by sometime in April.⁹²

In the Chinese shingle mill workers' victory, millowners finally reaped what they had sown when they introduced Asian workers to replace whites: Chinese workers, who were by 1918 the large majority in shingle

90. Report on Labour Organization, 1911, p. 85, 1914, pp. 226-28; B.C. Federationist, July 27, 1917, pp. 1, 5, Aug. 10, 1917, p. 6, Oct. 26, 1917, p. 1; Province, July 24, 27, 28, 1917. Saw filers had been organized in their own union from 1911 to 1914 (Saw Smiths' National Union, no. 9), but were no longer organized at the time of the strike. They started to reorganize in October, 1917, with 35 members from saw and shingle mills (there were three or four filers in each large mill).

91. In June 1918, for example, a few Chinese shingle packers walked off the job to protest an assault on one of their number by a white millwright. Sun, June 7, 8, 11, 1918; Province, June 7, 8, 1918, Sept. 9, 1918.

92. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 310, file 19(27); Province, March 4, 18, 1919; Sun, March 4, 1919, April 8, 1919, Pacific Coast Lumberman, March 1919, p. 23, April 1919, p. 25. The school established to train returned soldiers closed in June because of lack of interest. Province, May 6, 8, 1919, June 24, 1919.

mills, had achieved enough solidarity and organization to mount a crippling industry-wide strike, and shingle mill work had become sufficiently racially stereotyped that white workers were reluctant to do it.⁹³

Sawmill Workers

In the sawmills, the organization of white workers was even more erratic than in the shingle-mills. They lacked the skilled base provided by shingle weavers in shingle mills, and the initiatives for organization in the sawmills usually came from craft workers who were not directly involved in sawmilling, namely factory woodworkers and stationary engineers. Asians were equally poorly organized for most of the period, but they were far more militant, at least in the first decade. In contrast to Asian shingle mill workers, however, Asian sawmill workers did not take advantage of the opportunities of war capitalist labour shortages to engage in strike action.

The first attempt to organize white sawmill workers was by the Millworkers Union in the spring of 1903, when it claimed 180 members in Vancouver, and 50 in New Westminster by April. Alarmed lumber manufacturers prepared to fight the union, but for that or other

93. The strength of Chinese shingle mill workers still depended on a favorable labour market. Thus, a mid-October strike for higher wages at the Canada Shingle Co. mill in Vancouver was defeated when it became clear to the strikers that other labour contractors might supply workers to the mill. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 318, file 19(405).

reasons, it disappeared in Vancouver within a few months.⁹⁴ White sawmill workers expressed numerous grievances at this time and subsequently, including low wages, long hours, and the competition of Asian workers, who were seen as a threat to the former's jobs, living standards, and working conditions.⁹⁵ They took no collective action for their redress, however, probably fearing replacement by Asians if they did strike. The only alternative would have been to organize with Asian workers to improve the conditions of all, but except for a few socialists, white workers were generally unprepared to take that step.

While organizing efforts were going on among white sawmill workers, non-unionized Asian sawmill workers struck six times in the first decade of the century, generally in disputes involving the contract labour system.⁹⁶ For example, in a strike lasting less than one day in January 1903, 90 to 140 Japanese workers at the Brunette Mill in Sapperton succeeded in preventing the replacement of three or four of their bosses by a single supervisor. They were evidently trying to preserve the contract boss system which provided them with some

94. The union dissolved in Vancouver in September, 1903, but it hung on in New Westminster until early 1906. *Independent*, April 25, 1903; *Province*, April 22, 1903, *Western Socialist*, April 24, 1903; *Labour Gazette* IV (1904), pp. 680-81; VII (1907), pp. 889-91.

95. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 109-12, 364; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 184.

96. The only strike not related to contract labour, and the only strike in which whites were involved, was a three-day walkout in December 1900, by about 75 white and 100 Japanese workers at the Royal City Planing Mills in Vancouver. The strikers succeeded in having a wage reduction postponed for four months. *Province*, Dec. 3, 4, 1900; *World*, Dec. 1, 1900.

security, and perhaps insulation from the autocratic discipline of white mill bosses.⁹⁷ Other strikes showed the less beneficial side of the boss system. For example, at least 20 Japanese workers at the same mill struck for a day because they were being overcharged for supplies by their boss.⁹⁸ In February 1909, about 100 Sikhs at Fraser Mills walked out to protest the failure of their labour contractor to pay them for the previous three months.⁹⁹

Although mill owners were getting a cheap labour force when they hired Asian workers, it was by no means a docile one. But their militancy in the first decade of the twentieth century was merely spontaneous, and their actions isolated, defensive reactions to particular grievances that had more to do with their own labour market and consumption market position within the contract labour system than with their ultimate employers, so they posed little threat to the mill

97. Province, Jan. 15, 16, 1903; New Westminster Weekly Columbian (hereafter, Weekly Columbian), Jan. 20, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 625-126.

98. Weekly Columbian, May 19, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 971. A brawl between Japanese and Chinese employees occurred at the same mill in June. Province, June 5, 1903. There were also two strikes by Japanese workers at the North Pacific Lumber Co. mill in Barnet within a few days of each other in 1905, one to protest the dismissal of a worker, the other because of some dissatisfaction with a contract boss. Province, April 25, 28, 1905; Lumberman and Contractor, May 1905, p. 20.

99. Reports on the results of the strike conflict, but its ultimate impact was to add impetus to the mill's plans to replace Sikhs with French-Canadians. See above, page 213. On the strike, see PAC, RG 27, Vol. 296, file 3113; News-Advertiser, Feb. 23, 1909. According to these sources, a temporary arrangement was made the same day, and a resumption of work was expected the following day. The Labour Gazette reported no settlement at the end of the month, however. Labour Gazette IX (1909), pp. 1008-09.

owners' strategies of capital accumulation during a period of rapid growth. They would pose more of a threat if they were organized.

Asian workers were reported to be organized in the sawmills in 1907, when an unsuccessful attempt was made to unionize white sawmill workers.¹⁰⁰ There was again talk of a union of Japanese mill workers being organized in 1908, but it seems to have disappeared in the recession.¹⁰¹ The IWW and AFL continued to attempt to organize white (and in the case of the IWW, Asian) mill workers, but the absence of any demands or other action by either organization indicates that they were not very successful either.¹⁰²

Even in the wave of unionization and strikes during the war capitalist boom, the capacity of sawmill workers to mobilize and to act collectively was still hindered by skill and racial divisions. After a meeting of about 350 white sawmill workers to consider demanding an eight hour day, a local of the International Union of Timber Workers (IUTW) was formed in August 1917, but it collapsed when it was abandoned

100. A white labour organizer was surprised to discover in the spring that Chinese and Japanese workers were already organized in nearly all the mills in Vancouver, and were impatient for the whites to organize so that a wage increase could be demanded. VTLC Minutes, May 16, 1907; Province, May 17, 1907. W. Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 118, mentions the formation of Chinese and Japanese 'guilds' in 1906. It may have been these which the white organizer discovered.

101. Province, May 6, 1908:

102. The only example of concerted action by white sawmill workers in this period is a protest against a wage reduction by workers at the Small and Bucklin Mill to the New Westminster city council in 1914. See B.C. Federationist, Nov. 20, 1914, p. 3.

by the highly skilled sawyers and filers.¹⁰³ While progress by white sawmill workers was stalled, Asian workers continued to make advances. They were in short supply, and were able to win improved conditions in sawmills, through strikes if necessary. A Japanese Sawmill Workers Association was organized in January 1918, and Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian workers at the Western Canada Lumber Co. plant at Fraser Mills won a one-day strike for shorter hours in April.¹⁰⁴ The mostly Japanese sawmill workers never achieved the level of organization and militancy of the Chinese shingle mill workers, however.

As the labour shortages of war capitalism continued, a new impetus for the organization of sawmill workers developed from the stationary engineers, who were practically the only well-organized white workers in the sawmills.¹⁰⁵ After a history of organization in professional associations and non-militant unions, the engineers finally took militant and even radical positions in 1916 and 1917, such as opposition to conscription.¹⁰⁶ It also started to look outside its own

103. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 24, 1917, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Sept 7, 1917, Oct. 4, 1917; Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 93; Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 229-31.

104. Province, Jan. 21, 1918; B.C. Federationist, April 12, 1918, p. 1; Sun, April 11, 1918.

105. The only other organization of whites in sawmills was the Saw Filers Association (organized in 1918), but it held aloof from other workers in the mills.

106. The first organization of engineers in Vancouver was a branch of the Canadian Association of Stationary Engineers formed in 1900 (later the B.C. Association). Its aims were the educational advancement of members, and legislation on licensing and safety. It rejected any role in the determination of wages, deplored strikes, and believed in an

ranks in order to realize its objectives, and was thus led to organize the sawmills, where the majority of engineers worked. Engineers were difficult to organize, because they were scattered in small numbers in various plants, but the union grew quickly during the war, especially after the B.C. Association of Stationary Engineers amalgamated with it in August 1917; a year later, it claimed 1000 members.¹⁰⁷ The length of the working day (as long as twelve hours, seven days a week) was the principal grievance of engineers in saw and shingle mills. When attempts to obtain a legislated eight hour day failed, 1000 steam and operating engineers went on strike throughout B.C. on July 1, 1918. Most were employed in the forest industry, and in the Vancouver area, about sixty engineers struck at twenty saw and shingle mills, and other factories. A number of mills had granted the engineers' demands prior to the strike, some others settled after a few days, and all but four

 identity of interests between employee and employer. See World, Feb. 23, 1900; Province, Feb. 23, 1900, March 3, 1903, Jan. 26, 1904, March 19, 1904, July 13, 1907; VTLC Minutes, April 6, 1900. A local of the International Union of Steam Engineers began to compete with the association in 1909, but the latter maintained a substantial membership (450 to 500 in Vancouver in 1913), and even the union discouraged collective attempts to remedy engineers' many grievances. VTLC Minutes, Dec. 16, 1909; Labour Gazette X (1909), pp. 997-1001; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 36-43, 92-99, 183-88, Vol. 3, p. 69. The International union's locals in Vancouver dissolved in 1914, and engineers joined the Canadian Union of Steam and Operating Engineers in 1915, then reverted to the International in 1916. VTLC Minutes, April 2, 1914, Nov. 2, 1916; Report on Labour Organization, 1914, p. 184, 1915, pp. 176, 221-26, 1916, pp. 218-25; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 27, 1916, p. 1.

107. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 187; VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917, Aug. 16, 1917, Sept. 6, 1917, April 18, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 3, 1917, p. 6; Oct. 5, 1917, p. 4; Sun, June 29, 1918.

granted them before the middle of August.¹⁰⁸

The increasingly militant and radical engineers joined with factory woodworkers in an attempt to organize white sawmill workers in 1919, but before much organizing could be done in the sawmills, the general strike intervened.¹⁰⁹ The general strike was first felt in Vancouver mills on June 4, and by the following day, all the mills in a five mile radius were tied up by the strike of engineers and mill workers, including Asians.¹¹⁰ A few mills reopened towards the end of the third week of the strike, but most remained shut until it was called off on July 3.¹¹¹

108. For engineers' grievances, see B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 36-43, 91-93, 183-84, Vol. 3, pp. 65-69; Province, June 18, 1918. On the strike, see VTLC Minutes, Feb. 7, 1918, April 18, 1918; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 308, file 18(60); B.C. Federationist, June 21, 28, 1918, p. 1, July 5, 1918, p. 8, July 19, 1918, p. 1; Province, June 18, 29, 1918, July 2, 3, 20, 25, 1918; Pacific Coast Lumberman, June 1918, p. 48.

109. In April 1919, the millworkers local of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ) decided to broaden its field of operations to other parts of the lumber industry, and in May, after voting heavily in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3), they left the UBCJ, and formed the Millmen's Union, No. 1. B.C. Federationist, April 25, 1919, p. 1, May 23, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, May 8, 1919.

110. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190); Sun, June 5, 6, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 1; British Columbian, June 21, 1919.

111. Sun, June 29, 1919, p. 4; VTLC Minutes, July 3, 1919; Province, July 4, 1919; Western Lumberman, July 1919, p. 37. In New Westminster, engineers originally voted against the general strike, but when it was called on June 18, they decided unanimously to heed the call. Forty engineers at twelve mills in New Westminster and Port Moody stopped work, but the large mills managed to stay open with uncertified strikebreakers running the boilers. Except for a few white and Asian workers at one small mill, engineers were the only saw or shingle mill workers to join the general strike in New Westminster. Perhaps efforts to organize mill workers had not yet reached beyond Vancouver, or like

Engineers in Vancouver had voted more than five to one in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3) before the general strike, and after it was over, they organized workers in the industries where engineers were employed. Considerable progress was reported among mill workers, and in August, the Engineers, Firemen, and Oilers amalgamated with the Millmen's Union to form the B.C. Engineers and Mill Workers Unit of the OBU, with almost 1000 members evenly divided between the two groups.¹¹² Organization proceeded well outside Vancouver, but in the city attendance at meetings declined, and the poorly-paid engineers were observed to be more eager for organization than other skilled white mill workers, who persisted in the exclusivism that had wrecked previous attempts to form industrial unions in lumber manufacturing. Little progress was made toward realizing the union's primary objectives (the eight hour day and higher pay), and by the end of the year, the stagnant Engineers and Mill Workers contemplated joining the thriving LWIU.¹¹³ The union was also weakened by a surplus of engineers, and the competition of the reorganized local of the International Union of Steam and Operating

other workers in New Westminster, they were less radical and militant than their Vancouver counterparts. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221); Sun, June 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 1919; Province, June 20, 21, 1919; Western Lumberman, July 1919, p. 37.

112. B.C. Federationist, June 20, 1919, p. 8, July 18, 1919, p. 1, Aug. 1, 15, 22, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 14, 1919. The 500 engineers in the new union were only half the number claimed by the engineers in 1918 (see above page 243), so the radical turn was evidently divisive.

113. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 29, 1919, p. 1, Sept. 12, 1919, p. 1, Sept. 19, 1919, p. 6, Oct. 10, 17, 24, 1919, p. 1, Dec. 5, 1919, p. 7, Dec. 26, 1919, p. 1, Jan. 2, 1920, p. 7; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 28, 1919, Oct. 2, 30, 1919, Nov. 6, 1919.

Engineers, which was alleged to be supplying men at less than union scale, and providing strikebreakers to logging camps. The International / reported splendid progress, and as in other industries, it is probable that the international union and employers colluded to defeat the OBU in the lumber mills.¹¹⁴

For most of the 1900-1919 period, both white and Asian sawmill workers were weakly mobilized, and usually non-militant. This was in large part due to their competition. Semi-skilled and unskilled white workers seem to have been demoralized by working with Asian workers, whom they, and other white workers, considered inferior. They were difficult to organize as a result, because their working conditions appeared to them as something to escape, not to improve. In contrast, the skilled white workers in the sawmills were something of a labour aristocracy having authority over other workers, and they might, for that reason, identify their interests with their employers, and not other workers. For the Asian workers, the racial oppression that made them low-wage competitors to whites was also the main obstacle to the transformation of their growing numbers and ethnic solidarities into collective action. Low pay, restricted labour market opportunities, lack of political rights, and enmeshment in the contract labour system prevented them from organizing to improve their conditions. As a

114. The International had been reorganized in August, at which time it claimed 100 members, to the OBU unit's 500 engineers. VTLC (International) Minutes, Aug. 21, 1919, Sept. 18, 1919, Oct. 16, 1919; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 18, 1919, Oct. 9, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 22, 1918, p. 10, Dec. 6, 1918, p. 1, April 4, 1919, p. 1.

result, the collective action of Asians in sawmills consisted almost entirely of defensive strikes, related to the contract labour system.

During the war capitalist period, the mobilization and collective action of Asian workers changed. First, they were increasingly organized as workers within their own racial groups, independent of middle class hegemony, that is, of the leadership of merchants and labour contractors.¹¹⁵ The organization of the Chinese Labor Union in 1916 was a critical step in the transformation of strikes in shingle mills from isolated, spontaneous walkouts in solitary mills, to large-scale, industry-wide confrontations. But it was not the only condition of militancy, because the formation of the Japanese Sawmill Workers Association in 1918 did not have a comparable effect. That was a consequence of differences in class formation in saw and shingle mills: the small size and racial homogeneity of shingle mills (especially after the 1917 shingle mill strike, when many whites were replaced by Chinese workers) was more conducive to solidarity than the large size, and racial and skill divisions of the sawmills, where the workforce was divided between an exclusivist, skilled white aristocracy of saw filers and sawyers, and the majority of semi-skilled and unskilled Asians. Just as the racial division of the workforce had in the past had demobilizing consequences for white workers, so it now constrained the collective action of Japanese sawmill workers.

115. See Knight and Koizumi, *A Man of Our Times*, pp. 39-45, on the Japanese Labour Union.

Factory Woodworkers

Because they were skilled craft workers, racially homogeneous, and generally employed in small plants, factory woodworkers could be expected to have more capacity for collective action than other lumber industry workers. They faced hostile employers struggling to compete with lower-cost producers in the east and the U.S., however, and as a result were weakly mobilized for most of the period. The labour shortages of war capitalism provided the opportunity for stronger mobilization and successful collective action, and their continuing experience of employer hostility led to the radicalization of factory woodworkers, and their leadership in the drive to organize lumber mill workers.

Like the other workers in the lumber industry in the Vancouver area, factory woodworkers were briefly organized in the turn of the century surge of working-class mobilization. Unlike the others, they were strongly organized, but after a major strike in 1903, their union disappeared, like the unions of other workers in the industry.

Described in 1900 as "the worst paid and hardest worked men in the Province," despite their skilled work, factory woodworkers in Vancouver were first organized in their own union in 1901.¹¹⁶ The

116. Local 145 of the Amalgamated Wood Workers International Union was formed in January, but it had little immediate impact. The work week was still 55 to 60 hours in August, 1901, and wages 20 to 35 cents an hour, for skilled and semi-skilled work. Independent, March 31, 1900, April 6, 1901, Aug. 24, 1901.

connection between factory woodworkers and outside carpenters was strengthened in 1902, when the new union affiliated with the Building Trades Council, and joined with the two carpenters' unions in demanding an eight hour day effective April 1, 1903.¹¹⁷ After the carpenters struck for and won their demands in April, the factory woodworkers followed suit on June 1. Evidently believing that their position was not as strong as that of the carpenters, they reduced their demand to a nine hour day.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the millowners were adamant in their refusal to reduce hours, citing insufficient profits and competition from mills at Rat Portage and in the U.S. which worked ten hours. As a result, 157 skilled woodworkers, including non-union ones, went on strike at five sash and door factories.¹¹⁹

In contrast to the short, spontaneous strikes by unskilled

117. Independent, Aug. 16, 1902; News-Advertiser, Jan. 3, 14, 1903.

118. They justified their demands on various grounds: a man could do as much work in nine hours as in ten; factory dust was injurious to the health; hours and pay of other skilled workers were better; finally, "To labor must be ascribed the production of all commodities, and even a cursory examination will disclose the fact that they [sic] receive a mere trifle of what they produce." Province, May 30, 1903, June 2, 1903; Canada; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in the Province of British Columbia, 1903, Minutes of Evidence, (hereafter, Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence), pp. 804, 807-09; World, July 6, 1903; Independent, June 27, 1903.

119. Province, June 2, 1903, July 3, 1903; Independent, June 6, 1903; Weekly Columbian, June 16, 1903; World, July 6, 8, 14, 1903. Factories affected were: Vancouver Sash and Door (27 men), Robertson and Hackett (19 men), Heap and Co. (20 men), and Royal City Planing Mills (24 men in Vancouver, and 57 in New Westminster, including 19 Japanese). Royal City, part of the B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Co. empire, was the dominant force on the employers side. Three other factories had settled with the union.

workers in the lumber mills, the skilled woodworkers had the organization and resources to support a long strike, and the employers were determined to hold out against them. The first month of the strike was uneventful: most strikers found other jobs at nine hours a day, and woodworkers in New Westminster made plans to establish a cooperative factory.¹²⁰ At the beginning of July, however, the B.C. Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers Association came to the aid of the factories by ceasing to supply lumber to local contractors. Building activity soon shut down, as builders never kept much material on hand. The tactic was designed to put carpenters out of work, and thereby put pressure on the strikers whom they had been aiding morally and financially. Smelling victory, the factories offered to re-employ the strikers "whenever possible," and to consider individual advances, but when that did not prompt a return to work, they refused to have anything more to do with their "ex-employees," and proposed to fill their places and resume deliveries to builders.¹²¹

To avoid the general strike of building tradesmen that would result if they were supplied with non-union factory woodwork, the demoralized factory woodworkers called off their strike on July 15, and

120. Weekly Columbian, June 16, 30, 1903; Province, June 26, 1903; Independent, June 27, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 126.

121. Province, July 3, 6, 9, 13, 1903; Independent, July 4, 1903; World, July 6, 1903; Weekly Columbian, July 7, 1903, p. 32; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 807.

returned to work on their employers' terms.¹²² The failure of the strike seems to have dealt a death blow to the union, since nothing was heard of it subsequently.¹²³

In the seven years after the failure of their strike in 1903, factory woodworkers remained unorganized or hidden within the carpenters' unions, and attempts to reorganize them in 1910 and 1912 failed.¹²⁴ The tight labour market of the war capitalist boom finally provided the opportunity for successful organization of workers in sash and door, and other woodworking factories in the Vancouver district, however. By December 1917, some plants were completely organized in the Mill and Factory Woodworkers local of the carpenters union.¹²⁵ The new union moved quickly to improve wages and hours in the woodworking factories, and after strikes were twice threatened, agreement on a minimum wage and nine hour day was reached at the end of April 1918. The rising cost of living, the gains being made by unions in other

122. World, July 14, 1903; Independent, July 18, 1903; Weekly Columbian, July 21, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 127.

123. Skilled members of the Amalgamated Wood Workers were probably absorbed into the carpenters' unions, which had already taken in some of them before the end of the strike. World, July 14, 1903; Weekly Columbian, July 21, 1903. At the international level, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners started to raid the factory woodworkers in 1904. See G. Fink, Labor Unions, pp. 414-15.

124. VTLC Minutes, Sept. 15, 1910, Sept. 19, 1912; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 14, 1912, p. 1, Oct. 5, 1912, p. 2, Nov. 9, 1912, p. 4; Report on Labour Organization, 1913, p. 130, 1914, p. 226.

125. They formed local 1958 of the UBCJ. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 26, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1 (incorrectly identifying the local as No. 1915); Report on Labour Organization, 1917, pp. 175, 217-20.

industries, and the tight labour market soon led the factory woodworkers to demand further wage increases and an eight hour day.¹²⁶ When employers refused to negotiate the new demands, or to recognize the union, 160 to 200 factory woodworkers at ten factories in Vancouver went on strike August 1, 1918. Several factories granted the demands the same day, and by August 13 the rest agreed to part of the wage increase, overtime pay, and cost of living adjustments every three months. The eight hour day was left for arbitration in February, 1919, but when the time came, employers ignored inquiries from the union. Their failure to live up to the agreement contributed to the growing radicalism of the factory woodworkers.¹²⁷

The radicalization of factory woodworkers was expressed in support for industrial unionism and the OBU, and participation in the 1919 general strike.¹²⁸ After organizing in New Westminster, and among coopers and millwrights in late 1918 and early 1919, in April the re-named Millmen's Union decided to organize other workers in the lumber mills, and lowered its initiation fee to make membership more accessible. In May, they voted strongly in favor of the OBU (Table

126. B.C. Federationist, March 8, 1918, p. 1, March 15, 1918, p. 8, April 26, 1918, p. 1, May 3, 1918, p. 12; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1918, May 16, 1918.

127. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 308, file 18(62); B.C. Federationist, Aug. 2, 16, 1918, p. 1; Province, Aug. 1, 13, 1918; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 568-70. Some employers started negotiations over the eight hour day after a strike was threatened.

128. There is no information on participation by factory woodworkers in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike.

1-3), and left their international union.¹²⁹ Members of the union voted in favor of the general strike in Vancouver, and participated fully in it, as did Chinese labourers in the sash and door factories. It was a small union, in a peripheral industry, so it did not play a prominent role in the strike.¹³⁰ After the strike, the Millmen joined the OBU, and later amalgamated with the Engineers, as has already been recounted (above, page 245).

Conditions contributing to the radicalization of the factory Woodworkers in 1918 and 1919 can be found in both their social reproduction cycles, and in processes of mobilization and collective action. First, at the level of social reproduction, factory woodworkers possessed craft skills that were being degraded in factory conditions. Deskilling did not appear directly as an objective of their collective action (which was focussed on wages and hours), but it may have added to their sense of grievance, and led them to see less skilled workers as necessary allies if they were to improve their own conditions. Equally importantly, it gave them a link to carpenters outside the factories, providing a basis for mobilization, and for leadership in the attempt to organize other lumber industry factory workers in the OBU. Second, at the level of repression, opportunity, and power, the factory woodworkers

129. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 27, 1918, p. 1, Jan. 31, 1919, p. 1, April 25, 1919, p. 1, May 23, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 5, 1918, Jan. 2, 1919, May 8, 1919; Report on Labour Organization, 1919, p. 35.

130. Sun, May 31, 1919; Province, May 31, 1919; Western Lumberman, July 1919, p. 37. The Millmen's Union was paying VTLC per capita on only 118 members in June 1919. B.C. Federationist, July 18, 1919, p. 3.

had faced employers hostile to unionization throughout their history. While employer repressiveness was sufficient to defeat strikes and attempts to mobilize earlier in the twentieth century, the labour shortages during war capitalism gave Woodworkers the opportunity to organize, and to prevail over hostile employers. The success of strikes, or of the threat of strikes gave factory woodworkers a growing sense of power, which was generalized to the OBU and the general strike.

Conclusions

Mobilization and collective action by workers in the lumber industry reflected the combined impact of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction cycles, and the history of strategic interaction. Capital accumulation in the manufacturing branch of the industry was based primarily on the employment of low-wage labour, in order to meet competition from lower-cost producers in eastern Canada or the United States. For that reason, the main objects of contention in the industry were wages and hours, and employers were very hostile to any organization of their workers which threatened to raise costs. A low-wage labour force was made possible by the existence of a pool of racially oppressed Asian workers whose job opportunities were more restricted than the more numerous white workers, and who consequently had fewer resources for collective action. This central fact of workers' social reproduction cycles, combined with skill divisions in the labour force, constrained mobilization and collective action by

lumber industry workers for the whole period from 1900 to 1919.

The effects of skill and racial divisions on mobilization and collective action were shown by the groups of white workers who played leading roles in the organization and radicalization of the lumber industry in 1918 and 1919: loggers, engineers, and factory woodworkers. None of these groups was seriously threatened by the entry of large numbers of Asians into their occupations, unlike shingle weavers or sawmill operatives, and none of them were simply factory operatives. Engineers and factory woodworkers were crafts in a crisis of proletarianization: crafts because they were skilled workers, who were not lumber industry specialists, but were linked to skilled workers outside the lumber industry (to engineers and carpenters in shipbuilding and construction); proletarianized because they worked in industrial plants, in oppressive conditions. Loggers were frontier labourers: migratory workers performing hard, dangerous work in isolated camps run by operators who resisted any kind of union organization. Both categories of workers possessed a combination of racial homogeneity, solidarity, and grievances that were favorable to mobilization, militancy, and radicalism.

In contrast, factory operatives in saw and shingle mills lacked the conditions which made the organization and radicalization of engineers, factory woodworkers, and loggers possible. The labour force in the mills was divided into racial and skill groups. The most skilled white mill workers, like saw filers, foremen, and some sawyers, were virtually a labour aristocracy, divided from the rest of the

increasingly Asian labour force by skill, workplace authority, labour market position, and consumption practices.¹³¹ For some of these skilled workers (e.g. shingle weavers), and certainly for less skilled white factory operatives and labourers, the competition of low-wage Asian workers ultimately had a demobilizing effect.

A further characteristic shared by loggers, factory woodworkers, and engineers was that they each had histories of weak, discontinuous unionization, and powerlessness in the face of hostile employers, until the labour shortages of war capitalism provided the opportunity for strong mobilization and successful collective action. In subsequent chapters, we will see that increasing power, after an experience of powerlessness and employer repression, was a condition favorable to radicalization. White saw and shingle mill workers also had histories of weak mobilization and lack of power, but partly because of the racial division of the workforce, and partly because they would not abandon the exclusiveness based on their aristocratic position, they were unable to take advantage of war capitalist conditions.

Asian workers were restrained from mobilization and collective action for most of the 1900-1919 period by a lack of economic and political resources, and by an ethnic form of organization, under the

131. It is notable that in contrast to the engineers and factory woodworkers, these skilled workers were lumber industry specialists, i.e. their skills were not transferable to other industries. Engineers in mills cannot be considered part of a labour aristocracy, despite their skill, because of their low pay and lack of authority over other mill workers (engineers were generally isolated in separate buildings housing the steam plants).

control of middle-class labour contractors and merchants. Unable to act independently in pursuit of their own collective objectives, they were limited to occasional spontaneous, defensive strikes in individual plants. Only when they became well established, and perhaps even numerically predominant in the saw and shingle mills, and when labour shortages strengthened their hand, did they become organized on a wide scale to pursue working-class objectives. But those conditions were only temporary, and when economic conditions deteriorated, they once more ran up against the barrier of the racial segmentation of the working class, which continued to be the main obstacle to united action by workers in the lumber industry. Although the increasingly radical labour movement in Vancouver had been ready to enroll Asians in the new industrial unions of the OBU, it failed to do so, and the weakening of the radicals and the OBU after 1919 spelt the end of that initiative.

Chapter 6

SALMON FISHING AND CANNING:

"The days of [fishermen's] big six weeks money has gone by, just [as] have the days of big cannery profits."

Like logging and lumber manufacturing, salmon canning was one of the staple industries of the British Columbia economy. Pressures on capital accumulation led to major changes in the industry that affected both cannery workers and salmon fishermen in the early 1900s. They were thus the years of most intense conflict in the industry in the Vancouver area, as fishermen battled canners over price and fishery regulations. Fishermen were divided by class into simple commodity producers and wage workers, and by racial group into Japanese, Indians, and whites, however. Consequently, success in conflict with canners was limited by competition and conflict among fishermen. In the canneries, racial and skill divisions weakened the mobilization of workers, and the level of collective action was low.

6.1 Capital Accumulation

Salmon fishing and canning was the second great staple industry in British Columbia in the early twentieth century. It was originally centered in the Vancouver area, principally on the Fraser River and in the Gulf of Georgia, but as new investment shifted to the northern coast early in the 1900s, the Fraser lost its predominance, except in the big sockeye runs every fourth season.¹ The shift in investment and a growing concentration of capital led the number of canneries in operation on the Fraser to decline steadily: there were 49 in 1901, 38 in 1905, 35 in 1913, 29 in 1917, and only 13 in 1921.²

Each salmon cannery, and the industry as a whole, encompassed two separate production processes: catching the salmon at the mouth of the river, and turning the catch into the canned product. In the Vancouver area, both operations were concentrated in the six to eight weeks in July and August when the sockeye migrated from the Pacific Ocean to their Fraser River spawning grounds. Other species of salmon were increasingly caught for canning or other processing in the weeks

1. Sockeye salmon have a four-year life cycle, and until a rockslide on Canadian Northern construction disrupted the migration in 1913, every year following a leap year was a big run on the Fraser. The next year was generally good, but the other two years of the cycle were usually poor.

2. Canada, Dept. of Marine and Fisheries, Fisheries Branch, Annual Report, 1925-26, pp. 68-69.

before and after the sockeye run, but the sockeye remained the most important species for both fishermen and canners.

Beginning in the 1890s, the principal constraints on capital accumulation in salmon canning were overexpansion and overcapacity, competition with American canneries, and provision of a seasonal labour force.³ An almost permanent "crisis of overexpansion" gripped the salmon industry, as new capital entered the industry on the expectation (derived from good years) of making high profits.⁴ As a result, there were too many canning plants for the size of the catch (especially when runs were poor), leading to stiff competition for fishing and canning labour, overexpansion of the fishing labour force, over-fishing, and price-cutting in export markets.⁵

Despite the shift of the industry to the north, overcapacity and overfishing remained problems on the Fraser in part because of American competition in export markets and for salmon stocks. As in the lumber industry, American capital had a large home market protected by tariffs,

3. This section is based in large part on my paper, "Relations of Production and Collective Action in the B.C. Salmon Fishery, 1900-1925."

4. See H.K. Ralston, The 1900 Strike of Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishermen" (hereafter, 1900 Strike).

5. H.E. Gregory and K. Barnes, North Pacific Fisheries with Special Reference to Alaska Salmon (hereafter North Pacific Fisheries); D. Stacey, Sockeye and Tinplate; Technological Change in the Fraser River Canning Industry, 1871-1912 (hereafter, Sockeye and Tinplate); Canada, Commission to Inquire into and Report on Certain Matters in Connection with Fishing and Cannning Industries in District No. 2, British Columbia, Transcript of Proceedings (hereafter, 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings), Exhibit 52; Canada, Special Fishery Commission, 1917, Report (hereafter, 1917 Fishery Commission, Report), pp. 11-15; Province, Jan. 13, 1906, Sept. 21, 1907.

and lower costs of production.⁶ Since U.S. costs determined the world price, B.C. canners were always at a disadvantage in the world markets on which they depended. In addition, Puget Sound canneries intercepted salmon on their way to the Fraser through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and bought fish from Fraser River fishermen, further depleting B.C. salmon stocks and raising canners' costs.⁷ Both forms of U.S. competition put considerable pressure on B.C. canners to protect their sources of supply of fish, and to reduce their costs of production in fishing and canning.

A final impediment to capital accumulation was the problem of securing a seasonal labour force for each canning plant. Canners competed for fishing and canning workers with each other, and with other sources of employment, such as railway construction, logging and sawmills. B.C. canners were handicapped in this competition by their need to keep down labour costs in order to compete with American canners, and they frequently complained of labour shortages.⁸

6. American costs were lower because they used low-cost, capital-intensive methods of catching fish (e.g., traps and purse seines), which were initially prohibited in B.C., and they had economies of scale deriving from larger plants and larger packs.

7. Comparisons of Canadian and American costs are found in H.G. Doyle to A.G. Kittson, Feb. 1, 1902 (quoted in L.J. Ross, Richmond, Child of the Fraser, p. 120); 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 1339, 1346; 1917 Fishery Commission, Report, pp. 15-18; PAC, RG 23, Fisheries Records, Vol. 1223, file 726-34-4 [3]. Competition for catches is reported in Province, Feb. 3, 1911; Canada, Fisheries Branch, Annual Report, 1915-16, p. 244, 1917 Fishery Commission, Report, p. 37.

8. See, for example, Province, July 14, 18, 1910, June 21, 1917; Sun, June 6, 1918; Canadian Fisherman, June 1918, p. 803.

In order to overcome these barriers to capital accumulation, salmon canners in B.C. engaged in cannery mergers and formed combines, mechanized cannery operations, and attempted to more closely control the fishing labour force. The principal example of the first strategy was the merger of twenty-two cannery firms to form B.C. Packers Association in 1902. Its objectives included consolidating and rationalizing plants in order to reduce operating costs, and achieving monopoly power over fishermen and cannery labour contractors, in order to lower the price of salmon and the cost of cannery labour.⁹ The latter objectives were also paramount for a succession of canners' associations that were formed after the fishermen's strike of 1900. The price of fish was consequently a major object of contention between fishermen and canners in the years that followed.¹⁰

Mechanization of cannery production lines proceeded rapidly after 1900. The main objectives were to eliminate production bottlenecks, and to replace Chinese workers, who became increasingly scarce and expensive after the "head tax" on Chinese immigrants was raised from \$100 to \$500 in 1903.¹¹ Technical innovations such as

9. See Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 172-73; Stacey, Sockey and Tinplate, pp. 19-20; D.J. Reid, "Company Mergers in the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry, 1885-1902."

10. For the objectives of canners' associations, see 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 110; on price contention, see Ralston, 1900 Strike, Ch. 6.

11. The basic source on canning and fishing technology in this period is Stacey, Sockey and Tinplate. On the head tax, see Ward, White Canada Forever, pp. 59, 61.

can-washing and soldering machines saved considerable labour in the first few years after 1900, and machinery subsequently supplanted both hand methods and Chinese workers. The Smith Butchering Machine, or "Iron Chink," introduced in 1906, replaced as many as thirty skilled Chinese butchers with three less-skilled operators. The solderless "sanitary can" reduced Chinese labour by another third when it was introduced in B.C. canneries about 1913, and other machines such as automatic can-weighers and salters had similar effects.¹² These changes in the labour process resulted in the replacement or deskilling of Chinese workers, and a speed-up in the pace of work. Both were potential objects of contention between cannery workers and their employers.

Cannery owners had less success in transforming the technical conditions of salmon fishing in the early 1900s, when they sought changes in fishery regulations to allow the use of trap and seine nets. Fraser River gillnet fishermen's fears that they would be displaced were not in fact realized, but fishing gear regulations were an object of contention for several years after 1900.¹³ Canners did, however,

12. Province, Aug. 15, 1906, Stacey, Sockey and Tinplate, pp. 20-24; for more on labour-saving technology, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 136, 154; Pacific Fisherman, Feb. 1912, p. 36, Jan. 1913, pp. 37-38.

13. See PAC, RG 23, Vol. 131, file 222, part 1, C. Durham to Hon. L.P. Brodeur, Oct. 1, 1900; Independent, May 3, 1902; News-Advertiser, Feb. 14, 17, 1903; Canada, British Columbia Salmon Commission, 1902, Record of Proceedings (hereafter, 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings), Session 4 - Anderson, Session 7 - Cross, Session 8 - G. Mackie; Canada, British Columbia Fisheries Commission, Evidence Submitted to a Dominion Fishery Commission Known as The British Columbia Fisheries Commission 1905-6

succeed in delaying technological change in the north, when motor boats were banned for salmon gill netting in Fisheries District 2 from 1911 to 1923. Established canners had pressed for this ban because, in their view, motor boats would only worsen existing problems of overfishing and overcapacity.¹⁴

Contention in salmon fishing also arose from the complex social relations of production through which individual canners sought to obtain and control supplies of salmon by "attaching" dependable, productive fishermen to their canneries. Salmon were caught and sold to canneries by two categories of fishermen: simple commodity producers who owned their means of production (boats, nets, and other gear), and wage labourers who fished with cannery-owned means of production. Although their nominal independence was limited by chronic debts to canners for boats, nets, food, and supplies, simple commodity producer fishermen were more difficult for canners to control than wage labour fishermen, who (in theory at least) were obliged to deliver their catches to the cannery supplying their gear. It was in the interest of each canner to force each fisherman to whom he advanced loans or means of production to deliver to his cannery, but it was in the interest of each fisherman to

(hereafter, 1905-06 Fisheries Commission), pp. 68-76; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 1512; Province, Feb. 16, 1910, April 15, 1918.

14. See PAC, RG 23, Vol. 80, file 6, part 6, D.M. Moore to A. Johnson, Jan. 27, 1911, W.D. Burdis to L.P. Brodeur, Feb. 25, 1911; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 167, 1128-19; 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, Report, pp. 8-9. For a more extended analysis, see Conley, "Relations of Production and Collective Action in the B.C. Salmon Fishery, 1900-1925."

evade that requirement if, as was often the case, he could get a better price by selling to another cannery or to an American fish buyer.¹⁵ The ownership of the salmon caught by fishermen was thus an object of constant conflict on the fishing grounds, and in the courts.¹⁶

Capital accumulation also gave rise to an object of contention between fishermen, over restriction of access to the fish. Increased competition for catches followed from capital accumulation, as each cannery tried to increase his pack by increasing the number of fishermen delivering to him, and increasing their productivity by giving the best gear to the most productive fishermen. More fishermen meant lower catches for each individual fisherman, who therefore needed higher prices per fish in order to earn "wages." If the fishermen could not get higher prices, their alternative was to seek to reduce the number of fishermen competing for the fish supply. The grounds on which license restriction would be sought depended on fishermen's social reproduction cycles; to those we now turn.

15. This was inevitably the case for wage labour fishermen, who were paid on "shares," receiving two thirds of the price per fish paid to independent fishermen.

16. Province, Aug. 5, 7, 1903; PAC, GR 429, Attorney-General's Papers, Box 11, file 3, p. 2072-04, W.D. Burdis to Colin Campbell, July 25, 1904; Province, Aug. 6, 1905; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, p. 251; PAC, RG 23, Vol. 1007, file 721-4-43, pp. 1-2, F.M. Cunningham to W.A. Fould, Aug. 2, 1915; Province, Aug. 2, 1915; Canadian Fisherman, Sept. 1915, p. 108; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 1439.

6.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

In the early twentieth century, salmon fishing and canning employed a large seasonal labour force in the Vancouver area. Depending on whether they were employed in fishing or in canning, the social reproduction cycles of workers differed substantially. Each branch will therefore be examined separately.

Salmon Fishermen

"The fisherman is a peculiar man. He lives in hope."¹⁷

Salmon fishing employed thousands of men in the Vancouver area for a few weeks or months each summer (Table 6-1). In 1901, 3526 gill net licenses were issued for the Fraser River district; with a net man and a boat puller in each boat,¹⁸ this meant there were over 7000 workers in the salmon fishery that summer. The number of licenses held steady in subsequent big years at about 2700, until a poor catch in 1917 nearly halved them to 1437 in 1921.¹⁹ Fishermen's numbers had actually

17. J.N. Broderick, officer of the B.C. Fishermen's Protective Association, 1917 Fishery Commission, Evidence, p. 1519. Practically all fishers were men; thus the masculine pronoun will be used here.

18. Canada, Dominion-British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1905-1907, Report and Recommendations, p. 24.

19. In years when runs were usually small, fewer licenses were issued than in big years.

Table 6-1

Fraser River Gill Net Licenses, by Type, 1900-1919

Year	Type of License					Total
	Japanese	Individual Indian	White	Company	'Between Bridge'	
1900 N	1659	555	1076	393	-	3683
%	45.0	15.1	29.2	10.7	-	100.0
1901 N	1805	396	909	416	-	3526
%	51.2	11.2	25.8	11.8	-	100.0
1902 N	929	583	781	381	-	2674
%	34.7	21.8	29.2	14.2	-	100.0
1903 N	1416	477	860	343	-	3096
%	45.7	15.4	27.8	11.1	-	100.0
1904 N	795	446	742	232	-	2215
%	35.9	20.1	33.5	10.5	-	100.0
1905 N	1056	464	915	339	-	2774
%	38.1	16.7	33.0	12.2	-	100.0
1906 N	494	392	660	200	-	1746
%	28.3	22.5	37.8	11.5	-	100.0
1907 N	769	270	494	193	-	1726
%	44.6	15.6	28.6	11.2	-	100.0
1908 N	717	175	273	3	195	1363
%	52.6	12.8	20.0	0.2	14.3	100.0
1909 N	1263	584	638	-	243	2728
%	46.3	21.4	23.4	-	8.9	100.0
1910 N	766	236	426	-	148	1576
%	48.6	15.0	27.0	-	9.4	100.0
1911 N	607	232	411	-	146	1396
%	43.5	16.7	29.4	-	10.5	100.0
1912 N	655	217	486	-	72	1430
%	45.8	15.2	34.0	-	5.0	100.0
1913 N	1132	476	843	-	109	2560
%	44.2	18.6	32.9	-	4.3	100.0
1914 N	1250	333	842	-	231	2656
%	47.1	12.5	31.7	-	8.7	100.0
1915 N	1332	317	768	-	199	2616
%	50.9	12.1	29.4	-	7.6	100.0
1916 N	1435	211	437	-	157	2240
%	64.1	9.4	19.5	-	7.0	100.0
1917 N	1520	300	570	-	237	2627
%	57.9	11.4	21.7	-	9.0	100.0
1918 N	1025	106	303	-	149	1583
%	64.8	6.7	19.1	-	9.4	100.0
1919 N	874	56	294	-	113	1337
%	65.3	4.2	22.0	-	8.5	100.0

Source: Rounsefell and Kelez, Salmon Fisheries, p. 706.

Note: Cannery licenses were abolished in 1907; between bridge licenses were established in 1908 for fishing by settlers between the New Westminster bridge and the Mission bridge.

been falling prior to that, however, after one-man gas-powered boats started to replace sail and oar-powered ones in 1906. In big years an average of about 72 boats fished for each cannery; in other years the average was higher, because fewer canneries operated.

The work of all gill net salmon fishermen was substantially the same: travelling from the cannery wharf to the fishing grounds, "making a drift" (setting the net, waiting for the salmon to hit, and hauling in the catch), and delivering the fish to a cannery tender (collector boat), or to the cannery itself.²⁰ They were paid according to the number of fish they caught, and consequently bore the risks of fishing. If they were unlucky, they would not earn "wages," or what they would have earned in ordinary wage labour.

Beyond the similar technical conditions of salmon fishing, however, lay important differences in the social reproduction cycles of fishermen, corresponding to class and racial group. Differences in social relations of production have already been described: some fishermen owned their boat, net, and other gear; other fishermen used cannery equipment. Because fishermen who owned their means of production were often heavily in debt to canneries, this difference could be dismissed as illusory, if it did not correspond to different cycles of social reproduction. Since they could not meet their economic

20. Some fishermen began to adopt other methods of salmon fishing in the 1900-1919 period, such as trolling and seining. They were not significant in the Vancouver area, however, so attention will be restricted here to gill net fishermen.

objectives only by salmon fishing in the summer,²¹ fishermen supported themselves the rest of the year through subsistence production, wage labour, or simple commodity production in the fishery or elsewhere. Wage worker and simple commodity producer fishermen were distinguished by the different roles which salmon fishing played in their annual cycles of social reproduction.

Wage-worker fishermen fished on shares for canneries during the sockeye run, then returned to wage work in other occupations. Hundreds of men flocked to the Fraser during the peak of the sockeye run: in 1902, 600 to 800 fishermen fished only for the three weeks between July 26 and August 16, when the run was heaviest.²² Other temporary fishermen fished for much or all of the salmon season, then worked in other industries with demands for labour in the winter. Many Japanese worker-fishermen combined salmon fishing in the north or on the Fraser with work in sawmills and shingle bolt camps around Vancouver.²³ For many Indians, salmon fishing with cannery gear was part of a cycle of

21. In 1901, R.J. Ker, a cannery manager, complained that fishermen wanted to live the whole year from the proceeds of a summer's sockeye salmon fishing, but "The days of their big six weeks money has gone by, just [as] have the days of big cannery profits." 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 12; cf. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 153.

22. Report of the Fisheries Commissioner for the Province of British Columbia, 1902, p. 10.

23. Knight and Koizumi, *A Man of Our Times*, pp. 24-51; D. Marlatt, *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese Canadian History* (hereafter, *Steveston Recollected*), p. 24; C.H. Young and H.R.Y. Reid, *The Japanese Canadians*, pp. 46-47; 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 116 - McKuni; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 498, 502, 639-40, 761-62, 982, 992.

seasonal migratory labour that included berry and hop-picking in the Fraser Valley and Washington, and logging in winter.²⁴ For white wage-worker fishermen, the employment possibilities in the off-season were broader: sources mention mechanics, labourers, longshoremen, miners, loggers, butchers, barbers, and clerks as temporary fishermen.²⁵ Because they were migratory, worked in a resource extraction industry, and generally lived as single males at or near the canneries that employed them, wage-worker fishermen can be considered frontier labourers.

The economic rationale behind summertime fishing by wage workers was to make more money in a short time than they could in other occupations. "Just making wages" summed up disappointed expectations:²⁶

This year I think the average fisherman, if he made wages that would be all. Q: What do you call wages? A: I am just speaking of the going wages in the country. Anything from \$80 to \$90 clear of expenses.

Fishing was often not good enough to earn wages, however, and wage worker fishermen regulated their participation in the salmon

24. Province, Sept. 2, 1903, 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 1030; R. Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* (hereafter, *Indians at Work*).

25. PAC, RG 23, Vol. 81, file 6, part 7, "Deputation of Cannerymen Received by the Honourable the Attorney-General, Parliament Buildings, Victoria," Oct. 29, 1912; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 7, 1913, p. 4.

26. 1917 Fishery Commission, p. 992; cf. Labour Gazette V (1904), p. 254; Province, Aug. 19, 1909; Knight and Kolzumi, *A Man of Our Times*, p. 26.

fishery according to the expected size of the run, the price being offered by canners, and the wages in other jobs.²⁷ In some years, shortages of fishermen were reported because of better pay or steadier work elsewhere; in other years, especially in the early 1900s, labour was scarce in other jobs because men had gone fishing.²⁸

Whether they fished for the whole season, or for the height of the sockeye run only, wage worker fishermen did so using cannery gear. Anyone who fished for only a few weeks could not afford to own a boat and net, and if he were only selling to canneries anyway, there was little advantage in doing so.²⁹

In contrast to wage worker fishermen, simple commodity salmon

27. For example, hundreds of Japanese workers stayed away from salmon fishing in 1902, because of dissatisfaction with a sliding scale of prices, and the existence of "sure and profitable" employment in shingle bolt camps. Labour Gazette III (1902), p. 64; Province, July 3, 10, 1902. Similarly, Indian fishermen generally travelled to the river where they expected to make the best money, and if better-paying jobs in railway construction or logging were available, fewer Indians fished. Province, June 4, 1903, June 20, 1906; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 275-80, 388-90, 423-25; Canada, Dominion-British Columbia Boat Rating Commission, 1910, Report (hereafter, 1910 Boat-Rating Commission, Report), p. 408; Canadian Fisherman, Aug. 1917, p. 334; Knight, Indians at Work.

28. For shortages of fishermen, see Province, Sept. 20, 1909, July 18, 1910; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 639-40; Canadian Fisherman, Aug. 1917, p. 334; for labour shortages, see Province, July 17, 1901, July 22, 1903, Aug. 8, 1905; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 127.

29. 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 300-02; Canada, British Columbia Fisheries Commission, Evidence Taken in British Columbia (hereafter 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, B.C. Evidence), Port Essington, Aug. 19 - T.H. Davidson.

fishermen owned and worked their own boats, nets, and other gear.³⁰ For the social reproduction of simple commodity producers, ownership of the means of production and the capacity to use them must be maintained or expanded. This could require wage labour in fishing or other occupations, other forms of simple commodity production such as trapping, handlogging, or farming, or full-time fishing. The latter was the most important cycle of reproduction for simple commodity fishermen, and those engaged in it were "bona fide fishermen."³¹

The number of fishermen owning boats, nets, and other gear increased in the Fraser River district throughout the 1900-1919 period.³² Legal ownership of means of production did not eliminate their dependence on cannerys, however. They were frequently in debt to cannerys, many lived in cannery houses, many more were tied by contracts to deliver salmon to a particular cannery, and virtually all were subject to the monopoly of cannerys as buyers of sockeye (and increasingly, of other salmon species as well). Under these conditions,

30. Strictly speaking, simple commodity producers are not members of the working class, because they own means of production. Yet they are workers, and the history of the relationship between wage worker and simple commodity fishermen illustrates the process of class formation.

31. Definitions and examples of bona fide fishermen can be found in Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 345; 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 3 - Demés, Session 4 - P. Wylie, Session 5 - Gonzalez, Session 8 - G. Mackie; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 151, 308-10; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 270-72, 1402-06.

32. See 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 12 - J.A. Russell: "Relative Interests of Fishermen on the Fraser River as of Sept. 20, 1901"; Province, Feb. 3, 1911, Aug. 25, 1916; Canadian Fisherman, June 1914, pp. 185-86, Feb. 1918, p. 612, Aug. 1920, p. 183.

the decisive difference between simple commodity and wage worker fishermen was that the former were able to pursue other fisheries. They were not restricted to fishing for canneries, and during this period other markets expanded.³³ After 1906, the mosquito fleet of gasoline-powered Columbia River boats was increasingly mobile, and the development of trolling after 1912 gave fishermen an additional chance to escape the direct domination of canners.³⁴ Still, fishermen who owned their means of production were never entirely independent of canners; they needed them as a market for sockeye, and as cannery and other processing companies became more diversified, their independence decreased.

Because of their continued dependence on cannery capital, and the latter's power in the determination of state policies, simple commodity producer fishermen experienced persistent difficulties in reproducing their ownership of boats and gear.³⁵ One of the most

33. In 1905, there was a market for fresh spring salmon, and in the fall, as many as 1000 boats caught dog salmon to sell to salteries for export to Japan, and cohoes to be frozen for export to Europe. In 1908, white and Japanese fishermen were fishing for herring, cod and spring salmon in the off-season. See Labour Gazette V (1905), p. 970; Province, Nov. 13, 1905, Sept. 22, 1908, Nov. 7, 1908.

34. In 1918 and 1919 hundreds of Japanese fishermen left the Fraser in their motor boats to troll off the west coast of Vancouver Island, and their success led white and Indian fishermen to follow. See Sun, June 12, 1918; Pacific Fisherman, Aug. 1919, p. 24; PAC, RG 23, Vol. 1233, File 726-34-4 [3], "Memorandum presented to the Fisheries Commission of the Dominion Government of Canada by the Steveston Fishermen's Benevolent Society, Vancouver, B.C. September 1922."

35. For example, Japanese fishermen expanded their simple commodity production only by living at a level of subsistence below that of most workers in B.C., by intensive fishing in a variety of areas and

important obstacles to their social reproduction was the system of attached licenses and prohibition on motor boats for salmon gillnetting in the north after 1911, because it prevented Fraser River fishermen from taking advantage of the mobility provided by motor boats to fish in the productive northern waters.³⁶ At hearings of commissions investigating the motor boat and other issues in 1917 and 1922, owners of boats and nets repeatedly expressed their desire to use them in the north.³⁷ Support for the ban on motor boats came not only from canners, however, but also from fishermen who were wage workers in both their immediate relations of production and cycles of social reproduction.³⁸ This suggests a conflict of interests between simple commodity and wage worker fishermen.

The conflict of interests between simple commodity producers and wage workers in the salmon fishery was not limited to the north. Temporary, migrant, working-class fishermen formed a reserve army of labour for canners, filling the latter's fluctuating demand for fishermen (depending on the expected size of the run), and providing a

fisheries, and by taking advantage of cooperative practices within the Japanese community. See Province, March 21, 1908, Sun, March 25, 1912.

36. On the motor boat ban, see above, page 264. In the system of attached licenses, fishermen were licensed to fish for particular canneries, rather than independently.

37. 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 9, 510, 516, 838-39; 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, B.C. Evidence, Vancouver, Sept. 9 - A.G. Harvey; *ibid.*, Ottawa Evidence, p. 30.

38. See 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, B.C. Evidence, Port Essington, Aug. 19 - T.H. Davidson; *ibid.*, Report, p. 9; PAC, RG 23, Vol. 1293, file 726-34-4 [3], "Evidence of No. 2 District Fishermen's Association."

cheap source of labour. The last point is not immediately apparent, since all fishermen were paid the same price (minus the share taken by canners for rent of the boat, etc., from wage worker fishermen), but some speculation on the determination of the price of raw salmon supports that conclusion. On the one hand, the upper limit of prices was set by what canners, with their problems of overcapacity and competition on the world market, could afford to pay and still operate at a profit. On the other hand, the lower limit on prices was determined by the need to attract a productive and reliable working-class labour force. To do that, they had to offer enough so that, if the run was successful, more money could be earned in fishing than in alternative occupations. It is unlikely that the latter would need to be sufficiently high to pay the costs of production and reproduction of simple commodity producer fishermen. In short, the existence of a reserve army of working-class fishermen lowered the price paid to simple commodity fishermen.³⁹

Full-time, simple commodity fishermen were aware of the relationship between temporary working-class fishermen, and the price they received for fish. For example, in 1902 the Grand Lodge of the B.C. Fishermen's Union based its price demands in part on how many "woodsmen-fishermen" were expected to fish on the Fraser. In 1905, G.W. West, a Fraser River fisherman, denounced working-class fishermen in these terms: "Us practical fishermen is killed by the drygoods clerks

39. At the very least, it reduced the bargaining power of simple commodity producers.

and counter-jumpers that goes fishing. They just does it for a holiday." When a man has his own gear, he continued, "then he can go to the cannery and ask for a reasonable price ... There are plenty of us without them and we're men that can get a living if we get a fair chance."⁴⁰

The conflict of interests between simple commodity producer and wage worker fishermen was not the only division in their midst. Both classes of fishermen were also racially divided. Many of the main features of the social reproduction cycles of native Indian, Japanese, and white fishermen have been mentioned in passing already, so only the differences most significant for mobilization and collective action need be stated here. They were primarily differences of class, and of position in labour and consumption markets.

Most native Indian fishermen on the Fraser River were wage workers who engaged in sockeye salmon fishing as part of a pattern of migratory wage labour, combined with subsistence and simple commodity production.⁴¹ They came to the Fraser from the north (in big years), the Interior, and the immediate vicinity of Vancouver, camping on the shores of the Fraser near the canneries in New Westminster. While the Indian men fished, using cannery boats and gear, Indian women worked in

40. Province, July 5, 1902; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, p. 149. Cf. 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 11 - W. Cassidy; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 1542-43; 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, B.C. Evidence, Rivers Inlet, Aug. 23 - G.S. McTavish.

41. Some Indians were full-time simple commodity fishermen, however. See Knight, Indians at Work.

the canneries. Cannerymen frequently stated that they employed the Indian men, whom they regarded as less productive than whites or Japanese, solely in order to secure the labour of the Indian women.⁴² The labour of both men and women was hired indirectly, through intermediaries in each band.⁴³

Like their Indian counterparts, Japanese fishermen were often migratory workers, and were engaged to work for canneries through intermediaries, in their case labour contractors. As in the lumber industry, Japanese contractors in salmon fishing arranged with canneries to supply a certain number of fishermen, who were housed during the fishing season in boarding houses supplied by the canneries. The contractor, or "house boss" also supplied the fishermen with provisions, whence came most of his profits.⁴⁴

In contrast to the Indians, Japanese were much sought after by canneries as highly productive, intensive fishermen, and therefore they

42. See 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 7 - Welsh, Session 14 - Todd; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 86, 444; 1910 Boat-Rating Commission, Report, p. 40; British Columbia Magazine, March 1911, pp. 191-93; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 359-60, 1586.

43. P. Gladstone, Industrial Disputes in the Commercial Fisheries of British Columbia (hereafter, Industrial Disputes), p. 120.

44. On house bosses, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 341-42; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 500; 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, Report, p. 12; Marlatt, Steveston Recollected, pp. 11, 24, 39; J. Irwin, "Steveston: The Japanese-Canadian Experience," pp. 8-9; Knight and Kojzumi, A Man of Our Times, p. 30; H. Sugimoto, Japanese Immigration, the Vancouver Riots and Canadian Diplomacy, pp. 19-20.

were seen by whites and Indians as a threat.⁴⁵ In addition, it appears that through various forms of mutual aid, including help from Japanese merchants and contractors, increasing numbers of Japanese wage-worker fishermen were able to buy boats and gear, and become simple commodity producers.⁴⁶ Finally Japanese fishermen were also seen as a threat by New Westminster merchants, because in contrast to Indians and whites, they did not spend their earnings in the city.⁴⁷

White fishermen included both wage workers and simple commodity producers, and as with the others, the proportion of the latter tended to rise. White wage-worker fishermen differed from their Indian and Japanese counterparts in being hired individually, rather than collectively through a labour contractor. This had the disadvantages for the cannery operators of less discipline, and more bookkeeping work, but they regarded white fishermen as more productive than Indians, although less productive than Japanese. Like the others, white

45. See Province, Dec. 6, 1905; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 1108-09; G.A. Rounsefell and G.B. Kelez, The Salmon and Salmon Fisheries of Swiftsure Bank, Puget Sound, and the Fraser River (hereafter, Salmon Fisheries), p. 1707; H. Doyle, "Excerpts from the Diaries of Henry Doyle: An Early Canner's Account of Salmon Strikes and Profit," p. 28.

46. See B.C. Commissioner of Fisheries, Report, 1912, pp. 12-13; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 178-79; Canada, Commission to Investigate Fisheries Conditions in British Columbia, B.C. Fisheries Commission Report and Recommendations (hereafter, 1922 B.C. Fisheries Commission, Report), p. 9.

47. On Indian consumption, see Province, Aug. 30, 1901. In 1908, members of the Board of Trade complained that the fishermen's business "was once the biggest thing New Westminster had" but was gone because there was "no trade with the Japanese fishermen," whereas trade with whites and Indians was considerable. British Columbia, April 7, 1914.

4

UNITED STATES RESOLUTION TEST CHART
1963-A
10X
1.0 1.1 1.25 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 2.2 2.5 2.8 3.2 3.6 4.0 4.5 5.0 5.6 6.3 7.1 8.0 9.0 10 11 12.5 14 16 18 20 22 25 28 32 36 40 45 50 56 63 71 80 90 100 112 125 140 160 180 200 224 250 280 315 360 400 450 500 560 630 710 800 900 1000

wage-worker fishermen were migratory, and they followed a variety of occupations outside the fishing season. They differed from Indian and Japanese fishermen in two ways, however: a larger proportion of whites probably came from the Vancouver area, especially in the early years of the century, and they were occupationally more heterogeneous. Although the former may have made up for the lack of ethnic solidarity possessed by the Indian and Japanese fishermen, the latter made solidarity more problematic.

Simple commodity producer fishermen were also geographically concentrated, mainly in New Westminster and downstream from the city on the Fraser River, often in ethnically homogeneous communities. This geographic concentration of simple commodity fishermen contributed to their solidarity, and led members of other classes to facilitate their mobilization and collective action, as we will see subsequently.⁴⁸

Unlike white wage-worker fishermen, white simple commodity producers were not frontier labourers: their permanent residence in New Westminster put them in the class of settled urban workers (to the extent they can be considered part of the working class at all).

To summarize, in early twentieth century Vancouver and district, two intersecting dimensions of the social reproduction cycles of salmon fishermen shaped both class formation and objects of contention. The class dimension divided fishermen into simple commodity producers and

48. See S. Jamieson and P. Gladstone, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," p. 7.

wage workers; the racial dimension divided fishermen into Indian, Japanese, and white groups.

Tendencies of group formation operated on each dimension. On the racial dimension, both Indians and Japanese had solidarities deriving from their common minority status and collective labour market practices; whites had solidarities deriving from ethnicity, and from a growing hostility to Japanese fishermen. On the class dimension, it appears that among whites at least, simple commodity producers had more solidarity, because of their shared occupational experience and geographical concentration, than did the more diverse and dispersed wage workers.

Objects of contention in the salmon fishery derived from the combination of fishermen's social reproduction cycles and salmon canners' strategies of capital accumulation. The reproduction of fishermen as either wage workers or simple commodity producers depended on their fishing income, which was the product of the price of salmon and their catches. The interests of any of the solidary groups of fishermen consequently lay in two directions: raising the price of salmon, and reducing competition for finite fish stocks. The former interest conflicted directly with the interests of canners in keeping down the cost of their raw material, and gave rise to strikes for higher prices. The latter interest was more complex. Collective interests in restricting competition could be pursued through the restriction of access to the fish (by means of licensing regulations) on any of three grounds: gear type, race, and ownership of means of production. Each

strategy could involve conflicts with other fishermen or with canners. In gear conflicts, the gill netters sought restrictions on competing technologies that were adopted either by canners (such as trap nets) or by other fishermen (such as seines), and fought restrictions on their own technology (such as conservation measures). In racial conflicts, white and Indian fishermen sought restrictions on their most effective competitors, the Japanese fishermen. In conflicts involving ownership, simple commodity producers tried to exclude wage-worker fishermen. The last two types of conflict were mainly between different groups of fishermen, but as we saw in the previous section, they were shaped by canner strategies, which tended to increase competition among fishermen. In the long run, the racial conflicts became dominant, which can be explained by processes of mobilization and collective action. Before turning to that, however, we must examine the social reproduction cycles of workers in the canning branch of the industry.

Cannery Workers

Canneries were highly mechanized factories operating on assembly line principles; consequently the workers in them were factory operatives. At the beginning of the twentieth century, thousands of workers were employed inside salmon canneries, but their numbers declined steadily as a result of mechanization, rationalization, and the shift of investment to the north. Thus, in 1901, nearly 6000 men and women were employed in salmon canneries in the Vancouver area, but by

Table 6-2

Cannery Employees, District 1, British Columbia
(Lower Mainland), 1900-1919

Year	No. of Canneries Operating	Employees	Employees per Cannery
1900	45	6298	140
1901	49	5900	120
1902	42	5250	125
1903	35	4373	125
1904	23	1826	79
1905	38	4692	123
1906	24	2590	108
1907	18	1400	78
1908	16	1350	75
1909	38	4400	116
1910	21	4500	155
1911	15	1613	108
1912	15	1640	109
1913	35	3493	100
1914	20	2169	108
1915	22	2209	100
1916	21	2109	100
1917	29	-	-
1918	18	1030	57
1919	14	789	56

Sources: Fisheries Branch, Annual Reports, 1900-1919;
Canada, Census of Industry, 1917-1919.

Note: Number of employees from 1910 to 1916 includes
fish-house and freezer employees; all other years
are for cannery employees only. No data were
available for 1917.

1921 there were less than 1000 (Table 6-2).⁴⁹ Despite this decline, the average number of workers in each cannery held steady from 1900 to 1916 at about 100 workers, as the consolidation of cannery plants counteracted the effects of mechanization.⁵⁰

The social reproduction cycles of factory operatives in salmon canneries were dominated by a racial and gender division of labour, which resulted in three main groups of cannery workers: Chinese men, Indian and Japanese women, and white men.

Chinese men were the majority of salmon cannery workers. In 1901, for example, the Anglo British Columbia Packing Co. employed 720 Chinese men, 300 Indian women, and 180 white men in its canneries. Chinese men were employed mainly because they were cheap, reliable, and expert workers. According to one canner, "The Chinese are steady in their habits, reliable in their work, and reliable to make contracts with. They won't strike while you have a big pile of fish on your dock. They are less trouble and less expense than whites. They are content with rough accomodation at the canneries."⁵¹

Chinese cannery workers were skilled factory operatives. At the

49. In 1921, there were 887 cannery employees in Distict 1, which included all of the lower mainland (Canada, Census of Industry, 1921). In consulting this table, the four-year sockeye cycle should be kept in mind.

50. In the early 1890s, three times as many workers were employed in individual cannery plants. See Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 136, 144.

51. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 145. Cf. A.E. Copping, Canada To-day and To-morrow, p. 251; Province, Aug. 30, 1914, for similar statements.

beginning of the period, they were employed making cans, butchering the salmon, and filling, soldering, cooking, lacquering and boxing the cans. As the supply of Chinese workers declined relative to the demand, and wages rose in consequence, canners responded by mechanizing their plants.⁵²

Like their counterparts in the lumber industry, Chinese cannery workers were employed through labour contractors.⁵³ This system had several advantages for canners. Well before the fishing season began, arrangements were made with a Chinese contractor to put up the pack for a certain amount per case, turning that into a known, fixed cost. The canner was saved the trouble and expense of recruiting skilled and increasingly scarce Chinese workers, who were lured from jobs in agriculture or domestic service by advances paid by the contractor. In addition, the contractor stayed at the cannery to help supervise the workers, and was "able to get more work out of the men" than could the canner employing day labour. Finally, the men were accommodated in rough bunkhouses supplied by the canneries, and the contractor supplied his men with provisions, which were his main source of profit. If the pack

52. Shortages of Chinese cannery workers, and rising wages are reported beginning in 1901: Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 137, 142, 144; Province, April 12, 22, 1904, Oct. 3, 1905, May 22, 1906, June 9, 1906, July 16, 1906, Aug. 10, 1906, News-Advertiser, June 10, 1909; A.E. Copping, Canada To-day and To-morrow, p. 251; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 192-93; Vol. 3, pp. 10-14; cf. Stacey, Sockeye and Tinplate, pp. 20-21. On mechanization of cannery plants see above, page 262.

53. Published accounts, based largely on the same sources used here, are D. Stacey, "The China Contract," and Ward, White Canada Forever, p. 17.

was small, and the contractor might not make enough money to cover advances and board, the workers' meals would be cut back, and they might not be paid at the end of the season. Some of the risks of canning were thus transferred from the canners to the contractors and their workers.⁵⁴

Indian and Japanese women comprised the second largest group of cannery workers. In the early 1900s, nearly all female cannery workers were Indian, but by 1914, they were being supplanted by Japanese women in the Fraser River canneries, beginning a trend that continued at least until 1925.⁵⁵ The women were hired mainly to clean the salmon and fill cans by hand, being paid by the hour for the former, and by the piece for the latter.⁵⁶ Like the Chinese cannery workers, Indian and Japanese women worked under Chinese labour contractors. They were not hired by the Chinese bosses, however; the cannery recruited them through the same intermediaries as Indian and Japanese fishermen, and determined their

54. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 135, 141-43, 145-46, 148, 153, 160; Province, Aug. 9, 1907. On sources of Chinese cannery labour, see *ibid.*, pp. 142, 145, 150; Province, Oct. 3, 1905; Weekly Columbian, May 1, 1906.

55. This resulted from changes in the social reproduction cycles of Indians and Japanese in B.C. Because they were taking up agricultural pursuits, Indians were not migrating to the Fraser in poor years of the sockeye run. Once Japanese women were allowed into the country, they became available for cannery work while their husbands fished. British Columbian, July 14, 1914; W.A. Carrothers, "Standards of Living of the Orientals in British Columbia", p. 89.

56. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 141, 143, 148, 153; Independent, March 30, 1901; British Columbia Magazine, March 1911, pp. 168-70, 191-93; British Columbian, July 14, 1914.

wage scales.⁵⁷

The kinship relations of Indian and Japanese women cannery workers with salmon fishermen of the same racial group were amongst the most significant aspects of their social reproduction cycles. As we have seen, canners employed Indian fishermen principally to secure the labour of Indian women, who would not be available for cannery work unless Indian men migrated to the Fraser to fish. Similarly, Japanese women migrated to the canneries with their fishermen husbands. Those kinship relations gave Indian and Japanese fishermen and cannery workers a solidarity that was lacking for white fishermen and cannery workers. Given the sexual division of labour that evidently existed in both Indian and Japanese groups, it was unlikely that this solidarity would be used as a resource for women to redress their own grievances through collective action, but it could be used by fishermen for their collective purposes.⁵⁸

White men employed in canneries formed a labour aristocracy similar to that in the lumber mills. About 10 per cent of the workforce in each cannery consisted of white men in supervisory, administrative, and skilled trades positions (foremen, net bosses, engineers, watchmen, tallymen, etc.). In contrast to other cannery workers, this white labour aristocracy was steadily employed for about five months each

57. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, pp. 148, 153; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 15-17; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 574, 1131.

58. On Japanese women, see 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, p. 574; Marlatt, Steveston Recollected, p. 15.

season, with little variation from season to season. Their monthly pay was over twice that of male Chinese cannery workers.⁵⁹

The relationship between the white and Chinese cannery workers appears to have been hostile. An incident at the Imperial Cannery in Steveston in 1903 illustrates the general tenor of relations. Because a Chinese worker had left a tap running, a cannery foreman knocked him unconscious with a lump of coal, whereupon the other Chinese workers, many of whom worked with knives, chased the foreman to the net loft, where he escaped through a window.⁶⁰ Few interests or experiences were shared by the white labour aristocracy and other cannery workers.

Workers employed in the salmon canning industry were divided in a multitude of ways by their cycles of social reproduction. First, they were divided between two branches of production, fishing and canning. The labour processes of the two branches could hardly be more distinct. On the one hand were fishermen working independently, beyond the supervision of capitalists, with virtually no division of labour; on the other hand were cannery operatives working in increasingly mechanized, assembly line factories, with a complex, hierarchical division of labour, under the despotic authority of supervisors.

59. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 139-41, 143, 148, 152, 164; Independent, March 30, 1901; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 193, Vol. 3, p. 3.

60. Weekly Columbian, Sept. 15, 1903. It was undoubtedly only the narrow escape of the foreman which led to the event being reported. A traveller's tale that all white cannery employees were armed is probably fanciful. F. Herring, Among the People of British Columbia, p. 267.

Second, workers in each branch of production were divided on lines of class, racial group, and gender. Fishermen were divided into simple commodity producers fishing full-time in their own boats, and wage workers fishing seasonally in cannery boats. Cutting across this division was one between Japanese, Indian, and white fishermen. They were hired differently, lived in different accommodations, spent their incomes in different places, and were unequally valued by canners. Cannery workers were also divided racially, and by gender, into Chinese men, Indian and Japanese women, and white men. They played different roles in the labour process and authority structure, and were recruited and paid differently. Female cannery employees were distinctive, because they were linked by kinship to salmon fishermen, constituting the only link of solidarity across the boundary between the two branches of the industry.

Objects of contention in the salmon fishery derived from contradictions between canners' strategies of capital accumulation, and fishermen's social reproduction cycles, and from competition for catches amongst fishermen. The interests of canners and fishermen were antagonistic with respect to price and technological change. Conflicts among fishermen were over restrictions on access to the fishery, either on racial grounds, or by ownership of means of production. Except for the threat from mechanization to the position of Chinese experts in the labour process, the main object of contention between canners and cannery workers was probably wages and hours. Out of this complex web of social reproduction cycles in salmon fishing and canning grew

different possibilities for mobilization and collective action; to those we now turn.

6.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

The history of mobilization and collective action by workers in the salmon industry between 1900 and 1919 was dominated by huge annual strikes of fishermen from 1900 to 1903. Fishermen also pursued their objectives through political action throughout the period, in conflicts with canners over fishery regulations, and in competition between racial groups. In contrast to fishermen, cannery workers engaged in very little collective action, nearly all of which occurred between 1900 and 1906.

Salmon Fishermen

For the salmon fishermen of the Fraser River, the nineteenth century ended with the creation of a union, and intense conflict with canners over the price of salmon and over fishery regulations. The effects of the class and racial divisions in the fishermen's ranks were clearly revealed in this period. Racial divisions between whites, Indians, and Japanese had disastrous consequences in strikes, while class divisions between simple commodity producer and wage-worker fishermen were felt most strongly in collective action over fishery regulations. Strikes will be examined first, then collective action

over license restrictions and other fishing regulations.

Strikes by Fraser River salmon fishermen over the prices paid by canners for sockeye occurred annually from 1900 to 1903. Their sources lay in the sharpening of contradictions between canners' strategies of capital accumulation and fishermen's social reproduction cycles, and the resulting mobilization of white salmon fishermen.

Contradictions between capital accumulation and fishermen's social reproduction came to a head in the early 1900s because of the industry's growth in the 1890s. As the number of canneries rose, each canner tried to secure supplies of salmon by increasing the number of fishermen delivering to his cannery. Thus the total number of licenses issued on the Fraser rose rapidly beginning in the mid-1890s, with much of the growth being accounted for by newly arrived Japanese fishermen (Table 6-1). Average catches of individual fishermen declined as a result of the increased competition, and were only partially offset by higher prices. Combined with other conditions (such as overcapacity) those higher prices led, at the turn of the century, to canners' monopoly strategy of combines and mergers to regulate fish prices. The Fraser River Canners Association was formed in late 1899, and B.C. Packers came into being in 1902. The formation of the Canners Association led almost immediately to the organization of a fishermen's union in New Westminster, followed by one in Vancouver a few months later.⁶¹

61. This mobilization of white salmon fishermen was possible because their consciousness and solidarity had developed in a prolonged conflict

From the beginning, the unions in Vancouver and New Westminster were different: the latter was composed mainly of simple commodity producer fishermen, while the former enrolled mostly wage-worker fishermen.⁶² Racial distinctions were also reflected in fishermen's mobilization. Some Indians were organized in the union, and they generally followed its lead, but an attempt to unionize Japanese fishermen in 1900 failed. Instead, the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society was formed as a mutual aid association, with a membership that included labour contractors as well as fishermen.⁶³

The organization of salmon fishermen was the final precondition for the series of annual sockeye salmon fishermen's strikes between 1900 and 1903. In each, the organized fishermen's goal of a minimum sockeye price for the entire season conflicted with the organized canners' interest in using the competition of fishermen to keep down prices. Thus the 1900 strike came about when the new fishermen's organizations all demanded a minimum price of 25 cents a fish for the sockeye season. The canners refused to bargain with the fishermen, and simply announced a maximum price of 20 cents a fish, which on past practice would be

with canners over revisions to the fishery regulations, beginning in 1896. Rounsefell and Kelez, *Salmon Fisheries*, p. 706; Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 74-76, 93-96. The background to, and events of the 1900 strike have been exhaustively described and analyzed by Ralston, and my discussion relies heavily on his.

62. An immediate effect of that difference was that the former wanted to limit membership to white fishermen, but the latter, under socialist leadership, favored the organization of fishermen of all races.

63. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 80-104; Marlatt, *Steveston Recollected*, pp. 29-30, 35-36; *Province*, Oct. 27, 1911.

reduced when the sockeye run became heavy. Consequently, when the sockeye season opened on July 1, 1900, about 7000 fishermen went on strike (although there was no real work stoppage until the sockeye run actually began).⁶⁴

The 1900 strike was eventually defeated by the racial division between whites and Japanese, a lack of coordination between union locals, and provincial government aid to the canners. The racial division appeared first, when Japanese in as many as 1000 boats tried to fish at the end of the strike's first week, and a system of union patrol boats was established to stop them.⁶⁵ Lack of agreement between the whites' unions appeared near the end of the third week, when mass meetings of mostly wage-worker fishermen at Vancouver, Steveston, and Burne vowed to hold out for the original demand (25 cents), but the New Westminster simple commodity producer fishermen, and the Japanese, were said to be ready to fish for the 20 cents proposed by their negotiators. The Japanese fishermen broke first, and on July 24, between 3500 and 4000 Japanese fishermen started fishing, under the protection of the militia, whom the canners had arranged to have called out the previous evening.⁶⁶

64. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 105-13; Province, July 6, 7, 19, 21, 1900; World, July 18, 1900, Independent, July 21, 1900.

65. The weak support of Japanese fishermen for the strike was also shown by their absence from a large march and demonstration by white and Indian fishermen on July 14. See Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 113-23.

66. Two days of negotiations with canners broke down on June 20. Fishermen's negotiators were ready to settle for 20 cents, and canners had offered 18 cents, for the season. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 124-25.

One third to one half of the licensed fishermen, including most whites and Indians, and some Japanese, stayed on strike, and the canneries were unable to procure sufficient fish.⁶⁷ The precarious unity of the loosely-organized fishermen's union was starting to come apart, however. White fisherman at New Westminster, Eburne, and the few left in Vancouver were evidently ready to return on the canners' terms, leaving only the migrant wage workers at Steveston as hold-outs. The latter's leaders finally persuaded them to reduce their demands to 20 cents and union recognition. After further negotiations they accepted 19 cents, without union recognition, and on July 30, the strike was over.⁶⁸

Subsequent strikes revealed the same forces as in 1900: divisions between white and Japanese fishermen, divisions within the former between simple commodity producers in New Westminster and wage workers in Steveston, and state repression to protect strikebreakers.

After the 1900 strike, efforts to strengthen the white fishermen's unions culminated in the formation of a united Grand Lodge in March 1901.⁶⁹ When the new Grand Lodge of the B.C. Fishermen's Union

67. The run remained light, many of the Japanese who had started fishing were inexperienced and unproductive, and Indian fishermen were starting to return to their reserves, taking Indian women cannery workers with them.

68. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 142-67.

69. Unions were reported in Vancouver, Steveston, Eburne, Port Gulchon, Canoe Pass, and New Westminster at the end of the strike, but when the Grand Lodge was formed only four were mentioned: New Westminster, Vancouver, Canoe Pass, and Eburne (which was reported as organized in January, 1901). A lodge whose members were all Indians was organized at

(BCFU) raised the issue of price in the spring of 1901, it appeared to reflect the interests of simple commodity fishermen, since it warned the recalcitrant canners that the longer they delayed meeting the union, the less would be the influence of "bona fide resident fishermen," who were likely to be "responsible" in their demands.⁷⁰ They originally demanded a flat 15 cents a fish for the season, but backed down to 12 1/2 cents at the end of June, when canners were offering 12 1/2 cents until July 27, and 10 cents thereafter.⁷¹

The stage was set for another strike, but the fishermen were badly divided. Indian fishermen were behind the union's demands, and planned to stay away from the Fraser until a satisfactory price had been agreed. Japanese fishermen were silent, but by the end of June it appeared that they would fish on the canners' terms. As a consequence, the New Westminster lodge of the BCFU was against a strike, fearing that the canners could get by with only Japanese fishermen.⁷² Nevertheless, when the fishing season opened on July 1, approximately 3500 fishermen

Port Simpson in April, 1901. See Province, Aug. 4, 6, 11, 13, 31, 1900; Labour Gazette I (1901), p. 340; Independent, Jan. 19, 1901, April 6, 1901, May 11, 1901.

70. World, April 24, 1901, May 6, 16, 1901.

71. For the history of the negotiations, see Province, March 6, 1901, June 8, 10, 17, 18, 20, 1901, June 24, 1901; World, June 4, 7, 10, 17, 19, 22, 1901; Independent, June 15, 1901, June 29, 1901. The price demanded in 1901 was lower than in the previous year, because individual catches were expected to be larger in 1901, which was a big year in the four-year sockeye cycle. The canners' proposed reduction of July 27 was timed to coincide with the usual peak of the run.

72. World, June 10, 19, 1901; Province, June 17, 24, 26, 27, ~~1901~~.

(mostly white and Indian) went on strike.⁷³ After several days of uncertainty, Japanese fishermen began to fish, protected by their own patrol boats, and by the provincial police, who made several arrests of white fishermen. Since they could not prevent the Japanese from fishing, the strikers agreed to a compromise that turned out to be in their favor, and returned to work on July 21 or so.⁷⁴

In 1902, the canners continued to try to adjust the price of sockeye to the size of the pack. The Fraser River Canners Association proposed a sliding scale of prices, from 10 cents a fish for a large pack, to 20 cents a fish if the pack was small. Although the white fishermen's union originally rejected the proposal and broke off negotiations, an agreement was reached with canners on July 14, without a strike being called. The minimum price was raised to 11 cents, a limit of 2000 was set on the number of boats employed by canners, with preference to go to whites and Indians, and the canners agreed to help the union collect fees and dues. The agreement seemed designed to

73. The union claimed a membership of 3800 in early June, but this appears exaggerated. License data (Table 6-1) show that 1805 licenses were issued to Japanese, 396 to Indians, 909 to whites, and 416 to canneries. Since cannery licenses generally went to Indians, there were 1721 licenses issued to whites and Indians. With two men to a boat, and a few Japanese strikers, the figure of 3500 seems a reasonable estimate, better than the Labour Gazette's 5000. See World, June 7, 1901; Rounsefell and Kelez, Salmon Fisheries, p. 706; Labour Gazette II (1901), p. 125.

74. They settled on the basis of 12 1/2 cents for the first quarter of the pack, and 10 cents for the remainder. The sockeye run was small until July 30, after the canners' original 12 1/2 cent offer would have expired, and in the final settlement, the fishermen received 12 1/2 cents until August 6. Province, July 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 30, 1901, Sept. 7, 1901.

freeze out the Japanese, and to test the argument that if there were fewer fishermen (and therefore larger individual catches), they could afford to take lower prices.⁷⁵

White fishermen at Steveston and Canoe Pass were unhappy with the deal, however, forcing the secretary of the Grand Lodge to defend it as "the very best the canners would give this season, and having seen the disastrous results of our former strikes," a prudent compromise.⁷⁶ Japanese fishermen at Steveston were also reluctant to accept an agreement so contrary to their own interests, and demanded 17 cents until August 2, and 15 cents thereafter. As of July 18, none of the fishermen at Steveston had begun fishing, and militant Japanese had sent out patrols to prevent other Japanese from fishing. The patrol boats were suppressed by the provincial police, however, and when the fishermen's house bosses were given an ultimatum by the canners on July 23 to fish at the existing scale or not fish at all, they capitulated. At least 1000 fishermen had been on strike for six days.⁷⁷

The fishing season turned out to be a poor one, and many fishermen barely made wages. The strikers' distrust of the sliding scale was vindicated by the failure of canners and fishermen to agree on

75. Independent, June 14, 21, 1902; Province, June 17, 19, 21, 30, 1902, July 4, 5, 7, 14, 15, 1902; Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 28, 64-65.

76. Province, July, 16, 18, 19, 1902; Independent, July 19, 1902.

77. Dissatisfaction had also been expressed by Japanese fishermen through their unwillingness to leave other jobs in order to fish, and there were half as many Japanese fishermen as in the previous year. See Independent, July 12, 1902; Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 64-65. On the strike, see Province, July 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 1902.

the size of the catch at the end of the season, leading the BCFU and the Japanese association to unsuccessfully take the canners to court.⁷⁸ As a result, the BCFU and the Japanese Benevolent Association were united in 1903 by a desire to do away with the sliding scale of prices. They both rejected the canners' price offer, but their own price demands were different, and the whites' union ended up calling a strike on its own. The white fishermen appeared to be in a strong position: Indian fishermen supported them by agreeing not to come to the Fraser for less than the 18 cents being demanded, and there were expected to be fewer Japanese fishermen because of their association's warning not to leave other jobs when the canners' price offer was so low.⁷⁹ The union set up a patrol boat system, and at midnight, June 30, about 4500 fishermen went on strike. The Japanese fishermen did nothing until two days after sockeye started to run up the river on July 11, when they started fishing on the canners' terms. Knowing from past experience that they could not prevent the Japanese from fishing, because the provincial police would suppress patrol boats, the BCFU called off the strike on

78. Labour Gazette II (1902), pp. 147, 225; Province, Aug. 28, 29, 1902, Sept. 2, 4, 1902, Nov. 22, 1902, Dec. 3, 1902. The BCFU later claimed that the average earnings of sockeye fishermen in 1902 were only \$62 to \$66 for two months' work. See Province, June 8, 1903; Weekly Columbian, June 9, 1903.

79. The canners offered a sliding scale from 12 to 20 cents, or a flat rate of 15 cents in July and 14 in August. The BCFU wanted 18 and 17 cents; the Japanese association 16 and 15 cents. Province, April 22, 1903, May 2, 6, 22, 30, 1903, June 8, 1903; Weekly Columbian, May 5, 1903, June 9, 1903.

July 15.⁸⁰

As far as Fraser River sockeye salmon fishermen were concerned, strikes over prices had failed, and consequently they did not strike again for a decade.⁸¹ The failure of strikes showed that in this arena at least, fishermen could not match the power of canners, who were backed up by the provincial government. The primary reason for fishermen's lack of power was the racial division between whites and Indians on the one hand, and Japanese on the other, because the canners could use one group as strikebreakers against the other. Japanese fishermen were particularly vulnerable in these years, because of their economic dependence on the salmon fishery.

Sockeye salmon fishermen remained concerned about price, but after these failures they did not strike against canneries over the issue for another decade.⁸² In 1907, canners showed that they were firmly in control, by returning to their old practice of waiting until

80. Province, June 8, 22, 29, 30, 1903; July 2, 6, 13, 14, 1903; Weekly Columbian, June 30, 1903; July 21, 1903; World, July 6, 8, 11, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 126. The number of strikers has been estimated from license data.

81. The price issue certainly did not go away. For example, in 1905, white and Japanese fishermen were unhappy with the canners' price offer, but there was no talk of a strike against it. Province, May 29, 31, 1905, June 7, 12, 15, 17, 1905, July 10, 1905.

82. Even in the spring salmon fishery, where buyers (primarily fresh fish dealers) lacked the power of canners, a 1907 strike against a price reduction by about 75 union fishermen in New Westminster lasted only a few days before enough of the fishermen broke ranks to supply the buyers with as many fish as they needed. Province, June 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 1907; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 295, file 2941. The strikers were probably full-time fishermen, since they were fishing before the sockeye season.

the season opened before unilaterally declaring the season's price (so as not to discourage fishermen from coming to the river).⁸³ Nonetheless a strike over price was averted in 1909 only when a settlement was made on the basis of the demands of Japanese fishermen. Thus not only did the latter continue to hold a veto power over white fishermen's demands, but as their numbers stabilized at about 45 per cent of the total on the Fraser (see Table 6-1), the Japanese fishermen became more powerful in their relations with canners.⁸⁴

The increasingly central role of Japanese fishermen in the salmon fishery was dramatically revealed in a 1913 sockeye salmon fishermen's strike. When the canners' association dropped the sockeye price from 25 to 15 cents at the beginning of August, Japanese fishermen struck, and were soon joined by whites and Indians at Steveston. About 1200 Indian and Japanese women cannery workers struck in sympathy with the approximately 4700 fishermen.⁸⁵ White wage-worker fishermen remained poorly organized and ethnically divided, despite the efforts of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to unite all fishermen, and white simple commodity fishermen in New Westminster and upriver did not join the strike.⁸⁶ It collapsed on its second day, when hundreds of

83. Province, July 2, 5, 1907.

84. Province, July 2, 6, 8, 13, 17, 1909; News-Advertiser, July 3, 1909, 13, 14, 16, 1909.

85. Chinese and white workers stayed on the job, processing fish landed before the strike.

86. The BCFU appears to have existed in some form until about 1911, based in New Westminster. Reasons for its disappearance are not known.

Japanese started to fish for canneries outside the association, who were paying 20 cents a fish. IWW organizers tried to keep white fishermen out on strike, but they returned to work the next day, at the reduced price. As in previous strikes, Japanese fishermen were blamed for the defeat.⁸⁷

The failure of the 1913 strike once again convinced Fraser River sockeye salmon fishermen that strikes were futile. Consequently, there were no more strikes on the river until after 1919. The scene of strikes shifted to the north, and Fraser river fishermen became occupied with political action over issues connected with fishery regulations, especially license restriction, which had concerned them since 1900.¹

Strikes for higher prices were not fishermen's only means for dealing with the problem of growing competition to harvest a static or decreasing resource.⁸⁸ They also turned to political action to limit the number of fishing licenses, leading to conflicts among fishermen, as some asserted a right to fish to the exclusion of others.⁸⁹ Gill-net fishermen also engaged in political action to defend their livelihoods

87. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, file 13(110); Province, July 3, 1913, Aug. 4, 5, 6, 1913; News-Advertiser, Aug. 5, 1913; Sun, Aug. 5, 6, 1913; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 8, 1913, p. 1.

88. Declining sockeye catches continued after 1900, although rising catches of other species began to compensate for them. Average catches were calculated from data on the salmon pack and licenses in Canada, Dept. of Marine and Fisheries, Annual Report, 1925-26, pp. 68-69.

89. Tilly (From Mobilization to Revolution, p. 144) calls these types of action "competitive": "Competitive actions lay claim to resources also claimed by other groups which the actor defines as rivals, competitors, or at least participants in the same contest."

against various changes in fishery regulations proposed by canners.⁹⁰ Although not as dramatic as strikes, fishermen's collective actions over fishery regulations show how objects of contention were created by canner strategies and fishermen's social reproduction cycles, and how differences in the latter determined the capacity for collective action of different groups of fishermen. As the center of gravity of Fraser River fishermen's collective action shifted to political objectives, the social basis for that action shifted from wage workers in Vancouver and Steveston to the white simple commodity producer fishermen of New Westminster. In their struggles with canners over fishery regulations, the white simple commodity producers had several advantages over wage-worker fishermen. Unlike the latter, who were dispersed in the off-season, New Westminster fishermen had the solidarity born of settled residence, and were able to act at any time of year, not just in the fishing season. In addition, they had the support of local businessmen, through the Board of Trade and City Council.⁹¹

90. Tilly (From Mobilization to Revolution, p. 145) aptly calls this type of collective action "reactive," defining it as "group efforts to reassert established claims when someone else challenges or violates them."

91. New Westminster businessmen held the canners responsible for introducing large numbers of Japanese to the fishery, and the Japanese did not spend their incomes in the city to the extent that whites and Indians did. In addition, the rationalization following the formation of B.C. Packers in 1903 was leaving canning and cold storage plants in New Westminster idle. See PAC, RG 23, Vol. 131, file 222, part 2, pp. 370-72, R. Macpherson to Hon. R. Prefontaine, March 28, 1904; *ibid.* Vol. 335, file 2918 II, pp. 134-35, Secretary, New Westminster Liberal Association, to Hon. L.P. Brodeur, Dec. 1, 1906, and pp. 126-28, W.H. Keary to L.P. Brodeur, Dec. 4, 1906; Province, Jan. 16, 1905, Feb. 2, 1905, Nov. 13, 1905; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 382-83,

Limitation of fishing licenses on racial and ownership grounds was an objective of collective action in the aftermath of the 1900 strike. Demands made early in September 1900, and at the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration in April 1901, reflected the interests of white full-time, simple commodity fishermen. They wanted the abolition of cannery licenses, the restriction of licenses to whites and Indians, and a prohibition on the provision of boats, nets and supplies to fishermen by canners. These demands would have eliminated wage-worker and Japanese fishermen from the sockeye fishery.⁹² Again, at hearings of the B.C. Salmon Fisheries Commission in January, 1902, fishermen made a variety of proposals for license restriction, most of whose practical intent was to eliminate fishing by Japanese (and to a lesser extent by Americans). Although few were as vociferous, many of the fishermen would have agreed with J.H. Watson, organizer of the first fishermen's unions, that "The whole trouble on the river today is the Japs." Japanese fishermen were accused by white fishermen of unfair and illegal fishing practices, of fraudulently obtaining fishing licences, of being favored by canners, and of deserting white fishermen in strikes.⁹³ In addition, simple commodity producers continued to seek exclusion on grounds of ownership. A

408-09.

92. Independent, Sept. 8, 1900; Province, Sept. 10, 1900; Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 342-45. The demands were not met by the government.

93. For objections to Japanese fishermen, see 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 7 - Watson, Session 9 - Columbus, Session 11 - Vivian; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 101-02.

representative of the ~~New~~ Westminster union (who stated "we have none in the union who are not bona fide fishermen") argued that "If licenses were restricted to bona fide fishermen who own their own gear there would be no overcrowding as there is now."⁹⁴

Beginning in 1902, contention over fishery regulations increasingly shifted from the restriction of fishing licenses to threats to gill net fishermen from new gear types, such as traps, and other proposed changes in fishery regulations. For example, the BCFU spent much of the winter of 1902-03 agitating and petitioning in New Westminster against the proposed use of trap nets for sockeye fishing.⁹⁵ Over that winter, the BCFU became centralized around its headquarters in New Westminster, indicating the shift in power within the BCFU to the resident, full-time, simple commodity fishermen of New Westminster, who were the best placed to counter the canner initiatives.⁹⁶ The BCFU continued to fight against the introduction of traps in 1904, and once they were allowed, pressed for their strict regulation. They also fought to defend the common property status of

94. See 1902 Salmon Commission, Proceedings, Session 8 - G. Mackie. Similar demands were made in 1905: see Province, Nov. 4, 6, 13, 22, 1905; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 102-05, 149-50.

95. PAC, RG 23, Vol. 131, file 222, part 2, pp. 149-50, C. Durham to Hon. R. Prefontaine, Dec. 8, 1902; *ibid.*, pp. 153-56, E.E. Prince, "Memorandum re Proposed Salmon Traps in British Columbia" (Dec. 9, 1902); *ibid.*, pp. 271-72, H.J. Butterfield to Minister of Marine and Fisheries, April 6, 1903; *World*, Feb. 13, 1903; *News-Advertiser*, Feb. 14, 17, 1903; *Labour Gazette* III (1903), p. 667; *Weekly Columbian*, May 5, 1903.

96. *Province*, Jan. 16, 23, 1903, March 23, 26, 1903; *News-Advertiser*, Feb. 22, 1903.

the fishery against canner-initiated changes in regulations that would restrict gill-netting operations. Major issues included limits on the depth of nets, annual close seasons from the end of August to mid-September, the length of the weekly closed season, closure of the river (as a conservation measure) in 1906 and 1908, and the embargo on the export of raw salmon through which B.C. canners tried to check American competition for fish. With the support of the New Westminster Board of Trade, City Council, and the local Member of Parliament, simple commodity fishermen were able to achieve some of their objectives.⁹⁷

The other side of that support, however, was the increasing influence of business interests over New Westminster fishermen. The most important development in this respect was the formation of the Fraser River Fishermen's Protective Association (FRFPA) in 1914, with the objective of eliminating Japanese from the salmon fishery. The

97. For collective action on these issues, see Province, Nov. 13, 1903, Feb. 8, 1904, Aug. 2, 12, 1904, Jan. 7, 9, 1905, Aug. 22, 1908, July 30, 1909, Aug. 19, 23, 24, 30, 1909, Sept. 13, 1909, Feb. 12, 16, 1910, Aug. 10, 12, 17, 22, 1911, Feb. 12, 19, 1912, March 4, 1912; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 525; 1905-06 Fisheries Commission, Evidence, pp. 68-76; PAC, RG 23, Vol. 79, file 6, part 2, pp. 321-22, "Abstract of Minutes of Meeting of Fraser River Fishermen, held at New Westminster, Feb. 6, 1904," in C.B. Sword to Dept. of Marine and Fisheries, Feb. 7, 1904; *ibid.*, Vol. 335, file 2918 II, pp. 186-90, G. Mackie et. al. to Minister of Marine and Fisheries, n.d. [Dec. 1906], and "Petition to the Honorable Minister of Marine and Fisheries" from "bona fide resident fishermen of the Fraser River"; *ibid.*, Vol. 80, file 6, part 5, p. 77, J.W. Brodrick to Hon. L.P. Brodeur, June 11, 1909; *ibid.*, Vol. 364, file 3214, Recommendations of B.C. Fishermen's Union to Prof. Prince, April 17, 1909; *ibid.*, Vol. 365, file 3214, part 2, pp. 30-34, C.H.S. Wade to Minister of Fisheries, Feb. 19, 1910; *ibid.*, Vol. 80, file 6, part 6, petitions from white and Japanese fishermen for extension of the sockeye season in 1911; British Columbian, Feb. 22, 1910; Sun, Feb. 13, 1912.

circumstances of the FRFPA's organization show the role of and limits to the support given the mobilization of New Westminster simple commodity fishermen by businessmen in that city. The mobilization of white fishermen against the Japanese began when a cannery owner and chairman of the Fisheries Committee of the New Westminster Board of Trade, M. Monk, raised the alarm that Japanese were being settled on river above New Westminster to take advantage of special fishing privileges granted settlers there.⁹⁸ At the second of two mass meetings sponsored by the Board of Trade, a labour representative (New Westminster Alderman Dodd) persuaded the fishermen to form an organization.⁹⁹ The FRFPA was not a union, however, since "The main object of the organization is the elimination of the Japanese competition on the river" through license restriction. Its constitution affirmed an absence of hostility to canners, and it admitted to membership "all persons who believed in driving the Orientals out of the industrial life of the province."¹⁰⁰

The FRFPA grew to nearly 400 members in late June, and was successful in achieving its immediate objective of preventing colonies

98. Province, March 28, 1914; British Columbian, March 31, 1914, April 7, 1914; B.C. Federationist, April 3, 10, 1914.

99. At the first meeting, attended by over 200 fishermen, and officials of the Board of Trade, Trades and Labor Council (NWTLC), and Fraser valley municipalities, resolutions were passed for the protection of white and Indian fishermen against the Japanese "invasion." British Columbian, April 21, 1914; B.C. Federationist, April 24, 1914; PAC, RG 23, Vol. 81, file 6, part 8, pp. 297-310, R. Reid et. al. to Minister of Marine and Fisheries, April, 1914.

100. British Columbian, April 28, 1914, May 5, 19, 1914; B.C. Federationist, May 1, 8, 22, 1914, p. 2.

of Japanese fishermen from being established above New Westminster.

This was the only objective for which they had the nearly universal support of other organizations and municipalities in the Fraser valley.

Other proposals, such as license limitation, with preference for whites and Indians, were more controversial, and the greater power of canners prevented them from being achieved.¹⁰¹

After the 1914 sockeye season, the FRFPA lapsed into virtual inactivity.¹⁰² It had averted the immediate threat which had given birth to the organization; the war diverted attention from local racial conflicts, and drew fishermen into the armed forces or into better-paying occupations; and poor catches from 1915 to 1917 made fishermen more intent on personal social reproduction than collective action.¹⁰³

By the summer of 1917, membership in the FRFPA had fallen to 250, but the white fishermen were spurred into action by a commission of inquiry investigating changes in fishery regulations proposed by

101. PAC, RG 23, Vol. 81, file 6, part 8, pp. 334-58, "Minutes of Meeting of Fraser River Fishermen's Protective Association and B.C. Salmon Cannery Association, June 24, 1914, in F.H. Cunningham to W.A. Found, June 26, 1914; British Columbian, May 19, 1914, June 30, 1914, July 7, 14, 1914; B.C. Federationist, June 12, 1914, p. 2; Province, June 24, 1914.

102. It made some demands regarding prices and fishery regulations in Sept. 1914, and Dec. 1915, but was otherwise inactive. See Sun, Sept. 7, 1914; Province, Dec. 6, 29, 1915.

103. On military enlistment, see British Columbian, July 4, 1916; on catches and prices, see Canadian Fisherman, Sept. 1915, p. 308, Aug. 1916, p. 274; Labour Gazette XVI (1916), p. 1460; Province, Aug. 11, 25, 28, 1917.

canners.¹⁰⁴ Instead of the changes wanted by canners, the fishermen's association proposed that licenses be limited, and restricted to bona fide fishermen and Indians, and that attached licenses and the ban on motorboats in the north be abolished.¹⁰⁵ As in the past, white simple commodity fishermen wanted to monopolize fishing opportunities, and at the same time ensure their own reproduction as simple commodity producers by being allowed to use the most productive technology whenever and wherever they liked, and to sell their catches to the highest bidder.

Elimination of Japanese from the salmon fishery was thus a constant objective of the fishermen, but it did not become prominent until the end of the war, when returned soldiers tried to ensure themselves a place in the fishery at the expense of the Japanese. In fishing, as in other occupations, returned soldiers acted as a status group with special claims on economic opportunities because of their wartime sacrifices. In 1918, for example, they agitated for privileged access to purse seining licenses, and for an area off Vancouver Island

104. Extension of the sockeye export ban to other salmon species, closure of the river for three years to allow stocks to regenerate, and regulations affecting the northern district were issues before the commission.

105. See PAC, RG 23, Vol. 1007, file 721-4-47, W.D. Burdis to J.D. Hazen, Sept. 14, 1915; J.D. Taylor to G.J. Desbarats, 19 Sept. 15, 1915; British Columbian, Dec. 19, 1916, Province, Feb. 12, 1917; 1917 Fishery Commission, Proceedings, pp. 12-13, 1421-24, 1437-40, 1458, 1492, 1503-06, 1537-43, 1548.

to be reserved for fishing by veterans.¹⁰⁶ The FRFPA became active again in 1919, and the agitation of white fishermen and returned soldiers for the exclusion of Asians from the fishery subsequently led the government to restrict the number of licenses available to others than whites or Indians.¹⁰⁷ Preoccupied with the issue of license restriction, fishermen in the Vancouver area apparently played no part in the radical events of 1918 and 1919.¹⁰⁸

In summary, after the failure of the early strikes over the

106. In 1919, they got some of what they wanted, when special provisions were made for returned soldiers in the allocation of gill net and purse seine licenses. Province, April 20, 1918, Aug. 28, 1918, April 14, 1919, June 17, 1919, July 18, 1919. Returned soldiers in South Vancouver even urged the government to take over canneries and cold storage plants, and replace aliens working there (with returned soldiers, presumably). Even the B.C. Fisheries Commissioner, W. Sloan, was to recommend a government takeover to end excess capacity, conserve fish stocks, raise fishermen's incomes, reduce prices to consumers, and employ returned soldiers. Province, June 12, 1919; B.C., Report of the Commissioner of Fisheries, 1919, pp. 69-71, "Memorandum Respecting Salmon-Fishery Regulations for the Province of British Columbia."

107. In 1922, another fisheries commission recommended a 40 per cent reduction in licenses for Asians, and further reductions were made in the years following. The 1922 commission had also recommended an end to the prohibition on motor boats in the north. White simple commodity producers thus won the mobility necessary to their social reproduction, and the elimination of some of their most effective competitors. PAC, RG 23, Vol. 931, file 721-4-6 (21); Canadian Fisherman, Jan. 1920, p. 18; 1922 Fisheries Commission, Report, pp. 8-13; Ward, White Canada Forever, pp. 122-23; Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was, pp. 105-06.

108. The only One Big Union units formed by fishermen were at the mostly Finnish communities of Lund and Spintula, well north of Vancouver. Report on Labour Organization, p. 37. The most radical thing the FRFPA did was to consider joining the NWTLC and the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. The Steveston Fishermen's Benevolent Society of Japanese fishermen made overtures to affiliate with the FRFPA, but the white fishermen were more interested in excluding the Japanese than in joining with them. Canadian Fisherman, Dec. 1919, p. 488; Province, Dec. 6, 1919.

price of salmon, the objectives and methods of collective action by salmon fishermen became nearly exclusively political action over fishery regulations. Contrary to Ralston's argument that after the failure of the 1903 strike, fishermen's collective action shifted from strikes to political action because of the opening of new channels for the latter,¹⁰⁹ it appears that fishermen responded to urgent threats to their interests through the channels already available to them. When they learned of attempts by canners to limit their rights to catch salmon and do with them as they pleased, or when commissions arrived in B.C. to investigate, fishermen held mass meetings, organized petitions, sent letters to Ottawa, and dispatched representatives to hearings.

For the entire 1900-19 period, salmon fishermen's mobilization and collective action was thus reactive, that is, it almost entirely consisted of responses to threats resulting from canners' strategies of capital accumulation. Fishermen responded to the efforts of the canners' monopoly to lower prices, and to the competition of the rising number of fishermen by striking over price, and by seeking restrictions on fishing licenses. They responded to canners' efforts to change fishing technology by fighting revisions to fishery regulations. Over the course of the 1900-19 period, collective action shifted from strikes over price to political action over regulations. This was more than just a shift in tactics or objectives, because of the failure of strikes; it was also a shift in the social base of fishermen's action,

109. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 174-75.

from the migratory wage-worker fishermen of Steveston and Vancouver to the white simple commodity producer fishermen of New Westminster. The former had been the key to strikes: whites and Indians in a positive sense because of their militancy, Japanese in a negative sense because of their weakness. Once contentious action shifted to fishery regulations, New Westminster simple commodity producers became the central actors, because they had the most capacity to act. The New Westminster fishermen were less radical and less militant than the Vancouver fishermen, but they were better equipped than the latter to deal with political issues, such as fishery regulations. As residents of the city, they were able to mobilize for political action outside the sockeye season, unlike wage worker fishermen, who were occupationally and geographically scattered in the off-season. Since the tempo of political life did not correspond to that of the salmon, this was significant. In addition, the political and economic importance of simple commodity producer fishermen in New Westminster gave them a political resource lacked by the fishermen in Vancouver, namely the support of local business and political figures.¹¹⁰

Cannery Workers

While salmon fishermen engaged in huge strikes, and battled salmon canners over fishery regulations, cannery workers were

110. In Vancouver, politicians like H.H. Stevens used the fishery to whip up anti-Asian hysteria, but did not facilitate the mobilization and action of fishermen. See Province, May 4, 1912, Oct. 16, 1913.

practically inactive. The white labour aristocracy of the canneries neither organized nor engaged in collective action. Only Indian and Japanese women and Chinese men acted collectively, but infrequently, and usually on a small scale.

The only collective action by Indian or Japanese women working in canneries was in support of fishermen. In 1900 Indian women refused to process the catch of Japanese fishermen when they returned to work during the strike. Their action is not surprising, since their participation in the industry was contingent on that of Indian fishermen. Indian women were the most potent force among the Indian workers, because of the canner's demand for their labour, yet they used their power only to support the men.¹¹¹ In 1913, as we have already seen, Indian and Japanese cannery workers also struck in sympathy with fishermen of the same racial groups.¹¹²

Striking fishermen had also tried to persuade Chinese cannery workers to refuse to process the Japanese catch in 1900, but in the absence of ties of solidarity to the fishermen, the cannery workers took no action. They were, however, capable of acting militantly in response to threats to their own interests from canners or other workers.

The first actions by Chinese cannery workers, in 1901, were in response to threats to their positions from the competition of other

111. Ralston, 1900 Strike, pp. 143-45; Province, July 25, 27, 1900; Gladstone, Industrial Disputes in the Commercial Fisheries of British Columbia, p. 143.

112. See above, page 299.

workers, and from mechanization.¹¹³ Although they could temporarily slow down technological change in individual plants, Chinese cannery workers could not stop mechanization, which continued to lead to their displacement after 1901. Subsequent collective action by the increasingly scarce Chinese workers was for better pay from labour contractors.¹¹⁴ They also reacted against the despotic authority of white supervisors, over which two small strikes occurred in 1905.¹¹⁵

113. For example, in 1901 Chinese workers at one cannery threatened to leave if white workers hired to help with a heavy run of salmon were not dismissed. They were, and later that season, all the Chinese employed at another cannery stopped work in protest at the use of a fish-cutting and can-filling machine that was supposed to displace thirty of their number, and speed up work for the remainder. The machine was shut down, and they returned to work the same day. Labour Gazette II (1901), p. 149; Province, Sept. 4, 1901.

114. For example, in 1903, Chinese cannery workers held out for higher bonuses before signing up with contractors for work at northern canneries, and in 1904 they formed a short-lived Chinese Cannery Employees Union to demand larger advances from contractors, who were themselves pressing canners for larger advances or guaranteed packs. The cannery workers' union was formed shortly after the Chinese Contractors Association, with which it pledged to work. I suspect it was formed to help the contractors in their negotiations with canners. It was reported to have disbanded in May, 1905. Cannery workers demanded wage increases from contractors again in 1906. World, May 22, 1903; Province, April 25, 1904, June 9, 1906; Labour Gazette IV (1905), p. 1225.

115. A dispute with a foreman led Chinese workers to walk out for part of a day at an English Bay cannery, and the arrest of a worker for brandishing a knife (probably at a supervisor) led other Chinese workers at the Imperial cannery in Steveston to strike. Ignoring pistol shots fired by a white cannery employee, they chased a foreman who tried to force them back to work for half a mile. The foreman escaped unharmed, and the strikers returned to work when the arrested man was released. Province, Aug. 11, 1905, Sept. 25, 1905.

After 1905, Chinese cannery workers became less militant.¹¹⁶ Their earlier militancy was based on the opportunity provided by their scarcity in the labour market, and critical role in the canning labour process, and was a response to threats from mechanization and the harsh authority of white supervisors. Although the latter did not change, the progress of mechanization weakened the capacity of Chinese cannery workers to resist, because they became less able to disrupt production.

Collective action by factory operatives in canneries resembled that of operatives in saw and shingle mills in some ways. In both industries, the white labour aristocrats were not militant, and most strike action was by Asian workers. Like strikes by Asians in the lumber industry, collective actions by Chinese cannery workers were generally limited to one plant, because the threats they faced were localized: the introduction of a machine in a particular cannery, or the tyranny of individual foremen. The contrast with fishermen is instructive. Fishermen experienced collective challenges to their interests, such as cannery associations, price-fixing, and changes in fishery regulations. They had no choice but to face canners in a body; cannery workers were not compelled to do so. Also like Asian lumber workers, Chinese cannery workers' militancy was sporadic and

116. Although they pressed contractors for larger advances again in 1909, by 1918 they were praised for always keeping a bargain, and never having been known to strike. Province, Sept. 18, 1909, Aug. 30, 1918. In 1913, a cannery foreman's only complaint was that after working 14 or 15 hours a day during a big run, Chinese cannery workers would give "trouble," e.g., by objecting to getting up early for work on Sunday morning. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 10-12.

ill-organized, because their subordinate position in B.C. society and the hegemony of merchants and contractors within the racial group were barriers to mobilization and collective action. As a generally despised and impoverished minority, Chinese workers had few resources to commit to collective action, and if they did act collectively, they could not expect a sympathetic response from other workers, employers, or the state. In addition to that obstacle, the dealings of Chinese cannery workers with canners appear to have been firmly under the control of labour contractors, who were not interested in the independent organization of workers.¹¹⁷

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how mobilization and collective action by salmon fishermen and cannery workers was shaped by capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction cycles, and conditions of strategic interaction. Capital accumulation was based on control over costs of production, and control over a secure supply of fish. As a result, the price of salmon caught by fishermen, and attempts by canners to control the fishery through government fishery regulations were objects of contention between fishermen and canners. Because capital accumulation also tended to increase the number of fishermen competing for the same catch, it also gave rise to a conflict of interests among fishermen over

117. By the time that Chinese shingle workers were becoming broadly organized, during war capitalism, the number of Chinese cannery workers had declined greatly.

access to ~~the~~ fishery.

Canners needed a dependable supply of salmon furnished by a steady corps of fishermen for good years and bad, and by a reserve army for good years and peak periods. This need was met by fishermen with different social reproduction cycles, on the basis of which groups with different interests formed. On the one hand were wage worker and simple commodity producer reproduction cycles; on the other hand were the different cycles of Indian, Japanese, and white fishermen. The labour process was the same for all fishermen, regardless of reproduction cycle; the differences among them were located principally at the level of the labour market and consumption practices. Amongst white fishermen, the migratory and temporary employment of wage workers, and their geographical and occupational dispersal outside the fishing season contrasted with the full-time fishing and residential concentration of simple commodity producers. As a result, the latter had more solidarity, and a greater capacity for collective action in the off-season.¹¹⁸ Indian and Japanese fishermen each formed solidary groups as a consequence of collective labour market and consumption practices, organized through their tribal organizations in the case of the former, and through the contract labour system in the case of the latter.

In canning, the tendency of capital accumulation led to the

118. The same difference may have existed between Indian or Japanese wage-worker and simple commodity fishermen, but information on this point is lacking.

employment of workers from low-wage groups, such as Asians and women, and to attempts to introduce new technologies that would displace labour when it became too costly. Three different cycles of social reproduction shaped the interests and group formation of factory operatives in canneries. A white labour aristocracy of skilled male workers and supervisors was in a privileged, authoritative position in the canneries, and faced no threats to that position from capitalists or other workers. Skilled male Chinese workers faced the greatest threat from mechanization, and also seemed to suffer the most from the oppressive factory discipline. Female Indian and Japanese workers did not face the same threat from mechanization as did Chinese men, nor was the discipline as evidently oppressive.¹¹⁹ Their group formation was influenced primarily by their kinship relation to fishermen, in which they worked as a subordinate part of a larger family economy.

The division of the labour force in the salmon fishing and canning industry into different groups based on different labour processes, different relations to the means of production, and differences in labour market and consumption practices corresponding to race and gender, was reflected in mobilization and collective action. Fishermen were the best mobilized, and most active of the industry's workers, in large part because they generally faced global threats to their interests, in the form of the canners' association setting the salmon price and trying to change fishery regulations. Amongst the

119. This needs further study, however.

fishermen, while simple commodity producers had the highest levels of mobilization and collective action, for reasons of group formation already advanced, and because they were supported in at least some of their political objectives by business in New Westminster. White wage-worker fishermen, who were mobile frontier labourers, were more militant than the simple commodity producers in the early part of the century, but they were unable to maintain strong mobilization because of their mobility.

For Japanese fishermen collective action was problematic, especially in the early part of the century, because they lacked resources, and were mobilized through organizations controlled by middle class members of the racial group.¹²⁰ At the beginning of the period, Japanese fishermen had few resources to commit to collective action. As newcomers to the industry with few other employment opportunities, living in poverty, and controlled by labour contractors, they had scant capacity to withhold their labour power, as the strikes from 1900 to 1903 demonstrated. This was nonetheless the main form of their collective action, because they had practically no political influence, beyond that deriving from the intervention of the Japanese government on their behalf, which was very limited. As they became established as a large, stable part of the fishing labour force, and more of them owned boats, the Japanese became stronger. Still, lack of political resources meant

 120. For example, the representative of the Steveston Fishermen's Association at the 1917 Fishery Commission (Proceedings, p. 1523) was a fish exporter.

that their value to canners was their main protection against attempts to exclude them from the fishery, and that turned out to be insufficient in 1919 and after.

The mobilization and collective action of Indian fishermen appears to have been shaped by the same threats and forces as that of white wage worker fishermen. They were mobilized in the same union at one time, and when they were not, Indian fishermen followed the lead of and cooperated with the whites' union in collective action over price and exclusion of the Japanese. In defense of aboriginal fishing rights, and similar issues affecting their own interests particularly, Indians acted independently, but those are outside the scope of this investigation.

Finally, in addition to the effects of interests, group formation, and resources, this chapter has shown the influence on the collective actions of salmon fishermen of conditions of strategic interaction: opportunity and threat, repression and facilitation, and power. Nearly all collective action was defensive, in response to threats from canners. Repression was the most significant element in the failure of strikes, since state suppression of patrol boats meant that militant strikers could not prevent members of competing racial groups from fishing. As a result of the failure of strikes, white simple commodity fishermen concentrated on political action, where they had some power, in part because their action was facilitated by businessmen and politicians in New Westminster.

Like their counterparts in the lumber industry, factory

operatives in canneries were never well organized, and their collective action was defensive, sporadic, spontaneous, and isolated. In part this was because most were members of subordinated racial groups, or were women, and lacked the economic and political resources for collective action. It may also have been due, however, to the fact of being factory operatives, who generally had great difficulty mobilizing.

Chapter 7

METAL MANUFACTURING:

"The allround workman ...
becomes less a man and more of a machine."

Unlike the lumber and salmon industries, metal manufacturing was never a leading sector in the economy of the B.C. lower mainland. But it was a large manufacturing employer, and metal tradesmen played a significant role in the history of the Vancouver working class. Like metal workers elsewhere in North America, they faced attacks on their controls over the labour market and workplace, on their unions, and on their wages and hours. And like other metal crafts in crisis, they contributed to the growth of working-class radicalism as they worked out a response to these threats.

7.1 Capital Accumulation

The metal manufacturing industry was divided into contract shop

and railway shop branches, each with different conditions of capital accumulation, so they will be discussed separately.

In the contract shop branch, capital accumulation depended mainly on expansion and technological change in the lumber and salmon canning industries. The most important products of the iron foundries, machine shops, boiler shops, and engine works of Vancouver and New Westminster were saw and shingle mill machinery, logging equipment, salmon canning machinery, marine engines, and mining equipment.¹ The only exception to the dependence of the contract shops on these markets occurred in World War I, when munitions and shipbuilding work kept them busy from 1915 to the end of 1918.²

Expansion in contract metal manufacturing occurred in two big spurts between 1906 and 1915. The pace of capital accumulation can be indicated by the dates at which firms in the industry were established. Of the thirty-six firms for which data were obtained, five were

1. Province, July 9, 1906; for particular examples, see: logging equipment: Province, June 3, 1902; B.C., Chief Inspector of Machinery, Annual Report, 1902, pp. 11-12; Pacific Coast Lumberman, March 1918, p. 15; shingle mill machinery: British Columbia Lumberman, Jan. 1905, pp. 22-23; Lumberman and Contractor, July 1906, pp. 16-17; Oct. 1906, p. 6, June 1907, p. 46; Pacific Coast Lumberman, March 1918, p. 15; Western Lumberman, Aug. 1918, pp. 34-35; salmon canning machinery: Province, Oct. 12, 1901, Nov. 14, 1901, March 28, 1903, Feb. 28, 1910; News-Advertiser, Jan. 9, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 516; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, pp. 112-13, 122-23; Boam, British Columbia, p. 205; British Columbian, Sept. 7, 1915; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, p. 48; Pacific Fisherman, Jan. 1918, pp. 82-83; J.H. Hamilton, The Industries of British Columbia (hereafter, Industries of B.C.), pp. 92-93.

2. News-Advertiser, Sept 15, 1915; Province, Nov. 23, 1916, March 26, 1918; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 478.

established before 1900, four between 1900 and 1904, fourteen between 1906 and 1910, twelve between 1912 and 1915, and one after 1915 (in 1917).³ Existing contract shops also grew throughout the period, some becoming large by Vancouver standards.⁴

Despite their growth, capital accumulation in the metal manufacturing shops in the Vancouver area was limited by eastern Canadian, and (to a lesser extent) American competition. Except where specialized machinery for west coast logging, saw and shingle milling, and salmon canning furnished some protection, B.C. metal manufacturers faced competitors who had the advantages of larger production runs, cheaper freight rates, lower wages, and longer hours. Vancouver manufacturers could do little about eastern economies of scale or freight rates, but they could and did try to reduce the gap in money wages and hours between Vancouver and the east. The hourly wages of blacksmiths, boilermakers, machinists, and moulders were about 50 per cent higher in contract shops in Vancouver than they were in Toronto, until about 1916, after which the former's lead declined. Hours of work were usually about five hours per week shorter in Vancouver than in Toronto.⁵ Metal tradesmen compared their wages to the cost of living in

3. Data were not obtained for eight other firms. Sources were the various booster publications and articles already cited.

4. For example, the Vulcan Iron Works grew from 15 employees in 1910 to 150 in 1919. B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, p. 17; Telephone Talk, Jan. 1919, pp. 9-15.

5. Canada, Dept. of Labour, Wages and Hours of Labour in Canada, Report No. 1, Wages and Hours of Labour in Canada, 1901-1920 (hereafter, Canada, Dept. of Labour, Wages and Hours, 1901-20), pp. 11-14. Toronto

Vancouver, and to those of other local tradesmen (especially in construction), but employers were concerned only with the comparison of their labour costs to those of eastern competitors.⁶ Because of the contradictory perspectives of capitalists and workers on the latter's wages, they were an object of contention. In order to alter wages and hours in the metal trades, employers had to challenge unions and their control in the labour market, adding another level of antagonistic interests between them and workers.

The early twentieth century experience of metal craftsmen elsewhere in North America suggests that there would also be contention between capitalists and workers over efforts by the former to mechanize the production process, deskill crafts, and apply systematic management principles to wrest control over production away from skilled, autonomous craftsmen.⁷ Specialization, in which partially trained apprentices and helpers replaced all-round craftsmen in the performance of subdivided tasks, appears to have been the main tendency in Vancouver. From their visit to Vancouver in 1910, members of the Royal Commission on Technical Education concluded that specialization was leading to the decay of the apprenticeship system in the city:⁸

 was chosen to represent eastern Canada because data were reported for all four trades there. In Hamilton, wages were generally higher than in Toronto for three of the trades, but still lower than in Vancouver.

6. See the objections of Ross and Howard Iron Works to moulders' demands for shorter hours, in *Province*, Dec. 18, 1902.

7. See Chapter 2.

8. Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, Report, Part IV, p. 2344. VTLC representatives at the

The only way to get the boys trained is by laying down the rule that they are not to be kept at one machine more than 6 months, and that they are to learn to operate a certain number of machines during their apprenticeship.⁹ In the machinist trades, apprentices are often kept on one job for as long as a year and a half, when they could learn the process in two weeks. In boilermaking they are kept on heating rivets, which is very soon learned, and have no opportunity of becoming proficient in any other branch of the trade.

Mechanization may not have been as important. New machine tools had been introduced in Vancouver shops in response to growing markets, but it is not clear that in themselves they challenged craft control.⁹ Most contract shops in Vancouver were probably too small, and production runs too short, for capitalist reorganization of the labour process to occur on a large scale, but in the few larger plants, specialization and mechanization may have threatened the skills and autonomy of craftsmen.¹⁰ Accordingly, objects of contention in contract shops included wages and hours, craft controls on production, and the union organizations that maintained them.

In addition to the contract shops, three railway shops were located in the Vancouver area during the 1900-1919 period: the CPR

 commission deplored the specialization being forced on apprentices. Province, Nov. 30, 1910.

9. See Province, Jan. 27, 1903; Lumberman and Contractor, Sept. 1905, p. 26; Metal Trades Council (MTC) Minutes, May 10, 1911; Western Lumberman, Dec. 1912, p. 45.

10. This would probably not have occurred to the same extent as in eastern Canada, which itself lagged behind the United States, because of smaller markets, and shorter production runs. See Heron, "Crisis of the Craftsman," pp. 20-21. Nelson notes that companies introducing scientific management were usually very large. Managers and Workers, Ch. 4.

repair shops in Vancouver, the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER) car shops in New Westminster, and after 1910, the Canadian Northern Railway (CNR) repair shops in Port Mann. Developments in the railway shops were subordinate to capital accumulation in the industry of which they were a part, and so no obstacles to capital accumulation were specific to them. Both the size of transportation companies and their work affected objects of contention with their employees over wages and the labour process. The railway shops in Vancouver were not necessarily large in themselves, but they were parts of large, monopolistic transportation companies, and unlike contract shops which did custom work and small production runs, railway shops performed standardized maintenance, repair, and inspection tasks.¹¹ This can best be illustrated by the shops of the CPR.

Wages for craftsmen were lower, and hours longer at the CPR shops, than in the contract shops until at least 1913.¹² Semi-skilled workers such as carmen were "the worst paid on the C.P.R."¹³ The size

11. The BCER's shops also built street cars for the company (forty-five in 1910). See Province, July 28, 1910.

12. This was not true of the BCER shops, where wages were the same as at contract shops, and thus higher than at the CPR, in 1913 anyway. The BCER paid shop helpers the same scale as its motormen and conductors, and skilled trades got more. See Labour Gazette XIV (1913), pp. 274, 476-77.

13. Independent, July 21, 1900. Wages of CPR shop crafts were obtained from Province, July 21, 1901, Sept. 20, 1907; Labour Gazette II (1901), p. 342, IV (1903-04), p. 204, 404, 773; VI (1906), pp. 901-02, XIV (1913), p. 274. The poorer conditions of workers in railway shops, compared to contract shops, was the opposite of the situation in Winnipeg. See Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, p. 53.

and power of the CPR suggests an explanation for the higher wages and shorter hours of contract shop craftsmen: the latter's employers were less able to resist the demands of skilled workers than was the CPR.¹⁴

The standardized work of railway shops facilitated a finer division of labour than in contract shops. Specialization was in evidence at the CPR from early in the century, contributing no doubt to the lower wages there.¹⁵ The tendency was further strengthened in 1908, when the CPR engaged the services of Henry Gantt, a disciple of F.W. Taylor's scientific management, to reorganize their Montreal repair shops. The effects of Gantt's efforts seem to have been felt in Vancouver, as incentive wages, and a new merit/demerit system of discipline were introduced. The company followed up by cancelling craft agreements in order to introduce specialists, to increase the power of foremen, and to raise the number of apprentices.¹⁶ The CPR was able to engage in such an all-out attack on craft controls over production because of its size and power, compared to which the contract metal shops were small fry indeed.

14. The relationship between an employers' size and power, and his capacity to repress working-class mobilization and collective action will be examined in the last section of this chapter.

15. For evidence of a specialized division of labour, see the wage scales of allied metal mechanics and carmen, in *Labour Gazette* III (1902-03), pp. 148-49, 517-18; VI (1906), pp. 901-02.

16. On Gantt and the CPR, see Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, p. 217; Nelson, *Managers and Workers*, pp. 71, 72, 75. For effects in Vancouver, see *Province*, Feb. 12, 1908, April 2, 21, 1908; *Trades Unionist*, April 1908, p. 16. The changes introduced by the company in 1908 will be discussed in more detail below, since they gave rise to an important strike.

At the CPR shops then, we could expect wages and hours, and craft control over production to be objects of contention between managers and workers. If and how they were translated into collective action depended at least in part on the interests and solidarities deriving from the social reproduction cycles of metal trades workers.

7.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

Metal manufacturing was the second largest manufacturing employer in Vancouver. In 1911, the 1728 workers employed in metal manufacturing and repair in the city of Vancouver comprised nearly one fifth of all manufacturing workers (see Table 7-1). By 1921, they were nearly a quarter of all manufacturing workers.¹⁷

The median size of contract shops was between fifty and ninety-nine workers, but there were wide variations between shops, and in the same shop (depending on the state of business).¹⁸ The largest contract shop was the Vancouver Engineering Works (VEW), which employed 150 workers in 1908, 600 in 1912, 175 in 1915, and 300 in 1918.¹⁹

17. Unfortunately, it is impossible to distinguish railway shop workers from contract shop workers in census data.

18. The median was calculated from fifty observations during the period, using a variety of sources.

19. Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 210; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, Supplement, p. 50; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 97.

Table 7-1

Metal Trades Workers by Occupation, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%
Blacksmiths	281	16.3	157	8.1
Boilermakers & engine builders	140	8.1	104	5.4
Machinists	383	22.2	417	21.6
Moulders & founders	252	14.6	110	5.7
Automobile & bicycle makers & repairers	53	3.1	502	26.0
Other vehicle builders & repairers	229(1)	13.3	16	0.8
Labourers	87	5.0	164	8.5
Other	303(2)	17.5	458(3)	23.8
Total	1728	100.0	1928	100.0
% all manufacturing workers		18.9		23.6

Sources: 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI;
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) Includes 154 car builders & repairers, 64 carriage builders & repairers, 29 locomotive builders.
(2) Includes 128 iron & steel workers, n.o.s., 175 metal workers, n.o.s.
(3) Includes 6 carpenters, 5 coremakers, 6 drillers & rivetters, 13 electricians, 21 forgemen, weldermen, hammermen, 62 foundry & machine shop n.e.s., 4 grinders & filers, 14 hardware & wire goods makers, 19 machinery makers n.e.s., 67 misc. iron workers, 10 painters, 20 pattern and model makers, 7 rolling mill employees n.e.s., 31 stationary engineers, 3 tool makers, 42 foremen & inspectors, 71 non-ferrous metal workers, 57 tinsmiths.

Mainland Iron Works, which started with eight employees in 1907, had an average of seventy workers in 1912.²⁰ Other shops remained very small; for example, S. Hallander employed fifteen machinists in 1908, and Gibbs Tool and Stamping Works employed six men in both 1915 and 1918.²¹

Railway shops in the Vancouver area were larger than the average contract shops. For example, the CPR shops in Vancouver were struck by 180 shop crafts workers in 1900, and by 400 in 1908.²² The smaller car shops of the BCER at New Westminster employed 90 workers in 1910, and 115 in 1911.²³

In contrast to the lumber and salmon industries, where workers were divided by racial and gender differences, the metal trades were relatively homogeneous. Most of the workers in each branch of the metal trades in British Columbia in 1918 were from Canada, the British Isles, or the United States, and there is no reason to believe that the distribution in Vancouver was different. The same data reported no female workers in metal-working establishments, and although the VEW had employed as many as 200 women on munitions work in 1917, the employment

20. Province, Sept. 28, 1907; Boam, British Columbia, pp. 187-88.

21. Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 184; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, Supplement, p. 48; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 82.

22. World, Aug. 8, 1900; Province, Aug. 5, 1908.

23. Province, July 28, 1910, Aug. 10, 1911. There were no data on the CNR shops. Because the BCER and CNR shops were in New Westminster and Port Mann respectively, they do not figure in the census data cited above.

of women was definitely the exception rather than the rule.²⁴

In the absence of racial and gender differences within the metal trades, interests and group formation were shaped mainly by the occupational division of labour in the workplace and labour market, and the centrality of skill and job autonomy in the social reproduction cycles of metal craftsmen.

In order of numerical importance in 1911, the major metal trades in Vancouver were machinists, blacksmiths, moulders, boilermakers, railway carmen, and patternmakers (see Table 7-1).²⁵ Most of these trades worked in a variety of fields. In addition to working in machine shops and for railways, machinists were employed in lumber mills, mines, etc., and when the automobile became common, in garages. Blacksmiths worked mainly in railway shops. Moulders and pattern makers worked mostly in foundries, but were also employed at shipyards. Boilermakers also worked in shipyards, as well as in railway shops and boiler works. Railway carmen worked exclusively on railways, where they performed a

24. The percentages of employees in each trade from Canada and Newfoundland, Great Britain and Ireland, and the United States, were: blacksmiths, 87 per cent; boilermakers, 96 per cent; iron and brass foundries (moulders), 88 per cent; machinists, 91 per cent; miscellaneous metal trades, 94 per cent. For all metal trades, the average was 91 per cent. B.C., Dept. of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, "Statistics of Trade and Industries." For reports of women working on munitions, see B.C. Federationist, Jan. 26, 1917, p. 1, March 23, 1917, p. 1; Province, Feb. 19, 1917; Victoria Colonist, July 21, 1917. The 1911 census reported no women metal workers in Vancouver, the 1921 census only fourteen.

25. Classified by the material they worked on, pattern makers would have to be excluded from this list, and sheet metal workers included. But pattern making was part of the metal manufacturing process, and sheet metal workers worked increasingly as a building trade, making and installing metal trim on buildings.

variety of repair and inspection jobs on rolling stock.²⁶

Although employed in a variety of industries, each metal trade derived a certain amount of solidarity from a craft culture based on skill, and on control of work and the labour market. Throughout North America at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the skills and craft controls of metal tradesmen were under attack by employers attempting to reorganize the labour process. In Vancouver, specialization and the decay of apprenticeship threatened metal workers' craft skills and controls (see above, page 323).

The metal trades were affected unequally by threats to skills and control.²⁷ Beginning in the 1890s, machinists throughout North America suffered the most from mechanization and specialization, and their union, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), was a particular target of open shop campaigns beginning in 1904. Moulders and pattern makers, in contrast, seem to have suffered less from employer attacks on their craft autonomy. In 1910, moulders in Vancouver still continued the practice of going home after pouring a casting. Pattern makers in Vancouver did complain of specialization, however, and of the impossibility of an apprentice becoming an

26. Railway carmen worked with a variety of materials, and included a number of trades, such as carpentry, patternmaking, sheet metal work, pipefitting, painting, and upholstery. See Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 517-18, VI (1906), pp. 901-02; H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning (hereafter, Trade Unions in Canada), p. 144.

27. Information on the threats faced by specific metal trades is often scanty, so we must rely in part on the experience of workers elsewhere to make comparisons among crafts in Vancouver.

all-round craftsman. Boilermakers and blacksmiths were also threatened by specialization, and the latter, along with carmen, experienced some reorganization of work in the CPR shops along the lines of scientific management.²⁸

As a result of specialization, other changes in the labour process, and employers' open shop campaigns, the primary interest of metal tradesmen lay in protecting of their craft autonomy and all-round skills through their unions. How that interest was pursued depended in part on the effects on group formation of the interaction between the strong craft cultures of metal trades workers and the transformations occurring in the workplace and labour market. On the one hand, traditional craft skills and controls divided metal workers into distinct crafts, jealous of their prerogatives and privileges, and divided skilled journeymen and apprentices from helpers and labourers who worked in the same shops. The latter division was expressed most sharply in union eligibility rules: typically only journeymen and sometimes (with restrictions and after serving a certain number of years) apprentices were able to join craft unions, while helpers and labourers were excluded. On the other hand, specialization, mechanization, and the development of integrated metal manufacturing

28. On machinists, see Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century"; Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, Ch. 5; Heron, "Crisis of the Craftsman." On moulders, see Kealey, *op. cit.*; Heron, *op. cit.*; British Columbia, *Factory Inspector's Report*, 1910, p. 6. On patternmakers, see *Labour Gazette* VI (1905), p. 651. On boilermakers and blacksmiths, see Nelson, *Managers and Workers*, pp. 96-97.

plants tended to break down the divisions among metal workers. As members of different trades increasingly faced the same threats from the same employers, craft exclusiveness became less practicable.

Specialization tended to break down the distinction between apprentice and helper, and between journeyman and helper. These tendencies put some form of industrial organization, or at least coordination among craft unions and organization of the less skilled, on the agenda for metal trades workers. This created a dilemma for the unions, because their main resource in collective action against employers was their skill and collective control over the supply of skilled labour. But those resources were becoming less valuable, and to create new ones, the craft prejudices and exclusiveness that were the negative side of craft culture would have to be overcome.

The structural bases of mobilization and collective action by metal workers were thus established by the contradictions between employers' strategies of capital accumulation, and workers' social reproduction cycles. The competitive position of local metal manufacturers led them to attack metal workers' wages, hours, skills, and union organization at the same time as employers throughout the continent were attacking craft controls and unions. As a result, the metal trades were crafts in varying degrees of crisis. Their response to the threats from employers depended on how they resolved the dilemma of craft exclusiveness versus industrial organization. In the next section, we will see how the Vancouver area's metal workers faced that challenge.

7.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

At the turn of the century, unions of metal trades workers in Vancouver expanded beyond the core trades of machinists, moulders, and boilermakers to include smaller crafts, and often helpers as well. Following this initial wave of mobilization was a series of key strikes against both the CPR and contract shops, in which metal tradesmen defended their unions and craft controls against employers striving to reduce costs and gain exclusive control over the production process. The workers were soundly defeated by the CPR in 1908, and by large contract shops in 1904 and 1910-12. The metal trades were revitalized only by the wartime boom in munitions work and shipbuilding from 1916 to 1919. Their strength now lay in the shipyards, however (see Chapter 8), and there were only a few strikes against contract shops. Unable to win back what they had lost in the pre-war depression and in previous struggles with anti-union employers, metal trades workers made a significant contribution to the development of radicalism in the Vancouver working class in 1918-19.

For Vancouver metal trades workers, the turn of the century was a period of extensive mobilization, as new union locals were formed amongst both craftsmen and their helpers. Machinists and moulders had been organized early in the 1890s, and boilermakers later in the decade,

but other unions were more recent arrivals.²⁹ The pace of organization quickened in 1900, especially among helpers and labourers, as the international craft unions sought to counter the effects of specialization and the decline of apprenticeship by controlling that source of competing labour.³⁰ Blacksmiths were organized in April, and railway carmen in July of that year. Boilermakers' helpers were unionized in 1902, and in 1903, locals were formed of pattern makers, foundry helpers, blacksmiths' helpers, and CPR shop labourers.³¹ Organization also occurred in New Westminster, where workers often belonged to Vancouver union locals.³²

29. A lodge of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) was formed in Vancouver in 1892, and the International Union of Iron Moulders local was established in 1895 or earlier. The English machinists' union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), had a Vancouver local from 1897, and the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers from 1898. Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; E. Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902 (hereafter, Trade Unions in Canada), p. 253. Because it was a 'dual union' to the IAM, the ASE was outside the mainstream of the Vancouver labour movement (e.g., it belonged to the VTLC only intermittently), and was not an independent source of collective action. It finally ceased operations in Canada in 1920, its members joining the IAM. See Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, pp. 28, 127-28.

30. See Nelson, Managers and Workers, pp. 96-97; Fink, Labor Unions, pp. 35-37.

31. VTLC Minutes, April 6, 1900, July 6, 1900, Nov. 6, 20, 1902, May 11, 1903; Independent, April 7, 21, 1900, July 21, 1900, Oct. 25, 1902, April 18, 1903, May 10, 1903, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette II (1902), pp. 319, 482; IV (1904), pp. 674-79, 1276. The CPR shop labourers appear to have been mostly machinists' helpers, since the local's name was changed to the Machinists Helpers Union in 1911. Report on Labour Organization, 1911, p. 85.

32. For example, machinists were brought into the Vancouver IAM lodge in 1900. Independent, April 21, 1900.

The new mobilization of metal workers in Vancouver was centered in the CPR shops, where a series of strikes occurred between 1900 and 1904.³³ Most of these strikes were the defensive responses of workers to the challenges that a large corporation was able to mount against unions, craft work rules, and apprenticeship regulations.³⁴ The strikers won the first few strikes, but starting in 1903, the results became less favorable, until the decisive defeat of the shop crafts in a major 1908 strike.

The first strikes were in the summer of 1900, when CPR shops from Vancouver to Fort William were shut down by disputes involving machinists, boilermakers, allied mechanics, and carmen. In Vancouver, over 180 metal workers went on strike, starting on August 3 with machinists. They had won their first contract after a strike only a year earlier, and were striking again over CPR obstruction of negotiations, and violation of contract provisions regarding layoffs.³⁵ On August 14, boilermakers and allied mechanics walked out partly in sympathy, and partly for wage increases, union recognition, and limits

33. The BCER shops were organized by the street railwaymen's union, and the workers there were not an independent source of collective action.

34. Like the organization of helpers, the impetus for the CPR strikes often came from outside Vancouver, especially from Winnipeg, where its main western shops were located. Nonetheless, the shop crafts in Vancouver sometimes had their own strike objectives, and they occasionally acted independently of workers in other cities.

35. The CPR was laying off union activists, and the oldest, most skilled, best paid employees. The layoffs were ostensibly due to a prairie crop failure, but the company refused to allow a union proposal for shorter hours instead.

on the number of apprentices and helpers. The latter grievance was a consequence of specialization: in Vancouver the CPR was employing more than one apprentice to every five journeymen, and giving the former work that belonged to the latter. Work at the CPR shops stopped completely two days later, when the newly organized carmen struck in sympathy with the others. Crowded daily meetings, well-maintained pickets, and reports that train service was being disrupted kept the morale of strikers high, and they returned to work at the end of the month with most of their demands won.³⁶

These first strikes exemplified both the attempts of the company to weaken shop craft unions and introduce specialization, and the resistance and solidarity of the workers defending their craft. The same trends continued in subsequent strikes, but some of their limitations were also revealed.³⁷

36. The mechanics and boilermakers won their schedules, and the machinists theirs, except for a wage increase, which went to arbitration. The company only promised to investigate the issue of layoffs, while maintaining that staff reductions would go ahead, but laid-off grievance committee members, and all men working July 15 were reinstated, and strikebreakers were dismissed. For the history of the strike from a Vancouver perspective, see Province, Aug. 1, 3, 4, 9, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 29, 1900; Independent, Aug. 4, 18, 1900, Sept. 1, 1900; World, Aug. 4, 7, 9, 15, 18, 1900, Sept. 1, 1900.

37. For example, the management problem of controlling foremen and other supervisors was the source of a strike in January 1902. About 120 carmen, carpenters, and 'machine men' walked off the job in Vancouver after a new foreman from Montreal dismissed an "old and faithful employee." The strike was called off when the Master Mechanic arrived from Revelstoke to read a telegram, suppressed by local management, ordering that the man be reinstated. Machinists and blacksmiths had already promised to support the strikers. Independent, Jan. 25, 1902; Labour Gazette II (1902), p. 449. On the "foremen's empire," and problem of management control, see Nelson, Managers and Workers, Ch. 3;

The limits of solidarity in the CPR shops were manifested in 1903, when car repairers, carmen, allied mechanics, and carpenters struck in support of freight handlers and clerks fighting the company's attempt to destroy their union, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE).³⁸ The only shop workers to support the clerks and freight handlers immediately were about twenty-five car repairers (some of whom were UBRE members), who struck February 27, the same day as the clerks. They were not joined by any others until April 8, when fourteen carmen and allied mechanics refused to work with strikebreakers or replace strikers.³⁹ Although rank and file boilermakers, blacksmiths, and machinists wanted to join the strike, they were kept at work by their International union headquarters, and local officials (such as J.H. Watson of the Boilermakers).⁴⁰

Edwards, Contested Terrain, Ch. 2.

38. On the UBRE strike, see Chapter 10 below.

39. Weekly Columbian, March 10, 1903; Province, March 28, 1903, April 9, 1903; Railway Employees Journal, April 9, 1903; Independent, April 11, 1903; Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, pp. 579, 724.

40. The latter went as far as to sign an agreement with the company at the end of March declaring the Vancouver shops "fair," and thus allowing the CPR to replace striking car repairers with the craft unions' consent. That isolated the shop craft unions from the rest of the labour movement in Vancouver, and led machinists and blacksmiths to withdraw from the VTLC after it declared the shops "unfair." (The boilermakers had already withdrawn on February 5, "on account of political matters.") Not all local leaders of metal craft unions opposed the radical direction being taken by the VTLC, however. For example, the Moulders Union supported a resolution asking for the cancellation of J.H. Watson's appointment as organizer for the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. VTLC Minutes, March 5, 1903. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 5, 1903; Independent, Feb. 7, 1903; Province, March 28, 1903, April 2, 9, 16, 1903; VTLC Minutes, April 16, 1903; Independent,

The response of the shop craft unions to the UBRE strike was shaped by several factors, including rivalry between the AFL and the fledgling American Labor Union (to which the UBRE belonged), and political factionalism between supporters and opponents of socialism within Vancouver unions.⁴¹ The strike showed that solidarity between shop crafts and other branches of the railway service was not as strong as within the shops, but was still present, especially among the rank and file of less skilled, organized workers.

Except for two small, partially successful strikes over wages, strike activity by shop craft unions declined after 1903, until a new CPR offensive forced a decisive showdown in 1908.⁴²

At the beginning of April 1908, the CPR cancelled agreements with crafts in its mechanical department, gave notice of a wage reduction, laid off hundreds of shop workers at Winnipeg and elsewhere, and posted open shop notices in all its shops from Fort William to Vancouver. Declaring that "the days of individualism and craft

 April 25, 1903; Western Clarion, May 28, 1903; H. J. Tuck, "The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in Western Canada, 1898-1905 (hereafter, "UBRE in Western Canada"), pp. 79-82.

41. On the former, see P. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. III, The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1909 (hereafter, History of the Labor Movement, Vol. III), p. 422; Dubofsky, We Shall be All, p. 71; Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada," p. 81. On the latter, see Province, Aug. 23, 1902, March 26, 1903, April 4, 1903, June 12, 1903; VTLC Minutes, March 5, 19, 1903, April 6, 1903; Independent, May 3, 30, 1903.

42. Twenty or so blacksmiths and helpers struck in September 1903 for fulfillment of a promised wage increase, and about forty machinists and apprentices struck over wages for several days in September 1904. Independent, Sept. 26, 1903, Oct. 3, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1903), pp. 318, 404, V (1904), pp. 399-400; Province, Sept. 26, 1904.

organization" were past, workers at the Vancouver shops responded by resolving at a mass meeting to organize a joint committee for negotiations with the CPR.⁴³ The corporate challenge to the metal trades was helping to break down their craft boundaries.

The precise nature of the CPR challenge was revealed in the majority and minority reports of a Board of Investigation appointed under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (IDIA).⁴⁴ The CPR's first objective was to substitute less skilled, and therefore cheaper labour in certain jobs currently performed by machinists and boilermakers. As the minority report of the board observed, this would increase "the number of what is [sic] termed 'specialists' -- men with a knowledge of only part of a trade -- and a corresponding decrease in the number of allround mechanics." Wages would be reduced, and the power of foremen increased. The overall objective of the company, and the concept of craft control which the workers were trying to defend, was expressed well by the employees' representative:⁴⁵

The principle once admitted can be carried into any and all trades, destroying the men's earning powers through the lessening of the skill required to do a particular part of

43. They also decided to try to interest other employees across the country to do the same, and resolved to elect political representatives "in the sole interest of the working class." Province, April 9, 1908.

44. Trades Unionist, April 1908, p. 16; Province, April 2, 21, 1908; Labour Gazette IX (1908), pp. 152-53, 443. The majority report was written by its chairman, P.A. MacDonald, and the CPR representative, G.F. Galt. The minority report was submitted by the workers' representative, J. Somerville of the IAM. Both are printed in Labour Gazette IX (1908), pp. 155-60.

45. Labour Gazette IX (1908), p. 159.

the boilerwork or a single part of what goes to make up what is recognized as a skilled trade. The allround workman so much in demand in the present will pass away entirely as he becomes less a man and more of a machine.

Other CPR proposals also sought to further erode craft controls. The company wanted to restore the unilateral authority of foremen and supervisors by eliminating grievance procedures. To create specialists instead of all-round craftsmen, and replace higher with lower paid labour, it wanted to increase the number of apprentices, and to have helpers be allowed to use craft tools.⁴⁶ Finally, the CPR was seeking to substitute layoffs for the existing practice of a general reduction in hours for all staff when work was short. The proposed change attacked a practice that was a concrete expression of craft solidarity, and offered instead to divide workers by seniority.

The CPR's demands represented a concerted attack on craft controls over production, and in the IDIA hearings, it appeared that the company was also trying to break the craft unions, and prevent their joint action. The IDIA majority report conceded enough of its demands to whittle away craft controls, which the shop crafts were not going to relinquish without a fight.⁴⁷ As a result, a strike by about 4700 shop employees on the CPR's western lines, including about 400 in Vancouver, began on August 5, 1908.

46. See also B.C. Trades Unionist, Sept. 1908, p. 23.

47. According to a machinists' delegate to the VTLC, they were even willing to submit to a small wage reduction in order to preserve their working conditions. Province, Aug. 5, 7, 1908; B.C. Trades Unionist, Sept. 1908, p. 5.

The strikers put up a determined fight, but they were weakened by the absence (except in Vancouver) of strong financial support from other unions, which was needed to maintain strikers who had been working short time for months, or who belonged to weak unions, such as the railway carmen. In addition, the CPR was well prepared for the strike, and made effective use of strikebreakers guarded by its private police.⁴⁸ After two months the CPR finally prevailed, and union negotiators in Winnipeg accepted the IDIA majority report.⁴⁹ The strikers had been "whipped to a standstill," and it even turned out that CPR promises to rehire strikers were hollow. Reinstatements were still an issue in 1909, and those who were rehired lost seniority and pension rights.⁵⁰ The shop crafts managed to retain a federated organization, but they were in no position to secure improvements, or resist continued encroachments on craft control.⁵¹ The boilermakers,

48. Men in the Vancouver shops had been working short time all winter, each putting in about 140 hours a month. B.C. Trades Unionist, Sept. 1908, p. 5, Dec. 1908, pp. 9-10; Province, Sept. 4, 1908, Nov. 6, 14, 1908; Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 147.

49. One of the negotiators from Vancouver, J.H. McVety of the IAM, later defended the agreement as the best one possible, but many rank and file unionists dissented. The Brotherhood of Railway Carmen in Vancouver called for McVety's resignation. Province, Oct. 5, 1908, Nov. 6, 14, 17, 19, 1908; Labour Gazette IX (1908), p. 506; B.C. Trades Unionist, Dec. 1908, pp. 9-10.

50. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 15, 1908, Province, March 23, 24, 1909, April 8, 1909.

51. Western Wage Earner, March 1909, pp. 9, 17; May 1909, p. 8. There were complaints about "overly aggressive officials" not carrying out the terms of agreements, either because they were not instructed to do so by higher officials, or because they were instructed not to do so. The IAM also complained about the CPR "personal record system," calling it a

for one, were reported in 1911 to have had a "rough row to hoe" since the strike.⁵²

The defeat of the strikers was historic, because there were no more strikes by metal workers in the CPR shops in the 1900 to 1919 period. It appears that the CPR, having won most of what it wanted in 1908, was wary of pushing the unions at the shops too far. Thus, in 1909, it was content to continue the agreement it had won in 1908 for another two years. The unions were too weak, because of their defeat, their fight with contract shops, and, with the onset of the pre-war depression, either short time or layoffs, to try to restore previous conditions.⁵³ The unions and the company seem to have reached a stable accommodation, as the CPR did not even try to use the opportunity of the pre-war depression to wrest further control over production away from the crafts, or to attack their unions.⁵⁴ The IAM reported in 1916 that

 "pernicious scheme of blacklisting." Their premise was that craft workers should collectively control the labour market through their union, any member of which was by that fact competent to do machinists' work. See *Western Wage Earner*, loc. cit., and Dec. 1909, p. 10.

52. *World*, April 22, 1911.

53. The machinists reported in September 1914 that they were working full time at the CPR for the first time in two years, and they were working short time again in the summer of 1915. Carmen had been laid off in November and December, 1914. Even BCER caf shops were working short time in the latter month. See VTLC Minutes, Sept. 4, 1914, Nov. 19, 1914, Dec. 17, 1914, June 3, 1915, July 2, 1915, Nov. 18, 1915, Dec. 2, 1915.

54. Although a union of shop helpers (Federal Labour Union 23) disappeared in 1912, and a plumbers' local that was organized in the CPR shops in 1913 did not survive the pre-war depression, the latter's effects were not as serious as in the contract shops. On the organization of plumbers' local 632, see VTLC Minutes, Dec. 18, 1913.

the CPR shops were the only ones in the city not disorganized by the depression.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, metal tradesmen in the contract shops had been mainly concerned with wages and hours, job control, and unionization. Until 1904, they achieved notable successes. For example, in 1902 the machinists secured acceptance of new apprenticeship rules by most employers, and won a short strike against the Vancouver Engineering Works (VEW) for union recognition. Another strike was averted in 1903 when contract shops granted the machinists' demand for a nine-hour day.⁵⁶ Also in 1903, a few blacksmiths struck at two or three shops for a wage increase. Other trades were able to win higher wages and the nine-hour day without striking. About twenty-five moulders and an equal number of boilermakers won the nine-hour day in contract shops during 1903. Pattern makers, and about forty blacksmiths achieved it in 1904, and the latter were able to report that all shops in the city were unionized.⁵⁷

The success of metal trades unions in securing improved conditions and organizing contract shops received its first setback in

55. B.C. Federationist, May 5, 1916, p. 1.

56. A campaign for the nine-hour day was begun by the IAM in 1901. Independent, Aug. 10, 1901, Sept. 6, 1902, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 225-26; VTLC Minutes Jan. 19, 1903, Feb. 19, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 1, 1903; Province, July 21, 1904.

57. Province, Dec. 16, 1902, Jan. 2, 1903, April 2, 1903; Independent, Jan. 3, 1903; News-Advertiser, Jan. 3, 1903, March 1, 1903; Weekly Columbian, April 7, 1903, Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 773, VI (1905), pp. 542-43. Hours in the CPR shops remained at ten per day.

1904, when they had to fight for their existence against an employer open shop offensive. Early in that year, the VEW (the largest contract shop in the city) mounted a full-scale attack on craft control in the workplace and labour market. First, a strike by boilermakers was precipitated on February 25, when new shop rules from the National Metal Trades Association were posted, containing the following open shop clause:⁵⁸

In all departments, union and non-union men will be employed without discrimination or prejudice. Any employee interfering directly or indirectly with the operation of this rule will be subject to immediate dismissal.

Union boilermakers objected to working with non-union men on the grounds that they were incompetent, since any competent man would belong to the union. Although that sounds like self-serving rhetoric, non-union men were often used to replace all-round craftsmen with partially trained specialists.⁵⁹

The open shop offensive at the VEW was carried out in close coordination with the recently organized Vancouver Employers Association, and was seen by labour as the thin edge of an open shop

58. Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 1002; Province, Feb. 27, 1904, July 19, 1904. The National Metal Trades Association was the American employers' association that spearheaded the open shop drive in the metal trades in 1903-04. See D. Montgomery, "Machinists, the Civic Federation, and the Socialist Party"; on the open shop drive in general, see Poner, History of the Labor Movement, Vol. III, Ch. 2.

59. Province, July 19, 20, 21, 1904.

wedge in the Vancouver metal trades.⁶⁰ Strikebreakers were recruited in England and the United States before the strike, and brought into the country in contravention of the ineffectual Alien Labour Act. During the strike, members of the Employers Association refused to employ VEW strikers, circulated a blacklist, and helped the VEW find strikebreakers.⁶¹

The twenty-six striking boilermakers were joined by fourteen machinists in March, when the president of the local IAM Lodge was dismissed for violating the shop rules. The strikes were to no avail: through careful planning, the assistance of other employers, and a very porous Alien Labour law, the VEW won a decisive victory over the machinists and boilermakers, after strikes lasting about two months for each trade.⁶² It thereby established itself as an implacable foe of unionism in Vancouver, and the open shop was introduced in other

60. VTLC Minutes, March 3, 1904. The employers' association was organized in May 1903, during the UBRE strike against the CPR. By 1904, it had 122 members, who employed nearly 4000 workers and included most of the city's largest employers. The association's support had been requested by the VEW in December 1903. Independent, July 9, 1904; Province, July 19, 1904; for a list of 103 members, see VTLC Minutes, May 19, 1904.

61. The blacklist was extended as far as Seattle, where the Manufacturers Association pledged to help the VEW achieve the same open shop conditions that prevailed there. On the preparations for the strike and support by the Employers Association, see Independent, July 9, 1904; Province, March 24, 1904, April 6, 1904, July 19, 20, 21, 22, 1904.

62. Some strikers returned to work, and others were replaced. Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 1142. The IAM was still appealing for funds in July, to support its legal battle with the Employers Association over the blacklist.

contract shops.⁶³

The 1904 defeat, the open shop drive, and the 1907-08 recession weakened the metal trades unions. Membership in the boilermakers' union fell, and several unions of helpers disappeared: boilermakers' helpers in January 1905, foundry employees and blacksmiths' helpers after 1907, and moulders' helpers' in 1909.⁶⁴ The machinists were strong enough to win a wage increase in December 1906, but the recession soon led to short time and layoffs.⁶⁵

Only the moulders were not weakened after 1904. They had won the nine hour day and fifty hour week in 1903 without striking, and by 1906 the union had 200 members in Vancouver and district. In a 1907 strike, about 100 moulders won higher wages, although not the eight hour day, despite strongly organized employers, and the failure of foundry

63. The VEW was still an open shop in 1918, and other contract shops appear to have maintained open shops intermittently. See Province, April 2, 4, 1918, May 27, 1918; Mathers Commission Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 482. The defeat of the metal trades in Vancouver contract shops was not isolated. They suffered similar defeats throughout Canada, at the hands of employers using the same tactics: open shop drives, employers' associations, blacklists, and manipulation of the legal system. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, pp. 15-17; Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921, pp. 150-55; Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, pp. 222-24; D. Morton and T. Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (hereafter, Working People), pp. 83-84.

64. The boilermakers' union fell from sixty-five members in 1904 (all but six at contract shops) to twenty in 1906. Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 773; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1. On helpers' unions, see Labour Gazette VI (1906), pp. 883-86, X (1910), pp. 1002-04.

65. Winning their wage increase included a short Christmas Eve strike at a New Westminster shop. Province, Dec. 22, 26, 1906; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 294, file 2806; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 5, 1907, April 2, 1908.

helpers to support the strike.⁶⁶ The moulders were more strongly mobilized, and more successful in their collective action than other metal workers, because they retained more control over the labour process than those other tradesmen.⁶⁷

Although some metal trades unions continued to be weak when economic recovery began in 1909,⁶⁸ other unions grew stronger as trade improved at the contract shops.⁶⁹ Despite those improvements, further mobilization attempts failed because of persistent unemployment. For example, an Iron Trades Council formed in January 1909 attracted only four unions, and lasted just a few months.⁷⁰

66. The employers acted in conjunction with other foundries and machine shops in British Columbia and Washington to hold out against the moulders' demands, especially the eight hour day. The foundry helpers' union subsequently dissolved, indicated that they may have already been weakly mobilized at the time of the strike. Union membership data are from B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1; on the strike, see PAC, RG 27, Vol. 295, files 2942, 2944; Province, April 29, 30, 1907, June 25, 1907, July 2, 3, 5, 8, 1907, Labour Gazette VIII (1907), pp. 163-64.

67. See Heron, "Crisis of the Craftsman," for a comparison of moulders and machinists.

68. For example, the blacksmiths' union withdrew from the VTLC in January, 1909, apparently from financial distress, and nothing more was heard of it until attempts to reorganize the local were made in 1911. VTLC Minutes, Jan. 7, 1909, MTC Minutes, March 18, 1911.

69. For example, notices in local machine shops abrogating all machinists' contracts had been withdrawn in January, and by the spring the number of unemployed had declined. VTLC Minutes, Jan. 7, 1909; Western Wage Earner, May, 1909, p. 5. Trade continued the improvement that had begun in 1908 for moulders, and pattern makers continued to be a small, but well-organized and steadily employed trade. VTLC Minutes, May 21, 1908, April 1, 1909; Western Wage Earner, Sept. 1909, p. 7.

70. Machinists, blacksmiths, boilermakers, and pattern makers (but not moulders) joined the new council. Another example of mobilization problems was the failure of the IAM to set up a separate New Westminster

The continuing weakness of the metal trades in the face of hostile employers was shown by a two-year strike of contract shop machinists demanding the eight hour day.⁷¹ The demand was granted by some smaller shops, which were more dependent on the labour of highly skilled journeymen than larger ones.⁷² The latter, which were organized in a Metal Trades Association, refused the demand, with the result that on July 4, 1910, about 185 machinists went on strike against eight contract shops in the Vancouver area.⁷³

Conditions seemed opportune for a strike. The labour market had finally improved, and railway strikes in the United States promised to reduce the supply of strikebreakers. But the employers were determined not to worsen their competitive position relative to eastern manufacturers, and they saw in the strike the chance to weaken a strong craft union.⁷⁴ Strikebreakers were recruited from the east, apprentices

local, after trying for several months. *Western Wage Earner*, Feb. 1909, p. 9, March 1909, p. 23, April 1909, p. 16, Aug. 1909, p. 5, Sept. 1909, p. 7.

71. The movement for shorter hours was started by the IAM international convention in 1909, and a battle was soon being waged between it and large employers organized in the Pacific Coast Metal Trades Association in the United States. *Western Wage Earner*, Nov. 1909, p. 5, July 1910, p. 6.

72. See W. Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1914" (hereafter, "Toronto Metal Workers"), p. 61.

73. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 297, file 3277A; Province, June 28, 1910, July 4, 1910; *News-Advertiser*, July 3, 5, 1910. The shops affected were Mainland Iron Works, B.C. Marine Railway, VEW, Ross and Howard, Letson and Burpee, Terminal Iron Works, Pacific Iron Works, and Schaafe Machine Works (New Westminster).

74. *Labour Gazette* XI (1910), p. 182; *News-Advertiser*, July 5, 1910; *British Columbian*, July 12, 1910.

replaced journeymen, and "the notorious Thiel Detective Agency" was engaged to spy on strikers, who were harassed with charges of intimidating strikebreakers.⁷⁵ The strikers nonetheless had the resources to keep the strike going for two years. The International provided strike pay for those without work, and although the Metal Trades Association tried to prevent it, strikers were employed at small shops that had settled. In May, 1911, the union reported as many men working an eight hour day under union conditions as were working nine hours non-union, but it was clear by that time that the strike was probably lost in the large shops.⁷⁶

The metal trades drew from the machinists' strike the lesson that greater coordination between unions was needed.⁷⁷ Consequently, the Metal Trades Council (MTC) was formed in March 1911, by the largest unions: machinists, moulders, and boilermakers (pattern makers joined in

75. Province, July 27, 1910, Oct. 15, 29, 1910, Jan. 12, 20, 1911; Western Wage Earner, Nov. 1910, p. 12. None of the strikers charged with intimidation was convicted by a jury.

76. News-Advertiser, July 6, 24, 26, 1910; Province, July 27, 1910; Western Wage Earner, Aug. 1910, pp. 8-9, Sept. 1910, pp. 5-6; World, Jan. 7, 1911, July 29, 1911.

77. The IAM local declared shortly after the beginning of the strike: "As usual, the machinists are fighting the battle of the metal trades alone, the pattern makers, moulders and boilermakers continuing at their work as if no effort was being made to improve the conditions of those engaged in the metal trades shops." News-Advertiser, July 24, 26, 1910; Province, July 25, 1910; Western Wage Earner, Sept. 1910, p. 5, cf. Aug. 1910, p. 8. The other metal trades did not take kindly to this outburst; for example, the pattern makers replied angrily that they had not received advance notice of the strike, and although they were morally and financially supporting the machinists, and would like an eight hour day, they had received no encouragement from their international headquarters. Western Wage Earner, Oct. 1910, pp. 10-11.

June).⁷⁸ Its main objectives were closer cooperation among the metal trades in their fights with employers, and organization of unorganized metal workers. Moulders and machinists vocally championed the first cause, but the MTC did little to help the machinists in their strike.⁷⁹ Closer cooperation was held up by craft jealousies, unwillingness to jeopardize existing conditions, and according to some delegates (especially moulders), by the international officers of the unions.⁸⁰ The MTC also made little progress in organizing unorganized metal trades workers. Blacksmiths were reorganized at its instigation, but plans to organize foundry, machine shop, and boiler shop helpers were not realized.⁸¹

The hostility of large contract shops to unions was effective in weakening the mobilization of metal tradesmen, and defeating their collective actions.⁸² As a result, support for industrial unionism and

78. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 16, 1911, March 16, 1911; MTC Minutes, March 18, 1911, June 28, 1911. The moulders and machinists were the largest metal trades unions: the former reported 175 members in 1911, and 185 of the latter had gone on strike in 1910. There were only 42 union boilermakers in 1911. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912.

79. MTC Minutes, April 26, 1911, July 26, 1911, Jan. 24, 1912. The best they did was to organize a benefit smoker.

80. MTC Minutes, July 12, 26, 1911, Sept. 27, 1911, Oct. 25, 1911. At the latter meeting, a moulders' delegate suggested "radical changes in the Int. (sic) officers of all unions."

81. MTC Minutes, March 22, 1911, April 12, 26, 1911.

82. The only other strike in this period was by pattern makers: twenty-three members secured as wage increase in May 1912, and the remainder went on strike with unknown results. MTC Minutes, May 22, 1912, June 26, 1912.

socialism grew, with the strongest union, the moulders, taking the lead. Thus, "realizing the inadequacy of the present system of craft organization to protect the interests of the members of the various Metal Trades unions against the constant encroachments of Capital," a moulders' delegate presented a resolution to the MTC for industrial unionism, or "the complete amalgamation of Metal Trades unions into one compact body."⁸³ Referring to the deleterious effects of mechanization on the labour market, a moulder had earlier suggested that it "would be well for workers to look beyond Trade Unionism for a solution to their problems." Moulders, pattern makers, and machinists each voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Principles of Socialism in a B.C. Federation of Labor referendum in 1912.⁸⁴

As the local economy slid toward the pre-war depression, opportunities for mobilization and collective action by metal trades workers disappeared. The MTC barely survived 1912, and finally expired in 1913.⁸⁵ Individual trades such as boilermakers, moulders, and

83. MTC Minutes, July 24, 1912. The movement for industrial unionism extended beyond the metal trades and became a general movement endorsed by other unions in the city. VTLC Minutes, Aug. 15, 1912, Nov. 21, 1912. The moulders' role was in stark contrast to Toronto, where instead of starting the movement, they opposed it. Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers," p. 70.

84. MTC Minutes, May 10, 1911; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1912; B.C. Federationist, May 6, 1912, pp. 1, 2. No vote by boilermakers was reported. In 1911, the IAM voted against the formation of a political party by the VTLC, declaring "if this Union endorsed any political party it would be the socialist party." VTLC Minutes, Oct. 19, 1911. Socialist influence had been strong in the IAM in Vancouver since 1900.

85. MTC Minutes, Jan. 24, 1912 to Feb. 1913.

machinists suffered rising unemployment and falling membership in 1913 and 1914.⁸⁶ Unemployment was eased in 1915 when metal workers signed up for wartime munitions and shipyard work in England, and the revival of local metal manufacturing even led some unions to increase their membership.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, even unions with improving labour market conditions continued to face hostile, anti-union employers such as the VEW, and others were still weakened by unemployment.⁸⁸

The beginning of the war capitalist boom in 1916 held out to the metal trades new opportunities for mobilization and collective action. The labour market became tighter as a result of munitions and

86. B.C. Federationist, Nov. 29, 1912, p. 5, Oct. 17, 1913, p. 8; Province, Dec. 6, 1913. As a result of its defeat, the IAM had only 65 members in Vancouver in 1913, and the moulders had dropped to 120 members, half of whom were unemployed. During 1914, the boilermakers' union still had about forty members, but ten to twenty-five were unemployed. About 75 of the 120 union moulders were unemployed during the year, and machinists reported ten to thirty unemployed in 1914, accounting for about 15 per cent of their membership. PABC, Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-18, Roll 66, file 8560-14-14, pp. 8-15, 67-73, M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, Sept. 4, 1914, M.J. Reid to W.J. Scott, Dec. 23, 1914, in M.J. Reid to W.J. Bowser, Dec. 28, 1914; B.C. Federationist, April 17, 1914, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 3, 17, 1914, Dec. 17, 1914, May 6, 1915.

87. Province, July 13, 1915; VTLC Minutes, July 15, 1915. The first detachment was sent in July, by which time 211 had qualified. Boilermakers' union membership rose from forty in 1914 to ninety-five in early 1915.

88. Machinists and boilermakers were having trouble with anti-union shops, while the once powerful moulders had only 20 per cent of their members working in 1915. The blacksmiths' union seems to have dissolved sometime after 1914. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 8, 1915, p. 1; News-Advertiser, July 15, 1915; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 19, 1915, Dec. 16, 1915; Labour Gazette XVI (1915), pp. 566, 693. There were no reports concerning the blacksmiths' union in 1915 or 1916, and a new local was reported in Vancouver in 1917. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1.

shipbuilding work, and the contract shops were busy. Because the large employers remained as anti-union as ever, progress was slow outside the shipyards, however.⁸⁹

A strike by moulders in 1916 showed that the power of the large contract shops continued, despite the tightening labour market. At the end of August, fifty-five moulders went on strike for the eight hour day, and as usual, some of the smaller shops settled with the union. The larger shops declared an open shop and were able to fill the strikers' places. Some union moulders even returned to work under the open shop and nine hour day and were expelled from the union. As far as it was concerned, the strike was still in effect in March 1917, but it had long since been clear that the large shops had won another important victory.⁹⁰

Other trades were also weak, but they used the growing labour shortages of war capitalism to reorganize. After the havoc wreaked by the pre-war depression and the earlier strike loss, the machinists' locals in B.C. were the weakest in the country, according to an IAM organizer, and Vancouver machinists were consequently low paid, and worked long hours, frequently without overtime pay. An organizing

89. As much as possible, discussion will be limited here to developments in the contract shops. The role of the metal trades in shipbuilding will be left for the next chapter.

90. The large shops included the VEW, Letson and Burpee, Terminal City Iron Works, and Ross and Howard. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 305, file 16(49A); B.C. Federationist, Sept. 8, 1916, p. 4; VTLC Minutes, Feb. 15, 1917, March 1, 1917; MTC Minutes, May 23, 1917, July 25, 1917. Boilermakers in New Westminster also struck briefly in 1916, for a wage increase, with indefinite results. B.C. Federationist, July 21, 1916, p. 4.

campaign resulted in a new local in New Westminster (with thirty to thirty-five members), and the doubling of the Vancouver membership in two months.⁹¹ A separate IAM lodge (No. 777) was set up for contract shop machinists in March 1917, and despite employer opposition, the new local reorganized five small shops. It had sixty-eight members by June, and other shops started paying union wages to forestall unionization.⁹² Other trades which had been in poor shape also took steps to reorganize in 1917. A new local of blacksmiths was formed in July, with 80 members. The boilermakers' union mushroomed because of the shipbuilding boom, and even became stronger at the contract shops. Finally, moulders and pattern makers were in good shape, although the former had little success in luring back former members who had returned to work during the 1916 strike.⁹³

The culmination of the metal trades' mobilization was the re-establishment of the Metal Trades Council (MTC) in April 1917, and the affiliation of most unions whose members worked in contract shops or

91. B.C. Federationist, May 5, 26, 1916, p. 1, June 2, 1916, p. 1, Nov. 2, 17, 24, 1916, p. 1, Dec. 29, 1916, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 7, 1916.

92. B.C. Federationist, March 23, 30, 1917, p. 3, May 4, 11, 1917, p. 1, June 1, 1917, p. 6, June 15, 1917, p. 1, July 20, 1917, p. 1; MTC Minutes, June 6, 1917. Growing use of automobiles and trucks opened a new field for organization, and a separate IAM local was also established for auto mechanics in 1917. B.C. Federationist, July 20, 1917, p. 1, July 27, 1917, p. 3, Aug. 10, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 11, 1917, p. 1; Report on Labour Organization 1917, pp. 176, 217-20. There may actually have been two organizations. Sources in July and August refer to the Auto Repair Union, with 40, 50, then 100 members. In November, the formation of IAM 720 (auto repair men) is reported, with 30 members. The Dept. of Labour lists only the latter.

93. MTC Minutes, April 29, 1917, May 2, 23, 1917, July 4, 18, 1917.

shipyards.⁹⁴ The new MTC was a step in the direction of industrial unionism, since its primary objective was to achieve, through coordinated strikes if necessary, a blanket agreement for all the metal trades at contract shops and shipyards.⁹⁵

The persistently anti-union VEW was the only major contract shop to refuse to sign the MTC agreement. It granted union wages and hours, but refused to meet a committee of the unions, or alter its open shop policy, so on July 19, 1917, seventy boilermakers, machinists, pattern makers, blacksmiths and helpers went on strike. The new spirit of industrial unionism in the metal trades was shown by the provision of strike pay to non-union workers, and the inclusion of better conditions for the still unorganized helpers and labourers in the strikers' demands. The strike nonetheless failed, because helpers and labourers, moulders who had abandoned the 1916 strike, and about 200 female munitions workers all remained at work.⁹⁶ The MTC had not been able to

94. Unions with members mostly in shipbuilding included boilermakers, shipwrights and caulkers, blacksmiths, sheet metal workers, steam and operating engineers, and plumbers; unions whose strength was in contract shops were machinists (in IAM 777), moulders, and pattern makers.

95. Major demands in the blanket agreement included the eight hour day, wage increases, overtime pay, apprenticeship rules, union recognition, grievance procedures, and free access by union business agents to shops and yards. MTC Minutes April 11, 18, 1917, June 13, 1917; a copy of the blanket agreement can be found in PAC, RG 27, Vol. 42, folder 2. Boilermakers had separate agreements at several shipyards, so they were outside the MTC blanket agreement. Montgomery notes that MTCs generally took more initiative in bargaining, and calling strikes in this period. *Immigrants, Industrial Unions, and Social Reconstruction in the United States, 1916-1923*, pp. 104-05.

96. There were also constant defections from the strikers' ranks. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 906, file 17(64); MTC Minutes, July 11, 1917, to Oct. 10,

do much to aid the VEW strikers. It declared products of the VEW "unfair," (obliging all other unionized metal tradesmen to refuse to work with them), but that had no effect on the outcome of the strike.⁹⁷

The MTC had more success with employers who had signed the blanket agreement, for example in winning revisions of the wage scale in an attempt to keep up with the rising cost of living. Some organizational gains were also made in contract shops,⁹⁸ and over 200 unionized auto and garage mechanics won higher pay and shorter hours in March 1918.⁹⁹ Despite these successes, the metal trades unions were unable to establish a secure hold in many contract shops, where the open

1917; B.C. Federationist, July 20, 27, 1917, p. 1, Aug. 3, 1917, p. 6, Aug. 10, 17, 24, 1917, p. 1, Aug. 31, 1917, p. 5; Province, July 19, 1917; Sun, July 20, 1917.

97. Maintaining the boycott became one of the main preoccupations of the MTC, and one of the main irritants in its relations with shipyards, for months after the strike was effectively over. It started to break down in November, 1917, when exceptions were made when there were no alternative supplies for some products used in shipyards, and the MTC or its component unions were unwilling to jeopardize contracts for the sake of a principle. The boycott was still being applied in 1918, but the VEW continued to refuse to have anything to do with unions. MTC Minutes, Nov. 7, 28, 1917, Dec. 12, 1917, Jan. 23, 1918, Feb. 6, 1918, April 17, 1918.

98. A blacksmiths' local was formed in New Westminster, the foundry employees (helpers) were organized in Vancouver, and a district council of machinists was established for Vancouver, New Westminster, and Victoria. Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 178, 180, 225-29; B.C. Federationist, April 12, 1918, p. 1.

99. A strike was required at the Ford agencies in order to win the demands there. B.C. Federationist, Feb. 22, 1918, p. 1, March 8, 15, 22, 1918, p. 1; Province, March 1, 12, 1918; Sun, March 12, 13, 1918; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1918, June 20, 1918.

shop continued to prevail.¹⁰⁰ Their strength lay mainly in the shipyards.

The weakness of the metal trades was demonstrated in a strike of about 150 moulders at eight or nine contract shops in late 1918. The moulders wanted a wage increase to keep pace with the still rising cost of living, but both open shops and signatories of the MTC agreement refused. The strike was uneventful, and when the International refused to sanction it, the moulders returned to work under the old conditions, after more than three weeks on strike.¹⁰¹

As in the past, the weakness and defeats of the metal trades craft unions led them in the direction of industrial unionism and radicalism, expressed through support for general strikes and the OBU. The MTC led the call for the the 1918 Goodwin protest strike in Vancouver, and only moulders were reported to have stayed at work.¹⁰²

In 1919, the metal trades were torn apart by the One Big Union

100. See Sun, May 17, 1917; Province, May 27, 1918, lists twenty-four open shop metal manufacturing plants in Vancouver. The MTC was still only talking about organizing the machine shops and foundries of the city. MTC Minutes, May 29, 1918.

101. Foundry helpers, who were now organized in the Foundry Employees Union, again failed to join the work stoppage. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 308, ~~18(96)~~ 18(96); Province, Nov. 22, 25, 26, 1918, Dec. 13, 1918; Sun, Nov. 23, 1918, Dec. 13, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 29, 1918, p. 1.

102. In New Westminster, fifty to eighty moulders and machinists joined the strike. Province, Aug. 3, 1918; Sun, Aug. 4, 1918; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 1, 8, 15, 29, 1918; B.C. Federationist Aug. 9, 1918, p. 1. In the aftermath of the strike, the metal trades unions expressed their support by re-electing the delegates who had called it. Boilermakers, moulders, and machinists had also been ready to strike in sympathy with BCER workers in July, while blacksmiths were opposed. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918, July 7, 1918.

(OBU) issue. The major trades voted overwhelmingly for the OBU in the spring: only the railway machinists (IAM 182) and the pattern makers turned it down (Table 1-3). The strongest proponents of the OBU were boilermakers and contract shop machinists, who each formed new organizations after disputes with their internationals over the support they were giving the OBU.¹⁰³

Before metal workers' units of the OBU could be formed, the general sympathetic strike in Vancouver intervened for the month of June. The MTC as a whole voted in favor of the strike, in order to secure the recognition and legal protection of collective bargaining, and reinstatement of striking postal workers in Winnipeg.¹⁰⁴ With the exception of the CPR shops,¹⁰⁵ virtually all of the city's metal working shops were affected, as union and some non-union foundry employees, moulders, boilermakers, blacksmiths, machinists, pattern

103. The machinists lost their IAM charter because of their support for the OBU, and formed Machinists Union Local No. 1 instead. Machinists who wanted to stay with the international were organized into a new IAM local (No. 692). The boilermakers formed their own organization of journeymen and helpers after a large number were suspended by the International for supporting the OBU; it soon had over 1000 members. VTLC Minutes, March 27, 1919, April 10, 1919, June 12, 1919; Province, April 7, 11, 26, 1919, May 1, 28, 1919; B.C. Federationist, April 11, 1919, p. 12, April 25, 1919, p. 1, May 2, 9, 30, 1919, p. 1.

104. B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, pp. 1, 8; Sun, June 5, 1919. It is not surprising that the MTC would support the strike, since the issue in Winnipeg was the right of the MTC there to bargain with contract shops. See Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, pp. 110-11. That was not a sufficient condition, as was shown by the failure of Vancouver postal workers to join the strike.

105. Province, June 12, 18, 1919. The CPR shopmen had a case before the Canadian Railway War Board, and were probably afraid to jeopardize its outcome by participation in a sympathetic strike.

makers, auto mechanics, and various helpers joined the strike.¹⁰⁶

Tensions between OBU and International craft union supporters increased during and after the general strikes. The first OBU unit in the Vancouver area was formed in the middle of June by blacksmiths, boilermakers, and machinists (foundry workers joined in July). The MTC responded by suspending those organizations, and voting on a return to work.¹⁰⁷ After the general strikes were over, the MTC soon gained the upper hand on the OBU, as employers who had formerly fought unions tooth and nail now discovered the virtues of closed shop agreements with the International unions. Craft unions which had been reduced to small rumps by desertions to the OBU now swelled in membership as OBU members

106. World, June 5, 10, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8. The boilermakers who had left the International were strong supporters of the strike, and while the minority who stayed with it voted heavily against striking, they took part in it anyway. The same probably happened in the two machinists unions. Moulders voted heavily in favor of the strike at the end of May. B.C. Federationist, May 30, 1919, p. 1; World, June 3, 1919; Sun, June 3, 1919; Province, June 3, 1919. In New Westminster, a few workers who belonged to Vancouver union locals (such as pattern makers and moulders) struck at the beginning of June, but railway carmen (from the Canadian Northern shops at Port Mann), and machinists acted independently. Along with BCER shop workers, who belonged to the street railway union, they both joined the strike when it was called on June 18, and stayed out until it was called off on June 23. The machinists had voted against calling the strike, the carmen in favor. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221); British Columbian, June 4, 6, 19, 1919; Province, June 12, 19, 1919; Sun, June 20, 23, 24, 25, 1919.

107. Although radicals accused it of betraying the strikers, the MTC vote made little difference (a small majority favored returning to work), because the strike was ending by the time it was taken. B.C. Federationist, June 20, 1919, p. 1, July 4, 1919, p. 8; Sun, June 28, 1919, July 4, 1919; Province, June 28, 30, 1919, July 3, 1919.

returned in order to get their old jobs back.¹⁰⁸

The conflict between the OBU and the International unions benefitted neither. Although it still gained ~~some~~ new metal trades workers, such as the auto mechanics who joined the Transportation Unit, the OBU was seriously weakened by the collusion between the Internationals and employers.¹⁰⁹ The International union locals were also weakened by the conflict, even though they were winning. Machinists and railway carmen reported successes, but others were apathetic, and either failed to join the new International VTLC, or failed to report to it.¹¹⁰ The failure of the general strike, the conflict between the Internationals and the OBU, and the deteriorating labour market combined to weaken and demoralize metal trades workers in the Vancouver area, and no strikes occurred for years.¹¹¹

The split between the OBU and the Internationals was in large part a division over tactics. For example, when the IAM District Council rejected the OBU in April, 1919, delegates stated that they

108. For example, the new local of the International Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Union grew from 50 members in mid-May to 500 in early July. VTLC Minutes, July 10, 1919, Oct. 30, 1919; Province, July 10, 1919, Sun, July 10, 1919; B.C. Federationist, July 11, 1919, p. 1.

109. VTLC Minutes, Aug. 18, 1919.

110. For example, blacksmiths and moulders did not join the new council until well into 1920. VTLC (International) Minutes, Oct. 2, 1919, Nov. 20, 1919, Feb. 19, 1920, April 15, 1920, June 17, 1920, July 15, 1920, Nov. 4, 1920.

111. The Dept. of Labour recorded a strike against a wage reduction at contract shops by pattern makers in 1921. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 324, file 21(16).

avored industrial organization by means of the amalgamation of existing metal and transportation unions, rather than through a secessionist movement like the OBU.¹¹² Rejection of the OBU was not necessarily a rejection of industrial unionism. Both proponents and opponents of the OBU in the metal trades were responding to the same tendency for divisions among crafts, and between skilled journeymen and less skilled helpers and labourers, to break down under the impact of specialization and other changes in the labour process. What led some to support the OBU and others to oppose it?

The metal trades unions which opposed the OBU or stayed out of the general strike did not experience the same threats from specialization in the workplace or from hostile anti-union employers as did those which supported it. For example, the CPR machinists and carmen had reached stable accommodations with the railway, and apparently did not want to jeopardize them. In contrast, the newer CNR shops at Port Mann and elsewhere in western Canada were a hotbed of OBU support.¹¹³ In general, the unions which supported the OBU in Vancouver were composed of workers employed in contract shops, where they faced both types of threat, particularly from large, open shop employers like the VWV.¹¹⁴ In addition, unions of helpers, such as the Foundry

112. B.C. Federationist, April 11, 1919, p. 12.

113. Province, Oct. 17, 1919. The Port Mann shop crafts formed an OBU unit in 1919. Report on Labour Organization, 1919, p. 37.

114. The hostility of employers was mentioned by WTC representatives testifying at the Mathers Commission early in 1919 as the reason for labour unrest in Vancouver. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp.

Workers, or unions with a large number of helpers in them, such as the Boilermakers, were strong supporters of the OBU and the general strike. Helpers had little reason to be loyal to craft unions which were primarily oriented to preserving the privileges of skilled workers.¹¹⁵ From the experience of the metal trades, then, one source of radicalism lay in experiences of threats to craft skills and controls, of the hostility of employers to workers' unions, and of defeats suffered by the latter at the hands of anti-union employers. Since craft unions were not serving their purposes, many metal workers were eager to try something more radical. The "crisis of the craftsman" interpretation of working class radicalism thus receives considerable support from the experience of metal trades workers in the Vancouver area.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have examined the effects of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and repression, opportunity and power on mobilization and collective action by metal trades workers. Two processes at the level of capital accumulation were significant for workers' collective action. First, the metal manufacturers in the Vancouver area were compelled by outside competition to attack both craft controls over the labour process and labour market, and the craft unions that protected them. It was not so

544, 577-78. On open shops, see *ibid.*, pp. 482-83; Province, May 27, 1919.

115. See Sun, June 4, 1919, on helpers' support for the general strike and the OBU.

much a matter of the particular disadvantages faced by Vancouver manufacturers (although the higher wage costs on the west coast probably contributed), as of general trends in the metal trades in North America. There was nothing unique about the threats to craft workers in Vancouver. Second, capital accumulation in metal manufacturing produced a polarization between large and small shops. The large shops, including the railway shops, were able to introduce new production processes, because they had longer production runs and more opportunity for standardization of output, and therefore they were less dependent on the skill of individual craftsmen than were small shops doing mostly custom work. Consequently, they were the source of tendencies toward specialization and other challenges to craft control in the metal trades. They also had the resources to challenge craft unions, because of their reduced dependence on craft skills for production, and because they had the capital to finance fights with unions (to absorb losses due to shutdowns, to import strikebreakers, etc.). The most aggressive employers were thus the largest ones: the CPR and the VEW. Neither was locally owned, so in contrast to frontier labourer interpretations, the source of their attacks on the crafts was not the hostility of self-made men to unions, but the aggressiveness of corporate capital. The legacy of that aggressiveness was the radicalization of metal trades workers. We will find in subsequent chapters that in industries which depended on the labour of craft workers, the differentiation between large and small capitalists was very important for workers' mobilization and collective action, because the large ones mounted offensives against craftsmen.

With respect to workers' social reproduction cycles, we found that metal trades workers were crafts in crisis, which contributed to radicalism. Other results were also important in the light of comparisons with the other industries considered so far. For instance, racial and gender differences were absent in the metal trades, which appears to have been conducive to radicalism. Thus, loggers and factory woodworkers, the only sources of radicalism in the lumber industry in 1918 and 1919, were white and male. This comparison raises the question of why skilled metal tradesmen did not form a labour aristocracy like the skilled white workers in lumber mills and salmon canneries. There were two reasons. First, the production process in metal manufacturing was carried on primarily by the skilled workers, not by semi-skilled workers operating machines, as it was in salmon canneries and saw and shingle mills. For metal manufacturers to improve productivity and reduce costs, they had to attack the conditions of craftsmen. Second, and perhaps most importantly, there was not as sharp a status division between skilled metal craftsmen, and helpers or labourers, as there was between the skilled, white male elite in lumber and salmon plants, and the Asians and women who performed most of the labour. There was probably a status division as well as a skill one in metal manufacturing, but it could not have been as sharp as the racial one in lumber mills and salmon canneries.

Another difference between the metal manufacturing industry and the lumber and salmon industries was that shops were smaller in metal manufacturing than in the other two. Even the large plants such as the

VEW were divided into separate machine shops, boiler shops, foundries, etc. Small shops appear to have been conducive to worker solidarity, and the combination of small workshops, in which working-class solidarity was formed, and large metal working establishments, in which worker organization was repressed, was conducive to radicalism.

Finally, the history of mobilization and collective action in the metal trades reflected the impact of strategic interaction: opportunity and threat, repression, and power. The first few years of the twentieth century, the beginning of the second decade, and the war capitalist boom appear to have been times of opportunity, when metal workers took advantage of tight labour markets to attempt to win improvements in their conditions. At other times, their collective action was in response to threats to their job control or to their unions, leading to unsuccessful defensive strikes, such as the 1904 strike against the VEW, and the 1908 CPR strike. Beginning with the open shop drive in 1904, employers became increasingly repressive toward metal craft unions, and most strikes against contract shops met with hostile responses. Significantly, this repression worked, even when conditions were favorable for workers, such as during war capitalism.¹¹⁶ The lack of power of metal craftsmen, because of this

116. Employers in contract shops responded with hostility to seven of the thirteen strikes from 1904 to 1919, and won six of those strikes, replacing some or all of the strikers in five of them (in one other strike where the employers' response was not reported, the strikers were replaced, so that could be counted as an additional successful hostile response). The only strike in which employers responded with hostility, yet the strikers won, was the strike against Ford dealers, and so was outside the mainstream of the metal trades.

continuing repressiveness, was almost certainly a source of radicalism in the metal trades. That conclusion is suggested by comparison of the history of workers in contract shops, who faced that repression in 1910-12 and 1916-19, and were radicals in 1918-19, with the history of workers at the CPR, who were beaten in 1908, apparently reached a stable accommodation with the company thereafter, and were not radicals in 1918-19. The CPR also never carried its repression as far as the open shop policies of the large contract shops.¹¹⁷ The continued organization of the CPR shops in Vancouver gave metal craftsmen such as the machinists a base from which to attempt to mobilize the contract shop workers; the existence of small unionized shops had the same effect in this and in other industries. Finally, the expansion of metal work in the shipyards during war capitalism also provided a base for trying to organize the contract metal shops. This was the primary significance of the war: in addition to providing new grievances for workers such as inflation, conscription and so on (emphasized by frontier labourer interpretations of western radicalism), it provided opportunities for mobilization and collective action. When those actions met with continuing repression, metal workers were led to pursue the more radical alternatives to craft unionism that they had been toying with before the war.

117. To adequately support this comparison, we would need more data on conditions in the CPR shops after 1908, and on the CPR shops in Port Mann, which were a source of radicalism. Unfortunately, we do not have them.

Chapter 8

SHIPBUILDING:

"No industry can endure unless discipline is maintained...."

For a few years during the First World War, the shipbuilding industry was one of the largest manufacturing industries in the Vancouver area. More than any other industry, it exemplified the effects of the war capitalist boom on the relations between capitalists and workers. Wartime inflation, the assaults of shipbuilders on craft controls over the labour process, and the opportunities presented by a tight labour market led to a wave of strikes, and to worker radicalism in the shipyards.

8.1 Capital Accumulation

Prior to World War I, shipbuilding in Vancouver was composed of two branches. Boat building, or the production of small fishing or pleasure craft, was carried on in small enterprises with few employees

and little capital.¹ Shipbuilding proper, or the construction of larger wooden and steel ships, consisted before the war mostly of repair and refitting work, and the occasional construction of tugs, ferries, and coastal vessels. After starting in boatbuilding, the firm of Alfred Wallace became the main shipbuilder in the pre-war period.²

The onset of war capitalism abruptly changed the face of shipbuilding in Vancouver. The shipbuilding boom actually began in 1915, when the provincial government began providing assistance for the construction of vessels to carry B.C. products, in order to aid the depressed lumber industry.³ That programme was soon eclipsed by Imperial Munitions Board (IMB) contracts for wooden and steel ships. Wooden shipbuilding plants such as Lyall's and Western Canada Shipyards sprouted like mushrooms as local and outside capital moved to take advantage of generous IMB terms. The IMB provided the site, material and a fixed profit margin; contractors were only responsible for recruiting and managing the labour. Two steel shipyards, Wallace's and Coughlan's, also expanded to build steel ships on a straight contract

1. See Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 357-58; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 146; 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table 2, pp. 214-15; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 24-25.

2. The history of the Wallace shipyard can be reconstructed from: Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 358; Province, Feb. 16, 1907, July 11, 1911; News-Advertiser, Feb. 28, 1909, July 13, 1913; Sun, June 6, 1912; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, pp. 52-53; "History of Burrard Drydock Co. Ltd."; Progress: An Illustrated Presentation by Burrard Drydock Co.

3. B.C. Federationist, May 3, 1918, p. 3; Telephone Talk, June 1916, pp. 5-7; Roy, Vancouver, p. 88.

basis. Shipyards quickly became the Vancouver area's largest employers.⁴ The boom was short-lived, however, and the shipbuilding industry slowly wound down at the end of the war. Several yards closed, and the industry returned to its previous concentration on repair work and the construction of smaller coastal vessels.⁵

J.J. Coughlan, of Coughlan and Sons, offered three reasons for the failure of the shipbuilding industry in B.C. to become established on a firm footing. First, it was restricted to the local market. There was no developed export market on the Pacific, and the industry was cut off from eastern markets by distance, and from U.S. markets by tariffs. Second, high freight rates raised costs of production above those of eastern competitors. Finally, costs of production were further raised by high wages and labour instability.⁶

The labour instability which disturbed Coughlan was rooted in contradictions between workers' social reproduction, and capitalists' strategies to overcome the obstacles to capital accumulation that arose

4. Province, March 21, 28, 1918. On Coughlan's, see Telephone Talk, Feb. 1917, pp. 10-11; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 72; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), p. 905; McDonald, Business Leaders, p. 107. On Lyall's, see Province, June 29, 1917; Hamilton, op. cit., p. 74; B.C. Federationist, May 3, 1918, p. 4. On Western Canada Shipyards, see Province, May 10, 1917, June 4, 1917, March 26, 1918. On Wallace's during the war, see "History of Burrard Drydock Co. Ltd.," pp. 6-7; Province, June 29, 1917, Sept. 11, 1917.

5. For the decline of the industry, see Province, March 26, 1918, July 24, 1918, Aug. 10, 1918, Feb. 22, 1919, April 9, 1919, Sept. 26, 1919, Oct. 28, 1919, Nov. 6, 1919; Sun, July 8, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 10, 1919, p. 3; "History of Burrard Drydock Co. Ltd.," pp. 7-8.

6. Province, May 28, 1918; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 432-33.

during war capitalism. First, the shipbuilding companies were caught between fixed-price contracts with the IMB or the Canadian government, and their employees' need for higher wages to keep up with the rising cost of living.⁷ To get out of this squeeze, shipbuilders tried to use labour militancy to secure higher contract prices from the IMB, thereby shifting the conflict from local industry to the state.

Second, wartime production required that large numbers of workers be recruited, trained, and put to work building ships as quickly as possible.⁸ To overcome shortages of skilled labour, and other obstacles to rapid expansion of production, shipbuilders tried to short-cut craft controls by introducing specialization, mechanization, and other measures that diluted craft skills.⁹ Shipyard employers thus

7. The problem for shipbuilders was that if they did not pay higher wages, they would lose time through strikes, or lose men to shipyards in the U.S. Wallace's claimed to have lost \$30,000 per wooden ship because of this squeeze in 1916. It soon sold its wooden shipyard to the Lyall construction company from Montreal. "History of Burrard Drydock Co. Ltd.," p. 6.

8. For example, Lyall's yard started with 80 men having a knowledge of wooden shipbuilding, and they had to train a work force which numbered 1200 at its peak. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 421; cf. Province, March 26, 1918, on New Westminster Construction.

9. In several ways, the situation in shipbuilding resembled building construction: capital accumulation followed the same boom and bust cycle, and there was the same pressure to complete work quickly in both fields. The production processes were similar: boat building was like house construction, steel-shipbuilding like the construction of large buildings. Even the same firms were involved in each: Coughlan's was a supplier of structural steel before going into shipbuilding, and the Western Canada yard was established by a number of large general building contractors. On the former, see Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 158; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, p. 45; on the latter, Province, March 21, 1918.

increased the number of apprentices to levels far beyond union limits, and put labourers to work on jobs that were within the jurisdiction of skilled trades.¹⁰ Mechanization also occurred in ship and boat building before and during the war, but it did not become contentious until it was combined with craft dilution, as when paint spraying machines operated by labourers were introduced in 1917.¹¹

Third, shipbuilding capitalists found that because of inflation and the tight labour market, their labour forces were increasingly combative and independent-minded. Management (especially at Wallace's and Coughlan's) alleged that shipyard workers were less punctual, less disciplined, less productive, and in general, more difficult to manage than in the past. In particular, they complained about craft controls over production, and so introduced new systems of management to regain control over the workplace.¹² In the most ambitious attempt, an "efficiency system" was adopted at Coughlan's, but it met with so much resistance it was dropped. But after another attempt to institute a more intensive system of supervision failed in February 1919, a compromise was worked out in the form of a labour-management production

10. For examples, see Province, June 7, 1918, March 6, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 14, 1918, p. 1.

11. For reports of mechanization before the war, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 358; Province, Jan. 29, 1910. The paint sprayer issue will be discussed in section 3.

12. See press accounts (the only available) of the 1919 Royal Commission on Shipbuilding in B.C.: Sun, March 1, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 1919; Province, March 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 1919, April 4, 1919; B.C. Federationist, March 21, 1919, p. 1; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), pp. 430-32.

committee, which defused workplace contention, and allowed Coughlan's to reorganize production with the acquiescence of its workers.¹³

In shipbuilding, then, the main burst of capital accumulation occurred during World War I, and the obstacles to capital accumulation were most strongly felt during that boom. Large workforces had to be assembled and put to work quickly, the tight labor market made them harder to control, and wage costs were rising because of the wartime inflation. As a result, the interests of shipbuilding capitalists and shipbuilding workers diverged most sharply over the formers' attempts to restrain wage increases, and to challenge craft control over the production process through skill dilution and systematic management. To understand workers' capacity to respond to these threats, we now turn to their social reproduction cycles.

8.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

Shipbuilding was a small employer of labour in Vancouver until the war capitalist boom, when it became one of the largest. Thus in 1910-11, no more than a few hundred workers were employed in ship and

13. For the establishment and operation of Coughlan's efficiency and production committees, see Province, March 27, 1919, April 1, 4, 1919, July 21, 24, 1919 Aug. 4, 28, 1919, Sept. 26, 1919; Sun, June 1, 1919; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), pp. 904-05; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 439-42, 570-72. It will be examined in more detail in section 3.

boat building in the Vancouver area.¹⁴ Yet by the peak of the wartime boom in 1918, approximately 7000 workers were employed in shipyards in and around Vancouver and New Westminster.¹⁵

Some idea of the rapid growth in shipyard work during the war is provided by employment data for individual plants. The oldest yard, Wallace's, had 130 employees in 1915, 160 in June 1916, 800 in February 1917 (half in the wooden shipyard), 900 in March 1918 (after the wooden yard had been sold), and 1200 at its peak that year.¹⁶ Coughlan's, the other large steel shipyard, started with 500 workers in July 1917, and rose to over 2600 in May 1918, 2900 in June, and 3000 in October, before falling to 1900 in August 1919.¹⁷ Lyall's wooden shipyard started with 80 men in June 1917, and expanded to 375 in July, and 850 in December. At its peak in 1918, the yard employed 1200-1400 workers, before falling

14. In the city of Vancouver in 1911, only 129 workers reported occupations in ship and boat building. 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI. The Census of Manufactures reported 236 wage earners in shipbuilding and repairs, and 73 in boatbuilding for the Vancouver census district in 1910. There were also 45 employed in boatbuilding in the New Westminster district. 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table IX.

15. Province, March 26, 1918. P. Roy (Vancouver, p. 88) mentions 7000 workers in May 1918 at Coughlan's alone, but no other source supports that figure, and she cites none.

16. Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915 (Supplement), pp. 52-53; Telephone Talk, June 1916, p. 7, Feb. 1917, p. 10; Province, March 26, 1918, Feb. 22, 1919.

17. Province, July 2, 14, 1917, May 15, 1918, June 21, 1918, Aug. 4, 1919; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 72; Sun, May 23, 1918; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), p. 905.

to 400-500 in April 1919.¹⁸ Other wooden yards were smaller and more ephemeral, but still employed large numbers of workers.¹⁹ As the figures for individual yards imply, shipbuilding employment declined swiftly after the war; consequently by 1921, there were only 648 ship and boat building yard workers in the city of Vancouver.²⁰

The data on employment levels in shipyards during World War I indicate two important aspects of shipbuilding workers' social reproduction cycles in that period. First, they worked in very large plants, far larger than most Vancouver manufacturing industries, and second, the employment of most of them was necessarily temporary. Both were significant for interests and group formation. The huge size of shipbuilding plants raises dramatically the question of the effects of plant size on worker solidarity and capacity for collective action. While conventional wisdom leads us to expect that in the absence of any major divisions within the ranks of shipyard workers, the large size of their plants would be favorable for the development of solidarity and

18. Province, June 29, 1917, Dec. 19, 1917, March 26, 1918, April 9, 1919, Oct. 28, 1919; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 421.

19. For example, New Westminster Construction and Engineering anticipated 200 workers in July 1917, actually had over 600 in March 1918, but reduced its staff to 400 workers by April. Province, July 7, 1917, March 26, 1918, April 24, 1918. Western Canada Shipyards projected 400-600 workers in 1917, actually employed 750 at its peak in early 1918, fell to 350 by August, rose again to 500 in February 1919 after changing ownership, and finally declined to 200 later in 1919. Province, June 4, 1917, July 7, 1917, Aug. 10, 1918, Feb. 22, 1919, April 9, 1919.

20. 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

5

1.0

1.1

1.25

1.4

1.6

1.8

2.0

2.2

militancy, the results of several studies suggest otherwise.²¹ As we will see in the next section, shipbuilding supports the conventional wisdom.

The main divisions within shipyards were those of occupation and skill. Ethnic and gender divisions were nearly wholly absent in the shipbuilding industry during the war. Most workers were men from Canada, the British Isles, or the United States. In 1918, over 90 per cent of the employees of 15 shipbuilding firms in B.C. were from those countries of origin, and nearly all the rest were from Europe.²² No women were reported as shipyard workers in 1911, 1918 or 1921.²³

With respect to skill and occupation, the same divisions between skilled tradesmen, and less skilled helpers and labourers existed in the shipbuilding industry as in the metal trades. Both were also affected by the threats to craft controls from specialization, the dilution of craft skills, and systematic management that have already been described. The crafts most affected by these threats were the largest groups of shipyard employees, and the most crucial to the production process, namely boilermakers in the steel shipyards, and shipwrights and

21. See Shorter and Tilly, *Strikes in France*, pp. 227-35, and the literature cited therein.

22. B.C., Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries." The exact numbers were 6533 out of 6953 (94 per cent). Nearly 90 per cent were from the first two sources.

23. 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI; 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40; B.C., Dept. of Labor, loc. cit.

caulkers in the wooden shipyards.²⁴ As we will see, however, these crafts differed in their capacity to resist those threats on the basis of their own resources. Large numbers of helpers and labourers were also employed in both wooden and steel yards. The size of different occupational groups can only be estimated from union membership data: at its peak in 1918, the shipyard labourers' union had about 1500 members, boilermakers had "close to" 1500 members in August 1918, and shipwrights had 575 members in February 1919, when the boom had already started to decline.²⁵

As in the metal trades, the interests and group formation of shipbuilding workers tended in contradictory directions. On the one hand were the traditions and habits of craft exclusiveness, which offered the crafts one way of dealing with threats to their job and labour market control; on the other was the shared experience of working for the same large employer, and facing the same threat to their real wages from inflation. The context of the mobilization of shipyard workers thus consisted of contrary pressures toward craft exclusiveness and toward more broadly based, inclusive unionism. Because they affected each craft individually, it is possible that threats to craft

24. Boilermakers were a large majority of the workers at Coughlan's steel shipyard. Province, Jan. 16, 1919. Other trades, such as painters, carpenters, operating engineers, plumbers, and electricians, were employed in shipyards in smaller numbers, and were also affected by threats to craft control. For example, painters were threatened by the introduction of paint spraying machines.

25. MTC Minutes, Feb. 20, 1918; B.C. Federationist, April 5, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 9, 1918, p. 1; Sun, Feb. 27, 1919.

control would lead to the exclusionary response, while threats to real wages, which affected all more or less equally, would lead to inclusive mobilization.

The second important feature of shipbuilding workers' social reproduction during the wartime boom was the fact that their employment was temporary, and often of short duration. In this respect, shipbuilding workers resembled workers in building construction, and many of the tradesmen working in shipyards were drawn from the depressed construction industry. The workers were mobile, and many of them, especially labourers, were attracted to shipyards from a variety of other jobs by the high wages being paid there.²⁶ As a result, they were willing to move to other places and other jobs if pay or conditions were better, or to strike to improve those conditions. Their interests were short-term, like the industry, and they were willing to cease work on short notice to defend or advance their interests.²⁷ Their mobility put shipyard workers in a strong bargaining position, especially when shipbuilding expanded in the American Pacific Northwest, pressuring the shipyards and the government to either maintain conditions and pay

26. Although they were not "frontier labourers" in the sense that the 'blanketstiffs' of railway construction and logging camps were, two characteristics of shipyard labourers' social reproduction are similar: their mobility, and the fact of working in very large plants, which were necessarily class-polarized, even if the city of Vancouver and its environs were not class-polarized in the same way as an isolated camp.

27. These workers are therefore of interest for another reason: they exemplify the "speculative impulse" supposedly inimical to working-class solidarity that Ward attributes to mobile frontier workers in B.C. "Class and Race," pp. 588-89. If they are a source of worker radicalism, that would contradict Ward's argument.

comparable to American yards, or to restrict workers' mobility.

Conditions in shipyards were thus conducive to worker militancy. On the one hand were shipbuilders trying to meet contract deadlines; on the other were large numbers of mobile workers employed in large plants, whose real wages were threatened by a rising cost of living, and whose craft controls were threatened by changes in the labour process. The main question for mobilization and collective action was whether divisions of skill and occupation would be overcome in broader forms of solidarity.

8.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

Mobilization and collective action in the shipbuilding industry was concentrated in the period of the war capitalist boom, and especially in 1917 and 1918. Shipyard workers were organized by both new and established union locals, whose activities were coordinated in the resurgent Metal Trades Council (MTC). Numerous strikes in the same years comprised a major part of the wartime strike wave. Shipbuilding strikes in 1917 and 1918 accounted for less than a sixth of the total number of strikes in the 1916-1919 period, but they represented nearly half the strikers, and over a third of the striker days. No strikes were specific to shipbuilding in 1919, but shipyard workers played important roles in the general strike and in the formation of the OBU.

Before the wartime boom, the shipbuilding industry was a minor

arena of working-class mobilization and collective action. Skilled ship carpenters and caulkers in the small boatyards of the Vancouver area formed their first union with about twenty-five members in 1900.²⁸ In the following two years, they struggled for union recognition and control over the labour market, and engaged in three small strikes over those issues.²⁹ Like many others in the Vancouver area, the union dissolved in 1904.³⁰ They remained unorganized until 1912, when a new Shipwrights, Joiners and Caulkers Union was formed. Although it affiliated with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in 1913, the pre-war depression was an inopportune time for a new union, and it dissolved in 1915 without having shown any signs of life.³¹

A short strike by boilermakers and helpers in the same year as shipwrights and caulkers were organized anticipated future conflicts in the industry. Despite a poor labour market for boilermakers, they took the opportunity of a large sixteen-day repair contract at Wallace's to demand an increase in overtime pay (to double time). When the demand

28. The Vancouver and New Westminster Ship Carpenters and Caulkers Union was organized in September 1900. Labour Gazette I (1900), pp. 50-51, 152; Province, Sept. 4, 12, 1900; Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 342.

29. For the strikes, see Independent, Jan. 5, 1901, April 6, 1901, May 4, 18, 1901; Province, May 22, 23, 1901, Feb. 11, 12, 1902, March 5, 8, 1902; World, March 1, 1901, May 23, 1901; Labour Gazette I (1901), pp. 480, 549-50, II (1902), p. 525.

30. Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 1276, V (1905), pp. 878-81. The reasons for the dissolution of the union are not known.

31. Report on Labour Organization, 1912, p. 105, 1913, p. 132, 1915, pp. 223-26.

was refused, 200 union boilermakers and helpers ceased work. They stayed out for only three days before returning to work under the old conditions, however.³² The pressure on the yard to finish the contract on time was counterbalanced by pressure of a slack labour market on the workers.

The boilermakers' strike foreshadowed the militancy of shipyard workers during World War I in three respects. First, craftsmen and helpers acted together; second, by Vancouver standards, the strike involved a large number of workers at one plant. Third, the strikers tried to use the pressure of contract deadlines to force concessions from their employer. Each of these conditions reappeared in strikes during the wartime shipbuilding boom.

During that boom, the tremendous expansion of shipyards not only posed to employers the problem of recruiting and training a labour force, it challenged the capacities of unions to organize the many newcomers to shipbuilding. Organization began during 1916, but it was only in the course of a series of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours in 1917 that real progress was made by the three largest groups of workers: shipwrights and caulkers, boilermakers, and shipyard labourers. Union memberships generally peaked in 1918, at the height of the shipbuilding boom.

32. Province, May 11, 1912; Sun, May 13, 15, 1912; News-Advertiser, May 12, 14, 1912. It is not known whether the boilermakers' helpers belonged to the union. Their own union local had dissolved in 1905, and although helpers were included in the main body of the union at the International level during 1912, there is no information on the situation in Vancouver. See Fink, Labor Unions, pp. 35-37.

Shipwrights and caulkers were reorganized in the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ local 1803) in 1916. The union claimed to have completely organized the trade by July 1917; in September, it had 400 members in Vancouver, and a separate local had been set up with 78 members in New Westminster. There are no reports of union membership in 1918; in February 1919, when employment in wooden shipyards had declined, the union still had 575 members. When the OBU vote was taken a few months later, membership had fallen to slightly over 200, as the local headed toward its subsequent dissolution.³³

The boilermakers' union experienced even more rapid growth: its September 1917 membership of 600 (most of them employed in shipyards) doubled to about 1200 by April 1918, and by the time of the OBU vote in May 1919, it was over 1600, before falling to around 1200 after the general strike.³⁴

The most important new development in the mobilization of shipbuilding workers was the organization of shipyard labourers in 1917. Starting from only 70 members when it was chartered in June, the Shipyard Labourers Union (AFL Federal Labor Union 15615) grew steadily: 250 members in September, 450 in October, over 740 in November, and 900 by mid-December. In January 1918, about 1200 labourers belonged to the

33. Report on Labour Organization, 1916, pp. 158, 218-21, 1917, pp. 173, 217-20; 1919, pp. 290-93; B.C. Federationist, April 27, 1917, p. 5, Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1; MTC Minutes, July 25, 1917, Sept. 12, 1917; Sun, Feb. 27, 1919; for the OBU vote membership figures, see Table 1-3.

34. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1, April 21, 1918, p. 1, May 17, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 9, 1918, p. 1, July 18, 1919, p. 3.

union in Vancouver, and 200 in New Westminster; when it affiliated with the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) shortly after, membership was about 1250 in Vancouver and 260 in New Westminster. Its decline was equally swift: the union fell on hard times as shipbuilding slowed down, and had to withdraw from the VTLC in April 1919.³⁵

While they were organizing in 1917, shipyard workers engaged in a wave of strikes in which they successfully took advantage of the urgent demand for ships to secure shorter hours and wage increases. Strike demands reflected the regional labour market (which included Victoria and Seattle), the desire for wage parity amongst skilled trades, and the effects of inflation. In the first strike, about 150 boilermakers at Wallace's, B.C. Marine Ltd., and Vulcan Iron Works won wages equal to those being paid at Seattle after a three day strike in February.³⁶ The following month, a one-week strike by about twenty blacksmiths and helpers at Wallace's achieved the eight hour day, and wages equal to those of blacksmiths in Victoria, and boilermakers locally. Like many other recently reorganized workers, the strikers asserted that the time was ripe for the restoration of rights lost

35. Report on Labour Organization, 1917, pp. 177, 217-20, 1918, pp. 178, 180, 225-29; B.C. Federationist, June 8, 1917, p. 2, July 6, 1917, p. 5; Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1, Oct. 19, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 21, 1917, p. 1, Jan. 25, 1918, p. 1, April 5, 1918, p. 1; MTC Minutes, Nov. 28, 1917, Dec. 19, 1917, Feb. 20, 1918; VTLC Executive Minutes, April 17, 1919. The shipyard labourers became auxiliary unions within the ILA (ILA 38-5a in Vancouver, ILA 38-7a in New Westminster).

36. The strikers conceded their demand for an eight hour day in the negotiations that led to the settlement. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(90); News-Advertiser, Feb. 2, 3, 4, 1917; Province, Feb. 2, 3, 5, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 2, 9, 1917, p. 4.

during the pre-war depression.³⁷

The settlement of the blacksmiths' strike was considered temporary until wages and hours were settled through the new Metal Trades Council (MTC).³⁸ The MTC wanted all employers to sign its new blanket agreement collectively, and when they refused, two strikes resulted at shipyards.³⁹ In both strikes, it became apparent that beneath the ostensible issues of wages and hours lay a struggle between shipyard employers and the Metal Trades Council for control of the workplace and the labour market. Shipyard workers became increasingly unified in the course of this struggle.⁴⁰

The first strike over the MTC blanket agreement involved over 500 shipwrights and caulkers, machinists, and other metal workers at Wallace's and three smaller shipyards.⁴¹ Wages were the main issue,⁴²

37. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(91); B.C. Federationist, March 16, 23, 1917, p. 1; Labour Gazette XVII (1917), p. 278.

38. For background information on the formation of the MTC in 1917, see above, page 355.

39. The July 1917 strike at the Vancouver Engineering Works was part of the same series. See above, page 356.

40. See B.C. Federationist, July 27, 1917, p. 1; MTC Minutes, June 13, 27, 1917, July 25, 1917.

41. The other yards were B.C. Marine, Vancouver Shipbuilding, and Van Dyke Shipbuilding. Boilermakers were not called out on strike because they had separate agreements with Wallace's, B.C. Marine, and North Shore Iron Works. MTC Minutes, May 2, 1917.

42. "A wage scale far below the Coast average that is not commensurate with the advanced cost of living generally and the present price of staple commodities, is the chief grievance alleged." Province, May 2, 1917.

but the question of control of the shipyards lurked beneath the surface. Alfred Wallace complained that the workers believed "that they and not he were the ones to run the yards." Settlements were made at all yards except B.C. Marine after four days on strike, and after failing to establish an open shop, the latter finally signed the agreement twelve days later.⁴³

Barely was the strike over at B.C. Marine, when about 250 machinists, boilermakers, pipefitters, ship carpenters, helpers, and labourers went on strike for the MTC schedule at Coughlan's large shipyard. Like Wallace, J.J. Coughlan saw the strike in terms of control: it was "an issue of union control of shops," against which his company declared "its intention of maintaining the right of operating its yard as it sees fit, and without the dictation of organized labor." He refused to meet with union officials before the strike, and once it began, declared an open shop and advertised for strikebreakers:⁴⁴

Help us build ships for King and country. You can do your bit in our shipyard by helping construct the vessels now so badly required to carry supplies to England, and to the boys in the trenches at the front ... We make no discrimination between union workmen and those who are not members of labor organizations.

Despite the patriotic appeal, the yard was badly crippled by the strike, and after more than two weeks, the strikers' wage and hour demands were

43. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(92); MTC Minutes, May 2, 8, 23, 1917; Province, May 2, 3, 1917; News-Advertiser, May 2, 3, 8, 1917; B.C. Federationist, May 4, 1917, p. 1.

44. Province, May 28, 1917, June 1, 1917; Sun, May 28, 1917. The ads were dated May 22.

granted. Coughlan refused to sign the MTC agreement, however, and attempted to maintain an open shop, leading to "nothing but trouble" in the months following.⁴⁵

After these successful strikes, mobilization proceeded rapidly, as each of the three main unions (boilermakers, shipwrights and caulkers, and shipyard labourers) attempted to establish de facto closed shops by signing up all the shipyard workers within their jurisdiction, or (with the help of other unions) pressuring those who would not join to work elsewhere.⁴⁶ Tensions in the yards remained high in the following months, over a variety of small grievances, such as their failure to pay promised wage rates, discrimination against strike activists, and safety issues.⁴⁷

45. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(95); MTC Minutes, May 23, 30, 1917, June 6, 1917; B.C. Federationist, May 25, 1917, p. 4, June 1, 1917, p. 6, June 8, 1917, p. 1, July 27, 1917, p. 1; Province, May 21, 23, 1917, June 5, 1917; News-Advertiser, May 22, 1917; Sun, May 30, 1917.

46. See MTC Minutes, July 4, 11, 1917. The new Shipyard Labourers Union was also trying to secure a minimum wage of 45 cents an hour from reluctant employers. It was only able to win 40 cents, which was not a total defeat, since it had been the original goal, and it established parity with labourers' wages in American yards. Relations with IMB-controlled shipyards were complicated by the inability of the employers to make agreements without IMB approval. Thus six yards had agreed with the labourers' union to pay the 45 cent minimum, but the IMB refused to pay it, and the yards reneged on their agreement, claiming that it had been conditional on IMB approval. See MTC Minutes, July 18, 25, 1917, Aug. 1, 8, 15, 29, 1917, Oct. 3, 1917; B.C. Federationist, July 27, 1917, p. 4, Aug. 3, 10, 1917, p. 3, Aug. 17, 1917, p. 6, Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1, Oct. 19, 1917, p. 1.

47. MTC Minutes, May 23, 1917, June 13, 1917, Oct. 17, 1917; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 2, 1917. Even unorganized workers got into the act in September, when 175 at a New Westminster shipyard mounted a successful one-day strike against an attempt to introduce longer hours of work. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 7, 1917, p. 1.

In September 1917, a process began that would shift the center of disputes in the shipbuilding industry from individual shipyards to the IMB negotiating for them collectively. In that month, J.J. Coughlan succeeded in averting a strike for higher wages by boilermakers, by convincing the MTC that the shipyards were being squeezed between rising wages and prices fixed by contracts with the IMB.⁴⁸ It accepted his proposal that they each send delegations to lobby the IMB for better contract terms, and persuaded the boilermakers to postpone their strike.⁴⁹ The IMB refused to discuss contract terms until after a settlement was reached locally, and after the boilermakers refused Coughlan's offer to pay the wage rate resulting from a strike in Seattle, 500 boilermakers, helpers, and other tradesmen walked out on October 4 at Coughlan's and two contract shops. The crux of the dispute was whether Coughlan would sign the agreement presented by the boilermakers in September, but beneath the surface the issue was union recognition versus the open shop.⁵⁰ The boilermakers outnumbered all the other strikers combined, and exceeded them all in militancy.⁵¹ They

48. Coughlan stated that his own yard was paying 11 per cent more in wages than when he made his contracts, and therefore could not afford any more increases, yet he knew that he must keep pace with wage rates in Seattle or lose men to the shipyards there.

49. MTC Minutes, Sept. 5, 12, 1917.

50. MTC Minutes, Oct. 2, 3, 10, 1917; Province, Oct. 1, 4, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 5, 1917, p. 1.

51. When Coughlan again offered to abide by the wage award of the adjustment board investigating the American disputes, retroactive to September 1, the MTC recommended acceptance, and eight of the ten unions on strike agreed. Supported only by plumbers, boilermakers voted by a

finally agreed to Coughlan's wage offer, but adamantly refused to return to work without a closed shop for both journeymen and helpers. After nearly a month on strike, they won their demands in full.⁵²

The lesson of the Coughlan's strike, and of all the strikes in shipyards in 1917, was that militance paid off. Every shipyard strike in 1917 was successful in achieving all or part of the strikers' demands. This was despite the introduction of strikebreakers in half the strikes; we can conclude that the strike was a powerful weapon for shipyard workers, largely because of the prevailing labour shortages (and the attraction of U.S. shipyards). The issues in those strikes were all wages and hours, with the exception of the last one, where the closed shop was a major objective. The issue of control lurked beneath the surface of several of the strikes, and they were inclusive, that is, they involved several trades, or both skilled and unskilled workers.

In the strike against Coughlan's, the MTC was unable to control the militancy of one of its affiliated unions. In 1918, MTC leaders trying to carry out agreements with employers were to find individual unions and the union rank and file increasingly difficult to control. In contrast to 1917, when the issues in strikes were wages and hours,

large majority to stay out, and so the strike continued. The vote to continue the strike was 315 for, 159 against. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(97); Sun, Oct. 6, 1917; Province, Oct. 6, 19, 20, 1917; MTC Minutes, Oct. 15, 17, 21, 1917.

52. As part of the agreement ending the strike, the MTC waived its ban on working with products from the V&W, which was Coughlan's only source of propeller blades. MTC Minutes, Oct. 24, 31, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 26, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 2, 1917, p. 1; Province, Oct. 31, 1917; PAC, loc. cit.

issues of workers' control over the labour market and labour process became increasingly important in 1918. The mobilization and collective action of some tradesmen became more exclusive in consequence, but others engaged in more solidaristic action. Both tendencies were expressed in a series of small strikes in 1918.

In the first instance of rank and file insurgency, twenty five caulkers at the Lyall shipyard in North Vancouver walked off the job in January 1918, to protest labourers being put on caulking work.⁵³ They returned to work six days later, when ordered to do so by their union, and the labourers were taken off the job. The underlying issue remained, however, and the caulkers finally seceded from the Shipwrights and Caulkers to form a separate local in June 1918.⁵⁴

53. Caulkers were scarce, and those at Lyall's preferred working a second shift at double time to training new men. The dispute was a manifestation of the general contradiction between the desire of shipbuilders to increase production rapidly, and craft work rules. Shipyard management wanted to train caulkers quickly, but the rules of the union specified a three year apprenticeship for a trade of considerable responsibility ("it is the caulker who makes the ship seaworthy"). Reasonably enough, the caulkers and other crafts did not wish to see a wartime emergency used as an excuse for employers to replace skilled journeymen with poorly trained apprentices. See the testimony at the 1918 Royal Commission on Shipbuilding, reported in the Province, March 26, 27, 1918. The Report of that commission condemned the caulkers, whose union, it said, "had sought to unduly impede the efforts of the employers to remedy the shortage of caulkers either by the training of apprentices or the establishment of schools to teach caulking." Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), p. 411. The commissioners discounted the caulkers' fears that the labour market would be flooded with partially trained specialists after the war, but the caulkers could not afford to be so sanguine.

54. HTC Minutes, Jan. 2, 9, 1918, Feb. 20, 27, 1918, June 12, 19, 1918; Province, Jan. 8, 1918, June 7, 1918; Sun, Jan. 8, 1918; Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 225-29.

More rank and file militancy, and inter-union squabbling involving engineers and electricians, occurred after the caulkers dispute. Twelve operating engineers at Coughlan's ignored MTC orders to return to work, and struck for most of March, in a jurisdictional dispute with electricians and management over the operation of electrical cranes.⁵⁵ In May, forty electricians walked out in a wildcat strike for a wage increase to the scale of their union elsewhere in the city.⁵⁶ They returned to work three days later, after a sharply divided MTC resolved to supply men to the yard if the IBEW would not.⁵⁷

The conflict between shipyard workers and shipbuilding contractors returned from job control by individual trades to the general issue of wages and hours later in May, when the MTC turned from the task of controlling its members to coordinating the largest

55. MTC Minutes, March 13, 20, 27, 1918, April 3, 10, 1918; Province, March 14, 1918; Sun, March 14, 1918. The engineer-electrician dispute was part of a general struggle for control over new technology between the two unions. See G.L. Mangum, *The Operating Engineers: The Economic History of a Trade Union* (hereafter, *Operating Engineers*), pp. 290-91. Despite cooperation for wage and hour demands, jurisdictional issues had caused friction between unions in the MTC during 1917: between boilermakers and shipyard labourers over work controlled by the former, and between boilermakers and engineers. See MTC Minutes, Nov. 14, 1917, Dec. 12, 1917.

56. They had been working below scale since October 1917, but the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) had not asked for an increase at Coughlan's in order to cooperate with the MTC, whose agreement with the shipyard lasted until August 1918.

57. Proponents of the view that the MTC must be able to control its members' actions, in order to carry out agreements with employers, won out over those who believed that the council had no right to tell its members to work under conditions they found unacceptable. MTC Minutes, May 8, 1918; Province, May 9, 10, 1918; Sun, May 9, 1918; B.C. Federationist, May 10, 1918, pp. 1, 5, 8.

shipbuilding strike in the entire period. The origins of the strike went back to the summer of 1917, when the MTC accepted an IMB proposal to put into effect the forthcoming award of a United States Wage Adjustment Board for Pacific coast shipyards, and match any subsequent wage increase won by American shipyard workers. However, when the MTC tried to get a signed agreement with the IMB and wooden shipbuilding contractors early in 1918, incorporating a closed shop, and a 10 per cent wage increase awarded in the U.S. in December, the IMB refused.⁵⁸ An overwhelming majority of members of MTC unions then voted for a strike to begin on March 1.⁵⁹

The appointment of a Royal Commission led the MTC to postpone the strike. It later rejected the commission's report, when it recommended the 10 per cent increase (retroactive to February 1) only if hours of work were raised from 44 to 48 per week, as in American shipyards, and recommended against the closed shop.⁶⁰ The Metal Trades

58. The American increase was originally a war premium, but was to become a permanent wage increase on February 1, 1918. B.C. Federationist, May 31, 1918, p. 1.

59. MTC Minutes, Jan. 9 to Feb. 13, 1918. The strike vote was 1126 in favor, and only 121 against, with the largest unions (boilermakers, shipwrights, shipyard labourers, and machinists) heavily in favor. Men at the New Westminster and Coquitlam shipyards had already threatened to strike over the closed shop issue.

60. MTC Minutes, Feb. 20 to March 6, 1918. The commission was chaired by Judge D. Murphy, with W. Kelly of the VTLC, and J.R. Tonkin of the IMB as commissioners. It held hearings in March and April in Vancouver and Victoria, of which the only records are press reports. Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), pp. 409-10; Province, April 24, 1918. The commission dealt with some other issues: it recommended that labourers' minimum be \$3.85 a day (they wanted \$4.00), and that carpenters doing shipwright's work be paid the latter's \$6.00 rate.

Employers Association accepted the Royal Commission Report, broke off negotiations, declared its own wage scale, and posted shop rules that effectively eliminated the MTC from grievance procedures. Once again a dispute originally over wages and hours was turning into a struggle for control.⁶¹

The MTC responded by calling a strike of approximately 3200 shipyard workers at seven shipyards in the Vancouver area on May 23.⁶² Patriotic appeals by the IMB failed to alter the neutrality of returned soldiers' organizations in Vancouver, and they would not act as strikebreakers.⁶³ Mediation by Senator G.D. Robertson finally led to a

61. MTC Minutes, May 2, 15, 1918; Province, May 8, 9, 15, 23, 1918.

62. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(122); Province, May 23, 24, 25, 27, 1918; Sun, May 23, 27, 1918; City Archives of Vancouver, Add. Mss. 300, Vancouver Board of Trade, Special Committee Minutes, Vol. 144, p. 74: "Labor: Discussed with Senator Robinson [sic]." There is some confusion about when Wallace's was affected by the strike: the Province reported that men were not called out there until May 25, over the wages of shipyard labourers. Plants involved in the 1917 strike (Coughlan's, Vulcan Iron Works, and Patterson Boiler Works) were not affected by this strike, and contract shops were little affected, since nearly all ran open shops. The strike nearly expanded to the Coughlan's yard, where boilermakers in particular were becoming impatient for changes to their agreement, but it was prevented when the company broke away from the Employers Association and came to an agreement.

63. Notices posted at IMB yards in Victoria, where the strike was also in progress, stated, "... every patriotic citizen of British Columbia should lend all the assistance in his power toward the speeding up of the completion of the ships ... It is the duty of everyone to the Government and to his family in this hour of need to carry on, and it is felt that every right-thinking man with British blood in his veins will respond." R.B. Butchart, the B.C. head of the IMB, also declared that the strikers were "morally under the same obligation to fight with their hands, their minds and their highest spirit, as every enlisted soldier," because the purpose of the IMB shipbuilding programme was not commercial, but was to supply food to the front. Province, May 24, 27, 1918. Some returned soldiers acted as strikebreakers in Victoria. The

settlement at the beginning of June. It met the main MTC demand, providing for a 44 hour week, and a 10 per cent wage increase in an agreement to last until the end of the war, with quarterly cost of living adjustments to be made by an appointed wage adjuster. The closed shop was again absent, however, and boilermakers and electricians remained outside its provisions.⁶⁴

Although the Robertson agreement (as it came to be known) put an end to strikes at the yards it covered, it did not ensure the end of contention in the shipyards.⁶⁵ Shipyard workers were dissatisfied with many aspects of the agreement, which employers were alleged to have repeatedly violated. Work practices were a continual grievance in 1918 and 1919: for example, Lyall's was accused of paying lower wages and employing more apprentices than the agreement allowed.⁶⁶ The quarterly

MTC responded to the IMB propaganda by affirming that the increase they demanded was in line with the cost of living, and that it was their duty to ensure that when men returned from the war, they did not find a lowered standard of living. They did not want to delay shipbuilding, "but we demand a square deal from the IMB." Sun, May 27, 1918; Province, May 27, 29, 1918.

64. The settlement was arrived at on May 31, and accepted at a mass meeting of 2000 strikers on June 3. Province, May 31, 1918, June 1, 3, 4, 1918; Sun, May 31, 1918, June 2, 1918; Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), pp. 412-13; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 482. Boilermakers and electricians objected to the duration of the agreement, because their Internationals wanted to establish uniform Pacific coast wage scales effective August 1, 1918.

65. Immediately after the settlement was made, the treatment of shipyard labourers who had gone on strike at Lyall's yard nearly led to another strike there. Sun, June 4, 5, 6, 1918; MTC Minutes, June 5, 12, 1918; Province, June 7, 1918. There were also problems with the treatment of shipyard labourers at the New Westminster shipyard.

66. B.C. Federationist, June 14, 1918, p. 1, Oct. 25, 1918, p. 1.

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cost of living adjustments were the main grievance, because the adjuster, workers, and employers rarely agreed on the extent of price increases, or how they should be calculated, and in the absence of machinery to enforce compliance, employers simply refused to implement the adjuster's awards.⁶⁷

From the point of view of the government and employers, the Robertson agreement was a success, because it channelled workers' grievances through the institution of shop committees, and prevented strikes.⁶⁸ All subsequent shipyard strikes were at Coughlan's, which remained outside the agreement. These strikes showed the continuing rank and file militancy of shipyard workers, and their growing sense of working-class solidarity. They finally led to the establishment of a system of shop committees that also channelled workers' grievances, and combined with the decline of the industry and factionalism within labour, ended the wartime strike wave in shipyards.

All of the strikes at Coughlan's after the big shipyard strike ended in June were rank and file initiatives. In the first, on July 2, three quarters of the 2600 man labour force refused to work with power supplied by the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER), whose electrical workers had just gone on strike. As in previous wildcat

67. The wage adjuster advised workers they could either try the courts or go on strike. Province, Jan. 17, 24, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 14, 1919, p. 1, March 7, 1919, p. 1; Sun, Feb. 28, 1919; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 476-77, 480, 545, 559.

68. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 422, 477, 482, 485, 490-91.

strikes, the MTC quickly ordered the strikers back to work. The next night it decided to call out workers in all plants "using unfair juice," but cancelled that when a special committee of the VTLC, MTC, and the unions on strike decided on a general strike. About forty electricians at Coughlan's went on strike anyway, until ordered back to work by their union.⁶⁹

Another wildcat strike took place on December 12, when all the blacksmiths walked out immediately upon the dismissal of a helper, H. Anderson, for alleged neglect of duty. The MTC followed past practice by ordering them back to work, pending an investigation, and after four days, they complied.⁷⁰ The MTC investigation revealed no grounds for dismissal, and when demands for reinstatement by it and two returned soldier organizations were refused, the MTC executive called for a strike vote. Before one could be held, blacksmiths (and perhaps electricians) walked out on the morning of December 18, and were followed by the rest of the shipyard workers at noon. Mass meetings in the afternoon ratified the strike, and the MTC decided that evening to ask the VTLC for a vote on a general strike, which it rejected.⁷¹

69. Province, July 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 1918; MTC Minutes, July 3, 1918; B.C. Federationist, July 5, 1918, p. 1.

70. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 20, 1918, p. 1, 7; Province, Dec. 18, 1918; Sun, Dec. 19, 1918.

71. Although the VTLC supported the general strike as a tactic, they were looking for an issue of principle that could carry rank and file support, and for a better time than the dead of winter. World, Dec. 18, 1918; Province, Dec. 18, 20, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 20, 1918, pp. 1, 7.

J.J. Coughlan blustered that labour was giving the shipbuilding industry a black eye:⁷²

No industry can endure unless discipline is maintained and it is the duty of foremen to see that it is maintained ... my firm would prefer to go out of business if necessary via the strike route, rather than through disintegration following the abandonment of sound rules of industrial operation....

He nonetheless agreed to reinstate the man on the advice of the Great War Veterans Association, and the 3000 strikers began to return to work on December 30.⁷³

The series of wildcat strikes was followed, in early 1919, by MTC demands that wages at Coughlan's be brought up to the scale paid by shipyards operating under the Robertson agreement. A Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the issue of wages, but most of the testimony at its hearings concerned craft controls over production.⁷⁴ Echoing complaints made at the 1918 commission, Coughlan and his managers blamed craft work rules, the closed shop, and the influence of socialist ideas for lowering output and reducing efficiency. They alleged that piece-work employees in particular started work late, loafed on the job, were frequently absent, restricted output, hindered

72. Province, Dec. 23, 1918.

73. Province, Dec. 23, 26, 30, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 27, 1918, p. 1; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(128).

74. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 10, 1919, p. 8, Jan. 24, 1919, p. 1, Jan. 31, 1919, p. 8; Province, Jan. 14, 16, 24, 27, 1919, Feb. 7, 1919. The commissioners were Mr. Justice Murphy, chairman, F.W. Welsh, representing the MTC, and H.H. Watson, representing Coughlan's. As in the 1918 inquiry, there is no transcript of evidence.

attempts to introduce "efficiency systems," and refused to allow men to be trained to do skilled work.⁷⁵ Labour representatives blamed management for obstacles to production; 'loafing,' for example, was due to poor scheduling of materials. They defended workers' controls over the labour process and labour market by arguing that these obstacles were overcome only through the cooperation of unionized sub-foremen and workers.

The solution finally proposed by Coughlan, and accepted (over some opposition) by the MTC, was the establishment of a production committee to make recommendations on the operation of the yard. The committee was composed of three representatives from shipyard unions and three representatives of management, and as in other "industrial council" schemes that were starting to appear at this time, power remained firmly in management hands.⁷⁶ The committee's recommendations were not binding on the employer, and its agenda was dominated by management concerns: to eliminate loafing by remedying its causes, to

75. Sun, Feb. 27, 1919, March 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 1919; Province, April 2, 1918; March 6, 13, 1919. They were echoed by H.J.F. Turney of Wallace Shipyards, who complained of "union-bred independence." He alleged that workers were more difficult to discipline, less punctual, and less efficient than in the past, because the majority were union members.

76. The MTC accepted it for a sixty-day trial, during which time the Robertson agreement wage scale would be in force. The labour representatives were George Hardy (carpenters), W. Ironsides (pile drivers and bridge builders), and H.S. Nightscales (pattern makers). Province, March 22, 23, 1919. On industrial councils, see B. Scott, "A Place in the Sun: The Industrial Council at Massey-Harris, 1919-1929," esp. pp. 159-60. Since worker representatives were from unions, the scheme at Coughlan's was closer to British "Whitley councils" than to American "employee representation" plans.

adjust grievances, to look after safety, and to observe all operations and suggest ways of eliminating waste.⁷⁷ Although the carpenters' representative expressed the hope that the committee would show that the sources of inefficiency lay in the offices, not the yards, workers appeared to have exchanged higher wages for concessions on job control.

After starting work on April Fool's Day, Coughlan's production committee was soon given credit for improved conditions and fewer disputes in the yard. Even the opposition of the militant boilermakers disappeared, and the agreement was renewed twice. In July, the MTC wanted a modified version extended to other yards.⁷⁸ Coughlan's management was pleased with it as well, since it had rearranged machinery, installed service stations for supplies, and made other alterations to rationalize production with the full cooperation of the workers.⁷⁹ Shop committees established under the Robertson agreement

77. The company hoped that the committee would result in better relations with employees, greater efficiency, and lower production costs, which would offset higher pay. The hopes of the workers were not recorded, but the boilermakers' union refused to participate, and a VTLC delegate claimed that 80 per cent of Coughlan's workers were opposed to the plan. B.C. Federationist, March 21, 1919, p. 1; Province, March 22, 27, 1919, April 4, 1919; Labour Gazette XIX (1919), p. 431.

78. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 439-42, 570-72, 583; Sun, June 1, 1919; Province, July 21, 1919. The committee worked, Coughlan admitted, even though two of its three labour representatives were "avowed socialists." In July, it became a shop committee of three MTC representatives paid by the company, with a mandate to find ways to preserve the shipbuilding industry, sustaining wages and making jobs permanent; to promote good fellowship in the yards, and a square deal for employee and firm; to adjust grievances; to look after safety and eliminate waste.

79. The company also began publication of a weekly plant paper featuring "champion rivetters" and other items to spur production. Labour Gazette

seemed to have the same effect of securing the cooperation of workers, without management having to give up any of its powers or prerogatives.⁸⁰

The success of shipyards in blunting the militancy of their formerly combative workers in 1919 was not due solely to production and shop committees. At the same time as these initiatives were being tried, the OBU and the International unions were fighting for control over the shipyard workers. Let us return to the radical events of 1918 and 1919.

In 1918, shipyard workers manifested more militancy and a growing radicalism by joining the Goodwin protest strike on August 2 in large numbers. Support for the strike was strongest at the steel shipyards (Coughlan's and Wallace's), where nearly all the workers (mostly boilermakers and labourers) participated. Support was less solid at the wooden yards, where only 200 shipwrights and 900 labourers stopped work.⁸¹ Although the shipwrights had been lukewarm supporters of the strike, they and the boilermakers strongly condemned business and returned soldier organizations for calling on workers to replace the leaders who called the strike, and all three major shipbuilding unions

XIX (1919), p. 905; Province, July 24, 1919, Aug. 4, 22, 28, 1919.

80. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 490-91.

81. At Lyall's and Western Canada Shipyards only caulkers struck, and just a few employees struck at New Westminster Construction and Engineering.

re-elected their VTLC delegates.⁸²

Divisions between the shipwrights and the other two large shipbuilding unions reappeared in the formation of the OBU and the general strike in 1919. Shipyard labourers and boilermakers were strong supporters of the OBU, caulkers were weak and indifferent supporters (few bothered to vote), and shipwrights were opposed (Table 1 3). Boilermakers and labourers supported the general strike, and although shipwrights reportedly voted against it, all the shipyards were shut down for its duration.⁸³

The conflict between the OBU and the Internationals came to the fore at the conclusion of the general strike in Vancouver. As the shipyards started to re-employ strikers, OBU members found that Coughlan's and other yards were cooperating with the International unions to keep them out through closed shop agreements. This collaboration was effective, and may have been a source of MTC calls for extension of the shop committee system in July (see above, page 398). The shipwrights continued their opposition to the OBU, and it appears that the shipyard labourers followed the rest of the ILA in reversing

82. Province, Aug. 2, 3, 10, 1918; Sun, Aug. 4, 5, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 9, 1918, p. 1.

83. Only a few indentured apprentices at Wallace's were left at work. Sun, June 2, 5, 1919; Province, June 3, 1919; World, June 4, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 1. In New Westminster, 150 shipyard labourers and others at the assembly plant struck when the call came there on June 18, and returned to work with the others in that city on June 23. British Columbian, June 18, 19, 1919; Sun, June 20, 21, 1919. The Department of Labour reported that shipyard labourers did not strike, but other evidence indicates they were mistaken. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221).

their previous support for it. The boilermakers also suffered sharp reversals within the OBU (see above, page 360).⁸⁴

Several conditions combined in 1919 to dampen the militancy of the shipyard unions and their rebellious rank and file: failure of the general strike, collaboration between employers and International unions to defeat the OBU, shop committees which channelled workers' grievances, and rising unemployment in the city generally, and among shipbuilding workers particularly (as yards laid off men or shut down). There were no more strikes in 1919, and according to Department of Labour records, only one more strike occurred at shipyards before 1925.⁸⁵

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction cycles combined with the labour shortages of the wartime shipbuilding boom in the Vancouver area to create a militant and radical working class in the shipyards. For capitalists, the shipbuilding boom was an opportunity to realize substantial profits in a short time. The main obstacles to the achievement of this goal were workers' wage demands and controls over production, particularly by

84. A Shipbuilding Unit of the OBU was established, but it must have suffered badly from the collaboration of the Internationals and employers against it, as by September it was changed into the Construction Workers Industrial Union, with membership open to any worker in shipbuilding, the building trades, and heavy construction. Province, July 4, 1919, Aug. 13, 1919; Sun, July 8, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 19, 1919, p. 1.

85. It was by plumbers and sheet metal workers at Wallace's and Coughlan's in October 1920. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 323, file 20(352).

craftsmen. For workers, the shipbuilding boom was an opportunity to earn high wages after several years of depression. The main obstacle to the achievement of this goal was inflation, and beginning in 1918, wartime restrictions on labour mobility.⁸⁶ The goals of capitalists and workers during the shipbuilding boom were thus remarkably symmetrical, but they were also contradictory, which in this particular conjuncture made both sides very combative. As we have seen, this was expressed in a protracted struggle for control within the shipyards.

The objects of contention that were at the root of conflicts in the shipbuilding industry affected working-class solidarity and radicalism. Wage and hour issues, and issues of union power and solidarity (such as the closed shop, or discipline and grievance procedures) united workers, while issues of craft controls over the labour process had more ambiguous effects. Thus the largest strikes occurred over wages and hours, but usually also came to involve conflict over union power, represented by the demand for a closed shop. To outraged entrepreneurial capitalists like Alfred Wallace and J. J. Coughlan, these attempts by workers to impose conditions on their employers were challenges to the latter's authority. To a large extent, they were correct: by mobilizing virtually all of the thousands of craftsmen, helpers, and labourers in the shipyards, the MTC posed a

86. The latter prevented shipyard workers from migrating to American yards in pursuit of higher wages, and left them little alternative but to strike. The government and IMB appeared to recognize this, and therefore they were willing to pay the same wages as U.S. shipyards. See MTC Minutes, Feb. 13, 1918, April 14, 1918; B.C. Federationist, May 31, 1918, p. 1.

strong, quasi-industrial union challenge to the powers of shipbuilding capitalists.

The most radical unions in the shipyards were thus the boilermakers (who were also the most militant), and the shipyard labourers. Neither was an exclusively craft union (the boilermakers' union included helpers), and both acted collectively mainly on wage and union solidarity issues. This supports our earlier speculation that threats to workers' wages would favor solidarity in the large shipbuilding plants. The presence of large numbers of unskilled workers, whose main interest lay in wages, was thus conducive to radicalism in the shipyards, and to that extent, the frontier labourer interpretation of western labour radicalism is supported.

In contrast to wage and hour, or union and solidarity issues, issues of craft job control often divided the working class in the shipyards. The caulkers' dispute regarding apprentices and the jurisdictional disputes of engineers and electricians are good examples in which craft exclusiveness was promoted, rather than working-class solidarity. Contention over work practices sometimes had the opposite effect, however, as the example of painters in the shipyards shows.

Although the painters union had shown signs of radicalism before the war,⁸⁷ they became increasingly radical as result of experiences in shipbuilding during the war. Beginning in June 1917, they were engaged

87. For example, the painters' union delegates proposed the resolution in favor of industrial unionism in the VTLC in 1912. VTLC Minutes, Aug. 15, 1912.

in almost continuous disputes in shipyards over the introduction of paint spraying machines, operated by labourers at wages below the painters' scale. The machines diluted craft skills, threatened craft job controls, and endangered the health of both the workers using them and others working in the area. The union fought unsuccessfully from 1917 to 1919 to eliminate the machines and preserve all painting work for painters. By the end of that period, the painters had become radical, and were strong supporters of the OBU.⁸⁸

Some craft workers in shipyards, such as painters and boilermakers, thus became radical, while others, such as caulkers and shipwrights, did not. The crucial difference accounting for the radicalism of the former and the lack of radicalism of the latter was the extent to which each craft had the resources to protect itself against challenges to its job and labour market control. The most important resource was skill. Thus caulkers were able to preserve their craft control against the introduction of partially trained specialists, because their monopoly of skill was intact. Similarly, shipwrights seemed to be basking in the temporary labour shortage affecting their trade, and their craft controls on production were not challenged by

88. MTC Minutes, June 20, 1917, Aug. 1, 8, 15, 1917; Painters' Minutes, June 7, 1917 to July 31, 1919; Province, Feb. 17, 22, 1919; Sun, March 6, 14, 1919. At the Mathers Commission (Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 558), the painters' business agent (incorrectly identified as the agent of the binders' union) advocated abolishing the present system and establishing workers' control.

capitalists.⁸⁹ In contrast to shipwrights and caulkers, painters could not preserve their control over the labour process and the labour market against mechanization, nor could boilermakers stem the tide of specialization affecting their trade. Consequently, each expanded beyond narrow craft exclusiveness to industrial organization and broader forms of workers' control as the solution to their problems. The crisis of the craftsman interpretation is thus also supported by the history of shipbuilding workers: crafts in crisis were more radical than crafts whose skills and control were intact.⁹⁰

The history of mobilization and collective action by shipyard workers was also affected by strategic interactions: opportunities and threats, repression and facilitation, and power. Perhaps more than any other industry, shipbuilding during the war capitalist boom offered both opportunity and threat. The opportunity was the urgent demand for ships, and the shortage of shipyard labour, the threat was declining real wages due to inflation, and for the crafts, the reorganization of production.⁹¹ This combination produced an unprecedented level of

89. Instead, the main question affecting them was whether house carpenters doing ship carpentry would be paid the same rate as shipwrights.

90. This corresponds to what we found in metal manufacturing, but as we will see in the next chapter, crafts which were severely weakened because of deskilling did not become radicalized.

91. One other aspect of the wartime conjuncture was that it lent legitimacy to employer attacks on labour and on strikes, as the patriotic propaganda of employers during strikes attested. Workers themselves were relatively impervious to appeals for sacrifice made by their employers and others, because the sacrifices called for were one-sided: evidence of war profiteering, and the generous terms given

militancy by shipyard workers.

The militancy of shipyard workers was reinforced by their pre-war experiences of employers' repression of worker mobilization and the failure of collective action. These included the defeat of major strikes in the metal trades and building trades at the beginning of the decade (machinists in 1910-12, carpenters in 1911), the vigorous maintenance of open shops by anti-union metal trades employers, and finally, the pre-war depression, during which living standards and working conditions were eroded.⁹² Workers had much lost ground to make up, and it is not surprising that they tried to make it up when the labour market was favorable, especially when they could reasonably expect that it would not last beyond the post-war demobilization of the armed forces.

Finally, wartime militancy and solidarity were promoted by their successful results. Beginning with the boilermakers' strike in 1917, militant strike action worked for shipyard workers, so they continued the practice. Nearly two thirds of shipyard strikes in 1917 and 1918 were successful, and none of the unsuccessful ones were major disputes.

shipbuilders and other war contractors left them with the attitude that they might as well do what they could to maintain or improve their standard of living, while the labour market was tight. See Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 546. Unfortunately that attitude boded ill for relations between militant workers and returned soldiers after the war, when many of the latter were regarded wartime strikers as "slackers" and "traitors" to the men in the trenches. Their regard for capitalists was no higher, but in the circumstances of 1919, they could be manipulated by governments and employers to help defeat workers' struggles.

92. On anti-union employers in shipyards and the metal trades, see Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 544, 578.

Shipyard workers were sufficiently powerful that employers did not even attempt hostile responses to strikes: strikes failed because the MTC, in order to preserve its bargaining authority with employers, ordered wildcat strikers back to work.⁹³ Since strikes and solidarity amongst all shipyard workers were effective, it was only one more step to try them on a broader scale, in general strikes and in the OBU.

93. The state was similarly restrained: its interventions were all in the form of mediation, and in every case the strikers won all or most of their demands.

Chapter 9

CONSUMER GOODS MANUFACTURING

"Our interests are your interests."

Like metal manufacturing, consumer goods manufacturing was a subordinate sector in the lower mainland economy. In both the food and non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing branches, local or external competition was often intense. In response, manufacturers employed low-wage labour or mechanized production. Both strategies led to the degradation of crafts and to the employment of large numbers of women in factory production. The workforce was consequently divided between men and women, and between crafts and factory operatives. Crafts were better organized than factory operatives, and men than women, but mobilization also depended on whether employers faced local or outside competition. In the former case, manufacturers. Especially large shops, were more repressive than in the latter, where an alliance of unionized workers and manufacturers around union label strategies had some success.

9.1 Capital Accumulation

Capital accumulation in consumer goods manufacturing depended upon growth in the rest of the local economy. Production of consumer goods in Vancouver for the local and regional market existed despite eastern competition, because of the bulk and perishability of many consumer products, and the low organic composition of capital in the industry.¹ Since the competitive conditions were different in each, food and tobacco manufacturing, and non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing (clothing, shoes and leather goods, and household furnishings) will be discussed separately.

Food Manufacturing

Food manufacturing was one of the first industries to be established in Vancouver. Several companies producing beer, confectioneries, canned fruit, and sugar began operations in the 1880s and 1890s, and expanded during the 1900s.² New food manufacturing

1. McDonald, "Business Leaders," p. 93. The 1911 Census bears out the labour-intensive character of consumer goods manufacturing: with the exception of boat-building, the lowest levels of capital investment per industrial establishment in the Vancouver area were in bread, biscuits and confectionery, butter and cheese, furniture and upholstered goods, and tobacco, cigars and cigarettes. Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table IX, pp. 214-15.

2. McDonald, "Business Leaders," pp. 93-94; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 77; Province, June 3, 1905; Roy, Vancouver, p. 22.

companies were established in the 1900s and 1910s as well, including meat packers, cigar factories, confectionery manufacturers, and a profusion of large and small bakeries and dairies.³

Because most of their products were perishable, markets for food manufacturers were primarily local and provincial, but some extended south and east to embrace regional markets. Although perishability limited the size of their markets, it protected Vancouver food manufacturers from outside competition, except in the regional western Canadian market, where eastern Canadian manufacturers benefitting from freight rate advantages were stiff competitors.⁴ Producers of two less perishable goods, namely the B.C. Sugar Refinery and the cigar factories, met with the most eastern competition, but the former still managed to maintain a virtual monopoly.⁵

Because of the low organic composition of capital in most food manufacturing (sugar being the main exception), new companies easily sprang up, and the local market was generally very competitive. Price competition led food manufacturers to mechanize, employ low-wage labour, or do both. Substantial mechanization took place in the larger

3. See Province, March 30, 1907; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 123; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, p. 40; McDonald, "Business Leaders," p. 94.

4. See Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 6; Province, April 23, 1902, June 3, 1905; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 7; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., pp. 116-17, 123; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 320.

5. B.C. Sugar was investigated for price-fixing in 1917, but cleared. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 15, 1917; Labour Gazette XVII (1917), p. 487; M.I. Rogers, B.C. Sugar.

confectionery factories, bakeries, breweries, and cigar factories, and in the sugar refinery and packing plants.⁶

Many food manufacturers also achieved low production costs by paying low wages, maintaining long hours, employing large numbers of women, giving little thought to decent working conditions, and running their plants as petty despotisms. In order to maintain such conditions, these employers vigorously fought unions, especially unions of unskilled workers. B.C. Sugar exemplified most of these conditions, including "Oriental wages," "terrific heat," long hours, and a policy of firing anyone caught trying to organize the employees.⁷ Ramsay Brothers confectionery works employed large numbers of women, and was described as practically a sweat shop after a speed-up connected with changes in piece rates in 1915. Employees who reported conditions to the labour press were fired.⁸ Many of the smaller and some large bakeries employed non-union labour in dark, dank and unhealthy cellars, in contravention

6. On baking and confectionery, see Province, June 3, 1905, July 25, 1906, April 3, 1914; on breweries, Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 77, Province, Feb. 15, 1913; on cigar factories, B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 125; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., pp. 122-23; on the sugar refinery, Province, May 19, 1906; Rogers, B.C. Sugar; on packing plants, Province, March 30, 1907, Oct. 22, 1912.

7. Western Wage Earner, Aug. 1910, p. 13; Province, April 29, 1911; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 19, 1912, p. 1, May 19, 1916, pp. 1-2; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 524-29, 553-54.

8. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 22, 29, 1915, p. 1; Province, Nov. 11, 19, 1915. The Pacific Chocolate Factory also paid low wages to its female employees. See B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 93-95, Vol. 4, pp. 84-86.

of poorly enforced provincial regulations.⁹

In food and tobacco manufacturing, then, highly competitive conditions contributed to employer policies that would make mechanization an object of contention for some skilled workers, and wages, union organization, and working conditions objects of contention for many other workers, both skilled and unskilled.¹⁰

Non-Perishable Consumer Goods

The non-perishable consumer goods industry in Vancouver consisted mainly of the manufacture of men's and women's garments, boots, shoes and leather goods, household furnishings, and printing and publishing. Before 1900, most of these products were imported, but after the turn of the century, a boot and shoe factory and several clothing manufacturers were added to the mattress factory that had been established in the 1890s.¹¹ Markets were mainly local and regional, but

9. See World, Feb. 27, 1900; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 5, 1901, Feb. 2, 1911; PABC, Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-18, reel 37, file 557-12-12, R.G. Chamberlain to J.G. Hay, Jan. 16, 1912.

10. Not all food manufacturers kept down wage costs through the methods discussed in the preceding paragraphs. E.g., Vancouver Breweries Ltd. and Swift's packing plant each followed paternalist "welfare capitalist" policies of profit-sharing and stock purchase, and Shelly's bakery combined profit-sharing with "yellow dog" contracts in which employees were forced to promise never to join a union, on pain of dismissal. See News-Advertiser, July 2, 1909; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 5, 1917, p. 1; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 325.

11. On boots and shoes, see Province, Sept. 16, 1904, Nov. 21, 1908; Westward Ho! Magazine, Aug. 1908, pp. 79-83; Man-to-Man, June 1910, pp. 379-82; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Oct. 1915, p. 33. On clothing, see Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Nov. 1914, pp. 142-44, Oct. 1915, p. 39; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., pp. 104-07;

they met with eastern competition in both spheres to a greater extent than food manufacturers.

In three areas of non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing, production was organized in artisanal and industrial branches. First, garment manufacturing was divided between custom tailoring and dressmaking for a largely local market, and the manufacture of ready-made clothing for a local and provincial, mainly working-class market. Competition in the artisanal branch was originally local, including competition between white merchant tailors and a few Asian-owned shops, but eastern competition also appeared with the development of new forms of production of custom-made clothing.¹² In the ready-made branch, production took place in factories, and competition was both local and eastern. Second, printing was similarly divided into the artisanal, small-scale job printing branch, and the larger, more industrial daily newspaper branch. Markets for both were local, but job printers faced competition from the east.¹³ Third, the same division existed in the boot and shoe industry, between factory production in manufacturing, and artisanal production in shoe repair.

Like food manufacturers, non-perishable consumer goods

McDonald, "Business Leaders," p. 93.

12. On competition between white and Asian shops, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 177-79; on new methods of production, see the next section.

13. See complaints by printers of local businesses sending work to eastern firms. G. Bartley, Outline History of Typographical Union No. 226, Vancouver BC, 1887-1938 (hereafter, Outline History), pp. 19-20, 33-35; Sun, Nov. 25, 1912.

manufacturers mechanized their plants and attempted to keep down wages in response to eastern and local competition. In the artisanal branches, such as custom tailoring, new methods of production, long hours and low wages, and increased labour intensity were the main strategies, while in the industrial branches, mechanization and low wages were often combined. Thus, clothing and shoe factories were extensively mechanized before World War I, to a much greater extent than in food manufacturing, but employers also tried to decrease wage costs to keep competitive with factories in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, where wages were lower.¹⁴ In printing, the newspaper branch would have been the first to mechanize; in the job branch, only the larger shops would be able to afford new machines. Competition in the job shop sector was more sensitive to wage and hour conditions than in the newspaper sector.¹⁵

In both food and non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing, the primary obstacle to capital accumulation for individual producers was competition from lower-cost eastern Canadian and local manufacturers. To counter that competition, local capitalists were led to mechanize production, or to attempt to maintain low wages and long hours. The effects of these strategies on workers, and their capacity

14. See B.C. Inspector of Factories, Report, 1917-18, pp. 133-34; B.C. Minimum Wage Board Report, 1919, p. 91 (for this reason, clothing manufacturers objected to a minimum wage for women in B.C.).

15. See S. Zerker, *The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union, 1832-1972: A Case Study of Foreign Domination* (hereafter, *Toronto Typographical Union*), pp. 164-66.

to respond to them depended on their social reproduction cycles, to which we now turn.

9.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

Skill and gender were the most important distinctions in the social reproduction cycles of consumer goods manufacturing workers. They included factory operatives, secure crafts such as printers, and crafts in various degrees of crisis, ranging from the locally relatively secure cigarmakers, to the increasingly degraded tailors and bakers. In addition to skill differences, the labour force was segmented by gender, with a large minority of women concentrated in certain industries and occupations. Ethnic segmentation was not a significant factor, with one exception, as most workers in consumer goods manufacturing belonged to the dominant ethnic group. Because there were some differences between workers in the food and non-perishable branches, they will be discussed separately.

Food Manufacturing Workers

Employees in food manufacturing industries were a small but substantial part of the manufacturing workforce in Vancouver. In both 1911 and 1921, nearly a thousand workers were employed in food and allied production in the city of Vancouver, comprising about 10 per cent of all the manufacturing workers in each census year (Table 9-1). Their

occupational distribution is shown in Table 9-2: the most important groups were bakers, biscuit and confectionery workers, sugar refinery workers, cigarmakers, and packinghouse workers.

Bakers were the largest occupational group in food manufacturing in 1911, and although their numbers had declined by 1921, they were still a sizable component of the food manufacturing workforce. They worked in numerous small shops,¹⁶ which the development of larger mechanized bakeries did little to change.¹⁷ In addition to whatever occupational community derived from that source, bakers shared the characteristic of working unusual hours, since night work was the norm.¹⁸

Bakers possessed a craft skill that was under attack from

16. The city directory listed fifty-three bakeries in Vancouver in 1911, for an average of less than five bakers per shop. (Baking was evidently concentrated in Vancouver, since the same source reported only two bakeries in North Vancouver, and one in New Westminster.) The Census of Manufacturers for 1910 reported only twelve bread, biscuit and confectionery manufacturers with five or more employees in the Vancouver census district, so most shops were evidently small. See Henderson's Greater Vancouver, New Westminster and Fraser Valley Directory, 1911; Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table IX, pp. 214-15.

17. For example, one of the larger companies, Muir's (later Hanbury, Evans and Co.) employed only eight or nine workers in 1903, twenty-five in 1906, and over thirty in 1908 (of which probably fourteen were delivery wagon drivers). The continued small number of bakers per shop is indicated by a 1918 strike of bakers and helpers against the four largest bakeries in the city, which affected only forty workers. Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in B.C., Evidence, p. 698; Province, July 25, 1906; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 150; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 18(38), Bulger to Acland, Aug. 15, 1918.

18. "Long hours worked at night were the biggest thing which set bakers apart from their fellow workers." I. McKay, "Capital and Labour in the Halifax Baking Industry During the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century" (hereafter, "Halifax Baking Industry"), p. 89

Table 9-1

Consumer Goods Manufacturing Workers, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921, by branch

Branch	1911		1921	
	N	% all mfg.	N	% all mfg.
Food & allied	967	10.6	964	11.8
Clothing & allied	1214	13.2	640	7.8
Leather & rubber	241	2.6	176	2.2
Printing & allied	602	6.7	406	5.0
Total	3024	33.0	2185	26.8

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921
Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Table 9-2

Workers in Food and Allied Products Manufacturing, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921, by occupation and gender

Occupation	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Bakers	242	10	252	26.1	161	8	169	17.8
Biscuit & confectionery	54	31	85	8.8	47	57	104	10.8
Canners & curers, fish	183	2	185	19.1	50	-	50	5.2
Canners & curers, meat [1]	31	-	31	3.2	43	-	43	4.5
Liquors & beverages	35	1	36	3.7	27	-	27	2.8
Millers [2]	30	-	30	3.1	23	-	23	2.4
Sugar refiners [3]	56	7	63	6.5	23	17	40	4.1
Tobacco & cigars	82	4	86	8.9	33	7	40	4.1
Various food products	51	9	60	6.2	72	21	93	9.6
Labourers, food factories	104	-	104	10.8	324	-	324	33.6
Labourers, distilleries	35	-	35	3.6	20	-	20	2.1
Foremen	-	-	-	-	31	-	31	3.2
Total	903	64	967	100.0	854	110	946	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol.
III, Table 40.

Notes: [1] Including butchers.

[2] Including flour and cereal mill employees, n.e.s.

[3] Sugar and starch factory employees.

mechanized production and price-cutting employers. The threat of mechanization came from the larger, well-equipped bakeries, such as Muir's, which in 1906 had the latest machinery to mix, divide, and shape dough.¹⁹ The small shops, in contrast, were dependent on the craft skill of the bakers, but craft can be degraded in ways other than mechanization, and some of the smaller bakeries that competed by "underselling" were allegedly filthy, and located in poorly ventilated, damp cellars. They survived only by becoming sweatshops, paying low wages to under-qualified bakers.²⁰ Bakers were thus a craft in crisis.

Biscuit and confectionery workers were one of the four largest occupational groups in food manufacturing in 1911 and 1921, and unlike bakers, their numbers grew during the decade (Table 9-2). They worked in an industry closely related to baking, but their conditions, and the workers themselves, were very different. In the first place, they worked in much larger plants than bakers.²¹ Second, confectionery workers lacked the craft skill of bakers. The manufacture of biscuits, candy, etc., was subject to the standardized performance of repetitive

19. Province, July 25, 1906; cf. *ibid.*, April 3, 1914, on Shelly Brothers Bakery.

20. See VTLC Minutes, Feb. 3, 1910, Dec. 1, 1910, April 20, 1911, Province, Dec. 2, 1910, April 21, 1911; B.C. Labor Commission, Report, p. 11; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 22, 1916, p. 1.

21. For example, Ramsay Brothers employed seventy workers in 1905, Dominion Biscuit sixty in 1910, Haida Confectionery between thirteen and twenty-four the same year, the Pacific Chocolate Factory thirty-five to forty in 1913, and R.C. Purdy twenty in 1918. Province, June 3, 1905; B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, pp. 16, 18, 19; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 114.

tasks, and then to the replacement of workers by machines.²² Some hand processes remained, but confectionery workers were factory operatives performing manufactory or machine-tending work, often at an intense pace.²³

Third, in contrast to bakers, who were nearly all male, many confectionery workers were young women. In 1911, over one third, and by 1921, over one half of biscuit and confectionery workers were female (Table 9-2),²⁴ and in individual plants, women frequently outnumbered men.²⁵ The wages of women confectionery workers about half those of men in the same establishments (Table 9-3), and were insufficient for them to live independently.²⁶ In addition, bakers and confectionery workers

22. For example, a candy-dipping machine at Ramsay Brothers replaced the hand-dipping of most chocolates in 1905. Province, June 3, 1905. For nineteenth century developments in the labour process, see McKay, "Halifax Baking Industry."

23. For example, at Ramsay Brothers confectionery works, forty or fifty women making and packing candies were changed from time to piece wages in 1915, had their rate reduced by 20 per cent, and were forced to speed up production to meet a weekly minimum output. The factory was aptly termed a sweat shop. B.C. Federationist, Oct 22, 29, 1915, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Nov. 4, 1915; Province, Nov. 5, 1915.

24. In 1918, in all of B.C., women comprised two thirds of the employees in candy manufacturing (207 out of 319), and half in firms manufacturing jams, teas, etc. (97 out of 191). Large numbers of women workers in biscuit and confectionery factories were also noted by the press. B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries"; Province, July 20, 1918.

25. E.g. at Dominion Biscuit, there were thirty-five women and twenty-five men, at Empress Manufacturing (jams, etc.) seventeen women and eleven men, at Haida Confectionery fourteen women and ten men. B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, pp. 16, 19.

26. See B.C. Labor Commission, Report, Vol. 3, pp. 93-95, Vol. 4, pp. 84-86.

Table 9-3

Median Weekly Wages of Men and Women Workers, Consumer Goods
Manufacturing, British Columbia, 1918

Occupation	% of workers female	Median Weekly Wage		
		Women	Men	Ratio
FOOD				
Candy	66.1	\$8.50	\$17.00	.50
Jams, teas, etc.	50.8	10.50	18.50	.57
Bakeries	17.5	10.00	20.50	.49
Cigars & tobacco	14.0	10.50	19.50	.54
Packinghouses	7.5	13.50	23.50	.57
GARMENT MAKING	81.1	11.50	20.00	.58
LEATHER & FUR	29.7	12.50	22.50	.56
PRINTING	17.0	8.50	27.50	.31

Source: B.C. Dept. of Labor, Annual Report, 1918,
"Statistics of Trade and Industries."

Note: Wage data were given in \$1.00 ranges in the
source; mid-points have been used for
calculating medians.

(and male and female workers in food and allied production in general) differed in age. Over 70 per cent of the women in this branch were under twenty-five years of age, while only 20 per cent of the men were that young.²⁷ Only in ethnicity did biscuit and confectionery workers fail to differ from bakers: in 1918, well over nine tenths of workers in baking, candy manufacturing, and jam, tea, and related manufacturing in B.C. were from Canada, the British Isles, or the United States.²⁸

Labourers formed one of the largest categories of employees in food manufacturing. Although every food factory employed some, a large number undoubtedly worked at the B.C. Sugar Refinery. The refinery was highly mechanized in most departments, and most of the workers were unskilled or semi-skilled operatives working under strict factory discipline.²⁹ As early as 1901, the company employed between 70 and 100 workers, and by 1908 it was reported to have 300, at about which level it remained for the rest of the period (except for periods of staff reduction when markets were poor).³⁰

27. Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

28. B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries." There was no appreciable difference between men and women confectionery workers in this respect.

29. See Province, May 19, 1906, for a description of the production process. A few craft workers, such as coopers and machinists, were employed. See the testimony of the refinery's owner, B.T. Rogers, in Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 524-25.

30. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 191; Greater Vancouver Illustrated, p. 76; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Feb. 1914, p. 157; B.C. Federationist, May 19, 1916, p. 1; Province, Aug. 18, 1916; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p.

Although it was accused of paying "Oriental wages," B.C. Sugar employed no Asians in the refinery (because of an agreement with the city), and in 1917 most of the workers were described in the press as "British." A fifth of of the 250 workers employed that year were young women, who sewed and filled sugar sacks for piece wages that amounted to about \$1.50 to \$1.60 a nine hour day. Male refinery employees worked at least twelve hours a day in "terrific heat" for \$3.50 to \$4.25 a day, or about the wages of a building labourer.³¹

Cigarmakers and packinghouse workers were few in number, but are worth considering for purposes of comparison. Cigarmakers and other tobacco workers formed a small and declining component of the working class in Vancouver in 1911 and 1921 (Table 9-2). Like bakers, they were a skilled craft, in crisis because of the introduction of machinery and factory methods of production employing less skilled, cheaper labour. Unlike bakers, they faced little mechanization in Vancouver's generally small cigar factories, and the threat came largely from cigars made by machine or by sweated labour in the east.³²

525. The discrepancy between these figures and census data is probably due to refinery workers living outside the City of Vancouver.

31. B.C. Federationist, May 19, 1916, p. 1, April 27, 1917, p. 1; News-Advertiser, April 28, 29, 1917. Cf. Western Wage Earner, Aug. 1910, p. 13; Province, April 29, 1911, on heat, hours, etc. Women seemed to make up about one fifth of the workforce, e.g., in 1919, there were 60 women out of 300. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I pp. 525-28.

32. The Kurtz cigar factory had only twenty-five workers in 1902. Province, April 23, 1902. Even the large and "up-to-date" Stettler cigar factory that was established in Vancouver in 1918 employed 100 skilled male cigar makers out of a total of 150 workers. Machines were used for tobacco stripping, and first boys, and then women were employed

Cigarmakers were mostly men, but women made up a growing proportion of the labour force, rising from less than 5 per cent in 1911 to over 17 per cent in 1921. As in other food industries, they were paid about half the wages of men (Tables 9-2, 9-3).

Workers at the two packinghouses were an important component of the food manufacturing workforce in the Vancouver area. Swift's employed 65 workers in its Vancouver plant in 1912, and 80 in its new New Westminster plant in 1919. Burns' large packing plant in Vancouver employed 200 in 1918.³³ Both plants were highly mechanized, following the dis-assembly production line methods pioneered by that industry.³⁴ Some worker were highly skilled, and in great demand (e.g., butchers, pork cutters), but craft labour had disappeared in the nineteenth century, and "the work was carried on by specialists trained to do a single operation expertly."³⁵ Packinghouse workers were thus skilled and semi-skilled factory operatives, and craft skill remained only among meat-cutters employed in retail shops, which were often closely linked to meatpacking companies (e.g., Burns owned sixteen shops in Vancouver).³⁶

 in that department, where the work was less skilled. Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 123 (note photos); Province, Feb. 3, 1907.

33. Province, Oct. 22, 1912; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., p. 117; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 320-21.

34. On Burns, see Province, March 30, 1907.

35. D. Brody, The Butcher Workmen: A Study of Unionization (hereafter, Butcher Workmen), p. 39; cf. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, p. 322.

36. Brody, Butcher Workmen, p. 106; McDonald, "Business Leaders," p. 93.

Most packinghouse workers were men. There is no record of the number of women packinghouse workers in the Vancouver area, but in B.C. in 1918 less than a tenth were female (Table 9-3).³⁷ Ethnically, the packinghouse workers were slightly less homogeneous than other food workers: although in B.C. over four fifths were from Canadian, British, or American origins, significant numbers of European workers, and even a few Asians, were also employed.³⁸

The groups of workers that have been described comprise a fair sample of the workers in food and allied manufacturing in Vancouver. Bakers and cigarmakers were mostly male, skilled craftsmen, who usually worked in relatively small shops, and were threatened to a greater or lesser extent by mechanization and low-wage competition. They differed in the source of those threats: local for bakers; from outside Vancouver for cigarmakers. The interests of each lay in improved wages and hours (especially for bakers, who were virtually a sweated trade), and in protection from the competition of low wage labor and the inroads of mechanized production on their crafts. Their strategies would differ because of the different locations of those threats, however.

In contrast to bakers and cigarmakers, biscuit and confectionery, and sugar refinery workers were operatives in highly

37. In the United States, female workers were concentrated in canning and labelling operations, and later in sausage making. Brody, *Butcher Workmen*, pp. 39-41; cf. Mathers Commission, *Evidence*, Vol. II, pp. 320-21.

38. B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries". Swift's employed eight Asians in a labour force of eighty in 1919. Mathers Commission, *Evidence*, Vol. I, pp. 320-21.

mechanized factories, many of them were female, and they worked for long hours at low pay.³⁹ Their interests would lie in shorter hours and higher wages, and since, in order to keep down wage costs, their employers were fiercely anti-union, mobilization could be expected to be an object of contention as well. Packinghouse workers differed from both of the other groups: they were skilled, mostly male factory operatives, working in mechanized plants, but they had links to craft workers outside the factories (i.e. retail meat cutters). As we saw in the case of factory woodworkers, this could facilitate mobilization and collective action.

Non-Perishable Consumer Goods Workers

Vancouver's non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing sector employed workers in clothing and allied production, printing, and leather goods manufacturing. In 1911, clothing and allied production employed over one eighth of all manufacturing workers in Vancouver, printing about half that number, and leather manufacture a very small proportion of the total (Table 9-1).

Workers in clothing and allied production in Vancouver were employed in three different branches: custom tailoring, the manufacture of ready-made clothing, and dressmaking and millinery. It is very difficult to determine from census data how many were employed in each

39. It is noteworthy that in the industries where a large proportion of women were employed, the median wage of men was less than in the industries with a low proportion of women. See Table 9-3.

branch, because the census categories do not adequately distinguish garment workers in the ready-made sector from others (Table 9-4).⁴⁰ In addition, little is known about the conditions of dressmakers and milliners, but in any case they were not a factor in collective action.⁴¹ We will therefore concentrate on tailors and garment workers, whose differences paralleled those between bakers, and biscuit and confectionery workers.

First, tailors worked in small shops, stores, or at home; garment workers were employed in moderate-sized factories. Most tailors worked in shops with less than ten employees, and although some large shops existed in later years, most probably remained small.⁴² Garment

40. It is likely that some of the tailors and dressmakers in the census worked in garment factories.

41. Milliners and dressmakers, who were mostly women, appear to have been especially exploited. At least some were employed by retail stores, such as J. Stark and Sons, where girls started work at fourteen or fifteen years of age, and at one time worked with no pay for the first year (subsequently raised to \$1.00 a week), and \$2.50 a week for the second year. G. Drysdale paid apprentices \$1.00 to \$3.00 a week. Apprenticeship lasted four years, and in the early 1900s there were allegations that young women were being taken on as unpaid apprentices, then dismissed when the busy season was over. Independent, March 23, 1901; VTLC Minutes, March 20, 1902; B.C. Labor Commission, Report, Vol. 4, pp. 133, 138.

42. In 1901, there were eighty to eighty-five white workers in twenty shops during the busy season, and forty-five in the slack season. In 1909, a shop where tailors struck had only seven employees. Later that year, seventy-eight tailors made an agreement with either twenty-six or thirty-six shops (the source is ambiguous), for an average of two or three workers per shop. At six other shops, forty-five tailors went on strike, for an average of 7.5 workers per shop. In 1913, the largest tailor shop in the city, Western Cloak and Suit Co., employed about twenty workers, and in 1915, Ladies Guarantee Tailors employed twenty-eight. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 179; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 296, file 3121, Vol. 297, file 3202,

Table 9-4

Workers in Non-Perishable Consumer Goods Manufacturing, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921, by occupation and gender

Occupation	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
CLOTHING & ALLIED	537	677	1214	59.0	279	370	640	52.4
Dressmakers (1)	-	388	388		-	119	119	
Milliners (2)	7	177	184		5	84	89	
Tailors (1)	484	86	570		20	35	55	
Other employees								
Primary production (3)	-	-	-		52	46	98	
Clothing factories (4)	-	-	-		167	81	248	
Other (5)	46	26	72		26	5	31	
PRINTING	553	49	602	29.3	362	44	406	33.2
Printers	553	49	602		239	5	244	
Other printing workers	-	-	-		123	39	162	
LEATHER & RUBBER	233	8	241	11.7	160	16	176	14.4
Boot & shoe makers (6)	167	7	174		40	7	47	
Boot & shoe repairers	-	-	-		60	-	60	
Harness makers	44	-	44		12	-	12	
Other	22	1	23		48	9	57	
Total	1323	734	2057	100.0	792	430	1222	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census,
Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) In 1921, includes apprentices.
(2) In 1921, includes hat and cap makers.
(3) In 1921, knitters, weavers, textile factory employees, etc.
(4) In 1921, includes labourers.
(5) In 1921, awning, tent and sailmakers, mattress makers.
(6) In 1911, includes repairers.

factories were generally larger, most employing more than twenty-five workers, and some more than fifty.⁴³

Differences in workplace size reflected differences in production methods: tailors were craft workers, garment workers factory operatives. Before the introduction of new methods of production in the late nineteenth century, a tailor was a skilled craftsman who made entire garments himself, possibly with the assistance of a helper. This "old-style merchant tailoring business" was undermined by several developments, including improvements in the quality of factory-made clothing, the development of the "special-order trade" (custom tailoring done in factories), and the introduction of the "team system" in high grade custom tailoring (in which most of the work was done by specialists, skilled tailors being employed only when absolutely necessary). Home work and the sweating system also degraded the tailor's craft.⁴⁴ In contrast to the tailors, with their threatened

Vol. 302, file 13(108), Vol. 304, file 15(12); Province, Oct. 2, 1909.

43. E.g. in 1910, McMaster and Son employed twenty-seven workers, McKay, Smith, Blair and Co. thirty-three; in 1914, 1915 and 1918, Vancouver Knitting Co. had fifty workers, and Hamilton Carhartt employed twenty-five in 1915, and thirty-five in 1918. George A. Campbell employed sixty to eighty in 1918, and fifty-five in 1919; he added that the sixteen garment manufacturers in Vancouver each employed twenty to sixty workers. B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, p. 16; Industrial Progress and Commercial Record, Nov. 1914, p. 144, Oct. 1915, pp. 39-40; Hamilton, Industries of B.C., pp. 105-07; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 460-62.

44. C.J. Stowell, The Journeyman Tailor's Union of America: A Study in Trade Union Policy (hereafter, Tailors). Taken at face value, the census data in Table 9-4 indicate a tremendous fall in the number of tailors in Vancouver between 1911 and 1921. To the extent that it was not due solely to changes in census categories, it was the result of the forces degrading the craft.

craft skills, garment workers were employed from the beginning in mechanized factories with highly developed divisions of labour. They were specialized, semi skilled factory operatives.⁴⁵

Tailors and garment workers also differed in gender. Most of the former were men, most of the latter women.⁴⁶ For example, in 1911, 15 per cent of garment manufacturers in Vancouver were female, and 67 per cent of the workers were female. A report on clothing manufacturing in 1911 declared, "The majority of the labor employed in this trade is female."⁴⁷ In 1918, 86 per cent of the 433 employees in twenty-one garment-making firms (including large tailor shops) in B.C. were female (Table 2.4). Unlike most other industries, the majority of female clothing workers were not young: only 37 per cent were under twenty-five years of age in 1911, and 41 per cent in 1921.⁴⁸

The ethnic division of labour in tailor and garment work appears to have changed in the course of the 1900-1919 period. In the first decade of the century, it was reported that competition from low paid

45 See the description of the Vancouver Knitting Co. in *Industrial Progress and Commercial Record*, Nov. 1914, pp. 142-44.

46 Census data again seem unreliable. In 1911, 15 per cent of tailors were female; in 1921, 64 per cent were female, and 67 per cent of clothing factory employees were male (Table 2.4). This contradicts every other source.

47 B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, p. 16, *Industrial Progress and Commercial Record*, Oct. 1915, p. 39.

48 The older workers were probably married women called in to work in busy periods (suggested to me by Paul Phillips). The only categories with a majority under twenty-five were milliners in 1911, and textile workers in 1921.

Asians threatened the jobs of white tailors and garment workers. For example, in 1901, a tailor complained, "There is so much competition by Chinese and Japanese that the white men will be drawn out of the trade," and a merchant tailor stated that the prices were so low that Asian tailors must be paid less than whites could live on. In 1909, the international organizer of the United Garment Workers asserted, "The sewing trade in this city is monopolized by Chinese. They are crowding the white woman out." Yet according to the B.C. Dept. of Labor, in 1918, garment workers and tailors were mostly Canadian, British, or American in origin, so either the Asian competition disappeared, or the data for B.C. are not representative of the Vancouver situation.⁴⁹ The number of Asian tailors and garment workers is impossible to determine, but they were certainly perceived by white workers as a threat to their livelihoods for at least part of the 1900-1919 period.

After clothing workers, printers were the largest group of workers in non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing, with over 600 in the city of Vancouver in 1911, and over 400 in 1921. Except for the daily newspapers, most of the offices in which printers worked were

⁴⁹. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 179-80; Province, May 21, 1909; B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries." Data from the latter source are biased toward large firms, and Asian tailors and garment workers may have worked in small shops or firms that did not answer the questionnaire for some reason. For other reports of Asian competition to tailors, see Independent, June 2, 1900; VTLC Minutes, May 15, 1902, Aug. 20, 1903, June 4, 1908, Jan. 21, 1909; Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 773, V (1905), p. 1218, VI (1905-06), pp. 166, 277, 408, 744. Reports of garment manufacturers putting out work to Chinese workers appear in VTLC Minutes, Nov. 2, 1916, Feb. 7, 1918.

small. For example, in 1913 it was stated that probably no more than ten of the fifty print shops in Vancouver employed more than two men. By 1918, capital had apparently become more concentrated: twenty-three job printers in the city employed 209 workers, for an average of about nine each.⁵⁰

Printers belonged to a skilled trade which was remarkably successful at retaining craft control over production despite technological change. They were also exceptionally successful in maintaining a strong craft culture or identity, based on the "intimate environments" of their workplaces, control over the labour market, and pride in a highly respected craft.⁵¹ They were a geographically and socially mobile group of workers, many having spent considerable time on the tramp, and a number always moving into the ranks of small proprietors.⁵²

Despite strong controls over the job and the labour market, printers were still subject to the forces of early twentieth century capitalist rationalization. The most important of these was a growing division of labour, which gave rise to subsidiary, specialized

50. B.C. Labor Commission, Report, Vol. 1, p. 54; Province, Dec. 17, 1918.

51. See Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, pp. 84-87; W. Roberts, "The Last Artisans: Toronto Printers, 1896-1914"; Zerker, *Toronto Typographical Union*, pp. 7-10; S.M. Lipset, M.A. Trow and J.S. Coleman, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union*, pp. 25-32, 106-40. On Vancouver printers, see Bartley, *Outline History*.

52. See the obituary of Percy Whitworth, *B.C. Federationist*, May 19, 1916, p. 4; cf. R. Babcock, "A Newfoundland Printer on the Tramp."

occupations, such as pressmen, press feeders, and stereotypers in the larger shops. Composing room employees (typographers) still remained in the majority (Table 9-4), but even they were subject to deskilling, by which apprentices tended to become specialists on one machine, rather than all-round craftsmen.⁵³

Nearly all printing trades workers were male (Table 9-4),⁵⁴ and belonged to the dominant ethnic group.⁵⁵ With their craft skills largely intact, and with an exceptional degree of craft identity and homogeneity, printers had the most capacity for mobilization and collective action of all consumer goods workers in Vancouver

The small number of leather workers in Vancouver were not so well placed. Most were boot and shoe workers, and the largest single group of these were factory operatives at J. Leckie and Co. Leckie's employed about 12 workers when it opened in 1904, but grew to 40 or 50 in 1908, and about 100 by 1914. Craft production in shoe manufacturing had been superseded in North America by the 1860s, and the Leckie

53. See Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, Report, Part IV, p. 2344.

54. The few women workers were concentrated mainly in bookbinding, which paid considerably less than other branches. 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40, p. 388. In B.C. as a whole in 1918, the median wage of eighty-two female workers in printing and publishing was about 30 per cent of men's median wage (Table 9-3).

55. Nearly all printers in B.C. in 1918 were from Canada, Britain or the United States, and most of those were from the first two countries of origin. B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries."

factory was fully mechanized. The majority of employees were male,⁵⁶ and nearly all leather workers were from Canada, Britain, or the United States.⁵⁷

In the non-perishable branch of consumer goods manufacturing, as in food and allied production, a clear demarcation existed between craft workers and factory operatives. Of the craft workers, printers were secure in their job and labour market control, and in their craft skill, tailors in contrast were threatened by new production methods and the competition of cheaper labour. The interests of both could be expected to lie in improved wages and hours, although for different reasons: for the printers because their craft control was not threatened, for the tailors because of the constant pressure on wages and hours from employers. Operatives in garment and shoe factories were in much the same position as one another, performing semi-skilled work in mechanized plants. Wages and hours could therefore be expected to be their main interests. Differences in objects of contention were accompanied by differences in group formation: in general craft workers worked in numerous small shops, while factory operatives worked in a few larger establishments; and the former were nearly all male, while the latter

56. Women were employed to do the lighter stitching, and were paid (in B.C. in 1918) about 56 per cent of the wages of men in leather and fur goods manufacturing.

57. On the industry in general, see N.J. Ware, *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860*, pp. 40-48; Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, Ch. 3. For Leckie's, see *Province*, Sept. 16, 1904, Nov. 21, 1908; *Westward Ho! Magazine*, Aug. 1908, pp. 79-83; *Man-to-Man*, June, 1910, pp. 379-82; *B.C. Federationist*, Nov. 13, 1914, p. 4; *Industrial Progress and Commercial Record*, Oct. 1915, p. 33; B.C. Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industries."

included a large proportion of women. The differences between craft workers and factory operatives were thus similar in both the food and tobacco, and non-perishable branches of consumer goods manufacturing.

Workers in both branches of consumer goods manufacturing were also ethnically similar. Except for tailors and garment workers, who included a significant minority of Asians, the vast majority of workers in consumer goods manufacturing were of Canadian, British, or American origins. In the absence of the employment of Asians, women filled the same labour market role. Like Asians in other industries, such as lumber, they generally earned between 50 and 60 per cent of the wages of white males (Table 9-3).⁵⁸

9.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

The mobilization and collective action of consumer goods manufacturing workers depended on their skill, gender, and the type of threats they faced. Until the war capitalist boom, craftsmen were better organized and more militant than factory operatives, and men were invariably more strongly mobilized than women. Success also depended on whether their employers faced lower-cost competition from within or from outside Vancouver: in the former case, employers were considerably more

58. The 'functional equivalence' of women and Asians in the labour market is shown by the only food manufacturing industry in the B.C. Dept. of Labor "Statistics of Trade and Industries" in which no women were employed: in cereal milling, 35 per cent of the workers were Asian.

hostile to unions and strikes than in the latter case. We will look at craft workers first, then factory operatives.

Craft Workers

Cigarmakers and printers were the least threatened and most strongly organized crafts in consumer goods manufacturing in Vancouver. Bakers and tailors, in contrast, were crafts in crisis, and poorly organized.

Cigarmakers

Vancouver cigarmakers were organized in the Cigarmakers International Union in 1894.⁵⁹ They were generally successful in organizing local cigar factories, and were the best organized workers in food and tobacco manufacturing in the Vancouver area at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶⁰ Union cigarmakers remained a small, exclusive group of skilled craftsmen, however, not exceeding 100 members until the war capitalist boom.⁶¹ Like their counterparts elsewhere, the local's

59. Vancouver was local 357. By 1902, there was also a local (No. 486) in New Westminster. Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 227.

60. For example, in 1901 there were four union shops, and in 1909 only one factory did not have a closed shop agreement with the union. Independent, Jan. 5, 1901; VTLC Minutes, Feb. 18, 1909.

61. Union membership was 40 in 1906, 53 in 1911, 61 in January 1914, and 46 in December (with only 6 working). It increased by 60 in 1916, and in 1919 was over 70. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1, July 18, 1919, p. 3; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 7, 1908, Aug. 5, 1909, Aug. 3, 1916, Oct. 5, 1916, Nov. 16, 1916, Jan. 4, 1917.

constant objective was the promotion of local union-made cigars marked by the blue union label.⁶²

Because of their strong local organization, the main threat to the cigarmakers came from cigars manufactured by non-union labour outside Vancouver (usually eastern Canada). As a result, the union formed an alliance with local capitalists, and became an exponent of the ideology of home-made products.⁶³ Preoccupied with urging consumers, especially other workers, to buy union label cigars, union cigarmakers usually abstained from contentious action.⁶⁴ Although the union gave no

62. Occasions on which cigarmakers pushed the union label are too numerous to mention. Cigarmakers' delegates at the VTLC discussed practically nothing else. See VTLC Minutes, Feb. 15, 1901, June 21, 1901, Feb. 7, 1907, July 18, 1907, Jan. 21, 1909, Oct. 6, 1910, Feb. 15, 1912, June 3, 1915, Jan. 4, 1917. In 1910, the cigarmakers had spent more on union label campaigns than any other craft. On the activities of the union as a whole, see Ware, *Labor Movement in the United States*, Ch. 11; Poner, *History of the Labor Movement*, Vol. 3, pp. 17-89.

63. *Independent*, Feb. 2, 1901; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 16, 1917. For example, the president and secretary of the local union asserted in a long letter to the press in 1903, that "the patronage of home-made products" was essential to develop Vancouver's "boundless possibilities." The cigar industry had been established in Vancouver because of "the enterprise and business sagacity of our local manufacturers." They produced excellent cigars: "We feel that our goods are entitled to their patronage in preference to eastern child-labor and filthy tenement-house-made cigars." If Vancouver could secure the local, provincial, and northwest market, they optimistically asserted, 500 cigarmakers and 200 boys and girls could be employed, to the benefit of merchants, landowners, and "boys of poor parents," who would be able "to learn a remunerative trade and to acquire a fixed occupation." *News-Advertiser*, Jan. 18, 1903; *Independent*, Jan. 24, 1903; *Province*, Jan. 30, 1903. This was a common pattern in unionized consumer goods industries, but generally weak in western Canada, according to Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," pp. 68-69.

64. There may have been two strikes. Six 'girl' tobacco strippers were reported to be on strike in 1917 (with twenty-four still at work), and in 1918, VTLC delegates were asked to support a cigarmakers' strike by

indication of ending its policy of craft exclusiveness (e.g. by organizing women workers), cigarmakers nonetheless played an active, if minor, role in the events of 1918 and 1919. They voted in favor of a general strike to protest the imprisonment of Duncan Kerr (Table 1-1), and declared their willingness to join a proposed general strike in sympathy with striking BCER employees.⁶⁵ In the Vancouver general strike, eighty-one cigarmakers struck six factories from June 4 to July 2.⁶⁶ No record of a vote on the OBU exists, and the locals retained their international affiliations, but the cigarmakers in Vancouver remained loyal to the old OBU VTLC by a large majority.⁶⁷ Cigarmakers were conservative radicals willing to engage in actions like the general strike, but unwilling to give up their craft exclusiveness. Unlike other crafts in crisis, they were able to preserve enough job control in local shops to see no need to adopt more inclusive organizational forms. Printers were in a similar position.

Printers

Printing tradesmen were amongst the most strongly organized

asking for union label cigars. There is no more information on either strike, and both were discovered too late to be included in strike statistics. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 18, 1918, Oct. 10, 1918.

65. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918, July 7, 1918. There is no information on the role of cigarmakers in the Goodwin protest strike.

66. In New Westminster, where the union local reportedly voted against striking, only six cigarmakers joined the general strike, for two or three days.

67. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190), Vol. 315, file 19(221); Province, June 12, 19, 1919; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 4, 1919.

workers in Vancouver. The Vancouver Typographical Union (VTU) maintained a continuous existence after its formation in 1888.⁶⁸ Despite the secession of specialized crafts arising from technological change, the VTU remained the dominant organization in the printing trades, playing a central role in promoting their solidarity through the Allied Printing Trades Council formed in 1898.⁶⁹ At the beginning of 1910, all 160 members of the union were employed, and there were no non-union shops in the city. By early 1912, it had nearly 300 members,

68. The VTU was Local No. 226 of the International Typographical Union (ITU). Much of the VTU history that follows is from Bartley, *Outline History*. Note on terminology: by 'printers' will be meant members of the VTU; 'printing trades' will refer to all the crafts engaged in printing.

69. Also in 1898, pressmen seceded to form a separate union, and printers in New Westminster formed an ITU local (which was reabsorbed into the VTU in 1903). A local of the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders was organized prior to 1900, and in 1907, a local of Stereotypers and Electrotypers was added. Bartley, *Outline History*, pp. 17, 21; *Independent*, Sept. 5, 1903; *Labour Gazette* IV (1904), pp. 680-81; VIII (1908), pp. 979-83; *B.C. Federationist*, July 6, 1912, p. 3. As in Toronto, printing trades workers in Vancouver generally cooperated, despite discord at the international level. E.g. in 1905, printers invited pressmen and bookbinders to attend and speak at VTU meetings, "a seldom granted concession." See Bartley, *Outline History*, p. 24; Zerker, *Toronto Typographical Union*, Ch. 7. New Westminster organized its own local of the ITU again in 1908, and a weak union of press feeders was formed in Vancouver at the end of 1909. Finally, in 1911, a local of Photo Engravers was formed, but it did not survive the pre-war depression. VTLC Minutes, Dec. 16, 1909; *Labour Gazette* IX (1909), pp. 961-65; *Report on Labour Organization*, 1911, p. 85, 1914, pp. 226-28. The press feeders would have seceded from the Printing Pressmen's Union, which was suffering from the effects of further specialization due to technological change, much as had the ITU in the nineteenth century. They were a weak union, which dissolved in 1911, and was reorganized in 1913. See VTLC Minutes, March 2, 1911, May 15, 1913, July 17, 1913; Fink, *Labor Unions*, pp. 301-02.

out of 470 printing trades workers in the city later that year ⁷⁰

Maintenance of labour market control through the closed shop, preservation of craft control over machinery, and higher wages and (especially) shorter hours were the main objectives of Vancouver printers in the early twentieth century. The VTL was remarkably successful in establishing a closed shop in printing in Vancouver: all of the major newspapers and nearly all job offices, with the exception of Chinese and Japanese firms, were closed shops. ⁷¹ The principal mechanism for maintaining union conditions in job shops was the union label, and most of the activity of the Printing Trades Council was taken up with it. ⁷² They lobbied for the union label on local government printing, repeatedly requested that the province print school texts, and beginning in 1912, cooperated with the Allied Printing Trades Council on a "Print-it-in-Vancouver" committee to persuade local businesses not to send printing work to the east. The resulting harmony of interests between employers and employees in job printing was exemplified by the address of L.E. Denison from the committee to the Printers Board of

70. VTLC Minutes, Jan. 20, 1910; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 5, 1912, p. 3; Sun, Nov. 125, 1912. The census reported 602 printing trades workers in 1911, but that figure includes proprietors of small shops.

71. VTLC Minutes, May 23, 1908, Jan. 20, 1910, July 7, 1910; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 10, 1912, p. 1, Nov. 29, 1912, p. 6; UBC Library, Special Collections, Colleen Toppings Bourke Collection, "Interview with H. Neelands" (hereafter, "Neelands Interview").

72. In addition to promoting the use of their own label, the printers supported the union label campaigns of other trades, for example by fining members caught buying cigars or made-to-order suits not bearing union labels.

Trade (employers) on the subject, "Our interests are your interests."⁷³

Vancouver printers responded to the challenge of technological change like printers elsewhere, by attempting to control new machine work and regulate apprenticeship. Those issues do not appear in any of the sources after 1909, so the typos may have succeeded in stabilizing conditions by then.⁷⁴ Consequently, most of their collective activity consisted of negotiating wage and hour scales with newspapers and job shops.⁷⁵ Negotiations were not always easy or amicable, but printers were very successful in achieving their wage and hour objectives without strikes for nearly all of the 1900-1919 period, and their only strike was equally successful. When fifty-two printers struck in January 1919 against twelve job offices for the same scale of wages recently won at

73. Bartley, Outline History, pp. 16, 18, 19, 20, 25, 33-35, 38; Independent, March 1, 1902; Province, April 3, 1911; Sun, Nov. 25, 1912; VTLC Minutes, May 21, 1914; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 29, 1915, p. 1, March 2, 1917, p. 4. Job shop proprietors were often former union members, and could retain membership after going into business for themselves.

74. Bartley, Outline History, pp. 17, 18, 26, 28, 29; Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 1120.

75. The two scales were separate, and conditions at the job shops always lagged behind the newspapers. For example, newspaper printers won the eight hour day in 1898, but it took until the last moment before a strike in 1903 for job shop printers to obtain a phased reduction in hours. Subsequently, agreements were reached every three years or so, if necessary through recourse to arbitration at the international level. A seven and a half hour day was won at newspapers in 1908, and they were looking for seven hours in 1910. The history of negotiations and settlements can be reconstructed from Bartley, Outline History, pp. 22, 27, 30, 31, 33, 35, 38-40; Independent, Feb. 14, 1903; Province, March 5, 1903, May 9, 1907; Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 668, 972, IV (1904), pp. 643-44; Trades Unionist, Jan. 1908, p. 1, March 1908, p. 6; VTLC Minutes, July 7, 1910, Nov. 17, 1901, April 6, 1911, April 15, 1915, Nov. 21, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 5, 1912, p. 3.

the newspapers, all of the shops granted the strikers' demands within the week.⁷⁶

Although the trade contributed some radical leaders to the Vancouver labour movement, such as R.P. Pettipiece, the union opposed the participation of labour in politics, and printers were cautious proponents of labour solidarity.⁷⁷ This was demonstrated in general strikes in 1911 and 1919. In June 1911, printers were prepared to join other Vancouver workers in a planned general strike in support of striking carpenters, but when the ITU Executive Council (which was averse to strikes under any circumstances) refused to sanction the sympathy strike, the local settled for assessing each member a dollar a week to aid the strikers.⁷⁸

In the central events of working-class radicalism in 1918 and

76. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 310, file 19(1); B.C. Federationist, Jan. 3, 1919, p. 1; Sun, Jan. 9, 1919.

77. For example, see B.C. Federationist, March 30, 1917, p. 1. H. Neelands explained that printers were active in the labour movement, and in independent labour and socialist politics, but because the union contained members of every political party, the VTU as a body kept out of politics. They did discuss political questions at work, however. "Neelands Interview."

78. H. Neelands recalled, "Our sympathies were with our friends with whom we were associating day by day but a general strike was against the policy of the International Typographical Union. "Neelands Interview." In the event, only building trades workers took part in the general strike, but the printers became involved in a dispute with other unions, when the VTLC put the Province on the unfair list for publishing misleading articles about the strike. The printers objected, since the employment conditions were satisfactory, and withdrew from the council for three months. Province, April 3, 1911, May 27, 29, 1911, June 7, 27, 1911; VTLC Minutes, May 26, 1911, June 15, 1911, July 6, 1911, Aug. 3, 17, 1911, Nov. 2, 1911; World, May 29, 1911; Bartley, Outline History, p. 32.

1919, printers could be described as non militantly radical, or perhaps moderately radical (this contradiction in terms aptly capturing their position).⁷⁹ Thus, although their vote in favor was insufficient for printers in Vancouver to join the 1919 general strike, two newspaper offices were closed by protests against anti-strike propaganda.⁸⁰

Printers had been strongly opposed to the OBU before the general strike, voting more than seven to one against it Table 1-3.⁸¹ In the fight between the OBU and the Internationals after the strike, they stayed with the ITU, but kept out of the bitter struggle between the old and new VTLCs by withdrawing from the former, but not affiliating with the latter until the end of 1921.⁸²

79. For example, they opposed conscription in 1917, but remained at work in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike. They did, however, show support for it by refusing to accept the resignations of delegates who had voted in favor of the strike at the VTLC. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917; Province, Aug. 15, 1918. Earlier in the year, the VTU, Printing Press Assistants, and Bookbinders voted against a strike to protest Duncan Kerr's imprisonment (Table 1-1).

80. See Chapter 1 above. In New Westminster, printers condemned the idea of a sympathetic strike "without a properly organized effort for any definite object," voted against it, announced their refusal to participate even if called on to strike, and stayed at work when the strike did occur. British Columbian, June 2, 1919; Province, June 12, 18, 20, 1919; PAC, RG 27, Vol 315, file 19(221). They were also opposed to the OBU. Province, May 1, 1919.

81. They were more supportive of the idea of a six-hour day, in contrast to most unions, who were less in favor of the six-hour day than they were of the OBU. This is consistent with printers' search for a shorter workday, however. See Bartley, Outline History, p. 40; UBC Library, Special Collections, OBU v.f. 213.

82. A typo appeared at the first meeting of the new VTLC, but none were present subsequently. VTLC(I) Minutes, Aug. 7, 1919, Dec. 6, 1921

Bakers

Bakers and tailors were craft workers who had much more difficulty than cigarmakers and printers in mobilizing and achieving their objectives. Because they were unable to control entry to the trade and competition from new methods of production, they were unable to preserve the skill and job control used as a resource by more secure crafts to protect their craft position. In addition, they lacked the shared interests against outside competition that characterized relations between cigarmakers or printers and their employers and therefore faced more employer hostility when they mobilized or acted collectively. As a result, they were more militant than printers and cigarmakers, but less successful, and surprisingly, less radical.

A local of the Bakery and Confectionery Workers Union was first organized in Vancouver in 1899, and by the beginning of 1901, it had closed shop agreements with ten bakeries. Yet conditions were not promising, according to the Labour Gazette correspondent: "The bakers' trade is one of the poorest paid in the west, and at the present time is not likely to be improved upon. There is little or no demand for bakers."⁸³ Bakers struggled to maintain their organization in Vancouver's many small bakeries, in the face of strong opposition caused by the competition from "underselling" shops to those that employed union labour. They were too weak to achieve union conditions throughout

83. VTLC Minutes, March 16, 1900, Dec. 12, 1900; Independent, Jan. 5, 1901; Labour Gazette I (1901), pp. 216-17, IX (1909), pp. 966-68

the industry so employers in union shops sought to rid themselves of the union, in order to more easily compete with the lower cost bakeries.⁸⁴ The number of union shops declined, and after a cooperative bakery failed, the union dissolved in early 1905. It was reorganized in 1907, but soon disappeared in the recession.⁸⁵

A bakers' union local resurfaced in the improving labour market of 1909.⁸⁶ It grew rapidly until a one-day strike the following spring, when about sixty bakers won nine hour day and closed shop demands at most of the twelve bakeries where they walked out.⁸⁷ Conditions subsequently deteriorated, and two large bakeries that had held out in 1910, plus one other, had become "the three biggest and meanest non-union bakeries" in Vancouver, while many of the others had eroded the closed shop by making all their bakers foremen, who were not in the union. Consequently, when the agreement expired in 1911, bakers

84. The union's objectives consistently included improved pay and shorter hours, the closed shop, remedy of unsanitary conditions, and prohibition of Asian labour, underground bakeries, and night work. See VTLC Minutes, Dec. 21, 1900, June 6, 1904; Labour Gazette I (1901), pp. 216-17, 413.

85. VTLC Minutes, Dec. 3, 1903, Feb. 4, 1904, March 3, 17, 1904, April 21, 1904, July 7, 1904, Jan. 5, 19, 1905, Sept. 5, 1907, Oct. 3, 1907; Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 885, 1120, 1226, V (1905), pp. 1218, 1345, IX (1909), pp. 966-68.

86. The local had 24 members when it was reorganized. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 7, 1909, Nov. 18, 1909, March 17, 1910, April 7, 24, 1910.

87. Before the strike, all but two or three plants were open shops, and hours were ten to twelve a day. PAC RG 27, Vol. 297, file 3247; Province, April 30, 1910, May 3, 1910; News-Advertiser, May 3, 4, 1910; VTLC Minutes, May 5, 1910; Labour Gazette X (1910), p. 1443; Western Wage Earner, June 1910, p. 1.

demanded the closed shop, inclusion of foremen in the union, and improved wages and hours. Eleven bakeries signed the agreement in April, but the six largest refused, and were reported to be hiring strikebreakers in anticipation of a strike that began on May 1.⁸⁸ As in metal manufacturing, the smaller shops were more dependent on craft skills, and settled more readily with the union than the larger, more mechanized companies, which were now the union's bitterest foes. Because the large bakeries put pressure on the smaller bakers by threatening to cut off their flour supplies, only half of the city's forty bakeries had signed with the union by the end of May. The strike was still officially in progress in August, but a number of union bakers had already left town, and nothing more was heard of the dispute. Later in the year, non-union bakeries were reported to be working sixteen and seventeen hour days.⁸⁹ Bakers were a craft in crisis whose crisis was getting worse, and they appeared powerless to stop it through either industrial or political action.⁹⁰ After the strike, mechanization

88. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 12, 1911, April 4, 1911, May 4, 1911; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, file 3357; World, May 3, 1911; Province, May 5, 1911.

89. World, May 19, 1911, June 1, 1911; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 17, 1911, Nov. 2, 1911.

90. Even before their 1911 defeat, the bakers' union had pressed the issue of unsanitary bakeries and other violations of the Bake Shops Act through political channels. Despite their lobbying, lurid revelations of conditions in some bakeries, and the very occasional conviction of an offender, they had little success in the next few years. For reports of their efforts, and conditions in bakeries, see VTLC Minutes, Aug. 8, 1910, Nov. 11, 1910, Dec. 1, 15, 1910, Feb. 2, 1911, April 20, 1911, May 5, 1911, Aug. 17, 1911, Sept. 7, 1911, May 2, 1912, March 20, 1913, April 3, 1913; Province, Dec. 2, 1910, Feb. 17, 1911, April 21, 1911; Labour Gazette XI (1911), p. 1370, XII (1911), p. 539; PABC,

continued apace, and the union once again declined.⁹¹

It barely survived the pre-war depression, and severed its ties with the International to become a purely local organization by 1915.⁹² After reorganizing as part of the international union in September 1917 (with fifty members), bakers in Vancouver took advantage of the war capitalist labour scarcity, and persistent grievances such as hours, sanitary conditions, and night work, to organize 70 per cent of the trade by the following May. As in the past, the union's strength lay in the small shops, which were then being threatened by the larger bakeries' attempt to impose a single standard weight on bread.⁹³ The four largest bread plants in Vancouver maintained open shops, and so on June 16, the forty bakers and helpers working there struck for a closed shop and other demands. Most of the work in the large shops was done by

Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-18, reel 37, file 557-12-12, J.G. Hay to Attorney-General, Jan. 19, 1912; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 50, Report, p. 11.

91. On mechanization, see PABC, Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-18, reel 37, file 557-12-12, J.H. McVety to W.J. Bowser, Jan. 17, 1912; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 280-87; Labour Gazette XII (1911), p. 539. Membership was halved from its pre-strike level to 60 in 1912. World, April 29, 1911; B.C. Federationist, April 20, 1912, p. 1.

92. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 30, 1914, p. 2, April 3, 1917; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1912, Sept. 4, 1913, Jan. 15, 1914, Feb. 19, 1914, May 7, 1914. The union was paying per capita tax to the BCPL on seventy-five members in the first half of 1913, and sixty in the second half. Early in 1914 it claimed sixty-six members, of which twenty were unemployed.

93. Smaller bakeries sold a larger loaf because they did not deliver. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 22, 1916, p. 1, March 9, 1917, p. 1, April 13, 1917, p. 1, Aug. 3, 17, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 30, 1917, p. 4, May 10, 1918, p. 1; Province, April 9, 1917, Jan. 26, 1918; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 6, 1917, Feb. 7, 21, 1918.

machinery, so the owners expected to be able to fill the strikers' places in a "fight to the finish." But when bakery drivers were organized, and refused to be pressed into service as bakers, the strikers won their demands and returned to work in the middle of July.⁹⁴ The extent to which the power of bakers in large plants no longer depended on craft skill, but on working-class solidarity across skill lines, was shown by their dependence on the drivers for victory in the strike.

The lesson of the strike was lost on the bakers, who persisted in craft exclusiveness. There is no record of a vote on the OBU, and the local stayed with the International, although it did not join the new VTLC during 1919 or 1920. There is no information on participation by bakers in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike, and they were exempted from the 1919 general strikes, so they seem to have played virtually no part in the radical movement in the Vancouver area.⁹⁵

Tailors

Like bakers, tailors were weakly organized, generally

94. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 18(38); Province, June 17, 19, 1918, July 18, 1918; Sun, June 18, 20, 21, 1918; B.C. Federationist, June 21, 1918, p. 1, July 19, 1918, p. 1. An attempt to organize bakery wagon drivers in 1913 had failed. VTLC Minutes, May 1, 1913.

95. They had declared their willingness to join the proposed general strike in sympathy with BCER employees, in July 1918. VTLC Executive Minutes, July 7, 1918; Sun, June 3, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8, July 18, 1919, p. 3; Province, July 25, 1919. The bakery drivers (or bakery salesmen), who belonged to the teamsters' union, joined the new VTLC when it was formed in August 1919. VTLC(I) Minutes, Aug. 7, 1919.

non-militant, and confronted by the hostility of large employers. A union existed continuously from 1900 to 1919,⁹⁶ but it experienced sharp swings in membership and in shops signed to union contracts.⁹⁷

The union's principal, but not very successful, strategy for organizing and controlling the labour market was promotion of the union label, especially on government work (such as fire and police uniforms).⁹⁸ This method failed for tailors because they faced local non-union competition. As long as tailors could not organize all the local shops, employers had no interest in cooperating with them, and consequently their mobilization and collective action met with hostility, especially from the large shops, which were more likely than small shops to adopt new methods of production that lessened their dependence on craft skills.

Strikes revealed both the weak mobilization of tailors, and the

96. The first union of tailors in Vancouver lasted from 1890 to 1893, and was reorganized at the end of the 1890s, because of the threat of Chinese and Japanese competition. As a result of a strike in 1899, the organization was restricted to the smaller shops, of which eleven had union agreements in 1901. *Independent*, June 2, 1900, Sept. 5, 1903; Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada*, pp. 262-64; S. Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915" (hereafter, "Union Maids"), p. 45.

97. For example, only fifteen tailors were members in 1906, because union tailors were being displaced by Chinese competition and non-union sweatshops. *VTLC Minutes*, June 4, 1908, Nov. 5, 19, 1908, Dec. 17, 1908; *B.C. Federationist*, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1. New production methods were causing a decline in the membership of the entire international union from 1905 to 1909. *Stowell, Tailors*, p. 96.

98. For instances of this policy, see *Labour Gazette* III (1902), p. 318; *VTLC Minutes*, Jan. 19, 1905, Sept. 3, 17, 1908, March 17, 1910, Feb. 15, 1912, March 18, 1915.

hostility of large employers to the union, because of the existence of local non union competition. Most strikes were by non unionized workers, although in several cases, they joined the union during or after strikes, which they generally won. For example, in March 1909, four male and three female tailors struck for the replacement of a weekly salary by a piece work system because the employer was driving them too hard. They won after nine days, and joined the tailor's union.⁹⁹ When forty-five members of the union struck at six of the larger shops in October, for an increase in the weekly pay of male tailors,¹⁰⁰ only three shops settled, the others brought strikebreakers from the United States, and the strike dragged on for months.¹⁰¹

The tailor's union grew to 100 members in 1911, and in 1913, the newly re-named Tailors Industrial Union emerged from its craft exclusiveness to actively organize female tailors, in competition with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).¹⁰² A campaign for the eight

99. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 296, file 3121.

100. Female tailors worked by the piece, indicating that women may have been playing the role of specialists in new methods of production. They were not organized by the union until 1913 (see below), indicating that it was maintaining a policy of craft exclusiveness.

101. Small shops were crowded with work, so union tailors easily found other jobs, but the strike persisted until the next July, when a scarcity of non-union labour, and publicity surrounding the strike finally induced one of the holdouts to sign the agreement. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 297, file 3202; Province, Oct. 2, 22, 1909, Nov. 1, 1909; News-Advertiser, Oct. 2, 1909, Nov. 2, 1909; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 7, 1909; Western Wage Earner, Jan. 1910, p. 7; July 1910, p. 6.

102. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, April 17, 1913. Nothing is known about the IWW's organization work among tailors. The Journeymen Tailors Union changed its name in 1913 in a bid

hour day succeeded at twenty-three shops by May, but the largest shop in the city succeeded in defeating the union in a strike in August and September.¹⁰³ The union was weakened in the pre-war depression, and the conditions of tailors deteriorated badly.¹⁰⁴ Non-unionized workers again predominated in collective action.¹⁰⁵

Tailors failed to recover in the 1916-1919 period, and were definitely not radicals in 1918 and 1919. The union supported the entry

to organize all clothing workers, including garment workers. See Stowell, Tailors, pp. 102-03.

103. The strike occurred because the Western Cloak and Suit Company refused to reduce its hours of work unless two non-union competitors did likewise. At the start of the strike, the ten female strikers were unorganized, and the ten male strikers belonged to three different unions, but the Tailors Industrial Union soon signed up them all. The company imported male strikebreakers from the United States, and hired women through the Salvation Army, and the strikers finally started drifting back to work in late September. After working at the old hours for one day "to establish the fact we had not given in," the company reduced hours to fifty a week, two more than the strikers had demanded. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, file 13(108); Labour Gazette XIV (1913), pp. 261, 266; Province Aug. 11, 1913; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 22, 1913, p. 2, Aug. 29, 1913, p. 1, Sept. 12, 1913, p. 5; B.C. Inspector of Factories, Report, 1913, pp. 26-27.

104. Thirty per cent of the union membership had left town by the end of 1913, and only 25 per cent were employed in the last half of 1914, leaving 100 to 110 members unemployed. Those lucky enough to be working faced wage reductions. VTLC Minutes, Nov. 20, 1913, Aug. 30, 1914, Dec. 7, 21, 1914; PABC, Attorney-General's Correspondence, 1911-18, Roll 66, file 8560-14-14, pp. 8-15, M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, Sept. 4, 1914, pp. 67-73, M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, Dec. 23, 1914.

105. "Trouble" at several shops in 1914 included a strike by five tailors against a wage reduction, and in 1915 nine male and nineteen female tailors at Ladies Guarantee Tailors struck for higher piece wages and other demands. They won, and were organized into the Journeymen Tailors Union in the course of the dispute. VTLC Minutes, March 5, 19, 1914, June 4, 1914, July 16, 1914, Dec. 21, 1914; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 304, file 15(12). The union reverted to its old name in 1914. See Report on Labour Organization, 1914, p. 184.

of labour into politics in 1917, but that was as far as it would go. It withdrew from the VTLC in 1918 in protest at the calling of the Goodwin protest strike, and there is no indication that tailors participated in the general strike in 1919.¹⁰⁶ Like bakers, tailors were a craft in crisis, but they were weak, conservative and exclusivist.

Factory Operatives

The crafts were better organized than factory operatives in consumer goods manufacturing. The latter were weakly and intermittently mobilized, and non-militant until the labour shortages of war capitalism provided the opportunity for union organization and strike action by some. The sources of the weak mobilization of factory operatives were employer repression, the lack of solidarity in large plants where labour was finely divided and craft traditions were absent, and in some factories, the division of labour between men and women. Factory operatives in food manufacturing will be examined first.

Food Manufacturing

The first union of factory operatives in food manufacturing was a Confectionery Workers Union, organized with the assistance of the VTLC

106. The local did not return to membership in the central labour body until 1920, when they joined the International VTLC. VTLC Minutes, April 5, 1917, Aug. 29, 1918; Province, Aug. 20, 1918; VTLC (International) Minutes, Aug. 5, 1920.

and bakers in the summer of 1903. It lasted only until March 1904.¹⁰⁷
 Unions of other factory operatives in food manufacturing followed a
 similar pattern¹⁰⁸

Not until the labour shortages and surge of mobilization of unskilled workers during war capitalism was there renewed organization and strikes by factory operatives in food manufacturing. The first to act were two hundred workers (forty of them women) at the B.C. Sugar Refinery, who struck on April 23, 1917, after one of their number was discharged for circulating a petition asking for a wage increase. The strikers immediately formed a union under the guidance of the VTLC, and demanded union recognition, no discrimination against strikers, and improved wages and hours. The response of the owner, B.T. Rogers, was characteristic: "I don't know what reason the superintendent had for discharging him, but I will stand behind the superintendent until the

 107. The organization of 'girls' who worked in various factories in Vancouver was reported at the end of April 1903, and the Confectionery Workers Union seems to have been the result of this initiative. Province, April 30, 1903; VTLC Minutes, June 4, 1903, Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette V (1905), pp. 882-83. (Bakers were given jurisdiction over candy workers by the APL in 1903. Pink, Labor Unions, p. 26.)

108. Butchers and brewery workers were each organized in 1907, but neither union lasted beyond 1909. VTLC Minutes, May 1, 1907, June 6, 1907, July 18, 1907, Aug. 1, 1907; Labour Gazette VII (1908), pp. 979-83, X (1910), pp. 1002-04. A union of sugar refinery workers may have been organized in April 1911, but no more was heard of it, and it was later reported that any employee trying to organize a union was instantly dismissed. Province, April 21, 1911; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 19, 1912, p. 1. A local of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, organized in April 1911 with over 100 members, failed to last the year. World, March 18, 11, April 15, 22, 1911; Province, April 21, 1911; VTLC Minutes, May 18, 1911.

crack of doom. We will employ and discharge whom we see fit."¹⁰⁹
 Despite considerable public support, and a sympathetic strike by longshoremen, the strikers lacked the resources for a prolonged work stoppage, because they had been working only intermittently in the previous months. Sufficient strikebreakers were found to run the plant during the strike, and so after two months, strikers who had not gotten jobs elsewhere returned to work with a small wage increase, but no union.¹¹⁰

In August 1918, sugar refinery workers were organizing again, and men were fired for joining the union. After protests by the VTLC to the Minister of Labour, the discharged men were reinstated, and by September, the Warehousemen's Union had 141 members at the refinery, which it claimed was 80 per cent organized. The company, now tolerated union members, but remained an open shop, and refused to recognize the union.¹¹¹ The refinery workers were not organized at the time of the

109. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 305, file 17(2); Province April 23, 1917, B.C. Federationist, April 27, 1917, p. 1; News-Advertiser, May 6, 12, 1917. Rogers' intense, even obsessive hostility to unions is explicable on a psychological level by the fact that when the younger Rogers was eighteen, his father was killed by a brick thrown by a striker during a riot at his New Orleans sugar refinery. See M. I. Rogers, B.C. Sugar, pp. 5-7. Despite the largely peaceful character of the 1917 strike, Rogers retained a bodyguard.

110. Province, April 26, 1917, June 24, 1917; B.C. Federationist, April 27, 1917, p. 1, Sept. 28, 1917, p. 1; News-Advertiser, July 24, 1917; Sun, July 25, 1917.

111. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 23, 30, 1918, p. 1, Sept. 6, 1918, p. 1; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 525. Unless the refinery was operating well below capacity, the assertion of 80 per cent organization was an exaggeration, because the plant employed 300 in 1916 and 1919.

Goodwin protest strike at the beginning of August 1918, and so were not participants. In 1919, their support for the radical movement was hesitant. The Warehousemen's Union voted heavily in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3), but how many of those votes were by sugar refinery workers is unknown. In the 1919 general strike, all of the 225 male workers were reported to have struck on the second day, but many of the female employees, who were poorly organized, were said to be reporting for work the next day. When news was received on June 26 that the Winnipeg General Strike had ended, a large number of the strikers at the sugar refinery returned to work, and the plant was operating two days later. After that date, the sugar refinery workers drop from sight.¹¹²

Unlike sugar refinery workers, packinghouse workers were already unionized when they went out on their first strike. Butchers in retail stores and packinghouses were organized in September 1917, and the union grew rapidly.¹¹³ On November 9, they struck at Burns in Vancouver and Swift's in New Westminster, for a 10 per cent wage increase and a reduction in hours from ten to eight. The 120 workers at Burns reached a settlement the same day, but it took 50 workers at Swift's five more days to win the wage increase and nine hours a day obtained at the former. The sources of the strikers' success lay in their strong organization, and in the support of skilled retail meat cutters, who

112. Province, June 5, 26, 1919; Sun, June 5, 29, 1919.

113. Local 643 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen gained over 200 members in Vancouver, New Westminster and district by the end of the month.

threatened to strike if the companies introduced strikebreakers at the packing plants.¹¹⁴ They won acceptance of their union schedule by all employers in 1918, despite the competition of Asian workers in packinghouses and stores.¹¹⁵

Butchers and meat cutters played an active role in the OBU agitation and general strikes of 1919.¹¹⁶ They voted two to one in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3), and were also reported to have voted in favor of the Vancouver general strike. Butchers and meat cutters at Burns' packing plant and retail shops walked out on June 4, and were joined by workers at Swift's Sapperton plant the next day.¹¹⁷ The over

114. The strikers included 165 men and 14 women. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 21, 28, 1917, p. 1, Oct. 19, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 2, 23, 30, 1917, p. 1; Province, Nov. 3, 9, 10, 15, 1917; Sun, Nov. 12; PAC; RG 27, Vol. 305, file 17(28). On the international union's wartime expansion, see Brody, Butcher Workmen, pp. 75-83.

115. Swift's even agreed to pay Chinese workers union wages. B.C. Federationist, March 8, 1918, p. 1, May 3, 1918, p. 1. Swift's was also attempting to produce the "intense loyalty" that its management said existed at its other plants because of its share purchase plan, but it had not had the desired effects in B.C. Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 321-25. The plan had been in operation elsewhere since 1906. See Brody, Butcher Workmen, p. 61.

116. There is no information on participation by packinghouse workers in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike. Their vote on participation in the proposed general strike for Duncan Kerr was tied (Table 1-1), and in July, the union's VTLC delegate thought that members would support a strike in sympathy with BCER strikers. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918, July 7, 1918.

117. The latter were outside five mile radius of the Vancouver strike call, but struck because the plant was supplying meat to Vancouver. Meat supplies were not cut off in Vancouver, however, as Burns stayed open with non-strikers and foremen, and Swift's was able to ship supplies on hand when the strike began. The large meat markets were closed by the meat cutters' strike, but the small owner-operated shops (which were the majority) stayed open.

100 striking butchers and meat cutters stayed on strike until the Winnipeg strike ended.¹¹⁸ After the general strike, some members of the union must have joined the OBU's Food Supply Unit, but the International remained in existence, joined the new VTLC in August,¹¹⁹ and reported better conditions at the two packinghouses in October. It appears that the International whittled away at OBU support, particularly in other industries.¹²⁰

Clothing and Shoe Manufacturing

Factory operatives in non-perishable consumer manufacturing were also weakly organized and non-militant, and even less radical than operatives in food factories. Garment workers were not organized until May 1906, when a tiny, slow-growing local of the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) was formed.¹²¹ Like tailors, garment workers promoted the union label, in order, a woman organizer for the UGWA stated, to "foster the spirit of Unionism in the homes, for

118. The union formally ended the strike on June 31. Sun, June 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 19, 27, 29, 1919; World, June 4, 12, 19, 1919; Province, June 20, 23, 26, 27, 28, 1919, July 2, 1919. In New Westminster, meat cutters joined the general strike when it began on June 19 (packinghouse workers having already struck), but as in Vancouver, most butcher shops stayed open. Sun, June 3, 9, 20, 23, 25, 28, 1919; British Columbian, June 6, 19, 25, 1919; Province, June 12, 21, 1919; World, June 25, 1919.

119. Province, July 30, 1919; VTLC (International) Minutes, Aug. 31, 1919, Oct. 16, 1919.

120. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1906, June 6, 1907, B.C. Federationist, Jan 6, 1912, p. 1. In her article on women's unions in Vancouver, Rosenthal confuses the two unions of tailors and garment workers, in fact they were separate organizations enrolling different kinds of workers "Union Maids," p. 45.

It was useless for the men to talk unionism and their wives to fight it through their purchasing power being spent on Non-union goods."¹²¹ The strategy was even less successful for garment workers than it had been for tailors: the union experienced many organizational problems, and never established a secure hold in the industry.¹²² Even during the war capitalist boom, garment workers were not militant, and like tailors, they stayed largely outside the radical movement, although forty joined the Goodwin protest strike in 1918. In the 1919 general strike, the thirty-two to forty-two members of the UGWA joined the strike for only a day, if at all.¹²³ As might be expected, they voted overwhelmingly against joining the OBU (Table 1-3), and were one of the first unions to

121. The explicit alliance between union and manufacturers which this strategy entailed was shown in a series of laudatory articles in the labour press on local companies using the union label. Province, May 21, 1909; VTLC Minutes, May 20, 1909; B.C. Federationist, April 3, 1914, p. 6; Jan. 19, 1917, p. 6.

122. Union membership had risen to 100 in 1909, but it was down to 20 in 1911, and the VTLC had to help it resolve internal problems in 1912. At the end of 1913, there were still only 35 in the local. In 1916, there were only two non-union shops in the city, but in 1919, only two out of sixteen shops were union. See Western Wage Earner, May 1909, p. 5; VTLC Minutes, March 21, 1912, April 18, 1912, Nov. 21, 1912, Dec. 7, 1916; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 16, 1912, p. 1, April 20, 1912, p. 1, Jan. 30, 1914, p. 2, April 5, 1918, p. 1; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 460-62. Part of the difficulty appears to have been that the union was only able to mobilize young women, but the labour force in the industry was mostly older than twenty-five (see above, page 429).

123. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918; Province, Aug. 2, 1918; June 3, 1919; Sun, June 5, 1919; World, June 5, 1919. Garment workers were not on the list of unions on strike in B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8.

join the new VTLC 124

In the boot and shoe factory, workers did not organize until the war capitalist boom, when, during a strike, they decided to form a local of the Boot and Shoe Workers of America.¹²⁵ The strike had started on November 16, 1916, over demands by forty-one male and nineteen female shoe workers at J. Leckie and Company's factory in Vancouver for a 20 per cent increase in their daily wage.¹²⁶ The opportunity for a strike was present, because the labour market was tight, and Leckie's was working on a urgent boot contract for the Navy. Forty-five piece workers stayed on the job, however, and so after six days the strikers agreed to return to work, under the old conditions, until December 31, at which time they would receive a bonus and wage increase corresponding

124. VTLC(International) Minutes, Aug. 7, 1919. The garment workers' leader, Helena Gutteridge, was a prominent (and by no means conservative) organizer and strong opponent of the OBU.

125. Craft workers were the first to be organized in the leather working trades. In 1903, workers at saddleries and harness shops formed a local of the United Brotherhood of Leather Workers, and the radical American Labor Union organized shoemakers in repair shops. The latter dissolved in 1904, but the leather workers' union persisted until at least 1911, when a losing fight for shorter hours led to its dissolution. On leather workers, see: VTLC Minutes, Jan. 1, 1903; Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 674-79, 1277, VII (1907), p. 1463. On shoemakers: Province, May 6, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 674-79, V (1905), pp. 881-85. On the strikes in 1910 and 1911, see: News-Advertiser, April 21, 1910; Western Wage Earner, April 1910, p. 9, May 1910, p. 8, Oct. 1910, p. 7; British Columbian, May 3, 1910; VTLC Minutes, March 17, 1910, April 7, 21, 1910, Oct. 6, 1910, April 20, 1911; World, March 25, 1911, April 15, 29, 1911.

126. The demand for higher pay arose because day workers were earning practically the same wage as in 1912 (after reductions made in 1914 were restored in 1916), but the cost of living was considerably higher.

to any improvements in productivity.¹²⁷ After the strike, the union grew slowly, but succeeded in making Leckie's an all-union shop by May 1918.¹²⁸ In the radical events of 1918-19, their role was limited to participation in the Goodwin protest strike, after which they were locked out an extra day while Leckie awaited an apology for their walkout. There is no record of a vote by the union on the OBU, and it was not on a list of unions participating in the Vancouver general strike. In August, they helped form the new International VTLC to fight the OBU.¹²⁹ Like the factory operatives in garment manufacturing, boot and shoe workers were not radicals.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter has shown the effects of capital accumulation, working-class social reproduction, and experiences of strategic interaction on workers' mobilization and collective action. The low-wage and mechanization strategies of capital accumulation led to the degradation of crafts (especially in baking and clothing

127. At the beginning of 1917 they in fact received a ten per cent wage increase, and a reduction in hours. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 304, file 16(23); B.C. Federationist, Nov. 17, 24, 1916, p. 1, Jan. 5, 1917, p. 3; Province, Nov. 17, 18, 22, 1916.

128. The union had seventy-five members in September 1917. Several repair shops were also signed to union conditions in 1918. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 21, 1917, p. 1, May 17, 1918, p. 8; VTLC Minutes, May 1, 1919.

129. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918; July 7, 1918; Province, Aug. 5, 6, 1918; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8; VTLC (International) Minutes, Aug. 7, 21, 1919.

manufacturing), and the constitution of wages and hours as objects of contention. Perhaps more important for mobilization and collective action was the source of competition for local manufacturers: if it came from outside Vancouver, an alliance between workers and capitalists around a union label strategy was often possible, but if competition was from local non-union firms, employer hostility made such an alliance impossible, and mobilization by workers was repressed.

The competitive position of local manufacturers interacted with workers' social reproduction cycles to produce a number of similarities and differences between factory operatives, relatively secure crafts, and crafts in crisis. Because they were able to unite with local capital against cheap imports, cigarmakers and printers were the strongest, most successful trades. Paradoxically, they were also the most radical of the craft workers in consumer goods manufacturing, although that radicalism was lukewarm compared to workers in other industries, or even compared to some factory operatives in consumer goods manufacturing. Radicalism and union strength were related for these workers, but their alliance with local employers moderated it.

In contrast to printers and cigarmakers, bakers and tailors were crafts in crisis suffering from the competition of cheaper labour in the Vancouver market, and unable to resist the continuing degradation of their skills and craft controls. They were able to organize small, shops, whose proprietors were not far from being journeymen themselves, and who depended on craft skills more than larger shops. Mechanization or the sub-division of labour had gone farther in the latter, and unions

were nearly always strongly opposed. Yet bakers and tailors were not radicals in 1918-19; very much to the contrary, they conservatively stuck with the form of union organization that had been unable to prevent them from falling into their predicament, as if they were afraid to risk something new. In consumer goods manufacturing, the crisis of the craftsman was not a basis for radicalism.

Among factory operatives, differences and similarities followed other lines. Factory operatives had difficulty organizing in both branches of consumer goods manufacturing. Not until the exceptional conditions of the war capitalist boom, when a tight labour market provided the opportunity, and a fast-rising cost of living the incentive for collective action, were most of the unions in this industry organized and active. Even then, the sexual division of labour constrained mobilization: the most strongly organized workers were male packinghouse workers, sugar refinery workers, and (to a lesser extent) boot and shoe workers. In contrast, women factory workers in both branches were weakly mobilized. For example, the predominantly female garment workers' union was weak and non-militant. The reasons for this lay partly in the place of wage work in the life cycles of women workers (as we have seen, most were young, and turnover was high), and partly in the lack of interest of male unionists in organizing women.¹³⁰ The roles of factory operatives in the radical movement of 1918-19 depended

130. For the former, see above, page 421; for an exaggerated version of the latter view, see M. Campbell, "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920."

on whether they were in the food or non-perishable branch of consumer goods manufacturing. The strongest support for the general strikes and the OBU came from operatives in food manufacturing, while those in non-perishable consumer goods were non-radical. The source of this difference might be that garment workers and boot and shoe workers were committed to a non-militant union label strategy for organizing and winning their objectives, while sugar refinery workers and butchers followed more militant strategies.

The experiences of strategic interaction also affected the course of collective action in consumer goods manufacturing. As in most industries where unskilled workers were employed, the war capitalist boom represented an unprecedented opportunity for factory operatives and degraded crafts like bakers to organize and strike for higher pay. Previously, the repressiveness of large employers, especially those facing local competition, had hindered mobilization and defeated strikes. Newly organized factory operatives such as sugar refinery workers and packinghouse workers became radicals under these conditions, and under the influence of power achieved through militant action. The mobilization and power of bakers, tailors, and garment workers remained weak (or even declined) and they did not become radical. Printers and cigarmakers, who remained well-organized and powerful, displayed some signs of radicalism, although neither supported the OBU. This is not surprising, since their craft organizations were, for the moment, serving their interests well. It is surprising that bakers and tailors did not support the OBU, since neither was gaining much from craft

organization. They seem to have been afraid of losing the limited power they had achieved through their craft unions. It appears that power achieved through new organization and militant strike action was conducive to radicalism. Those who did not strike, or who were weakly organized (such as women workers) were not as radical as more combative workers.

Although some trades and groups of factory operatives in consumer goods manufacturing were more radical than others, in general, workers in this industrial sector were followers rather than leaders of radicalism in the Vancouver area. The reason for this undoubtedly goes back to the alliances which could be formed between employers and unions following the union label strategy so prevalent in consumer goods manufacturing.¹³¹ This has important implications for the explanation of the western labour revolt. Because workers in consumer goods manufacturing were only a small fraction of the working class in Vancouver, their lack of militancy and non-radicalism had little effect, but in eastern Canada, where they were more numerous, they would have dampened radical impulses emanating from crafts in crisis;¹³² in the west, in contrast, the presence of frontier labourers amplified those impulses.

131. Even bakers, who did not push the union label like some others, allied with the small shops where they were most strongly organized, as their objection to the single standard loaf demonstrated.

132. See Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," p. 68.

Chapter 10

EXTERNAL TRANSPORTATION:

"some of the shipping interests are as anxious to stop any arrangement as the most radical of the men."

Capital accumulation in the external transportation sector always played a central role in the economic development of Vancouver and vicinity. From its establishment as the "terminal city" for the new transcontinental railway, Vancouver was politically and economically dominated by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), which continued to be a major employer and property-owner after 1900.¹ Furthermore, as the CPR terminus and a center of wholesale commerce, Vancouver was also an important and growing port for both coastal and deep-sea shipping.² The more than two thousand workers directly employed in the external transportation industry were one of the most contentious groups of

1. See N. MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900."

2. Province, Jan. 19, 1907, Sept. 21, 1907; L. Stevens, "Rise of the Port of Vancouver, British Columbia."

workers in the area, as they struggled against the large transportation companies.

10.1 Capital Accumulation

Unlike most of the manufacturing industries in Vancouver, the external transportation industry was dominated by large, highly capitalized, and more or less monopolistic corporations. Although its monopoly declined throughout the 1900-1919 period, the CPR remained paramount in all three branches of external transportation: rail transport, the waterfront, and shipping. Because of its large size, monopoly power in the local economy, and bureaucratization, the CPR had the resources to resist workers' demands, and to experiment with new methods of work organization and managerial control. This discretionary power of CPR management over its employees was the source of objects of contention in transportation.³

The main objects of contention between the CPR and its employees derived from the company's effort to control its labour force through a combination of stern paternalism and labour force segmentation.⁴

3. The CPR was not immune from conditions such as the state of markets for its services, of which wheat shipments from the prairies were of major importance: for example, crop failure on the prairies in 1900 led it to lay off shop employees in Vancouver. Province, Aug. 1, 1900.

4. Some of the ideas in this and the next paragraph are drawn from J.H. Tuck, "W.C. Van Horne and the Foreign Emissaries: the CPR Trainmen's and Conductors' Strike of 1892" (hereafter, "CPR Trainmen's and

Paternalism took the form of company benefits, such as pensions and medical attendance funds, but it was combined with a determination to crush any rebellion against managerial authority.⁵ Only if the workers were powerful enough to force the company to bargain collectively, and did not try to spread the rebellion to other sectors of the workforce, would the company deal with unions. Consequently, much of the contention involving the CPR concerned workers' mobilization, or union security and solidarity issues.

In addition to paternalism, the CPR followed a divide and rule policy to maintain control over its vast and diverse labour force, as would be expected from the 'radical' literature on segmented labour markets.⁶ Divisions between permanent (salaried) employees and hourly employees, between geographical divisions of the railway, and between different occupational groups were deliberately created and fostered by the company.⁷ As we will see, these divisions were barriers to the mobilization and collective action of railway workers.

In the branches of external transportation other than the

Conductors' Strike").

5. On CPR benefits, see Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 401, 552-54, XVIII (1910), p. 28; Province, Dec. 26, 1902, Nov. 4, 1912; Independent, March 8, 1902.

6. See, for example, M. Reich, D. Gordon, and R. Edwards, "A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation."

7. An IDIA board investigating salary differentials between some CPR freight department employees found that "the work done by these two classes is in the main identical, the differentiation being apparently introduced because it is desirable, from the company's standpoint, to have it exist." Labour Gazette XVIII (1910), p. 27.

railway, less is known about capital accumulation, but the CPR still appears as a dominant presence. On the waterfront and in coastal shipping, however, corporate paternalism was absent; because of the nature of the work or the labour market, stevedores and shipowners apparently found it neither desirable nor necessary to encourage employee loyalty in that way.

Two conditions shaped the organization of capital on the waterfront. First, in the twentieth century era of fast steamships with regular runs, shipowners tried to limit the time boats spent in port to a minimum. Cargoes varied, so the work of loading and unloading could not be routinized, and the speed of longshore work depended largely on the teamwork of longshore gangs and their skill in stowing cargo safely and effectively. Second, because of the intermittent arrival of vessels to be unloaded and loaded, waterfront work was irregular. As a result of these conditions, shipping companies generally contracted the unloading and loading of vessels to stevedores, who were described by one longshoreman as "middlemen or small capitalists, who supply foremen acquainted with the wealth-producing qualities of the workers, keep the time and handle the payrolls."⁸

In shipping itself, even less is known about conditions of capital accumulation than in the other branches of external transport. The coastal steamship service between the mainland and Vancouver Island,

8. B.C. Federationist, April 13, 1917, p. 1. Sometimes the shipping company hired longshoremen and other dock workers directly, but it was undoubtedly more productive if there was a stevedore on the scene, who knew the workers.

and up and down the Pacific Coast was the most important for our purposes. Three large companies dominated the coastwise traffic: the CPR, the Union Steamship Company (USS), and in the 1910s, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP).⁹

In conclusion, most workers in external transportation and utilities in the Vancouver area worked directly or indirectly for companies (especially the CPR) with a substantial degree of monopoly power. As a consequence of that power, managements had more discretion in relations with workers than companies under more direct competitive pressures, and perhaps more importantly, they had the resources to resist workers' demands. To understand those demands, we turn to the social reproduction of external transportation workers.

10.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

External transportation was a major employer of labour in the Vancouver area in the early twentieth century. In 1911, over 2000

9. In addition to deep sea shipping, there were also river steamers on the Fraser, operating out of New Westminster, but after the British Columbia Electric Railway interurban line was built, a price war erupted, and the steamers disappeared before World War I. On the latter, see P. Roy, "The British Columbia Electric Railway, 1897-1928: A British Company in British Columbia" (hereafter, *A British Company*), pp. 128-34. The only published histories of coastwise steamship service are anecdotal, and not very useful. See M. Hacking and K. Lamb, *The Princess Story, the History of Canadian Pacific Steamships*; G. Rushton, *Echoes of the Whistle: An Illustrated History of the Union Steamship Company*.

workers, constituting five per cent of all workers in the city of Vancouver, were employed in transportation, and by 1921, the more than 2500 workers in transportation comprised seven per cent of the whole labour force (Table 10-1). They were nearly evenly divided between those employed by railways and those employed in connection with water transportation. Railway workers, sailors, and dock workers formed three separate groupings in terms of interests and group formation, so they will be examined separately.

Railway Workers

Over one thousand railway workers (not including shop trades) resided in the city of Vancouver in 1911 and 1921: about four hundred were in the running trades, a hundred or more in ticket offices and freight handling, and several hundred in track maintenance. The interests and group formation of these railway workers were shaped by the paternalist and segmenting labour policies of the CPR, and by the characteristics of their work. The three groups of railway workers differed in skill, pay and conditions, type of work, and ethnic composition and homogeneity, in ways that were consequential for mobilization and collective action. Since little is known about maintenance-of-way men in Vancouver, we will concentrate here on the contrast between the running trades on the one hand, and freight handlers and clerks on the other.

Locomotive engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen, and other running trades employees were the aristocrats of the railways. Because

Table 10-1

Workers in External Transportation, City of
Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%
STEAM RAILWAYS	1143	52.8	1203	46.3
Agents	125	5.8	71	2.7
Running trades (1)	401	18.5	423	16.3
Section & trackmen	20	0.9	82	3.2
Labourers	386	17.8	287	11.0
Others (2)	211	9.8	340	13.1
SHIPPING	1020	47.2	1395	53.7
Sailors & seamen (3)	719	33.2	643	24.7
Stevedores & longshoremen (4)	263	12.2	599	23.1
Others (5)	38	1.8	153	5.9
TOTAL	2163	100.0	2598	100.0

Sources: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) Baggage men, brakemen & trainmen, conductors, engineers, firemen, yardmen.
 (2) In 1921, bridge & gate tenders, inspectors, porters, stewards, other employees.
 (3) In 1921, sailors & deckhands, engineers, firemen, stewards.
 (4) In 1921, includes warehousemen.
 (5) In 1921, boatmen, canalmen, lock-keepers; firemen; other employees; labourers; agents, canvassers & collectors.

of their specialized training and heavy responsibilities, they were privileged, exclusive, and high status crafts that were definitely not in crisis in the early twentieth century. Consequently, their solidarities were to their individual crafts (and eventually to other running tradesmen); their interests lay in their own conditions, pay, and job security.¹⁰

In contrast to the skilled running trades, freight handlers and clerks were relatively unskilled, and correspondingly low paid, settled urban workers.¹¹ Their work was irregular, and frequently involved long periods of overtime, for which monthly employees were not paid.¹² Wages and working conditions, especially hours, thus dominated their interests. Similar interests were combined with many differences, however: clerks and freight handlers performed different kinds of work, and appeared to belong to different labour markets. For example, most freight handlers were paid by the hour, while most, if not all, clerks were paid by the month, and as permanent employees of the company were

10. See Province, June 18, 1901, on the lack of identification of skilled running tradesmen with unskilled railway workers. There is virtually no information, discovered by this researcher, on running trades workers in Vancouver. Useful background can be found in Tuck, "CPR Trainmen's and Conductors Strike."

11. Freight handlers and clerks in the freight sheds and offices of the CPR in Winnipeg were paid low wages; the same was undoubtedly true in Vancouver. J.H. Tuck, "The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees in Western Canada, 1898-1905" (hereafter "UBRE in Western Canada"), p. 64.

12. Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in British Columbia, Evidence, pp. 547, 583-84, 612, 635-37, 712, 766-68. A billing clerk reported working 28 to 30 hours at a stretch; others often worked 4 or 5 hours overtime a night.

entitled to advantages such as two weeks vacation with pay, a company pension, and some prospect of advancement.¹³ Despite these differences, the interests shared by freight handlers and clerks generated solidarities that crossed the usual boundary between manual and office work.¹⁴

Waterfront Workers

About the same number of water transportation workers as railway workers lived in Vancouver. Because of the growth of shipping in the port, longshoremen and other dock workers were a rapidly growing component of the workforce in that branch (Table 10-1). Two more or less distinct types of work on the waterfront served to divide workers into two groups: longshore work proper (loading and unloading cargo on the ship itself) and dock work (handling cargo between the ship's slings and the freight sheds).¹⁵

13. Labour Gazette, XVIII (1918), pp. 28, 29. A minor difference between clerks and freight handlers was that a few of the former were women: nearly 18 per cent in 1911. 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI. There were no other female railway employees. There is nothing to indicate the presence of ethnic divisions in the freight or office staff, and some evidence points to ethnic homogeneity: e.g., all of the twenty clerks who made statements on overtime work to the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in 1903 had British-sounding names (Evidence, pp. 765-68).

14. See B.C. Federationist, Nov. 16, 1917, p. 1; Province, Nov. 15, 1917; Labour Gazette, XVIII (1918), pp. 28-29.

15. See Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 193; ILWU Local 500 Pensioners, "Man Along the Shore": The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront, As told by Longshoremen Themselves, 1860's - 1975 (hereafter, ILWU, Man Along the Shore), p. 47. To keep terminology consistent, I will refer to the former as 'longshoremen,' and to the latter, who included freight

6

The main influence on the group formation and interests of waterfront workers was the casual labour market: employment was intermittent, and typically the supply of labour power was greater than the demand. Because the demand for workers depended on the arrival of vessels to be unloaded and loaded, employment fluctuated greatly, and waterfront workers were described as living from hand to mouth.¹⁶ Stevedores adjusted their workforces daily, even hourly, with the result that men were alternately overworked and underemployed.¹⁷

Intermittent employment was combined with a system of hiring in which employers picked men from a pool that generally exceeded the number required. "The so-called regular employee never knows when he lines up in the morning whether he will be selected for work amongst the crowd awaiting employment," observed the press committee of the warehousemen's auxiliary in 1917.¹⁸ In the absence of a union, longshoremen and other dock workers were hired through the 'shape-up': when a boat was expected, men lined up at the dock, and were picked for work by the stevedore; those who were not picked went home or to a

handlers and warehousemen, as 'dock workers'.

16 News-Advertiser, Oct. 16, 1912.

17 A lumber handler recalled being sent away after two or three hours work; at other times, longshoremen might work for eighteen hours or more, far beyond what was normal or safe. Paddy McDonagh, who started on the waterfront in 1910, recalled: "I have seen us finish a long job on the North Shore at two in the morning and get ordered for Terminal Dock for a 7:00 AM start. We got overtime for the night work but went back on straight time for the day work, I have often worked 24 hour shifts." ILWU, Man Along the Shore, pp. 25, 38-40.

18. Province, Aug. 4, 1917.

nearby cafe.¹⁹ In such a system, employers naturally picked men they knew and whose work they liked, so longshoremen often felt that work was unfairly distributed.²⁰

The existence of a crowd awaiting employment depended on two conditions: the relatively unskilled nature of the work, and the availability of a reserve army of unemployed workers. Longshoring proper had its tricks of the trade, so that experienced men could work faster and better than inexperienced ones, and 'knights of the hook' displayed considerable 'craft' pride, but other dock work such as trucking, piling, and warehouse freight handling was less skilled. In general, the main requirement for dock work was strength and endurance, and as the mecca of unemployed workers from logging, railway construction, and other forms of seasonal work in B.C., Vancouver was generally well-supplied with men who had the requisite qualities.²¹ For the longshoremen employed regularly on the docks, it followed that

19. The system was described by McDonagh: "When I started [in 1910] you had to line up at the ship to get a job -- no matter what time the ship came in, five in the morning or one in the morning. I have lined up for the Frisco Boat at 1:30 in the morning, not making a job, and told to come back at 7:00 AM, on the chance that somebody would lay off." ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, p. 29; cf. pp. 33, 34, 38, 51, for similar accounts, and J.S. Woodsworth, *On the Waterfront*, pp. 7, 12-13.

20. *News-Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 1917; W. Finley, "Workers' Control and Control of Workers: The Case of West Coast Longshoremen" (hereafter, "West Coast Longshoremen").

21. On the skills of longshoring, see ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, pp. 34-35; Woodsworth, *On the Waterfront*, pp. 8-11; Finley, "West Coast Longshoremen," pp. 51-52. Lumberhandlers took particular pride in loading long timbers ("sticks") into tight spots in ship's holds. ILWU, op. cit., pp. 24-26, 44, 55.

protection from the competition of this reserve army was a primary interest and object of contention with employers

The labour process and labour market also shaped group formation on the waterfront. The 'craft' pride of longshoremen in the skilled performance of exacting and arduous work clearly made for camaraderie.²² This was reinforced by the development of specialized gangs of longshoremen who regularly performed the same kinds of work together. Specialized lumber-handling gangs emerged as early as the turn of the century, and by 1915, regular gangs existed for general cargo, for the sugar refinery, for the Empress liners, for cement, etc.²³ The cooperation among gang members necessary for loading and unloading safely and quickly was also a source of solidarity

The organization of work also constituted objects of contention. Their skills and work organization gave longshoremen an autonomy in the performance of their jobs rare among workers who were not craftsmen, which employers threatened at their peril.²⁴ This job autonomy depended on the state of the casual labour market, however. In

22. See ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, pp. 55-57

23. One gang of ten to fifteen men worked each of a ship's hatches ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, p. 40, 74; Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp 124-27; Finley, "West Coast Longshoremen," p. 52.

24. Anyone interfering in longshoremen's work was strongly resented, since they felt perfectly capable of doing the job, and management or supervisors generally were not. For example, Ed Long, a foreman between 1914 and 1916, recalled an incident in which "one of the guys came up to me and said there was a guy down there (in the hold) hollering at them and if I didn't get him out of there they were going to quit." ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, p. 36.

one longshoremen's colorful words, "competition for jobs is occasionally as keen as a two-edged Toledo sword, while at others the longshoremen are satiated with work like a boy with delicacies at a picnic and are as independent as the Swiss republic." When the labour market was favorable, longshoremen took advantage of the casual labour market to take a day off when they felt like it, much as loggers would leave their camps for a spree in Vancouver,²⁵ or to engage in spontaneous collective actions.²⁶

The longshoring labour market was another source of solidarity. When hiring occurred through the shape-up, the requirement of showing up at the docks at any hour of day or night encouraged regular contact among longshoremen and other dock workers, and limited contact with workers in other occupations, because of the hours.²⁷ When a union controlled the labour market, solidarity was strengthened by the reproduction of social contacts among longshoremen, and the reduction in competition for jobs. For example, in 1901, longshoremen were supplied to stevedores through a 'rotary list': each man in the union took turns at the available jobs, going to the bottom of the list once he had

25. See B.C. Federationist, March 16, 1917, p. 6.

26. For example, on the night of February 15, 1909, a regular coaling gang refused to work in heavy rains, and so were locked out and replaced by Japanese workers the next day. Another spontaneous strike broke out when longshoremen who were unloading cement demanded and won the same rate of pay as the regular cement gang, instead of the general cargo rate they had been receiving. Province, April 2, 1912.

27. See Lipset, Trow and Coleman, Union Democracy, p. 132, on longshoremen's "occupational community."

worked five hours. After 1912, there was a union hiring hall, where men would congregate and be sent out to jobs. Non-union men formed a "sidewalk gang" waiting outside for leftovers after all the union men had been hired. For them, the same conditions of group formation applied as for longshoremen when there was no union.²⁸

Sources of solidarity are also sources of division for those outside its limits, and the stratification of waterfront workers was a potential source of conflict. The skills and organization of longshoremen proper set them apart from the reserve army of workers who did trucking and shed work on the docks.²⁹ In 1917, longshoremen were described as married, long-term residents of the city, and consequently were settled urban workers.³⁰ They were something of a waterfront elite, getting the best jobs when the port was busy, and taking the poorer ones when it was not. Freight handlers and warehousemen, in contrast, suffered more from labour market competition, low wages, and irregular employment, and were consequently less settled than longshoremen. They formed "a considerable part of the floating population of the city," and accordingly can be considered frontier

28. See Labour Gazette II (1901), p. 208; Woodsworth, On the Waterfront, p. 13; ILWU, Man Along the Shore, pp. 34-35.

29. This stratification was not solely the creation of employers; worker organizations also contributed to its formation. This reinforces the general point that class formation cannot be understood in functionalist Marxist terms. See Rubery, "Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organization, and Low Pay."

30. News-Advertiser, July 31, 1917.

labourers.³¹

Stratification on bases other than skill do not appear to have been serious sources of division among waterfront workers, even though special gangs were often ethnically distinct: lumber-handling gangs were mostly native Indians, and coaling gangs at one point were mostly Italians. General cargo gangs were mainly 'British', but every gang included workers of many ethnicities.³²

Sailors

About 700 seamen formed the final major group of external transport workers in the Vancouver area (Table 10-1). They were a diverse lot that included ship's masters and mates (whose workplace authority placed them on the margins of the working class, if not outside it altogether), skilled and responsible marine engineers who ran the ship's boilers, marine firemen and oilers who assisted them, stewards and other service personnel on passenger boats, and finally ordinary seamen or deckhands. They sailed on a variety of vessels, from large Empress liners and other deep-sea ships, to moderate-sized vessels of the coasting trade, small river steamers that plied the Fraser River, and the mosquito fleet of tugs and tow-boats that swarmed over Burrard Inlet and the surrounding area. The most important for our purposes

31. Sun, June 17, 1912.

32. Knight, *Indians at Work*, p. 124; ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, pp. 13, 27, 41; Woodsworth, *On the Waterfront*, p. 5. Knight (op. cit., p. 127) states that "employers attempted to maintain a competition between racially distinct crews," but he offers no evidence or examples.

were the crews of coastal boats.³³

Most coastal sailors were deckhands, stewards, and engine-room employees, at the bottom of the hierarchy of skill and authority. On board ship, it appears that long hours and unhygienic living conditions were common.³⁴ On shore, sailors were additionally subject to exploitation by 'crimps', or boarding-house keepers who controlled their employment, and quickly separated the sailor from his money, before returning him to sea (after receiving "blood money" from the ship's captain if the labour market was tight).³⁵

Sailors were migratory, frontier labourers, who frequently

33. The crews of the large ocean-going ships are beyond the scope of this study, because they were generally not Vancouver residents, and spent very little time in port there, although on occasion they did engage in striking displays of solidarity with Vancouver workers. E.g. in the 1919 general strike, the crew of the Canadian-Australian liner "Makura" refused to allow strikebreaking longshoremen to unload frozen mutton from the ship. *World*, June 11, 1919. The social reproduction cycles of deckhands on river steamers on the Fraser were much the same as those of seamen on coastal boats. They worked long hours for little pay, slept on straw on board, and were an easily replaced migrant workforce. Deck crews were small (about eight men), and ethnic rivalry was sometimes fostered between white and Indian crews. They were a small, and not very significant part of the local working class. See Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp. 104-06, and Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story: the History of Canadian Pacific Steamships*, pp. 147-48.

34. See *Province*, Feb. 4, 1910, Nov. 10, 11, 18, 1910; *Labour Gazette* XI (1910), pp. 652-53; *B.C. Federationist*, Jan. 23, 1914, p. 2, April 5, 1918, p. 1. Regular 15 hour days, seven day weeks, inadequate washroom facilities, water washing into bunks, harsh discipline, and poor food were some of the conditions endured by the sailors.

35. Crimping was generally more serious a problem in deep-sea shipping than in the coastal traffic, but it was a problem in Vancouver until about 1910 nonetheless. See *News-Advertiser*, April 1, 4, 7, 1909; *Western Wage Earner*, June 1909, p. 16; *Province*, March 19, 1910, June 25, 1910; on the problem in general, see P.S. Taylor, *The Sailors' Union of the Pacific*, pp. 26-29.

alternated between sailing and logging.³⁶ Conditions were very similar in the two occupations, except that the pay was better in logging, especially in summer. As in logging, the labour market was the key to the sailors' conditions, for when labour was scarce, steamship companies made concessions to their workers, but when it was plentiful, they reverted to atrocious conditions.³⁷ Controlling that labour market, and improving shipboard conditions appear to have been the main interests of sailors.

The isolation of the work, and subjection to the authority of the ship's master were favorable to solidarity among sailors. In addition, nearly all were men in 1918, and four fifths were of Canadian, British, or American origin. There was a significant minority of Asian, mostly Chinese, workers (nearly one eighth), however.³⁸ Despite these favorable conditions for collective action, the capacity of sailors to act on their grievances was legally limited. Once they had signed ship's articles, they could forfeit wages owing them and even be charged with desertion if they ceased work.

At the other end of the hierarchy of skill, authority, and

36. Thus institutions such as the Strathcona Institute catered to both occupational groups. See Province, Nov. 27, 1911.

37. Western Wage Earner, July 1910, p. 5 (according to W.S. Burns, business agent of the Sailors Union of the Pacific). Cf. Taylor, The Sailors' Union of the Pacific, p. 162.

38. B.C., Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industry"; coast shipping included passenger and freight steamships, tug-boats, and river navigation. Less than one per cent of workers in coast shipping were women in 1918.

responsibility from sailors were masters, mates, and engineers. They were in an ambiguous or contradictory class location: they were employees, but status privileges and workplace authority formed a boundary between them and other ship workers. Little else is, or need be known about them: their contradictory class position affected their interests and group formation. Like other employees they were subject to pressures deriving from tendencies of capital accumulation, but their position in the division of labour ensured that their mobilization and collective action would diverge from that of other workers.³⁹

To summarize, workers in external transportation were employed in three different branches: railways, the waterfront, and shipping. In each branch, they were further divided in their interests and group formation, primarily on lines of skill. On the railways, the running trades were marked off from the less skilled clerks and freight handlers. On the waterfront, longshoremen were more skilled than the other waterfront workers, although compared to the railway running trades they were unskilled workers. Finally, the masters, mates, and engineers on coastal boats were sharply marked off from deckhands and other sailors.

 39. On contradictory class locations, see E.O. Wright, "The Class Structure of Advanced Capitalist Societies."

10.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

Mobilization and collective action by workers in each of the three branches of external transportation proceeded independently most of the time, but similarities existed between them. The less skilled workers in each branch were generally weakly, discontinuously mobilized, and their organizations and collective actions generally met with repressive employer responses made possible by the latter's monopoly power.

Railway Workers

The mobilization and collective action of railway workers can best be understood by comparing the skilled running trades with the freight handlers and clerks employed by the CPR.⁴⁰ The former, who were secure crafts, were well organized and non-militant; the latter, who were settled urban workers, were weakly organized, and when the opportunity was present, militant.

The running trades were the only unionized workers outside the railway shops in 1900. They were not involved in any strikes, and they held aloof from the rest of the organized working class in Vancouver. For example, they never affiliated with the VTLC, nor did they come to

40. Railway shop workers have already been considered in connection with metal manufacturing. See Ch. 7 above.

the aid of other railway workers in the area. The running trades had fought and won their battles for union recognition in the nineteenth century, and had seemingly made their peace with the CPR in the early twentieth century.⁴¹

Except for the shop crafts, CPR freight handlers and clerks were the only significant source of strike activity on the railways in early twentieth century Vancouver.⁴² Union organization and strikes by freight handlers and clerks were restricted to the two periods of intense working-class mobilization and collective action in Vancouver: 1900-03, and 1916-19. The freight handlers, as might be expected, were the only group of railway workers to respond positively to the radical trends moving the Vancouver working class in 1918 and 1919, although they did so in a half-hearted way.

CPR freight handlers in Vancouver were organized and militant as early as the beginning of 1900.⁴³ A local organization called the United Brotherhood of Freight Handlers was reported in January 1901, and

41. See J.H. Tuck, "Canadian Railways and Unions in the Running Trades, 1865-1914."

42. The only strikes not in connection with freight handlers and clerks were a nation-wide strike of CPR maintenance of way men (trackmen) in 1901, in which only about thirty workers in Vancouver were affected, and two short strikes over wages by about twenty-five CPR telegraph messengers in 1915 and 1916. On the trackmen's strike, see Labour Gazette II (1901), pp. 63, 173, 175; World, June 15, 18, 1901. On the messengers' strikes, see B.C. Federationist, March 12, 1915, p. 1; Sun, March 8, 1915; News-Advertiser, March 7, 1915; Province, Aug. 30, 31, 1916.

43. A union was mentioned in connection with a one-day strike on Feb. 21, 1900, to stop the use of Japanese strikebreakers in a longshoremen's strike. Province, Feb. 21, 1900.

In June 1902, its sixty-two members in Vancouver won a one-day strike against the CPR for union recognition and a wage increase.⁴⁴ Later that year, about 200 clerks and freight handlers joined the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE).⁴⁵ The establishment in Vancouver of Division 81 of the UBRE set the stage for what has twice been called "the first great sympathy strike in B.C."⁴⁶

The circumstances leading up to the strike indicate that the CPR deliberately forced it on the UBRE in order to destroy the union. The CPR carried on a "secret warfare" against the UBRE in the months

44. Independent, Jan. 19, 1901, p. 3, June 28, 1902; Province, June 23, 1902; Labour Gazette III (1902), p. 29.

45. The UBRE was an American industrial union, with the ambition of uniting all railway workers in a single body, but its sole successes were in organizing previously unorganized workers. On the UBRE, see Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada,"; and P. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. 3, pp. 424-25. On the organization of local freight handlers, see News-Advertiser, Nov. 18, 19, 1902; Independent, Nov. 22, 29, 1902, March 7, 1903.

46. Phillips, No Power Greater, p. 39; Schwantes, Radical Heritage, p. 145. The events of the strike have finally been given definitive treatment in Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada," so only the main lines need to be indicated here. Previous discussions all gave an account of the UBRE strike, related miners' strikes on Vancouver Island, and the subsequent, inquisitorial Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in the Province of B.C., but analysis of the strike itself, especially the dimensions of and reasons for its widespread support, and the reasons for and consequences of its defeat, has been deficient. For general accounts (of varying quality), see Phillips, op. cit., pp. 39-41; Robin, Radical Politics, pp. 70-74; McCormack, Reformers, pp. 44-48; Schwantes, op. cit., pp. 142-50; C. Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959, pp. 100-05; Jamieson, Times of Trouble, pp. 112-21. On the miners' strike, see A.D. Orr "The Western Federation of Miners and the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in 1903 with Special Reference to the Vancouver Island Coal Miners' Strike." For the role of the Deputy Minister of Labour, see H. Ferns and B. Ostry, The Age of Mackenzie King, pp. 59-64, and Craven, An Impartial Umpire, pp. 246-250.

preceding the strike. it attempted to intimidate members, transferred leaders to the east, infiltrated the organization through its secret service, and recruited strikebreakers in eastern Canada.⁴⁷ Knowing that the union planned to build up its strength in western Canada before any confrontation, the CPR used its resources and monopoly power to force the issue while the union was still limited mainly to Vancouver.⁴⁸ The company had reluctantly learned to live with craft unions in the shops and running trades, but it was clearly not prepared to countenance a radical organization of unskilled workers which challenged the established pattern of labour relations.⁴⁹

The strike began on February 27, 1903, when approximately 150 clerks walked out to protest the CPR's refusal to reinstate a clerk suspended for a minor breach of discipline.⁵⁰ A widening series of sympathetic strikes began almost immediately: twenty-five car repairers apparently associated with the UBRE walked out in sympathy the same day,

47. Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, pp. 556, 579ff., 619, 764ff., Report, pp. 6, 9-11; Province, March 3, 10, 1903.

48. The UBRE actually forbade any strikes before there were 100,000 members on a railway system. Although this was used against the union to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the strike, it actually shows that it struck in desperation. See Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Report, p. 15.

49. The CPR was also following its longstanding practice of not granting union recognition unless the union was strong enough to force it in a strike. See Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada," p. 64; cf. the same claim by a striker in Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 643.

50. Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Report, pp. 11-12, Province, Feb. 27, 1903, March 2, 1903.

conscription was enacted.¹¹³ The following January, members of both the ILA and the Auxilliary of Freight Handlers and Warehousemen voted two to one in favor of a general strike to protest the imprisonment of Duncan Kerr.¹¹⁴ Resolutions turned to action in March, when waterfront workers struck to protest arrests of ILA members by military authorities, on suspicion of draft evasion.¹¹⁵ In August, after Ginger Goodwin was killed by a military policeman, nearly 1000 waterfront workers joined in the one-day general strike, and the longshoremen's hall was one of the main targets of returned soldiers in the ensuing disturbances.¹¹⁶

As in 1918, the longshoremen played a prominent part in the 1919 general strike. They voted overwhelmingly in its favor, and although some "experienced longshoremen" reportedly returned to work after about two weeks, most held firm until the strike was called off on July 3.¹¹⁷

113. The union subsequently endorsed the resignation of ILA delegate Jack Kavanagh from the presidency of the VTLC to protest its failure to object to its former president, J.H. McVety, holding a position on the conscription exemption board.

114. See Table 1-1. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917, June 21, 1917, Oct. 4, 18, 1917; VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918.

115. They declared that the police had no right to interfere with any longshoremen in their work, and let it be understood that they would strike again if there was any more trouble involving the Military Service Act. Sun, March 10, 12, 1918; Province, March 11, 1918; B.C. Federationist, March 15, 1918, p. 1.

116. Province, Aug. 2, 3, 5, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 9, 1918, p. 5; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 8, 1918.

117. Sun, June 4, 1919, gives the ILA strike vote as 1400 to 300, but I can find no other report of membership being that high. The Province, June 3, 1919, reports a membership of 961 in the ILA and its auxiliary (they had amalgamated in January - see B.C. Federationist, Jan. 3, 1919, p. 1); at the end of the strike it reported 1500 union dock workers

locked out when they refused to take the places of strikers who had gone out over a month earlier,⁵⁷ and at least twenty-five Japanese longshoremen refused to work in place of the striking Italian track labourers, and walked off the job, to the cheers of about 100 strikers.⁵⁸ Sympathetic walkouts also occurred in Nelson, Revelstoke, and points farther east.⁵⁹

In addition to the sympathetic strikes, at least eight large mass meetings expressed support for the strikers or condemned the CPR, and numerous expressions of moral support and financial assistance came from nearly all segments of the Vancouver working class, and other quarters as well.⁶⁰

Several reasons account for the widespread support given the strikers. First, George Estes, the UBRE President, was a popular figure,⁶¹ and second, the industrial union ambitions of the UBRE fell on favorable ground in Vancouver. Third, the strikers benefitted from belief in the justice of their cause: their right to organize in the

57. Province, March 28, 1903, April 2, 9, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 724.

58. Province, April 8, 1903.

59. See Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada," p. 79.

60. Sympathetic actions are too numerous to list in detail. For endorsements of the strike, and financial contributions, see Independent, March 7, 14, 21, 28, 1903, April 4, 11, 18, 25, 1903, May 2, 1903. Mass meetings of supporters occurred on March 2, 12, 20, April 3, 9, 11, 18, 21, and May 13. Each was well documented in the daily press of the following day.

61. He had drawn large crowds on a visit in 1902. See News-Advertiser, 18, 1902; Independent, Nov. 22, 1902, Dec. 6, 1902.

union of their choice was being brutally denied by a monopolistic employer.⁶² Fourth and last, the CPR was unpopular among both workers and non-workers in Vancouver, because of its labour policies and monopoly power.⁶³

Support for the striking UBRE members was not evenly distributed, however. It varied with the degree to which other workers were in a position similar to the strikers, and had social contacts with them. Those most like the strikers, i.e. unskilled, weakly organized transportation workers, displayed the most active support, while workers less like the strikers in skill and occupation supported the strike in less militant ways. Active opposition came only from well organized, skilled railway workers (and especially from officials of their unions), whose craft unions, and stable accommodation with the CPR were threatened by the industrial unionism of the UBRE.⁶⁴

Despite the outside support received by the strikers, they were

62. See Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, pp. 674, 677-78. The importance of this condition was further revealed by the strenuous propaganda efforts of the CPR to demonstrate that the UBRE had no right to exist. They are described below.

63. City Council was engaged at the time in a controversy with the CPR over ownership of street ends on False Creek; businessmen were objecting to its freight rates; and white workers believed that the CPR encouraged the employment of Chinese labour. See World Feb. 25, 27, 1903.

64. The UBRE alleged that the railway brotherhoods opposed it because they feared that it would supplant them and that paid officers of the unions had fooled the rank and file. World, March 10, 1903; Western Clarion, May 28, 1903. AFL craft unions were generally hostile to the industrial organizations, like the UBRE, which were affiliated to the American Labor Union. See Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. 3, p. 422.

defeated by the CPR. Negotiations had gone on until March 6 or 7, and various outside parties, including the Vancouver Board of Trade, City Council, the provincial government, and Ministerial Association tried unsuccessfully to settle the dispute in March.⁶⁵ The strike dragged on through April and May, marked by mass meetings, arrests, lawsuits by both sides, occasional assaults on strikebreakers, and the murder of Frank Rogers, a strike sympathizer, by a CPR employee.⁶⁶ A settlement was finally reached between the company and a committee of its employees (not the union) on June 10, during hearings in Vancouver of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the UBRE and miners' strikes in B.C., and the strike was officially called off by the UBRE on June 26. The CPR agreed only to take back strikers as vacancies occurred, and the union was smashed.⁶⁷

65. For the history of negotiations and outside attempts at settlement, see Province, March 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 25, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 10, 1903, p. 2; Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 797.

66. Rogers had been a leader in the fishermen's strikes, and his funeral procession on April 18 was the climax of the agitation by strike supporters. It involved 850 to 1000 participants "from every craft and calling," and was "the biggest affair of its kind ever seen here." Weekly Columbian, April 21, 1903; Western Socialist, April 24, 1903; Province, April 18, 1903.

67. Province, June 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 26, 1903; VTLC Minutes, June 18, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Report, pp. 3-4. Part of the confidential agreement was a memorandum signed by the counsels for the CPR and UBRE, stating: "It is understood that the settlement is conditional so far as concerns the company on the men signing a statement before being employed by the company that they are not members of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, recognizing that any future membership of the Order will be sufficient grounds for dismissal." Labour Canada Library, Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in the Province of British Columbia, 1903, Exhibits,

The strikers had been defeated by the preparations and monopoly power of the CPR, and the effectiveness of its propaganda in moulding public opinion against the strike. As a result of its prior recruitment of strikebreakers, the CPR's operations were only temporarily interrupted by the strike.⁶⁸ In addition to providing the resources to destroy the UBRE, the CPR's monopoly position meant that any effective strike against it became a strike against the economic life of the city, turning public opinion against the strikers. For example, when teamsters declared they would not handle CPR freight, they hoped that the disruption of local commerce would force a speedy settlement; instead it led many merchants to support efforts to break the strike for the good of the city.⁶⁹ Middle class public opinion was also swayed against the union by CPR propaganda. The main issue of the strike, according to the UBRE's Estes, was "the right of railway employees to

 "Confidential. Agreement re. strike between CPR and UBRE (Dept. of Labour)." Tuck ("UBRE in Western Canada," p. 85) aptly calls this "a sort of official death certificate for the UBRE."

68. The company replaced about 200 striking clerks and freight handlers with 130 strikebreakers by the third week of the strike, and more were brought in to replace longshoremen and teamsters. Province, March 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 16, 17, 19, 31, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 15, 18, 1903; Weekly Columbian, March 24, 1903; Western Socialist, April 10, 1903, May 1, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 642.

69. On March 10, 150 representatives of commercial interests pledged to support efforts to break the teamsters strike; only half that number of individuals and firms signed a petition asking merchants to support the teamsters' boycott on unfair freight. See News-Advertiser, March 10, 11, 1903; Province, March 11, 12, 14, 1903; Independent, March 21, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 797-98; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, pp. 575, 578.

become and remain members of the UBRE."⁷⁰ The CPR therefore set out to show why that right should be denied, and set the terms of middle class debate, reflected in the statement of Chief Justice Hunter, chairman of the Royal Commission: "the U.B.R.E. is on trial here."⁷¹ The credulous Royal Commissioners accepted all of the charges made by the CPR against the UBRE, and more: it was not a properly constituted (craft) union; it encouraged members of other unions to break contracts and engage in sympathy strikes; its leader was promoting the UBRE and trying to damage other unions solely for his personal aggrandizement; the strike violated the union constitution; it tried to interfere in the rights of management; it did not live up to its contracts; it was an American organization, but was not recognized by American railways; it was a revolutionary socialist organization; it was a secret society.⁷² They found the UBRE guilty on all counts, but its death sentence had already been carried out in the agreement ending the strike, and it effectively disappeared in western Canada within the year.⁷³

70. Province, March 6, 1903; cf. *ibid.*, March 3, 13, 1903; Weekly Columbian, March 10, 1903.

71. Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 573.

72. For the CPR propaganda campaign, see Province, March 7, 9, 10, 12, 24, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 11, 12, 1903; for the 'trial' of the UBRE, see Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, pp. 561-62, 570, 573, 604-05, 609, 619, 629-30, 644, 684, 687-88, 769-70; Report, pp. 3-15, 27-28, 33, 65-68, 75-76.

73. Tuck, "UBRE in Western Canada," p. 86; the Labour Gazette reported the Vancouver local dissolved in 1904, but added that some members maintained an affiliation with the international body. See Labour Gazette V (1905), pp. 884-85.

The strikes of UBRE members and sympathizers were pivotal events in the history of the Vancouver working class.⁷⁴ Their failure confirmed the belief of many Vancouver labour leaders in the necessity of industrial unionism, and convinced them to distrust the leaders of international craft unions in the U.S. and eastern Canada. Sympathy strikes became integral parts of the repertoire of collective action of Vancouver workers, the lesson of 1903 being that to be effective, they had to be more extensive and coordinated. At the same time, the 1903 strikes provided lessons for Vancouver employers. The Vancouver Employers Association was formed not long after, and many employers became more hostile toward unions, just as the campaign for the open shop was getting underway in the U.S. The strike thus contributed to the class mobilization of both workers and employers.

The 1903 strike did not contribute much to the mobilization and collective action of railway workers in Vancouver, however. The running trades remained conservative and non-militant, and clerks and freight handlers remained unorganized until World War I.⁷⁵ The improved labour market and rising cost of living in the war capitalist period provided the combination of opportunity and threat that led to successful strike

74. That is why so much space, here and elsewhere, has been devoted to them.

75. In 1911 the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (CBRE) made a foray into Vancouver to organize clerks and freight handlers, but no subsequent activities were reported, and by 1913 it was dormant. Report on Labour Organization, 1911, p. 85, 1913, pp. 179-82. Freight handlers in Vancouver were not involved in the CBRE strike against the CPR in 1912. On the CBRE in general, see Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, pp. 141-42.

action and the resurgence of unionism among railway clerks and freight handlers. When CPR freight handlers struck for a wage increase in May 1917, the company was unable to replace the strikers, and agreed to submit the issue to local arbitration. The freight handlers returned to work after less than a week on strike, and were later awarded most of what they had demanded.⁷⁶ During the strike, steps were taken to organize a union that eventually became a local of the International Brotherhood of Railway Clerks.⁷⁷

The new union continued to seek improved wages and hours, to obtain parity with waterfront freight handlers and keep pace with the cost of living. The CPR resisted wage increases, and as in the earlier period, objected to the inclusion of freight handlers and clerks in one union.⁷⁸ It subsequently showed its displeasure by making changes in

76. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 557, file 17(102); Province, May 15, 16, 23, 25, 1917; B.C. Federationist, May 18, 1917, p. 1.

77. Report on Labour Organization, 1918, p. 175. The organization went through several changes: at the beginning of 1918 it was the Western Freight Handlers Association, No. 40; later in the year it was dissolved, and the members joined the International, which had two locals in Vancouver in 1918 and three in 1919. The international organized mainly workers on the CPR, because clerks and freight handlers on other Canadian railways were already organized by the CBRE, which had formed a local in Vancouver in 1917. There was also a new local of the Brotherhood of Railway Storemen in 1917, but it did not last. See Report on Labour Organization, 1917, pp. 175, 176, 217-20; 1918, pp. 225-31.

78. For example, at an IDIA board of inquiry in November 1917, the company refused to deal with clerks along with freight handlers. However, it accepted the board's report when it awarded a partial wage increase and reduction in hours (to nine per day) to freight handlers performing manual labour. Clerks were awarded an offer made by the CPR. B.C. Federationist, Nov. 2, 16, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 23, 1917, p. 8; Province, Oct. 31, 1917, Nov. 15, 21, 24, 1917, Dec. 12, 1917; Labour

payment methods and work assignments that tended to abolish the distinction between freight clerks (formerly paid by the month) and freight handlers (paid by the hour).⁷⁹ Both groups objected to these changes, and a short strike occurred in April 1918, when a union clerk who refused to be reassigned was fired. The dismissed employee was reinstated, but the underlying issue remained.⁸⁰ In October, 1918, about 400 male and female freight handlers, clerks, and station employees in Vancouver were again on strike, this time with their counterparts on the CPR's western lines, for the formal recognition of their union, and the reinstatement of two dismissed union members in Calgary. As in the past, the CPR refused to have anything to do with the union, and after a strike of three weeks, only agreed to submit the matters in dispute to the Railway Adjustment Board. The result is not known, but a union representative told the Mathers Commission in 1919 that the CPR practically ignored the union, suggesting that it was still

Gazette XVIII (1918), pp. 25-29 (text of IDIA Board report).

79. This is contrary to what we would expect from some early versions of theories of segmented labour markets, in which corporations are seen as promoting segmentation in the early twentieth century, in order to control their workers. See Reich, Gordon, and Edwards, "A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation." (They have more recently argued that this period was one of homogenization. See Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*.) In this case, the employer was promoting homogenization, the union segmentation. Once again, the need to take worker organization and action into account is shown. Cf. Rubery, "Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organization, and Low Pay."

80. Province, April 4, 1918; B.C. Federationist, April 5, 12, 1918, p. 1; Sun, April 5, 1918.

unrecognized.⁸¹

CPR freight handlers and clerks had struggled repeatedly against a hostile and determined employer since 1900, with little to show for their efforts. If employer intransigence was a source of radicalism amongst unskilled workers, railway clerks and freight handlers ought to have been radicals in 1918 and 1919. They were the most radical railway workers, and the CPR's were more radical than the rest, but they were not as radical as some other transportation workers. Although they were reportedly willing to strike in sympathy with BCER strikers in July 1918, they do not seem to have participated in the 1918 protest strike over the murder of Ginger Goodwin.⁸² Members of the CBRE and of one local of the Railway Clerks each voted against the OBU (Table 1-3). In the 1919 general sympathetic strike, however, CPR freight handlers and clerks finally established radical credentials, although not without hesitation and ambiguity. The majority joined the general strike on June 10 rather than handle "unfair traffic," and most of the more than 120 strikers held out until the end of the general strike.⁸³ The clerks

81. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 558, file 18(138); Province, Oct. 3, 17, 22, 24, 1918; Sun, Oct. 4, 24, 1918; B.C. Federationist Oct. 4, 1918, p. 8, Oct. 25, 1918, p. 1; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 456.

82. VTLC Executive Minutes, July 7, 1918. Even if they did not support it, clerks and freight handlers at least did not go to the extreme of the B.C. Railway Mail Clerks Association, which suspended its delegate to the VTLC in protest at the strike. Province, Aug. 8, 1918.

83. Only baggage men heeded orders from the union's international executive to return to work a couple of days after the strike began, and only a few clerks returned after the CPR threatened to permanently replace them. B.C. Federationist, May 30, 1919, p. 1; Province, May 31, 1919, June 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21, 1919, July 4, 1919; Sun, June 4, 19,

and freight handlers subsequently dropped from sight, although their union locals remained in existence.

Freight handlers and clerks at the CPR were the only railway workers outside the shops to join the general strike. Their counterparts at the Canadian Northern and Great Northern stayed at work, and the running trades were all instructed by their headquarters not to stop work, which was probably their inclination anyway.⁸⁴

The history of mobilization and collective action by railway workers reveals the power of large corporations in this period to repress unions and defeat strikes by unskilled workers, while tolerating unions of skilled workers in the shops and running trades. It also shows that although radicalism could be engendered by employer repression of workers' mobilization and collective action, if mobilization was seriously weakened by repression, then support for radicalism was also weak. Thus the railway running trades, and the shop crafts, reached stable accommodations with the CPR after 1900 and 1908 respectively, and were not radicals; while freight handlers, who suffered continuing repression, were radical, but only hesitantly so. As we will see in the next section, to become radicals workers had to be both powerful and vulnerable.

20, 1919; Victoria Colonist, June 18, 1919; World, June 19, 1919; VTLC Minutes, July 3, 1919.

84. Province, May 29, 1919; Sun, June 11, 1919. There was an indication of interest in the strike at a meeting of 500 railway workers on June 11, but they did nothing besides wiring the president of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council to try to break the deadlock there. See Province, June 12, 1919; Sun, June 12, 1919; World, June 12, 1919.

Waterfront Workers

Collective action by waterfront workers was strongly affected by the stratification between longshoremen and dock workers, and by the casual labour market. Although the resources available for collective action of all dock workers were limited by the hand-to-mouth existence and labour surpluses that followed from the casual labour market, longshoremen's skills and cooperative control of the labour process meant that attempts to replace them with inexperienced, non-union men led to delays for stevedoring companies.⁸⁵ Because their skills and experience were a resource that could be used to disrupt shipping schedules, longshoremen's mobilization and collective action was more successful than that of dock workers. Yet if stevedores and shipping companies were willing to tolerate delays, longshoremen could be beaten, and their organizations destroyed. This occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century, when longshoremen suffered a string of defeats in strikes, because of the ability of large transportation companies to recruit strikebreakers from the reserve army of unemployed workers in the local casual labour market, or from outside the Vancouver area.

Longshoremen mobilized and acted collectively for three main objectives. First, they attempted to compensate for casual work through high hourly wages relative to other unskilled labour. Second, they attempted to collectively control and regulate the casual labour market,

85. See News-Advertiser, Oct. 16, 17, 1912.

to restrict competition from the reserve army of unemployed, and to regularize employment. Third, they also tried to control the labour process, to preserve their job autonomy and limit how hard they were driven by supervisors. In order to attain these objectives, longshoremen needed a strong organization, because their skills were insufficient to provide the more informal kinds of control sometimes exercised by craftsmen.

At the beginning of 1900, longshoremen were organized in the Independent Stevedores Union; in March 1901, it became a local of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA).⁸⁶ The labour market and job control exercised by longshoremen, and the existence of their union were first challenged by the Pacific Coast Steamship Company in 1900.⁸⁷ It sought to replace the union walking delegate with its own stevedore in assigning longshoremen to jobs, and seemed intent on breaking the union.⁸⁸ In the protracted strike by about eighty longshoremen that

86. Longshoremen were one of the earliest groups of workers in Vancouver to unionize: the first Stevedores Union was organized in 1888. It was absorbed into the Knights of Labour from 1892 to 1896, then took the form it had in 1900. See Phillips, *No Power Greater*, p. 18; Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada*, p. 340; ILWU, *Man Along the Shore*, p. 32; *Independent*, April 7, 1900.

87. The system prevailing in 1903 (and probably in 1900 as well) was as follows: the union delegate found out how many men were needed on a ship, called them to work on the basis of the union rotating list, and usually stayed at the dock to superintend the men and assist the ship's chief officer in placing the cargo. See the testimony of G. Noonan, union secretary, in *Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence*, p. 731.

88. The company's superintendent had reputedly boasted of smashing every longshoremen's union on the Pacific Coast.

resulted in February, the company won the right of its own stevedore to supervise work, but the longshoremen's union retained the right to select men for work, and received a slight wage increase. The compromise outcome of this strike depended on the capacity of the union to prevent strikebreakers from being recruited in Vancouver, and the company's ability to continue operations by bringing men from the U.S. In the face of an impotent Allen Labour Act.⁸⁹ Subsequent strikes failed when the union was unable to prevent the replacement of strikers by non-union men and ship's crews.⁹⁰

The string of defeats for the longshoremen's union culminated in 1903, when they struck in sympathy with CPR clerks and freight handlers in March. They were replaced in April by strikebreakers imported by the CPR, and when they finally returned to work in June, they were forced to

89. Province, Feb. 20, 22, 26, 1900, March 5, 1900, April 17, 1900, July 13, 1900; Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 98; Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, pp. 340-41.

90. The weakness of the longshoremen was revealed in 1901, in small, unsuccessful strikes over wages and control of the labour market by lumber handlers at Moodyville, and longshoremen loading salmon at Steveston. Province, Feb. 28, 1901, March 4, 9, 1901, Sept. 13, 16, 20, 21, 1901, Oct. 7, 1901; World, March 1, 1901; Independent, Sept. 14, 1901. The union's weakness was also illustrated by an unusual reversal of roles in early 1902, when a few non-union longshoremen on the Evans, Coleman, and Evans dock walked out to protest the employment of union men on the same dock. Appropriately enough, four of the strikers broke ranks after a couple of hours, and returned to work, while the rest were replaced. See Independent, May 24, 1902. A strike in December, 1902 against the refusal of the Vancouver and Victoria Stevedoring Co. (an old offender against union rules) to live up to union working conditions failed when the strikers were replaced during the first week by a ship's crew and non-union men. Province, Dec. 23, 24, 27, 30, 31, 1902. They were defeated again by the Pacific Coast Steamship Co. in a small strike for a wage increase in 1903, because the company was able to replace them. Province, June 6, 1903.

do so individually.⁹¹ The ILA was smashed on the CPR's wharves; and nothing more was heard of it between 1904 and 1912.⁹²

Despite the destruction of the union, the independence and solidarities arising from longshoremen's social reproduction cycles gave them the capacity to continue to engage in strikes. Whenever labour surpluses appeared, however, stevedores were able to replace strikers, or rescind concessions made during labour shortages, and the strikes were ultimately unsuccessful.⁹³ For example, in 1907, fifty or sixty lumber handlers on the north shore were organized by the Industrial Workers of the World. They struck in October against an increase in hours from nine to ten, but were forced to return to work on the companies' terms after three weeks, and the union disappeared from sight.⁹⁴ The largest strike during the non-union period was a spontaneous strike for higher pay by about 200 longshoremen in March 1909. The strike began at the sugar refinery dock, and spread

91. Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 797, 923; Province, June 12, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 728.

92. The Department of Labour continued to report the existence of an ILA local until 1907, but it appears in no other sources. VTLC Minutes, June 2, 1904, July 7, 1904; Labour Gazette VII (1907), pp. 885-88, 1461.

93. For example, unorganized lumber handlers at Millside had struck for higher pay and shorter hours in April 1907, and were immediately replaced. Also early in 1907, coal heavers struck for a wage increase, to maintain their ten cent pay differential over regular longshoremen, who had received an increase because of a labour shortage. The outcome of the strike was not reported, but in any case, wages were reduced to the old rate in the winter, when supplies of labour increased. Province, April 25, 1907, May 28, 1907.

94. PAC RG 27, Vol. 294, file 3018. The Lumber Handlers (Industrial Union, No. 526 of the IWW was reported dissolved in October 1909.

throughout the port the same morning. The CPR, which continued to be the dominant force on the waterfront, quickly brought in strikebreakers from Winnipeg, defeated the strike, and subsequently tried to establish a longshoremen's association under the control of employers.⁹⁵

Initiatives to reorganize longshoremen in 1909 and 1910 failed, so Vancouver longshoremen remained the most poorly organized and paid in the Pacific Northwest until the ILA was re-established in the city in 1912.⁹⁶ It quickly organized the waterfront, and negotiated a wage increase bringing longshoremen's scale up to the level of Victoria, Seattle and Tacoma.⁹⁷

The reorganization of the longshoremen in 1912 marked a small turning point in their power, as indicated by a doubling of the dismal success rate in waterfront strikes from 11.1 per cent in 1900-12, to 22.2 per cent in 1913-19.⁹⁸ Employers continued to be hostile to the union, especially in the pre-war depression, and as a result, when the

95. News-Advertiser, March 30, 31, 1909, April 2, 3, 4, 6; Province, April 1, 2, 5, 1909; Labour Gazette IX (1909), p. 1258. As far as I know, nothing came of the attempt to organize a company union.

96. Province, Aug. 20, 1909, Oct. 7, 1910.

97. After starting in March with 60 members, and growing rapidly to 252 members in May, the union claimed to have organized 99 per cent of the waterfront by September. VTLC Minutes, April 4, 18, 1912, May 2, 1912, Sept. 5, 1912; ILWU, Man Along the Shore, p. 46.

98. The failure rate was more than halved, from 77.7 per cent to 33.3 per cent, and the difference was made up in the percentage of strikes where the outcome was indefinite or unknown, which rose from 11.1 to 44.4. The reason for this improvement was that employers were less able to use strikebreakers in disputes. They introduced strikebreakers in over 60 per cent of the strikes before the end of 1912, but did so in only 33 per cent of strikes after 1912.

tighter labour market during the war provided the opportunity, the increasingly powerful waterfront workers became leaders in working-class militancy and radicalism.

With the reorganization of longshoremen, the stratification of the workforce between them and dock workers became more significant. The benefits of the new organization were initially limited to longshoremen. The wages of freight handlers on the docks remained about half those of longshoremen, and a number of them struck for wage increases at the docks of the CPR, and Evans, Coleman and Evans. The longshoremen did nothing to help the freight handlers, and the strikes failed after strikebreakers were employed.⁹⁹ Although they were not willing to support other dock workers, the longshoremen were willing to strike later in the year against the employment of a "notorious" non-union man, and succeeded in forcing his dismissal. They were now powerful enough to affirm the principle that union members would receive preference in hiring, despite the employer's open shop.¹⁰⁰ These strikes showed the consequences of different social reproduction cycles of longshoremen and freight handlers for mobilization and collective action. Longshoremen were more powerful than freight handlers because

99. It is not clear whether the truckers were unionized. In one report, they belonged to the ILA, in another, they were organized by the IWW. Province, May 21, 22, 1912; Sun, May 22, 23, 1912. After the strike was over, freight truckers did receive an increase, but not to the level of longshoremen. See B.C. Federationist, June 22, 1912, p. 3; News-Advertiser, June 16, 18, 1912.

100. News-Advertiser, Oct. 17, 1912; Province, Oct. 17, 1912; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 19, 1912, p. 1.

their work was more skilled, and solidarity between the two groups was weak. This was because, for the longshoremen, freight handlers were a reserve army of labour, potentially competing for longshoring jobs, while freight handlers were at the receiving end of longshoremen's exclusionary practices, and would thus feel little solidarity with them.

The division between longshoremen and dock workers began to break down in the pre-war depression, under the impact of an employer offensive against the union. The first signed agreement between longshoremen and stevedores (organized in the B.C. Marine Association) was made in 1913,¹⁰¹ but shipping companies soon evaded it (by changing their names or withdrawing from the B.C. Marine Association), and reduced wages. When the Union Steamship Co. gave notice of a reduction in truckers' wages, and the CPR intimated that it would follow suit, all of the approximately 500 longshoremen and dock workers in Vancouver went on strike. Employers were able to draw on the large number of unemployed in Vancouver for strikebreakers, but the union's international connection paid off, as longshoremen at other Pacific Coast ports refused to work vessels calling at Vancouver, and the

101. The agreement incorporated increased wages, improved working conditions, and in a new departure, included truckers and pilers (i.e. freight handlers) in its provisions. Prior to this, agreements had been informal: "... we have what is called a port wage, and all employers know that port wage. There is no contract, only an understanding that if the union had the men it would supply them." Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 729; Province, May 23, 1913; B.C. Federationist, May 23, 1913, p. 1; Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 193

companies were forced to give in after a month.¹⁰²

Taking advantage of the surplus of labour, shipping companies continued to act aggressively after the strike, and wages continued to be an issue, as wartime inflation and renewed business prosperity contrasted with declining real wages. The British Consul at Portland observed, "It seems as if some of the shipping interests are as anxious to stop any arrangement as some of the most radical of the men."¹⁰³ Agreements (which included a closed shop) were signed with several stevedoring companies in September, but in October the Union Steamship Co. locked out members of the ILA. Manager Beasley explained "that he would be foolish as a business man not to take advantage of labour conditions," to lower wages and evade the closed shop.¹⁰⁴ The longshoremen learned the lesson of their employers' conduct during the pre-war depression, and the radicalism referred to by the British Consul was to grow and find militant expression during the war capitalist boom.

102. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 303, file 15(5); News-Advertiser, March 2, 3, 5, 9, 24, 1915; April 3, 1915; Province, March 12, 13, 15, 24, 1915; Sun, March 12, 17, 29, 1915; B.C. Federationist, April 2, 1915, p. 1.

103. "The men have begun to show ill feeling because they are not sharing in the large profits that the contractors and manufacturers are making on war orders," remarked another observer. PAC, RG 24, Dept. of Militia and Defence files, Vol. 6517, file HQ 363-18-3, Thomas Erskine to Sir Cecil A. Spring-Rice, May 21, 1915; *ibid*, British Consul General, San Francisco, to British Embassy, Washington, Sept. 6, 1915: Report of Private Enquiry Office.

104. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 21, 1915; PAC, loc. cit., T.V. O'Connor to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, quoted in Spring-Rice to the Governor-General, Nov. 13, 1915; Labour Gazette XVI (1915), pp. 654-55.

The organizational strength of longshoremen and dock workers in Vancouver grew during the labour shortages of the war capitalist boom, and they became increasingly militant. The growing mobilization of waterfront workers was shown in the formation and rapid growth of the Marine Warehousemen's and Freight Handlers' Auxiliary of the ILA in the first half of 1917. By September, total ILA membership in Vancouver had more than doubled in a year, from "some 500" to 1200.¹⁰⁵

Strikes by waterfront workers during war capitalism were at first either to restore their real wages to former levels, or in solidarity with other workers, but by 1917, their objectives became increasingly political. Solidarity with other workers was expressed in June, 1916, when union longshoremen refused to unload a Blue Funnel liner in Vancouver out of sympathy with striking U.S. longshoremen, and in April 1917, when they supported strikers at the B.C. Sugar Refinery by refusing to handle cargo for the company, until the strikers gave up in July.¹⁰⁶

Increased wages were the objective in one small strike in 1916,¹⁰⁷ and in the first major waterfront battle of the war capitalist

105. VTLC Minutes, July 19, 1917, Sept. 6, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 21, 1917; ILWU, Man Along the Shore, p. 47. The Dept. of Labour does not report the organization of the auxiliary until 1918. Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 225-29.

106. Province, June 6, 9, 1916, April 25, 1917; B.C. Federationist, June 8, 1917, p. 8.

107. In August 1916, seventy to eighty non-union truckers at the Evans, Coleman and Evans dock, whose wages had previously been reduced to 25 cents an hour, won a short strike for an increase to 30 cents. Province, Aug. 25, 1916; Labour Gazette XVI (1916), p. 1781.

period, at the end of July 1917. In the latter, a strike of longshoremen, truckers, marine warehousemen, and marine freight handlers against the CPR and other steamship companies began when about 500 longshoremen and truckers walked out to back demands for an increase in the wages of truckers working on the docks. Later, another 500 or so warehousemen and freight handlers went on strike, first in sympathy with the longshoremen, then for a wage increase to bring them up to the scale of the truckers. Underlying the entire dispute was "the wide difference in wages existing between work performed on the dock and work performed on the ship," which had "been a bone of contention for some time."¹⁰⁸ In the view of the B.C. Federationist, the purpose of the differential was "to offset united and effective action by the membership of the longshoremen's union," and it nearly had that effect.¹⁰⁹ Dock workers (truckers and pilers) were much more militant and radical than the longshoremen: under the radical leadership of socialists like Ernest Winch, dock workers wanted to strike against all the waterfront employers, and desired the levelling of longshore and dock wages; longshoremen wanted to act only against the CPR, and were less interested in levelling wages.¹¹⁰ The longshoremen and truckers won

108. Province, July 31, 1917, Aug. 1, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 3, 1917, p. 1. After a wage increase granted by waterfront employers in June, the differential between longshoremen and dock workers was 15 cents an hour for day work, and 25 cents for nights.

109. B.C. Federationist June 15, 1917, p. 1.

110. At the meeting in which the decision to strike was taken, longshoremen physically ejected the radicals from the longshoremen's hall, but nonetheless stuck by the decision to strike the whole

their demands in six days, but the warehousemen's pay was left for subsequent negotiation.¹¹¹ The strike and its outcome showed the effects on collective action of the stratification of the workforce on the waterfront: the most skilled, the most privileged (in terms of pay and access to jobs), the best organized, and the least radical were the longshoremen; the other workers on the docks were more recently organized, less privileged, and more radical.

Differences between longshoremen and dock workers would reappear in the future, but in 1917 and 1918, all waterfront employees became more radical, and increasingly oriented to political action against conscription.¹¹² For example, in May 1917, all five ILA delegates to the VTLC voted in favor of a resolution denouncing conscription and advocating a referendum on a general strike over the issue, and 83 per cent of the membership later voted for a general strike in the event.

waterfront, vowing that solidarity would be maintained until the strike was over, when they would deal with the radicals. World, July 31, 1917; News-Advertiser, July 31, 1917. On the radicalism and otherwise of waterfront workers, see University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, McInnis Collection, Box 52, file 16, Ambrose Tree interview, Box 55a, file 16, Helena Gutteridge interview (she recalled the longshoremen being right-wing), Box 52, file 1, Ernest Burns interview (the longshoremen were mostly Liberals until people like Ernest Winch started bringing socialists into the auxiliary). On Winch, see Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel, esp. pp. 35-43.

111. Province, Aug. 6, 1917; News-Advertiser, Aug. 7, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 10, 1917, p. 1; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(116).

112. They did not give up pursuing more prosaic economic goals, but they were able to win wage increases and shorter hours without striking. Radicalization thus occurred at the same time as their power in reaching economic objectives was growing.

conscription was enacted.¹¹³ The following January, members of both the ILA and the Auxiliary of Freight Handlers and Warehousemen voted two to one in favor of a general strike to protest the imprisonment of Duncan Kerr.¹¹⁴ Resolutions turned to action in March, when waterfront workers struck to protest arrests of ILA members by military authorities, on suspicion of draft evasion.¹¹⁵ In August, after Ginger Goodwin was killed by a military policeman, nearly 1000 waterfront workers joined in the one-day general strike, and the longshoremen's hall was one of the main targets of returned soldiers in the ensuing disturbances.¹¹⁶

As in 1918, the longshoremen played a prominent part in the 1919 general strike. They voted overwhelmingly in its favor, and although some "experienced longshoremen" reportedly returned to work after about two weeks, most held firm until the strike was called off on July 3.¹¹⁷

113. The union subsequently endorsed the resignation of ILA delegate Jack Kavanagh from the presidency of the VTLC to protest its failure to object to its former president, J.H. McVety, holding a position on the conscription exemption board.

114. See Table 1-1. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917, June 21, 1917, Oct. 4, 18, 1917; VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918.

115. They declared that the police had no right to interfere with any longshoremen in their work, and let it be understood that they would strike again if there was any more trouble involving the Military Service Act. Sun, March 10, 12, 1918; Province, March 11, 1918; B.C. Federationist, March 15, 1918, p. 1.

116. Province, Aug. 2, 3, 5, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 9, 1918, p. 5; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 8, 1918.

117. Sun, June 4, 1919, gives the ILA strike vote as 1400 to 300, but I can find no other report of membership being that high. The Province, June 3, 1919, reports a membership of 961 in the ILA and its auxiliary (they had amalgamated in January - see B.C. Federationist, Jan. 3, 1919, p. 1); at the end of the strike it reported 1500 union dock workers

Continuing rank and file militancy was shown immediately after the end of the general strike, when about 400 longshoremen went on a wildcat strike to protest discrimination by the CPR against union members working in the freight sheds.¹¹⁸ Following a "long and heated" discussion at a mass meeting that night, they returned to work the next morning. They were still so dissatisfied, however, that a strike would have been called at the July 9 regular meeting of the union, had not union leaders prevented a strike vote being taken.¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, divisions between the longshoremen and the dock workers resurfaced over the OBU issue. Before the general strike, ILA members had voted over two to one in favor of joining the OBU (Table 1-3). Only freight handlers followed that up by seceding from the ILA to form their own organization in August, and ultimately joining the Transport Workers Unit of the OBU. In contrast, longshoremen reversed their previous stand on the OBU (voting 376 for, and 806 against it), and decided to remain with the international. Their decision was partly a matter of expediency, taken under pressure from the CPR, which had declared that it would continue to recognize the ILA, but not the OBU

(Province, July 4, 1919). In the OBU vote, there were 1369 members in good standing (see Table 1-3).

118. While most other companies agreed to return to the conditions prevailing before the strike, the CPR had warned previously that it would continue to employ about 200 strikebreakers, and threatened on July 2 to flood the waterfront with workers unless the longshoremen returned to work.

119. Sun, June 27, 1919, July 5, 6, 1919; Province, June 27, 1919, July 2, 5, 11, 14, 1919; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), Militia and Defense, Victoria, to Assistant Director of Military Intelligence, Ottawa, July 7, 1919.

It may have also been a response to the failure of the general strike to achieve its aims, and resulting disillusionment with the OBU ideal.¹²⁰

Faced with the choice between the OBU without employer recognition, and the International with it, longshoremen had too much to lose, especially their control over the labour market for longshore work proper, to risk the former. Freight handlers and warehousemen had less to lose than the longshoremen, because they were more vulnerable to labour market competition, especially when labour was plentiful, as it was increasingly becoming. It was therefore more sensible for them to seek to protect themselves from that competition, and from the power of corporations such as the CPR, in a radical industrial union like the OBU, especially when they had been successful under radical leadership.

Sailors

Most collective action by workers in coastal shipping was by ordinary sailors, who were weakly and intermittently organized for virtually all of the 1900-1919 period, and were constrained in their collective action by legal restrictions and the power and hostility of

120. A Royal Northwest Mounted Police secret agent reported that two prominent leaders of the general strike, who were also closely identified with the OBU, W.A. Pritchard and J. Kavanagh (a longshoreman), were hooted off the platform at a mass meeting of longshoremen on July 2. PAC RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), Report of Special Agent no. 33, July 2, 1919; for the events of July and August, see VTLC Minutes, July 31, 1919, Aug. 14, 1919; Province, Aug. 7, 20, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 15, 1919, p. 8. The CPR announcement was made in June; the longshoremen later received a wage increase, with a flat rate for all workers, which Kavanagh saw as an attempt to forestall the OBU. Sun, June 17, 1919; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 21, 1919.

large steamship companies. The most frequent strikes were by unorganized riverboat deckhands, but they were too small to be significant.¹²¹ The most strongly organized steamship employees were the highly skilled masters, mates, and engineers, but their ambiguous class position gave rise to collective action that set them off from other steamship employees.

The first organization of coastal sailors disappeared in 1903, after 150 or more deckhands and firemen belonging to the organization struck in sympathy with the UBRE in 1903, and Canadian Pacific Navigation ceased to recognize it.¹²² They remained unorganized and inactive until a branch of the Sailor's Union of the Pacific organized deckhands in 1908, and grew to a membership of 160 by the fall of

121. Deckhands on the small Fraser River steamers engaged in nine spontaneous strikes, usually over wages or overtime pay, in which they were either immediately replaced (five times), or their demands immediately granted (four times). Sources on strikes by deckhands are:

- 1901: Labour Gazette II (1901), p. 208.
- 1903: Weekly Columbian, Feb. 17, 1903; Province, Feb. 10, 1903; News-Advertiser, Feb. 11, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), pp. 707-09.
- 1905: Weekly Columbian, Sept. 5, 12, 1905.
- 1906: Weekly Columbian, April 10, 1906; Province, Aug. 9, 1906; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 1294, files 2654, 2758
- 1907: Province, April 10, 1907, Sept. 7, 13, 1907; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 294, files 2848, 2849, Vol. 295, file 3000.

122. The first organization of seamen in the area was the Mainland Steamshipmen's Union (or Association), organized in 1892 or 1893. Its name was changed to the B.C. Steamshipmen's Society in late 1902, and in February of the following year it was incorporated as a benevolent society. Independent, Sept. 22, 1900; April 27, 1901, June 29, 1901, p. 3, Sept. 20, 1902, Sept. 5, 1903; World, April 2, 4, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 18, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 680-81.

1910.¹²³ The union's immediate concerns with working hours, and overtime pay for Sunday work in port were addressed by an IDIA board, but led by the CPR, the steamship companies denied the existence of any dispute, refused to recognize the union, and ignored the board's findings.¹²⁴ A crew of deckhands on a CPR steamer who refused to shift cargo on Sunday without overtime pay was fired, but the union took no action beyond unsuccessfully attempting in 1911 and 1912 to achieve its objectives through the courts.¹²⁵ The union was too weak to enforce its demands against the powerful steamship companies, and the state was of no assistance, so unhygienic conditions and long hours persisted on coast vessels.¹²⁶ The source of the union's weakness lay in the migratory labour market for sailor labour, which kept up the pressure of the reserve army of unemployed, and allowed companies to maintain conditions that were not much different from those in logging camps.

When the labour market became tighter during the war capitalist period, however, coastal sailors again began to make demands on their

123. Western Wage Earner, Jan. 1910, pp. 6-7; VTLC Minutes, Jan. 20, 1910; Province, April 23, 1910; Labour Gazette XI (1910), p. 653; Taylor, Sailors' Union of the Pacific, p. 146. Marine firemen, oilers, and water tenders were organized late in 1910, but the subsequent fate of their union is unknown. Western Wage Earner, Dec. 1910, p. 12; World, April 1, 1911. Taylor (op. cit., p. 147) says that the Sailors' Union of the Pacific decided to organize those workers in B.C. in 1913.

124. The board recommended payment for Sunday and holiday work, a ten hour day, overtime pay, and improved food and quarters.

125. Province, Feb. 4, 1910, Nov. 1, 10, 11, 18, 1910, May 19, 27, 1911, July 10, 15, 1911, March 13, 1912, April 30, 1912, June 21, 1912, Nov. 7, 1912; Labour Gazette XI (1910), pp. 652-53.

126. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 23, 1914, p. 2.

employers, and to strengthen their organization. Thus in 1916, deckhands, engine room hands, and stewards demanded higher wages, conditions as on the U.S. side, and recognition of the Sailors Union of the Pacific.¹²⁷ A petition signed by nearly every coast seaman in Vancouver (and later, in Victoria) was presented to the steamship companies, but again led by the CPR, they refused union recognition and were evasive on wages.¹²⁸

No further action was taken in 1916, but in 1917, a strike by approximately 500 sailors demanding a 20 per cent wage increase began on CPR steamships, then spread to Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) and Union Steamship (USS) vessels. After nearly three weeks, the strikers settled for 10 to 15 per cent raises.¹²⁹ Soon after that strike, marine firemen and oilers formed their own branch of the International Seamen's Union, with 130 members. By April 1918, membership had grown to 232, and after demanding higher wages, an eight hour day, overtime pay, and clean

127. The Sailors' Union of the Pacific organized only deckhands in the United States, leaving firemen and oilers, and stewards to branches of the International Seamen's Union, but in B.C. the union appears to have enrolled those two groups, for a time at least. It may have been an aspect of the "independence of headquarters in San Francisco" exhibited by B.C. (but not U.S.) branches of the union. The B.C. branches were also more militant than the American ones. See Taylor, Sailors' Union of the Pacific, pp. 146-49, 165-66.

128. B.C. Federationist, May 5, 12, 1916, p. 1; Province, May 13, 1916.

129. Province, June 26, 27, 1917, July 11, 12, 16, 1917; News-Advertiser, June 28, 29, 1917; B.C. Federationist, June 29, 1917, p. 1, July 6, 13, 1917, p. 1; Labour Gazette XVII (1917), pp. 543, 610; Taylor, Sailors' Union of the Pacific, p. 148.

bedding and linen, they won a wage increase later in the year.¹³⁰ The sailors were also able to win further small improvements in wages, hours, and living conditions without striking, indicating that their power was growing. The shipping companies were still hostile, however, and refused to recognize the union.

The combination of increasing worker strength and continued employer hostility contributed to radicalism among coastal sailors. Although there is no record of participation by any ships' employees in the Goodwin protest strike in 1918, 350 or more deckhands, stewards, and firemen and oilers joined the general sympathetic strike in 1919, ceasing work when ships reached their home ports. The companies were unable to replace strikers, especially firemen, so over three quarters of the coastal steamer fleet was tied up by June 5.¹³¹ The strike was costly for the sailors, who at its conclusion were forced by the companies to resume work without the concessions which had been made on nearly every issue, including the crucial demand for an eight hour day, during negotiations before the general strike.¹³²

130. B.C. Federationist, July 7, 1917, p. 1; Oct. 19, 1917, p. 1, April 5, 1918, p. 1, Dec. 6, 1918, p. 8.

131. A few vessels were kept running, with office staff filling firemen's places, and some women and Chinese men working as stewards. Province, June 2, 3, 4, 7, 12, 21, 1919; World, June 3, 4, 1919; Sun, June 6, 11, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8.

132. Strikers at the GTP and USS returned to work immediately under those conditions, but because it would not dismiss strikebreakers, the strike continued at the CPR until July 15. VTLC Minutes, June 26, 1919; Sun, June 27, 1919, July 16, 1919; Province, July 4, 1919; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C). The strikebreakers were still employed nearly a year later. Victoria Colonist, May 6, 1920.

Prior to the general strike, marine firemen and oilers had voted overwhelmingly in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3), and they subsequently formed its Marine Firemen and Oilers Unit. Stewards had also voted for the OBU, but they and deckhands stayed with the international union.¹³³

In contrast to the ordinary sailors on coastal boats, the highly skilled and responsible masters, mates, and engineers were non-militant and conservative. The best organized were marine engineers, whose local of the National Association of Marine Engineers (NAME) maintained a continuous existence for the remainder of the 1900-19 period after its formation in 1903. Like their counterparts on shore, they were not militant, and NAME was more of a professional association than a trade union.¹³⁴ Masters and mates were not organized until 1917, when they joined the Canadian Merchant Service Guild (CMSG). It could hardly be called a union: according to one member, "It was rather a professional than a labor organization." Its character reflected the ambiguous class location of masters and mates, who were employees, but held positions of authority and privilege over ordinary sailors. Even so, the large steamship companies, such as the CPR, GTP, and USS, refused to deal with

133. Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 38, 290-93. In the end, only firemen on coal-fired vessels stayed with the OBU, while oil firemen returned to the Marine Firemen and Oilers Union, and all sailors returned to their main interests: shorter hours, better pay, improved conditions, and union recognition. PAC RG 27, Vol. 320, file 20(154); Victoria Colonist, May 6, 1920.

134. Labour Gazette IV (1904), pp. 674-79; Province, Aug. 15, 1903, March 11, 1905. Their only strike was by six engineers, to force the Union Steamship Company to pay a wage increase (equal to that given engineers by the CPR) in 1913. See B.C. Federationist, July 11, 1913, Province, July 14, 1913.

the CMSG in 1918,¹³⁵ and when a Royal Commission failed to resolve the issue of recognition, members of the guild proceeded on August 24 to 'strike,' or as they put it, to resign, for 'union' recognition and acceptance of the commission's findings on wages and other conditions. Marine engineers, who were in the same ambiguous class location as masters and mates, and who had refused to support sailors in their 1917 strike, immediately declared their refusal to sail under strikebreakers, and shipping was swiftly halted by the dispute. Work was resumed after four days, when a formula for recognition was agreed upon. The companies soon reneged on it, but the issue disappeared in any case when in 1919 the CMSG incorporated as a benevolent society, with insurance benefits its main goal.¹³⁶ Neither masters and mates, nor engineers took part in the radical events of 1918 and 1919.

The differences between ordinary sailors and the elite of masters, mates, and engineers was a reflection of the differences in workplace authority, living conditions on board ship, and labour market conditions. As we would expect, the frontier labourer sailors were more radical and more militant than their aristocratic shipboard companions. The differences in social reproduction cycles were sufficiently sharp, and the collective actions and organization of the latter sufficiently exclusivist, that we are justified in seeing the creation of a class

135. Sixteen small companies settled with the CMSG.

136. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(150); Province, June 11, 1918, Aug. 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 1918, April 4, 16, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 14, 1918, p. 1, July 12, 26, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 2, 1918, p. 5, Aug. 23, 30, 1918, p. 1; Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), pp. 810-16.

boundary between them and sailors. Yet it is important to note that even the masters and mates were led to moderately militant action by the labour policies of large transportation companies.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how the mobilization and collective action of external transportation workers was shaped by capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and conditions of strategic interaction (opportunity, repression, and power). With respect to capital accumulation, and repression, it is remarkable how the corporate form of the CPR looms over everything. It was the main opponent of workers' organizations on the railways, the docks, and coastal steamships. It fought unions of railway clerks and freight handlers, longshoremen, and sailors every step of the way, and more often than not it was successful in defeating unions in critical strikes, usually by introducing strikebreakers and refusing to dismiss them when the strike was over. Its actions, and those of other large transportation companies, demonstrate the central role played by large capitalists in repressing workers' mobilization and collective action, and consequently giving rise to contention over issues such as union recognition and the closed shop.

The experience of the suppression of their unions and repression of their collective action affected various transportation workers differently. On the railways, the freight handlers and clerks, who were settled urban workers, never really recovered from the defeat of the UBRE in 1903, even when the war capitalist boom provided the

opportunity, and although they were more radical than other railway workers in 1919, they were still too weak to be more than very hesitant radicals. Longshoremen, who were settled urban workers in some respects and frontier labourers in others, were better able to maintain their union organization, despite numerous bitter disputes with employers (in which the CPR was often in the background). As a consequence, the ILA was in the forefront of radical agitation in 1918-19, yet it was not the longshoremen proper, with their job autonomy and labour market control, who were the most radical, but the more vulnerable dock workers, who were frontier labourers. Like dock workers and railway freight handlers, sailors in coastal shipping were weakly and intermittently organized until the war capitalist boom, when they experienced a rapid increase in mobilization strength and in power through strikes. The experiences of dock workers and sailors lend credence to aspects of the frontier labourer interpretation of western labour radicalism, and also show the importance of experiences of strategic interaction with intransigent employers. As in other industries, a combination of power through militant action, and vulnerability to labour market competition and repression was the key to radicalism among unskilled external transportation workers.

Chapter 11

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC UTILITIES:

"leave the pay of the ... Company's employees
to the Company."

As elsewhere in North America, local transportation and utilities were major employers of labour and fields of investment in early twentieth century Vancouver.¹ The growth of the city's population provided expanding markets for the relatively new street railway, electric power, and telephone services. Local drayage and teaming companies represented an older technology, slowly being supplanted by motor vehicles, but they were also major employers in the area. Skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers in each of these branches responded to pressure on wages, hours, control of the labour process and labour market, and mobilization by forming unions and striking,

1. Telephones, electric power, street railways, and automobiles were the four growth industries in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Gordon, Edwards and Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, p. 102.

especially in the war capitalist period.

11.1 Capital Accumulation

As in external transportation, the local transportation and public utilities industry was highly monopolized in two of its three branches. The British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER) held a monopoly on the provision of street car service, and a near monopoly on electric power. The B.C. Telephone Company had a monopoly on telephone service, and like the BCER, operated under a municipal franchise. In contrast, the local teaming and cartage business was composed of a large number of small employers, and was extremely competitive.

Capital accumulation in the street railway and electric power branch was determined by the large capital investments in generating stations, track, and rolling stock on the one hand, and by municipal franchise agreements that limited fares and imposed minimum levels of service, on the other hand.² Learning from the failures of other electric railways, including two predecessors in Vancouver, the BCER's English directors avoided speculative overexpansion and capital shortages by following a policy of cautious growth. At the same time, the company tried to maintain a strong bargaining position for

2. The account that follows is based principally upon Roy, "A British Company." For a more general account, see E.P. Schmidt, Industrial Relations in Urban Transportation.

negotiations with municipal governments over franchises, and to avoid movements for municipal ownership. A prime element of its strategy was a paternalistic labour relations policy, intended to both establish public opinion favorable to the company, and control its labour force.³ The main components of the company's paternalism were recognition of the street railwaymen's union, a profit-sharing plan, free transportation, electricity discounts, and the usual assortment of company picnics, clubs, etc.⁴

The success of the BCER's own policies, combined with outside events, was the undoing of paternalistic, cordial relations with the largest part of its workforce, the street railway employees. As the street railway service expanded, and the number of employees grew, relations with management became more impersonal. In 1911 a new personnel administration instituted changes in the transportation division that may have represented first efforts to adopt more systematic management procedures. By then the large numbers of new employees were less committed to the company than in the past; as they benefitted less from profit-sharing, and wages fell behind the rising

3. In addition to the source already cited, see P. Roy, "The B.C.E.R. and its Street Railway Employees: Paternalism in Labour Relations" (hereafter, "Paternalism in Labour Relations"). Schmidt (Industrial Relations in Urban Transportation, p. 71) notes that street railway employees worked "with little personal scrutiny from their employer"; therefore managerial control was a problem.

4. For details, see Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations"; Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 147-48, 560-62; Province, Oct. 21, 1905, Dec. 7, 1910, Oct. 3, 1912, Nov. 2, 1912; B.C. Federationist, March 21, 1913, p. 1.

cost of living. In 1913 and 1914, the pre-war depression and the advent of jitneys put the final nails in the coffin of paternalism.⁵ Squeezed by jitney competition, falling revenues, and rates fixed by franchise agreements, the BCER attempted to reduce expenditures through a series of attacks on established employee conditions. Consequently, during the pre-war depression and the war capitalist boom, "impersonal management" and wages became serious objects of contention between the company and its employees.⁶ The paternalism of the BCER was a policy that could be maintained only when local economic growth and the company monopoly on local public transportation ensured steady profits. When these conditions ceased to exist in the 1910s, contention over control of the labour process and labour market surfaced at the BCER.

Like the BCER, B.C. Telephones was a growing and profitable local utility. Its expansion was based on rising population and the establishment of the telephone as a general household convenience instead of just a business service.⁷ Not enough is known of its financial history to determine whether impediments to capital accumulation were sources of objects of contention, but it is known that

5. Jitneys were private passenger cars that cruised busy streets, picking up passengers. They were usually cheaper and faster than the street railway, but they were unreliable, had no fixed routes or schedules, and took only the cream of street car traffic. See Roy, "A British Company," pp. 204-14; Schmidt, *Industrial Relations in Urban Transportation*, pp. 23-24, 45-46.

6. The term "impersonal management" was used in an editorial on the street railway situation in *B.C. Federationist*, July 30, 1915, p. 2.

7. The following account is based primarily on Bernard, *Long Distance Feeling*.

expansion of the service was accompanied by contentious changes in the working conditions of telephone operators and electrical linemen.

The work of telephone operators was critical to the telephone service in an era of manual switching equipment, and their wages were a major expense for the telephone company. Wages were at first kept to a minimum by employing boys, but they were replaced by more disciplined young women in the 1890s. As service expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of operators rose, and the labour process became centralized in exchanges, where it was more directly under management control, and the work pace was faster.⁸

Management control over telephone operators was solidified through the prevention and destruction of operators' unions, and a combination of scientific management and paternalism. The destruction of an operators' union was achieved after a 1906 strike, leaving the way open for the second set of policies. Scientific management was represented by strict discipline, close supervision, and incentives for speed and accuracy. Paternalism took the form of the promotion of a desirable, professional image for telephone operators, a company magazine, a dining room and lounge, and a sickness benefit fund.⁹

8. See the description of a new exchange in 1900: "Miss Murray, the chief operator, sitting at her desk in front of the switchboard, has a view of the entire room, and is able to note any inattention the girls at the board show to their work. She is also able, owing to her facilities for cutting in on the line to listen to any conversation carried on by the operators, and so supervise their work." Province, June 29, 1900.

9. In a last-ditch attempt to prevent the re-emergence of a union during the war, B.C. Telephones even started a holiday camp, and provided a

Electrical linemen performed maintenance and installation work from the switchboards to the homes and businesses of subscribers. They started out as all-round electrical craftsmen, but as telephone technology developed, the skills required for telephone work and for other electrical work increasingly diverged, and the telephone company tried to gain more control over the labour process by turning its electrical workers into telephone specialists. It was in the electrical workers' interest to resist this tendency and preserve their craft skills, so deskilling became an object of contention at the B.C. Telephones.¹⁰

In contrast to the street railway and the telephone company monopolies, the teaming business was highly competitive.¹¹ Wages were the principal cost for drayage companies (50 to 75 per cent according to one source), and the intensity of competition in this branch of transportation meant that in order to compete, employers kept wages of teamsters low and hours long. For example, one employer noted at a meeting of owners and drivers in 1910 that a scheme for the reduction of teamsters' hours would work only if every employer adhered to it,

 "welfare superintendent" to improve working conditions and ensure cordial operator-management relations. See Province, Feb. 16, 1907, June 19, 1909, Jan. 17, 21, 1918; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 40-44, 46-47.

10. See Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 38-39, 66.

11. One indication is that in the categories "express and drays," "hacks," and "transfer companies," the City Directory listed sixty-five different firms in the city of Vancouver in 1911. Henderson's Greater Vancouver, New Westminster and Fraser Valley Directory, 1911, pp. 1556, 1579, 1696-97. Teamsters were also employed by department stores, grocers, wholesale merchants, lumber and fuel companies, etc.

otherwise those still working long hours would undercut the others.¹² Low wages and long hours were therefore in the interests of individual capitalists in the industry.

With the exception of teamsters, most workers in local transportation and utilities in the Vancouver area worked for companies with a substantial degree of monopoly power. As a consequence of that power, managements had more discretion in relations with workers than companies under more direct competitive pressures. They used this latitude to shape the organization of production, control, and supervision to a degree generally not attained in other industries. They also used it to provide employee benefits that were generally not available in other industries, but always as instances of corporate paternalism, to be dispensed and withdrawn at the discretion of management, depending on economic conditions and the actions of employees. To understand those actions, we must look at the social reproduction cycles of workers in transportation and public utilities.

11.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

— Over 3000 workers employed in local transportation and public

12. One employer who had given his teamsters a half-holiday on Saturdays in 1909 had been forced by competition to give up the practice. Province, Jan. 11, 1910, Feb. 7, 25, 1910. On wages as a large proportion of costs, see D. Garnet, *The Rise of Teamster Power in the West*, p. 49.

utilities lived in the city of Vancouver in 1911 and 1921, comprising over 8 per cent of the workers there (Table 11-1). Four main groups of workers were employed in the industry: street railway employees at the BCER, electrical workers at the BCER and B.C. Telephones, telephone operators at B.C. Telephones, and teamsters employed by cartage companies, merchants, etc. Each group will be examined in turn.

Street Railway Employees

All of the street railway employees in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Victoria worked for one employer, the BCER. The number of street railway workers increased rapidly as the street railway system grew, from 284 in the three cities in 1903, to about 400 motormen and conductors in Vancouver alone by 1911.¹³

Although the skill level involved in street railway work was itself an object of contention between companies and employees, motormen and conductors can be considered semi-skilled machine operators (the former more so than the latter).¹⁴ They were not threatened by technological change as were craft workers, but they did face several threats from the company, such as new forms of management control, speed-ups, and declining real wages. They also worked long hours, with

13. BCER trackage grew from nearly 52 miles in 1905 to over 350 miles in 1913. Province, Sept. 22, 1903; Roy, "A British Company," p. 92; Table 11-1.

14. See Schmidt, Industrial Relations in Urban Transportation, pp. 81-85.

Table 11-1

Workers in Local Transportation and Utilities,
City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%
STREET RAILWAYS	520	17.6	509	15.9
Motormen & conductors	409	12.6	411	12.8
Labourers	60	1.7	27	0.8
Other employees	151	4.3	71	2.2
POWER WORKERS	546	15.4	535	16.7
Electricity & gas works [1]	339	9.6	117	3.7
Engineers & firemen [2]	207	5.9	418	13.1
TELEGRAPH & TELEPHONE	340	9.6	738	23.1
Operators [3]	327	9.3	660	20.6
Linemen	13	0.4	78	2.4
TEAMSTERS	1799	51.2	1354	42.3
Cab, Express & Delivery	1244	35.4	874	27.3
Trade & Merchandising Labourers & Drivers	555	15.8	480	15.0
OTHER	209	5.9	64	2.0
Other employees [4]	52	1.5	64	2.0
Road builders	157	4.5	-	-
TOTAL	3514	100.0	3200	100.0

Sources: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: [1] In 1921, electricians, generation & distribution; electricity & gas works employees; metermen, electricity & gas.
 [2] In 1911, engineers & firemen, n.o.s.; in 1921, stationary engineers, n.o.s.
 [3] In 1921, 516 of these were telephone operators.
 [4] In 1921, bridge & gate tenders, grain elevator employees, foremen, other employees, labourers.

split shifts, for seven days a week.¹⁵ Objects of contention pitting their interests against those of the owners were therefore not lacking, especially when BCER paternalism declined.

Group formation among street railway workers was shaped by their work and by the labour policies of the company. Motormen and conductors all performed much the same work (except for those on inter-urban lines in the Fraser valley), under similar conditions, since they all worked for the same company. They were all men, and there are no reports of ethnic divisions in the workforce.¹⁶ The internal labour market of the company, with its seniority provisions in pay and benefits made street railway men one of the most settled groups of workers in Vancouver, and consequently, they fit the type of settled urban workers.¹⁷

Electrical Workers

Most electrical workers were employed by the BCER, or B.C. Telephones, while smaller numbers worked for the city of New Westminster and the Western Canada Power Co. In 1911, over 300 workers in

15. See Province, March 13, 1905; Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 283; B.C. Federationist, March 17, 1916, p. 1.

16. Although they were all men, the street railway employees' union did not oppose female street car conductors, as long as they were paid the same wage as men. B.C. Federationist, Nov. 24, 1916, p. 4.

17. Although the work of motormen at least could be considered 'machine tending,' street railway employees cannot be considered a factory proletariat.

electricity and gas works,¹⁸ and a handful of telephone linemen lived in the city of Vancouver. By 1921, the former declined (for unknown reasons) to only slightly over 100 workers, but the latter increased sixfold (Table 11-1). Linemen were not as numerous as the others, but more is known about them, and they were more active in struggles with capital.

Electrical workers were skilled craftsmen, who unlike some of the other crafts, were products of new technology, not threatened by it. Their work was essentially the same whether performed for the power company or telephone company (except for the work of power station operators). All three branches of the craft were represented in both fields of employment: cable splicing, stringing and maintaining outdoor wire, and indoor wiring. A skilled electrical worker could perform both types of work, but more pressures towards specialization existed in telephone work. The telephone company encouraged the development of telephone specialists, such as the specialized indoor wiremen who installed phones and serviced switchboards, rather than all-round electrical craftsmen.¹⁹ For that reason, telephone linemen were a craft in crisis.

Group formation was strongly favored by the conditions of electrical workers. They worked in a skilled, hazardous craft requiring

18. Gas workers were employed by the BCER, which bought Vancouver Gas Co. in 1904. Roy, "A British Company," p. 164.

19. See Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 66-69.

specialized knowledge.²⁰ Because skills were interchangeable between employers, they were mobile workers.²¹ Other aspects of their social reproduction cycles encouraged solidarity: they were all men, and they were apparently not divided by ethnic differences.²² Finally, nearly all worked for large, monopolistic utility companies.

Telephone Operators

Because of the expansion of the telephone system, the number of telephone and telegraph operators in the city of Vancouver grew from 327 in 1911 to 660 in 1921, of which over 500 were telephone operators

20. Although an IDIA Board noted in 1911 that "men working for a Telephone Company must be young, strong and active men, and that as an average, they cannot employ a man over forty years of age; that his employment is considered an extra hazardous class of work, and for this reason he is unable to obtain Life Insurance at anything like a rate which he could afford to pay...", telephone work was less dangerous than electric power work, because of the higher voltages involved in the latter. A different board in 1915 observed that work for the BCER was even more dangerous: "It was quite evident to us that the work of these employees of the B.C. Electric was much more hazardous than that of similar workmen employed by a telephone company ... It is skilled and dangerous work, requiring years of experience. It should only be pursued by competent men, not only for their own protection, but as a safeguard to the public..." Labour Gazette XII (1911), p. 569, XVI (1915), p. 435; cf. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp 110-11, 296; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp 14-15.

21. The latter could be a source of weakness at the local level, because, as the Vancouver local of the electrical workers union noted in 1910, membership was always changing. Western Wage Earner, Oct. 1910, p. 7.

22. Over four fifths of workers in gas, power, and electric light firms in B.C. in 1918 were from Canada, the British Isles, or the U.S. B.C., Dept. of Labor, "Statistics of Trade and Industry". A large number of linemen for B.C. Telephones in 1911 were reported to be American. Labour Gazette XII (1911), p. 570.

(Table 11-1). Telephone operators worked for the same company as many electrical workers, but their social reproduction cycles were very different, with respect to labour process, gender, and age. The work of telephone operators was semi-skilled machine-tending,²³ which was closely supervised and regulated by a management employing scientific management techniques to increase control and productivity.²⁴ Telephone operators were in effect factory operatives, whose interests lay in preserving whatever job autonomy they could, and in protecting their wages in the face of company attempts to keep down labour costs.

The other differences between electrical workers and telephone operators affected group formation among the latter. In the first place, operators' mobility was restricted. Their skills were specific to the phone company, and the only prospect of advancement was to the position of supervisor.²⁵ Combined with the fact that they all performed the same work (except for a few long-distance operators), this ought to have promoted solidarity, but its effects were mitigated by a second feature of operators' social reproduction, namely their gender and age. Most telephone operators were female: over 90 per cent in

23. The Minimum Wage Board concluded that it took nine months for an operator to become experienced. B.C., Minimum Wage Board, Report, 1919, p. 90.

24. See Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 18-21, 39-44; above, page 523.

25. Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 40.

1921, for example.²⁶ Most were also young: in 1911 and 1921, four fifths of the women employed as telephone and telegraph operators in Vancouver were under twenty five.²⁷ Their youth reflected a high rate of turnover, as operators usually left the telephone company after about four years to marry or have children.²⁸ In such temporary employment, solidarity and mobilization would be hard to sustain as operators came and went.

At least solidarity was not compromised by ethnic differences. The company recruited women of Canadian, British, and American origins almost exclusively.²⁹ And like electrical workers, all telephone operators worked for the same monopolistic company, although they were dispersed in several different exchanges.

Teamsters

In 1911, perhaps 1500 teamsters employed by cab, express and delivery companies, merchants and other businesses, lived in the city of Vancouver. Although the increasing use of motor trucks reduced their number in the following decade, there were still well over 1000

26. Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 13; 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40. Most telegraph operators, in contrast, were men: 82 per cent in 1921.

27. Computed from 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table III; 1921 Census, Vol. VI, Table 40. In contrast, only 30 to 40 per cent of male telegraph and telephone operators were under 25.

28. Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 31; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 114.

29. Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 41.

teamsters in 1921 (Table 11-1).³⁰

Teamsters' interests were determined largely by the long hours and low pay that resulted from the competitiveness of the industry.³¹ With respect to group formation, teamsters differed from other local transportation workers in several important ways. In the first place, teamsters working in cartage and delivery were scattered among a large number of small firms, where employers and workers (who often worked side by side) were not as clearly distinguished as in larger transportation companies.³² Second, teamsters performed different kinds of work, for different kinds of employers. In addition to local cartage and delivery companies, they were employed by lumber, construction, and manufacturing companies, and by retail and wholesale merchants. The work included light delivery, transportation of passengers, sales on commission (for instance, bakery and dairy drivers), and heavy hauling. Third, group solidarity was favored despite this occupational diversity by the geographical concentration of teamsters' work and residence in

30. Since the census reports "labourers and drivers" under one category in trade and merchandising, it is not possible to be more exact. (I have assumed that half the labourers and drivers in the census were drivers.)

31. In 1910, teamsters officially had a ten hour day, but since an hour was added at each end of the day for care of the horses, it worked out to twelve hours. Province, Feb. 5, 1910. For comparable conditions in San Francisco, see R.E.L. Knight, Industrial Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1900-1918, pp. 3, 59.

32. See Garnel, The Rise of Teamster Power in the West, p. 34. This has the further consequence that the census data probably include numerous self-employed teamsters, but it is impossible to determine how many.

the downtown area.³³ Because of these characteristics, teamsters might be considered settled urban workers, but not enough is known about their occupational and geographical mobility to be sure.

Teamsters were occupationally very diversified, but they were less diversified in other aspects of their social reproduction. Little is known about the ethnicity of teamsters, except for reports of some Asian drivers in 1918.³⁴ All teamsters in Vancouver were men.³⁵

In summary, workers in local transportation and utilities had several similarities and differences that affected their interests and solidarities. In terms of skill, only electrical workers were a craft, all the others being either semi-skilled machine operators (street railway employees, telephone operators), or relatively unskilled (teamsters). Most worked for large, monopolistic companies, only teamsters worked for a variety of small firms. Again with the possible exception of teamsters, each group was ethnically homogeneous, and with the exception of telephone operators, each was entirely male. Job mobility was different for each group: street railway workers were settled urban workers, tied into the seniority system of the company; electrical workers were geographically mobile craft workers; telephone

33. Their work was mostly in the warehouse district around Water Street, and because their hours were so long, teamsters were forced to live near downtown. See Province, Feb. 7, 1910, Aug. 25, 1916.

34. B.C. Federationist, Feb. 22, 1918, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1918, May 2, 1918.

35. Three quarters of them were 25 years of age or older. 1911 Census, Vol. 3, Table III, 1921 Census, Vol 6, Table 40.

operators had little job mobility, but most did not stay in the wage labour force long; teamsters had the possibility of moving into self-employment. Except for electrical workers, whose craft was in crisis, and who were therefore concerned with job control, the interests of most local transportation workers could be expected to lie in wages and hours, and in protecting their capacity to mobilize and act collectively in the face of large monopolistic corporations (or intensely competitive small capitalists, in the case of teamsters).

Now that aspects of the social reproduction of workers in local transportation and utilities have been considered, we can turn to the histories of mobilization and collective action by each of these groups of workers.

11.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

Workers in local transportation and utilities had widely different experiences of mobilization and collective action. Street railway workers were solidly organized, and had tranquil relations with their employer until the economic foundations of BCER paternalism began to crumble in the 1910s. In contrast, electrical workers and telephone operators' unions had to fight for their existence against a large, hostile employer for practically the entire 1900-19 period. Teamsters were different again, as they repeatedly tried and failed to build an organization composed of workers employed by many small firms. The

history of mobilization and collective action of each will be organized around the main branches of local transportation and utilities: street railway and electric power, telephones, and local teaming and delivery.

Street Railway and Electric Power Workers

Paternalism was triumphant at the BCER from 1900 to 1909, in decline from 1910 to 1915, and in crisis from 1916 to 1919. Relations between the union and the company were generally amicable throughout the first period; in the second, the expansion of the labour force and the economic crisis led to growing tensions; in the third, war capitalist period, they finally exploded.

All the street railway employees in the Vancouver area were organized in the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, a conservative, non-militant industrial union which was recognized by the BCER.³⁶ The Amalgamated was the largest union in Vancouver in 1905, with 201 members, and by 1908 it had grown to 334.³⁷ Motormen and conductors made up the large majority of members, but the union also included electricians, shopmen, barnmen, car repairers, blacksmiths, painters, lamp trimmers, trackmen, and accountants.³⁸

36. A local had been organized in Vancouver in 1898, and one in New Westminster in 1901.

37. Province, Oct. 21, 1905; Labour Gazette III (1902), p. 319; VTLC Minutes, June 4, 1908.

38. Electrical linemen were members at first, but withdrew when they found that it conflicted with their allegiance to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Blacksmiths and painters belonged to both the Amalgamated and the unions of their own trade. The

The conservatism of the Amalgamated Association was amply reinforced by the BCER in the early 1900s.³⁹ A profit-sharing scheme was introduced in 1902, and wages and benefits were related to seniority. A company pension plan was rejected in 1906, but accepted in 1908, and a three year agreement incorporating increased wages and shorter hours was signed in 1907.⁴⁰ All of these measures had their desired effect, and management was highly esteemed by employees. For example, A.G. Perry, the local president of the Amalgamated Association, stated in 1905: "One of the principles of the union is to consider the company as our best friend. In fact the officials of the company have shown all along that they are. Therefore every man works for the company's interests just as faithfully as if they were his own."⁴¹

main challenge to the union came from craft unions trying to draw away its members, which if successful "would leave a divided and broken body to fight aggressive corporated [sic] capital," according to the local union. VTLC Minutes, April 2, 1903; Independent, April 4, 1903.

39. At a banquet for the visiting president of the Amalgamated Association, W.D. Mahon, the Vancouver manager of the BCER, J. Buntzen, extolled the cordial relations between management and employees, and received a standing ovation from the latter. Mahon then discussed the history of the union, and attributed its success to the fact that "the management of a great number of roads were glad to have the men organized, as it gave them less trouble." Province, Aug. 11, 1902.

40. Province, July 28, 1906, July 6, 1907, Aug. 1, 1907, April 9, 1908, June 30, 1908; VTLC Minutes, July 2, 1908.

41. Province, Oct. 21, 1905; cf. the illuminated address presented (with a composite photograph of all the Vancouver employees) to General Manager Buntzen in 1904: "We cannot express too strongly our appreciation of the generous way you have treated us, and of the kindly and able manner in which you have adjusted our differences ... Procuring for us a percentage of the profits of the company has been a great boon... Since you have assumed the position of general manager we have worked in harmony and we feel that we have a personal interest in the welfare of the company." Province, Nov. 25, 1904; for more of the

The few disputes between management and workers in this period were only minor variations on the theme of harmony. A successful half-hour strike by street railway workers for the removal of an "obnoxious superintendent" may have occurred in 1903, and in July, 1906, some electrical workers won improved conditions after a strike of unknown duration.⁴²

Beginning in 1910, the stable accommodation between the company and its workers declined as the labour force grew, and was further weakened by the pre-war economic crisis and jitney competition. The first indication of paternalism's decline was the end of the profit-sharing system in 1910. Because the increasing number of employees meant that the share received by each had been declining since 1907, they traded it for a wage increase in negotiations with the company.⁴³

Relations between the BCER and its street railway employees remained cordial after the 1910 agreement, but as company revenues fell in the pre-war depression, the street railwaymen were put on the defensive by company attacks on established conditions. According to employees, it protested "every inch" of the old agreement in 1913, tried to retract longstanding concessions on working arrangements and

same, cf. *ibid.*, July 5, 1905, July 10, 1905.

42. On the 1903 strike, see *B.C. Federationist*, June 15, 1917, p. 8 (it was not reported at the time); the 1906 strike is mentioned (with no details) in *VTLC Minutes*, July 18, 1906, Aug. 2, 1906.

43. *Province*, May 30, 1910, June 16, 29, 1910, Dec. 7, 1910; *Western Wage Earner*, Nov. 1910, p. 18. The union remained strong, as it grew with the expansion of the BCER. *Western Wage Earner*, Feb. 1910, p. 7

seniority in the mechanical departments, and challenged the industrial organization of the union by refusing to allow new classes of employees (who were already union members) to be included in the agreement.⁴⁴ The dispute was referred to an IDIA Conciliation Board, which made recommendations that would have reduced the real wages of most street railwaymen.⁴⁵ As a result, a strike nearly occurred at the end of August, after a mass meeting of more than 900 street railway employees voted 80 per cent in favor of rejecting the report. It was avoided when the BCER made concessions on working conditions.⁴⁶

44. B.C. Federationist, June 22, 1912, p. 3, July 4, 18, 1913, p. 1. The new classes of employees at the BCER included auto drivers, steam shovel operators, station agents, operators, teamsters, and foremen.

45. In their August 1913 report, the chairman and employer's representative started from the premise that the company should have "absolute control of all features that seemed vital to the operation and maintenance of their railway system." Although the "safety and comfort" of employees was subordinate to this principle, they allowed that job security and seniority did not contradict it. They further conceded that while "wages under the present constitution of society are governed in the last analysis by the law and supply and demand," it was necessary to pay every man a "living wage," which was enough "to justify a young man to make a life career of it," that is, "to enable him, by the exercise of thrift and economy ... to within a reasonable time found a home and rear a family." After this defense of the idea of a family wage, and the observation that the cost of living had risen since 1910, they recommended an increase in the hourly rate for motormen and conductors in their first year of employment, leaving the rates for subsequent years unaltered. The net result of this curious logic was a reduction in the real wages of most employees, especially older, married employees trying to raise families, as the employees' representative, local cost of living expert Moses Cotsworth, observed in his minority report. After documenting a 16 per cent rise in the cost of living since 1910, he recommended increases in the hourly rates of all employees. Labour Gazette XIV (1913), pp. 268-304.

46. Province, Aug. 29, 30, 1913; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 29, 1913, p. 1, Sept. 5, 1913, p. 1; Sept. 19, 1913, pp. 3, 5, 7, 8.

Despite the 1913 agreement, the company tried to assert unilateral control over its employees without interference from their union, in contravention of past agreements and past practice. In 1914, overtime pay for night car repairers was reduced, running schedules changed, and employees summarily dismissed for alleged dishonesty. The 1913 conciliation board was re-established to examine the issues, and a strike was again threatened when the BCER rejected its majority report, which was favorable to employees. It finally backed down in August, however, and a strike was again averted.⁴⁷

The depression and competition from jitneys led to falling revenues and further conflict, as the BCER tried to cut costs by reducing staff and cutting wages.⁴⁸ The union avoided layoffs by dividing up work: in September 1914, service had been reduced by 15 per cent, and men with regular runs were laying off one day a week in order to give extras some work.⁴⁹

47. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 10, 1913, p. 1, Feb. 20, 1914, p. 1, March 20, 1914, p. 1, April 10, 17, 1914, p. 1, Aug. 14, 1914, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 16, 1913, March 5, 19, 1914, May 7, 1914, Aug. 6, 30, 1914; Sun, Oct. 3, 6, 1913; Labour Gazette XV (1914), pp. 53-59.

48. For example, 100 of the 1050 members of the Amalgamated Association in Vancouver were laid off in January 1914. In August 1915, the BCER pasted slips on the back of pay cheques, reading, "To unmarried men: Your King and Country Need You. We Can Spare You." So far it was only hinting, not dismissing single men.

49. By December, union membership had declined to 980 in Vancouver, of which 150 would have been unemployed had the union not adopted short time for all members in preference to layoffs. In New Westminster, union membership fell from 500 at the beginning of 1914 to 300 in 1915, after the company refused to allow short time any longer in the mechanical department. VTLC Minutes, Jan. 15, 1914, Sept. 17, 1914, Dec. 17, 1914, Feb. 4, 18, 1915, March 18, 1915, May 6, 1915; B.C.

Layoffs and short time were accompanied by wage reductions that again nearly led to a strike. At hearings of the IDIA board investigating the 15 per cent wage reduction demanded by the BCER, contradictions between the imperatives of capital accumulation and of workers' social reproduction were clearly revealed. The company argued for a wage reduction on the grounds of its present financial condition, the supply and demand for labour, a general fall in wages during the depression, and a decline in the cost of living since 1913. It also sought once again to abolish seniority provisions that it thought infringed on the untrammelled control the employer should exercise over production. The employees in contrast simply argued for a living wage, and maintained that wages had been too low in the past, when the BCER was enjoying the profits of the boom years. They also believed that instead of declining, the cost of living had actually risen since 1913. The majority of the board accepted most of the company's arguments, and recommended an 8 per cent wage reduction.⁵⁰

Federationist, Nov. 6, 1914, p. 1, Dec. 18, 1914, p. 3, Feb. 5, 1915, p. 3, Feb. 12, 1915, p. 1, June 4, 1915, p. 4; Province, Jan. 28, 1915; British Columbian, Aug. 17, 1915.

50. It rejected the attack on seniority and supported the principle advocated by employees that reductions in hours were preferable to layoffs in the car shops and barns, however. In his minority report, the employees' representative, J.H. McVety, dismissed the company's alleged inability to pay with the observation that it always pleaded poverty, and observed that when employees had not shared in the benefits of boom times, they should not be forced to pay for investments that were temporarily unremunerative. He rebutted other company arguments, and pointed out that the employees had not received a wage increase since 1910, while the cost of living had risen steadily until 1914, regardless of what had happened since. For reports on testimony before the board, see Province, July 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 29, 31, 1915, Aug. 9, 10, 1915. The reports of the board are in Labour Gazette XVI (1915),

The company accepted the majority report, and although it threatened dismissals if it was rejected by the employees, a large majority of workers in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Victoria defiantly declared their readiness to strike. Their militancy was sabotaged by the international headquarters of the union, which refused to sanction a strike after being contacted by BCER General Manager Kidd, and the demoralized street railway employees accepted a compromise settlement.⁵¹ BCER employees were unhappy with both the compromise and their union, and after complaints from the New Westminster local to the international headquarters received the response that dissatisfied members could leave the organization, union members began to think about forming a new association. The pre-war depression thus ended with street railwaymen living up to company complaints in 1915 about the "spirit of independence of the men."⁵²

Street railway employees were not the only BCER workers with a "spirit of independence," and in 1915 the company began to attack the established conditions of its electrical workers. It demanded wage reductions, longer hours of work, changes in working conditions, and abolition of the seniority principle in staff reductions; it also

pp 407-33.

51. Modifications were made to the terms of union recognition, the length of the contract, and wages for trackmen. Only half the employees at the mass meeting to ratify the agreement voted.

52. Labour Gazette XVI (1915), p. 433; Province, Aug. 31, 1915, Sept. 1, 3, 4, 1915; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 1, 1915, p. 3, March 17, 1916, p. 3; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 2, 1915; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," pp. 11-12.

dismissed several employees, and refused to participate in the IDIA inquiry requested by the workers.⁵³ The BCER nonetheless received some of its demands.⁵⁴

BCER management's attack on the electrical workers' union intensified in 1916. It set out to break the union (IBEW local 213) that General Manager Kidd called "one of the most costly and offensive Unions any company ever had to deal with," and whose leaders were "aggressive labour agitators with extreme socialistic and syndicalistic views."⁵⁵ Linemen had been willing to negotiate without the union in 1915, but labour shortages that appeared in 1916 gave them the opportunity to become more militant, and when management refused to meet union officials to discuss wage reductions, thirty-five linemen in Vancouver went on strike.

The solidarity of street railwaymen helped the electrical workers win their strike. After reports that the BCER was hiring strikebreakers through the Thiel Detective Agency, street railwaymen threatened to strike unless the company met with the linemen's union officials "forthwith," and negotiated a satisfactory agreement. This

53. The dismissals were allegedly for reasons of economy, but they were probably to put pressure on the employees to accept company demands. The union construed them as a lockout and charged the BCER with violation of the IDIA, but the case was dismissed in Police Court. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 27, 1915, p. 1; Labour Gazette XVI (1915), pp. 584-85.

54. B.C. Federationist, May 14, 1915, p. 1; Labour Gazette XVI (1915), pp. 434-39; Province, Sept. 11, 1915.

55. Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," p. 12, fn. 34.

kind of sympathetic action was what BCER management feared most, so they recognized the IBEW again, gave the electrical workers a wage increase, and in addition remedied many of the street railway workers' grievances.⁵⁶

The contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction led in 1917 to the first major strike of street railway employees. As the rising cost of living started to bite into their real wages, BCER employees were forced to fight for higher pay against a company squeezed between rising costs on one hand, and fixed fares and jitney competition on the other. Starting on June 13, 1917, over 1000 street railway employees in Vancouver, North Vancouver, and New Westminster (but not employees on interurban lines), and over 200 in Victoria went on strike for an all-round 5 per cent wage increase. A thorough picketing system was established, and the electrical workers threatened to strike if strikebreakers were introduced. The company made no attempt to run its street cars, thus avoiding the violence that occurred in street railway strikes elsewhere.⁵⁷ Management argued that

56. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 305, file 16(46); B.C. Federationist, Aug. 25, 1916, p. 1, Sept. 1, 22, 1916, p. 1,; Province, Aug. 24, 1916, Sept. 9, 1916; Sun, Aug. 25, 1916; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 21, 1916; Labour Gazette XVI (1916), pp. 1622, 1639; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," pp. 11, 13. Street railway workers achieved a longstanding goal in 1916: legislative limitation of their work week to six days, finally allowing them time for recreation and for their families. See Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 283; VTLC Minutes, Jan. 20, 1916; B.C. Federationist, March 17, 1916, p. 1, April 7, 1916, p. 1, May 5, 1916, p. 4.

57. See Kealey, Toronto Workers, pp. 200-11; B. Palmer, "'Give Us the Road and We Will Run It': The Social and Cultural Matrix of an Emerging Labour Movement"; Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, pp. 11-14, Palmer, Culture in Conflict, pp. 211-16.

they could not afford to pay the wages demanded unless restrictions were placed on jitneys, which were doing a flourishing business during the strike, and under pressure from the Retail Merchants Association and other business groups worried about the effects of the strike on trade, the province appointed Dr. Adam Shortt of the Dominion Civil Service Commission to investigate transportation in the strike-bound cities. The union refused to return to work pending the result of the inquiry, and hinted that the electrical workers would also strike. Consequently, the BCER agreed to pay the wage increase in the expectation that the results would be favorable to it, and the strikers returned to work on June 21.⁵⁸ Shortt's report did support the company position, and jitney competition was finally eliminated in the spring of 1918.⁵⁹

The militancy of BCER employees continued, resulting in concurrent strikes by street railway and electric power workers in 1918. Electrical workers demanded wage increases to a level comparable to the booming shipyards, an eight hour day, changes in staffing levels, and the closed shop from the BCER, Western Canada Power, and B.C. Telephones. Although the first two employers had applied for an IDIA board to investigate the dispute, 282 electrical workers in Vancouver (and 35 in Victoria) went on strike on July 2. On the same day, over 1100 street railwaymen in Vancouver (and 200 in Victoria) struck for a

58. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 305, file 17(17); B.C. Federationist, May 18, 1917, p. 6, May 25, 1917, p. 1, June 1, 1917, p. 2, June 22, 1917, pp. 1, 15; Province, June 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 1917; Sun, June 22, 1917; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," pp. 13-15.

59. Roy, "The BCER, 1897-1928," pp. 244-50.

wage increase, an eight hour day, and changes in working conditions.⁶⁰

The crux of both disputes was control of the workplace. The electrical workers demanded a closed shop because "the employees ... feel that they should have more say in the running of the business than they have at present," and the employment of non-union men made it more difficult to enforce union working conditions. The closed shop was "their one protection." The company considered control over production to be entirely a management prerogative, as it made clear in its response to the street railwaymen's demands concerning working conditions: "...many onerous and entirely new conditions have been incorporated into an agreement which previously left little enough control in the hands of the management. If these conditions were embodied in a new agreement the management could not possible hold itself responsible to the public for the operation of the system." The company also pleaded that it was losing money, and therefore could not afford to pay higher wages, or to hire the additional employees necessary if hours were reduced, and it again challenged the jurisdiction of the union, by objecting to the inclusion of freight department and station employees in the agreement.⁶¹

Except for sympathetic actions by shipyard workers (see Chapter 8 above), the strikes of street railway and electrical workers were

60. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(165); Province, June 7, 10, 18, 1918, July 2, 4, 1918; B.C. Federationist, June 21, 1918.

61. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(142); Province, May 14, 15, 23, 1918, July 5, 1918; B.C. Federationist, May 17, 1918, p. 4, June 21, 28, 1918, p. 8; Sun, July 1, 1918; Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), pp. 575-88.

uneventful.⁶² The electrical workers won all but one of their demands on July 10, and the next day (after having won a fare increase from Vancouver and other municipalities) the company granted the main demands of the street railwaymen.⁶³ Electrical workers abruptly walked out at the BCER at midnight, July 13, because after they had returned to work two days earlier, the BCER had laid off twenty to twenty-five union men (while retaining strikebreakers), and withdrawn longstanding fringe benefits (free transportation, reduced power rates). The strikers also demanded that rehiring after layoffs be done on the basis of seniority, and that a certain superintendent be dismissed. By striking again so soon, the electrical workers showed their high level of militancy, and their determination to defend craft controls over the job and the labour market. The company vehemently condemned the strikers, but on July 16 they conceded all but the last demand.⁶⁴

The strikes by BCER employees in 1918 were successful for three reasons. First, the solidarity of street railway and electrical workers strengthened the hand of each. Second, they were strengthened by wartime labour shortages, which prevented their easy replacement by

62. BCER officials managed to keep up the domestic power supply, but could not generate enough to operate the street railway, and hundreds of jitneys reappeared on Vancouver streets.

63. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, files 18(142) and 18(165); B.C. Federationist, July 5, 12, 1918, p. 1; Province, July 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 1918.

64. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(166); Sun, July 14, 17, 1918; Province, July 15, 16, 17, 1918; B.C. Federationist, July 19, 1918, p. 1. The issue of the objectionable superintendent was submitted to Mayor Gale (one of the architects of the strike settlement) for investigation.

strikebreakers. President Cottrell of the Vancouver branch of the Amalgamated Association revealed one of the sources of the 1918 strike wave when he stated that the men knew the labour market would be flooded with returned soldiers at the end of the war, so if they did not get the eight hour day immediately, they would not get it. This combination of opportunity and threat was conducive to militancy. Third, the BCER was vulnerable in 1918, because its franchise agreements were coming up for renewal that year, and it did not want a long strike to alienate the municipalities with which it had to negotiate.⁶⁵

In other industries, stronger mobilization and growing militancy during war capitalism led to support for the radical events of 1918-19. The same was true of the street railway.⁶⁶ Although they had voted against a general strike in the Duncan Kerr case (Table 1-1), BCER employees in Vancouver (but not in New Westminster) were strong supporters of the twenty-four hour Goodwin protest strike in 1918.⁶⁷

Because they were crucial to the urban transportation system, street railwaymen were also important actors in the 1919 general strikes. In Vancouver, the union was sharply divided on the advisability of the strike, and on June 2, the day before it was to

65. World, June 26, 1918; B.C. Federationist, June 21, 1918, p. 8.

66. Signs of radicalism appeared earlier as well: the Vancouver local of the Amalgamated Association voted in favor of socialism in the 1912 BCFL referendum (New Westminster voted against), and it opposed registration and conscription in 1916-17, voting in favor of a general strike against the latter. B.C. Federationist, May 5, 1912, p. 3, Nov. 24, 1916, p. 4; VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917, June 21, 1917.

67. See Chapter 1 above.

begin, they voted more than two to one against striking.⁶⁸ For two days, they followed the advice of international headquarters and kept the cars running, despite pickets at the car barns and on the street cars themselves, but at an all-night meeting on June 5, with longshoremen and other militant strikers demonstrating outside, the street railwaymen voted two to one in favor of joining the strike. More than 1200 union members in Vancouver stayed out until the Winnipeg strike ended on June 26. They returned to work on June 30 after a majority of 45 (out of 750 voting) were in favor of ending the strike.⁶⁹ As in other industries, street railway workers in New Westminster were less radical than their Vancouver counterparts, but they all walked out in the general strike there.⁷⁰

68. Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," p. 19, mentions a figure of 518 to 209, without giving any source. According to a RNWMP secret agent, the union local was controlled by older, more conservative members, and the radicals were younger men. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), Special Agent No. 11, Vancouver, May 22 (1919). This generational split also existed in dissension within the union in 1918-19 over the seniority system and swing (or split) shifts. Young street railwaymen with little seniority formed the B.C. Electric Reform Association within the union, and promoted swing shifts, which the union executive opposed. More research is needed on this dispute. See B.C. Federationist, Jan. 25, 1918, p. 1, March 1, 1918, p. 8, April 18, 1919, p. 7, July 11, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, March 6, 1919, April 10, 1919, May 5, 1919; VTLC Executive Board Minutes, March 27, 1919, May 6, 1919; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," p. 21.

69. The small majority led to a heated debate at the mass meeting on June 28 during which the decision to return to work was taken. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190A); Province, May 30, 1919, June 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 30, 1919, July 3, 1919; Sun, June 2, 3, 13, 26, 30, 1919; VTLC Minutes, June 5, 12, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 1; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," pp. 19-21.

70. They were originally against a general strike, but the membership voted by a 70 per cent majority on June 8 to strike if military force

Street railway workers in Vancouver contributed to the 1918 and 1919 general strikes, but they did not emerge as supporters of the OBU in 1919. No vote on the OBU by the Vancouver union branch was recorded, and the New Westminster branch voted more than two to one against affiliation (Table 1-3). They stayed in the Amalgamated Association, because it was already a well-established industrial union, and unlike many of the workers who flocked to the OBU, they did not need to try a new form of organization. They held aloof from the internecine battles between the supporters and opponents of the OBU,⁷¹ and instead turned their attention back to immediate economic interests. The street railwaymen demanded higher pay and minor changes in working conditions from the BCER, and although they did not get what they wanted from the resulting IDIA inquiry, their militancy was apparently exhausted, and they accepted the board's report, beginning a period of relative tranquillity that was to last through the 1920s.⁷²

The history of mobilization and collective action by street railway employees and electric power workers illustrates the contradictions of corporate paternalism as a form of labour control.

was used in Winnipeg, or the state acted otherwise against organized labour. All the 250 street railway employees in New Westminster, including shop and repair workers, joined the strike when it was called June 18, but they decided to return to work on June 23, leading to the collapse of the strike. PAC, RG-37, Vol. 315, file 19(221); Province, June 3, 12, 23, 1919; Sun, June 10, 19, 20, 24, 1919.

71. E.g., the Vancouver branch tabled the OBU issue at the end of July, and did not join the new International VTLC. VTLC Minutes, July 31, 1919; VTLC(I) Minutes, Aug. 21, 1919, Nov. 5, 1919.

72. Labour Gazette XIX (1919), pp. 1394-99; Roy, "Paternalism in Labour Relations," p. 22.

The BCER was the most successful instance of paternalism in early twentieth century Vancouver, but its success depended on the employees remaining submissive, and accepting benefits bestowed on them by management with gratitude. By and large, BCER employees did this until about 1913, when the depressed economic conditions led company management to attempt to assert its unilateral control over the operations of the street railway. Consequently, at the beginning of the war capitalist boom, the BCER was no longer the "model" paternalistic employer of more prosperous times.⁷³ Because they were not ready to relinquish their own controls over work and the labour market, such as seniority rights, fair hearings in case of dismissals, and reductions in hours instead of layoffs, street railway men and electrical workers acted with a previously unknown militancy to defend their wages and working conditions, when wartime labour shortages gave them the opportunity to go on the offensive.⁷⁴ The radicalization of street railwaymen in 1918 and 1919 also followed from their experiences with BCER management since 1913.

73. Roy, *Paternalism in Labour Relations*, pp. 11-12.

74. Thus Roy (*"Paternalism in Labour Relations,"* p. 23) is mistaken when she concludes, "The strikes of 1917, 1918 and 1919 were aberrations from the general pattern and reflected the culmination of general labour unrest in the province rather than specific dissatisfaction with the B.C.E.R." She is on more solid ground when she attributes the militancy of BCER workers to the failure of paternalism: "Paternalism, in short, worked only in relatively stable and prosperous times." It was this limitation on paternalism that was the source of unrest.

Telephone Workers

In contrast to the paternalism and peace of the BCER in the early 1900s, the telephone company was the scene of intense conflict until 1906. Telephone operators struggled to organize against the hostility of the telephone company to their unions.⁷⁵ They were weakly mobilized because of their high turnover, and were defeated in crucial strikes because of the ability of the company to replace them with strikebreakers. Skilled electrical workers were less vulnerable to replacement, but they were forced to carry on a constant struggle to preserve their craft controls against company attempts to foster specialization.

Male electrical workers were the first telephone employees to organize, forming local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in November 1901. Within a year, they were fighting the company over the labour process, as fifteen electrical workers were locked out by the New Westminster and Burrard Inlet Telephone Company (the predecessor of B.C. Telephones) in September 1902, for refusing to follow new operating procedures which required ~~them~~ to provide tools "which custom has made the property of companies." The company gave in after three days, and also conceded union recognition.⁷⁶ The latter was soon rescinded, however, and the

75. Telephone companies elsewhere were also hostile to unions; cf. J. Sangster, "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers."

76. Independent, Nov. 23, 1901, Sept. 20, 1902, Province, Sept. 17, 18, 1902; Labour Gazette III (1902), p. 225, Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 17, 21.

company began a concerted attack on the electrical workers and on the telephone operators, who had been organized into Telephone Operators Auxilliary No. 1 of the IBEW after the strike. This attack led to strikes by telephone operators and electrical workers in 1902 and 1906.

The 1902 and 1906 strikes followed the same pattern: both were provoked by a company attack on the union, operators were replaced by strikebreakers, and the outcome of the strike consequently depended on public (especially business) opinion. The 1902 strike began in November, when the telephone company dismissed a prominent official in the operators' union and a union lineman.⁷⁷ About thirty telephone operators and electrical workers in Vancouver responded on November 26, by striking for union recognition, higher pay, shorter hours, and other demands. They were soon joined by six operators at New Westminster and others in Victoria. The phone service was only temporarily shut down however, as the company restored service with twenty-five local and outside strikebreakers housed in the telephone exchange.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the strikers were able to win a closed shop, union recognition, an eight hour day, and wage increases (although less than demanded), because they were able to mobilize public opinion. Vancouver

77. The company's superintendent was particularly hostile to the unionization of operators, who were all young women, and in the past had invited presumptuous 'girls' who asked for wage increases to resign. He ignored the numerous grievances of the operators, and regarded them only as tools of the electrical workers. Province, Nov. 26, 27, 28, 1902, Dec. 4, 1902; Independent, Nov. 29, 1902, Dec. 6, 1902; VTLC Minutes, Nov. 20, 1902; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 18.

78. Province, Nov. 27, 29, 1902, Dec. 1, 2, 6, 1902; Independent, Nov. 29, 1902, Dec. 6, 1902; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 23.

workers strongly backed them, but the support of subscribers, who were still mainly businessmen, was more important for the strike's outcome.⁷⁹ The striking female operators in particular won the sympathy of influential Vancouver businessmen, whose attempts to settle the dispute were ineptly sabotaged by the telephone company. It finally settled with the strikers after over two weeks, in order to protect its public franchise.⁸⁰

The closed shop won in 1902 "in practice never applied to the operators." Their union was weakened by a high turnover of young female operators, the absence of effective organization and education work by the male-dominated IBEW, and company employment policies that weakened union solidarity.⁸¹ A separate agreement was signed by the well-organized linemen in January 1906, and the company precipitated the second major telephone strike by trying to finish off the moribund operators' union. In return for higher pay and better holiday provisions, most operators signed a statement in January renouncing the union, but they changed their minds later in the month. After general

79. Support from other workers in Vancouver was expressed through refusal to act as strikebreakers, minor harassment of strikebreaking linemen, and financial support for operators (who received no union strike pay).

80. Province, Nov. 27, 28, 29, 1902, Dec. 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 1902; Independent, Dec. 13, 20, 1902. Much of this account of the strike is based on Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 22-28.

81. The latter included a training program, a bonus and incentive system for "special aptitude and attention to business," and promotions of several operators to "monitor girls." Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 31-33.

superintendent Kent tried in February to intimidate them into leaving the union, the operators were promised the support of the electrical workers, and they went on strike February 22, when the company refused to sign an agreement whose first clause was union recognition.⁸²

The electrical workers supported the operators by striking in sympathy, but the company was able to maintain service with operators who stayed at work, and strikebreakers from Vancouver Island. Other workers again offered moral and financial support, but the other public support that had helped the strikers in 1902 was absent this time. Since the 1903 UBRE strike, and the open shop drives that began not long after, employers in Vancouver were more hostile to unions, and the Vancouver Employers Association (whose president was W.T. Farrell of B.C. Telephones) was firmly behind the telephone company. The strike dragged on into the summer, and was obviously lost, but it was not officially called off until February 1907, by which time both the operators' and electrical workers' unions had fallen apart at the telephone company.⁸³ In the absence of the unions, the telephone company was able to proceed unhindered toward the introduction of telephone specialists in electrical work, and scientific management in operating.

82. Province, Feb. 21, 23, 24, 1906, March 17, 19, 1906; Labour Gazette VI (1906), pp. 1030-31; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 33-34.

83. About thirty-four operators and twenty-five electrical workers were on strike. Province, Feb. 24, 1906, June 26, 1906, Aug. 29, 1906, Feb. 27, 1907; VTLC Minutes, March 1, 1906, May 3, 17, 1906; Labour Gazette VI (1906), p. 1153; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 32-37. The IBEW local remained in existence, since it included workers in construction and at the BCER.

Electrical workers at B.C. Telephones were reorganized by the IBEW in 1910, and they proceeded to defend their craft and union against more company attacks. Their employers' attitude to negotiations was succinctly expressed by its representative on an IDIA board investigating the electrical workers' demand for a twenty-five cent wage increase: "leave the pay of the B.C. Telephone Company's employees to the Company."⁸⁴ The extensive employment of apprentices and less-skilled specialists was the main grievance of electrical workers, as the company whittled away at craft controls by training cheaper telephone specialists who lacked the all-round skills of the well-paid, well-organized, journeyman electrical workers, and who were more under company control.⁸⁵ This challenge to craft controls led to a strike against B.C. Telephones by about 150 electrical workers in the Vancouver area (and between 250 and 350 elsewhere in the province) in March 1913. The strikers demanded a fifty cent a day wage increase, double time for overtime, changes in the classification of journeymen, reduction of the apprentice ratio, and union recognition. After ten days on strike, they won every demand except the last.⁸⁶

84. Labour Gazette XII (1911), pp. 569-71; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 37-38; reports of the board's proceedings are in Province, Oct. 18, 19, 20, 1911, Nov. 2, 3, 1911.

85. In some departments, the ratio of apprentices to journeymen was as high as sixteen to seventeen, and one to two; the union wanted a one to four ratio. Province, March 15, 1913; Sun, March 15, 1913; B.C. Federationist, March 21, 28, 1913, p. 1; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 38-39.

86. The large number of strikers compared to previous strikes is a reflection of the growth of the telephone system. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 301,

Electrical workers suffered wage cuts during the pre-war depression, and in order to avoid layoffs, operators had to share work by taking one week off in four.⁸⁷ With the onset of the war capitalist boom in 1916, electrical workers restored their wages to former levels. They won another increase in 1917, but they were unable to strengthen craft controls through a closed shop or restrictions on the employment of lower paid "wire chiefs" as supervisors instead of foremen. To strengthen their bargaining position, the IBEW set out to reorganize the operators, and despite new welfare capitalist initiatives by the company,⁸⁸ IBEW local 77A was chartered in June 1918. In the same month, electrical workers won wage increases and a closed shop from B.C. Telephones, without the strike that occurred at the BCER over the same demands.⁸⁹ The electrical workers at B.C. Telephones were becoming more powerful.

Growing power and stronger mobilization were generally favorable for the development of radicalism, and both telephone operators and electrical workers played significant roles in the radical movement of 1918-19. Operators were excluded from the Goodwin protest strike call, and the electrical workers were seriously divided on the issue, so only

file 13(23); Province, March 15, 17, 19, 22, 1913; News-Advertiser, March 15, 1913; Sun, March 15, 1913; B.C. Federationist, March 21, 28, 1913; p. 1; Labour Gazette XIII (1913), pp. 1072, 1141; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 39.

87. Labour Gazette XVI (1915-16), pp. 405, 890.

88. See above, footnote 9.

89. B.C. Federationist, June 7, 1918, p. 8, June 21, 1918, p. 5; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 45-49.

a few went on strike at the telephone company.⁹⁰ Opinion within the IBEW was also divided over participation in the 1919 general strike, but all 120 linemen were out on its second day. Operators were originally exempt from the strike call, but when called out on June 13, about 325 operators and their immediate supervisors in Vancouver and New Westminster stopped work.⁹¹ As in previous operators' strikes, the telephone company immediately recruited strikebreakers, and despite picketing at phone exchanges by operators and electrical workers, it managed to keep the service operating in Vancouver.⁹² The company's refusal to reinstate all the striking operators to their old positions nearly prolonged the general strike, and kept the operators and electrical workers on strike until the middle of July, when they returned on company terms.⁹³

After this defeat, the operators' union was paralysed.⁹⁴ The electrical workers' local, in contrast, remained active, and was

90. Province, Aug. 2, 1918; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, p. 55.

91. Reports conflicted about how many operators belonged to the union, and joined the strike: the union claimed 75 to 85 per cent, the company 50 per cent. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190), Vol. 315, file 19(221), Vol. 317, file 19(285); Sun, June 5, 6, 13, 1919; World, June 6, 1919; VTLC Minutes, June 12, 1919; Province, June 13, 1919; British Columbian, June 13, 1919; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 57-59.

92. Province, June 13, 14, 18, 23, 25, 26, 1919.

93. Province, June 30, 1919, July 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 15, 16, 1919; VTLC Minutes, July 3, 1919; B.C. Federationist, July 4, 11, 18, 1919, p. 1; Sun, July 4, 11, 12, 13, 16, 1919; Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 61-62.

94. It finally disappeared in the late 1920s.

immediately embroiled in the factionalism surrounding the birth of the OBU. Over 60 per cent of the members of IBEW 213 who voted on joining the OBU were in favor (Table 1-3), but most of them must have worked for the BCER or in shipbuilding or construction, because telephone company electrical workers flocked to a new international local (IBEW 310) formed to replace local 213, which lost its charter because of its support for the OBU. The lack of support for the OBU by telephone company electrical workers is surprising, since as a craft in crisis, we would have expected them to be more radical. It seems that they had moved far enough on the road to becoming telephone specialists that the former mobility between telephone and other work no longer existed, and they wanted their own organization.⁹⁵ The position of telephone operators is less surprising, since few factory operatives supported the OBU, and they had been badly weakened by the failure of the strike.

Teamsters

Like telephone company workers, teamsters in Vancouver formed their first union in the early 1900s, won some improvements, then were defeated in a strike and entered on a period, extending from 1903 until 1914, during which repeated attempts to reorganize failed. Like many other workers, teamsters finally became well-organized and militant in the war capitalist boom, and were active in the 1918-19 radical movement.

95. See Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 62-64.

The first union of teamsters in Vancouver was a local of the Team Drivers International Union, formed in May 1902 with 154 members. The union succeeded in winning a new wage scale in negotiations with employers in September, but it failed to achieve a reduction of the working day to eleven hours.⁹⁶

Like freight handlers and clerks, coastal sailors, and longshoremen, teamsters lost their union organization as a result of the 1903 UBRE strike against the CPR. The teamsters began a boycott of CPR freight on March 4, but continued to do other work until March 12, when about eighty went on strike, either because some had been dismissed for refusing to haul CPR freight, or because they objected to their employers hauling it.⁹⁷ The CPR immediately offered to supply strikebreakers, and five days later the Master Draymen's Association cancelled its agreement with the teamsters' union and began to employ other men. The teamsters managed to prevent some strikebreakers from working, but the coalition of the CPR, master draymen, and merchants was able to defeat the strikers, who held out until the end of the UBRE strike on June 13. At least one firm insisted that strikers leave the union before being rehired, but in any case the union disappeared in the

96. The new scale was from \$35.00 a month for hotel bus drivers to \$65.00 for drivers of heavy loads. Province, March 3, 1900, Sept. 13, 27, 30, 1902, Oct. 1, 1902; VTLC Minutes, June 5, 1902; Labour Gazette III (1902), pp. 226, 319; Independent, Sept. 5, 1903.

97. The union gave the former reason, the Master Draymen' Association the latter. There were 190 members in the union; presumably those not on strike were employed by firms that had no CPR business. Province, March 2, 5, 12, 17, 1903; News-Advertiser, March 5, 12, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 733.

next few months, if not sooner.⁹⁸

After the collapse of their union in 1903, teamsters repeatedly failed in attempts to reorganize. A new union organized in 1907 attained a membership of 100 in September, but it was moribund by May 1908, and no longer holding meetings in June.⁹⁹ Early in 1910, another attempt to organize teamsters grew out of the movement for a nine hour day started by a Vancouver Alderman and employer of teamsters. The movement was supported by employers, but soon escaped their control as teamsters used the opportunity to organize union locals in Vancouver in April, and in New Westminster in June. Despite appeals to building tradesmen to induce men to join the union when they made deliveries to building sites, the new union disappeared in Vancouver in 1911, and an IWW attempt to organize teamsters and labourers also failed.¹⁰⁰ Attempts to reorganize teamsters in 1912 and 1913 met the same fate. The main obstacle to reorganization was shown in a strike for higher

98. Labour Gazette IV (1903-04), p. 78, 1277; VTLC Minutes, June 18, 1903; Independent, July 18, 1903, Nov. 7, 1903. The union was listed in the Independent's Union Directory in July 1903, but not in November, and although it was in the Dept. of Labour list of labour organizations in 1904, there was no other indication of its existence.

99. The Dept. of Labour reported that it dissolved in October 1909, but its effective demise was probably considerably earlier. VTLC Minutes, July 18, 1907, Aug. 1, 1907, Sept. 9, 1907, June 18, 1908; Trades Unionist, May 1908, p. 12; Labour Gazette VIII (1908), pp. 979-93, X (1910), pp. 997-1001.

100. VTLC Minutes, March 17, 1910, April 7, 1910, June 10, 1910, Oct. 6, 1910, Nov. 17, 1910, Feb. 16, 1911, March 16, 1911; Western Wage Earner, July 1910, p. 8, Dec. 1910, pp. 6-7; World, Feb. 4, 1911, April 8, 22, 1911, June 17, 1911. Report on Labour Organization, 1911, pp. 82, 86, 1914, pp. 226-28. The teamsters' local in New Westminster lasted until 1914.

wages by about sixty-five non-unionized teamsters at the end of March or beginning of April 1912: the labour market was glutted, and they were immediately replaced.¹⁰¹

Once the labour shortages of war capitalism began to appear, teamsters were able to reorganize and become much more militant. The reorganization of teamsters began in an unlikely place, with the formation of a local of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) by eighty-four dairy drivers in October 1915. The four or five large dairies where most union members were employed refused to have anything to do with the union. Consequently, on May 4, 1916, the drivers went on strike for changes in the credit system (drivers were responsible for all credit given to customers on their delivery routes), and a closed shop. By the beginning of June, nearly all union members were working for the small dairies, whose business had increased during the strike, but the large dairies hired strikebreakers and held out against the demands.¹⁰² As in other industries, the main opponents of worker mobilization were the larger companies, which had the resources to fight unions.

General teamsters were not reorganized until August 1917, when

101. B.C. Federationist, July 20, 1912, p. 1, Aug. 10, 1912, p. 2, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 3, 17, 1912, Jan. 2, 1913, May 1, 1913, June 8, 1913; Sun, Jan. 13, 1913, Feb. 10, 1913.

102. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 7, 21, 1915; Report on Labour Organization, 1915, pp. 221-22; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 15, 1915, p. 1; March 31, 1916, p. 5, May 5, 12, 1916, p. 1, June 2, 1916, p. 1; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 305, file 16(65A); Province, May 4, 6, 1916, June 2, 1916; Sun, May 4, 13, 24, 1916. The milk drivers' union dissolved in 1916. Report on Labour Organization, 1916, pp. 221-25.

they joined the new union (IBT local 655) in large numbers. Union membership tripled from 200 to 600 members in the month after its formation, and it claimed to have completely organized several cartage and transfer companies. For the B.C. Federationist, this indicated that "the old 1903 spirit of B.C. unionism" had returned.¹⁰³

The rapid growth of the teamsters' union was also a sign of its growing power. For example, in November about 250 teamsters won their first signed agreement, a reduction in hours from ten or twelve a day to nine and a half, 10 to 20 per cent wage increases, overtime pay, and a closed shop after a half-day strike against about twelve heavy teaming firms (organized in the General Cartage Association). In December, agreements were signed with department stores and wholesale merchants after a strike was threatened.¹⁰⁴ A few small strikes followed in 1918, as the union tried to win its demands from individual employers.¹⁰⁵

103. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 3, 10, 31, 1917, p. 1; Sept. 7, 1917, p. 8, Sept. 14, 1917, p. 1, Sept. 28, 1917, p. 4; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 16, 1917, Sept. 6, 1917.

104. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(119); B.C. Federationist, Oct. 5, 12, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 23, 30, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 7, 21, 1917, p. 1; Province, Nov. 24, 26, 27, 1917, Dec. 20, 21, 1917.

105. A strike at Hastings Sawmill in January 1918 appears to have been a success. VTLC Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 18, 1918, p. 8; Province, Jan. 18, 19, 1918. Warehousemen employed by four wholesale produce merchants struck in June, but despite a sympathetic strike by twelve teamsters, they were defeated. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(167); Province, June 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 1918; Sun, June 6, 1918; B.C. Federationist, June 7, 1918, p. 1. There were also strikes by teamsters employed by three grocery stores in New Westminster in December 1918, and against a cartage company in February 1919. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 13, 1918, p. 1, Jan. 17, 1919, p. 1, Feb. 28, 1919, p. 1; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 310, file 19(25).

The establishment of union conditions at cartage companies, department stores, and wholesale houses in 1917 led to the union's growth to 800 members by February 1918. Organizing drives among bakery drivers, lumber yard drivers, dairy employees, laundry drivers, and female factory workers led to further expansion and the formation of new locals in 1918 and 1919. ¹⁰⁶

Like other local transportation workers whose mobilization increased during war capitalism, teamsters were part of the radical movement of 1918-1919, and in contrast to the others, they were strong OBU supporters. They voted three to two in favor of a general strike over Duncan Kerr's imprisonment (Table 1-1), but no record of their participation in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike exists. They reportedly voted three to one against the 1919 general strike, but all teamsters and warehousemen in Vancouver were on strike by June 4. Half had returned to work by the end of the fourth week, but the rest remained on strike until the general strike was called off on July 3. ¹⁰⁷

106. The greatest successes were among bakery driver-salesmen (whose local (IBT 371) grew from 60 to 120 members, and signed up all the large bakeries in 1918), lumber yard drivers, and dairy workers. In addition, the warehousemen's union (formed in March 1919) joined the IBT in May. The local of laundry wagon drivers was suppressed by the company that owned the two largest laundries, however. B.C. Federationist, Feb. 2, 23, 1918, p. 1, April 12, 26, 1918, p. 1, May 17, 1918, p. 1, July 26, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 2, 1918, p. 1, Feb. 14, 1919, p. 8, May 16, 23, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, May 2, 1918, Aug. 29, 1918, Feb. 20, 1919; Report on Labour Organization, 1918, p. 182, 1919, p. 236.

107. Since many employers had hired strikebreakers, some strikers had difficulty being reinstated. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190); Sun, June 2, 12, 19, 25, 28, 30, 1919; July 4, 1919; Province, June 3, 4, 11,

Members of the teamsters' union in Vancouver had voted heavily in favor of the OBU in May (Table 1-3), and after the general strike, they replaced the old executive, which had allegedly "stampeded" the membership back to work, severed their connection with the IBT, and joined the OBU. Some members formed a new international local at the beginning of August, and joined the new international VTLC. In the competition that followed, the OBU was able to hold its own: in June 1920, the IBT delegate to the international VTLC complained that many team owners preferred to employ "Wobblies." They were able to maintain OBU organization because of the larger number of employers in teaming than in some other industries, where a few employers colluded with international unions to keep out the OBU.¹⁰⁸

The support of teamsters for the OBU is explicable in terms of their social reproduction cycles, and their recent experience of mobilization and collective action. Teamsters were easily replaceable, unskilled workers, whose strength depended on inclusive mobilization: as their organizing activities in 1918-19 demonstrated, the teamsters' union was already an embryonic 'one big union,' so it was only a short step to the real thing. To that extent, teamsters were like dock workers in their social reproduction, and their history supports a

12, 23, 28, 30, 1919, July 2, 4, 1919; World, June 11, 19, 1919; VTLC Minutes, July 3, 1919. Only half the teamsters in New Westminster were organized, and they did not join the general strike there. Province, June 19, 20, 1919; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221).

108. B.C. Federationist, May 2, 1919, p. 1; July 25, 1919, p. 1, Aug. 1, 1919, p. 1; Province, June 30, 1919, July 25, 1919; VTLC Minutes, July 3, 10, 24, 1919, Aug. 14, 21, 1919, Sept. 4, 11, 18, 1919; VTLC(I) Aug. 21, 1919, Sept. 18, 1919, June 17, 1920.

frontier labourer interpretation of worker radicalism in Vancouver.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter has shown the effects of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction cycles, and the history of strategic interaction on mobilization and collective action by workers in local transportation and utilities.

The most important features of capital accumulation in both local and external transportation and utilities in the early twentieth century were the large capital investments by the major companies, their monopoly or near-monopoly in each branch of the industry, and their large workforces. Because of these conditions, companies like the CPR, BCER, and B.C. Telephones were able to experiment with methods of labour control that were beyond the capacity of most employers. The result was a combination of paternalism and systematic management, applied in different ways by different employers. This unstable combination generated much of the contention in the local transportation industry.

The BCER practiced paternalism while tolerating the presence of an industrial union for most of the period, but even it started to attack the unions of its street railwaymen and electrical workers, and the craft controls of the latter, when its economic position deteriorated in the pre-war depression. B.C. Telephones, like the CPR, was more hostile to unions from the beginning, because they interfered with company control over the workforce, especially over operators, where the combination of paternalism and systematic management was most

consistently applied. It also attacked electrical workers' craft controls and skills, by trying to introduce specialization.

Because of their size and power, the telephone and street railway companies were formidable opponents of workers and their unions. They were not invincible, however, because key groups of workers were able to thoroughly disrupt operations. Telephone operators and street railwaymen were in the most powerful position in this respect, but the operators were unable to use it effectively, because they were unable to prevent strikebreaking. Because the street railway operated in public, it was much more costly (in terms of public opinion, and damage to equipment in the violence that always seemed to result) for strikebreakers to be introduced on it, and therefore street railwaymen were able to use their capacity to disrupt operations by withdrawing their labour.

In contrast to the large size and monopoly power of the employers of street railwaymen, electrical workers, and telephone operators, teamsters worked for small, competitive capitalists. Corporate paternalism and systematic management were not possible in this branch, and objects of contention between employers and workers concerned wages and hours rather than controls over production. The mobilization of these workers faced other difficulties than the hostility of employers (although that was undoubtedly present); instead, the dispersal of teamsters among numerous competing small employers was the main obstacle.

The contradictions of paternalism, and of capital accumulation

in general, gave rise to contention only because they conflicted with the social reproduction cycles of workers, which included crafts in crisis, frontier labourers, factory operatives, and settled urban workers. Their mobilization and collective action was in turn influenced by experiences of opportunity and threat, repression, and power.

The only craftsmen among local transportation workers were electrical workers at the power and telephone companies. Only the latter appeared to be in crisis, because of the effects of specialization, and they fought the telephone company over job control in consequence. They were radicals to the extent that they participated in the general strike, and stayed out on strike in support of telephone operators, but they were not supporters of the OBU, while the power company electrical workers do appear to have been OBU supporters. The difference between the two groups of electrical workers may be explained by their recent history of strategic interaction: BCER electrical workers had been engaged during the war capitalist boom in bitter disputes with an increasingly aggressive employer over power in the workplace and union organization, whereas telephone linemen had been able to win wage increases and a closed shop without strikes.¹⁰⁹ Neither group played a leading role in the radical movement however, and the craftsman in crisis interpretation is not supported in this case.

109. It is also possible that telephone company electrical workers were no longer a craft in crisis, because specialization had advanced far enough that their interests were as telephone workers, not as electrical craftsmen. See Bernard, Long Distance Feeling, pp. 62-64.

The frontier labourer interpretation is indirectly supported by the history of teamsters, who were easily replaced, unskilled workers. They were organized only intermittently for most of the 1900-1919 period, largely because they were scattered amongst a large number of small, competitive employers. Like frontier labourers such as dock workers and loggers, teamsters became radical when they experienced increasing mobilization and power during the opportunity provided by war capitalism's labour shortages. They participated in the 1919 general strike, and many were sufficiently strong supporters of the OBU to join it after the general strike, when it was being abandoned by many former supporters.

Telephone operators were the only workers in local transportation and utilities who could be considered factory operatives, because of their closely supervised, machine-tending work. Like other factory operatives in Vancouver, they were mostly women and were only weakly and intermittently mobilized. They were more strongly organized than other factory operatives, because that was in the interests of the electrical workers, who therefore facilitated the operators' mobilization.¹¹⁰ Perhaps because they were better organized than

110. The telephone company had persistently denied that the operators could have any grievances or capacity to act independently on them, and blamed all their collective action on 'meddling' by male linemen. For example, in the 1906 strike, the company claimed that the men resurrected the "ladies auxiliary" because "they could not exact their own unreasonable demands" without the assistance of the operators, who could shut down the telephone system. See Province, March 19, 1906, and for virtually the same allegation, angrily denied by the operators, see Province, Nov. 27, 1902. This was mostly patronizing rhetoric, but it contained a grain of truth, namely that the electrical workers' interest

7

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010A
ANTWERP, BELGIUM

factory operatives in other industries, telephone operators were also more radical, but they were still weak and hesitant radicals, for the same reasons as telephone electrical workers.

Finally, street railway employees were settled urban workers. Because they worked for a paternalistic employer that tolerated unions, they were well-organized and non-militant until the pre-war depression showed the harsher face of paternalism. As a result of the threatening new posture of the BCER, the street railway employees became militant, and were prominent participants in the general strikes. They opposed the OBU, however, because they had been organized in a strong industrial union for over two decades, and therefore saw no need to try a new form of organization. Threat, power, and repression thus shaped their mobilization and collective action, as it had that of other workers in local transportation.

in organizing the operators seemed to correspond to their own need for the latter's assistance against the company. The solidarity shown by the electrical workers in 1919 shows however, that they were not as indifferent to the interests of the operators as claimed, for example, by Campbell, in "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920," p. 171.

Chapter 12

CONSTRUCTION:

"'Open shop' means closed to union men."

In the middle of the 1900-19 period, the construction industry was one of the leading sectors of the Vancouver area economy, and the struggles of building trades workers were a focal point of working-class collective action. Like other craft workers, their experiences of mobilization and collective action depended on whether they belonged to a threatened craft in crisis, a new craft fostered by technological change, or a secure craft with its skills intact. In contrast to the building trades, construction labourers were poorly organized, and divided between migratory frontier labourers and settled urban workers, between English-speaking and 'foreign' labourers, and between employees of private contractors and civic employees.

12.1 Capital Accumulation

The construction industry in the Vancouver area experienced a period of slow, unsteady growth from 1900 to 1908, followed by a tremendous boom from 1909 to 1912. The boom gave way to severe depression in 1913, from which the industry was only beginning to recover at the end of the war. The number and value of building permits in the city of Vancouver shows the overall level of construction activity from 1902 to 1919 (Table 12-1).

In his study of strikes in Canada, Jamieson speculated that high levels of industrial conflict in the pre-World War I western Canadian construction boom had their roots in predominantly small-scale operations, a high turnover of residential building contractors, intense competition that put pressure on contractors to reduce labour costs, large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled immigrant workers vulnerable to exploitation, and a rising cost of living.¹ The first three conditions are a convenient starting point for examining capital accumulation in the building industry in the Vancouver area.

The scale of operations in the Vancouver construction industry was, on average, small. In 1911 for example, 381 builders, contractors, and general contractors employed nearly 8000 building tradesmen, for an

1. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, p. 74. These were the conditions that existed in Ontario in the late 1950s.

Table 12-1

Vancouver Building Permits, 1902-1919

Year	No.	Value (\$)
1902	417	833,607
1903	580	1,426,148
1904	836	1,986,590
1905	940	2,653,000
1906	1006	4,408,410
1907	1772	5,632,744
1908	1697	5,950,893
1909	2052	7,258,565
1910	2260	13,150,365
1911	2775	17,652,642
1912	3221	19,388,322
1913	2020	10,423,197
1914	1314	4,484,476
1915	615	1,593,379
1916	444	2,412,889
1917	561	768,255
1918	829	1,440,384
1919	1233	2,271,411

Source: Vancouver, Comptroller, Financial Statements and Annual Reports, "Report of the Building Inspector," 1936, p. 91.

Note: Building activity in 1913 was lower than indicated here, because many projects which received permits were never financed. See Bartlett, "Real Wages," p. 9, citing Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 37.

average of only twenty-one workers per employer.² This average is misleading to a certain extent, because capital in the construction industry was divided into two branches. On the one hand, some very large general contractors were engaged in large, heavy construction projects, such as large office buildings, streets, railways, and bridges.³ On the other hand, builders in residential construction were generally far smaller, and specialty subcontractors (for plumbing, electrical work, etc.) smaller still.⁴

The large number of small contractors and subcontractors in construction was due to the small amount of capital needed to enter the industry. In most specialty contracting, all that was required was a license, a kit of tools (which any tradesman would possess), and access to a supplier who would provide materials at a discount, often on credit.⁵ Building trades unionists occasionally started their own

2. Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, p. 286; Henderson's Greater Vancouver, New Westminster and Fraser Valley Directory, 1911, pp. 1528-31, 1533-34. If specialty contractors were included, the average would be even lower.

3. For example, Armstrong, Morrison, and Company employed at least 500 labourers on street paving in 1908, and Norton-Griffith Steel Construction Company employed 4000 men in Vancouver and Victoria in 1912. On the former, see Greater Vancouver Illustrated, pp. 138-39; Province, June 19, 1909; on the latter, Boam, British Columbia, pp. 183-85.

4. For example, the proprietors did all the work, aided only by apprentices in eleven plumbing shops in 1905. Seven other shops employed a total of forty-five journeyman plumbers, for an average of less than seven each (the largest employed ten). Province, May 1, 1905, Labour Gazette V (1905), p. 1384.

5. M. Segal, The Rise of the United Association: National Unionism in the Pipe Trades, 1884-1924 (hereafter, Rise of the United Association),

contracting firms.⁶ Even in residential housebuilding, entry to the ranks of small capitalists was not difficult, as long as mortgages could be obtained. For example, Ernest Winch, the future socialist leader in Vancouver, tried his hand as a building contractor at the end of the 1909-1912 construction boom, erecting one heavily mortgaged house in Burnaby and seven in White Rock.⁷

Winch's creditors foreclosed on both of his housebuilding ventures, exemplifying the high turnover in small contracting. Of twenty-five contractors listed in the city directory in 1905, only twelve were still in business in some form in 1910, suggesting that thirteen failed to weather the 1907-1908 recession.⁸ The converse of those failures was the rise of new contractors during the boom: 90 per cent of the construction companies in Vancouver in 1912 had registered with the provincial government after 1909.⁹

The competition of the large number of small builders led to efforts to keep down labour costs by directly holding down wages (or at least limiting wage competition, because no individual employer could allow his wage costs to rise above his competitors'), or by increasing

pp. 12-13.

6. See *Independent*, Feb. 15, 22, 1902, April 12, 1902, for examples from carpentry, painting, plumbing, and electrical work.

7. Steeves, *Compassionate Rebel*, pp. 25-26.

8. Henderson's *City of Vancouver Directory*, 1905, p. 533; Henderson's *Vancouver and North Vancouver*, 1910, pp. 1344-47. The city directory becomes an uninformative source after 1911, so no further comparisons were possible.

9. McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman," pp. 44-45.

productivity. The former was one of the objectives of associations of builders and contractors formed in Vancouver after 1900 to present a united front to labour unions. The Builders' Exchange was an organization of general contractors that negotiated with carpenters, and specialty contractors had their own associations for the same purpose, such as the Master Painters Association.

One way of increasing productivity in the building trades was by quickening the pace of work. Small builders in particular may have had to drive their workers, in order to compete with larger contractors.¹⁰ A faster pace of work compromised safety considerations, as J. Davidson, a union carpenter and foreman, told the B.C. Labor Commission: "The men, as a rule, I find are so afraid of not working fast enough to hold their jobs that they will take unnecessary chances. Time and again I have had to order men off the scaffold. They were anxious to get done and they would say 'It's good enough.' ... A certain amount of work is required or you lose your job."¹¹ Employers also introduced piecework to increase production.¹²

10. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 344; cf. Mills and Holdsworth, "The B.C. Mills Prefabricated System: The Emergence of Ready-made Buildings in Western Canada," p. 167, fn. 6, on the cost advantages (in design, materials, land, and financing) enjoyed by larger residential contractors.

11. Proceedings, Vol. 1, p. 126; cf. pp. 44-45, 64-65.

12. In 1903, one of the objectives of a carpenters' strike was the abolition of piecework. Independent, Jan. 3, 1903; for other examples, see *ibid.*, April 4, 1903 (builders' labourers); Labour Gazette IV (1904), p. 772, V (1905), p. 1217, VI (1905), p. 517 (lathers); Painters' Minutes, Jan. 21, 1908 (painters); B.C. Federationist, May 6, 1912, p. 4, Feb. 7, 1913, p. 4 (carpenters).

Productivity was also increased by purchasing ready-made building components, instead of having skilled craftsmen make them on the building site. Carpenters were the first to be affected, as mouldings, trim, doors and windows came to be produced in mechanized sash and door factories in the nineteenth century. New materials such as sheet metal, tile, terra cotta, and plasterboard, and new building methods such as steel frame or reinforced concrete construction had the same effect. These technological changes tended to degrade the skilled building crafts, especially those employed by large general contractors.¹³

Entry to the ranks of the few large general contractors was more difficult than to the large number of small builders and subcontractors, because more capital was required.¹⁴ A smaller number of contractors did not reduce competition, however, and there is every indication that large contractors were as concerned about wage costs and productivity as small contractors. But as in other industries, their size gave them more latitude in dealing with employees, and more power in confrontations with unions. The division between large and small contractors received institutional form in 1911, when the large general contractors formed their own organization, the Master Builders

13. On carpentry, see Reckman, "Carpentry," pp. 85-90.

14. For example, Armstrong and Morrison had a sand and gravel yard, its own scows and steamboats, and interests in three granite quarries and a brick plant. Greater Vancouver Illustrated, pp. 138-39; Province, June 19, 1909.

Association, to negotiate with carpenters.¹⁵

An additional circumstance that entered into large, heavy construction projects was that the state was often the owner for whom the work was being done, or the direct employer of construction workers. The same work could at one time or place be performed by workers employed by contractors, at another by day labour directly employed by the state. Local governments, which were the most frequent builders of public works, were under pressure to keep down costs to minimize taxation, and maintain credit supplies. Because of these fiscal imperatives, municipalities often had public works performed by contractors, because they were cheaper, or if they did them themselves employing day labour, they tended to behave much like private contractors. This was modified to some extent by the political pressures to which elected officials were subject, leading for instance to the use of public works for unemployment relief.¹⁶ The state was also subject to the contradictory desires of employers and workers that it be a model employer on matters of wages, hours, union recognition, and working conditions.

In conclusion, the tendency of capital accumulation in the construction industry made wages, the pace of work, and technological change potential objects of contention. To understand how that

 • 15. Province, April 11, 12, 1911; News-Advertiser, April 14, 1911.

• 16. Civic expenditures on public works thus might expand in depressions, when civic employment was used as a relief measure, as in Vancouver in the winter of 1907-08.

potential was realized, we must turn to the social reproduction cycles of construction workers.

12.2 Workers' Social Reproduction

As Vancouver expanded after 1900, so did the building trades. Carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, electricians, plasterers, painters, plumbers, and a host of other craftsmen and their helpers were needed to build the city's houses, apartments, offices, shops, and factories.¹⁷ In addition, many hundreds of labourers were employed on building sites, and in the construction of roads, sewers, and bridges. Near the height of the construction boom in 1911, almost 8000 construction workers lived in the city of Vancouver (Table 12-2).¹⁸ Approximately two thirds were building trades craftsmen, and the other third labourers. By far the largest group of building craftsmen were carpenters, with nearly 3000 in the city in 1911. Painters, plumbers and steamfitters, bricklayers, masons and stonecutters, and plasterers were the next largest crafts, with hundreds of members each. After the boom collapsed, the number of construction workers in the city plunged

17. In 1912, 2224 houses, 218 apartments, 293 offices and stores, and 217 factories were built in Vancouver. MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle," p. 32.

18. This table undoubtedly underestimates the number of construction workers in 1911, since many of the 2675 government labourers in the census were working on streets, etc. It also fails to include construction workers such as hoisting engineers, for example.

Table 12-2

Construction Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911		1921	
	N	%	N	%
Bricklayers (1)	299	3.7	120	4.8
Carpenters	2991	37.4	1128	45.5
Concrete builders	42	0.5	-	-
Electricians	76	1.0	147	5.9
Masons & stonecutters	228	2.9	-	-
Metal workers & roofers (2)	158	2.0	15	0.6
Painters & decorators	719	9.0	345	13.9
Plasterers	412	5.2	67	2.7
Plumbers & steamfitters	584	7.3	189	7.6
Structural iron workers	84	1.1	40	1.6
Labourers (3)	2402	30.0	271	10.9
Other (4)	-	-	156	6.3
Total	7995	100.0	2478	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921
Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) Includes masons in 1921.
(2) In 1921, roofers and slaters.
(3) In 1911, building labourers, and general labourers, n.o.s.
(4) In 1921, apprentices, crane-men, stationary engineers, other construction workers.

to less than 2500 in 1921. Carpenters still formed the largest craft (with over 1100 members), and painters, plumbers, and bricklayers and masons also remained relatively numerous. Because of the decline in the amount of public works, the number of labourers fell drastically, to less than 300.¹⁹

The social reproduction cycles of workers in the construction industry were different for building trades workers, most of whom were craftsmen, and for heavy construction workers, who were unskilled frontler labourers or settled urban workers.²⁰ The two groups differed significantly with respect to size of employers, skill, and ethnicity, in ways that affected both interests and group formation.²¹

Since small shops were generally conducive to worker solidarity, differences in the size of employers ought to have been significant for the capacity of building trades workers and heavy construction labourers to mobilize and act collectively. As was indicated in the previous section, most building trades workers were employed by small contractors, although a few were large.²² Carpenters were usually

19. The number of government labourers declined correspondingly, to 325.

20. The former also included builders' labourers, and the latter a few specialized crafts, such as steam shovel and dredgemen.

21. One characteristic in which they did not differ was gender: in 1911 and 1921 combined, there were only five female construction workers.

22. For example, McDonald and Wilson, stonecutting and general contractors, employed "hundreds" of skilled stonecutters and masons on its contracts for the courthouse and Carter-Cotton building in Vancouver, and the Parliament Buildings in Victoria. The Norton-Griffith Steel Construction Company would also have employed many craftsmen among its 4000 workers in Vancouver and Victoria in 1912.

employed by general contractors, so they worked for larger employers than other building tradesmen, employed by smaller specialty contractors often not far removed from being workers themselves. In contrast to building tradesmen, labourers in heavy construction were generally employed by comparatively large contractors.²³

The skill difference between building tradesmen and heavy construction labourers affected interests and group formation through the occupational division of labour, and technological change. In the building trades, group formation was shaped by the strongly marked division of workers into the different skilled crafts. Craft identities were consequently sources of solidarity, and interests were formed on craft lines to the extent that they were affected differently by labour market conditions and technological changes.²⁴ As in the metal trades, this gave rise to a tension between craft exclusivism based on particular craft interests, and a more inclusive type of unionism, based on interests shared with other trades. The former was expressed in

Province, June 19, 1909, Boam, British Columbia, pp. 183-85.

23. For example, Armstrong and Morrison employed 500 or more labourers on street paving and street railway tracklaying in 1908, and Christian, Hartney and Christian employed 75 men on excavating and street paving in 1909. Greater Vancouver Illustrated, pp. 138-39; Province, June 19, 1909. In 1910, M.P. Cotten employed 200 labourers on street work, Pinto and Romano about 120, and Palmer Brothers and Henning 100. Province, July 19, 1910; News-Advertiser, July 19, 20, 22, 1910.

24. The degree of craft identity varied: it was probably strongest in the secure crafts such as bricklaying, strong in threatened crafts such as painting and carpentry, and weakest in the relatively new crafts such as plumbing. Evidence is very sketchy, however. See W. Roberts; "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen: Politics and Unionism among Toronto Skilled Building Trades Workers, 1896-1914" (hereafter, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen").

jurisdictional squabbles, when different crafts tried to assert their control over new materials or processes, the latter in attempts by all crafts to jointly control the labour market. As we will see, the inclusive tendency was dominant for much of the 1900-1919 period in Vancouver.

Technological change affected the threatened, secure, and new building crafts unevenly. Carpenters bore the brunt of technological change, as work was transferred from the building site to sash and door factories, and the outside carpenter deskilled: "the tools of the skilled craftsmen have gradually been, and are still being taken from them and placed in the factories until today the skilled craftsman of other days is becoming less and less necessary to the modern building."²⁵ As a result, carpenters were a threatened craft, increasingly vulnerable to competition from low-wage "handymen." Control over the labour market consequently became the main object of contention between carpenters and contractors.²⁶ Other trades were not as directly, as severely, or as constantly threatened with deskilling and the competition of lower-paid workers as carpenters, who were the main

25. B.D. Grant, "The Evolution of the Modern Carpenter," B.C. Federationist, Aug. 3, 1912, p. 4. A further indication of deskilling is that the only test of skill for joining the carpenters' union was the ability to hold a job with a builder. Province, June 5, 1911.

26. B.C. Federationist, Feb. 7, 1913, p. 4; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, p. 45; Reckman, "Carpentry," pp. 85-87; Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen," pp. 93-100; W. Galenson, The United Brotherhood of Carpenters: The First Hundred Years, (hereafter, United Brotherhood of Carpenters), pp. 18, 26, 112-13.

'craft in crisis' in the building trades.²⁷ New crafts such as electricians, plumbers, iron workers, and sheet metal workers were not unfavorably affected by technological change during this period, although they still had to fight for control of the labour market. For secure crafts such as bricklayers and masons, stonecutters, lathers, and plasterers, technological change was in the form of new building materials, and they were not a threat until after they were well-established in their job and labour market control.²⁸

Geographical mobility was a major aspect of the social reproduction cycles of most construction workers.²⁹ All the building trades faced competition from newly arrived workers who were often badly in need of a job, and therefore willing to undercut prevailing wage rates. Especially at the height of the building boom, a constant influx of building trades workers from the British Isles and the western United States intensified labour market competition in Vancouver.³⁰ Control over the labour market was consequently a major objective of building

27. Painters also faced low-wage competition, and were a craft in crisis as well, but to a far lesser extent than carpenters.

28. Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen," pp. 103-14; on bricklayers and the threat from cement, see *Western Wage Earner*, Sept. 1909, p. 7; on stonecutters and terra cotta, *Western Wage Earner*, Dec. 1910, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 15, 1910.

29. Workers' geographical mobility was a major reason for the formation of national and international unions, and builders' labourers in Vancouver called for the formation of a national organization for that reason in 1908. *B.C. Trades Unionist*, March 1908, p. 12; cf. Galenson, *United Brotherhood of Carpenters*; Segal, *Rise of the United Association*.

30. *World*, April 8, 1911.

trades workers who sought to insulate themselves from the reserve army of labour through measures such as closed shops. The result, according to a carpenter, was that "Almost any Union of any size is an employment bureau in itself," the primary task of union business agents being to keep in touch with contractors and supply them with men.³¹ Even so, union locals still faced the problem of absorbing newcomers, and coping with the loss of members when they migrated to other places.

In the heavy construction industry, craft identity was absent as a basis for solidarity for all except the few crafts employed there. Instead, ethnicity was a source of both solidarity and division.³² Many common labourers were single male frontier labourers from Italy and eastern Europe. As migrant sojourners interested in making as much money as possible in the short construction season, they were generally willing to do backbreaking work under poor conditions, for long hours and low pay.³³ They were consequently looked on with disfavor by resident and migrant construction labourers of British or American background, whose interests lay in restricting competition in this unsteady line of work, especially when jobs became scarce. Lacking even the threatened skills and craft identities of building tradesmen, they

31. This was true of the unions of carpenters, painters, plumbers, and electricians at least. See B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 171-72.

32. As far as can be determined, ethnicity was not a source of unity or division among building trades workers.

33. See Province, January 29, 1912; R.F. Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930."

had less capacity to realize their interests, however. As we will see in the next section, these differences were a source of different histories of mobilization and collective action by construction workers.

12.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

Mobilization and strike action in the construction industry in the Vancouver area was principally by building trades workers.³⁴ The largest numbers of strikers were in strikes by more than one trade, and by carpenters; following far behind were strikes by painters, builders' labourers and helpers, plumbers, stonecutters, sheet metal workers, bricklayers and masons, and electricians, in that order.³⁵ Building trades workers skirmished with employers over wages and control of the labour market for the first decade of the century, culminating in the general strike of 1911. Employment in the construction industry collapsed in the pre-war depression, drastically weakening mobilization. Building trades workers were just beginning to recover during the war, and they played only a minor role in the 1918-19 radical movement as a result.

In contrast to building tradesmen, heavy construction labourers

34. Building trades workers (including builders' labourers) engaged in 62 strikes, involving 7463 strikers, and 304,906 striker-days

35. Strikes by more than one trade accounted for over half the strikers, and two thirds of the striker-days in the building trades; strikes by carpenters a quarter and a fifth respectively.

were weakly and intermittently mobilized, and they engaged in little collective action.³⁶ As in the building trades, the climax of collective action occurred in the construction boom of 1909-12, in two large strikes in 1910.³⁷ Although the frontier labourer segment of heavy construction workers was the source of those strikes, the best mobilized were area residents employed by the city, who played a very modest role in the radical movement.

We will examine the building trades first, then heavy construction.

Building Trades

All of the major, and some of the minor building trades in the Vancouver area were unionized by the end of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Other trades were organized in the first few years of the century: builders' labourers, and sheet metal workers in 1902, lathers in

36. Ten strikes (evenly shared between private contractors and the state) involved 1300 strikers, and 11184 striker-days.

37. They accounted for four fifths of the strikers and striker-days in strikes by heavy construction labourers.

38. A branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (ASCJ) was formed in Vancouver in 1889, and branches of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ) were organized in Vancouver and New Westminster in 1890, the same year that stonecutters and bricklayers were also organized. Several unions dissolved in the 1890s recession (plumbers, plasterers, and bricklayers), but as economic conditions improved at the end of the decade, they were reorganized, and new unions were founded: bricklayers and plumbers in 1898, painters and plasterers in 1899. Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, pp. 185-200. Bricklayers in New Westminster were organized about the same time as those in Vancouver.

1904.³⁹

The building trades unions concentrated on achieving higher wages and shorter hours, and establishing collective control over the labour market. The latter was a particularly important objective, and in many ways a prerequisite to the others, since newcomers willing to undercut union wages and other conditions gave non-union contractors a cost advantage over union contractors, and thereby threatened the wages and working conditions of all building tradesmen. Although the building trades unions tried to control the labour market individually, most contention arose when they tried to do so collectively, through Building Trades Council (BTC) "universal working cards." The card system was in effect and intention a union shop in the building trades, since under it, no union tradesman was to work on a construction site where any other building tradesman was not a union member in good standing. Although the solidarity required for successful operation was not always present, when it was effective, the system allowed the weaker trades to benefit from the power of the stronger.

The first Building Trades Council was formed on March 1, 1901, in response to increasing immigration, as explained by its secretary, A.J. Mortimer: "Experience has shown that it is necessary to bring about a closer amalgamation of the workers for the betterment of their

39. VTLC Minutes, Nov. 20, 1902; Independent, Oct. 18, 1902; Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 482; IV (1904), p. 1276. Electricians were organized with electrical linemen in IBGW 213 in 1901, and not until 1908 did they form a separate local. B.C. Trades Unionist, June 1908, p. 3; Labour Gazette IX (1909), pp. 961-65.

condition, seeing that the trades are now being invaded by cheap Orientals and to a large extent by other foreigners, to the detriment of all concerned." A card system was planned, but not introduced until early May 1902. Meanwhile, a resolution that no member of an affiliated union be permitted to work with Asians at any trade represented in the BTC caused a strike of carpenters at the end of May, and prompted the plasterers' union to withdraw from the BTC.⁴⁰

When the card system was introduced in 1902, most employers quickly ensured that workers on their jobs were in unions, in order to save the trouble and expense of disputes. Thirty-six jobs were unionized in the thirty days ending June 14, and every union belonging to the BTC grew.⁴¹ Ten small strikes nonetheless resulted in 1902-03, as building tradesmen tried to enforce the closed shop against a minority of recalcitrant employers. One of the main objections to the card system was expressed in June 1903, by Barr and Anderson, plumbing contractors, who demanded that the plumbers' union withdraw from the BTC, because the card system put union contractors such as themselves at the mercy of contractors who might not obey union rules. After a five day strike, their eight journeymen plumbers gave in, and the union left

40. The strike lasted only an hour before the Chinese carpenters and joiners were withdrawn by their Chinese employer. *Independent*, March 16, 1901, June 15, 1901, September 5, 1903; *Province*, May 29, 1901; *Labour Gazette* I (1901), pp. 415, 549; the quotation from Mortimer appeared in a letter to the *Independent*, May 4, 1901, and *World*, May 11, 1901.

41. *Independent*, March 22, 1902, May 17, 24, 31, 1902, June 14, 28, 1902, Aug. 16, 1902; *Labour Gazette* II (1902), p. 735.

the BTC. Three other strikes over the card system failed, four were successful, and in two the outcome was unknown.⁴²

The card system worked well in 1903 and 1904,⁴³ but an influx of labour from outside Vancouver in 1905 led to increasing employment of non-union workers. A strike in August by carpenters, bricklayers, and labourers succeeded in having non-union men replaced, but in October, carpenters, plasterers, and electricians striking against the employment of non-union painters were replaced. This defeat was the final blow for a council weakened by the loss of the plumbers in 1903, and of bricklayers some time after, and the BTC disbanded in November 1905.⁴⁴

While they struggled collectively for control of the labour market through the BTC, members of individual building trades also mobilized and fought for objectives specific to their own craft, generally wages and hours. Carpenters and painters were examples of crafts in crisis, electricians, plumbers, and sheet metal workers of new

42. The strikes were as follows: painters, carpenters, electricians and unidentified building tradesmen in four separate strikes in May 1903; stonecutters and others in mid-July; builders' labourers, masons and rock-drillers in one strike in September; carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, electrical workers, and tile layers in November; stonecutters in February 1903. Independent, May 17, 24, 1902, July 19, 1902, Sept. 20, 1902, Nov. 8, 29, 1902, June 27, 1903; Province, Sept. 16, 17, 19, 1902, Feb. 17, 19, 1903, June 25, 29, 1903; World, June 29, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1902-03), pp. 430, 708.

43. A scarcity of construction labour kept wages above union scales in the latter year.

44. According to its leaders, the council folded because its members were unable to maintain the principles of the card system, indicating that other violations must have gone unchallenged. Labour Gazette V (1905), p. 1270, VI (1905), pp. 276, 337, 583-84; Province, Aug. 2, 1905, Oct. 5, 1905, Nov. 11, 1905.

crafts, and bricklayers and stonecutters of crafts secure in their skills. The first two were the most militant, and the last the least.

In the first few years of the century, carpenters were strongly organized, and were able to win most of their objectives. The nine-hour day, a Saturday half holiday, and a wage increase were won from the Builders' Exchange without a strike in 1900, and the two carpenters' unions tripled their membership under the BTC card system in 1901-02.⁴⁵ They were therefore ready for their first major strike in 1903. After demands for higher pay, an eight hour day, and recognition of the BTC card system were rejected by the Builders' Exchange, about 300 carpenters in Vancouver went on strike on April 1, 1903.⁴⁶ Independent contractors agreed to the unions' schedule within three days. The Builders' Exchange countered with "an unholy compact" in which the Lumbermen's Association agreed to supply lumber only to contractors authorized by the Exchange. It failed, and the carpenters returned to work on April 9 with the eight hour day; arbitration later gave them

45. World, Jan. 20, 1900; Province, April 2, 1900; Independent, April 7, 1900, Aug. 16, 1902.

46. The demands reflected a national movement for eight hours and higher wages in the trade, but local reasons were also offered: the cost of living, wages in other west coast cities, and (showing how far carpenters had travelled down the path from being artisans to being "merchants of their time") the right of workers to get a better price for their commodity when demand was strong. Province, Jan. 2, 1903, March 4, 5, 17, 30, 1903, April 2, 1903; Independent, Jan. 3, 1903; Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 90. On the meaning of wage demands, see E.J. Hobsbawm, "Artisans and Labour Aristocrats?" p. 258.

their wage demand.⁴⁷ Although the tactic failed, the contractors' agreement with lumber manufacturers reflected the state of class conflict in Vancouver in 1903, when the solidarity being shown by workers in the UBRE sympathy strikes was beginning to be matched by that of employers.⁴⁸

A labour surplus and growing employment of non-union labour prohibited carpenters from trying to enforce any new demands when the 1903 agreement expired in 1905. The unions remained strongly organized,⁴⁹ and in 1906 they were able to use the opportunity of a labour shortage to win a wage increase without a strike. This set the stage for the next major carpenters' strike, however, as many contractors were waiting for an opportunity to impose an open shop.⁵⁰

When their "outrageous demand," for a dollar-a-day wage increase was rejected, about 900 union carpenters struck on April 1, 1907 against

47. The outcome of the demand for recognition of the card system is not known. Province, March 31, 1903, April 2, 4, 9, 23, 1903; Independent, April 4, 11, 25, 1903; Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes, Evidence, p. 743. The tactic of cutting off lumber supplies to contractors who settled with strikers was later tried in Victoria and Toronto, and similar tactics were used in other industries. Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 1027.

48. It also reflected lumbermen's fears that if won in construction, the eight hour day would soon be demanded in mills and factories.

49. The carpenters' unions had about 700 members in mid-1905, and new ASCJ branches were formed in Vancouver and New Westminster in 1906. Labour Gazette VI (1905), pp. 54, 275, VII (1907), pp. 885-88.

50. Province, Jan. 2, 1906, March 31, 1906. According to a trade journal: "Several builders say that it will be impossible to live under the agreement for long, and another year will see very few builders tied down to the union." Lumberman and Contractor, April 1906, p. 17.

150 contractors (including at least 65 outside the Builders' Exchange).⁵¹ The Builders' Exchange declared an open shop on April 15, but they had difficulty recruiting non-union workers, because of the strong mobilization of the strikers, and an effective picketing system (including a close watch for the arrival of strikebreakers on trains and boats). The Builders' Exchange therefore agreed to a phased seventy-five cent increase at the end of April, but when it still insisted on the open shop, the carpenters' unions ceased to recognize it, and announced their willingness to sign with individual contractors. In two weeks, all the union carpenters were back at work.⁵²

The carpenters' victory was temporary. The business slump beginning in the summer brought severe unemployment throughout 1908, leading to "practically" an open shop, and pre-strike wage levels. But the unions maintained their organization, and when economic recovery began in 1909, carpenters were ready to lead the building trades' struggle to control the labour market.⁵³

51. According to contractors, the demand was unwarranted by building conditions, but carpenters argued that it was justified by time lost due to wet weather and delays, the high cost of tools, and the increasing cost of living. The contractors calculated their interests in terms of capital accumulation; the carpenters in terms of their own social reproduction cycles.

52. Half the contractors, eager to make up for time lost over a severe winter, had signed on May 2. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 294, file 2842; Province, April 2, 11, 15, 19, 20, 22, 29, 30, 1907, May 1, 2, 17, 1907; VTLC Minutes, May 1, 1907; Labour Gazette VII (1907), p. 1430.

53. A second UBCJ local in the area was formed in North Vancouver, and the ASCJ continued to maintain three branches. Both carpenters' unions

Like carpenters, painters were strongly mobilized and powerful until 1905. They required only one or two day strikes to win most of their demands in 1900, 1901, and 1903.⁵⁴ In the less favorable labour market conditions of 1905, a three week strike by fifty painters was required to win shorter hours at all but two of the thirty-three shops that initially refused to sign the painters' agreement.⁵⁵ Despite that victory, and the closed shop clause in the union agreement, open shop conditions were established in the trade, and 150 painters struck in April 1907, for the closed shop and wage increases. Over two thirds of the strikers returned to work under union conditions after a week, but the closed shop clause was again being flouted only two weeks later.⁵⁶

 reported growing membership in 1909: the ASCJ added a fourth branch in June, and gained 310 members during the year. VTLC Minutes, May 21, 1908, June 4, 1908, April 1, 15, 1909, June 3, 1909, Jan. 20, 1910; Western Wage Earner, April 1908, p. 16, April 1909, p. 16, May 1909, p. 24, July 1909, p. 6, Nov. 1909, p. 5; Province, May 3, 14, 1909; Labour Gazette IX (1909), pp. 961-65; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 27, 1912, p. 3.

54. For example, a two-day strike by seventy-five painters in April 1900 won a wage increase, union recognition, and closed shop. Province, April 2, 4, 1900; Independent, April 7, 1900; Painters Minutes, April 3, 1900. The Master Painters Association gave in after two days to the strike of all union painters in Vancouver in 1901. Painters' Minutes, Nov. 20, 1900, March 12, 29, 1901, April 2, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1901; Province, April 19, 20, 1901; Independent, April 20, 27, 1901. In 1903, all Master Painters who were not members of the Builders' Exchange agreed to the painters' schedule after a one day strike. Members of the Builders' Exchange did not sign with the painters until the end of the strike of carpenters that started the same day (see above, page 591). Painters Minutes, April 1, 9, 1903; Province, April 2, 1903.

55. Seventeen shops employing twenty-five painters had already signed. Painters Minutes, Jan. 18, 1905, March 31, 1905, April 22, 1905; Province, April 1, 1905; Labour Gazette V (1905), p. 1217.

56. Painters Minutes, Feb. 19, 1906, Jan. 24, 1907; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 294, file 2844; Province, April 2, 8, 22, 1907; Labour Gazette VII (1907), pp. 1299, 1305.

Conditions worsened in the 1907-08 slump: financial difficulties forced the union to withdraw from the VTLC in January 1908, union members were doing piecework at less than union scale, and many painters were unemployed.⁵⁷

Secure crafts were less militant than painters and carpenters. Bricklayers and masons were a strong, well-organized, and comparatively well-paid craft at the end of the nineteenth century. An unsuccessful ten-week strike for the eight hour day in 1900 weakened the union and divided its membership, but they did not give up an exclusivism based on the possession of irreplaceable skills.⁵⁸ For example, the union left the BTC after 1903 to avoid becoming involved in the strikes of other building trades, and it was accused of scabbing on carpenters in their 1907 strike (see above, page 592).⁵⁹

57. Once the construction boom started, membership grew, and the union rejoined the VTLC in 1909. VTLC Minutes, June 6, 20, 1907, April 1, 1909, May 6, 1909; Painters Minutes, June 27, 1907, Oct. 8, 1907, Dec. 3, 1907, Jan. 21, 1908, Feb. 25, 1908; Western Wage Earner, Aug. 1909, p. 11.

58. In the strike, about seventy-five bricklayers ceased work for Builders' Exchange contractors at the beginning of April. Eight days later stonecutters struck in sympathy, tying up nearly all brick and stone work in the city. At least ten members formed a local union (the Vancouver Bricklayers and Masons Protective Association), and returned to work under the old conditions in early June, and members of the international union soon returned to work with shorter hours, but less pay. Before long they were again working nine hours, union membership declined, and attendance at meetings fell, from over 80 in 1899 to 15 or 16 immediately after the strike. Province, April 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16, 26, 1900, June 14, 1900, Aug. 20, 1900; Independent, April 14, 21, 1900; World, June 13, 1900. The local union finally dissolved in 1905. Labour Gazette VI (1905), p. 883.

59. VTLC Minutes April 18, 1907.

A new craft like plumbers fell in between the threatened and secure crafts, sharing some characteristics of each. Like bricklayers, plumbers were a well-paid, well-organized trade, with union conditions in 4 shops in 1900.⁶⁰ Like carpenters and painters, however, they had difficulty controlling the migratory labour market in 1905-06, and they were more militant than bricklayers. In 1903, plumbers struck at one shop for eleven days to compel an apprentice to join the union, and in 1905 they struck for several months to obtain a wage increase.⁶¹ After the 1905 strike, the open shop was a problem, and perhaps for that reason, plumbers voluntarily reduced their wage scale to the pre-strike rate in March 1906. In the following month non union men were reportedly being imported from outside the city.⁶²

All of the building trades had been weakened by the 1907-08 recession, but with the beginning of the construction boom in 1909, unions started to rebuild, and carpenters used their growing organizational strength to lead the struggle for control over the labour

60. They were already demanding an eight hour day in 1902. VTLC Minutes, June 15, 1900, Province, March 12, 1902.

61. On the first, see Province, Aug. 23, 1903; Labour Gazette IV (1903), p. 210. The result was not reported. In the second, forty-five plumbers struck against members of the Master Plumbers Association on May 1. Twenty returned to work the next day, on rush jobs where the employer agreed to pay whatever settlement was made elsewhere, but most of the remainder were on strike at the other seven shops until June, when all but two or three contractors had settled. By September, all the strikers were at work for the union wage, but the holdouts never did settle.

62. Province, May 1, 2, 1905; Labour Gazette V (1905), pp. 1344, 1384; VI (1905), pp. 54, 461-62.

unemployment of women in other occupations, as in 1914 and 1915, was the supply of domestic servants plentiful. The rest of the time wealthy families relied on male Asian immigrants and women brought from England by the Salvation Army or other charities to alleviate the continuing "servant problem."⁴⁰

In personal services, the largest employers were restaurants and hotels, and laundries. Over 1700 restaurant employees, cooks, and hotel and boarding house employees lived in the city of Vancouver (Table 13-4).⁴¹ The number of laundry workers fell from 662 in 1911 to 430 in 1921, as a result of the technological revolution and concentration of capital in steam laundries, and perhaps also a decline in the number of Chinese hand laundries.

The social reproduction cycles of hotel and restaurant employees on the one hand, and of laundry workers on the other, were similar in some respects, and different in others, in ways that affected

40. On Asian servants, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 167, 171. Women fleeing domestic work, the servant problem, and attempts to alleviate it are reported in Province, March 4, 21, 1907, July 13, 1907, April 23, 1910, March 21, 1911; Labour Gazette XIII (1913), p. 237; Ward, White Canada Forever, p. 61; cf. Leslie, "Domestic Service"; Roberts, Honest Womanhood, pp. 13-15, on general conditions. On unemployed women turning to domestic service, see B.C. Federationist, April 10, 1914, p. 1, Oct. 16, 23, 1914, p. 1, Dec. 4, 1914, p. 1, Feb. 19, 1915, p. 1; Province, Dec. 27, 1915.

41. It is impossible to be more exact than this, because the census fails to distinguish between cooks in private homes and cooks in restaurants. In addition, the 1921 census does not appear to be strictly comparable with that for 1911: the number of hotel and boarding house employees plummeted, apparently because chambermaids were classified elsewhere in 1921, and there is an unexplained tripling in the number of cooks between 1911 and 1921.

on strike for the closed shop that had eluded them two years earlier, and were defeated after six weeks by the well-organized electrical contractors, who imported non-union electricians from Seattle and eastern Canada with the assistance of the Employers' Association.⁶⁶

The employers' open shop offensive resumed at the beginning of the 1910 building season, when members of the Master Sheet Metal Workers' Association put into practice the ideology expressed by one contractor: "As owners we simply think that we have the right to run our own businesses along lines to suit ourselves." Open shop notices began to be posted on April 8, precipitating immediate walkouts, and by April 20, twenty-eight of the thirty-one shops employing union labour had started strikes by about eighty sheet metal workers. The small sheet metal workers' union had been flourishing in all the city's shops, but the strike eventually collapsed because contractors had no trouble filling the strikers' places. After a labour shortage in August, the union was soon back on its feet, showing that the volatile building trades labour market could not be completely controlled by either side.⁶⁷

Despite the offensive, the BTC signed many individual members of

which says that plumbers were running open shops.

66. PAC, RG-27, Vol. 296, file 3152; Province, May 19, 21, 1909; VTLC Minutes, June 3, 1909; Western Wage Earner, June 1909, p. 9, July 1909, pp. 15-16. The president of the Employers' Association was also one of the larger electrical contractors.

67. News-Advertiser, April 9, 21, 22, 23, 1910; Province, April 9, 1910; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 297, file 3235; Labour Gazette XI (1910), p. 317; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 20, 1910.

the Builders' Exchange to closed shop agreements, and in May 1910, it put another card system into effect. As in 1902, it produced immediate benefits for the carpenters' unions in particular.⁶⁸ In contrast to the previous boom, many of the construction workers now arriving in Vancouver from eastern Canada were union members already, so contractors found it harder to resist the card system by recruiting non-union carpenters. Not all trades benefitted equally, however. For example, painters complained in the fall that the BTC was not as energetic as it had been, so that "a lot" of the union's members were walking the streets, while non-union painters were working. To control the labour market through the card system required a cooperation and solidarity that did not always exist among the different crafts, and even when acting together, they did not necessarily have the power to force union conditions on large determined employers. This was illustrated by what was celebrated as a great success by building trades unions late in 1910: the acceptance of union conditions by the general contractor Smith and Sherbourne, after a strike of building tradesmen in December. The company had difficulty replacing the strikers, but it gave in to union demands only when J.D. Taylor, Vancouver's Mayor and manager of the Daily World newspaper, refused to award it the contract on the new World

68. They added over 300 members on the first day of its operation; by July, the UBCJ alone had 800 members, and it was the smaller of the two unions. The ASCJ added a fifth branch in Vancouver in 1910, and the UBCJ a local in New Westminster. News-Advertiser, April 21, 1910, May 3, 1910; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 20, 1910, Nov. 3, 1910; Labour Gazette XI (1911), pp. 960-63.

Building unless it changed its conduct toward organized labour.⁶⁹

The fight over the closed versus the open shop culminated in a general strike of building tradesmen in 1911. The main opponents were the BTC on the one hand, and the larger contractors, organized in the Master Builders' Association (MBA), on the other.⁷⁰ The events leading up to the general strike began with a strike by carpenters on April 11 for a fifty cent a day wage increase.⁷¹ By April 20, most carpenters were working for the many individual smaller contractors who agreed to pay the raise,⁷² but four members of the new MBA refused to pay more than a twenty-five cent increase, and declared an open shop.⁷³

The BTC escalated the strike on April 25 by calling on all building tradesmen to cease work on buildings where strikebreakers were being employed.⁷⁴ Plasterers, tile layers, plumbers, builders'

69. Western Wage Earner, Nov. 1901, p. 8, Jan. 1911, p. 5; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 15, 1910. Taylor cultivated the labour vote.

70. On the organization of the MBA, see Province, April 11, 12, 1911; News-Advertiser, April 14, 1911.

71. Carpenters had last won a wage increase in 1909, to \$4.00 a day, which was still below their 1907 wage rate. There had been no agreement in the trade after the 1907 strike, and the minimum wage had settled at \$3.50. Province, May 14, 1909; Western Wage Earner, June 1909, p. 9. Meanwhile, the cost of living had been rising.

72. The ASCJ reported that 1600 of its 1800 members were working at the new scale, as were nearly all of the UBCJ's more than 800 members.

73. Province, Feb. 22, 1911, March 31, 1911, April 1, 11, 13, 15, 28, 1911; World, April 8, 1911; VTLC Minutes, April 20, 1911; Labour Gazette XI (1911), p. 1300.

74. This should have been happening anyway, if the building trades card system was working properly. Evidently it was not. Later, during the general strike, painters attributed the need for it to "the untenability

labourers, cement workers, and even bricklayers (whose union was not affiliated to the BTC) walked out at a total of seven jobs where the four MBA firms were employing strikebreakers. Construction was delayed, but the contractors still refused to come to terms with the carpenters, and support from bricklayers and plasterers began to fall away.⁷⁵ The strikes expanded in other directions, however: more than 200 building labourers struck for a closed shop and fifty cent wage increase on May 1, and they were joined first by plasterers' labourers, and then by plasterers. The strike was called off on May 19, without achieving its objective.⁷⁶ On May 30, electricians struck against the open shop declared by nine contractors, and for a wage increase. This strike soon merged with the general strike that started on June 5.⁷⁷

The intransigence of the five MBA contractors who were by then fighting the carpenters set the stage for the general strike. After a mass meeting of carpenters and other building tradesmen on May 20, at which fears were expressed that the large contractors were defeating the carpenters' wage demands as part of a broader fight against unionism, the BTC decided on May 22 in favor of a general strike. In the next few

of [the BTC's] position through the lack of a sufficiently strong card system." Painters were amongst the strongest supporters of the card system in the city. Strike Bulletin, June 26, 1911.

75. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, file 3335; World, April 24, 28, 29, 1911; Province, April 25, 26, 28, 1911.

76. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, files 3356, 3365, 3365A; World, May 1, 3, 8, 1911; Province, May 1, 1911.

77. Province, May 30, 1911, June 1, 5, 1911; World, June 2, 1911; Labour Gazette XII (1911), pp. 134-35.

days, the VTLC executive, the board of union business agents, and a special VTLC meeting approved the measure, in what was seen as a life and death struggle to preserve the closed shop, and even the existence of unions, in Vancouver. "The fight was on a broad principle of closed shop versus open shop, capital arrayed against labor," declared the carpenters' J.W. Wilkinson.⁷⁸ The actions of employers made it plain to building tradesmen that they were involved in generalized class conflict in which the survival of their organizations was at stake.

The MBA was supported against "the unreasonable demands of the men," by the Employers' Association of Vancouver, the Federated Employers' Association of the Pacific Coast, and the owners of the buildings its members were erecting, all of whom were determined "to avoid the establishment in Vancouver of labor conditions such as exist in San Francisco at the present time ... due to the unreasonable demands on the part of organized labour."⁷⁹

Carpenters and representatives of other unions in Vancouver saw the issues in the same uncompromising terms as their employers, raising the strike to the level of a class struggle. J.W. Wilkinson, ASCJ

78. World, May 22, 23, 26, 27, 1911; Province, May 23, 25, 26, 27, 1911. The carpenters' fears may have been exaggerated, because three quarters of the smaller contractors belonging to the old Builders' Exchange had agreed to the wage increase. Province, May 4, 5, 1911. However, given the competitiveness of the construction industry, the other contractors might be forced to reduce wages to MBA levels.

79. Province, April 12, 21, 1911. San Francisco was "one of the most tightly organized union towns in the country." P. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. V: The AFL in the Progressive Era, 1910-1915 (hereafter, History of the Labor Movement, Vol. V), pp. 8-9.

business agent, said the carpenters were fighting an organization that "may count as its supporters practically all the moneyed interests of the country."⁸⁰ Coming in the midst of the long strike of machinists against contract metal shops, and the successful open shop campaign being led in Los Angeles by the newspaper publisher H.G. Otis, it was an important episode in the history of the Vancouver working class, comparable in its effects on class formation to the 1903 UBRE strike against the CPR.⁸¹

The expansion of the open shop campaign (and other grievances⁸²) contributed to the sense of class conflict. Open shops were declared by plumbing contractors, painting contractors, members of

80. World, April 10, 1911; News-Advertiser, April 14, 1911; Province, April 19, 25, 1911, May 22, 1911.

81. "Employers Would Los Angelize Vancouver," read a notice in the Vancouver Strike Bulletin, and J.H. McVety speculated "that a general plan is on foot -- emanating from General Otis and followed up in the Coast cities -- to put down the closed shop...." R.P. Pettipiece recalled that Otis had sent his congratulations to the Pacific Coast Employers Association in February, when it had declared itself in favor of the open shop. That meeting in Portland had included representatives from Vancouver and other coast cities, and was cited repeatedly as evidence that employers had a concerted plan to break the unions. The subsequent organization of the MBA, its hostility to the carpenters, and the support given it by the Employers Association lent additional credence to this interpretation of events. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, file 3378, Vancouver Strike Bulletin (hereafter, Strike Bulletin), June 26, 1911; Province, May 25, 27, June 6, 1911; World, February 4, 1911, May 25, 1911, June 6, 1911.

82. For example, the president of the MBA, F.W. Nicholson of Norton-Griffith Steel Construction, violated his company's contract with the VTLC, and deliberately insulted all Vancouver unionists, by putting non-union men to work on the new Labour Temple. Later in the spring, the MBA and Employers Association succeeded in having the union labour clauses in South Vancouver civic contracts removed.

the Builders' Exchange, and independent general contractors, in addition to those who had done so previously. There were also persistent allegations, denied by contractors, that open shop contractors were discriminating against union members, and that larger contractors were intimidating smaller ones that were sympathetic to unions.⁸³

As final proof of the concerted attack by employers on unionism, the official Strike Bulletin published a circular sent by the Vancouver Employers Association to businesses that were not members. It included extracts from the constitution and bylaws of the association that amounted to the maintenance of blacklists and the open shop:

... the objects of the association are:

First, To protect its members in their rights to manage their respective businesses, in such lawful manner as they may deem proper.

Second, The adoption of a uniform system whereby members may ascertain WHO IS AND WHO IS NOT WORTHY OF EMPLOYMENT...

Fourth, To endeavor to make it possible for any person to obtain employment without being obliged to join a labor organization....

The circular later stated that Association members were drawn principally from "prominent firm(s) in the City that (employ) skilled workmen," strongly suggesting that its overall objective was to break craft controls over the workplace and the labour market.⁸⁴

As far as unionists in Vancouver were concerned, then, the

83. Province, April 25, May 15, 22, 27, June 3, 5, 8, 10, 15, 16, 19, 1911; World, May 31, 1911; June 8, 19, 24, 1911; Strike Bulletin, June 26, 1911.

84. Strike Bulletin, June 26, 1911 (emphasis in original); see also Labour Gazette XII (1911), p. 43.

struggle in the construction industry was representative of a city-wide battle between the open shop and the survival of unionism. "'Open shop' means closed to union men"; "'open shop' means low wages, long hours, ... wives forced to go out to work to earn the necessities of life for the kiddies ... the open shop town means that starvation, prostitution and vice of every shape reigns supreme" prophesied the Strike Bulletin.⁸⁵

The overall threat to unionism in the city had given rise to plans for a general strike of all unions affiliated with the VTLC, but support for it was strongest in the building trades, so the 4000 strikers who walked out on June 5 were all building tradesmen, including even non-union men. Not every building trade joined however: 300 to 400 bricklayers were the most notable, and most widely condemned absence.⁸⁶

In the first few days strikers engaged in turnout actions, marching from building site to building site to force workers still on

85. Strike Bulletin, June 26, 1911; cf. similar statements by J.H. McVety at a mass meeting on June 3. Province, June 5, 1911; World, June 5, 1911.

86. Province, May 31, 1911, June 2, 5, 1911; VTLC Minutes, June 1, 1911; Painters' Minutes, June 15, 1911; World, June 16, 1911. The bricklayers had withdrawn from the BTC before September 1909; and would not rejoin in 1911, despite the threat of expulsion (never carried out) from the VTLC; they were still not members in 1912. VTLC Minutes, Sept. 2, 1909, June 15, 1911, July 20, 1911, Nov. 2, 1911; Province, May 5, 19, 1911; B.C. Federationist, March 20, 1912, p. 3, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1. Despite their reluctance to strike with other building workers, they had been ready to strike in April for a wage increase to \$6.00 a day, which was in the end won without a strike. Province, March 29, 31, 1911, April 7, 1911; Labour Gazette XII (1912), pp. 270-71. Bricklayers in Toronto were similarly exclusive; see Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen," pp. 111-13.

the job to cease work, but the effects were temporary. The tactic was discontinued after some minor violence and arrests, and the main scene of confrontation between strikers and strikebreakers shifted to the Exhibition Grounds, where mass picketing by up to 1000 men, and some isolated violence were insufficient to force a cessation of work on a project of symbolic importance.⁸⁷

The strikers held out for over a month (by which time the carpenters had been off the job for three months) thanks to strike pay and donations from other Vancouver unions. The strike began to fall apart when the BTC rejected an offer made by independent contractors in the first week of July. Solidarity collapsed, and after individual trades started to return to work,⁸⁸ the BTC bowed to the inevitable, and left settlements in the hands of individual unions on July 18. Carpenters resumed work on July 20, and most other trades had returned to work for all contractors willing to accept a closed shop by July 25. Plumbers and painters held out for closed shops in the whole trade, and while the former settled before the end of July, painters remained on

87. A festival atmosphere developed, as the striking carpenters had picnics, played football, and amused themselves first by jeering strikebreakers, then by counting the number of hammer-strokes it took them to put up siding (cheering those who were fastest). These tactics unnerved strikebreakers, but the labour market was glutted, and they were ultimately ineffectual. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, file 3378; Province, June 6, 8, 10, 13, 17, 21, 30, 1911, July 7, 1911; World, June 6, 1911, July 7, 1911.

88. Tile layers and marble workers returned on July 11, plasterers (who withdrew from the BTC) on July 13, plasterers' labourers and stonecutters on July 14, and iron workers and lathers on July 17. Individual carpenters and sheet metal workers were also drifting back to work.

strike against open shop contractors until September, in a losing cause (there were still only three union shops in December).⁸⁹ Again in May 1912, painters decided to work only in all-union shops, and fifteen struck briefly against an open shop contractor in August. The Master Painters' Association remained an open shop organization, however, and although the painters made modest gains in their battle for labour market control, there were still sixteen open shops in May 1913.⁹⁰

The building trades unions tested their strength against the large employers in the 1911 general strike, and were defeated. They were not destroyed, and individual unions retained enough control over the labour market to preserve closed shops with some contractors, but they could not prevent serious erosion of the closed shop in the building trades. The BTC slowly built up again after the strike, and by March 1912, sixteen out of twenty eligible unions were members. It dissolved that summer, however, a victim of jurisdictional disputes between its members, and of a new influx of building tradesmen that member unions had difficulty assimilating.⁹¹

89. World, June 14, 30, 1911, July 7, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 1911; Province, June 15, 19, 30, 1911, July 3, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 1911; VTLC Minutes, July 20, 1911, Aug. 3, 1911, Oct. 19, 1911; Painters' Minutes, July 27, 1911, Aug. 3, 17, 24, 26, 31, 1911, Sept. 7, 1911; Labour Gazette XII (1911), pp. 134-35; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 23, 1911, p. 1. Nearly 160 painters belonged to the union in 1911. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 6, 1912, p. 1.

90. B.C. Federationist, May 6, 1912, p. 1, Aug. 10, 1912, p. 4, May 5, 1913, p. 4; VTLC Minutes, April 18, 1912, May 2, 1912.

91. VTLC Minutes, Aug. 17, 1911; B.C. Federationist, March 20, 1912, p. 3, Aug. 3, 1912, p. 3. It was revived again in late September. B.C. Federationist, Oct. 5, 12, 1912, p. 1. The inability of the building

Symbolic of the disarray in the building trades, three strikes occurred over craft jurisdiction in 1912.⁹² Jurisdictional struggles were an aspect of building trades unions' attempt to control the labour market, when changes in building materials and methods were redefining or challenging craft boundaries. In contrast to efforts supported by threatened crafts (especially carpenters and painters) to secure control for all building workers through BTC card systems, jurisdictional struggles represented the dominance of exclusivist strategies among secure crafts such as stonecutters and plasterers.

The struggle for labour market control, which had almost completely dominated the militant collective action of the building trades since the resumption of the construction boom in 1909,⁹³ receded after the 1911 defeat. A modest radicalization may have occurred, as several building trades unions endorsed the principles of socialism

trades to control the labour market began to affect other conditions in 1912: for example, several contractors tried to lengthen hours by working Saturday afternoons, and wages for carpenters had fallen back to their 1906 level. B.C. Federationist, May 20, 1912, p. 2; Province, Aug. 1, 1912; Sun, Aug. 1, 1912.

92. The first two jurisdiction strikes were over competing claims by stonecutters and granite cutters to stone being used on the Court House in Vancouver and the Parliament Buildings in Victoria. Province, June 5, 1912; B.C. Federationist, June 15, 1912, p. 4; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 130-1, 137, 147, Vol. 4, pp. 46-49. In the other, plasterers and cement finishers on a number of large buildings struck over the installation of base boards, which was probably being done by carpenters. Sun, Aug. 13, 1912; cf. Galenson, United Brotherhood of Carpenters, pp. 112-22.

93. Only two small strikes occurred over straight wage issues, both in 1910. Lathers won a 20 per cent increase after a strike in February or early March, and plumbers won a dollar a day increase after a one-hour strike in April. Province, March 4, 1910; Western Wage Earner, May 1910, p. 7.

in 1912, but apathy and demobilization were also indicated.⁹⁴

During the pre-war depression, building activity plummeted, leading to high levels of unemployment and out-migration for every trade. By 1915, "the almost complete unemployment of building tradesmen" was reported, and 5000 were estimated to have left Vancouver between 1914 and 1916.⁹⁵ Several attempts to reorganize the BTC failed, and although individual unions generally managed to keep going with reduced memberships, substantial demobilization occurred.⁹⁶ Consequently, building tradesmen were generally unable to resist the

94. Painters voted 45 to 3 for socialism (and 67 to 1 for industrial unionism), UBCJ carpenters 63 to 13 (Vancouver) and 19 to 2 (New Westminster), bricklayers 50 to 14, plumbers 31 to 21. The low turnout of carpenters (in a union which a year before had over 800 members in the Vancouver area) indicates substantial apathy. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 15, 1912, April 4, 18, 1912, Aug. 15, 1912; B.C. Federationist, May 6, 1912, p. 1.

95. Labour Gazette XV (1915), p. 1293; B.C. Federationist, January 19, 1917, p. 1. For other reports on unemployment in the building trades, see B.C. Federationist, March 21, 1913, p. 1, April 25, 1913, p. 2, June 13, 1913, p. 1, Dec. 12, 1913, p. 10, Feb. 20, 1914, p. 1, April 17, 1914, p. 1, Oct. 23, 1914, p. 1, Nov. 27, 1914, p. 4, Dec. 25, 1914, p. 1, March 25, 1915, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, March 5, 1914, Sept. 25, 1914, Dec. 17, 1914, Jan. 21, 1915, May 6, 1915; PABC, Attorney-General Correspondence 1911-18, Roll 66, file 8560-14-14, M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, Sept. 4, 1914, and Dec. 23, 1914 (the latter in M.J. Reid to W.J. Bowser, Dec. 28, 1914).

96. The BTC was reorganized in September 1912, collapsed in 1913, was revived in 1914, and disappeared once more in 1915. See VTLC Minutes, Jan. 2, 1913, July 17, 1913; B.C. Federationist, May 9, 1913, p. 1, May 1, 1914, p. 8; Report on Labour Organization, 1915, pp. 223-26. The painters' Vancouver local declined from 183 members in 1912 to 114 in the last half of 1913, and several unions lost locals in 1914-15: carpenters five in Vancouver, and two in New Westminster, lathers one in each, painters and plumbers each one in New Westminster. Report on Labour Organization, 1914, pp. 226-28, 1915, pp. 223-26. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 30, 1914, p. 2.

wage reductions and longer hours imposed by employers in these years. Eighty granite cutters (a secure craft) actually managed to win a wage increase after a twenty-six day strike in 1913, but sheet metal workers and plumbers (each new crafts) struck unsuccessfully against wage reductions in 1914 and 1915.⁹⁷

Only when the labour market became tighter during war capitalism did building trades workers have the opportunity to reorganize, and to demand wage increases to compensate for the losses incurred during the depression and for the rising cost of living. After a failed attempt in 1916, the BTC was reorganized in 1917, and individual unions slowly rebuilt their memberships, but not to the heights of the 1909-1912 boom.⁹⁸ Many wage increases were won without strikes, but after some minor disputes involving smaller trades in 1917, more important strikes by the two main threatened crafts (carpenters and painters) occurred in 1918 and 1919.⁹⁹

97. On the granite cutters, see PAC, RG 27, Vol. 303, file 13(111); Labour Gazette XIV (1913), p. 419. On the sheet metal workers, see B.C. Federationist, Aug. 14, 1914, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 30, 1914. The plumbers were locked out in January 1915, and the dispute was still in progress in January 1916. VTLC Minutes, March 18, 1915, April 15, 1915, May 6, 1915, July 2, 1915, Sept. 2, 1915, Oct. 21, 1915, Nov. 18, 1915, Jan. 20, 1916; B.C. Federationist, May 21, 1915, p. 1, June 12, 1915, p. 1, July 9, 1915, p. 1.

98. B.C. Federationist, Feb. 18, 1916, p. 4, April 21, 1916, p. 4, Aug. 11, 18, 1916, p. 1, Jan. 5, 1917, p. 3, Jan. 19, 1917, p. 1, Feb. 16, 1917, pp. 1, 4, April 20, 1917, p. 1, April 27, 1917, pp. 5, 6, May 18, 1917, pp. 1, 6, June 1, 1917, p. 5, July 6, 1917, p. 1, July 20, 1917, p. 6; Province, April 13, 1917.

99. The small strikes were by pipefitters and helpers, electricians, and carpenters. See Province, May 16, 28, 1917; News-Advertiser, May 19, 1917; Sun, May 29, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 3, 17, 1917, p. 6;

Labour shortages resulting in part from the wartime shipbuilding boom were the reason for the growing power of building trades unions, and the two carpenters' strikes were closely connected to shipbuilding. The first was in sympathy with striking ship carpenters (who also belonged to the UBCJ) at the Wallace Shipyard; the second was by about 400 house carpenters demanding an increase in pay to the rate paid house carpenters working in shipyards. They won a compromise settlement from forty contractors belonging to the Master Builders Association after eleven days.¹⁰⁰ In a strike against forty painting contractors, 150 painters also won a wage increase at nearly every shop in less than two weeks.¹⁰¹ Both painters and carpenters also won closed shops, and reasserted some control over the labour market.¹⁰² As the wartime boom ended, however, labour scarcity gave way to surplus, and labour market control became more difficult to maintain. A strike by seventy-five painters against all the city's painting and decorating firms in May 1919, succeeded in obtaining another wage increase in less than three weeks, but seven to ten non-union shops remained at the old rate.¹⁰³

World, Aug. 4, 1917.

100. On the former, see Sun, May 25, 1918, Province, May 27, 1918. On the latter, see PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(112); B.C. Federationist, Aug. 2, 1918, p. 1; Province, June 22, 1918, July 31, 1918, Aug. 1, 6, 7, 11, 12, 1918; Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), p. 741.

101. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(113); Province, Aug. 1, 14, 1918; Labour Gazette XVIII (1918), p. 741.

102. B.C. Federationist, Sept. 6, 1918, p. 1; Painters' Minutes, Sept. 5, 1918.

103. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(174); Painters' Minutes, April 17, 1919, May 8, 15, 22, 1919. A strike by electricians for a substantial

Because of their numerical decline, and the upsurge of militancy in other industries, the building trades were not leaders of working class collective action in Vancouver during the war capitalist boom. This was reflected in the radical movement of 1918-1919. Most building trades unions that held votes were against the proposed general strike in the Duncan Kerr case,¹⁰⁴ and they played practically no role in the Goodwin protest strike in 1918. All building tradesmen employed by large contractors joined the 1919 general strike, including 1100 carpenters, and with one exception, they stayed out until the strike was called off.¹⁰⁵

Every building trades union which voted on the question of affiliation with the OBU was in favor, but secure old crafts, such as bricklayers and stonecutters, who retained their skills and job control intact, were indifferent to the appeal of the OBU, and did not hold votes (Table 1-3). Painters and carpenters were the two largest and most threatened trades, and the most radical in 1919. All carpenters'

wage increase lasted at least three weeks in September, perhaps indicating that increased pay was becoming harder to achieve. Province, Sept. 24, 1919 (nothing more is known about this dispute).

104. Only tile layers, pile drivers, and iron workers were in favor. Carpenters (ASCJ), painters, sheet metal workers, plumbers, plasterers, and bricklayers were opposed. Their total vote was 122 for, and 164 against. Only painters reported willingness to strike in sympathy with BCER strikers in July 1918. VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918, July 7, 1918.

105. Sheet metal workers decided independently to return to work on June 27. In New Westminster, only carpenters were organized, and they joined the short general strike there. B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8; Sun, June 20, 26, 27, 1919; Province, June 5, 27, 1919; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 315, file 19(221).

locals but one voted strongly in favor of the OBU, and resolutions were passed earlier in the year demanding the six hour day, an end to censorship, the recall of allied troops from Russia, and any policy for a complete change in the social system, replacing production for profit with production for use. They also supported the general strike as a tactic for forcing an end to restrictions on free speech and assembly, and in unsettled industrial disputes.¹⁰⁶ Some carpenters joined the OBU after the general strike, but others left the OBU-oriented VTLC, and by November, the former withdrew from the OBU.¹⁰⁷

Painters were also radical in 1919. In addition to voting strongly for the OBU, they instructed their delegate to the Western Labour Conference to forward fraternal greetings to the All-Russian Council of Soviets, and their representative at the 1919 Shipbuilding Royal Commission, and at the Mathers Commission was a socialist who advocated workers' control of industry. After the general strike, however, the union was sharply split into OBU supporters and an old guard of opponents. As a result, they did not join the OBU, but neither did they leave the old VTLC.¹⁰⁸

New crafts in the building trades were less radical than the

106. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 3, 1919, p. 4, Feb. 7, 1919, p. 1.

107. The situation was very confused. See B.C. Federationist, Aug. 15, 1919, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 7, 14, 1919, Sept. 11, 1919; VTLC (I) Minutes, Nov. 5, 1919; Report on Labour Organization, 1919, pp. 290-93.

108. Sun, March 11, 1919; B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1919, p. 1; Province, May 2, 1919; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 28, 1919; Mathers Commission Evidence, Vol. I, p. 558.

carpenters and painters. For example, plumbers were nearly evenly split on the OBU, and they ended up in the anti-OBU camp after the general strike, when they withdrew from the old OBU VTLC and joined the new International VTLC.¹⁰⁹

In the history of radicalism, then, as in the overall history of mobilization and collective action in the building trades, the threatened crafts, or crafts in crisis, were the most weakly organized, but also the most oriented to inclusive organization and action, the most militant, and the most radical. Secure, unthreatened crafts were the most strongly organized, the most exclusivist, among the least militant, and by far the least radical. New crafts were somewhere in between: moderately well organized, militant, and ambivalently radical.¹¹⁰ For the building trades, then, the "crisis of the craftsman" interpretation of early twentieth century working class history fits the case of Vancouver.

Construction Labourers

Construction labourers were more weakly mobilized and less active than building tradesmen. Employment fluctuated drastically, most

109. They had passed some radical resolutions earlier in the year, but were one of only two building trades unions to join the new VTLC (the other was the new international local of electrical workers). Province, July 30, 1919; VTLC (I) Minutes, Sept. 4, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 7, 1919, p. 1. Another new craft, sheet metal workers, withdrew from the VTLC at the same time as the plumbers.

110. On the strength of organizations, see B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 166. These results are similar to those found in Toronto by Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen."

labourers were migratory, and they lacked a craft skill and identity as a basis for organization. They were also divided between settled urban workers and frontier labourers, and English-speaking workers and "foreigners." Conditions were different for builders' labourers, heavy construction labourers employed by private contractors, and Vancouver civic employees, so each will be examined in turn.¹¹¹

Like building tradesmen, builders' labourers struggled to control the migratory labour market, but they were weakly mobilized, and had less success. A union was organized in 1902, and its membership quadrupled to 100 by the following spring.¹¹² They struck for higher wages and the eight hour day, and like other building trades unions, reached a quick settlement with contractors outside the Builders' Exchange, for whom all union members resumed work the next day.¹¹³ Union membership grew slightly, but many builders' labourers remained outside it, and in the course of the building boom lasting until 1907, it was weakened by the constant arrival and departure of hundreds of builders' labourers.¹¹⁴ When the building boom resumed in 1909, the

111. Civic labourers for other municipalities were unorganized, and so will be considered with the former.

112. VTLC Minutes, May 15, 1902; Independent, Oct. 18, 1902, Sept. 5, 1903.

113. Labour Gazette III (1903), p. 601; Province, April 1, 2, 1903. In another small strike, in 1906, building trades labourers (plasterers' labourers) won wage increases from at least three shops after a few days. Province, Aug. 1, 3, 1906.

114. Independent, Sept. 5, 1903, Labour Gazette VI (1905), p. 54; B.C. Trades Unionist, March 1908, p. 12.

union expanded quickly, but the migratory, seasonal labour market resulted in fluctuating membership.¹¹⁵ Like other building workers, builders' labourers suffered badly from unemployment and wage cuts in the pre-war depression, and many left the city. A strained marriage between the builders' labourers and civic employees unions in 1913 did nothing to help the situation. The builders' labourers split with the civic labourers' union in April 1917, but the new union was inactive, and finally disappeared in 1918.¹¹⁶ Because they were not organized in 1918-1919, builders' labourers played no role in the radical movement in Vancouver.

A union of forty-five general labourers was formed in 1902, but it soon disappeared, and labourers for private heavy construction contractors, and civic labourers outside the city of Vancouver, remained non-unionized.¹¹⁷ They were nevertheless militant, and accounted for a large proportion of the strikes by non-union workers in the Vancouver area. Three small strikes occurred in 1906-08,¹¹⁸ but the most

115. The union had 400 members in July 1909, half that number in the winter of 1910-11, 400 in April 1911, and 280 in February 1912. *Western Wage Earner*, May 1909, p. 15, Nov. 1909, p. 6, June 1910, pp. 6-7; VTLC Minutes, July 15, 1909, Feb. 1, 1912; *World*, April 15, 1911.

116. *B.C. Federationist*, May 25, 1913, p. 1; Nov. 21, 1913, p. 1, April 17, 1914, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, Nov. 20, 1913. *Report on Labour Organization*, 1918, pp. 229-31.

117. *Independent*, Jan. 18, 1902.

118. Seventy-five labourers, described as "mostly foreigners," employed on paving work by Armstrong, Morrison and Company struck for wage increase in 1906 (outcome unknown), and thirty labourers building a sea wall won a compromise settlement of demands for higher pay and steady work in a one-day strike in July 1907. Twenty-five labourers for the

significant strikes were by labourers on public works in 1910.

About 600 non-unionized labourers employed on water works construction by the municipality of South Vancouver went on strike on April 22, 1910, after petitions for a wage increase and eight hour day were ignored. The walkout began as a "turnout action": a work gang at Cedar Cottage downed tools, then toured the district enlisting other gangs, until virtually the whole work force arrived at the municipal hall. After speeches in English, Russian, Italian, and French, an Excavators' Union was formed, apparently under the influence of IWW organizers. The weak solidarity of the ethnically heterogeneous strikers quickly melted away, however, and they found other work. By the time the strike was called off on May 2, only 100 strikers were left, mostly residents of South Vancouver. These settled urban workers had wanted to accept the city's offer of an eight hour day at the same pay, but had previously been outvoted by more militant frontier labourers.¹¹⁹

The conflicting interests of settled urban workers and frontier labourers also appeared in the other labourers' strike, in Vancouver in July 1910. The dispute had its roots in a city bylaw, won through the efforts of unions, that established the eight hour day for city contractors. When contractors reduced their labourers' daily wages

City of New Westminster were replaced when they struck for a wage increase in June 1908. Province, June 27, 1906, July 3, 1906, July 5, 1907; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 296, file 3074.

119. Province, April 23, 30, 1910, May 6, 1910; News-Advertiser, April 23, 1910, May 1, 3, 1910.

accordingly, the mostly Italian street labourers, who "appeared to desire to make the greatest amount of money possible at this season," demanded restoration of their former pay rates, even if they had to work a nine-hour day. The strike began on July 18, as a spontaneous turnout action by one crew, which brought about 420 labourers out on strike on the first day. Turnout actions continued for several days, as new crews were put to work by contractors, and strikers pulled men off private as well as public work.¹²⁰ Since the frontier labourers' goal was to make as much money as possible in a short time, they had no interest in holding out for long, so by July 25, the majority had returned to work on their employers' terms, and the rest had found other jobs.¹²¹

The failure of the 1910 strikes spelt the end of militancy by heavy construction labourers during the construction boom and ensuing depression. Several strikes occurred in 1917, when war capitalist labour shortages once again furnished the opportunity.¹²² In none of

120. Sensational press reports and allegations made by contractors stressed violence and intimidation (of which there was some), but the strike was largely peaceful. Police attempts to suppress the turnout actions were foiled by imaginative tactics such as bicycle-riding scouts, and flying squads of pickets in autos, who assembled at job sites to stop work, then dispersed as the police arrived. The labourers had not been unionized at the beginning of the strike, but these tactics bore the marks of the IWW, which became involved soon after it began.

121. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 298, file 3282; Province, July 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 1910; News-Advertiser, July 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 1910; Labour Gazette XI (1910), pp. 268-69.

122. Fifty labourers on sewer construction struck won a compromise victory on wage demands after nearly three weeks on strike, in which they were joined in sympathy by another thirty workers on the same project. See PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(98); Sun, Feb. 1, 1917; Province, Feb. 13, 1917; Labour Gazette XVII (1917), pp. 208-09. In

these strikes were the workers unionized, demonstrating the continued weak mobilization of heavy construction labourers not employed by the city of Vancouver.

All heavy construction labourers had difficulty organizing because of the seasonality of the work, the migratory labour market, ethnic divisions, and the hostility of employers. Because they were aided in their mobilization and collective action by the VTLC (in its capacity as the political voice of organized Vancouver workers), and because they had a nucleus of residents on which to build an organization, Vancouver's civic labourers were more strongly mobilized than private construction workers. A Civic Employees Union was formed in June 1902, with 110 members from street repair, waterworks, and board of works departments.¹²³ They enrolled only a small proportion of the seasonal labour force, however, and were still too weak to enforce their main demands: an eight hour day, union recognition, increased wages, overtime pay, preference in hiring for citizens and union members, and performance of public works by day labour.¹²⁴ The union had difficulty

three separate strikes in April, a total of about 155 labourers working on construction at the Canadian Northern and Great Northern railway yards struck for wage increases. See PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(89); Province, April 16, 19, 1917. A three day strike in September for a wage increase was partially won by fifty dredge workers. See PAC, RG 27, Vol. 306, file 17(88); Sun, Sept. 24, 26, 28, 1917; Province, Sept. 27, 1917; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 28, 1917, p. 1.

123. Independent, Sept. 5, 1903; VTLC Minutes, May 15, 1902, June 19, 1902; Province, Oct. 10, 1902.

124. Their weakness was shown by the fact that in June 1904, 60 per cent of the city's labourers were not union members. Province, June 16, 1900, April 12, 1905, Dec. 1, 1905; Independent, June 23, 1900, Feb. 28, 1903; VTLC Minutes Oct. 2, 1902, Dec. 4, 1902, Feb. 7, 1904, June 2,

maintaining itself during the 1907-1908 slump, because of the hostility of the city street superintendent, and the worsening labour market.¹²⁵

The employment of labourers on civic works expanded to about 1000 workers in 1909-10, and twice that number in 1912, but membership in the Civic Employees Union remained low, and fluctuated widely. Its weakness was attributable to difficulty assimilating newcomers, especially non-English speakers, the hostility of foremen and civic officials, and the apathy of labourers, for whom improved conditions were won by the VTLC.¹²⁶

The ethnic division between Italian and English-speaking labourers weakened workers on both sides, and became an important issue for civic labourers beginning in 1911, when English-speaking residents tried to exclude Italians from civic jobs.¹²⁷ The issue became more prominent when the pre-war depression and resulting municipal fiscal crises led to unemployment, wage reductions, and short time for heavy

1904.

125. VTLC Minutes, Aug. 1, 1907, March 5, 1908, Aug. 6, 1908; Province, Aug. 2, 1907, Jan. 31, 1908, March 10, 17, 1908, June 23, 1908, Aug. 25, 1908, Sept. 2, 1908; B.C. Trades Unionist, June 1908, p. 3.

126. Province, March 27, 1909, April 12, 1909, April 27, 1910, May 3, 20, 1910, Feb. 14, 1911, April 22, 1911, June 15, 1911, Jan. 31, 1912, March 7, 27, 1912, May 3, 1912; VTLC Minutes, July 8, 15, 1909, Sept. 7, 1911, Oct. 19, 1911, Nov. 2, 16, 1911, March 7, 1912, May 2, 1912; Western Wage Earner, Dec. 1910, p. 12; World, Feb. 18, 1911, April 15, 1911; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 23, 1911, p. 8.

127. Province, Sept. 8, 20, 1911, Feb. 7, 8, 1912; VTLC Minutes, Sept. 21, 1911, Nov. 16, 1911; News-Advertiser, Feb. 7, 1912; Sun, June 20, 1912.

construction labourers.¹²⁸ Competition for jobs increased, and even after the city laid off many 'foreigners' to give preference to married men and civic taxpayers, the 'Italian question' remained prominent, because Italians were still the only workers who would work consistently in sewer construction.¹²⁹ Divisions between employed and unemployed labourers, English-speakers and 'foreigners,' and residents and migrants, weakened a civic labourers' union already in difficulties because of repression by city officials.¹³⁰

Like other workers, civic labourers reorganized during the war capitalist boom,¹³¹ and began to struggle first for the restoration of

128. South Vancouver laid off 350 road workers because of its fiscal crisis in June 1913; Vancouver employed 2000 labourers in 1912, and only 900 to 1000 in 1913. See B.C. Federationist, March 21, 1913, p. 1; Province, Jan. 30, 1913, June 27, 30, 1913, Oct. 10, 1913. Half the membership of the Civic Employees Union was unemployed in April 1914, and sewer workers were put on half time in August. In 1915, wages were reduced 15 per cent. VTLC Minutes, April 2, 1914, Aug. 30, 1914, Oct. 1, 15, 1914, May 20, 1915, June 3, 1915; Province, Aug. 11, 1914, Sept. 30, 1914, Oct. 5, 1914, April 7, 1915, May 19, 1915, June 12, 1915, Oct. 20, 1915; B.C. Federationist, April 9, 1915, p. 2, May 21, 1915, p. 1, June 18, 1915, p. 4.

129. The city's new policy worked a hardship on foreign workers and other migratory labourers, and on labourers who lived outside the city, where rents were lower. Province, June 30, 1913, Nov. 10, 1913, March 4, 11, 1914, April 17, 1914; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 332.

130. Charges of discrimination against prominent union members by the city were documented in an IDIA board report. Province, March 6, 10, 12, 27, 1913, April 16, 1913, May 1, 1913; B.C. Federationist, May 9, 1913, p. 1; Labour Gazette XIII (1913), pp. 1382-85.

131. They grew slowly beginning in 1916. In 1918 the Civic Employees Union sought members among inside employees as well as outside labourers, and then joined in the federation of civic employees unions that came into existence in 1918-1919. B.C. Federationist, March 24, 1916, p. 4, Dec. 22, 1916, p. 1, June 22, 1917, p. 8, Sept. 21, 1917, p.

conditions existing before the wage reductions and short time of the pre-war depression, then for wage increases to keep up with the cost of living.¹³² In April 1918, approximately 300 labourers, joined by a number of city mechanics in sympathy, went on strike for wage increases to compensate for the rising cost of living. The city administration responded with wage cuts, and threatened to dismiss all strikers, but it relented after threats of further sympathetic strikes.¹³³

Although the success of the threats of sympathetic strikes in the 1918 dispute added fuel to the fires of general strike proponents in Vancouver, civic labourers played a supporting role in the radical movement of 1918-1919. They did not join the 1918 Goodwin protest

1; VTLC Minutes, April 5, 1917; Dec. 5, 1918; Province, Dec. 5, 1918.

132. In March 1917, a meeting of 250 union and non-union civic labourers voted nearly unanimously in favor of a strike for the restoration of the \$3.00 a day wage they received before the depression. The city agreed to pay the wage increase recommended by an IDIA board, but it was as unwilling as any private employer to give up management rights, and so refused to make recommended changes in its promotion and disciplinary procedures. B.C. Federationist, April 7, 1916, p. 1, Sept. 8, 22, 1916, p. 1, Dec. 22, 1916, p. 1, March 30, 1917, p. 6, April 20, 1917, p. 4, June 15, 1917, p. 1; Province, Sept. 1, 22, 1916, March 17, 24, 1917, June 9, 1917; News-Advertiser, Sept. 20, 1916; Labour Gazette XVII (1917), pp. 446-48.

133. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 309, file 18(169); Province, April 6, 11, 24, 25, 27, 30, 1918, May 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 1918; B.C. Federationist, April 26, 1918, p. 1, May 3, 10, 1918, p. 1; Sun, April 28, 30, 1918, May 3, 5, 1918. The reclassification of labourers remained a grievance, and another strike was threatened later in the month, before the matter was resolved. See Province, May 28, 29, 1918; Sun, June 1, 1918. Another wage increase was won later in the year without a strike. Province, Oct. 29, 30, 1918, Nov. 20, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 15, 1918, p. 1.

strike,¹³⁴ and were hesitant and timid participants in the 1919 general strike.¹³⁵ Members of the civic employees' union had previously voted heavily in favor of the OBU (Table 1-3), but after the general strike, enthusiasm for the new organization was lost in unsuccessful attempts to restore the seniority and other benefits the city had taken from them. The union remained in existence, and cooperated with the other unions of city employees, but its radical and militant impulse was gone.¹³⁶

Conclusions

The history of mobilization and collective action by building tradesmen and construction labourers shows the effects of capital accumulation, the social reproduction cycles of the workers, and strategic interaction (repression, opportunity and power).

The objectives of building tradesmen's mobilization and

134. They had opposed conscription in 1917, however, and favored a general strike against it, but in early 1918, they voted 2 to 1 against a general strike over the imprisonment of Kerr. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917, June 21, 1917; VTLC Executive Minutes, Jan. 17, 1918.

135. They originally voted 139 to 30 against it, but when they were called out by the strike committee on June 7, about 250 permanent employees and 200 construction labourers joined the strike (reluctantly, according to the union business agent, A.W. MacFarlane). City Council immediately resolved that strikers would be considered to have resigned, with reinstatement at the discretion of department heads, and permanent employees consequently became obsessed with reinstatement and the preservation of seniority. As a result of continual defections from the strikers' ranks, about 100 were back at work by June 24, and the rest returned as new employees without seniority on June 28 and 30 (before the general strike was called off). PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190); Sun, June 1, 7, 12, 29, 1919; Province, June 7, 9, 10, 23, 24, 26, 30.

136. VTLC Minutes, March 27, 1919; Province, June 2, 1919, July 30, 1919, Nov. 18, 1919.

collective action followed from the contradictions of capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction. The industry was principally composed of intensely competitive, small building contractors and subcontractors. Combined with the division of building workers into a large number of crafts threatened to various degrees by technological change, deskilling, and the migratory labour market, this put labour market control and wages at the center of conflicts in the industry.

Differences in the histories of mobilization and collective action of the various building trades depended on the effects of capital accumulation on craft workers' social reproduction cycles. Differences in organizational strength, militancy, and radicalization depended on whether crafts were affected by the tendency to reduce labour costs through deskilling, and the resulting increase in labour market competition. The craftsmen most threatened by that tendency were carpenters, and to a lesser extent, painters.¹³⁷ They were the most weakly organized,¹³⁸ the most militant, and in 1918 and 1919, the most radical of the building trades. Secure crafts such as bricklayers and stonecutters retained their skills and control over production, and were the most strongly organized, amongst the least militant, and by far the least radical. Finally, new crafts fostered by technological changes in

137. The introduction of paint sprayers in shipyards also threatened painters in this way. See page 404 above.

138. This was especially true of the carpenters; painters were better organized.

building, such as plumbers, sheet metal workers, and electricians, were moderately well-organized and militant, but not radical.¹³⁹ For the building trades, then, the "crisis of the craftsman" interpretation of early twentieth century working class history fits the case of Vancouver.

Opportunities for collective action by building tradesmen depended on the fluctuating level of construction activity, and on the conditions in the local labour market. Strike militancy was thus highest in 1900-03, and in the building boom from 1909 to 1912. Because of the influx of workers from the national and international labour market, however, contractors had the opportunity to introduce the open shop when construction was depressed, and to employ strikebreakers even in strikes during booms. As a result, opportunity was not converted to power, especially for threatened crafts. Contributing to that lack of power was the hostility to unions and workers' collective action of large contractors, who were backed by open shop organizations such as the Vancouver Employers' Association. As we saw, this turned the 1911 carpenters' strike into a class struggle, the loss of which, followed by the 1913-1915 depression, gave impetus to the development of working-class radicalism in the war capitalist boom.

Most construction labourers faced conditions of capital accumulation and social reproduction different from those affecting

139. On the strength of organizations, see B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 166. These results are similar to those found in Toronto by Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen."

building craftsmen. The most important differences were the lack of skill of builders' and heavy construction labourers, and among the latter, divisions between migratory frontier labourers and labourers who were settled urban workers, and between English-speaking and 'foreign' labourers.

The differences between builders' labourers, and settled and frontier heavy construction labourers affected mobilization, militancy, and radicalism. Builders' labourers were organized for much of the period, but their union was weak and unstable. The reason for their organization was their connection to the building trades, in whose mobilization and action they became involved. They were unable to form a stable organization because, unlike the building crafts, they lacked a basis in skill, and therefore suffered even more than the former from labour market competition.

Of the heavy construction labourers, civic labourers employed by the city of Vancouver were the best organized, the least militant, and only hesitantly radical. Like builders' labourers, and probably for the same reasons, their union was unstable. Membership fluctuated widely, depending on the amount of construction work being done by the city, and it was never able to organize more than a small proportion of the large number of civic labourers during construction booms. From this it may be inferred that the union was based on the city's permanent employees, who were residents of the Vancouver area and probably English-speaking, rather than on migratory frontier labourers. Lack of militancy may have been a consequence of their weakness, the hostility of the city

administration, and the fact that their employment conditions were a matter of public debate, so that political avenues for the achievement of their objectives were available.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the same condition of permanency that made possible long-term mobilization also seems to have dampened radicalism; consequently support for the general strike and OBU rapidly evaporated when it appeared that some of the benefits that they had derived from permanent city employment, such as seniority, could be lost.

Migratory frontier labourers employed by private contractors, and by civic authorities when road and sewer construction was at its peak, were the least well-mobilized construction labourers.¹⁴¹ Lacking any representation of their interests, their only resource consisted of spontaneous strike action using the militant tactics characteristic of unorganized, unskilled workers who were easily replaced, such as turnout actions.¹⁴² It was a weak resource, however: because they were trying to earn as much as possible during a short construction season, they (like other frontier labourers, especially those from oppressed ethnic groups)

140. The civic employees generally had the VTLC fighting for them, and their representatives could always make themselves heard at City Council meetings, even if city officials were hostile to them. A.W. MacFarlane, business agent of the Civic Employees Union, was known as "the alderman for the ninth ward" (Vancouver had eight wards), because of his frequent appearances at council meetings. Province, Feb. 4, 1919.

141. The only unions amongst frontier construction labourers consisted of ephemeral IWW organizations started after strikes had already begun.

142. See B.R. Brown, "Industrial Capitalism, Conflict and Working-Class Contention in Lancashire, 1842," pp. 132-33, on the conditions of turnout actions.

could not hold out long in strikes. After the collapse of the construction boom, their numbers declined to such an extent that they were not an important force in the Vancouver working class in the war capitalist boom, and they played no role (as heavy construction labourers¹⁴³) in the radical movement of 1918-19. To that extent, the frontier labourer interpretation of working-class radicalism in Vancouver is not supported in the construction industry.

143. Construction labourers who were settled urban workers, and remained in the city into the war capitalist period, ~~may~~ have become shipyard labourers, who were fairly radical in 1918-19. For one example, see Mathers Commission Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 510-16.

Chapter 13

TRADE AND FINANCE, SERVICES, AND THE STATE:

"Real estate is the basic industry here."

Most studies of early twentieth century working-class history concentrate, for good reason, on industrial workers and on the transformation of capitalist production. Occurring at the same time, however, were changes in the administration of industrial enterprises, a revolution in the marketing of industry's products, the centralization of financial capital, increasing investment in the services sector, and the beginnings of the expansion of the state. Workers in these growing fields of employment were, in a sense, at the margins of the working class. They were employees, but most of them performed different kinds of work than industrial workers, and as indicated by the terms sociologists have used to designate this difference -- "white collar" versus "blue collar" workers, "mental" or "non-manual" versus "manual" labour -- their work put them in a position in many ways closer to their capitalist employers than to other members of the working class. Yet for many of them, work was becoming increasingly "industrialized:"

offices and stores were enlarged and rationalized, services were mechanized, and nearly all suffered from low wages and long hours. The main question in the history of these workers in the early twentieth century was that of class formation: would they form part of the working class in anything more than a nominal, classificatory sense? For that reason, the history of workers in trade and finances, services, and the state is worth examining, even though these three sectors were minor arenas for class conflict.

13.1 Capital Accumulation

Trade and Finance

As labour leader J.H. McVety's comment in the title to this chapter attests, trade and finance was one of the most important sectors of the Vancouver economy.¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, Vancouver had beaten out Victoria for commercial and financial predominance in British Columbia. Large wholesale merchants were established in the city by 1900, eastern banks and insurance companies set up provincial headquarters, and salmon-canning, lumber, and other manufacturing and resource companies located offices in Vancouver. The city remained the commercial and financial capital of B.C. in subsequent decades. In addition, the speculative boom from 1909 to 1912 led to an

1. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 253.

explosion of real estate and investment offices to channel the money of the greedy and the gullible into urban property, timber lands, and mining ventures. To those sources of capital accumulation was added the growth of the city itself, resulting in the expansion of retail trade.²

There were thus three branches to the trade and finance industry in Vancouver: wholesale trade, real estate and finance, and retail trade. Although there is insufficient information to say much definite about capital accumulation and objects of contention in each branch, some informed speculation will help to orient the subsequent discussion of mobilization and collective action.

The most important feature of capital accumulation in wholesale merchandising and in real estate and investment was that it did not depend primarily on the exploitation of employees: in the former it depended on a high and rapid turnover of goods (which itself depended on sales effort and organization); in the latter on success in speculation and investment.³ Objects of contention therefore did not arise in the same way as for capital in other branches.⁴ That would not mean, of

2. McDonald, "Business Leaders," pp. 81-88, 97-116; L. McCann, "Urban Growth in a Staples Economy: The Emergence of Vancouver as a Regional Metropolis 1886-1914." In 1911, the city of Vancouver boasted 860 real estate offices, 309 grocery stores, 86 men's clothing stores, 46 dry goods stores, 44 hardware stores, and 4 large department stores. Henderson's Greater Vancouver, New Westminster and Fraser Valley Directory, 1911.

3. See A.D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (hereafter, *The Visible Hand*), pp. 219-23.

4. This would not apply to the packaging and manufacturing operations of wholesalers like Malkins, or Kelly, Douglas, and Company, where conditions were more industrial. See Boam, *British Columbia*, pp.

course, that the cost of labour was not an important consideration for employers in these branches, or that increasing their productivity would not contribute to profitability. There might, however, be less pressure to move in that direction, to the extent that profits derived from other sources.

In fact, an "administrative revolution" transformed office work in the early twentieth century. Clerical work was both proletarianized and femininized: male clerks who had been adjuncts of management were replaced by women operating the new office equipment, such as typewriters, and performing routine tasks in jobs without significant opportunities for promotion.⁵ Because individual male workers generally entered new supervisory positions, proletarianization itself was not an object of contention.⁶ In addition, the administrative revolution was limited to large offices, of which there were only a few in early twentieth century Vancouver. As a result, low wages and long hours were the main objects of contention in the wholesale trade, real estate, and finance branches of trade and finance.

In the retail trade branch, the most important feature of capital accumulation in the early twentieth century was competition

188-90; Province, Feb. 15, 1913.

5. See G. Lowe, "Class, Job and Gender in the Canadian Office," and "The Administrative Revolution in the Canadian Office: An Overview"; Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Ch. 15.

6. This was not always the case: in Toronto at the turn of the century, men pushed out of stenography and bookkeeping responded by unionizing. W. Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women 1893-1914* (hereafter, *Honest Womanhood*), pp. 25-27.

between large department stores (such as Woodward's, Spencer's, and the Hudson's Bay) and smaller stores. Department stores reduced the costs of distribution through high sales volumes, and were therefore generally able to sell at lower prices and lower profit margins than smaller retailers. The latter tried to offset the competition by staying open for longer hours, and paying low wages. Long hours might therefore be objects of contention, particularly for clerks in small shops.⁷

Services

In addition to the expansion of white collar work in offices, the early twentieth century saw the beginning of the expansion of the service sector in industrialized capitalist societies.⁸ While servants continued to be employed by persons of wealth, domestic service was declining in the early twentieth century. Instead, increasing numbers of men, women, and children were employed by capitalists to produce

7. Another interpretation leads to opposite conclusions: Estey argues in his studies of retail unionism that early closing was in the interests of small shopowners as well as their employees, because the owner worked the same hours as the clerks. For large and small stores, early closing was a way to regulate the competition in which each tried to gain an advantage by staying open later, leading to longer hours for all. See M. Estey, "Early Closing: Employer-Initiated Origins of the Retail Labor Movement," pp. 568-69, and "The Retail Clerks," p. 48. Estey's argument is applicable to the nineteenth century early closing movement, before the development of the large department store transformed competition in retail trade. In the early twentieth century, we would expect small shopkeepers to oppose early closing. On the development of the department store, see Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, pp. 224-38.

8. See R. Warburton and D. Coburn, "The Rise of Non-Manual Work in British Columbia." "Non-manual work" is really a misnomer when applied to work in the service industry, because much of it was manual, and even industrial work (e.g. laundries).

services as commodities to be sold for profit.⁹

In the personal service sector, where services were produced as commodities, laundries, hotels, and restaurants were the largest employers. Particularly for small proprietors, capital accumulation in both branches of personal service was dominated by competition between "white" and Chinese-owned establishments. Chinese restaurants were considered unfair competition by white restaurateurs because of the low wages and long hours of their Chinese employees. To this obstacle to their profitability, they responded by employing Asian or women workers at low wages. As a result, wages, hours and Asian competition were objects of contention in restaurants.

In the laundry business, "the white laundries of Vancouver" faced the dominance of Chinese laundries over the market at the turn of the century, and responded in the years following with a technological revolution in the washing, ironing, and delivery of laundry.¹⁰ Mechanization and the faster pace of production made steam laundries into industrial establishments that were hot, humid, and noisy. The work was frequently heavy, accidents were always a danger, and the

9. See G. Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," (hereafter, "Domestic Service") for background.

10. The phrase quoted is from an advertisement for steam laundries, Province May 1, 1915. According to the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration (Report, p. 175), thirty-five Chinese laundries held three quarters of the market, leaving four white-owned steam laundries (including the CPR's Vancouver Hotel) to divide the rest. The technical revolution was reported by a laundry manager in B.C. Federationist, Dec. 27, 1912, p. 9.

management was often despotic.¹¹ "The laundry trust" regulated prices of the steam laundries, and capital became concentrated.¹²

In addition to technological change, steam laundries also sought to counter Chinese competition for the lucrative restaurant and hotel trade by paying low wages to predominantly female workers, and resisting shorter hours. In order to maintain these conditions, laundry owners were determined opponents of unions, and "agitators" were dismissed on more than one occasion.¹³ Low pay, long hours, and the right to organize were the resulting objects of contention between workers and employers' in white-owned laundries and restaurants.¹⁴

State

The thesis behind this study has been that antagonistic class interests were based on contradictions between policies adopted by capitalists to overcome obstacles to capital accumulation, and workers' social reproduction cycles. The state in early twentieth century Canada

11. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, pp. 169ff.; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 16, 1916, May 8, 15, 1919.

12. By 1916, the Pioneer Investment Company dominated the business with one small, and three large, highly mechanized plants. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 102; VTLC Minutes, Oct. 16, 1916, April 4, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1.

13. For instances of employer hostility to unionism, see B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 178; Province, Feb. 7, 1914; VTLC Minutes, April 2, 1914, Oct. 5, 1916; B.C. Federationist, May 21, 1915, p. 2, April 12, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 2, 1918, p. 1.

14. Information on Chinese-owned establishments is lacking, but the same issues must have been present there as well.

was not a direct agent of capital accumulation, and was clearly not subject to the constraints of capital accumulation in the same way as a capitalist enterprise. But the state was affected by similar pressures, because it operated in a capitalist environment.

Both the services which the state was compelled to provide, and the revenues from which it provided them depended on the condition of the capitalist economy. Expenditures on the infrastructure of transportation, utilities, and services for businesses and their labour forces increased as the economy expanded.¹⁵ In a rapidly growing area such as Vancouver, these were considerable. Moreover, they did not stop when the economy ceased to grow; in the first place because the frequently over-optimistic commitments entered into during booms still had to be met during busts, and in the second place because during economic slumps, municipal governments were burdened with relief expenditures for the masses of unemployed workers. Again, in a boom and bust economy such as that of British Columbia, and in a "mecca for the unemployed" such as Vancouver, these expenses were considerable.

To make infrastructural or relief expenditures, governments needed revenues, which came from either taxes or borrowing on the bond market. Limits on both sources raised the spectre of "fiscal crisis." Even in a boom phase of the business cycle, taxes were limited by the

15. The state at all its levels (federal, provincial, and municipal) provided this infrastructure directly through its own efforts, or indirectly, through bonuses, subsidies, and other giveaways. See R.T. Naylor, *The History of Canadian Business*, Vol. 2, *Industrial Development*, Ch. 12-13.

bonuses and giveaways used to attract investment, and by popular resistance to increased taxation (expressed through movements such as the single tax). Borrowing through the bond market was also an important source of revenue, but it placed governments at the mercy of financial capitalists. In economic slumps revenues were even more limited, as tax receipts declined, and credit dried up. As a consequence of these constraints, the state was under pressure to reduce costs. One of the important ways of doing this was to act much like a capitalist employer, keeping down labour costs directly through wage and hour policies, and indirectly through workplace rationalization.¹⁶

Yet, at the same time as the constraints of the capitalist economic environment worked on the state, it was also subject to popular political pressures which often contradicted economic imperatives. These included resistance to higher taxation, the demand for relief for the unemployed and impoverished, and most significantly for our purposes, efforts (by the trade union movement in particular) to make the state a model employer in wages, hours and union recognition. In a liberal democracy, these pressures could not be ignored, although they might be deflected, diluted, or modified.

All three levels of government had employees in the Vancouver

16. For example, in the construction of public utilities, city governments contracted out construction for much the same reasons as machinery companies employed an internal contract system in the late 19th Century: it kept costs low, and limited the city's or capitalist's function to that of inspecting the quality of work; it did not need to be concerned with pay or working conditions. Cf. R.F. Harney and H. Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 52, and Nelson, *Managers and Workers*, pp. 36-38.

area, but the municipal level was the largest employer, so we will concentrate on it here. Civic governments in Vancouver and surrounding municipalities employed office staff, construction and maintenance workers, police and fire personnel, and teachers, nurses, and other service workers.¹⁷

The financial and administrative history of municipal government in the Vancouver area in the early twentieth century fell into two periods: 1900-12, and 1913-19. The first was a period of easy money, in which heavy demands on the city of Vancouver to provide utilities and other services were met from rising tax and other revenue, and through heavy borrowing. Administratively, the most important development in this period was the predominance, beginning in 1905, of City Councils preoccupied with economic growth and efficient civic administration.¹⁸

The easy money of 1900 to 1912 was followed by a period of fiscal crisis from 1913 to 1919. Debts accumulated with the expectation that prosperity would continue became a crushing burden in the pre-war depression. Expenditures on the expansion of municipal services ceased to rise, but unemployment relief had to be provided directly or in the

17. Since they have already been examined in connection with the heavy construction industry, construction workers employed by the city will be ignored in this chapter.

18. It is not clear, however, whether the administrative reforms desired by these officials went beyond campaign rhetoric and vague proposals, to actual changes in the way the work of municipal employees was carried on. In 1910 and 1911, the municipal election issue of the apparent chaos prevailing in the City Engineers' department indicates that it did not amount to much. MacDonald "Business Leaders," pp. 304-05; Roy, Vancouver, p. 73.

form of public works as late 1918, and operating expenses continued to have to be met. At the same time as this was happening, revenue fell because the unemployed could not pay their property taxes, the population declined, and real estate values collapsed. The severity of the fiscal crisis led to the virtual bankruptcy of the largely working-class suburb of South Vancouver in 1913-14. Vancouver was forced to turn to the province for money in the relief crisis of the spring and summer of 1915. Hard-pressed municipal governments were tight-fisted and hostile employers from 1913 to 1919, not much different from many capitalists.¹⁹

13.2. Workers' Social Reproduction

The accumulation of capital in services, trade and finance, and the expansion of the state led to the formation of a large office, sales, state, and service sector labour force in Vancouver (Table 13-1). The number of office workers who lived in the city of Vancouver grew from over 3000 in 1911 to over 5000 in 1921. In trade and finance, the number fell by a quarter from possibly 6000 workers in 1911 to 4500 in

19. R.T. Naylor "The Canadian State, the Accumulation of Capital, and the Great War," p. 27; Roy Vancouver, p. 112. On the crisis in South Vancouver, see PABC, Attorney-General Correspondence, 1911-18, Roll 66, file 8560-14-14, J.A. Kerr to John Mahoney, Sept. 15, 1914, J.B. Springford to W.J. Bowser, Nov. 28, 1914; Province, July 14, 1913, Dec. 28, 1914. For Vancouver, see Province, March 29, 1915, April 8, 9, 1915, May 5, 1915, June 17, 1915, July 14, 1915.

Table 13-1

Trade, Services, and State Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Sector	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Offices (1)	1945	1132	3077	18.3	3226	2180	5406	32.7
Trade and Finance	6564	729	7293	43.5	3203	1335	4538	27.4
Domestic & Personal Services	3612	2638	6250	37.2	3428	2580	6008	36.3
State (2)	163	-	163	1.0	586	-	586	3.5
TOTAL	12284	4499	16783	100.0	10443	6095	16538	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI,
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: (1) Including government employees.
(2) Excluding government employees under other categories, i.e. labourers and office employees.

1921, while the number of domestic and personal service workers held steady at about 6000. The less than two hundred civic government employees who did not fall into other categories more than tripled between 1911 and 1921.²⁰ Only three of these groups of workers can be considered here: office workers, sales clerks, and service workers.²¹

Office Workers

Office workers comprised a small, but growing part of the working class in the early twentieth century Vancouver (Table 13-2). Sociologists have frequently explained the expansion of office work by the centralization of capital in large corporations, and by transformations in the labour process in manufacturing that transferred planning and control to specialized bureaucracies.²² Some such changes were undoubtedly occurring in Vancouver, because the employment of office workers in manufacturing and transportation grew fourfold between

20. The number of trade and finance, and government workers is necessarily approximate, because of inadequacies in 1911 census data. In the first place, no distinction was made there between agents and officials on the one hand, and clerks on the other hand, for insurance, loan, trust, and real estate companies. Since there were 860 real estate offices in Vancouver in 1911, less than half the number reported for that category in the census (1638) could have been clerks. In the second place, no civic fire department staff are reported. From other sources, we know that the city employed over 100 fire fighters in 1911. Province, March 11, 1911, April 21, 1911.

21. All that is known of government workers not covered in other places (i.e., of police and fire department employees) is that they were all men, that the latter in particular worked extremely long hours for little pay, and that in 1914, many of them were married. Province, May 7, 8, 1902, Nov. 26, 1914.

22. See above, page 632, footnote 5.

Table 13-2

Office Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Industry	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Construction	28	8	36	1.2	63	22	85	1.6
Extractive [1]	10	1	11	0.4	38	5	43	0.8
Government [2]	813	39	852	27.7	528	179	707	13.1
Legal & professional	72	75	147	4.8	102	253	355	6.6
Manufacturing	107	47	154	5.0	496	205	701	13.0
Service [3]	-	-	-	-	87	82	169	3.1
Trade	632	292	924	30.0	541	615	1156	21.4
Transportation	207	66	273	8.9	745	224	969	17.9
Unspecified [4]	76	604	680	22.1	626	595	1221	22.6
TOTAL	1945	1132	3077	100.0	3226	2180	5406	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI,
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

Notes: [1] Fishing, forestry, and mining.
[2] Includes "officials" in 1911. In 1921, there were 293 officials to 707 clerks; if the same proportion held in 1911, there would have been 599 clerks.
[3] Hotels, restaurants, etc. None reported in 1911.
[4] In 1911, "stenographers and typists not otherwise specified"; in 1921, "unspecified industries."

1911 and 1921. Significantly, this expansion occurred over a period in which the number of production workers declined in manufacturing, and stagnated in transportation, indicating that systematic management changes were occurring in those industries.²³ This does not account for all of the increase in office work, which was also growing in wholesale and retail trade, in government, and in the residual category of stenographers and typists whose employers were not specified.²⁴

Little is known about the world of office workers in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919. Most were in small offices, where employees would be much closer to management than in the few large offices undergoing the administrative revolution.²⁵ A large proportion (about 40 per cent) of office employees were women, who were concentrated in the trade and the unspecified stenographers and typists categories.²⁶ The

23. See Craven, *An Impartial Umpire*, pp. 375-80, for use of a similar measure (increases in the ratio of administrative to production employees) to indicate the "proliferation of management functions" that was an aspect of systematic management.

24. "Officials" are included in the government category in 1911. There were 293 officials to 707 clerks in 1921; if the same proportion held in 1911, there would have been 599 clerks, giving an increase of 108.

25. Nearly 400 office workers were employed by the city in 1911 (Table 13-2), and the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER) reportedly had 400 or 500 office employees in 1916-17. Province, Dec. 4, 1916, Jan. 31, 1917.

26. The small number of men in the "unspecified" category in 1911 showed that women were indeed consigned to operating the new office machines. The dramatic rise in the number of male employees in that category, from 76 in 1911 to 626 in 1921 is most likely due to change in census categories between those dates.

majority of female office workers were young,²⁷ indicating that women were restricted to low level jobs that did not become careers, and that they were not in the wage labour force long, before leaving to marry or have children. This fact would make them difficult to mobilize.²⁸

Although it is likely that office workers fell into the category of settled urban workers, practically nothing is known about their hours, wages, and other working conditions.²⁹

Sales Clerks

Sales clerks were the majority of employees in trade and finance in 1911 and 1921 (Table 13-3). Like office employees, they were settled urban workers. Most worked in small shops with less than ten employees,³⁰ but there were some large employers.³¹ The large number

27. In every category where large numbers of women were employed in 1911, over 60 per cent were under twenty-five years of age, while for male office workers at least 60 per cent were twenty-five or older. By 1921 the percentage of women office workers under twenty-five had declined slightly, but in every category except legal and professional, it had declined even more for men.

28. See B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, p. 1.

29. Long hours were reportedly a complaint of women employed in small professional offices. B.C. Minimum Wage Board Report, 1919, p. 89.

30. From census data for 1911 and the incomplete sample of 489 retail stores from the city directory in 1911 (see above, footnote 2), we get a rough (and high) estimate of an average of less than nine employees each. A more conservative estimate of the size of retail stores can be made from the census category "Merchants and dealers -- proprietors, managers, foremen," of which there were 2080 in 1911, or one for every two sales employees. Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, p. 294.

31. In 1913, for example, Drysdale's department store had about 175 employees, the Hudson's Bay about 150 "young ladies," Spencer's about

Table 13-3

Trade and Finance Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Bank clerks	412	36	448	6.1	331	225	556	12.3
Brokers & clerks	551	19	570	7.8	-	-	-	-
Agents, officials & clerks (1)					101	186	287	6.3
-insurance	230	38	268	3.7				
-loan, trust & real estate	1553	85	1638	22.5				
Sales persons (2)	3718	548	4266	58.5	2651	914	3565	78.6
Other (3)	100	3	103	1.4	120	10	130	2.9
TOTAL	6564	729	7293	100.0	3203	1335	4538	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI,
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

- Notes: (1) In 1921, only clerks were included, but they could not be separated from the others in 1911, so the number of workers is undoubtedly overstated in the latter year. In 1921, there were only 72 "managers, inspectors, and superintendents," so the huge decline in this category was real.
- (2) In 1921, including "employees in stores, n.e.s."
- (3) In 1911, including "auctioneers' clerks," "bill posters," "hucksters and pedlars." In 1921, including "auctioneers," "decorators, etc.," "employment agencies," "inspectors, etc.," "news agents," "agents, canvassers and collectors."

of small shops in retail trade scattered clerks among a variety of employers, inhibited class polarization around objects of contention such as long hours and low wages, and held out to employees the possibility of moving into the ranks of small proprietors. These would have been powerful solvents of class formation among retail clerks in small shops.³² In large department stores, in contrast, impersonal forms of management and control, and possibly the rationalization of work and close supervision, could have constituted objects of contention, and the concentration of large numbers of employees in one location could have furthered identification with other clerks.

Even in department stores, however, there is evidence that sales clerks did not identify with other members of the working class. In 1918, Helena Gutteridge reported difficulty in organizing women department store clerks, "owing to a feeling of superiority to union workers" amongst them.³³ This status division between white collar and

350 women and 425 men, Woodward's about 225 employees, and Stark and Sons about 125. See B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, pp. 94, 110, 117, 126, 138.

32. Unlike skilled tradesmen, who also frequently worked in small shops, retail clerks lacked a craft identity on which opposition to employers and to capitalism could be based.

33. Province, July 26, 1918. J.H. McVety had earlier noted the same tendency in bank clerks, who despite low pay and poor conditions, were "a type that consider themselves above ordinary workmen like myself." B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 292. Conditions for bank clerks may have been deteriorating at this time: many women entered the occupation between 1911 and 1921 (Table 13-3), which for Roberts (Honest Womanhood, pp. 25-26) indicates increasingly routine work, and less opportunity for promotion. In 1918, bank clerks were dissatisfied with long hours and low pay, and were considering organizing. B.C. Federationist, July 18, 1918, p. 1.

blue collar workers was an aspect of sales clerks' social reproduction cycles that hindered class formation and mobilization.

Mobilization and group formation among sales clerks was also hindered by the division of labour between men and women.³⁴ An increasing number of women were employed as clerks in retail stores, and as in office work, they were primarily young, temporary members of the wage labour force, restricted to lower level jobs.³⁵

Sales clerks had much to mobilize about. "The shift in economic emphasis from production to distribution"³⁶ that transformed capitalism from early in the century was accomplished on the backs (or more accurately, the feet,³⁷) of retail employees who worked long hours for

34. Like office workers, sales clerks appear to have been ethnically homogeneous.

35. About 60 per cent of saleswomen were under twenty-five in 1911 and 1921, but only 33 and 24 per cent of salesmen. Proprietors, managers and foremen were nearly all men (98 per cent). Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40. Many of the young women working in stores were "girls" living at home with their parents, and working for very low wages to learn the business, according to employers. Their competition lowered the pay of all female employees, and their youth may have been a barrier to solidarity with older employees. Finally, for many women, wage work was a temporary interlude before marriage, resulting in a high rate of turnover that made organization difficult. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 215; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, pp. 1-4, 94-143 passim.

36. C.W. Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, p. 164.

37. As far as outside observers were concerned, the main problem for retail clerks was the lack of seating for female clerks, which required them to be on their feet all day. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, pp. 4, 14; B.C. Federationist, July 24, 1914, p. 1.

low pay.³⁸ It was around those that their mobilization and collective action would revolve.

Service Workers

Approximately one seventh of the workers in Vancouver in 1911 and 1921 were employed in domestic and personal services (Table 13-4). For our purposes, the largest and most important groups of service workers were domestic servants, hotel and restaurant workers, and laundry workers. Most were settled urban workers, but some of the last were factory operatives.

A large proportion of service sector workers were employed in domestic service as servants, housekeepers, cooks, and chauffeurs, but difficulties keeping the labour market supplied with domestics indicated its decline.³⁹ Women fled the isolation, long hours, and oppressive conditions of domestic service for the greater autonomy of factory, sales, or office work. Consequently, only when there was widespread

38. For example, in 1912-13, department store employees worked a five and a half day week of eight or nine hour days, except on Saturdays and before Christmas, when the workday extended to twelve or thirteen hours. Clerks in clothing, shoe, hardware, grocery, furniture, and other small stores generally worked longer hours." According to one source, the wages of male clerks in 1913 averaged \$15.00 a week, "which is very poor indeed." Female retail clerks were even more poorly paid, most well below what was necessary to maintain a single woman living on her own, and less than female office workers (who on average worked shorter hours). B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, Exhibit No. 5, pp. 8A-9A, Vol. 4, pp. 2-3, 94-96, Report, p. 20; B.C. Minimum Wage Board, Report, 1918, pp. 62, 69, 70, 1919, pp. 89, 99.

39. In the census, cooks in private homes were not distinguished from restaurant cooks, so it is impossible to state exactly how many domestic servants there were.

Table 13-4

Domestic and Personal Service Workers, City of Vancouver, 1911, 1921

Occupation	1911				1921			
	M	F	Total	%	M	F	Total	%
Barbers & hairdressers	298	11	309	4.9	143	40	183	3.0
Caretakers [1]	191	2	193	3.1	382	72	454	7.6
Cooks	357	58	415	6.6	1125	87	1212	20.2
Hospital workers [2]	55	303	358	5.7	6	511	517	6.0
Hotel & boarding house employees [3]	820	155	975	15.6	140	-	140	2.3
Housekeepers [4]	-	154	154	2.5	130	290	420	7.0
Laundry workers [5]	461	201	662	10.6	261	169	430	7.2
Recreation workers [6]	-	-	-	-	156	42	198	3.3
Restaurant workers [7]	468	232	700	11.2	361	309	670	11.2
Servants n.o.s.	361	1233	1594	25.5	422	950	1372	22.8
Other [8]	601	289	890	14.2	302	110	412	6.9
TOTAL	3612	2638	6250	100.0	3428	2580	6008	100.0

Source: Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI,
1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40.

- Notes: [1] In 1921, includes "charwomen and cleaners."
 [2] In 1911, includes "nurses and nursemaids." In 1921, includes only nurses and nurses in training.
 [3] In 1921, includes only porters, messengers and bellboys; the disappearance of chambermaids is a mystery.
 [4] In 1921, "housekeepers and stewards."
 [5] In 1921, includes "dyers, cleaners, pressers and repairers."
 [6] Theatre, resort, and sports employees (probably found under other categories in 1911).
 [7] In 1921, "waiters and waitresses."
 [8] In 1911, bootblacks, chauffeurs, coachmen and grooms, undertakers, other. In 1921, bootblacks, chauffeurs, undertakers, attendants and guards, elevator tenders, labourers, window cleaners, other.

unemployment of women in other occupations, as in 1914 and 1915, was the supply of domestic servants plentiful. The rest of the time wealthy families relied on male Asian immigrants and women brought from England by the Salvation Army or other charities to alleviate the continuing "servant problem."⁴⁰

In personal services, the largest employers were restaurants and hotels, and laundries. Over 1700 restaurant employees, cooks, and hotel and boarding house employees lived in the city of Vancouver (Table 13-4).⁴¹ The number of laundry workers fell from 662 in 1911 to 430 in 1921, as a result of the technological revolution and concentration of capital in steam laundries, and perhaps also a decline in the number of Chinese hand laundries.

The social reproduction cycles of hotel and restaurant employees on the one hand, and of laundry workers on the other, were similar in some respects, and different in others, in ways that affected

40. On Asian servants, see Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, pp. 167, 171. Women fleeing domestic work, the servant problem, and attempts to alleviate it are reported in Province, March 4, 21, 1907, July 13, 1907, April 23, 1910, March 21, 1911; Labour Gazette XIII (1913), p. 237; Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 61; cf. Leslie, "Domestic Service"; Roberts, *Honest Womanhood*, pp. 13-15, on general conditions. On unemployed women turning to domestic service, see B.C. Federationist, April 10, 1914, p. 1, Oct. 16, 23, 1914, p. 1, Dec. 4, 1914, p. 1, Feb. 19, 1915, p. 1; Province, Dec. 27, 1915.

41. It is impossible to be more exact than this, because the census fails to distinguish between cooks in private homes and cooks in restaurants. In addition, the 1921 census does not appear to be strictly comparable with that for 1911: the number of hotel and boarding house employees plummeted, apparently because chambermaids were classified elsewhere in 1921, and there is an unexplained tripling in the number of cooks between 1911 and 1921.

mobilization and collective action. First, workers in steam laundries were factory operatives in relatively large, mechanized industrial plants.⁴² Chinese laundries, in contrast, were small shops using hand methods.⁴³

Except for a few large hotels, waiters, waitresses, and cooks were scattered in small restaurants in a variety of locations, and both group formation and mobilization were hindered in consequence.⁴⁴

In addition to workplace size, the interests and group formation of personal service workers were affected by the division of labour between men and women. Large numbers of women were employed as both laundry and restaurant workers; fewer were employed as cooks or in

42. For example, in 1910, the Dominion Steam Laundry employed 30 men and 70 women, Pioneer Laundry 40 men and 100 women, and the smaller Cascade Laundry 25 men and 20 women; in 1913, the Star Laundry employed 80 to 90 'girls,' and 50 men, Pioneer 124 women and girls, and about the same number of men. B.C. Factory Inspector's Report, 1910, p. 19; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 4, pp. 165, 180, 188. In New Westminster, the Royal City Laundry employed about 16 men and 29 women. Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 99.

43. In 1901, thirty-five Chinese laundries in Vancouver employed 192 workers (for an average of less than six each), while nine in New Westminster employed 38 workers (for an average of slightly over four each). Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Report, p. 175.

44. The only data on employer size are from strikes: ten waitresses at the Ritz Cafe in 1913, and about the same number at McLoed's Cafe in 1917; at the CPR's Vancouver Hotel in 1918, twenty-five to thirty waiters, and twenty-five chambermaids. B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1913, p. 4, Aug. 2, 1918, p. 1; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(133), Vol. 310, file 18(180). In general, see Rosenthal, "Union Maids," p. 41; and for similar conditions in Toronto, Roberts, Honest Womanhood, p. 22. Both also note that the long hours worked by waitresses (and other hotel and restaurant employees) were an obstacle to the establishment of lines of communication between them.

hotels (Table 13-4), although in individual establishments, the proportion of women employees varied widely from the average.⁴⁵ Group formation among women workers in these industries was probably hindered by their youth: about 50 to 60 per cent of female laundry and restaurant workers were under twenty-five in 1911 and 1921.⁴⁶ As in other industries, it appears that women did not stay long in the workforce, making them difficult to mobilize.⁴⁷ In the culinary trades, the problem of a high turnover of employees was not confined to women, since the cooks and waiters' union reported that a large number of "floaters" was an obstacle to organization.⁴⁸

More important for group formation and collective action than gender was ethnicity. It was apparent from the objectives of the unions of white hotel and restaurant workers that the labour force was racially

45. In steam laundries, the number of females outnumbered males, sometimes as much as two to one (see the figures for individual plants cited above), while in Chinese laundries the employees were nearly exclusively male. On the basis of very fragmentary data (such as the strikes discussed above), it seems that in individual restaurants, either waitresses or waiters were employed, but not both. Consequently, solidarities might develop on gender lines at the level of the individual workplace, but group formation be hindered on a broader level.

46. Canada, 1911 Census, Vol. 6, Table VI, 1921 Census, Vol. III, Table 40. Less than 20 per cent of male laundry workers, and less than 30 per cent of male restaurant workers were under twenty-five.

47. The president of the Laundry Workers International Union was probably referring to this fact when he spoke to the VTLC in 1909 on "the difficulties of maintaining an organization necessarily composed of a large percentage of persons who are merely transient employees, and who do not remain a sufficient length of time to allow an efficient organization to be built up." VTLC Minutes, June 3, 1909.

48. Western Wage Earner, April 1910, p. 5.

divided between whites and Asians.⁴⁹ Laundry workers were also divided into different racial groups, but a crucial difference from hotel and restaurant workers was that in laundry work, whites and Asians were employed in completely different establishments, employing different production methods, while in hotels and restaurants, they were employed in similar, and sometimes in the same establishments. Asian competition was therefore indirect for white laundry workers (largely a matter of competition between employers), but a direct threat to the jobs of cooks, waiters, and waitresses.⁵⁰ This significantly differentiated the interests of laundry workers from those of hotel and restaurant workers.

Low wages and long hours were objects of contention between workers and employers in laundries, and hotels and restaurants.⁵¹ But

49. Rosenthal's description of the unions as "rabidly anti-Oriental" ("Union Maids," p. 48) is apt, as will be shown in the next section.

50. Thus, the manager of the Vancouver Hotel maintained that it would be impossible to employ only whites in hotels, because Asians were willing to work constantly at any kind of labour, and performed menial tasks with more grace than whites. Province, March 16, 1916. He may have been right, for at least the more class conscious whites did not take kindly to the idea that tips made up for low wages. W.E. Walker of the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses Union responded to that suggestion in 1913: "That's a poor way for any man to work . . . more of a begging policy than anything else." B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 215.

51. Even unionized waiters and waitresses made low wages: in 1913, \$14 a week for the former, \$10-12 for the latter, and as low as \$6 for Asians. Hours were long: ten a day, seven days a week for union waiters and waitresses, twelve to eighteen hours a day for Asians. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 205 ff.; cf. B.C. Federationist, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1. Wages for female laundry workers in 1918 were generally well below the "reasonable" cost of living for a "prudent," self-supporting woman. On the basis of returns made by female laundry

overshadowing wages, hours, and other working conditions (such as sanitation) for white restaurant workers was Asian competition in the labour market, and the presence of Asian workers in the same workplace was especially contentious. Conflict between workers and employers over wages and hours easily became racial conflict over restricting competition in the labour market.⁵² In steam laundries in contrast, racial divisions in the labour force did not obstruct the conflict between owners and workers over wages and hours, and may even have made it more intense as the owners fought to keep down wage costs in order to compete with Chinese laundries.

In conclusion, office workers, sales workers, and service sector workers appear to have had interests antagonistic to those of their employers, but for most, their social reproduction cycles were not conducive to the transformation of those interests into collective

employees, the B.C. Minimum Wage Board (Report, 1918, pp. 63-66, 71) calculated that their cost of living was \$14.86 a week, and set a minimum wage of \$13.50 a week for female laundry workers eighteen years and older. Out of 381 laundry employees submitting returns to the Board, 75 per cent earned less than \$13.00 a week, and 83 per cent less than \$14.00. Hours were as long as fifty-six a week, despite the Factory Act's limitation on women's hours to forty-eight. See PABC, Attorney-General Papers, Box 15, file 1, S.T. Creelman et. al. to Attorney-General, Feb. 5, 1908; VTLC Minutes, March 3, 1911, May 18, 1911, April 2, 1914, Oct. 5, 1916, Nov. 16, 1916, Jan. 18, 1917, April 5, 1917; World, March 25, 1911; B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 1, pp. 199-200; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 6, 1914, p. 1, March 2, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1, Jan. 11, 1918, p. 4, Feb. 15, 1918, p. 2.

52. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, pp. 205ff.; B.C. Federationist, May 21, 1915, p. 1; Mathers Commission Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 386ff. In a classic racist stereotype, there was special objection to white women working under Asian supervision, where they were allegedly subject to "unmentionable abuses." The hotel and restaurant employees' representative at the Mathers Commission dismissed the idea, however, and stated that wage competition was the problem.

action.

13.3 Mobilization and Collective Action

Nearly all trade and finance, services, and state workers either failed in attempts to mobilize, or did not even try between 1900 and 1919. The frequency of their attempts, the degree of their success, the reasons for their failure, and the consequences of their history for the radical movement in 1918-1919 differed for each group, so office workers, sales clerks, laundry workers, hotel and restaurant workers, and civic government employees will each be discussed.⁵³

Office Workers

With the exception of CPR clerks (who have already been considered), mobilization and collective action by office workers in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919 was practically non-existent. Some workers in large offices were weakly organized during the war capitalist boom. Several hundred BCER office employees organized in 1916 to petition City Council for the regulation of jitneys; in the following year, they formed an association to promote the mutual welfare of the company and themselves. The hold of BCER paternalism on its street

53. Some service workers who were organized, and even engaged in the occasional strike, will not be considered here, such as barbers, musicians, motion picture operators, and postal workers.

railway and electrical staff may have weakened, but its grip was still strong among office employees.⁵⁴ More class conscious than their counterparts at the BCER, office employees at Coughlan's shipyard took the lead in organizing a short-lived union of office employees in 1918.⁵⁵ The only other group of office employees to be organized were city hall office workers, who will be considered with other civic employees below.

Sales Clerks

It is apparent from the history of mobilization and collective action by sales clerks that they did not consider their interests sharply opposed to those of merchants. Their chief organizing device was the union card; their exclusive objective was shorter hours through early closing, which they pursued in cooperation with sympathetic employers. They engaged in no strikes, and were weakly organized for the entire 1900-19 period.

The weak mobilization and non-militance of retail clerks in Vancouver was present in their first organization, a local of the Retail

54. Their closeness to management was indicated by the election of General Manager Kidd as honorary president. The company returned the favor in 1919 by loaning the Office Employees Association \$50,000 to help its members buy homes. Province, Dec. 4, 1916, Jan. 31, 1917, April 8, 1919.

55. The Stenographers, Typewriters, Bookkeepers and Assistants Federal Labour Union No. 16258 dissolved in 1919, and there is no record of its activities. Province, Aug. 15, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Aug. 23, 1918, p. 1, Oct. 4, 1918, p. 1; Report on Labour Organization, 1918, pp. 188, 225-29, 1919, pp. 290-93

Clerks International Protective Association.⁵⁶ To help the union organize, "union men" were repeatedly urged to request the clerks' union card or button when shopping.⁵⁷ The tactic did not work, and the union had difficulty recruiting members, especially among women.⁵⁸ It disbanded in the fall of 1904, a victim of the status division between clerks and the manual workers who were the backbone of the labour movement.⁵⁹ It inhibited clerks from joining a labour organization, and made union men unenthusiastic about supporting the clerks' union.⁶⁰

56. Formed in 1899, it was the first local in Canada. Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, p. 276; Independent, Sept. 5, 1903. The parent body was established in the United States as the Retail Clerks National Protective Association in 1890. See Fink, Labor Unions, p. 328.

57. This was a variant of the union label campaign used by unions in consumer goods manufacturing.

58. A canvass of the city in June 1900 netted only twelve "lady clerks" in a week. A year later, the local still had only 60 members, and not a twelfth of the female clerks in the city belonged. By 1902, however, three out of eight members of the executive were women. Independent, June 16, 23, 1900, July 27, 1901, Jan. 11, 1902.

59. In January 1904, for example, the union complained that it lost 14 members because union men were failing to ask for the clerks' card. VTLC Minutes, July 2, 1903, March 17, 1904; Labour Gazette VI (1905), p. 276. For appeals to request the clerks' union card, see VTLC Minutes, April 20, 1900, June 15, 1900, March 20, 1902, Aug. 21, 1902, Jan. 7, 1904; Independent Jan. 11, 1902.

60. For example, in 1900, a socialist writing about trade unions complained of clerks and storemen whose wages were no more than those of street cleaners, but "who consider it beneath their dignity" to be identified with the labour movement. In 1902, "Unionist" wrote that he would not support the clerks' union card campaign, accused them of being weak-kneed, afraid of their employers (whose class he said they wished to join), and scornful of manual labour. He concluded, "There never has been, on the part of clerks -- there may be, however, in future -- any bond of sympathy between the two classes." The only response by the union to these accusations was the weak assertion by the local's secretary, W.J. Lamrick, that they did not apply to union clerks.

During its brief existence, the clerks' union made some progress on its main objective, which was the legislated "early closing" of retail stores. It depended on the cooperation of merchants, however, and that broke down under the pressure of competition. Thus although a city early closing bylaw was passed for clothing, furnishing and shoe stores in 1901, nineteen stores were on the clerks' unfair list for violating the bylaw by October 1902, and the union's pursuit of the objective faltered.⁶¹

Conditions deteriorated after the clerks' union dissolved,⁶² and attempts to reorganize clerks in 1907, 1910, 1911, and 1912 came to nothing.⁶³ Finally, a branch of the provincial Retail Employees Organization took root in Vancouver, and grew rapidly in 1913.⁶⁴

World, Jan 27, 1900; Independent, Aug. 9, 23, 1902, Sept. 13, 1902.

61. The initial success may have led to demobilization and apathy, and they certainly did not resort to militant tactics to make sure that the law was enforced. Independent, March 23, 1901, Aug. 10, 1901, Aug. 24, 1901, June 21, 1902; VTLC Minutes Oct. 11, 1902. Organizations of clerks which had early closing as their main objective tended to disappear once it was achieved. N. Estey "The Retail Clerks," p. 42.

62. The Wednesday afternoon holiday observed in 1904 by stores employing about 3500 employees was practically abandoned in Vancouver in 1905, the demand for retail clerks was poor, and wages were lower than unskilled labour. In New Westminster, however, the equally unorganized clerks managed to secure the half-holiday and 6:00 PM closings on weekdays. Labour Gazette VI (1905) pp. 276, 570-71.

63. VTLC Minutes June 6, 1907, Dec. 1, 1910, Sept. 21, 1911; Province May 22, 1912.

64. Five or six hundred clerks were at the first meeting in April; by June it claimed a membership of 1100. The parent body of the Retail Employees Organization had been formed in Victoria in March. In New Westminster, a local of the Retail Clerks International Protective Association was established in May. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 123; Province, April 30, 1913; B.C. Federationist, May 2,

The aims of the Retail Employees Organization were a permanent half-holiday,⁶⁵ early closing, and generally improved conditions. Although the organization received support from middle class reformers and larger stores, the protests of smaller merchants defeated early closing and a compulsory half-holiday at City Council in May 1914.⁶⁶ A 5000 signature petition for a Saturday half holiday and 6:00 P.M. closing again in the more favorable economic conditions of 1916 led to a successful referendum for the former demand in Vancouver, Victoria and, New Westminster. But competitive pressures leading to longer hours were still too strong, and merchants won its repeal in 1917.⁶⁷

The successful challenge from merchants in 1917 led clerks to renew their organizing effort, and to distance themselves slightly from their employers. Early in the year they moved closer to the labour movement by affiliating with the VTLC (which had been supporting their early closing movement), and reorganizing in the International union.⁶⁸

1913, June 20, 1913, Oct. 3, 1913; Report on Labour Organization, 1913, pp. 174-78.

65. A summer half-holiday was a frequent goal of retail clerks, "to give temporary relief from long hours during the hot summer months." Estey, "The Retail Clerks," p. 48.

66. Province, April 28, 30, 1913, May 10, 1913, June 6, 1913, Oct. 17, 1913, May 30, 1914, July 4, 1914, Sept. 1, 1914; B.C. Federationist June 26, 1914, Aug. 7, 1914; B.C. Royal Commission on Labor, Report, p. 20.

67. B.C. Federationist, March 31, 1916, p. 1, April 7, 1916, p. 1, June 16, 1916, p. 1, March 6, 1917, p. 6; Province, April 5, 14, 20, 1916, June 2, 1916, Sept. 1, 1916, Dec. 13, 15, 27, 1916, Jan. 5, 12, 1917, March 9, 1917.

68. In New Westminster, the Retail Employees Organization also disappeared in 1917; an International local was organized in September 1918.

The main device in their organizational campaign was still the union label, and they failed to organize women in the department stores, which, because of their size, were prime targets for unionization.⁶⁹ They only succeeded in winning early closing in stores where more than 75 per cent of the shops petitioned for it.⁷⁰

Unionized retail clerks were conservatives in the radical movement during war capitalism.⁷¹ They did not participate in any of the general strikes, and although they voted for the OBU (Table 1-3), they retained their international affiliation after the general strike.⁷² This is not surprising, since they had followed conservative, non-militant tactics, such as the union card, throughout their history, and rarely identified their interests as antagonistic to employers. Because of the status division between themselves and manual workers, retail clerks had little solidarity with the latter, and the union never possessed the combination of strength and vulnerability that was

69. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 5, 26, 1917, p. 1, March 2, 1917, p. 1, April 19, 1918, p. 5, Sept. 20, 1918, p. 7; Province, Jan. 24, 1917; VTLC Minutes, May 17, 1917, April 18, 1918.

70. Province, March 6, 1918, Feb. 6, 8, 1919, April 22, 23, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 21, 1918, p. 5, May 9, 1919, p. 8. Early closing on Saturdays was established in furniture, shoe, men's clothing, and department stores.

71. In 1917, the clerks' delegate to the VTLC supported conscription, and opposed holding a vote for a general strike over the issue. VTLC Minutes, May 30, 1917.

72. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 22, 1919, p. 1. There is one report that they donated a substantial sum of money to the 1919 strike, however. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 314, file 19(190C), Report of CPR Investigation Dept., forwarded to RNWMP, June 26, 1919.

necessary for radicalism to develop.

Laundry Workers

Like retail clerks, white laundry workers had difficulty maintaining an organization, but in nearly every other respect they differed. Laundry workers were organized without difficulty, they were ready and willing to use militant tactics, and they had a very clear idea of the opposition of interests between themselves and their bosses. It was only the intransigence of the latter that prevented them from forming a strong union.⁷³

The threat from the competition of Chinese laundries led white laundry workers to unionize in 1902.⁷⁴ The union was never able to become well-established in the steam laundries where its members worked, although it usually managed to maintain union conditions at one or two

73. A Chinese Laundrymen's Union formed in May 1906, with 90 to 120 members demanded a reduction in hours from eighteen or nineteen a day to fifteen or sixteen, a six day week, and a slight wage increase. In November, sixty Chinese laundry workers struck in New Westminster, and won a wage increase of \$5.00 a month (to \$20.00). A strike may have occurred in Vancouver in June over hours, but that objective was pursued mainly through political channels, and after steam laundries did not object, a bylaw limiting the hours of laundries was passed by City Council in August. Nothing more is known about mobilization or collective action by Chinese laundry workers. Province, May 4, 8, 12, 1906, July 10, 1906, Aug. 7, 30, 1906; Western Clarion, June 2, 1906; Labour Gazette VI (1906), p. 1343, VII (1906-07), pp. 634, 898; W. Bennett, Builders of British Columbia, p. 118.

74. A local of the Shirt Waist and Laundry Workers Union was formed in February-March, with seventy to seventy-five members, whose objective was "to force the Chinese washhousemen to the wall."

until about 1905.⁷⁵ Its difficulties subsequently increased, and organizational assistance from the VTLC did not prevent its disappearance in 1908. Attempts were made to revive it almost annually between 1909 and 1916, but employer opposition and intimidation foiled every attempt.⁷⁶

Laundry workers were nothing if not persistent, and despite continued harassment and intimidation,⁷⁷ a union local was again organized in July 1918; this time it took root, and grew to 250 members

75. Closed shops were won at two laundries (requiring a half-hour strike at one) in 1902, but another vowed to fight the union, perhaps causing a strike in August. Fifteen members at two laundries won higher wages in June 1903, after striking for six or seven days, but the union was nearly inactive afterwards, and by November, only one laundry was using the union label. Agreements were made with three laundries in 1904, but one was lost to the union in 1905, and problems arose at another. See VTLC Minutes, Feb. 6, 1902, Aug. 7, 1902, June 18, 1903, Nov. 19, 1903, June 2, 1904, July 15, 1904, Feb. 18, 1905, July 6, 1905, Sept. 21, 1905; Province, March 6, 1902, July 25, 1902; Independent, April 5, 1902, May 17, 1902, Aug. 2, 9, 1902, June 13, 20, 1903, July 4, 1903, Sept. 5, 1903; Labour Gazette III (1902), p. 148, IV (1903), p. 86; Province, May 30, 1903, June 13, 1903.

76. This dismal history is documented in VTLC Minutes, April 4, 1907, July 18, 1907, Dec. 5, 1907, May 20, 1909, June 3, 1909, March 16, 1911, Aug. 15, 1912, Dec. 5, 1912, Dec. 18, 1913, Feb. 5, 1914, April 2, 1914, Oct. 5, 1916; World, March 18, 25, 1911; Province, May 19, 1911, Feb. 7, 1914; B.C. Federationist, Jan. 16, 1914, p. 2, Feb. 6, 1914, p. 1, May 21, 1915, p. 2, April 12, 1918, p. 1.

77. The attitude of employers was exemplified early in January 1918, when two female laundry workers at the Cascade Laundry were fired for complaining about long hours of work. Seven others walked out, but returned to work when the company promised to reinstate one of the women at the first opportunity. It reneged on its promise, and instead replaced the strikers at the first opportunity. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 11, 1918, p. 4.

at the end of August.⁷⁸ As they had been throughout their attempts to organize, the laundry workers' objectives were higher wages and shorter hours, and (to protect their organization) union recognition and the closed shop. Employers refused to negotiate or recognize the union, and told employees to leave it; as a result some 236 female and 54 male laundry workers went on strike September 9. After a month marked by strong picketing, sympathetic action by several steam engineers and firemen, and several disturbances and minor violence when strikebreakers attempted to work, the owners conceded the wage and hour demands of the strikers, but still refused to grant a closed shop. Knowing from past experience that the owners would soon renege on their other promises, the strikers would not budge on that demand, and the strike continued.⁷⁹ Two laundries settled with the strikers before the end of October, but the others reopened with strikebreakers, and the dispute continued until called off at the end of December, with about 180 workers still on strike.⁸⁰ Only a few of the remaining strikers were able to get their old jobs back, leaving about sixty women and twenty

78. B.C. Federationist, July 19, 1918, p. 8, July 26, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 2, 16, 23, 30, 1918, p. 1; VTLC Minutes, July 18, 1918, Aug. 1, 1918, Sept. 5, 1918.

79. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 310, file 18(182); Province, Sept. 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 1918, Oct. 3, 7, 8, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Sept. 6, 13, 1918, p. 1, Sept. 20, 1918, p. 8, Oct. 11, 1918, p. 1.

80. About fifty returned to work at the laundries which settled, and sixty had found other work.

men still unemployed in mid-January.⁸¹

The laundry workers' strike was important for the history of the Vancouver working class, because it pitted the resources of organized labour against a small group of recalcitrant employers.⁸² At a mass meeting two days before the strike was called off, Ernest Winch declared that it was really a fight between organized employers standing behind the laundry owners, and organized labour standing behind the laundry workers. Like the carpenters' strike in 1911, the laundry workers' strike in 1918 became the focal point of class struggle in Vancouver. The defeat of the strikers foreshadowed the course of events in 1919 and after, and like the 1903 UBRE sympathy strikes and the 1911 building trades general strike in their times, it symbolized the weakness hidden beneath the tremendous energy and militancy of Vancouver workers at the end of World War I.⁸³

The immediate lesson drawn from the strike was the need for greater working-class solidarity, through the One Big Union and the

81. Province, Oct. 19, 22, 28, 1918, Dec. 10, 11, 12, 20, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Nov. 8, 1918, p. 1, Dec. 6, 1918, p. 1, Jan. 3, 1919, pp. 2, 5, 7, 8, Jan. 24, 1919, p. 8, Feb. 7, 1919, p. 8, March 7, 1919, p. 1; Sun, Dec. 10, 1918; VTLC Minutes, Jan. 2, 16, 1919.

82. The laundry workers could not have been so remarkably tenacious, were it not for the support given by other workers. By December 6, over \$12,000 had been contributed to the strike fund organized for the laundry workers by the VTLC. At the beginning of October, the council had raised the possibility of a general strike, but was dissuaded by the Laundry Workers' representative, Helena Gutteridge. VTLC Minutes, Sept. 5, 1918, Oct. 17, 1918; Province, Oct. 4, 18, 1918; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 6, 1918, p. 1.

83. B.C. Federationist, Jan. 3, 1919, pp. 2, 7.

general strike. A.S. Wells observed after the strike that if workers had been organized in the OBU, the laundry workers would not have been defeated, because labour in all industries would have been called out on strike.⁸⁴ That was the real contribution of the laundry workers to the radical movement in 1918-1919, which otherwise consisted only of voting unanimously for, and joining the OBU.⁸⁵ The support of laundry workers for the OBU, which was unique among unions composed mainly of female factory operatives, appears to have derived from their recent experiences: for the first time since the early 1900s, laundry workers were able to organize in the face of employer repression, and after putting up a strong fight, make gains at two laundries, in large part because of the support of other Vancouver workers. The OBU promised to institutionalize such support, and was therefore attractive to these remarkably militant factory operatives.

Hotel and Restaurant Employees

Like laundry workers, cooks, waiters and waitresses were

84. Province, April 7, 1919. Wells' idea was soon to be tested in Winnipeg, and found wanting, of course.

85. They had not participated in the Goodwin protest strike in August 1918, probably because they were still organizing then, and they were exempted from the 1919 general strike. Although membership had declined to 111 at the time of the OBU vote in the spring, the union had managed to hang on at the two laundries that settled in 1918. In August it was recruiting factory workers (presumably women), and in October, it was reported to be making good progress as a unit of the OBU. B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1919, p. 1, June 6, 1919, p. 8, June 20, 1919, pp. 2, 8, June 27, 1919, p. 4; Province, March 18, 1919; Sun, June 3, 1919; VTLC Minutes, Aug. 28, 1919, Oct. 19, 1919; VTLC Executive Minutes, Oct. 13, 1919.

organized early in the 1900-1919 period. Unlike them, however, they were able to hold a union together, but it was weak, divided, and not militant. Its objectives oscillated between reducing hotel and restaurant workers' long hours, and eliminating the threat of Asian competition.

A local of the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses Union was formed in July 1900, with waitresses in particular joining in large numbers.⁸⁶ In its struggle to organize and gain recognition, the union's main weapon was to encourage other workers to boycott non-union restaurants, especially Chinese and Japanese ones. But the purchasing power of other workers was a scarce resource, and difficult to mobilize,⁸⁷ so as we might expect from other industries where union label campaigns were pursued, the strategy was only intermittently successful. Membership in the union, and the number of restaurants signed to its schedule fluctuated widely. It grew until 1903, nearly collapsed in 1904-05, recovered in 1906, fell back in the 1907-08 recession, and was back on its feet in 1909 as the economy improved.⁸⁸

86. Independent, July 21, 1900, Aug. 4, 1900; Province, Nov. 3, 1900. The union local was usually referred to as the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses, but it was actually Local 28 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union. The latter also included bartenders, who dominated the international union from 1902 to 1914. See Fink, Labor Unions, p. 148. In Vancouver, the bartenders were usually organized in a separate local.

87. According to a carpenter, white workers patronized Chinese restaurants because they had to live as cheaply as possible. B.C. Labor Commission, Proceedings, Vol. 3, p. 112.

88. Independent, April 20, 1901, June 7, 14, 1902; VTLC Minutes, April 3, 1902, Aug. 6, 1903, June 16, 1904, Jan. 5, 1905, June 1, 1905, Nov. 2, 1905, March 3, 1906, Sept. 17, 1908, Oct. 15, 1908, Jan. 21, 1909.

In addition to the indifferent success of the union card campaign, the cooks, waiters, and waitresses were plagued by internal disagreements, in large part over the issue of Asian competition.⁸⁹ Perhaps because they worked in the back of the restaurant, Asian competition affected cooks more than the others, and the elimination of Chinese cooks in restaurants where union members were employed was their primary goal. It was not as important for waitresses as for cooks or waiters, because the labour market position of waitresses was closer to that of Asians, giving employers less reason to replace them with the latter.⁹⁰

The next split in the union was on lines of gender, as waitresses left to form their own local in June 1910.⁹¹ The new union was initially a success, but it made little progress on its main objective of shortening ten and twelve hour workdays. Their first

March 4, 1909, April 1, 1909, Nov. 18, 1909, Western Wage Earner, May 1909, p. 5.

89. Thus, the cooks seceded from the waiters and waitresses in 1902, because union cards were issued to restaurants that employed Chinese kitchen help. Independent, June 14, 1902. They returned to the fold before 1907.

90. For union efforts to eliminate Asian competition, see VTLC Minutes, April 3, 1902, May 3, 1906, Sept. 19, 1907, Oct. 10, 1907, April 4, 1908, May 21, 1908, June 4, 1908, Oct. 15, 1908, April 1, 1909, April 20, 1911; Independent, June 7, 1902; Western Wage Earner, April 1910, p. 5. On Asian competition to cooks, see Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 386-89.

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91. Waiters and cooks went their separate ways in December, and both withdrew from the VTLC the following February, when it ruled in favor of the waitresses in a dispute. Western Wage Earner, Oct. 1909, p. 8, Feb. 1910, p. 22, July 1910, p. 1; Province, June 15, 17, 1910, Feb. 3, 17, 1911; VTLC Minutes, Dec. 1, 1910. They returned to the VTLC before the end of 1911.

strike was lost,⁹² appeals to organized labour to support union restaurants went unheeded, and a shrunken union rejoined the cooks and waiters in 1914.⁹³

Meanwhile, cooks and waiters continued to pursue their objective of eliminating Chinese competition by appealing to union workers to patronize union restaurants, without much success. More militant tactics were no more successful,⁹⁴ so they tried political action, to have Asian employees prohibited as a condition of hotel licenses. Hotel owners successfully fought the measure, and demonstrated the similar labour market positions of Asians and women by arguing that much hotel work was unfit for white women (who would replace the banned Asians).⁹⁵

92. In March 1913, ten or eleven waitresses at the Ritz Cafe struck over their employer's refusal to stop verbal harassment by the non-union cook. They were replaced. B.C. Federationist, March 14, 1913, p. 4.

93. By that time, economic depression was again weakening the union: nearly a third of the fewer than 120 members were unemployed, and unemployment continued in 1915. Western Wage Earner, June 1910, p. 6, July 1910, p. 7; VTLC Minutes, March 17, 1910, May 5, 1910, June 2, 1910, July 7, 1910, Oct. 6, 1910, Jan. 15, 1914, June 4, 1914, Dec. 17, 1914; Labour Gazette XI (1910), p. 421, quoted in Rosenthal, "Union Maids," p. 49; B.C. Federationist, Dec. 13, 1912, p. 1, March 14, 1913, p. 4, April 9, 1915, p. 3.

94. In 1914, a boycott of at least two non-union restaurants was organized, with pickets, a banner, and even a sandwich-board man parading in front. In 1918, they considered something similar at a restaurant resisting unionization: a banner was to be placed outside, warning members of the longshoremen's union (whose headquarters were nearby) "not to go into the place during the busy hours, and spend an hour, or so eating a ten cent lunch, as it will make the moment real sore." Whether it was actually carried out, and if so, its success, was not reported. VTLC Minutes, May 7, 1914, June 18, 1914, Sept. 17, 1914; B.C. Federationist, June 14, 1918, p. 1.

95. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 15, 1914, April 6, 1916, Aug. 3, 1916, Feb. 20, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 9, 1914, p. 1, Jan. 22, 1915, p. 3, Feb.

In the war capitalist boom, the reunited cooks, waiters and waitresses successfully organized around the objective of the six-day week and eight-hour day.⁹⁶ One small, but long strike for shorter hours and union recognition resulting from that campaign was lost after nearly three months, despite constant picketing by the ten striking waitresses, and financial support from the VTLC and other unions, because the strikers were unable to prevent the restaurant from hiring replacements, or stop businessmen and retail clerks from patronizing it.⁹⁷ In August 1918, a strike for higher wages by thirty waiters and twenty-five chambermaids at the CPR's Vancouver Hotel resulted in a pyrrhic victory.⁹⁸ The failures of strikes illustrated the union's weakness in

19, 1915, p. 3, March 17, 1916, p. 1, July 14, 1916, p. 1; Province, Feb. 11, 1915, March 16, 28, 1916, June 22, 28, 1916; Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, pp. 386-89.

96. Membership grew to 200, and numerous hotels and restaurants were signed to union conditions.

97. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 8, 1917, p. 1, Sept. 7, 1917, p. 1, Sept. 28, 1917, p. 5, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 7, Dec. 21, 1917, p. 1. During the organizing drive, the union's organizer from Tacoma suggested organizing Chinese workers, but the white members of the union apparently did not consent to it. On the strike, see PAC, RG 27, Vol. 307, file 17(133); B.C. Federationist, Oct. 12, 1917, pp. 1, 8, Oct. 26, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 2, 9, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 16, 1917, pp. 1, 8, Nov. 23, 1917, pp. 1, 2, Nov. 30, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 7, 14, 28, 1917, p. 1; Sun, Oct. 7, 1917.

98. The waiters and chambermaids were badly underpaid and overworked: waiters were paid \$8.05 for a fifty-six hour, seven day week, chambermaids \$4.55 for a sixty-six hour, seven day week. The hotel maintained that tips made up for the low pay, refused the demands, and tried to replace the strikers. After a week, the intervention of the Minister of Labour's wife led to a settlement in which the chambermaids received a small wage increase and eight hour day. The CPR planned to replace the union chambermaids as soon as it could conveniently do so, however. PAC, RG 27, Vol. 310, file 18(180); B.C. Federationist, July 19, 1918, p. 1, Aug. 2, 9, 1918, p. 1; Province, Aug. 1, 3, 6, 8, 1918. The B.C. Minimum Wage Board (Report, 1919, p. 89) soon established an

the face of hostile employers.⁹⁹

Most hotel and restaurant workers stayed out of the general strikes in 1918-1919, but some supported the OBU.¹⁰⁰ The hotel and restaurant employees who voted were evenly divided on the OBU (Table 1-3). They continued to be half International and half OBU after the strike, but the former gradually prevailed.¹⁰¹

Municipal Government Employees

Municipal government employees were poorly mobilized and non-militant for virtually all of the 1900-1919 period. Firemen were the most restive, but even they only intermittently adopted a union form of organization, and generally expressed dissatisfaction with their conditions of employment in individual rather than collective ways. In part, this was a consequence of the intense hostility of the city

eight hour day and minimum wage of \$14.00 a week for women in public housekeeping occupations.

99. An attempt in 1919 to organize White Lunches also showed it: employees who joined the union were fired, and management refused to negotiate. VTLC Minutes, April 3, 1919, May 15, 1919; B.C. Federationist, May 16, 1919.

100. There is no record of their participation in the 1918 Goodwin protest strike, and it was rumored they had voted against the general strike in 1919. All were exempted from striking, but after the strike leaders in Winnipeg were arrested, bartenders joined the strike, and on June 28, union cooks, waiters, and waitresses were asked to refuse to serve meat or fish, or be called out on strike. By that time the general strike was starting to end anyway, so the request seems to have been ignored. Sun, June 3, 4, 21, 29, 1919; B.C. Federationist, June 6, 1919, p. 8, June 20, 1919, p. 1; Province, June 28, 1919; VTLC Minutes, June 19, 1919.

101. B.C. Federationist, Aug. 1, 1919, p. 8; VTLC(I) Minutes, Aug. 21, 1919, Oct. 2, 1919.

administration to unions, especially in the period of municipal fiscal crisis from 1913 to 1919.

During the period of easy money from 1900 to 1912, fire, police, and office employees of the City of Vancouver were remarkably uncontentious, and weakly mobilized. Firemen were the most active. Twice between 1900 and 1911, they changed their mutual benefit association into a union, made wage and other demands, threatened mass resignations if they were not met, and disbanded the union after they won what they wanted.¹⁰² While firemen toyed with unionization, the police remained within the framework of mutual benefit societies, politely requesting pensions and holidays, and inside city hall employees were wholly inactive.¹⁰³

The municipal fiscal crisis that began with the onset of the pre-war depression in 1913 furnished civic firemen, policemen, and office staff with the reasons and the resources for collective action. Once again firemen were the most contentious.¹⁰⁴ When the labour market

102. The Firemen's Protective Union was formed in 1902, and affiliated with the VTLC. It demanded pensions and higher pay, and after the city granted wage increases nothing more was heard of it. Grievances concerning promotions led to the unionization of 98 of the 106 members of the force in 1911, but after winning a wage increase, they acceded to City Council's request to surrender their international union charter. Province, Feb. 2, 1902, May 7, 8, 1902, July 2, 1902, April 7, 11, 21, 1911, May 5, 9, 1911, Nov. 17, 1911; Independent, June 21, 1902.

103. Province, Feb. 1, 28, 1902; Jan. 13, 1909, March 14, 1910; Independent, April 12, 19, 1902.

104. For example, when the city imposed a wage reduction on all its employees in November 1914, firemen threatened to resign in a body in protest, while police and city hall staff bore the reduction in silence. In 1915, firemen were again alone in protesting a wage

improved in 1916, firemen protested long hours and low pay by resigning to take other jobs, and by unionizing and campaigning for a "two platoon" system of two shifts a day, seven days a week, to replace the existing "continuous service" system of twenty-one hour days, six days a week. Despite widespread public support for their cause (including an 8000 name petition), civic ratepayers rejected the two-platoon system in 1917.¹⁰⁵ After the plebiscite, a disagreement with the Mayor over implementation of a promised one day off in four led to a successful three hour strike by 130 firemen on July 7, 1917.¹⁰⁶ This was the peak of firemen's militancy, although other hours of work remained a grievance.¹⁰⁷

For most of the period of municipal fiscal crisis, police and

reduction (without success). Province, Nov. 17, 18, 26, 1914, July 15, 16, 1915.

105. The vote was 1457 to 1107. B.C. Federationist, Nov. 17, 1916, pp. 1, 4, Dec. 1, 8, 22, 1916, p. 1, Feb. 2, 9, 1917, p. 1, Feb. 16, 1917, p. 4, May 11, 1917, p. 1, June 15, 1917, p. 1, June 22, 1917, p. 7; VTLC Minutes Nov. 16, 1916, Dec. 7, 1916; Province, Jan. 27, 1917, May 23, 26, 1917, June 19, 1917, July 6, 1917.

106. It ended when the Mayor promised to cast a tie-breaking vote, if necessary for the measure to pass City Council at its next meeting. He did, and the firemen did not have to fulfill their threat to resume the strike if their demand was not met. B.C. Federationist, June 8, 29, 1917, p. 1, July 13, 1917, p. 6; VTLC Minutes, July 5, 1917; PAC RG 27 Vol. 307 file 17(129); Province, July 7, 9, 10, 1917; Sun, July 9, 1917.

107. Despite wage increases in early 1918, resignations continued because of the hours, until the city finally instituted the two platoon system in August. Province, Dec. 14, 1917, Jan. 23, 1918, March 8, 1918, April 4, 1918, June 12, 1918, Aug. 13, 1918; B.C. Federationist, April 5, 1918, p. 1. In 1919, firemen threatened "concerted action" over the city's policy of firing men who had replaced those who had enlisted during the war, but failed to act when aldermen ignored them. Province, Feb. 20, 1919.

inside city hall staff remained inactive, but both were finally unionized in the summer of 1918. Police Chief McRae declared, "So long as I am chief of this department there will be no union," but policemen overcame dismissals, spies, and demands for no-strike pledges and non-affiliation with the VTLC to form a union that enrolled four fifths of the force, and belonged to the VTLC. Their only concession to the fears of Vancouver's political elite was a clause in the union's constitution against participation in sympathetic strikes.¹⁰⁸ They did not need to worry, for policemen were not radicals; the issues which really concerned them were wage increases, one day off in seven, and elimination of undercover "stool pigeons."¹⁰⁹

Inside city hall staff, who had been organized in July 1918, met with the same hostile response as the firemen and policemen, and nearly struck when a wage increase was refused.¹¹⁰

108. The Mayor, Police Chief, Police Commissioners, and 'prominent citizens' feared that a police force allied with labour might not enforce public order (as it had, for example, in 1912, when free speech demonstrations were brutally repressed), or that it might be called on to join proposed sympathetic strikes. Province, June 15, 1918, July 2, 3, 4, 1918; Sun, June 18, 19, 1918. For one of the events in 1912, see Province, Jan. 29, 1912; Western Clarion, Feb. 3, 1912; B.C. Federationist, Feb. 5, 1912, p. 2. J. Scott, Plunderbund and Proletariat, pp. 41-51, describes the entire IWW free speech fight in Vancouver.

109. The first two were eventually granted, and the police were for the moment satisfied. Province, Aug. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 21, 23, 1918, Sept. 4, 6, 10, 1918, Oct. 16, 1918, Dec. 14, 1918.

110. The city Finance Committee declared that it would only consider individual, not collective requests, and threateningly added that employees who had replaced enlisted men would be dismissed as soon as the latter requested their old jobs back. The strike was avoided through a last-minute compromise. Province, July 25, 26, 1918, Oct. 5,

The civic workers considered here played virtually no role in the radical movement of 1918-1919. They all abstained from the Goodwin protest strike, which the police and fire unions strongly opposed.¹¹¹ They were also against the general strike in 1919, but supported the striking outside workers in their demand for reinstatement without prejudice. Firemen showed their continuing dissatisfaction with the status quo by voting in favor of the OBU, but they subsequently changed their minds, and retained their international affiliation.¹¹²

Conclusions

The mobilization and collective action of trade and finance, services, and state workers was shaped in various ways and degrees by capital accumulation, their social reproduction cycles, and for some, their experience of strategic interaction (opportunity, power, and repression) in past struggles.

Capital accumulation in trade and finance was an extremely important element in the economic development of Vancouver, but the office workers and retail clerks employed there played virtually no role

1918, Nov 28, 1918, Dec. 3, 7, 1918; Report on Labour Organization, 1918, p. 180.

111. Police and firemen nearly withdrew from the VTLC over it. But when calls were made by City Council, business and veterans' organizations for their withdrawal from the council, they held firm (leading the city to demand legislation from Ottawa to outlaw it).

112. The others did not even vote on the OBU. A federation of civic employees unions formed in October 1919, assured a nervous City Council that they would not participate in sympathetic strikes, or affiliate with the VTLC. Sun, June 1, 1919, Province, June 11, 26, 27, 30, 1919; B.C. Federationist, Oct. 31, 1919, p. 1.

in working-class mobilization and collective action.¹¹³ The reasons were the small size of the majority of Vancouver's shops and offices, and the status division between white collar workers and industrial workers. These conditions of capital accumulation and working-class social reproduction inhibited class polarization in the workplace, and raised obstacles to solidarity between sales and office workers on the one hand, and unionized manual workers on the other.¹¹⁴

In the services sector, capital accumulation was dominated by competition between white-owned and Asian-owned businesses. The lower labour costs of the latter led the former to attempt to cut their own labour costs, with different consequences for working-class mobilization and collective action depending on how this was accomplished. Both steam laundries, and hotels and restaurants paid low wages, and worked long hours; the only important difference between them was that the former competed by raising productivity through mechanization and the concentration of production in large plants, and did not employ Asians, while the latter remained labour-intensive and did employ Asians. The small number of laundry owners were intensely hostile to unions, and had

113. The two cases of mobilization of office workers even come from outside trade and finance, namely from transportation and manufacturing. See above, page 655.

114. As a result, when white collar workers did mobilize around a shared grievance, as retail clerks did over long hours of work, they did not identify their employers as the main opponent. Instead, conflict was between employers, as some tried to regulate competition through early closing, and others, whose competitive position was weak, fought it. The same tendency was shown in retail clerks' main organizational device, the union card, which generated more confrontation with organized workers than it did with employers.

the resources to fight them; as a result the repeated attempts of laundry workers to organize were foiled by their repressive tactics, and it was very clear to laundry workers that their immediate enemies were their bosses, not Asian competitors. Thus, their objectives always concerned wages, hours, and union recognition, and when the labour market gave them the opportunity, they took strike action. Their experiences of repression and of militant action facilitated by other workers seems to have led laundry workers to become radical.

In contrast to laundry workers, cooks, waiters, and waitresses were employed in numerous small workplaces, and although that hindered mobilization in many respects, it also made it possible for a union to maintain a foothold in a few restaurants, and mount organizing campaigns from there. Therefore, unlike laundry workers, who kept trying, but were rarely organized, hotel and restaurant employees were able to maintain a continuous organizational presence in Vancouver, even though union membership fluctuated. In addition, because the clientele of at least some restaurants was working class, hotel and restaurant workers could attempt to mobilize them through the union card.¹¹⁵ Finally, because cooks and waiters faced direct labour market competition from Asians, they were prone to identify them, rather than their employers, as their enemy, and the elimination of Asian employees was thus a prominent objective. Because waitresses were less directly affected by that competition, they showed more interest in reducing hours of work

115. Laundry workers did not have this doubtful resource, because the most important markets for steam laundries were other businesses.

than in ousting Asians from the industry. They were all weakly mobilized, and generally non-militant, so the radical impulse was weak among hotel and restaurant employees.

The state was affected by capital accumulation because both its expenditures and its revenues depended on the condition of the economy. When the pre-war depression led to fiscal crisis in 1913, the municipal government tried to slash labour costs, and reacted with intense hostility when state workers attempted to mobilize.¹¹⁶ As was so frequently the case, repression was effective in restraining workers' mobilization and collective action.

Because there were no frontier labourers or craftsmen in crisis in the industries considered in this chapter, we can draw no conclusions regarding the central historical question of the sources of working-class radicalism, except to observe that, with few exceptions, neither factory operatives nor settled urban workers were prominent in the 1918-19 radical movement. Radicalism derived mainly from the experiences of threatened craftsmen and frontier labourers.

116. The political role of the state was also a source of hostility to the unionization of government workers, and to their affiliation with labour bodies such as the VTLC. Especially as the rest of the working class became increasingly radical in 1918 and 1919, Vancouver's ruling elite feared that government workers would act in a crisis as workers, rather than as servants of the state.

Chapter 14

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been presented as an instance of dialogue between sociological theory and history, in which a sociological concern for explicit conceptualization has been brought to bear on an existing historical question. The dialogue has proceeded in whispers through much of the discussion of capital accumulation, workers' social reproduction, and workers' mobilization and collective action in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919. At this point, by way of conclusion, let us make the dialogue explicit, by looking again at the sociological and historical problems with which we started.

14.1 Class Conflict and Collective Action

The sociological problems addressed in this thesis concern the analysis of class conflict in capitalism. Three problems were identified: the sources of antagonistic interests between workers and capitalists, and within the working class; tendencies of working-class formation; conditions of working-class collective action, especially

that in which workers act as members of a class opposed to the capitalist class.

It was argued that antagonistic interests between capitalists and workers arise from contradictions between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction cycles. These were located in theory at each phase of workers' social reproduction: consumption, labour market, work, and consumption practices. Specifically, obstacles to capital accumulation lead capitalists to adopt strategies to surmount those obstacles, and those strategies frequently disrupt the social reproduction practices to which workers are accustomed. Because those strategies may take advantage of different social reproduction cycles of workers, they can also create or exacerbate conflicts of interest within the working class.

The usefulness of this approach has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. We cannot understand the conflicts between capital and labour without examining the forces and conditions shaping the interests, and thereby the objectives, of each.¹ Guided by the proposal

1. The historical analysis of capital accumulation and of workers' social reproduction is admittedly not always all that it could be: the author is all too acutely aware of the limitations of his analysis of each. For example, the analysis of capitalists' interests is too often dependent on what they say are the obstacles to accumulation in their industries; similarly, we too often lack direct evidence of the social reproduction of workers, especially in the consumption and consumption market phases of social reproduction. To remedy those defects, more economic histories of particular industries (and especially of their labour processes), and more social histories of working-class family life, recreation, housing, and the like are needed, and are slowly being provided despite huge problems with sources. The recent volume by The Working Lives Collective, *Working Lives: Vancouver, 1886-1986*, provides a beginning in some of these areas. This thesis has, I hope, indicated

that obstacles to capital accumulation lead to policies to surmount them, we found three main types of industry, according to the obstacles confronting them: those with competition from lower-cost producers outside the Vancouver area, usually the United States or eastern Canada (e.g. lumber, salmon canning, contract metal shops, non-perishable consumer goods manufacturing); industries with competition from local producers (e.g. food manufacturing, building, restaurants and laundries); monopolized industries (steam railways, street railway and electric power, telephones). Unfortunately for the neatness of our conclusions, these three categories did not correspond to particular strategies to overcome obstacles to capital accumulation. Some combination of lowering wage costs (often through the employment of low-wage labour, whether Asians, women, or migratory or casual labour), mechanization, specialization, and systematic management appeared in each. Nonetheless, it was still the case that when obstacles to capital accumulation were encountered, capitalists did make changes that frequently disrupted workers' social reproduction. These changes concerned not only the wages, hours, and working conditions of individual workers, but also consisted of challenges to union organization and to collective controls over the labour market and workplace. It appears that the first impulse of capitalists facing obstacles to accumulation was to attack unions, so as to gain a free hand in responding to other obstacles to capital accumulation; therefore

Some of the lines along which more of such inquiries might profitably proceed.

union security was a frequent issue in strikes.² This was the source of the hostility of employers to unions that both frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsman interpretations of western labour radicalism stress. An insufficiently emphasized aspect of this hostility has been the significance of employer size. In industry after industry, it was large employers who had the resources to fight unions, and hold out in strikes, in order to cut wages, lengthen hours, change the labour process, and so on.

With respect to workers' interests, we have been able to show that their collective action was in pursuit of shared interests, not simply a reaction to social breakdown or social strains. Contentious action grew out of the daily lives of workers: their experiences in the labour market, at work, and to a far lesser extent, in the consumption market and consumption practices. Very importantly, it also grew out of their experiences of mobilization and collective action. Working-class collective action was thus rational, and not only in actions involving the antagonistic interests of capitalists and workers, but also in conflicts between workers. When wages, hours, and working conditions depend at least in part on the amount of competition in the labour market, it is rational for any group of workers to insulate themselves from that competition, that is, to erect barriers to entry to the

2. See Chapter 4. Correspondingly, we might state as a general rule that employers whose workers were not previously unionized generally resisted if they were able to, because the acceptance of a union would reduce their control over their business. See Bliss, *A Living Profit*, p. 86, although he does not give sufficient emphasis to this source of hostility.

occupation, trade, or industry. It might also be collectively rational to restructure the economy with the cooperation of competing groups to ensure that all received a fair share, but in any short-term calculation of interests, the former is more rational, because more immediately obtainable, and because competing groups usually have economic, political, or cultural disabilities that make them easy targets of exclusion.³ This was most true of Asians, and to a lesser extent, other "foreigners," and women. As in the case of capitalists' desire to rid themselves of unions, however, what a group of workers has an interest in doing, and what they are capable of doing are not the same. Exclusionary strategies may cease to work under the impact of changes in production, forcing workers to pursue more inclusive strategies, as occurred to craftsmen in crisis. This capacity is a question of class formation and resources for collective action.

Class formation, it was argued, is jointly shaped by capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction at each of its phases. The working class in Vancouver was divided by racial and ethnic group, by gender, and by skill. The bases for these divisions involved various phases of social reproduction. Racial and ethnic divisions within the working class combined distinctive labour market, consumption, consumption market, and workplace practices, that reinforced and signified each other. Because Asians had distinctive consumption practices, they were considered suitable for certain kinds of work, and

3. Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*, p. 95.

restricted from others; because they were restricted in their labour market opportunities, their incomes and therefore their levels of consumption were lower than many other workers, leading to complaints by white workers that they were unfair competition. Similarly, gender involved a combination of practices in each phase. The relegation of women to domestic labour and childrearing in the consumption practices phase of working-class social reproduction was reproduced in the labour market and workplace, where young women were temporary wage workers prior to marriage, and where they were restricted to 'women's work,' such as domestic and personal service, laundry work, food preparation, and garment making. Although the nature of the relationships between consumption practices on the one hand, and work and the labour market on the other hand, were different for Asians and women, the consequences were the same. Both were in the same labour market position, performing work that was low-paid, and often temporary or seasonal.

Skill also combined aspects of various phases of social reproduction. The most important were work and the labour market, where technical expertise and control over the labour process were combined with restricted entry to the trade (which, as technical expertise became less important, became all the more critical). They were reinforced by the more favorable consumption market position (higher real wages) of skilled craftsmen compared to other workers, and the status deriving from the consumption based on that, giving rise to a comprehensive craft identity. The challenge posed to craftsmen's labour market and workplace position by changes in capitalism at the turn of the century

gave craftsmen in crisis a leading role in class conflict, because their whole craft culture was at stake.

The effects of class formation on collective action were felt mainly in the strength of workers' mobilization. In Vancouver, mobilization strength (indicated by continuity of union organization, and membership size) was associated with ethnic and gender homogeneity. In industries in which the labour force was divided into racial or ethnic groups, or into men and women, all workers were less well mobilized than in industries in which it was not.⁴ In addition, men were generally more strongly organized than women, and whites were more strongly organized than Asians, although when there was direct competition between whites and Asians, the mobilization of white workers was weaker than in its absence.

The weak mobilization of Asians and women is attributable to a variety of factors which are very difficult to separate. Some were specific to their social reproduction cycles, such as women's domestic role, and the racial exclusion and contract labour system under which Asians worked. Because of these conditions, both Asians and women lacked resources to be mobilized for collective action. Other factors were more general, and applied to some white male workers as well. First, unskilled workers, especially factory operatives and workers in

4. Racial divisions were most pronounced in saw and shingle mills, salmon fishing and canning, hotel and restaurant work, and laundries (in each of which there were large numbers of Asians). Large numbers of women were employed in salmon canning, biscuit and confectionery manufacturing, garment manufacturing, and as telephone operators, waitresses, and laundry workers.

service occupations, were more weakly mobilized than craftsmen, and women and Asians were concentrated in the former occupations. The mobilization of unskilled workers depended on the existence of favorable labour market conditions, that is, a tight labour market, which was only occasionally present. Second, workers whose labour market was migratory, such as many Asians, as well as frontier labourers such as loggers or heavy construction labourers, and workers who were temporarily in the labour market, such as most women workers, were generally weakly mobilized. The only exceptions were migratory workers like building tradesmen, who possessed a skill and strong craft identity.

Consequently, the occupations and industries whose workers were most strongly unionized were the metal trades, shipbuilding workers (in war capitalism), cigar makers and printers, electrical workers, building trades crafts, and street railway workers. The common factors in strong mobilization were racial and ethnic homogeneity, an occupation made up of men only, and skilled work.⁵ Skilled, white, male workers, generally of British ethnic origins, were thus the most strongly mobilized members of the Vancouver working class.⁶

5. These three features characterized all the strongly organized trades and industries, with the exception of street railway workers, where skill was lacking.

6. Surprisingly, plant size (or workplace size) was not associated with strength of mobilization. Weakly mobilized workers were employed in all sizes of plant, as were strongly mobilized workers. In addition, repression did not (in general) correspond to mobilization success: both strongly and weakly organized workers were subject to repression.

Working-class collective action is not only a question of class interests and class formation, but is also a matter of processes of strategic interaction operating on mobilization and collective action themselves. Experiences of repression and facilitation, opportunity and threat, and power affect the objectives, breadth of mobilization, and frequency and forms of working-class collective action.

Several generalizations can be made regarding the repression and facilitation of workers' mobilization and collective action in the Vancouver area between 1900 and 1919. Repression acting on either mobilization, or on collective action was mainly by employers, and the facilitation of mobilization and collective action was almost always by other workers. Although the length of strikes often depended on facilitation, in the form of strike pay and strike funds, repression appears to have been more important in shaping collective action, and so our conclusions will concentrate on it.

First, as the Tillys found with respect to collective violence in Europe, repression worked.⁷ This was especially so if it was used to prevent or suppress workers' mobilization. Repression of their organizations was a major factor in the weak mobilization and lack of power of contract metal shop workers, telephone operators, and laundry workers. However, if repression let up, or became ineffective, and they were able to mobilize, workers whose mobilization had formerly been repressed tended to become radical.

7. C. Tilly, L. Tilly, and R. Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930*, p. 285; Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 114.

Repression, whether of workers' mobilization, or their collective action, had costs, and large firms, especially large, monopolistic corporations were best able to afford those costs. Employers like the CPR, B.C. Telephones, and large metal trades shops were therefore the strongest opponents of workers' organizations.⁸

Employer repressiveness was related to workers' skill level, being more hostile to the mobilization and strike action of unskilled workers than that of crafts. It was not related to other aspects of workers' social reproduction cycles, such as the main divisions of craft, frontier labourer, factory operative, and settled urban worker, or gender and racial group. The hostility of employer responses to strikes did depend on their objectives: union security and solidarity, labour market control, job control, and wage and hours objectives met with decreasing hostility, in that order.⁹ To employers unions and strikes contested their power.

Tilly argues that in the long run, repression is inversely related to a collective actor's power (indicated, as we have seen, by outcomes of past collective actions). That is, the more powerful group, the less likely it will be repressed.¹⁰ As we saw in Chapter 4,

8. As we have already argued, employers repressed unions when they were obstacles to capital accumulation strategies, and when they were first organizing.

9. See above, Chapter 4.

10. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, p. 115. We are not looking at a "long run" here, so we cannot properly test this idea, but we can see if it helps in the short run too. We also do not have systematic data on all the interactions of workers and employers, only strikes, so

the hostility of employer responses rose just after the peak of strike waves, which were also the points at which strike success was highest. This inverts Tilly's hypothesis for the short term, since it suggests that a period of growing working-class power is followed by or ended by growing repression.¹¹ Similarly, in the few industries where sufficient strikes occurred for some sort of pattern to be discovered, past power was not a good predictor of employer responses to strikes.¹² Employers' responses to strikes were thus a matter of their calculation of the workers' strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as the costs of repression versus the costs of concession to workers' demands. Workers' power in the past might only increase an employer's determination to defeat them when the opportunity arises, for example when the labour market is slack, or when other employers are mobilized in employers' associations to fight unions.¹³ There are rational actors on both sides of capitalist-worker interactions, each evaluating the costs and benefits of courses of action, the opportunities and threats facing

our conclusions are tentative.

11. Employer hostility also rose during periods of labour surplus or when there was a high rate of migration into Vancouver, giving employers the opportunity to replace strikers.

12. The experience of metal tradesmen in railway (CPR) shops is instructive here: the shop workers won strikes in the early 1900s, and encountered non-hostile responses from the CPR, until in 1908, it reversed its past practice, and became hostile, defeating the metal tradesmen.

13. The experience of telephone operators illustrates this process: B.C. Telephones continued to use repression against strikers, even when it first failed; its management must have calculated that telephone workers, especially operators, were vulnerable to replacement.

1 them, and the resources behind the power of themselves and their opponents.

In addition to repression and facilitation, working-class collective action depended on the balance of opportunity and threat. For strikes, this was a matter of the state of the labour market. A tight labour market provided the most favorable opportunity for workers' mobilization and strikes, with the former mediating the latter. That is, waves of strikes usually followed waves of unionization when labour markets were tight. Conversely, workers experienced the most threat to their living standards, working conditions, and mobilization during labour surpluses, but they did not usually respond to the threats by striking, until the opportunity was present. In other words, they usually struck strategically and offensively (or proactively), especially if they were strongly mobilized. Weakly mobilized workers such as Asians in the lumber and salmon industries were the exception: they generally struck defensively, in response to immediate threats to their interests. Similarly, contentious gatherings were mainly responses by unskilled workers to threats (usually from the state): it is as if for Asian workers, strikes, and for workers generally, contentious gatherings, were not parts of their repertoires of proactive collective action.

Collective action was affected by the form as well by the existence of threats. Global threats to workers' interest promoted global responses by large numbers of workers, whereas threats that were restricted to particular groups of workers led to more limited forms of

action.¹⁴ Consequently, situations in which employers as a class appeared to be threatening the rights or interests of workers as a class were critically important in the development of class mobilization and class action. These occurred when there were global threats to living standards and working conditions, as in the pre-war depression, and the inflation of war capitalism, or when workers' mobilization was threatened, as in the 1911 carpenters' strike, and in government controls over labour³ during war capitalism.

Finally, we considered the power of workers in collective action as the outcomes of that action, but argued that it is necessary to look at the resources on which power was based. Resources could be found at all phases of workers' social reproduction: in consumption practices, the esteem deriving from styles and levels of consumption; in the labour market, the capacity to withdraw labour power; in work, the capacity to disrupt production; and in the consumption market, working-class purchasing power. As we expected, esteem and purchasing power were of negligible value. The former was not explicitly drawn on by workers, although it did have a role in the responses of outsiders to workers' actions: public opinion appeared to be more sympathetic to the demands of women workers (who were considered in need of protection) than those

14. In salmon fishing, for example, global threats to fishermen's incomes resulted in large-scale mobilization and collective action, whereas in salmon canning, the piecemeal introduction of machinery produced no comparable response. Similarly, in shipbuilding, the global threat of the high cost of living, or of arbitrary disciplinary procedures gave rise to plant-wide walkouts, but specific threats to individual crafts' jurisdiction lead to isolated and divisive action.

of men.¹⁵ Attempts were made to draw on workers' purchasing power as resource for collective purposes, but as retail clerks, consumer goods manufacturing workers, and hotel and restaurant workers discovered, it was difficult to mobilize. This was in part because workers' purchasing power was limited, but mainly because it was difficult for the collectivity to control.¹⁶

The ineffectiveness of social esteem and purchasing power as resources for collective action meant that workers' power depended mainly on their capacity to disrupt capitalists' operations and impede capital accumulation through strikes, and their ability to maintain that disruption by preventing strikebreaking. Both were necessary: for example, telephone operators had the capacity to totally disrupt the telephone system, but they could not prevent strikebreaking, and so were generally unsuccessful, unless they could mobilize other resources, such as the sympathy of business subscribers in early strikes.¹⁷ In other

15. Thus the propaganda of the telephone company against the operators' union attacked it as a tool of the male electrical workers. Similarly, collective actions by married, settled, white workers were more tolerantly regarded than actions by Asians, 'foreigners' (including Americans), and migratory workers.

16. To the extent that working-class purchasing power was exercised by the wives of wage workers, sanctions on its use would be even more difficult. The VTLC occasionally tried to control it, at least among union delegates. For example, in 1909, it required that delegates have at least three union labels on their clothing before being admitted to meetings, and in 1910, it awarded a two dollar prize to the delegate having the most union labels on his clothing. VTLC Minutes, Oct. 21, 1909, April 7, 1910.

17. Similarly, the BCER's fear of bad publicity if it tried to run street cars during strikes was a resource for street railwaymen.

words, the most powerful resources of workers were in the labour market and workplace. This gave skill its central importance in workers' mobilization and collective action, since it was the most reliable resource by which both disruption of production, and the prevention of strikebreaking could be ensured.¹⁸ In the absence of skill, or if skill was degraded, the size of the group which could be mobilized for collective action became a critical resource.¹⁹ The necessity for crafts to adopt broader forms of organization, in order to prevent their replacement in strikes by handymen or specialists thus followed from the devaluation of skill as resource.

The collective actions of workers were thus a complex result of antagonistic interests, processes of group formation, and the strategic interactions of workers and capitalists, each mobilizing their resources in nearly constant conflict.

18. The more skilled (and presumably scarce) workers were, the more difficult they were to replace. Also, the more skilled the workers, the more they could disrupt production, to the extent that production depended on skilled workers (any changes which made employers less dependent on skilled work reduced the value of this resource). Thus, as we saw in Chapter 4, employers were more repressive towards strikes by non-craft workers, and they more often won in such strikes than in strikes by craft workers. The importance of this resource also showed up in the greater frequency of contentious gatherings in strikes by unskilled workers than in strikes by craft workers: since skill did not protect them from strikebreakers, the former had to use more militant means.

19. The larger the group that withdraws its labour power, the more difficult it is for the employer to replace it (unless there is a tremendous surplus of labour), and the greater its capacity to disrupt production. The trouble with size as a resource is that the larger the group, the more problems there are in mobilizing it. See M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*,

The approach that has been taken in this study has stressed divisions of race, gender, and skill, and has particularized class conflict by looking for its sources in specific contradictions in individual industries. By concentrating on strikes, it has also neglected the political dimension of working-class collective action. It can therefore be criticized for breaking down the totality of the working class and its action into a series of isolated parts, and so rendering class conflict invisible.²⁰ It is the conclusion of this study that workers were formed as a class as a result of their mobilization and collective action around the specific conflicts of interest that arose from the contradictions of capital accumulation and social reproduction in various industries. Experiences in that conflict led to class mobilization, that is, the organization of workers on a class basis and their collective action in pursuit of class objectives, or what we have termed radicalism. The analysis of divisions within the working class is thus essential for interpreting such class mobilization, because in order for it to be achieved, the divisions we have mentioned had to be overcome. Furthermore, those divisions remained in existence, ready to be reasserted in different conditions, as such divisions were in B.C. in the 1920s, after the failure of class

20. Palmer, for one, has frequently criticized such tendencies, although even he has been increasingly forced to admit the significance of divisions within the working class. For example, B. Palmer, *The Making of E.P. Thompson: Marxism, Humanism, and History*, p. 74. Cf. Stark ("Class Struggle and the Transformation of the Labour Process," p. 321), who argues that "a class never exists as a single collectivity-in-struggle, but as a multiplicity of collectivities in struggle."

mobilization and class action. This attention to distinctions and divisions is also necessary in order to reveal that not all workers contributed equally to the development of class action. How do you discover this, and the social basis of radicalism, if you do not perform the kind of analytic operation undertaken here?

With respect to the absence of politics in this study, the thesis has shown the significance of industrial militancy in the development of class mobilization and class action in this period. As one comparative historian has noted of the strike wave from 1917 to 1919: "Nowhere had workers moved so massively as in their industrial actions; nowhere had they so successfully organized themselves as a class; nowhere had they been so susceptible to socialist leadership and ideas...."²¹ Common experiences in mobilization and collective action, for primarily economic objectives, transcended occupation, workplace, industry, skill level, and even (to a limited extent) gender, ethnicity and race to produce the exceptional upsurge of class struggle in the Vancouver area in 1918-19.

14.2 Frontier Labourers or Craftsmen in Crisis?

The historical problem with which this study began was the roots

21. L. Peterson, "Revolutionary Socialism and Industrial Unrest in the Era of the Winnipeg General Strike: The Origins of Communist Labour Unionism in Europe and North America," p. 119.

of the early twentieth century western labour revolt. This problem has received competing "frontier labourer" and "crisis of the craftsman" interpretations. In the frontier labourer interpretation, the sources of worker radicalism have been found in the resource proletariat of the industrial frontier: miners, loggers, railway construction workers, and other migratory, immigrant labourers performing harsh, dangerous work, and confronting ruthless capitalists in isolated towns and camps. In the crisis of the craftsman interpretation, in contrast, the sources of labour revolt have been found in the changing organization of capitalist production, specifically the challenge to craft workers' control over the workplace and labour market posed by mechanization, systematic management, and specialization. To assess these competing interpretations, we examined the experiences of craftsmen, frontier labourers, factory operatives, and settled urban workers in various industries in Vancouver between 1900 and 1919. The short answer to the historical question is: frontier labourers and craftsmen in crisis formed the social basis of working-class radicalism in early twentieth century Vancouver and district. In contrast, factory operatives and settled urban workers were nearly always poorly mobilized and non-radical.

By showing that sources of working-class radicalism existed within Vancouver, this study partially contradicts the frontier labourer interpretation. Frontier labourers were not the almost exclusive source of western labour radicalism. Working-class radicalism in Vancouver was not just a pale reflection of that of the western resource proletariat.

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It had sources rooted in early twentieth century transformations of capitalism that were not limited to the west, notably the challenge to craft controls in the workplace and labour market. At the same time, however, radicalism was not exclusively a phenomenon of craftsmen in crisis: the mass base for working-class radicalism in 1918-19 was to a large extent provided by frontier labourers. This is what made the labour revolt so much more powerful in western than in eastern Canada: without the mobilization of the loggers above all (but also of shipbuilding labourers and dock workers, and outside the Vancouver area, of miners), the revolt would not have gone far. In industrial eastern Canada, in contrast, the mass base for radicalism could only have come from factory operatives and settled urban workers, but as we have seen, in Vancouver at least, they were generally weakly mobilized and non-radical.

Another implication of the findings of this thesis for the frontier labourer and crisis of the craftsmen interpretations concerns the interpretative explanation of radicalism. Usually implicitly, and in common with much sociological theorizing on "collective behavior," some frontier labourer interpretations have emphasized irrational elements in the working-class revolt, or adopted what Tilly calls a "breakdown" theory of collective action.²² In such a perspective,

22. For example, in Bercuson's analysis of the sources of radicalism in Winnipeg during World War I, working-class responses to wartime inflation are characterized as irrational expressions of "panic," "fear," and the like. See Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, pp. 34-35.

radical or revolutionary movements are consequences of rapid social change, which wrenches populations out of hitherto routine patterns of social interaction. The resulting social disorganization and psychological disorientation lead to "hostile outbursts" and other manifestations of collective behavior by the people affected.²³ In contrast to such approaches, the one taken here emphasizes interests, group formation, and mobilization as conditions of collective action.²⁴ Its appropriateness for the analysis of the sources of radicalism can be shown by reviewing each of its elements.

First, did radicalism depend on the conflict of interests between workers and capitalists? If it did, there must have been something to distinguish the interests of those workers who became radical, from those who did not. Frontier labourers and craftsmen in crisis were distinguished from settled urban workers and factory operatives by the importance for the former of conflicts that involved whole ways of life. If social historians are correct, the challenge to craftsmen at the turn of the century was experienced as threatening a whole craft culture, that is, not only their income, but their way of life and status in the community. Similarly, as the literature on western Canadian labour radicalism has stressed, frontier labourers were involved in a confrontation with capitalists over the totality of their lives and work in resource camps and towns. In terms of the theoretical

23. For the best example, see N. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior; and Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*.

24. See L. Hunt, "Charles Tilly's Collective Action."

framework adopted here, the contradictions between the interests of capitalists and workers unified all phases of the latter's social reproduction, for those segments of the working class which became radical.

This conclusion must be qualified, however, because it does not apply to some leading radical industrial groups, such as waterfront workers, and even if radicals were not distinguished from non-radicals by their interests, it is still the case that radicalism grew out of collective action in pursuit of largely economic interests. The capacity of workers to engage in collective action, which depended on class formation, was thus also important as a condition of radicalism. It was true that the radicalism of crafts depended on their interests in opposing the degradation of their craft skills, so that there was little radicalism among workers not facing challenges to their skills (for example, compare shipwrights and caulkers with boilermakers and painters in shipyards); but it was also true that crafts which were sufficiently degraded to lose much if not all of their craft identity and control, (such as bakers and tailors) were not radical.

The main finding of the thesis with respect to class formation and radicalism is the absence of divisions of race and gender among the working-class groups which became radical. Workers in industries in which the labour force was composed of members of different racial groups were generally not as radical as those in which it was more homogeneous. In the lumber industry, for example, the only groups not to face Asian competition, namely loggers, factory woodworkers, and

stationary engineers, were the social basis for radicalism. Similarly (with some exceptions), workers in industries where large numbers of women were employed, such as garment manufacturing, were not as radical as those in more homogeneously male industries. Racial and gender divisions did not affect radicalism directly, however, but through their effects on mobilization, and through it, on collective action.²⁵

The comparative analysis of workers' mobilization and collective action has shown that, given the interests and capacity, workers' radicalism depended on their experiences of strategic interaction: repression, opportunity and threat, and power. Four conditions were central to the development of radicalism in individual industries, and in the Vancouver working class as a whole: workers' remobilization during war capitalism; the experience of repression of their mobilization before 1916, and continued employer hostility after 1916; the combination of opportunity and threat during war capitalism; workers' growing power during war capitalism.

First, with respect to mobilization, war capitalism was a period of worker remobilization, in which unions that had been weakened by the pre-war depression and earlier defeats rebuilt, and many formerly non-unionized workers formed rapidly growing organizations. This was a necessary condition of radicalism, since the latter was weak in industries where no strong remobilization occurred.²⁶ Yet because

25. See above, page 684.

26. The best examples are factory operatives in consumer goods manufacturing, such as garment workers, and biscuit and confectionery

nearly all unions experienced remobilization, including those that did not become radical, it was not a sufficient condition.

In addition to union growth, it was conducive to radicalism, and especially to support for the One Big Union, if workers experienced the need for some form of inclusive organization crossing skill and craft boundaries. Frontier labourers, who were occupationally mobile and therefore required a broadly-based organization (such as the IWW or OBU), were perhaps the best example, but there were others. For example, craft unions with a large number of helpers (such as the boilermakers), unions which engaged in joint bargaining with other unions (such as in the metal trades), and unions which organized workers in a variety of different types of work (such as the teamsters), were generally radical.²⁷

Second, workers who experienced repression of their mobilization efforts in the past, and the continuing hostility of employers to their remobilization during war capitalism, usually turned out to be radicals. Good examples of this radicalizing experience were metal tradesmen in contract shops, and laundry workers. This was once again a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of radicalism. For example, bakers experienced union growth during war capitalism, and suffered repression by employers, but they remained weak, i.e. unsuccessful in their collective actions, and were not radical.

workers, and white sawmill and shingle mill workers.

27. This was not always true, with the street railwaymen being the most notable exception: because they were already organized in a successful industrial union, they saw no need for an OBU type of organization.

Third, radicalization depended on opportunity and threat. For all workers who were able to remobilize and engage in collective action during war capitalism, the labour shortages of this period provided a grand opportunity to make up for recent setbacks and injustices, such as the defeats suffered by many important groups of workers in 1909-12, and the attacks on union organization and deterioration in living standards and working conditions experienced by most workers during the pre-war depression. It was an opportunity to remobilize, as was already indicated, and an opportunity to strike or to threaten to strike. Combined with the continuing hostility of many employers, this led to the wartime strike wave, which was the first chance for workers to put to the test lessons learned in the smaller strike wave of 1909-12.²⁸ Above all, the war capitalist period provided this opportunity for militant action to unskilled workers, whose strikes had often been defeated by the ability of employers to replace them with strikebreakers.

War capitalism was a period of threats as well as opportunities. The high cost of living threatened to take away the promise of improved living standards, unless workers fought for wage increases from employers. In addition, many employers continued in their pre-war hostility to unions: they refused to end open shops (e.g., steam laundries); they failed to live up to agreements (e.g., sash and

28. For example, the general strike. In this sense, as Kealey ("1919," pp. 16, 39-40) suggests, the strike wave of 1916-19 was a continuation of that of the previous period.

door factories); they continued to challenge craft controls in production (e.g., contract metal shops); sometimes they did all three (e.g., shipyards). Looming over all of these threats was the prospect of post-war depression, and the flooding of the labour market with returned soldiers. This gave a sense of urgency to workers' collective action: it was necessary to act quickly, before the chance was lost.²⁹ All of these were global threats that affected a broad cross-section of workers, and could therefore be the basis for widespread mobilization and class action.³⁰

Finally, the experience of growing power, that is, of successful collective action, was conducive to radicalism. This was especially true when this was accomplished through militant action that had to overcome employer resistance and repression. For example, shipyard workers and teamsters were militant and increasingly powerful, and became radical, while telephone company electrical workers became more powerful without actually having to strike, and were less radical. Growing power gave organized workers the confidence to try something new, to experiment with new forms of organization and action.³¹ If

29. Cf. Pentland "Western Canadian Labour Movement," p. 76.

30. Again, the pre-war experience was to some extent repeated, as in 1911, when the open shop position of a few building contractors was seen as a global threat to working class mobilization, leading to the general strike of building trades workers.

31. A contemporary observer offered a similar interpretation, although his hostility to radicalism led him to overemphasize the role of leaders. The ordinary working man followed radical leaders, journalist L.W. Makovski explained to the Mathers Commission, because "All through the war those men have got constant rises of wages by threatening

workers did not experience growing power, that is if they remained weak and unsuccessful despite remobilizing, they were weakly radical in 1918-19, as the examples of freight handlers and clerks, bakers, tailors, and hotel and restaurant employees demonstrate.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from this review of conditions of strategic interaction is that while the antagonistic interests of capitalists and workers, and the formation of working-class collectivities furnished crucial background conditions, radicalism resulted from the experiences of different groups of workers in class struggle. Can a case study such as this support such a conclusion?

This study has in part been an exercise in what Tilly calls "variation-finding comparison," Skocpol calls "analyzing causal regularities", and Stinchcombe calls discovering "causally significant analogies between instances."³² Whatever we call it, as so often happens in historical sociology, the logic of comparative method is compromised by the fact that the units being compared (in this case groups of workers) are not really independent. Workers in different industries influenced one another, and they had collective experiences. Although this does make the comparative analysis less than perfect, the development of class mobilization and class action in Vancouver was furthered by these influences and shared experiences. What were they?

strikes or causing trouble, and that is a very practical demonstration of what they can do." Mathers Commission, Evidence, Vol. 1, p. 268.

32. C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, pp. 82-83; T. Skocpol, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology," pp. 374-80; Stinchcombe, *Theoretical Methods in Social History*, p. 7.

First, during the 1900-19 period, workers in Vancouver experienced a variety of common problems, such as falling real wages, depression and war. In addition, white workers, who were the basis for radicalism, felt the threat of Asian immigration. However much it demobilized and weakened the workers immediately affected, the competition of Asians gave white workers a sense of unity against an outside threat.

Second, workers in the Vancouver area underwent a variety of common experiences of mobilization and collective action before the war. They had common experiences of mobilization and militancy in the two main periods of opportunity, leading to the strike waves of 1900-03, and 1909-12. Each was followed by experiences of defeat and demobilization under the onslaught of employer repression and economic recession. The defeat and destruction of the UBRE and unions of sympathy strikers in 1903, the subsequent organization of Vancouver employers and open shop campaigns, the defeats of metal and building tradesmen in 1909-12, and the pre-war depression were the most prominent examples. A few strikes, such as the 1903 UBRE strike, the 1911 carpenters' strike, and the 1918 laundry workers' strike, crystallized class conflict and contributed to class mobilization.³³ Despite these common experiences, however, some workers were still more radical than others, so the logic of the comparative analysis is not wholly compromised.

³³ As we saw in the case of the 1903 UBRE strike, they contributed not only to the class mobilization of workers, but that of employers too.

However, there is a further limit to the logic of the argument pursued here. Events in Vancouver did not occur in a vacuum, and the class mobilization of Vancouver workers was undoubtedly shaped by events on the resource frontier: the Rossland miners' strike in 1901,³⁴ the strikes by members of the Western Federation of Miners on Vancouver Island in 1903,³⁵ the IWW-led strikes of railway construction workers on the CNR and GTP in 1912,³⁶ and the Nanaimo miners' strike from 1912 to 1914.³⁷ The question is how much weight these events should be given in the class mobilization of workers in Vancouver. To avoid counterfactual historical speculations (Hobsbawm's "if my grandmother had wheels she'd be a Greyhound bus"³⁸) about what would have happened

34. See Phillips, *No Power Greater*, pp. 33-34; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, pp. 27, 37-40.

35. Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

36. Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54; Scott, *Plunderbund and Proletariat*, pp. 108-41.

37. On the Nanaimo miners' strike, see Phillips, *No Power Greater*, pp. 55-61. Its effects were felt in Vancouver in 1913, with the formation of the Miners' Liberation League, through which the VTLC, Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party, B.C. Federation of Labor, United Mine Workers, and IWW cooperated to press for the release of imprisoned miners. Public meetings and a parade were held, a card printed to be displayed in the windows of businesses that supported the miners' release, contributions solicited for a fund to support miners' families, and calls made for a general strike. Some miners were eventually pardoned and released. *B.C. Federationist*, Sept. 19, 1913, p. 1, Oct. 31, 1913, p. 1, Dec. 19, 1913, p. 1, Jan. 2, 16, 30, 1914, p. 1, Feb. 6, 1914, p. 1, March 27, 1914, p. 1; *Province*, Nov. 1, 22, 29, 1913, Dec. 18, 1914; *Sun*, Nov. 7, 12, 1913. Cf. *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, p. 114, where McCormack overemphasizes the role of the IWW.

38. E.J. Hobsbawm, "Labor History and Ideology," p. 376.

In Vancouver if these events on the resource frontier had not occurred, let it be granted that they did occur, and did have an influence. But their influence reinforced tendencies to radicalism which were already present in the Vancouver working class. This is shown by comparing Vancouver and New Westminster: the former was always more radical than the latter. Several conditions contributed to this difference,³⁹ but above all, it was because the industrial composition of the cities was different. New Westminster's economy was dominated by industries in which workers were generally poorly mobilized factory operatives (especially in saw and shingle milling) or settled urban workers. Above all, it lacked the unions of crafts in crisis that provided radical leadership in Vancouver. Lacking those conditions, but undergoing the same regional influences as workers in Vancouver, workers in New Westminster never became as radical. The conclusion must stand: both craftsmen in crisis and frontier labourers were the social base for working-class radicalism in the Vancouver area in 1918-19.

39. For example, union locals in New Westminster were smaller (never more than half the size of Vancouver's on average), fewer, and weaker than in Vancouver. See Chapter 4, Table 4-6.

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Appendix A

SOURCES AND CODING

A.1 VTLC Contention

The contentious activities of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC) were taken to represent routine trade union contention in Vancouver for the 1900-1919 period. The criterion of working class contention that the participants be members of the working class was easily met by VTLC meetings: all the participants were delegates of unions. With respect to the criterion that a visible contentious claim be made, the VTLC was considered to have made a claim whenever a special meeting was held, or a public meeting called to take a position on an issue, or whenever a decision was made to participate (or to refrain from participating) in an event the publicly recognized meaning of which was support for or opposition to some state policy or official.¹

1. For example, as a protest against Dominion government disallowances of provincial laws restricting Oriental immigration, the VTLC refused to participate in a parade welcoming the Governor-General of Canada to Vancouver in 1906. Province Sept. 26, 1906. See Weber's definition of "social action," "which includes ... failure to act ... oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others." Economy and

Endorsing the action of, or expressing sympathy for a union belonging to the council was not counted as contention, unless in doing so, the VTLC became an active party to the conflict (for example, by sending the resolution to the target, or by sending a delegation).²

SOURCES

The main source of information on routine union contention in the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (VTLC) is the official minutes. Minutes of regular meetings are available from March 20, 1902, to January 30, 1916, and from August 7, 1919, to the end of the period. Minutes of executive board meetings are also available for the period 1907 to 1920.³ To make up for missing minutes of regular meetings,

Society, p. 22.

2. Several examples will illustrate what does and does not count as routine trade union contention in the VTLC. The first is an unambiguous example of trade union contention: on Feb. 4, 1904, a proposed property qualification for park and license commissioners was declared to be an "evil principle" intended to deny representation to the "wage-earning class", and a resolution was passed objecting to it. At the same meeting a committee was appointed to investigate the lumber question and the attempt of the B.C. lumber combine to induce the federal government to put a duty on rough lumber. The second action does not count as contention, since no claim was made on another party. A third example is trickier: A Province reporter described the "poor opinion of held by the members of the council regarding the Alien Labour Act" and the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, including delegate Pettipiece's characterization of the latter as "a screaming farce". The delegates clearly had a grievance with the federal government, but neither in the Province report nor in the official minutes is there any record of action being taken on this grievance, so the incident would not be counted as contention. VTLC Minutes, Feb. 4, 1904, May 16, 1907; Province, May 17, 1907.

3. The regular minutes in 1919 are of the "International" VTLC; the executive minutes are of the "OBU" VTLC.

reports published in the labour papers, The Independent (for April 1900 to 1902), and The B.C. Federationist (for 1916 to 1919), were consulted.⁴ To supplement these sources, reports of the regular meetings in the daily press (especially The Province) were also consulted, but in case of conflict, the official minutes and reports in the labour press were given priority.

Coding

1. VTLCID VTLC contention identification number: year, month, and day of meeting; sequence number of claim in that meeting. (In order to distinguish International and QBU VTLCs after August 1919, claims made by the former are numbered down from 9; thus any VTLCID ending with a number greater than 6 is a claim made by the International VTLC.)
2. VTLCCLAC Class content of VTLC claim.
 1. Class conflict: pits members of the working class against employers or their representatives, and concerns relations between employers and workers.
 2. Ethnic conflict: pits workers of one ethnic group against members of another.
 3. Other conflict: pits workers against other workers on some basis other than ethnicity.
 4. No class content: none of the above, i.e. no immediate class conflict, ethnic conflict, or other conflict.

4. Reports in The Independent are apparently verbatim copies of the official minutes, and are accurate when compared with the official minutes when they are available. The B.C. Federationist reports are only summaries. At the risk of some confusion, I have stated the source as "VTLC Minutes" even when the information comes from these unofficial reports. The VTLC Minutes can almost always be found in the first issue of the Independent or B.C. Federationist after the meeting.

5. Mixed: more than one of the above.

0. Don't know.

3. VTLCGEOG

Geographical scope of claim: broadest area in which its effects would be felt if realized.

1. Vancouver.

2. British Columbia.

3. Canada.

4. International.

5. Mixed: more than one of the above.

0. Don't know.

4. VTLCERI

Cycle of reproduction 1: phase of working-class social reproduction cycle on which the claim principally bears.

1. Consumption: bears on consumption practices of workers or their families, including styles of consumption, and status.

2. Labour market: bears on employment practices, competition for jobs, unemployment; wages, or hours.

3. Work: bears on control of the labour process, discipline and supervision, dismissals or layoffs, apprenticeship, health and safety.

4. Consumption market: bears on conditions in which articles of consumption are purchased by workers: price, monopoly, quality.

5. Mobilization: bears on conditions affecting the capacity of workers to organize and act collectively, especially conditions of facilitation or repression (including claims arising from responses to previous contentious action).

6. Other: see OTHER1 for categories.

9. None.

0. Don't know.

5. OTHER1

Specification of "Other" from VTLCCR1.

1. state and labour: for issues that involve the relationship of the state to the labour movement, such as representation of labour on boards, etc., or enforcement of labour or safety legislation. With its counterpart, "state and capital," this category denotes contention over political power, or over whose interests the state will serve.

2. state and capital: for issues that involve the relationship of the state to capitalists, such as monopoly powers, concessions and grants to corporations, etc.

3. Justice: demands concern fair or just treatment of individuals by the state, usually regarding criminal cases before the courts.

4. Taxation: demands concern the tax policies of the state, usually connected with single tax agitation.

5. War: demands concern the conduct of war, or other policies directly connected with it, such as registration, conscription, censorship (which is also coded as "mobilization" since it affects labour's capacity to organize and act collectively).

6. Other: not classified.

0. Not applicable.

6. VTLCCR2

Cycle of reproduction 2: phase on which the claim has a secondary bearing, if any.

Same categories as VTLCCR1.

7. OTHER2

Specification of "Other" from VTLCCR2.

Same categories as OTHER1.

8. CRFLAG

Comment on cycle of reproduction.

1. More than two.

2. Good example.

3. Coding problem.

0. Not applicable.

9. VTLC TARG

Target of claim: the party or parties to which it is oriented, that is, who are expected to act.

1. Federal government: including officials of government and state, and federal political parties or politicians.

2. Provincial government: including officials of government and state, and provincial political parties or politicians.

3. Municipal government: mayor, aldermen, or officials.

4. More than one level of government.

5. Employer: including individual employers and employer organizations.

6. Other workers: including groups of workers and other working-class organizations (outside the membership of the VTLC).

7. Other.

8. Mixed: more than one of the above.

9. Government, level unknown.

0. Don't know.

10. VTCALINK

Link to other contentious action, prior to or concurrent with the present event (record the most recent one).

1. Contentious gathering.

2. Strike.

3. Routine union contention, not including VTLC contention.

4. VTLC contention, within two months of meeting (give or take a week).

5. Non-working class contention.

0. None reported.

11. VLINKLOC

Location of link to other contention.

1. Outside greater Vancouver.

2. In greater Vancouver.

0. Not applicable.

12. VTLC ACT

Action through which the VTLC made its claim known, ordered from the least to the most militant (record the most militant if more than one action).

1. Resolution: statement of the claim, communicated by letter, the press, etc.; no other action.

2. Delegation or donation: the council expends some of its resources in pursuit of the objective.

3. Threat of further action: the council publicly commits itself to action beyond resolutions or delegations if the claim is not satisfied, i.e., it commits itself to escalating the dispute.

4. Contentious gathering planned: a decision is made and steps taken to organize a public meeting to advance the claim.

5. Strike planned: a decision is made and steps taken to organize a work stoppage to support the claim (e.g., a date is set, and strike votes in the member unions requested).

0. Don't know.

13. VTLCRESP

Response by the target to content of the VTLC claim.

1. Granted: the demand is fully realized, or nearly so.

2. Compromise: the demand is partly granted.

3. Rejected: no part of the demand is granted.

4. No claim: the target denies the existence of the issue.

0. Don't know.

A.2 Contentious Gatherings

In addition to the other criteria of a contentious gathering (see Chapter 3), in order to be counted in this study, at least twenty participants had to take part in the collective action. The threshold of twenty was chosen on the grounds that any gatherings with fewer participants would not be significant and would not be reported with any consistency in the press or other sources. Very often the exact number of participants in a contentious gathering was not given in reports of the event; in that case the presence of terms such as "crowd", "largely attended meeting" and so on, were used in conjunction with other information (e.g., on the size of halls) as indicators of the number of participants.⁵

Sources

Sources used for information on working-class contentious gatherings represent a compromise between the desire for accuracy and comprehensiveness, and the exigencies of time, money, and other

5. For example, in 1903, when union sympathizers tried to persuade non-union longshoremen to stop work and join the strike in sympathy with CPR clerks and freighthandlers, press reports say nothing about the number of participants except that they were a "crowd". That is enough to qualify the incident as a contentious gathering. Its contentiousness is indicated by the claim made on the strikebreakers (stop work), and the response of the CPR, which called on the city police to disperse the crowd. Province, March 19, 1903; World, March 19, 1903.

resources available to the researcher. The main source was the daily press, supplemented by other sources.

The Vancouver Daily Province was read on microfilm for every day from the beginning of 1900 to the end of 1919. Comparison of the Province with other Vancouver papers showed that it was the most consistent in its coverage of contentious gatherings, and events which were reported there were not always reported in the others. Comparisons made for randomly selected months during the period revealed very few contentious gatherings reported in other papers but not in the Province (certainly not a sufficient number to be commensurate with the effort required to discover them).

As much as possible, reports of contentious gatherings in the Province were checked against reports in other daily papers, since in general, the Province was biased towards employers and the Conservative Party. The World was more favorably inclined towards labour, but it was not always reliable.⁶ The Sun began publication in 1912 as a Liberal paper, and tended to be hysterical in its coverage of events involving working-class radicals. The News-Advertiser, which was absorbed by the Sun in 1917, was sparse in its reporting of working-class events, except for the waterfront.⁷

Labour papers published in Vancouver were also read for the

6. It had the additional disadvantage of being available to the researcher only on inter-library loan (except for eighteen months after 1900), which proceeds sufficiently slowly that it would have taken nearly five years to get all the issues.

7. It was also available locally only for 1909 to 1917.

entire 1900-1919 period. They were a good source of additional information on some events, but they did not provide consistent coverage of contentious gatherings. The local socialist press (most notably The Western Clarion) was a poor source for information about local events, unless they were Socialist Party of Canada gatherings. It was more concerned with questions of socialist theory than with the activities of Vancouver workers, and was therefore used only selectively.

Coding

1. CGID Contentious gathering identification number: year, sequence number in year.
2. CGDATE Date of event: day, month.
3. CLCON Class content of the claim.
Same categories as VTLC contention "VTLCCCLAC."
4. CGGEOG Geographical scope of claim.
Same categories as VTLC contention "VTLCCGEOG."
5. CGCR1 Cycle of Reproduction 1.
Same categories as VTLC contention "VTLCCR1."
6. OTHER1 Specification of "Other" from CGCR1.
Same categories as VTLC contention "OTHER1."
7. CGCR2 Cycle of Reproduction 2.
Same categories as VTLC contention "VTLCCR1."
8. OTHER2 Specification of "Other" from CGCR2.
Same categories as VTLC contention "OTHER1."
9. CRFLAG Comment on cycle of reproduction.
1. More than two.

2. Good example.

10. NOPAR

Number of participants in gathering (best estimate).

1. 20-49, or "crowd," "assembly," "mob."
2. 50-99.
3. 100-199, or "largely attended meeting."
4. 200-499.
5. 500-999.
6. 1000 or more.

11. NOFLAG

Comment on NOPAR: basis of the estimated number of participants, when not from a direct report of the number.

1. Size of meeting place.
2. Qualitative description: "crowd" etc. Probably an underestimate.
3. Conflicting reports of the number: one considered most reliable chosen (or compromise between them).
0. Not applicable.

12. SPONSOR

Type of organization or group that mobilized the participants for the gathering.

1. Union: including central bodies such as the VTLC, Metal Trades Council, etc.
2. Political party.
3. Returned soldiers' association.
4. Ethnic association.
5. Ward association, or other organization based on residence.
6. More than one of the above.
7. Other.
8. None.

0. Don't know.

13. PARCLASS

Participants' class: judged from description of participants in reports of the gathering. If not available, use leaders or speakers at gathering, or sponsoring organization.

1. Mostly working class: more than two thirds of participants were members of the working class.

2. Majority working class: more than half, less than two thirds.

3. Minority working class: more than one third, less than half.

14. CLASFLAG

Comment on PARCLASS: basis of the estimate of participants' class, if not a direct report.

1. Leaders or speakers at gathering.

2. Sponsoring organization.

3. Other basis: see coding sheet.

0. Not applicable.

15. PARTIC

Participants' industrial classification: most specific category applicable to working-class participants in the event.

11. Workers not otherwise identified.

12. More than one industry.

13. Unemployed.

14. Returned soldiers.

15. Other non-industrial classification (except ethnicity or skill).

16. Soldiers' dependants.

21. Logging.

31. Fishing - salmon.

32. Fishing - other.

41. Mining.
50. Manufacturing - salmon canning.
51. Manufacturing - food and tobacco.
52. Manufacturing - boots and shoes, leather.
53. Manufacturing - textiles and garments.
54. Manufacturing - printing and publishing.
55. Manufacturing - wood products.
56. Manufacturing - metal, including repairing.
57. Manufacturing - shipbuilding.
58. Manufacturing - more than one.
59. Manufacturing - other.
61. Construction - building.
62. Construction - railway, road and bridge.
63. Construction - more than one.
64. Construction - other.
71. Transportation and utilities - steam railway.
72. Transportation and utilities - street railway.
73. Transportation and utilities - water transportation.
74. Transportation and utilities - telephone and telegraph.
75. Transportation and utilities - water, gas, light and power.
76. Transportation and utilities - teamsters and chauffeurs.
77. Transportation and utilities - longshoremen and freight handlers.
78. Transportation and utilities - more than one.

79. Transportation and utilities - other.

81. Trade and finance.

91. Service: except public service (i.e., state).

92. State employees, not otherwise classified.

00. Don't know.

16. ICFLAG,

Additional participants.

1. Not identified.

2. Identified.

0. Not applicable.

17. PARTSKL

Participants' skill level: working-class participants only.

1. Craft workers: members of skilled trades.

2. Not craft workers: all others.

3. Mixed: both.

4. Not applicable (e.g. soldiers' dependants).

0. Don't know.

18. PARTETH

Participants' ethnicity.

1. "British."

2. Other European.

3. Asian.

4. Native Indian.

5. Other.

6. Mixed.

0. Don't know: it is assumed that this means that the ethnic identification of the participants was not a significant component of the action.

19. ETHFLAG

Ethnicity of target.

Same categories as PARTETH.

20. CGOCC

Occasion of action: the reason the participants were assembled in one place.

1. Planned meeting: planned, that is, for the purpose of making the claim.
2. Spontaneous: gathering arose from normal patterns of work, residence, or leisure, or was organized for a purpose other than making a claim (e.g., a banquet, sporting event, funeral).
0. Don't know.

21. CGACTION

Action: what the participants did to make their claim known.

1. Indoor public meeting: with resolution or the equivalent to a resolution, e.g., a delegation sent with a demand.
2. Outdoor public meeting: with resolution or act of defiance of authorities.
3. Demonstration: meeting held at a place of real or symbolic significance for making the claim, e.g., City Hall.
4. Mass picketing: pickets are established at or near a work location to discourage strikebreakers from working, or to prevent materials from entering or leaving the location (informational picketing will not be considered contentious).
5. March: participants travel from one place to another, making their claim known (assumed to end with an indoor or outdoor public meeting).
6. Turnout action: a group of strikers attempt to persuade or coerce other workers to come out on strike, by marching from workplace to workplace in a body.⁸
7. Disruption of another meeting or activity, e.g. organized heckling to prevent someone from speaking.

8. The concept is drawn from Brown, "Industrial Capitalism, Conflict and Working-Class Contention, in Lancashire, 1842," pp. 132-33.

8. Other.

0. Don't know.

22. ACTFLAG

Comment on action.

1. Additional act significant.

2. Good example.

0. Not applicable.

23. CGVIOL

Violence by collective actors: property damage, personal injury, seizure of property, space or persons, and threats.⁹

1. Minor violence: threats, minor property damage, punching or isolated fist fight, isolated rock throwing.

2. Major violence: more violence than 1.

0. None reported.

24. CGTARGET

Target of claim: the party or parties to which it is directed.

Same categories as VTCTAG.

25. CALINK

Link to other contentious action, prior to or concurrent with the present event (record the most recent one).

Same categories as VTCALINK.

26. ACTRES

Response to action: by the state, employers or their representatives, or any other party to the contention.

1. Facilitation: aid is provided to the actors in making their claim.

2. Toleration: no response to the action is reported.

3. Mixed response: facilitation from some respondent(s), repression from other respondent(s).

⁹ The coding scheme is from F. Hunger, "Contentious Gatherings in Lancashire, England, 1750-1893," p. 98.

4. Minor repression: an effort to prevent the action from occurring or having its desired effect, short of arrests or violence (e.g., peaceful attempts to disperse a meeting).

5. Repression with arrests.

6. Repression with violence.¹⁰

7. Other.

0. Don't know: used only for events where information was scarce (i.e. where even if there was a response, it would probably go unreported); otherwise it was assumed that no reported response was equal to toleration.

27. RESFLAG

Comment on ACTRES.

1. More than one response was significant.

2. Different responses from various targets or authorities.

28. CLAIMRES

Response to claim: response to the content of the demand by the target, or some party acting on behalf of or instead of the target.

Same categories as VTLCRESP.

A.3 Strikes

In a way that is not true of other forms of working class contention, it is often very difficult to determine the boundaries of strikes, that is, to say in a particular case whether there was one strike or several. Assuming that the workers involved were different,

10. Note that 4, 5, and 6 are in ascending order of repressiveness; the most repressive response applicable was coded for each event.

any of the following criteria were sufficient for a stoppage of work to be considered a distinct strike. First, work stoppages were distinct strikes if the starting dates of the stoppages were different, unless it was stated by the strikers or informed observers that one group of strikers was either "jumping the gun" and stopping work before the appointed time, or that they were joining a strike already in progress rather than starting their own.¹¹ Second, work stoppages constituted different strikes if their objectives were different, unless there was evidence that the issues were being considered jointly by the employer and the strikers.¹² Third, if the objectives of the stoppages were the same, but the occupations and employers were distinct, and negotiations and settlements occurred separately, then the strikes were distinct.¹³ Fourth and last, if workers in several trades or industries went on

11. For example, deckhands on the river steamer Ramona struck in New Westminster on April 9, 1907 for higher pay, and the next day, deckhands on the Beaver struck for the same objective. There is little doubt that the strikes are related, but they are counted as separate events because they started on different days. Province, April 19, 1907; PAC, RG 27, Vol. 294, files 2848, 2849.

12. For example, if boilermakers at a shipbuilding plant struck for higher wages on the same day as machinists struck for shorter hours at the same plant, there would be two separate strikes unless it was found that the two trades presented their demands together and joint negotiations were being carried on.

13. For example, in May 1902, the Vancouver Building Trades Council attempted to enforce a closed shop in the building trades, and a series of strikes resulted, involving miscellaneous trades here, carpenters there, electrical workers at a third and so on. The contractor at each site was different and settlements were made (or not made) individually; consequently they were counted as separate strikes. Independent, May 17, 24, 1902; Province, May 19, 1902.

strike together, but one or more trades or unions continued on strike after most of the others settled or returned to work, then those who held out were considered to be involved in separate strikes beginning on the date when the main strike ended.¹⁴

Sources

The most important sources for information on strikes in Vancouver and vicinity were the files of the federal Department of Labour, daily newspapers and labour papers, and trade union records.

The strike and lockout files of the Department of Labour and the department's monthly publication, the Labour Gazette, were exhaustively searched for information on strikes in Vancouver and district. They were frequently a useful source of data on how participants in the dispute defined it (particularly when the files contained correspondence regarding the strike), as well as dates, numbers of participants, and outcomes. However, both sources had several deficiencies that are worth commenting on.

First, the strike and lockout files start only in 1904, and it took several years for the Department of Labour's procedures for collecting information on strikes to get straightened out. Second, the department's record is biased against small strikes, even within its own

14. For example, the general strike of building tradesmen in Vancouver in 1911 was called off on July 18, and most unions had returned to work by July 25, but plumbers were reported to still be out on July 29, and painters were still getting strike pay until Sept. 9. The latter two were counted as separate strikes beginning on July 25. World, July 29, 1911; Painters Minutes, Aug. 17, 24, Sept. 7, 1911.

criteria of at least one day in duration, and ten strikers. Small strikes in one industry or trade were usually aggregated and called one strike if they happened at about the same time. Third, the record is biased against sympathy strikes for the same reason; that is, sympathy strikes are often amalgamated with the original strike. Fourth, data are biased toward employer priorities, because the department's overriding purpose was the prevention of strikes. For example, the termination of strikes was decided on the basis of whether production had returned to normal (an employer priority) rather than whether the strikers still considered themselves on strike. In assembling its statistics, the department also seems to have tended to accept employer accounts of strikes over those of workers.¹⁵ Fifth, they did not count strikes for political objectives, and sixth, they stopped counting fishermen's strikes for much of the 1900-1919 period. For all these reasons, it was imperative that other sources be consulted.

The major labour papers for the period were read, as was the Province, from 1900 to 1919. Both contained more information on strikes than the Labour Department files, and additional strikes were discovered through them. The labour papers generally took the point of view of strikers, and the Province was generally on the side of employers (earning several censures from unions for this bias). Since the labour papers did not appear more than weekly, they did not cover the daily events of strikes as well as the daily press, so to balance the biases

15. On the biases of employers and workers in reporting strikes, see J.I. Griffin: *Strikes: A Study in Quantitative Economics*, p. 29.

of the Province, other daily papers, such as the World, News-Advertiser, Sun and (for New Westminster) the British Columbian, were consulted.

For additional information on strikes, the minutes of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council (1900 to 1919), the Metal Trades Council (1911 to 1918), and the Painters and Allied Trades Union Local 138 (1900 to 1919) were examined. The Trades and Labor Council minutes in particular are a good source for strikes that were otherwise unreported, and for continuing information on strikes after the press had stopped covering them and the Department of Labor had declared them over. In other respects union minutes are often a disappointing source, since many of the most interesting events in strikes occur outside of union meeting halls.

Secondary sources and other primary sources were also consulted for more information on strikes whose existence was already known. The basic list of strikes comes from the three major sources, however.

Coding

1. SLID Strike identification number: year, sequence number in year.
2. PLACE Location of strike.
 1. Vancouver: city only.
 2. Suburbs of Vancouver: South Vancouver, North Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby.
 3. New Westminster: including suburbs such as Sapperton, Port Moody.
 4. Greater Vancouver: Any combination of 1, 2 and 3.

5. British Columbia: elsewhere in B.C. as well as greater Vancouver.

6. Canada: elsewhere in Canada (outside B.C.) as well as greater Vancouver.

7. Other

3. BDATE

Beginning date: day, month, year: the first day on which work is missed.

555555. Don't know.

4. SETTLED

How return to work came about.

1. One settlement: the employer (or employers) settles all at once with the strikers.

2. Several settlements: more than one employer; with different employers settling on different dates.

4. holdouts: some employers settle, a few hold out past the return to work date (i.e. after most of the strikers have made settlements elsewhere and returned to work).

5. Don't know.

6. No settlement: most strikers do not settle with employer; e.g., strike called off unilaterally by union, strikers drift back to work, or employer replaces strikers.

7. Not applicable: e.g., protest strikes or political strikes where there is nothing to settle with employer.

5. RTOW

Date of return to work: date on which the main body of strikers resumes work. If no return to work, use date on which the union calls the strike off, or the last date on which it is mentioned by the union or press as still being on (with some indication there are still strikers). If no other information, use the date on which the employers' operations have returned to normal. If no union, and strikers were immediately replaced (nothing more being heard of the strike), consider the return to work to be the day after the strike began.

555555. Don't know.

6. LENGTH

Duration: in days from beginning date to return to work, or settlement date, if return to work not known. Count as 1 day if strike lasts less than a day.

0000. Don't know.

7. SDAYS

Striker days: duration times number of strikers. Calculated from raw data on when strikers went out and returned to work at individual workplaces. In the absence of information to the contrary, it will be assumed that the number of strikers is halved every 180 days, to take account of those who migrate or find other jobs.

000000. Don't know.

8. STRIKERN

Number of strikers: maximum number of workers on strike at any one time in Greater Vancouver.

00000. Don't know.

9. UNION

Union affiliation of strikers.

1. International: affiliated to American Federation of Labor or other international body (e.g., Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners), except those in 3.

2. Canadian: Trades and Labor Congress of Canada charter, local charter, or other Canadian union (e.g., Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees), except those in 3.

3. Radical industrial union: e.g. IWW, OBU, UBRE.

4. Other union (e.g. Chinese Labor Association).

5. Union organized during strike: if applicable, use instead of 1, 2, 3 or 4.

6. More than one affiliation.

8. Union, but don't know affiliation.

9. no union.

0. Don't know.

10. STRSKL

Skill level of strikers: possess control over labour market or labour process.

1. Craft workers: (provisional list) bakers, boilermakers, bricklayers, carpenters (including ship carpenters and caulkers), car repairers, electrical workers (including telephone linemen), lathers, leather workers, machinists, moulders, moving picture operators, painters, patternmakers, plasterers, plumbers, printers and allied trades, sheet metal workers, stonecutters, tailors, telegraphers.

2. Not craft workers: all others.

3. Mixed: craftsmen and others.

0. Don't know.

11. STRIC

Industrial classification of strikers: not of the employers, e.g., if machinists on the CPR strike, the strikers' industrial classification is "manufacturing - metal."

11. Workers not otherwise identified.

12. More than one industry.

13. Unemployed (e.g., relief camp workers).

21. Logging.

31. Fishing - salmon.

32. Fishing - other.

41. Mining.

50. Manufacturing - salmon canning.

51. Manufacturing - food and tobacco.

52. Manufacturing - boots and shoes, leather.

53. Manufacturing - textiles and garments.

54. Manufacturing - printing and publishing.

55. Manufacturing - wood products.

56. Manufacturing - metal, including repairing.

57. Manufacturing - shipbuilding.

- 58. Manufacturing - more than one.
- 59. Manufacturing - other.
- 61. Construction - building.
- 62. Construction - railway, road and bridge.
- 63. Construction - more than one.
- 64. Construction - other.
- 70. Transportation and utilities - more than one, local.
- 71. Transportation and utilities - steam railway.
- 72. Transportation and utilities - street railway.
- 73. Transportation and utilities - water transportation.
- 74. Transportation and utilities - telephone and telegraph.
- 75. Transportation and utilities - water, gas, light and power.
- 76. Transportation and utilities - teamsters and chauffeurs.
- 77. Transportation and utilities - longshoremen and freight handlers.
- 78. Transportation and utilities - more than one, external.
- 79. Transportation and utilities - other.
- 81. Trade and finance.
- 91. Service: except public service (i.e., state).
- 92. State employees, not otherwise classified..
- 00. Don't know.

12. BOSSIC

Employer's industrial classification.

Same categories as STRIC.

13. BOSSN Number of employers: maximum number in Vancouver whose employees were on strike at any one time. (Not the number of establishments, but the number of employers - e.g., not the number of canneries, but the number of cannery companies. If no data on the latter, use number of establishments.
000. Don't know.
14. SPERBOSS Strikers per employer: total number of strikers divided by number of employers.
0000. Don't know.
15. BOSSOWN Ownership of employer: i.e. place of ownership.
1. Local: Vancouver or British Columbia.
 2. Canada: outside B.C.
 3. Foreign.
 5. More than one of above.
 0. Don't know.
16. MONOP Sector of economy.
1. Monopoly: large scale production, high capital to labour ratio, national or international market, or domination of local market.
 2. Competitive: low capital to labour ratio, small scale production, local or regional market.
 3. State: state-owned or public service.
 4. More than one of the above.
 0. Don't know.
17. BOSSASS Employer's association: are the employers formally organized and is the association involved actively in the dispute, e.g. in negotiations, in obtaining strikebreakers, in blacklisting, in legal actions. This includes actions by Vancouver Employers' Association or similar bodies, acting on the side of the employer.
1. Yes.

2. No.

0. Don't know.

18. SUBJECT1

Strike object 1: Issue over which work stoppage occurred. Usually there are several issues in a strike, but only the two most important in causing the work stoppage or preventing a settlement will be counted here and in 19. If the issues change in the course of the strike, the one most important for starting it will be coded here, and the subsequent issue that prevented settlement or return to work in 19. The importance of issues, and the definitions of strike objects are always from the point of view of strikers.

11. Union recognition: employer refuses to recognize the union as the bargaining agent for the employees, or will not meet with union representatives and insists on treating employees as individuals. (This must be handled carefully, since an issue referred to at the time as "union recognition" would now be called "closed shop" and would be coded accordingly here.)

12. For closed shop: for the employment of union members only, or for non-members to be required to join the union in order to remain employed.

13. Against open shop: the employer has declared that henceforth employees will be hired regardless of union membership (usually considered an attack on the union).

14. Vs. non-unionists: strikers object to the employment of particular persons because they do not belong to the union. (Not applicable if employees objected to are strikebreakers: in that case, code as "hot cargo" (17).)

15. For unionists: strikers object to dismissal of an employee, interpreted to be because of union membership or union activities (regardless of cause alleged by employer); or object is stated as "no discrimination" against union members.

16. Sympathy: no grievance with the particular employer; employees strike in support of some other strike.

17. Hot cargo: work stoppage occurs over refusal of employees to work with strikebreakers, do work

ordinarily performed by strikers, or work with material handled by strikebreakers.

18. Agreement violated: unspecified failure of employers to live up to previous agreement, or failure of employers to sign agreement (not otherwise classifiable).

21. Change method of pay: any change in payment procedures, including frequency of pay, medium of exchange, place of payment, or way pay calculated (e.g., piece vs. hourly rates).

22. Change labour process: protest against new work rules, introduction of new machinery, speed-up, job classifications, supervision or disciplinary procedures, or for such changes.

23. Other working conditions: e.g., health and safety issues.

31. Vs. supervisor: objection is made to the continued employment of a particular supervisor (foreman, overseer, manager).

32. Vs. ethnic employee: objection is made to the continued employment of particular person(s) because of his race or ethnicity.

33. Vs. other employee: any other reason for objecting to another employee(s) unless connected with union membership or strikebreaking.

34. For supervisor: objection is made to the dismissal of a foreman or other supervisor (may be presented as demand for reinstatement or impartial investigation).

35. For other employee: any other reason for objecting to the dismissal of some other employee(s), except union membership.

36. Apprenticeship: over employment of apprentices: number, training, length of apprenticeship, etc.

37. Employment practices: to determine general practices concerning hiring and firing (except closed and open shop), e.g. job security, de-casualization, seniority in promotions and layoffs.

41. For wage increase: increase in pay over previous wage rates, or over what the employer is offering. In

cases where shorter hours are demanded which would result in higher hourly wages but the same daily wage, do not count as wage increase.

42. Vs. wage reduction: employer has announced a reduction in pay and employees object.

43. For overtime pay: for payment for work time over regular hours, for holidays, or for work not ordinarily performed.

44. Non-payment of wages: failure of employer or sub-contractor to pay wages in full, including over-charging for supplies (since that is a deduction from the full value of wages).

45. Fringe benefits: over additions to the value of wages such as pensions, profit-sharing, special rates for services, paid vacations.

51. For shorter hours: reduction in daily or weekly hours of work.

52. Vs. longer hours: announced or enacted by employer.

61. Political: protest against some action or policy of government or state.

71. Other.

99. None.

00. Don't know.

19. SUBJECT2

Strike object 2.

Same categories as SUBJECT1.

20. SOBFLAG

Comment on strike object.

1. Additional objects: i.e., more than 2.

2. Good example.

3. Coding problem.

0. Not applicable.

21. SLRELN

Strike relationship: relation to a previous or concurrent strike, i.e., part of a sequence or cluster

9

OF/DE

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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

of strikes.

1. Yes, in Vancouver area.

2. Yes, outside Vancouver.

3. Definitely not.

0. Don't know.

22. CGRELN

Contentious gathering relationship: relation to a previous or concurrent contentious gathering by strikers or others.

1. Yes.

2. Definitely not.

0. Don't know.

23. VTLCRELN

Relationship to VTLC contention: strike results from or is otherwise related to previous action by the trades council.

1. Yes.

2. Definitely not.

0. Don't know.

24. STRKRCG

Striker contentious gatherings: any contentious gatherings organized and participated in by the strikers or by sympathizers who cannot in practice be distinguished from strikers.

1. Yes.

2. Definitely not.

0. Don't know.

25. STRVIOL

Striker violence: violence by strikers or sympathizers who cannot be distinguished from strikers, including property damage, personal injury, seizure of property, space or persons, or explicit threats of any of these.

1. Threats, minor property damage, isolated fist fight, isolated rock-throwing.

2. More violence than 1.

0. No violence, i.e. none reported.

26. WCSUPP

Working class support for strike: actions by workers in Vancouver (except for "9") indicating support for the strike, scaled in order of increasing support (choose most supportive one applicable).

0. None or don't know.

1. Moral support: statements of support, sympathy endorsement, etc., from organizations or individuals.

2. Boycott: evidence of support for a boycott of the products or services produced by the employer.

3. Active support: donations of money or some equivalent including labour, goods, or facilities.

4. Contentious gathering: any working class contentious gathering (except when only strikers or sympathizers as above) in support of the strike or strikers, except when violence involved.

5. Violent contentious gathering.

6. Sympathetic strike: any sympathy or hot cargo strikes.

9. Sympathetic action outside Vancouver: sympathy or hot cargo strike; refusal of imported strikebreakers to work when they discover existence of strike. (Count this only if particularly significant for outcome of strike.)

27. WCOPP

Working class opposition to strike: actions by workers in Vancouver indicating opposition to the strike or strikers, scaled in order of increasing opposition (choose most oppositional one applicable).

0. None, or don't know.

1. Apathy: other workers in significant numbers fail to observe boycott, do not respond to appeals for moral or financial support, i.e., proceed as if strike was not happening despite efforts to recruit their support.

2. Explicit refusal to support strike: goes beyond ignoring strike to explicitly refusing to join it,

strikebreaking, refusal of local union leadership to sanction strike.

3. Aid to employer: active assistance from workers or working class organizations to defeat the strike, e.g., active recruitment of strikebreakers.

4. Contentious gathering: any working class contentious gathering whose object is to oppose the strike, except when violent.

5. Contentious gathering with violence.

28. WCFLAG

Comment on working class response.

1. Support flag: support other than one indicated is significant.

2. Opposition flag: opposition other than one indicated is significant.

3. Coding problem.

4. More than one of above.

0. Not applicable.

29. STRPAY

Strike pay: are the strikers receiving regular strike pay from any source, i.e., payment in lieu of wages because they are on strike (not including irregular charitable contributions).

1. Yes.

2. No.

9. Not applicable: e.g. strike less than 2 days; no union.

0. Don't know.

30. BOSSRES

Employer response to strike: on scale of increasing hostility to strikers. Choose most repressive response applicable.

1. Negotiations: employer negotiates with strikers, takes no other action.

2. Refusal to negotiate: employer refuses to talk to strikers or representatives, or breaks off negotiations after strike has begun.

3. Local strikebreakers: employer tries to resume operations with strikebreakers hired in B.C., or with deserters from the ranks of strikers, except when strikebreakers are ethnically divided from strikers. (If strikebreakers, but nothing more known, code as 3.)

4. Outside strikebreakers: strikebreakers are not subject to social pressures from the strikers because they are imported from outside B.C., are professional strikebreakers, or are of an ethnic group divided from the strikers by language or hostile relations.

5. Strikers dismissed: strikers' dismissal announced (not necessarily carried out), or threatened as of a stated date; also applicable if strikers immediately replaced.

6. Blacklist: in addition to strikers being replaced, employers try to prevent them from getting other employment in Vancouver, or exert pressure on other firms in the same industry to prevent them from settling with the strikers.

7. De-legitimation: employer attempts to destroy or thoroughly discredit the union by impugning its motives or those of its leaders; or by means of legal action that seeks to ruin the union.

8. Violence: by employers or their agents, e.g., private police, strikebreakers, other employees.

0. Don't know.

31. STATÈRES

State response to strike: by officials of the state apparatus and elected officials acting as representatives of the government (others would be counted in OTHERES). On a scale from support to hostility. (Not including state as employer.)

1. Support: moral support, financial support, police protection offered to strikers.

2. No action.

3. Conciliation: offer of mediation or investigation of the dispute.

4. Mixed: one level or agency of state supports, another opposes.

5. Condemnation: verbal opposition to strike.

6. Police action: police or militia play an active role on the side of employers, up to and including arrests of strikers, but not violence. Also count other state aid to the employer here.

7. Violent repression: police action with violence.

8. Other.

0. Don't know.

32. OTHERES

Response by others: i.e. by non-members of working class not including agents of the state and employers directly affected, and employers associations involved in strike.

1. Support: moral, financial, etc., support for strikers.

2. Mixed response: support from some quarters, opposition from others.

3. Conciliation: offer of mediation or investigation.

4. Condemnation: verbal opposition to strike.

5. Active opposition: actions to aid employers or to combat strike and strikers, short of violence.

6. Violence: violent actions against strikers.

0. Don't know, no known response.

33. RESFLAG

Comment on responses.

1. Boss: employer response more complex than indicated.

2. State: state response more complex.

3. Other: others' response more complex.

4. More than one.

5. Coding problem.

0. Not applicable.

34. STOUTCOM.

Strike outcome: result of strike at conclusion relative to strikers' main demands (i.e. those coded in 18 and 19 above).

1. Granted: object of strike realized in full or nearly so. (Include strikers all getting jobs elsewhere in Vancouver on terms demanded.) If almost all places grant demands, except a few holdouts code "1" here and "4" in "4. SETTLED".

2. Compromise for strikers: not all the main demands are realized, but the result is clearly in favor of the strikers.

3. Indefinite: compromise, cannot determine in whose favor. (Include cases where some firms settle, some do not.)

4. Compromise for employer: the employer is obliged to retreat from his original position, but is still clearly the victor.

5. Return to work on boss's terms: strikers return to work under conditions imposed by employer.

6. Union disorganized: one of the conditions of the return to work is that strikers no longer belong to the union; or the union local has disintegrated during the strike.

7. Some dismissals: some strikers are not re-hired at the end of the strike (one to two thirds of the strikers do not get their jobs back within one month of the end of the strike).

8. Strikers replaced: none of the strikers, or less than one third, are re-hired within one month of the end of the strike.

0. Don't know.

35. SSEX

Strikers' gender.

1. Male.

2. Female.

3. Both.

0. Don't know.

36. SETHNIC

Strikers' ethnicity.

1. British.
2. Other European,
3. Asian.
4. Native Indian.
5. Other.
6. Mixed: i.e., more than one of above.
0. Don't know, not mentioned.

Appendix B

CHRONOLOGY

1900

July 1-30 Strike by 7000 Japanese, white, and Indian sockeye salmon fishermen.

1901

March 1 Building Trades Council formed.

July 1-21 Strike by 3500 sockeye salmon fishermen, mostly whites and Indians.

1902

July 18-24 Strike by 1000 sockeye salmon fishermen, mostly Japanese.

1903

February 27 Strike by 150 CPR clerks, organized in UBRE. Sympathetic strikes by car repairers, freight handlers, longshoremen, sailors, teamsters, and track labourers begin in March and early April. Settlement reached June 10; strike called off June 26. UBRE subsequently dissolves, as do many of the unions involved in sympathetic strikes.

July 1-15 Strike by 4500 sockeye salmon fishermen.

1904

February Open shop drive in contract metal shops begins with victory of Vancouver Engineering Works (with the assistance of the Vancouver Employers Association) over boilermakers and machinists, in two-month strikes.

1905

November Building Trades Council dissolves.

1907

Recession begins in summer. As many as 5000 unemployed in Vancouver in December.

September 7 Anti-Asian riot in Vancouver.

1908

August-October Strike by metal trades workers on CPR's western lines, won by company.

1909

Economic recovery begins in spring.

April Building Trades Council formed.

1910

July Beginning of strike by 185 contract shop machinists for eight-hour day; lasts two years.

1911

March Metal Trades Council formed.

April 11 Strike by carpenters for wage increase. Most contractors settle in next two weeks, but large contractors organized in Master Builders' Association hold out, and declare open shop.

June 5 General strike of 4000 building tradesmen in support of striking carpenters begins.

July 18 After individual unions start to return to work, general strike called off.

1912

January-February Free speech demonstrations and meetings.

August Building Trades Council dissolves.

1913

Pre-war depression begins in spring. Large scale unemployment, especially in building trades, beginning in summer.

February Metal Trades Council dissolved.

1914

Growing unemployment in fall, officially reaches 4000 by December. Unemployed migrate to Vancouver, while local workers leave in search of work and enlist in armed forces.

1915

Continued high unemployment.

April Riot and demonstrations by single unemployed men when relief cut off.

1916

Beginning of war capitalist boom.

1917

Union organization and reorganization takes off, beginning of wartime strike wave in Vancouver.

April-May Metal Trades Council formed, presents blanket agreements to contract shops and shipyards. Beginning of strike wave in shipyards.

May-June Meetings to protest conscription.

1918

Peak of shipbuilding boom: at least 7000 workers employed.

January VTLC referendum on strike to protest imprisonment of Duncan Kerr.

July 2-11 Strike by 1400 BCER electrical workers and street railwaymen; sympathetic strikes by shipyard workers; general sympathetic strike proposed.

August 2-3 General strike to protest murder of Ginger Goodwin.

September 9 Beginning of strike by nearly 300 laundry workers, possibility of general strike raised, but strike ends in defeat December 31.

December Loggers' union organized, grows rapidly.

1919

End of war capitalist boom, growing unemployment in summer.

- March Western Labour Conference held in Calgary; decision to form One Big Union taken.
- April-May Unions vote on affiliation with OBU.
- May 15 Beginning of Winnipeg General Strike.
- June 3 Beginning of Vancouver General Strike, by approximately 10000 workers.
- 5 Street railway employees join general strike.
- 6-9 Organizations of strike opponents formed.
- 14-18 Printers at Sun and Province strike to protest anti-strike propaganda.
- 18 Beginning of general strike in New Westminster, by about 600 workers.
- 23 New Westminster strike called off.
- 26 Winnipeg strike called off, mass meetings in Vancouver decide to continue strike, but many strikers drifting back to work.
- June-July OBU-units formed in Vancouver.
- July 3 Vancouver strike called off.
- 15-16 Telephone linemen and operators return to work.
- August 7 International VTLC formed.

END

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FIN