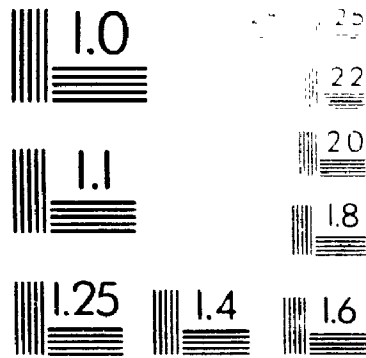




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**THE COMMONWEALTH LABOUR CONFERENCES, THE BRITISH LABOUR
PARTY MODEL, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON
CANADIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICS, 1920-1961**

by

Ray Clinton Barker, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts**

**Department of History
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
August 1996**

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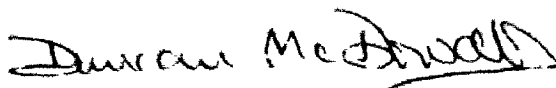
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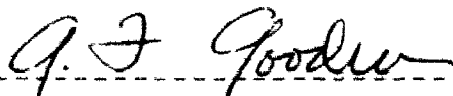
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28 August 1996

Abstract

Using materials from the British Labour Party archives in Manchester, England, Canadian archives, memoirs, and secondary sources, this study of the Canadian democratic socialist and labour movement from the 1920s to the creation of the New Democratic Party in 1961 examines two structural models for the organization of that movement: the federative, decentralized structure of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the centralized structure used to reorganize the British Labour Party in 1918, with its formal affiliation with and financial dependence on trade unions. The British Commonwealth Labour Conferences (1925-1957), which brought together the labour parties from throughout the Commonwealth and attempted to create a unified labour movement, held out the reorganized British Labour Party as a model of success. The conferences are presented as important events in the shaping of Commonwealth labour's political culture. The conferences seldom produced tangible results, but for the Commonwealth labourites they produced a sense of intangible solidarity and common purpose. In Canada, this outcome was filtered through a particular set of national imperatives with the result that Canada's path deviated from its sister Commonwealth nations. The British, Australian, and New Zealand labour parties, all organized under the British Labour Party model, became governing parties in their respective countries. The Canadian CCF, which never achieved a federal victory, finally adopted elements of the the British Labour Party model in its 1961 constitution, but adopted the model too late to be effective

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This whole undertaking would have been quite impossible without the unstinted help of many people. I am deeply grateful and permanently indebted to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Duncan L. McDowall, who has been instrumental in the preparation of this manuscript. He went above and beyond the call of duty to help me over the past year, even during his yearlong tenure as a visiting professor at Bermuda College. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Raymond A. Jones, now retired, who instilled in me a belief in the ability of individuals to shape history. Among the librarians and archivists who have helped me in my research, I should like to mention Mr. Stephen Bird, the Labour Party archivist at the National Museum of Labour History in Manchester, England. Immense thanks are also due to Joan White, the Graduate Secretary of the Department of History at Carleton University, for her frequent assistance throughout the course of creating this thesis.

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I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to Carleton University, which has generously funded my Master's studies and has provided a wonderful environment for scholarly work.

Ray C. Barker
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
August, 1996

For my grandfather.

Dr. Raymond I. Koterak
(July 26, 1916 - July 2, 1996)

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Introduction

In his acclaimed study, The Emergence of the Labour Party, 1880-1924, Roger Moore answers the question of why the British Labour Party came into existence by stating that "without the support of the unions the Labour Party as we know it could not have come into existence."¹ Labour Party membership statistics certainly back Moore's claim. In 1900, the infant Labour Party had a trade union membership of 353,070 and had only seven constituency branches. By 1920, Labour's trade union membership had increased by nearly four million members, and there were 492 constituency parties.²

The relationship between organized labour and democratic socialism in Canada has also attracted the attention of scholars. It is commonly held that "the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was transformed into the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961 to increase the role of organized labour in the party."³ In that transformation, the federative blueprint of the CCF was replaced in favour of a closer alliance with the urban-based labour movement. The 1961 New Party Convention's establishment of formal ties to the trade union movement was an outcome that contrasts sharply with the intentions and language of the two cornerstone documents of the CCF: the 1932 Calgary Programme and the Regina Manifesto of 1933.

The 1932 Calgary Programme stated that the CCF was a *federation* of farmer, labour, and socialist organizations. The name of the party officially

¹ Roger Moore, The Emergence of the Labour Party, 1880-1924 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 195.

² *Ibid.*, p. 201.

³ Keith Archer, "Canadian Unions, the New Democratic Party, and the Problem of Collective Action," Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings, eds. L.S. MacDowell and Ian Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), p. 735.

included the appendage "Farmer-Labour-Socialist," at the insistence of delegates from British Columbia who wanted it known that not all the affiliates could claim the title "socialist."¹ The establishment of the CCF as a federation was restated in the 1933 Regina Manifesto:

[The CCF] is a democratic movement, a federation of farmer, labour, and socialist organizations, financed by its own members and seeking to achieve its ends solely by constitutional methods. It appeals for support to all who believe that the time has come for a far-reaching reconstruction of our economic and political institutions and who are willing to work together for the carrying out of the following policies...

A contemporary critic of the CCF, Liberal M.P. for Hants-Kings (Nova Scotia) James Lorimer Ilsley, said that logic alone would prove the Federation would never gain a foothold in Canada. He said,

The movement is a Farmer, Labour, and Socialist one, and it can never be really strong or united because interests and ideals of farmers and labourers are opposed. The farmer wants the highest price possible for his produce and labour wants to buy it as cheap as possible; again, the farmer wants low labour wages and labour naturally wants higher wages. There is a lack of essential cohesion within the movement.²

The federative, decentralized, and fragmented structure of the CCF and the centralized structure of the British Labour Party, with its formal affiliation with and financial dependence on trade unions, thus represent two distinct blueprints or models for the organization of a social democratic movement. The belated emergence of the British Labour Party model in Canada as the blueprint for reinvigorating the old CCF did not occur haphazardly, but was the final resolution of the tension between these two party models in Canada. J.S. Woodsworth wrote in May 1923 that "we, in Canada, seem far removed

¹ Walter Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 42.

² Michiel Horn, ed., The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1972), pp. 442-443.

from the centre of things and yet are trying as best as we can to follow the great lines of the labour movement in the Old Land.”⁹ Far from existing in theoretical isolation, the British Labour Party model had in fact been part of the structural debate within the Canadian democratic socialist movement from the very beginning and was certainly a contributing factor to the birth of the New Democratic Party.

Despite this abiding importance and significance of the British Labour Party, no comprehensive attempt has been made to assess, through a comparative analysis of the British and Canadian labour movements, the relationship of the British Labour Party to the Canadian social democratic movement and the significance of the adaptation of the Labour Party model by the New Democratic Party.

The historiography of the CCF/NDP has been dominated since the 1960s by the “protest movement becalmed” conceptual models of historian Walter Young and sociologist Leo Zakuta. Essentially, these authors and their many adherents argue that the CCF was, in its early phase, a protest movement that fought for fundamental change, but that in its later phases, as it adapted to the Canadian political centre, it became an institutionalized, conventional political party. While useful as a departure for debate about Canadian democratic socialism, historians have become mired in the “protest movement becalmed” thesis and have largely failed to go beyond that argument to much else. Labour politics in Canada have thus been cast in the mould of traditional Canadian centrist parties.

Many books have examined the rise of the Labour Party as an inevitable outgrowth of the industrial revolution and have pondered the

⁹ Ivan Avakumovic, Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 36.

"strange death" of Britain's Liberal Party, as George Dangerfield did in his 1936 book, The Strange Death of Liberal England. However, few scholars have attempted to put the Labour Party in a context larger than British domestic politics. Those who have tried to put it into a broader context have almost always chosen to contextualize it within a European framework where class polarities seem most invitingly close. Few historians have, however, tried to examine its influence within the context of the British Commonwealth, as will be attempted within these pages.

The existing CCF-NDP historiography will be examined in Chapter One. This examination will suggest that there is a distinct need to examine the role of the British Labour Party model in the transformation of the CCF from a "federation" into a centralized political party with formal links with trade unions. The distinctions between the federative CCF model, on the one hand, and the British Labour model, on the other hand, will be elaborated in Chapter Two.

A comparative analysis of the democratic socialist movements in Great Britain and Canada from 1920 to 1961, taking into account the two models, will attempt to reveal a common process of structural change within both movements. An analysis of Commonwealth Labour Parties in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa provided in Chapter Three will suggest that the British Labour Party was able to influence other Commonwealth social democratic parties via the Commonwealth Labour Conferences. These conferences, which started in 1925 and continued well into the 1950s, were designed to promote unity among the socialist/labour parties of the British Commonwealth and provided a forum of information and debate about the crucial issues of the day. The conferences, all but one

held in Britain, tended to highlight the political success of the British Labour Party. After all, the Commonwealth parties came to Britain and not the other way around. Hence, the conferences served not only to create a sense of solidarity, but indirectly held out the British Labour Party as a model of success. Almost all of the Commonwealth labour parties seemed to be following similar patterns of development as the British Labour Party, but were at earlier stages of political evolution. The Commonwealth Labour Conferences showed these developing parties how the structural transformation of the British Labour Party changed that party from an unelectable, fragmented fringe party into the governing party of one of the world's most powerful countries. In this sense, then, the conferences were the vehicle by which a structural model was transferred. Given that the patterns of change within these Commonwealth parties seem to be similar, this thesis will investigate the role of the conferences in that transference and its significance. Particular emphasis will be given to the transference of the British labour model to Canada, and the subsequent transformation of the CCF into the NDP.

Chapter One
Workers and Social Democratic Politics: Historical Approaches to the
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation/New Democratic Party

Spawned by the Great Depression, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was established as a political party by the Calgary Convention of 1932 and the Regina Convention of 1933. The CCF was begun as a direct response to the widespread poverty of the "dirty thirties," when 1.5 million Canadians were on welfare, and never less than ten percent of the wage earners in Canada were out of work.⁷ In 1933, when one Canadian wage earner in four was looking for work, the CCF described itself as "a federation of organizations whose purpose is the establishment in Canada of a Cooperative Commonwealth in which the principle regulating production, distribution, and exchange will be the supplying of human needs and not the making of profit."⁸

The CCF and its successor, the New Democratic Party (NDP), have attracted considerable academic attention, despite being "third parties" and never having formed a government at the federal level. Proportional to its size, more has been written about the CCF/NDP than either of the two major parties." As academic subjects, the CCF/NDP have attracted not only historians, but sociologists and political scientists as well. To this day, political commentators oversee the NDP's political fortunes with particular interest,

⁷ Olenka Melnyk, No Bankers in Heaven: Remembering the CCF (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1989), p. 3. See also Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People (Ottawa: Deneau & Greenberg, 1980), Chapter 14: Surviving the Depression.

⁸ S.D. Clark, ed. Prophecy and Protest: Social Movements in Twentieth-Century Canada (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Limited, 1975), p. 181.

^{*} Alan Whitehorn, "An Analysis of the Historiography of the CCF-NDP: The Protest Movement Becalmed Tradition." Building the Co-Operative Commonwealth: Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada. Edited by J. William Brennan. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1985), p. 1.

conscious that the party in many ways departs from the norms of Canadian politics. The problem is that very little historiographical attention has been paid to what has been written about the CCF/NDP. For example, in almost any book written about the CCF or NDP, the introduction usually states that the author is either an activist in the party or is sympathetic to democratic socialism. The political sympathies of these authors have frequently influenced their writings, but few observers have linked the interpretations of these activist writers with their personal politics. What often emerges out of these authors is a rather one-sided form of Whig history, in which the CCF/NDP represents good, progressive, and moral politics while Liberals and Tories represent the interests of oppressive, bourgeois capitalists. The sway of this simplistic, Whig analysis of Canadian social-democratic politics must be reexamined if historians want to write accurate, balanced, and probing histories of the CCF/NDP.

The CCF/NDP are part of Canadian political history, and they should be properly analyzed within the context of twentieth century Canadian politics. Unfortunately, due to the extreme compartmentalization of Canadian history over the past thirty or so years, histories have been written in their respective compartments and are rarely scrutinized beyond those compartments. Labour historians write for other labour historians; diplomatic historians for diplomatic historians; and women's historians for women's historians. As historian Michael Bliss has so forcefully suggested, history in Canada has become "privatized," bound into the service of narrow special interests.¹⁰ This compartmentalization can result in the production of stale, inbred, uncritical histories which do not even attempt to reach beyond their narrow

¹⁰Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Winter 1991-92, pp. 5-17.

sub-discipline audience. I will argue that the histories of the CCF/NDP have succumbed to the same myopia.

This chapter will provide a broad, critical examination of the historiography of the CCF/NDP, but will focus especially on pre-1961 CCF historiography. It will address in particular the questions of left-wing bias among the authors of CCF/NDP histories, the lack of diverse interpretation within CCF/NDP literature, and will suggest that these shortcomings are the result of rigid compartmentalization, the substitution of political hagiography for political biography, the lack of new conceptual models, and the anticipations of labour historians for political interpretations of Canadian Labour's twentieth century condition. This historiographical myopia has also discouraged examination of the British Labour Party model in the Canadian context.

The dominant and most exhausted theme of CCF/NDP histories has been that of the "protest movement becalmed". This theme is present in such works as Walter D. Young's The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961 (1969), Leo Zakuta's A Protest Movement Becalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF (1964), and John Smart's "Populist and Socialist Movements in Canada" from Canada Ltd.: The Political Economy of Dependency (1973). The "protest movement becalmed" literature contains two primary arguments.¹¹ First, there is the contention that a dichotomy exists between a social movement and a political party. Second, if we consider the CCF to be a combination of a social movement and a political party, the CCF can be seen as a social movement which is eventually displaced by the CCF as a political party. In the writings of Young and Zakuta, one is presented with two polar

¹¹ Whitehorn, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

entities: the CCF as a social movement, which is dedicated to ideological socialism and social transformation, and the CCF as a political party, which is portrayed as the betrayal of socialist principles, focused on electoral strategy and political power, and hence coopted into the parliamentary system. This demonstrates the aforementioned tendency of CCF/NDP historians to present their material in a Whig history fashion, in this case: the good, socialist social movement versus the "becalmed" political party of the parliamentary center.

The Anatomy of a Party begins with the assertion that "socialists belong to movements, capitalists support parties. From begin to end, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was referred to as a movement by its leaders and its members. To them it was much more than a political party although, of necessity, it had to compete in the party battle."¹² Borrowing from political scientist E.E. Schattschneider, author of Party Government (1942), Young defines the primary purpose of "pure" political parties as "winning elections in order to control the government." Borrowing several works on social movements, most notably Wendell King's Social Movements in the United States (1956), he defines a movement as "a group venture extending beyond a local community or a single event and involving a systematic effort to inaugurate changes in thought, behaviour, and social relationships."¹³ Young believes that political parties may pursue reform, i.e. normative change, whereas only movements may pursue fundamental change. Since political parties must constantly strive for electoral victory, they must appeal to the dominant political values of their society. Due to the imperatives of winning elections in the Canadian political system, it would be impossible for a Liberal

¹² Walter D. Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 3.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

or Conservative government to pursue fundamental or radical changes of the established order.

In Young's book, the CCF represents a hybrid between a social movement and a political party. In representing the CCF as a combination of a social movement and a political party, Young neatly avoids the problems of his narrow definitions. Historian Alan Whitehorn writes, "Young's narrow statement of a party's purpose...seems to omit unjustifiably both non-electoral oriented parties which exist even in democracies and ideological parties which may be strongly committed to articulating policy differences in addition to the obvious goal of the acquisition of political power."¹⁴

The CCF was formed from the confederation of a number of different movements, both urban and rural, all sharing a common desire to change the system by changing the values on which it was based.¹⁵ Its initial leader, J.S. Woodsworth, in his speech to the Regina Convention in 1933, declared that "the CCF is undoubtedly a movement of protest born of the discontents of our time; a disgust at the inefficiency of the old parties, and the inadequacy of their policies."¹⁶ The program to which Woodsworth and his party was dedicated, enumerated in the Regina Manifesto, concluded

No CCF Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full program of social planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth... We aim to replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated.¹⁷

¹⁴ Whitehorn, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ J.S. Woodsworth, Toward Socialism: Selections from the Writings of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: Thistle Printing Company, 1948), p. 39.

¹⁷ Desmond Morton, The New Democrats 1961-1986: The Politics of Change (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1986), p. 12.

The CCF movement, as stated in Woodsworth's speech and in the Regina Manifesto, emphasized an ideology committed to social change.

The "protest movement becalmed" literature emphasizes how the party orientation displaced the movement orientation. Young writes, "where movement and party combine, as in the CCF, the aims of one frequently frustrate the aims of the other, particularly when the two are in direct conflict....The history of the national CCF shows that it was more successful as a movement than as a party, and that the degree to which it succeeded as one and failed as the other was determined by the effect one had on the other."¹⁸ He adds that the "party-movement both gains and loses because of the combination. The discipline and certainty of the party political system, that is, elections, propaganda, Parliament, and opposition parties, affect the nature of the movement and the clarity with which it is able to perceive its goals, while the nature of the movement, that is chiliarism, dedication, iconoclasm, and sectarianism, affects the operation of the party. The relationship between the two is both beneficial and corrosive."¹⁹

Many of Young's conclusions derive from Leo Zakuta's A Protest Movement Becalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF, the first work written for the University of Toronto's Canadian Studies in Sociology series, a series established by the Social Science Research Council in the 1960s to support scholarly work in the social sciences in Canada. Zakuta's study of the CCF was published five years before Young's The Anatomy of a Party. Zakuta, whose interest in the CCF grew out of his active involvement in the party in the 1940s, makes the movement-party distinction in a chronological fashion: the CCF was a protest movement from 1932-1941, a "major" political party on the

¹⁸ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

ascent from 1942-1945, a "major" political party on the decline from 1945-1949, and became a "minor" political party after 1950. The reason for the decline of the CCF is quite simple for Zakuta. While the CCF, in its early phase, was a protest movement, the party garnered membership and strength because its program promised fundamental change which the traditional political parties could not provide, a program that seemed especially appealing to Canadians during the Great Depression and in its psychological wake. However, as the CCF (and later the NDP) became enmeshed in its surrounding society and parliamentary environment, it developed an increasing resemblance to the established bodies against whose very nature it initially rose in protest, and hence became a somewhat conventional political party itself.²⁰ According to Zakuta, "Nothing very remarkable happened to the CCF. It simply went the way of all organizations. In technical language, it became institutionalized. Both the party and the world came a long way towards meeting each other."²¹ The introduction of social and labour legislation by the Mackenzie King government helped to blur the distinctions between the Liberals and the CCF in the 1940s, as the CCFers were labeled "Liberals in a hurry."²²

The institutionalization of the CCF, according to the "protest movement becalmed" literature, was made possible by the centralization of power within the party. The adherents of the CCF as a movement failed to keep control of the leadership and failed to replenish the leadership by developing new people who believed in the CCF as a movement, while power in CCF gradually became centralized in the national office of the party

²⁰ Leo Zakuta, A Protest Movement Becalmed: A Study of Change in the CCF (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 5

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²² Ivan Avakumovic, Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 135.

in Ottawa and in the parliamentary leadership.²³ John Smart, another adherent of the “protest movement becalmed” tradition and author of the “Populist and Socialist Movements in Canadian History” chapter of Canada Ltd., writes that in the years after 1945, “the CCF executive and council, by convention resolution, acquired more and more control over and responsibility for the disciplining of provincial organizations, membership, and the content of CCF election platforms.”²⁴

Smart’s point about the centralization of power is well taken, as is his comparison of the ideological change within the party between 1933, when the Regina Manifesto was crafted primarily by intellectuals in the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), and 1956, when the Winnipeg Declaration was drafted by a four-man committee selected by the national executive. One gets a sense of the centrist shift that occurred in the the CCF over those twenty three years by comparing the last paragraphs of the two documents. The Regina Manifesto (1933) ends:

No CCF government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full program of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

The Winnipeg Declaration (1956) ends:

The CCF will not rest content until every person in this land and in all other lands is able to enjoy equality and freedom, a sense of human dignity, and an opportunity to live a rich and meaningful life as a citizen of a free and peaceful world. This is the Cooperative Commonwealth which the CCF invited the people of Canada to build with imagination and pride.²⁵

²³ John Smart, “Populist and Socialist Movements in Canadian History.” Canada Ltd.: The Political Economy of Dependency. Edited by R. Laxer. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), pp. 204-205.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 206.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

However, instead of examining this centralization process within a new conceptual framework, Smart goes back to the same exact themes of Young and Zakuta. Smart writes that in his view "a socialist movement is decentralized and contains a high proportion of activists to members. In a socialist movement... the power of political decision-making is not delegated."²⁶ It seems quite odd for an author to claim that "in *his* view" a socialist movement is different from a political party when he quotes major passages from Zakuta and Young, and borrows their movement-party distinction as if it were the historical gospel handed down from on high. Even his conclusion that the momentum of the movement of the 1930s and 1940s was largely lost is standard "protest movement becalmed" gospel.²⁷

Smart's article was written in the early 1970s, and one might expect that the historical models would change after that time. After all, by 1973, if not earlier, the themes of the "protest movement becalmed" literature of historians, political scientists, and sociologists seemed to have been exhausted. Surprisingly, however, the same themes continued to appear in text after text, and each author kept making references back to the same authors (Zakuta, Young, and Smart) and to the same themes of the "protest movement becalmed" literature that were enumerated back in the 1960s. Of course, whenever historians referred to the "protest movement becalmed" theme, the footnotes within their work referred back only to the secondary source authors, Zakuta and Young, who originated the concepts. No one seems to have challenged their notions, and their conclusions about the movement-party dichotomy are accepted at face value. Even Desmond Morton borrowed from Zakuta. In his introduction to The New Democrats,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

1961-1986: The Politics of Change (1986), Morton wrote

Never again would the CCF recover the momentum of the war years. In Ottawa and in provincial legislatures from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, it provided contingents of able representatives, offering much of the inspiration and innovation to be found in Canadian politics in the stagnant postwar years. It was not enough. Falling membership, tired leaders, financial crises and declining electoral support were all symptoms of what a *sympathetic sociologist* Leo Zakuta, described as "a protest movement becalmed."²⁸

The same "protest movement becalmed" theme is present in Olenka Melnyk's No Bankers in Heaven: Remembering the CCF (1989). Melnyk argues that in the beginning, the CCF was more of a social movement than a political party, characterized by a strong evangelical and messianic bent, and that during the Depression the CCF preached a blend of socialism, Fabianism, and the social gospel.²⁹ However, as the country eased into post-war prosperity, the party adopted to the changing times by "becoming more moderate and poll-oriented." For example, by its tenth national convention in 1948, the CCF abandoned its earlier support for total public ownership in favor of a mixed economy; business was no longer denounced as inherently evil.³⁰ Melnyk then pursues the same themes of the "protest movement becalmed" tradition of Zakuta and Young.

The foregoing tradition of interpreting the CCF/NDP is historical inbreeding of the worst sort. For thirty years, historians of the CCF/NDP have been complacent in their duties as scholars. They have accepted the Zakuta-Young theses as fact, and have perpetuated the same essential view of the CCF for three decades. In the words of Alan Whitehorn:

The onus of the scholar is to go beyond the mere appearances of oft-

²⁸ Morton, op. cit., pp. 14-15. [Italics added.]

²⁹ Melnyk, op. cit., p. 7

³⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

repeated phrases and to analyze carefully. Less simplistic, repetitive, and one-sided party histories might foster, albeit perhaps in a very small way, a further step in the path to the diversification and democratization of Canadian culture.³¹

Given that there has been a substantial consensus on the main traits of the "protest movement becalmed" model, Zakuta, Young, and their adherents have scarcely been challenged on their assumptions. Three questions need to be asked of these assumptions. Is the movement/party dichotomy valid? Did the change from movement to party occur and did it occur in the manner suggested by these authors? What impact, if any, did the "protest movement becalmed" model have?³²

Few authors who have quoted from Young have mentioned that he himself qualifies the model by noting the "distinction between norm-oriented parties and value-oriented movements, like all such typologies, suffers if pressed too hard."³³ In fact, the movement-party distinction is further blurred by Young's conclusion that the "relationship between the CCF qua movement and the CCF qua party was close and interdependent. The movement succeeded to the extent it did because the party was able, at one point at least, to pose a threat to the established order through legitimate channels."³⁴ Clearly, if we are to accept, as Young's conclusion does, that the relationship between the CCF as movement and the CCF as party is a mutually interdependent relationship, then Zakuta's earlier claims that the movement phase lasts until 1941 and the party phase continues thereafter (and all other claims that the movement-party relationship is a dichotomous

³¹ Whitehorn, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

one) are based on false assumptions. Young, who is recognized as the most thorough researcher of the CCF archives, contradicts himself in The Anatomy of a Party, but the perpetuation of the basic assumptions of the party-movement dichotomy have continued.

Young's conclusions about the relationship between the CCF qua movement and the CCF qua party must affect the answer to the second question posed: Did the change from movement to party occur and did it occur in the manner suggested by the "protest movement becalmed" authors? If there was nothing from which to change, i.e. if we cannot separate the CCF as movement and the CCF as party because of their interdependence, then much of the "protest movement becalmed" model falters.³⁵ It should be noted that it is also possible to argue that the CCF was very much a political party in the 1930s, and was founded as such precisely to avoid the pitfalls of the protest movements and quasi-parties of the 1920s.³⁶ This would again challenge many of the "protest movement becalmed" authors who write the history of the CCF as a history of the CCF's institutionalization from social movement to establishment party.

The Canadian union movement, which had been growing since the turn of the century, continued to grow during World War I. In 1914, there were 166,000 trade union members in Canada. By 1919, there were 378,000 trade unionists.³⁷ Despite the fact the trade union ranks more than doubled during this period, a national labour party was still unrealized by 1921. Only provincial labour parties, such as the Ontario section of the Canadian Labour Party, the Federated Labour Party of British Columbia, the Independent

³⁵ Whitehorn, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁷ M. Janine Brodie and Jane Jenson, Crisis, Challenge and Change: Party and Class in Canada (Toronto: Methuen, 1980), p. 88.

Labour Parties of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta existed at the time of the 1921 general election.³⁷ As political scientists M. Janine Brodie and Jane Jensen have pointed out,

[These parties] were not ready to coalesce into a nation-wide political entity and this uncoordinated and disjointed movement produced only twenty-seven labour candidates in 1921.³⁸

Furthermore, while the Independent Labour Party had made surprising gains in the Ontario provincial election of October 20, 1919 (the I.L.P., which had no seats at dissolution, gained eleven seats in the provincial House), the I.L.P. was defunct by 1923, torn by internal factionalism.³⁹ The Canadian Labour Party, born from the demise of the I.L.P., was defunct by 1930, destroyed by the secession of trade unionists, socialist, and independent labourites from the party, which they felt had been captured by Communists.⁴⁰

Further information on these events is provided in chapters two and three. However, a cursory glance at the state of independent labour politics in the 1920s reveals that the problem was not a lack of labour militancy or the non-existence of labour unions or groups. Labour "as a social movement" certainly did exist in the 1920s. However, the labour political parties created in the 1920s to give political expression to that movement failed not because the "movement" was subjugated by political goals, but because they were torn apart by internal strife. Given such a history, it is logical that the CCF would be formed as a federation. The CCF was formed as a federative political party to unify a disparate movement precisely because the fragmented political

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁹ Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University Press, 1968), p. 251.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

parties of the 1920s had failed to achieve their primary political objective electoral success.

The acceptance of the “protest movement becalmed” tradition with blind faith has not only produced stale, repetitive, and inbred history, it has also blinded historians to other important questions about the CCF as a political party in the 1930s. If one accepts that the CCF was a social movement in the 1930s, there is a tendency to overlook aspects of the party attributes of the CCF. For example, the 1933 CCF constitution has an entire section (No. 10) devoted to the discipline of deviant members and this has almost been entirely overlooked by researchers.⁴² If they had bothered to examine their primary source material more carefully, and perhaps not be blinded by political or historical assumptions, they might have recognized this as a feature of a political party.

The “protest movement becalmed” thesis, despite its shortcomings, has been repeated, with diminishing results, far too often. However, one of the key points made in the “protest movement becalmed” literature is that the CCF underwent *structural* change. It emphasizes that as the CCF became “institutionalized,” to use Zakuta’s jargon, the CCF as a social movement was displaced by the CCF as conventional political party. If structural change is an important consideration given the CCF’s so-called institutionalization, then it follows logically that structural change would also be a consideration given the CCF’s transformation into the New Democratic Party in 1961. Given that there is a historical vacuum surrounding the role of the British Labour Party model in the structural transformation of the CCF into the NDP, as will be discussed later, this thesis will continue the focus on structural change begun

⁴² Whitehorn, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

by the "protest movement becalmed" literature in examining that model while striving to avoid its thematic, oft-repeated pitfalls.

Extensive biographies have been written about prominent CCF/NDP figures, especially those examining members of the unofficial CCF "oligarchy" (with the notable exceptions of CCF federal leaders M.J. Coldwell and Hazen Argue): Woodsworth, Lewis, Scott, Grace and Angus MacInnis, Knowles, and Casgrain⁴¹. Some of these biographies are well-written, insightful, and analytical works which have added some diversity to the stale CCF/NDP canon. However, it is also a very problematic type of writing for historians, who can turn biography into hagiography.

J.S. Woodsworth, the "father of the CCF," has been the subject of at least three biographers. Grace MacInnis's J.S. Woodsworth: A Man to Remember (1953), Ken McNaught's A Prophet In Politics (1959), and Allen Mills' Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth (1991) have all tried to put Woodsworth's life in perspective. Of the three, only two are academic biographies. Grace MacInnis was Woodsworth's daughter, and her biography does not pretend to be an academic or objective work. This is quite understandable, as MacInnis's purpose is to provide her readers with some sense of Woodsworth the man and Woodsworth the father, and not confront some of Woodsworth's complex, and sometimes contradictory, political views.

⁴¹ See Grace MacInnis, J.S. Woodsworth: A Man to Remember (Toronto: Macmillan, 1953), Kenneth McNaught, A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), Allen Mills, Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), Cameron Smith, Unfinished Journey: the Lewis Family (Toronto: Summerhill, 1989), S. Djwa, The Politics of Imagination: A Life of E.R. Scott (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), Ann Ferrell, Grace MacInnis: A Story of Love and Integrity (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry, 1994), Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, Stanley Knowles: The Man from Winnipeg North Centre (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982), and Thérèse Casgrain, Women in a Man's World (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).

Ken McNaught's glowing tribute, A Prophet in Politics, was published in 1959 and was reprinted in 1960. While the life of Woodsworth was undeniably accomplished, McNaught's admiration of the man is ceaseless and his work qualifies as hagiography. McNaught glorifies every aspect of Woodsworth's life: his pacifist stand on war, his protestantism (which "seemed rooted in his very nature"), his leadership (a leadership that came from "instinct"), his incorruptibility, his "passion for social justice," his "abiding suspicion of dogma" (even though he was accused of being doctrinaire), and his moral courage.⁴ In short, McNaught makes Woodsworth out to be a prophet, as the title of his work suggests. McNaught described his prophet as "a success by any standard other than that of expediency."⁴ Woodsworth's life would not be reassessed in another work of biography for over thirty years. Certainly, Woodsworth was mentioned in plenty of CCF histories and articles over those thirty years, but he would not be reexamined in a biographical work until Allen Mills's Fool for Christ was published in 1991.

Mills was prompted to write his Woodsworth biography because Woodsworth had been so mythologized by the Canadian Left even the CCF's successor party, the NDP, had lost sight of who the man really was. Mills, for instance, found it bitterly ironic that Marxist delegates, who wore "Woodsworth Lives" buttons at NDP conventions in the late 1970s and 1980s, did not realize that Woodsworth was a militant anti-Marxist, who once put the entire Ontario section of the CCF into "receivership" because of its

⁴ Kenneth McNaught, A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 315-316.

⁴ Ibid., p. v.

association with the Communists.⁴⁶ Mills argues that the failure of historians to reassess or reinterpret Woodsworth's life for so long a period of time has contributed to the growth of the Woodsworth myth. Mills implores historians to "get beyond the hagiography which masquerades as biography and which was no doubt both cause and consequence of the myth."⁴⁷

Mills implies that McNaught's biography is at least partly to blame for the Woodsworth myth. To give McNaught credit, his presentation of Woodsworth's life -- his Methodist background, his role in the social gospel movement, his experience with immigrants and indigent labourers at the All Peoples' Mission in Winnipeg from 1907 to 1913, his time as Secretary for the Canadian Welfare League in 1913, his experience with the Winnipeg General Strike, and his election in 1921 as the independent labour representative for Winnipeg North Centre -- all seem thorough and comprehensive. McNaught covers his charisma, his religious background, and his biographical details quite well. What seems to be missing are some of the details of Woodsworth's political philosophy.⁴⁸

Mills criticizes McNaught, who wrote his biography during the height of the Cold War, for being too willing to "domesticate" Woodsworth to the political climate of the 1950s. Mills accuses McNaught of stressing the more liberal elements in Woodsworth's thought rather than the socialist elements, and claims McNaught downplays the fact that Woodsworth was very much an apologist for the Soviet Union's experiment with social planning.⁴⁹ Mills

⁴⁶ Allen Mills, Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. ix.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. x.

⁴⁸ David Walden, "Following the Gleam: The Political Philosophy of J.S. Woodsworth." Building the Co-Operative Commonwealth: Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada, p. 43.

⁴⁹ Mills, op. cit., p. xi.

sights four specific examples of this in McNaught's book. Using Mills' footnotes to find these specific examples in McNaught one can find references to Woodsworth's aversion to the Socialist Party of Canada's call for elections to be used as revolutionary propaganda⁵⁰, to Woodsworth's references to the political thought of John Stuart Mill⁵¹, to the connection between Woodsworth's stand on pacifism and John Stuart Mill's essay on utilitarianism⁵², and to Woodsworth's skepticism that his or any political platform, including the "platform" of the Russian communists, could provide a final solution to the problems of society.⁵³

Some of the impressions Mills leaves need to be corrected. First, Mills' own criticism that McNaught has overemphasized Woodsworth's liberalism and understated his socialist beliefs should remove the temptation to suggest that McNaught has contributed to the myth of the socialist Woodsworth. While one of the reasons Mills gives for reexamining Woodsworth's life in Fool for Christ was to correct faulty impressions, he should be more explicitly clear that he does not blame McNaught for this. Second, with the exception of making too great a link between John Stuart Mill and Woodsworth's pacifism, McNaught has not overplayed Woodsworth's liberal beliefs to the detriment of his socialism. Based on these specific examples, Mills has not convinced the readers that McNaught has distorted Woodsworth's views.

As for the charge that McNaught downplays Woodsworth's apologetic views for Soviet-style communism, Mills exaggerates somewhat on the basis of historical hindsight. It was true that Woodsworth visited Russia in 1931, and that he was optimistic about its boundless economic activity, "with

⁵⁰ McNaught, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-17.

tangible results in dams and factories." Woodsworth did mention that this economic activity was accompanied by significant inefficiency and waste, and that it could not yet be determined if Russian farm collectivization would be successful.⁵⁴ McNaught does mention this visit, and also the fact that Woodsworth was attacked by the communist Worker in an article entitled "Pacifist Flunkey of the Ruling Class." Mills includes more comments than McNaught does, and he quotes Woodsworth as saying,

We [referring to the labour movement] are sympathetic with Russia; I do not deny it. I regard the experiment in Russia as one of the greatest that has been made in any part of the world, or in any age of history. We can look back today with something like a dispassionate view to the achievements of the Russian revolution of ten years ago as marking one of the greatest epochs in the history of the world. I am not suggesting that we in Canada should proceed along Russian lines - that is another question.⁵⁵

That last sentence is crucial to understanding why McNaught does not spend more time in his biography trying to analyze Woodsworth's views of Soviet communism. In terms of democratic socialist models, Woodsworth emphasized the British Labour party, as well as the labour movements and parties in Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden. In each case, Woodsworth used the parliamentary socialist experience in those countries as a possible model for the CCF. While he visited the Soviet Union, his views of the Bolshevik revolution had to be coloured by his limited access to the results of the revolution and his sympathy for working class Russians. In Winnipeg, he had meet many Doukhobors, members of a Russian religious sect who had fled their country under Tsarist persecution and had been arriving in Canada

⁵⁴ ibid., p. 233.

⁵⁵ Mills, op. cit., p. 138.

in significant numbers since 1898.⁵⁶ Woodsworth's sympathy for the plight of the Doukhobors and other Russians under Tsarist rule, and his hopes for the improvement of their condition under the Bolsheviks should not be confused with a willingness to support Bolshevik or other revolutionary communist methods. Woodsworth clearly rejected those models in favour of the evolutionary socialist approach, and Mills' criticisms that McNaught downplays Woodsworth's sympathies for the Soviet Union's "experiment with planning" are overstated. The evidence does not bear out Mills' charge that McNaught domesticates Woodsworth to the Cold War environment of the 1950s.

Mills also argues that McNaught downplays Woodsworth's "nativism" and his pacifist stand on the Spanish Civil War. Here, the evidence backs up Mills. It is certainly true, especially in his early life, that Woodsworth displayed a certain amount of insensitivity to Blacks, Indians, and East Europeans, and was uneasy with a multi-ethnic conception of the Canadian identity.⁵⁷ He emphasized the need for national cohesion and cultural conformity, and believed that existing independent and isolated groups, such as the Mennonites and Ukrainians, should be assimilated into the "Canadian way of life."⁵⁸ However, despite some rather loose language, he was not an overt racist. He did not believe Britons or Scandinavians were inherently "superior," but that it was because of the "adventitious" circumstances of the Protestant religion and its work ethic, a northern climate, and an individualist culture that made northern Europeans the most desirable class

⁵⁶ Grace MacInnis, J.S. Woodsworth: A Man to Remember (Toronto: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 209-210, 288.

⁵⁷ Mills, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 45. See also J.S. Woodsworth, Strangers within Our Gates (Toronto: F.C. Stephenson, 1909).

of immigrants to Canada.⁵⁹ Jews were also acceptable immigrants to Canada because they demonstrated agreeable traits: they were hard-working, ambitious, individualistic, temperate, and religious.⁶⁰

In certain ways, Woodsworth's racial views reflect the racial thinking of his own time (which should not be at all surprising), and it is true that McNaught does not dwell on those views. It is also true that Woodsworth took a pacifist stand on the Spanish Civil War, giving his moral support to the Spanish Republic but advising against armed intervention by Canadian soldiers or Canadians who supported the Republic, and that McNaught neither discusses this stand or links it to his pacifist views on World War II. However, neither the omission of Woodsworth's nativism nor his wrangling over the Spanish Civil War from A Prophet in Politics prevent McNaught from covering the the essentials of Woodsworth's life. Despite his tendency to sanctify Woodsworth, McNaught's biography has held up well for a biography first published in 1959.

The development of Woodsworth as a mythological figure was not McNaught's fault. On the whole, his biography is satisfactory. What has been unsatisfactory is that Woodsworth has subsequently been treated as a closed subject for the greater part of the last thirty years. An historical reexamination of Woodsworth is necessary to prevent historians from falling into the trap of depicting Woodsworth as a mere "cardboard saint" who never accomplished anything in hard political terms. The saint-like or faulty depictions of Woodsworth should not be blamed on a biographer like McNaught, who tried to be fair in his judgments about Woodsworth, but on a failure of the current Canadian historical community to remove their blinders and exercise

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

their generational responsibility to contemplate and study the role of people like Woodsworth in the life of the nation.

In 1983, David Walden advised the Canadian Plains Research Center that the tendency of studies on the CCF to stress biographical details and charisma needed to be remedied with a more balanced approach.⁶¹ Allen Mills' Fool for Christ answered that plea by stressing Woodsworth's political philosophy and the influence Woodsworth's ideas had on the various movements and parties with which he was associated. Mills does reexamine Woodsworth's political theories, and, in that sense, his work is a welcome addition to CCF historiography.

It is unfortunate that current labour historians have spurned the traditional political biography as an effective historical genre. Instead, many labour historians have divided the CCF into two cultures, "mass culture" and "elite culture." In recent works, the emphasis has been on "mass culture" or on the lives of ordinary members of the working-class, while prominent trade unionists or "labour politicians" such as Woodsworth, Knowles, and Lewis have increasingly been dismissed as "labour elites" or "labour aristocrats." As a trend toward inclusion, the earlier trend of making labour history inclusive of ordinary working-class voices was extremely welcome. However, the call for the voices of the masses to be included has now become a polemical mantra. The history of the "labour elites" that is so sneered at by the "new" labour historians should be brought back into proper contextualization, and should not be dismissed *prima facie*. The consequences of ignoring CCFers like Woodsworth is that their true legacies will be distorted. If historical truth means anything, then historians must not let

⁶¹ David Walden, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

these "elites" remain buried in the dust of history.

In recent years, histories that deal with the role of women in the CCF/NDP have been one of the few growth areas in CCF/NDP historiography. Joan Sangster, one of the co-editors of Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics (1989), contributed an article, "The Role of Women in the Early CCF, 1933-1940," to the volume. An earlier version of her article appeared in the 1985 collection, Building the Cooperative Commonwealth: Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada. Sangster emphasizes that despite the egalitarian principles of the CCF, "the party, like the society it strove to change, upheld distinct, and sometimes unequal, roles for women."⁶² She also emphasizes that the political traditions women brought to the CCF were just as varied as the constituent groups of the CCF. Many women who joined the CCF in 1933 had already been active in the League for Social Reconstruction, labour parties, Christian, or farm groups, but "only a small minority of women became involved in the CCF with feminist goals in mind."⁶³ Sangster notes that although "some Marxists within the party were well aware of women's economic subordination, competing intellectual traditions within the party, such as Fabianism and Christian socialism, did not, as a rule, stress gender inequality. Moreover, many CCF women were drawn to the party because of their experience of economic and social inequality in general, not because of their concern for women's inequality in particular."⁶⁴

The economic upheaval of the Great Depression helped draw women

⁶² Joan Sangster, "The Role of Women in the Early CCF, 1933-1940." Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics. Edited by L. Kealey and J. Sangster. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 118-119.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

to the CCF, especially working-class women. Sangster writes:

"Unemployment and relief, either experienced at first hand or viewed at second hand, were radicalizing forces for many women."⁶⁵ In Leo Zakuta's A Protest Movement Becalmed (1964), the role of women in the party is limited to the wives of CCF candidates or leaders.⁶⁶ If Zakuta had had the benefit of Sangster's research on women in the early CCF in 1964, he may have been able to enrich his argument that the CCF originally was a diverse social protest movement. In this sense, Sangster's work is not an isolated growth, but adds much needed depth to previous CCF research.

Sangster's research also highlights the sexual division of labour. While women were active at the grassroots, few reached leadership positions within the party.⁶⁷ The evidence suggests that women were channeled into social committees or educational roles.⁶⁸ It was believed that the inherent "emotional and sensitive" character of women prevented them from coping with the "rational" world of politics.⁶⁹ The second class status of women was most apparent in the selection of candidates, where women were frequently placed in the most difficult ridings (i.e. safe Tory and Liberal seats) to win.⁷⁰

Susan Mann Trofimenkoff's article "Thérèse Casgrain and the CCF in Quebec," also included in the Beyond the Vote collection, approaches the first woman provincial leader in the CCF from a feminist perspective, rather than from what Mann Trofimenkoff calls the "strategic-studies approach" to political history: an investigation of the ideas, actions, and impact of an

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

⁶⁶ Zakuta, op. cit., pp. 26, 28, 121-123.

⁶⁷ Sangster, "The Role of Women in the Early CCF, 1933-1940." Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, pp. 118, 123

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 125, 127.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 127.

individual.⁷¹ Mann Trofimenkoff does an admirable job in explaining why Casgrain, with little in her upbringing to suggest active involvement with a socialist party, would join the CCF at the age of 50 in 1949.⁷² Mann Trofimenkoff's analysis is that Casgrain found that the CCF's political program matched her feminist social concerns, and that the CCF provided her the opportunity to fulfill her political ambitions.⁷³ Casgrain would become the first vice-president of the party in 1948, the first provincial leader in 1951, and would be the sole woman member of the national committee for the New Party from 1959⁷⁴. Mann Trofimenkoff's research has provided a much broader understanding of Casgrain's beliefs and her rise in the CCF. Her essay is significantly weaker in respect to Casgrain's difficulties as a liaison between the French and English factions within the CCF, and how Casgrain was pushed out of her role as provincial leader in 1957 to make room for a leader from the labour movement. Her essay continues the trend of introducing more dynamic themes regarding the role of women in the CCF. However, additional research which emphasizes the "strategic-studies approach" to political history will reinforce the conclusions of this work.

Another continuous theme of CCF/NDP historiography has been the relationship of Canadian labour to politics. Recent works, like Keith Archer's Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party (1990), have argued that any understanding of the NDP's dismal electoral performance as a federal party must explore the weak links between trade unions and the NDP. Archer summarizes his

⁷¹ Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Thérèse Casgrain and the CCF in Quebec." Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics. Edited by L. Kealey and J. Sangster. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 140.

⁷² Ibid., p. 140.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 147.

book's purpose succinctly: "This book attempts to explain why the dramatic change from the CCF to the NDP - which is viewed as an explicit attempt to align the party more closely with organized labour - did not yield the anticipated increase in votes, particularly votes from union members."⁷⁵ Archer continues a traditional theme that began with Gad Horowitz's seminal work, Canadian Labour in Politics (1968). In 1968, Horowitz noted that the NDP had failed its first three tests of electoral support, the federal elections of June 1962, April 1963, and November 1965, because the NDP had lost a significant portion of the CCF's support among Saskatchewan farmers, and that this loss had only just been compensated for by the increased support from industrial Ontario and British Columbia.⁷⁶ Horowitz observed that the "purpose of the change from CCF to NDP was to increase labour's involvement and support and to 'broaden the base' of the party in the general public. The trouble is that these purposes may not be easily compatible." Keith Archer's book simply demonstrates this same observation using more recent electoral data.

Canadian Labour in Politics was also an attempt to apply Hartzian "fragment theory" to North America. Horowitz wrote that the "Hartzian approach is to study the new societies founded by Europeans (the United States, English Canada, French Canada, Australia, etc.) as "fragments" thrown off from Europe. The key to understanding ideological development in a new society is its "point of departure" from Europe."⁷⁷ Horowitz takes the Hartzian thesis one step further by asking why organized socialism is dead in

⁷⁵ Keith Archer, Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 5.

⁷⁶ Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 260.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

the United States, but alive in Canada. Class fluidity, the material success of capitalism, and other factors can explain why Canadian socialism is weak in comparison to European socialism, but they do not explain why Canadian socialism is so much stronger than American socialism.⁷⁶ The intellectual question of why Canadian socialism has survived and American socialism has not has created a genre of CCF/NDP histories that one could label the "Why Canada?" literature. This genre includes Norman Penner's The Canadian Left (1977), which reduces Horowitz's three hundred page work to a one sentence conclusion as to why socialism was more successful in Canada than in the United States: "In Canada, socialism is British, non-Marxist, and worldly; in the United States it is German, Marxist, and other worldly."⁷⁷ Penner does a fairly good job in assessing socialist movements at the level of the nation-state, but is less enlightening in showing how the British Labour party model was applied, arguably unsuccessfully, to the internal mechanics of the NDP. It is interesting to note that the "Why Canada?" literature has influenced what has been written about the Canadian identity. Desmond Morton noted that those "who find Canada's distinctiveness in her conservative tradition might find just as valuable evidence in the strength of the country's radical political party."⁷⁸

Penner argues that two events occurred at the same time to increase "the attractiveness of forming a Canadian labour party on the British model."⁷⁹ First, the Bolshevik Revolution, which surprised most Canadian socialists, proved that socialism did not necessarily follow a long,

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁷⁷ Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 75.

⁷⁸ Morton, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷⁹ Penner, op. cit., p. 60.

evolutionary capitalist development, as Marxist theory held. Penner believes that the rapid nature of change in Russia electrified the socialist movement in Canada, increasing militancy and radicalism.⁸² At the same time, the British Labour Party reorganized itself in 1918, adopting a new constitution and a policy document, Labour and the New Social Order. [For more information on Labour's reorganization in 1918, please see chapter two.]

Labour and the New Social Order committed the British Labour Party to an explicitly socialist objective. In February 1918, James Simpson, who would become the future secretary of the Ontario section of the Canadian Labour Party, directly linked the aims of the Bolsheviks and the British Labour Party in a speech in Montreal:

There are not many differences between the Bolsheviks and the British workers. The press has tried to belittle the Bolshevik Government, but it is well to recognize that the sentiment of the Russian people is at bottom that of the British workingmen.⁸³

They were wearied of Czarism in Russia. They had enough of capitalism. The workers have torn power from the capitalists which the latter have tried to seize at the revolution. They have dethroned the bourgeoisie for fear of a second French Revolution. What the British workers want is just what the Bolsheviks have attained - the nationalization of all great public institutions - such as railways and banks.⁸⁴

Following these two important events, provincial labour parties were "established in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia," and the outgoing TLC executives proposed calling "a convention to organize a National Canadian Labour Party...at as early a date as practical."⁸⁵ Penner ends his assessment of the impact of the British Labour

⁸² ibid., p. 56.

⁸³ ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁴ ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁵ ibid., p. 60.

model in Canada around 1921, stating that the British Labour Party model was a successful model because it represented enough of a commitment to socialism to satisfy Canadian militants while rejecting revolutionary Bolshevism.⁶⁶

While Penner helps begin an historical assessment of the British Labour model, his analysis stops short in several important ways. First, 1921 is too early a date to end an analysis of the British Labour model. As previously mentioned, by 1930 the Independent Labour parties and the Canadian Labour Party were defunct. Based on Penner's assessment, one would have to conclude that the British Labour model must not have been successful if the parties which adopted it did not even exist a decade later. Several important points must be made. As will be explained in chapter two, the Labour model was much more than a commitment to a socialist objective. The 1918 British Labour Party constitution certainly committed Labour to that objective, but it also reorganized the party in many important ways, improving the party's constituency organization, allowing individual membership in the party, and creating direct links to trade unions. In none of the Canadian labour parties of the 1920s was this model fully implemented. Therefore, the initial adoption of the British Labour model was artificial at best.

The British Labour model was not fully implemented in the creation of the CCF in 1932 either. In fact, Labour's own reorganization in 1918 was prompted in part by problems created by a similar federative structure to that which the CCF adopted in 1932. Ultimately, the British Labour model was fully adopted in Canada, but in 1961 with the creation of the NDP not in 1932 with the creation of the CCF. This thesis will attempt to continue this

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

important assessment of the British Labour model by examining its replacement of a federative party structure in both Britain and Canada.

The history of the NDP after 1961 must, for the most part, be collected from scattered and partial sources. In addition to Desmond Morton's continually updated survey on the NDP, The New Democrats: The Politics of Change, other secondary sources include Nelson Wiseman's Social Democracy in Manitoba: A History of the CCF-NDP (1983), which adds a few new primary sources to familiar secondary source materials (McNaught, Horowitz, Young, Zakuta, Avakumovic), J.T. Morley's disappointing Secular Socialists: The CCF/NDP in Ontario: A Biography (1984), takes the poorly constructed analogy of the 'party personality' too far and is another NDP history written by a committed activist. Various articles, the most notable of which is Robert Hackett's "Pie in the Sky: A History of the Ontario Waffle" from Canadian Dimension Volume 15, Numbers 1 and 2, October/November 1980, round out the picture.

In conclusion, this chapter has examined most of the broad trends of the historiography of the CCF/NDP since the 1960s. Analysis has focused mainly on what has been written about the CCF, partly because of the volume of materials available and partly because of the benefit of historical distance. With a few exceptions, the historiography of the CCF is in a troubled state. Continually stuck with essentially the same conceptual models since the 1960s, CCF histories have stagnated under the inbred "protest movement becalmed" model which has so dominated the literature for the past three decades. Unfortunately, just as the need for new dynamism emerged in the 1970s, many labour historians left the CCF behind to explore new issues, like the class struggle of ordinary working people, working-class culture, and

ethnic workers. The history of the CCF has become increasingly unfashionable, as historians have sought to increase their perspective beyond the "labour elite."

As CCF/NDP historiography has become more unfashionable, it has become more and more isolated and compartmentalized, remaining outside the mainstream of both political and labour history. This narrowness has accentuated the failure to reexamine the old conceptual models of the 1960s. Furthermore, CCF/NDP historiography now seems to attract only those historians who are left-wing party activists. The current overwhelming left-wing bias of "activist writers" is an unhealthy situation, and more centrist, right-wing, or other potentially objective authors should be encouraged to, at the very least, comment on what is being produced by left-wing, activist historians. A more balanced approach is needed, if only to challenge the complacency of CCF historians. Compartmentalization, and hence marginalization, of CCF historiography should be intensely fought. The CCF must reclaim its proper position in Canadian political history. The consequence of not reexamining this history will be the perversion of that history, where CCF figures will either become misunderstood or mere cardboard saints. The case study for this third point is provided by the examination of the Woodsworth biographies.

The only growth area of CCF historiography in recent years has been the development of histories related to role of women in the CCF. By embracing new historical concepts and models, authors like Joan Sangster and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff have increased our understanding of the participation of women in the early phases of the party, how women struggled to reach beyond the grassroots into positions of leadership, and the

early female party leaders, like Thérèse Casgrain. CCF historians must insure that this research is not limited simply to feminist perspectives, and must investigate how this new research enhances our understandings of the party.

As CCF historians seek to create new and dynamic models, some of the older models have still not been fully researched. Horowitz's application of the Hartzian fragment theory to Canadian socialism is a useful one, especially since much work remains to be done on the British Labour Party model and its unsuccessful adaption to the NDP. As suggested earlier, the primary objective of this thesis is to examine the British Labour Party model and the federative model of the CCF as competing organizational structures within the Canadian labour movement. A thorough investigation of structural change based on the two models should provide some insight into the transformations of both parties. Comparisons with other Commonwealth labour parties should help in an assessment of the degree to which said structural changes are shared across labour/democratic socialist movements.

Alan Whitehorn has argued that there is still a great deal of fruitful work that can be done on the CCF, and that this work would be hastened by the use of alternative hypotheses. If Whitehorn is correct, his observation from 1983 still holds true: "The historiography of the CCF-NDP is at a watershed."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Whitehorn, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Chapter Two Two Structures, Two Blueprints

In the introduction, it was suggested that the federative, decentralized, and fragmented structure of the CCF and the centralized structure of the British Labour Party, with its formal affiliation with and financial dependence on trade unions, represent two distinct blueprints, two distinct models for the organization of the Canadian social democratic movement. In order to compare and contrast these models, it must first be established exactly what the models are. This chapter examines these two structures and how they came to be.

I. The British Labour Party Model

A decisive moment in the history of British trade unionism came on February 27, 1900, in the Congregationalist Memorial Hall on Farringdon Street in London. On that day, at a conference barely noticed by the press, representatives from the trade unions, the socialist societies (such as the Fabian society), and the small, social democratic parties (such as the Independent Labour Party [ILP] and the Social Democratic Federation [SDF]) came together to pass a resolution that established a common cause for these groups. The resolution called for

establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to cooperate with any party which for the time being may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency.⁸⁸

The conference also established an executive committee, the Labour

⁸⁸ Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party: A Short History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 11.

Representation Committee (L.R.C.). By the general election of 1906, the L.R.C. would evolve into the British Labour Party and be referred to as such after that election. The aforementioned resolution of the 1900 conference was thus carried to its logical conclusion: the formation of a distinct Labour Party beholden to its own interests. Most British labour historians abbreviate the story of the L.R.C.'s evolution by saying that "the British Labour Party was officially founded at a conference in London in 1900."⁸⁹

The origins of the Labour Party have been pondered by many historians of British labour. In his seminal work, The Origins of the Labour Party, historian Henry Pelling pondered the central question: "How did the Labour Representation Committee (or L.R.C. as we must call it) come into existence, and how did it succeed in transforming itself into a Labour Party?"⁹⁰

The primary reason the L.R.C. came into existence, to answer Pelling's question, was the relative failure of fragmented, decentralized labour politics in the late nineteenth century to produce results. For example, the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), a Marxist party founded in 1881 by a middle-class businessman named Henry Hyndman, ran candidates in three constituencies (Nottingham, Hampstead, and Kennington) in the general election of 1885. The three S.D.F. candidates polled 32, 57, and 598 votes, respectively. These pathetic polls were indicative of the fact that the S.D.F. had virtually no influence on British thought and politics.⁹¹ Furthermore, the membership of the S.D.F. was disappointingly small; "for years its membership was in the hundreds, and by 1900 it had reached only ten thousand."⁹²

⁸⁹ Andrew Reekes, The Rise of Labour, 1899-1951 (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁹¹ Brand, op. cit., p. 5.

⁹² Ibid., p. 4.

Despite the failure of the S.D.F., eleven working-class members, mainly miner representatives, were elected to Parliament in the general election of 1885, all under the banner of the Liberal Party.⁹³ Coopted by the Liberal Party, these candidates, known as “Lib-Labs,” had no independent voice in Parliament.⁹⁴ While the Lib-Labs did garner political strength from their alliance with the Liberal Party, it also quickly became clear that as long as the wily Gladstone was leader of the Liberals, there would be serious obstacles to any plan of social reform for “Gladstone was never convinced that Parliament could legitimately embark upon such a course.”⁹⁵

The Fabian Society, founded in 1884, did make an important and lasting intellectual contribution to British socialism, but its membership never exceeded four thousand members.⁹⁶ Fabians like G.B. Shaw, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and Annie Besant wrote and debated about issues like the nationalization of industry. Certainly, their debates were important precursors to the intellectual development of Labour, particularly when Labour was eventually in a position to implement political, social, and economic changes, as they were in 1945. However, the Fabians had absolutely no power to implement changes that would achieve tangible, practical results for the working class.

Finally, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), founded in 1893 at Bradford, was an organization based entirely in northern England and “owed its emergence, in part, to a sudden awakening of political consciousness amongst the textile workers of Yorkshire [due to concerns over the U.S.-

⁹³ Philip Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography, Volume One (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), p. 55

⁹⁴ Brand, op. cit., p. 3.

⁹⁵ J.H. Stewart Reid, The Origins of the British Labour Party (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 27.

⁹⁶ Brand, op. cit., p. 5.

imposed McKinley Tariff on British woolen exports]."⁹⁷ The ILP's emergence also reflected the fact that existing structures were not suitable for the needs of Northerners who desired independent political action. The Fabian groups outside of London were thought to be too closely allied with the Liberals, while the socialist societies in London were thought to be too revolutionary.⁹⁸ The ILP founding convention was chaired by Keir Hardie, who had won a seat at South West Ham as an independent Labour candidate in the general election of 1892. The founding convention of the ILP was notable for the presence of trade unionists, especially from the North and Scotland, and the complete lack of involvement from members of the SDF or Southern trade unionists and socialists.⁹⁹ According to Hardie,

the ILP is a socialist, and not, as its titles might seem to imply, a purely working class organization. It aims at the creation of a Co-operative Commonwealth founded upon the socialization of land and capital.¹⁰⁰

Keir Hardie, a "cloth-capped" Scottish miner who had started work in the pits at the age of ten, was an energetic voice in Parliament who demanded help for the unemployed, an eight-hour day, and the abolition of child labour.¹⁰¹ Hardie was an illegitimate son of a farm servant -- a dubious moral credential in Victorian times --, had received no formal education, and had been brought up in dire poverty, more plausible credentials for an early Labour politician.¹⁰² Hardie also promoted the party's positions through his

⁹⁷ Roger Moore, The Emergence of the Labour Party, 1880-1924 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 48.

⁹⁸ Henry Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 99.

⁹⁹ Brand, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ J.H. Stewart Reid, op. cit., p. 68.

¹⁰¹ Brand, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰² Moore, op. cit., p. 40.

weekly newspaper, the Labour Leader.¹⁰³ Hardie's election address at Mid-Lanark gives an example of his political views and style:

Few save the poor feel for the poor, the rich know not how hard it is to be of needful food and needful rest debarred. I ask you therefore to return to Parliament a man of yourselves who, being poor, can feel for the poor, and whose whole interest lies in the direction of securing for you a better and happier lot. You have the power to return whom you will to Parliament. I only ask you to use that power as a means of securing justice to yourselves, by which you will do injustice to no man.¹⁰⁴

Despite Hardie's bombastic enthusiasm and the party's socialist message (which attracted recruits such as future Labour Party Leader Ramsay MacDonald and future Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Snowden), the ILP was unable to gain any real momentum in the political arena.¹⁰⁵ In the general election of 1895, none of the ILP's twenty-eight candidates, including Keir Hardie, won a single constituency.

Perhaps Hardie's greatest contribution to the British labour movement was his insistence that the fragmented structure of the British labour/socialist movement produced two main results: internal strife and political defeat.¹⁰⁶ It was easy for Hardie to provide examples of both. The SDF refused to provide any support for the ILP on the grounds that the ILP refused to use the term "socialist" in its name. The ILP insisted that it was a socialist organization and had committed itself to common ownership of the means of production, but considered the inclusion of the word "socialist" in its official title as "unwise and unnecessary."¹⁰⁷ Of course, the dispute between the SDF and the ILP was

¹⁰³ Brand, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Keir Hardie's Election Address, Mid-Lanark, 1888, The Labour Party, 1881-1951, ed. Keith Layburn (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Brand, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁷ J.H.S. Reid, op. cit., p. 69.

not the sole reason for the ILP's political failures at the general election of 1895, but the dispute was an example of how the fragmentation of the labour movement weakened the political resolve of the entire movement. Hardie proposed a solution to this quandary: the formation of a Labour Alliance.

Hardie's "Labour Alliance" proposal was announced in the Labour Leader. He believed that "the trade unions, the socialist societies, and the cooperators - the three forms of the working-class movement - should each sponsor their own candidates for Parliament, but accept a common program and jointly bear the expense of a campaign."¹⁰⁸ This proposal led to the conference on Farringdon Street in London in February 1900.

The L.R.C., established by the aforementioned conference, began life under considerable financial difficulties. Its entire income for the year 1900-1901 "was only £237, yet it ran fifteen candidates at the general election in [1900]."¹⁰⁹ Philip Snowden, who became a Labour MP in 1906, recalled the shaky beginnings of the L.R.C. in his 1934 autobiography:

The new movement did not begin auspiciously. At the end of the first year only 40 trade unions out of 1,200 then existing had affiliated, with a membership of 353,000. The three Socialist bodies¹¹⁰ had joined up. The great organizations of the miners and the textile workers stood aloof, looking on the new movement with suspicion and regarding it with undisguised hostility. The first annual conference was held in Manchester in February, 1901, and I well remember the feeling of despondency which prevailed. It looked as if this new effort was going to share the fate of previous attempts to secure the direct representation of Labour.¹¹¹

Of those fifteen candidates, only two (Keir Hardie in a new constituency at

¹⁰⁸ Brand, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ J.H.S. Reid, op. cit., p. 90.

¹¹⁰ Snowden refers to the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party, and the Social Democratic Federation.

¹¹¹ Snowden, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales and Richard Bell, secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants [ASRS] in Derby) were returned.¹¹² To this duo were added three more MPs through by-election victories between August 1902 and July 1903, including Arthur Henderson. Five seats were hardly enough to convince unaffiliated unions of the importance of joining the L.R.C.¹¹³

However, trade unions were increasingly willing to affiliate with the L.R.C. after the Taff Vale judgment was given by the House of Lords in July 1901.¹¹⁴ The Taff Vale judgment ruled that the Railway Servants Union funds were liable for the "tortious acts of its officials." Specifically, the union's funds were used to pay damages totaling £23,000 to the Taff Vale railway company because the union's secretary had picketed the Cardiff railway during a strike in 1900.¹¹⁵

This decision, which went beyond the legal precedent on picketing established by *Lyons v. Wilkins* (1898) by making the union's funds liable, demonstrated to union leaders that they had "suffered a serious setback in their struggle against the employers."¹¹⁶ Seizing the initiative, the L.R.C. promised to pass legislation against the Taff-Vale judgment, while the Liberals would not. Consequently, the L.R.C.'s membership rose from 376,000 early in 1901 to 469,000 in 1902 to 861,000 in 1903.¹¹⁷ Membership in the L.R.C. may even have been higher if the SDF had not discontinued its affiliation in

¹¹² Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

¹¹³ Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 11.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

1901 because the L.R.C. failed to declare a policy of socialism.¹¹⁸

By its third conference, held in 1903, the L.R.C. increased its subscription rate to establish a compulsory parliamentary fund for the payment of MPs.¹¹⁹ By the 1906 general election, the L.R.C., aided by the subscription rate and a voluntary levy, was able to contest 50 seats and returned 29 MPs, who gathered a collective 323,195 votes.¹²⁰ The L.R.C. capitalized on a number of working-class discontents. First, the Conservative government which won the 1900 election used navy personnel to break a strike in Gibraltar and was involved in the importation of cheap Chinese labour into South Africa, both affronts to British trade unionists. Second, prices continued to climb while wages remained stagnant, and not until 1913 would real wages reach their 1900 level.¹²¹ Unemployment increased four percent from 1900 to 1906.¹²² These factors increased support for the L.R.C. and soon as the L.R.C.'s 29 MPs assembled in Parliament after the 1906 election, the L.R.C. assumed the name Labour Party.¹²³

Before 1918, the Labour Party had been a loose association of trade unions, socialist groups, the Independent Labour Party, and the Fabian Society, and had no individual party members.¹²⁴ In the December 1910 general election, the Labour Party secured a mere 371,772 total votes and elected only 42 Members of Parliament to the 670 seat House of Commons. The figures, as shown in Table 1, for the next three general elections seem

¹¹⁸ J.H.S. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹¹⁹ Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, p. 12.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹²¹ J.H.S. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹²³ Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, p. 18.

¹²⁴ L.C.B. Seaman, *Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 106.

astounding considering the pre-1918 electoral performance of the party.

TABLE 1: Performance of the Labour Party in General Elections, 1910-1923¹²⁵

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Votes</u>	<u>% Share of Total Vote</u>	<u>MPs</u>
1910 (Dec.)	371,772	7.1%	42
1918	2,385,472	22.2%	63
1922	4,241,383	29.5%	142
1923	4,438,508	30.5%	191

The extraordinary growth in Labour Party support in 1918 is partially ascribable to the operation, for the first time, of adult suffrage.¹²⁶ The Representation of the People Act of 1918 gave the vote to all men over twenty-one and all women who were householders or wives of householders provided they were over thirty. Thus, the act completely changed the electoral map of Britain.¹²⁷ As a result of the changes, there were 21,400,000 electors in 1918, nearly triple the 7,300,000 electors who voted in the 1906 general election.¹²⁸

Growth also occurred among the trade union ranks. World War I transformed the trade union world, and also tended to expose class relations for what they were -- there was a crisis of class confrontation by the end of the war, part of Marwick's "deluge". With the expansion of industry that accompanied the war effort, trade unions seized the opportunity to increase their memberships, as shown in Table 2: Total Trade Union Membership in Great Britain, 1910-1920. In 1913, there were 4,135,000 trade unionists in Great

¹²⁵ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 202 Percentages from David Butler and Anne Sloman, British Political Facts, 1900-1979 (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 206-207.

¹²⁶ Seaman, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹²⁷ Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1965), p. 203.

¹²⁸ Chris Wrigley, "Trade unions and politics in the First World War," Trade Unions in British Politics, eds. Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (London: Longman, 1982), p. 86.

Britain. By 1919, there were 7,926,000 trade union members.¹²⁹ In roughly six years, the trade unions had doubled their membership. This increase brought with it a great deal of consolidation, as smaller unions merged into larger federations:

outstanding examples were the Amalgamated Engineering Union (1920), the massive Transport and General Workers' Union (1921), and the General and Municipal Workers' Union (1924), a merging of [the] Gasworkers with the National Amalgamated Union of Labour and the Municipal Workers.¹³⁰

TABLE 2: Total Trade Union Membership in Great Britain, 1910-1920¹³¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Membership</u>	<u>% Rate of Increase</u>
1910	2.565 million	--
1911	3.139 million	22.5%
1912	3.416 million	8.8%
1913	4.135 million	21.0%
1914	4.145 million	--
1915	4.359 million	5.0%
1916	4.644 million	6.5%
1917	5.499 million	18.3%
1918	6.533 million	18.5%
1919	7.926 million	21.4%
1920	8.347 million	5.3%

Historian Arthur Marwick argues that the increase in the Labour vote was the result of class politics: the combination of working-class discontent with the absence of any other anti-Coalition party which could appeal to the working class. As Marwick points out,

The reasons for the extreme working-class discontent were varied, and differed in emphasis from place to place; among them were the the Conscription Acts, and the manner in which they were applied by over-zealous military authorities, the Munitions Acts, the attempts by private employers to extend dilution, high prices, bad housing, and the

¹²⁹ Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940* (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 19.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹³¹ Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 240

resentment of skilled workers who found themselves overtaken in the wage race by unskilled workers.¹³²

When this growing working-class resentment was combined with the great excitement created by the 1917 Russian Revolution, it is clear Labour stepped into a political vacuum and delivered a message which appealed to the working-class. The Labour Party was best positioned to capitalize upon labour's pent-up frustrations and newfound expectations.

Nineteen eighteen proved something of a watershed for labour politics in Britain. An expanded electorate and a frustrated working-class may have been important contributing factors to Labour's newfound success, but the party had also begun a crucial reorganization process. Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb, the two principal architects of this transformation, implemented changes which would transform the Labour Party from a loose federation into a competitive national party. The transformation was made in two important ways: in terms of party structure and organization and in terms of message and ideology.

The reorganization of the party had to solve two big problems: the shortcomings of local organization and the shortage of money.¹³³ Henderson felt that in order to "meet the challenge" of the expansion of the electorate and to "take full advantage of the redistribution of political power," Labour had to reorganize, for he felt Labour's organization was "plainly inadequate."¹³⁴ Henderson and Webb drafted a new party constitution, which was approved at the second Labour Party conference in 1918, to address both the problems of organization and of money. The new constitution allowed

¹³² Marwick, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

¹³³ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹³⁴ Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (London: Headley Bros., 1918), p. 14.

membership in the Labour Party to be open to individuals, extended its constituency organization, and extended affiliated membership through affiliated societies.¹³⁵

Arthur Henderson (1863-1935) was born into poverty in Glasgow, Scotland, one of four children of David Henderson, a manual labourer. At the age of nine, his family left Scotland and moved to northeast England, where Arthur was apprenticed as an iron-moulder. Although he did earn his living as a skilled craftsman for almost a decade, he soon "abandoned his trade to work as a union organizer and later within local politics."¹³⁶ According to biographer F.M. Leventhal, Henderson's "credibility as a union organizer and as a party functionary derived in part from having pursued a craft."¹³⁷

Between the years 1892 and 1903, Henderson was a trade union official for the Ironfounders, and was responsible for the organization of the union in the counties of Northumberland, Durham, and Lancashire.¹³⁸ Beginning in 1895, Henderson took on the additional responsibility of becoming the secretary-agent for Sir Joseph Pease, the Liberal member for Barnard Castle.¹³⁹

Henderson, who was extremely proficient at organization, made the Barnard Castle constituency better organized than ever before.¹⁴⁰ This appointment also extended Henderson's own political base. After Pease announced his impending retirement, Henderson used that political base to win the Barnard Castle seat for himself in 1903 as a trade union/labour candidate supported by

¹³⁵ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹³⁶ F.M. Leventhal, *Arthur Henderson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 4. See also Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson: A Biography* (London: William Heinemann, 1938).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³⁸ Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson: A Biography* (London: William Heinemann, 1938), p. 21.

¹³⁹ Leventhal, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

the Labour Representation Committee.¹⁴¹ At various times after his election, Henderson held the positions of chief whip, parliamentary chairman, treasurer and secretary for the Labour Party.¹⁴² He was also a member of Lloyd George's war cabinet. Henderson brought a number of qualities to the Labour Party: his personal triumph over poverty, his credibility and experience in the trade union ranks, his experience as a political agent, his organizational skills, and his experience as a legislator. This background made him well-suited to take on the enormous task of reforming Labour's internal election machinery. He would be rewarded for his efforts with the Home Secretary cabinet post during the first Labour government in 1924.

Henderson, in The Aims of Labour, argued in 1918 that the organization of pre-1918 constitution Labour Party was simply an historical accident. He suggested that "the form of organization adopted indicates quite clearly that at that time the creation of a national party was not contemplated."¹⁴³ The federative nature of the Labour Party, a mosaic of trade unions, trade councils, socialist societies, Fabians, local labour parties, and the Labour Representation Committee¹⁴⁴ formed a collection of groups, "not a democratic political party capable of challenging the two historic parties on their own ground."¹⁴⁵ Henderson then added that

When the war came it was made clear that this form of organization had elements of weakness which the less serious stresses of peace times had not revealed. As the war wore on, and the democratic will became stronger, we were led to see that if Labour is to take its part creating the new order of society it must address itself to the task of transforming its

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁴² Moore, op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁴³ Henderson, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁴⁴ The Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was first established at a meeting at the Memorial Hall in London's Faringdon Street in February 1900. It was established to elect independent Labour candidates to Parliament

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

political organization from a federation of societies into a national popular party rooted in the life of the democracy, and deriving its principles and its policy from the new political consciousness.¹⁴⁶

One such "element of weakness" was the party's finances. The party had been hampered since 1909 by the Osborne Judgment, which made the political levy, i.e. trade union contributions to the Labour Party's finances, illegal. The direct financial losses to the Labour Party between 1909 and 1915 have been estimated to be about £28,000.¹⁴⁷ The 1913 Trade Union Act restored the legality of trade union political action through the political levy, subject to several conditions.¹⁴⁸ One such condition established that before any expenditure could be made, "the membership must have approved the union's proposed political fund in a ballot and money to finance such activity must come from a political fund."¹⁴⁹ The failure of the Labour Party to centralize its finances meant that the unions remained masters of their own political expenditure.¹⁵⁰

With trade unions in control of financing their candidates, resources available to candidates varied on the strength and size of the dominant local union. The best financed candidates were those of the Miners' Federation, who received between £600 and £800 on average for their campaigns.¹⁵¹ In rural constituencies, particularly in Scotland, average expenditures of less than £200 were not uncommon.¹⁵² Since unions were weaker in rural areas,

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ McKibbin, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ Andrew J. Taylor, *The Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 205.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁵⁰ McKibbin, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

party organization was weaker.¹⁵³ The 1918 constitution established a central fund to supplement the electoral expenses of all candidates through a 2 *d.* per member levy on affiliated unions.¹⁵⁴ The fund was designed to help the Labour Party expand in constituencies where organization was previously poor, and also to impose a national organization on a financial system where local authorities were previously autonomous. The levy was increased to 3 *d.* per member in 1920. While full centralization of political funds of all affiliated organizations to "equalize the financial support available for all candidates," as requested at the 1924 Labour Party conference, was not accomplished, the "fighting fund" was able to increase local constituency spending by £200 or more (on average), thus making Labour more competitive.¹⁵⁵

The 1918 constitution broadened the terms of membership. Anyone who belonged to an affiliated organization, was an individual member of a local Labour Party, or who subscribed to the Constitution and Programme of the Party was now considered a Labour Party member. The Party Constitution was primarily a five clause statement under the heading "Party Objectives - National." Perhaps the most famous is Clause Four, the clause which states it is the objective of the Labour Party to

secure for producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.¹⁵⁶

This clause would remain an ideological cornerstone of the party constitution

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁵⁶ Labour Party Constitution, 1918, The Labour Party, 1881-1951, ed. Keith Layburn (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), p. 77.

until 1995, and has traditionally been the target of many Conservative Party attacks on Labour. Only recently, and after dogged resistance by "hardliners," has Labour leader Tony Blair been able to shift the Labour Party away from this dogma. However, it must be understood that the 1918 constitution was written in a time of great working-class discontent and also in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Since no Labour government ever tried to implement full-scale control of the means of production, the meaning of Clause Four can, in the practical sense, be considered largely symbolic.

In 1918, Clause Four was meant to be a long-term objective, nothing more. Far more significant for Labour at the time were the implications of both Clauses One and Two. Clause One stated that "the establishment of a Local Labour Party in every County Constituency and every Parliamentary Borough" was a national objective for the party. Clause Two stated Labour would "cooperate with the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, or other Kindred Organizations, in joint political or other action in harmony with the Party Constitution..."¹⁵⁷

As a result of the new constitutional arrangements with the trade unions, the Labour Party moved into a joint headquarters with the Trades Union Congress.¹⁵⁸ Second, the voting system for places on Labour's most important policy-making body, the National Executive, was changed. Previously, each section of the party elected its own members to the appropriate section of the National Executive, thus insuring representation from all of the groups which comprised the Labour Party and maintaining the fragmentary nature of the party. A new motion, passed at the 1917 Labour

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Taylor, *The Trade Union Question in British Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 32.

Party conference, established that the whole Conference would vote on all of the places on the National Executive.¹⁵⁹ With the new influx of trade unionists in the party, effective control of the National Executive was passed over to the trade unions.

While this forced consolidation and unity, the party was not without its growing pains. There were left-over tensions from the war which eroded the call for unity of the party. The anti-war socialists, such as Ramsay MacDonald, had come into conflict with many of the trade union leaders over their position on the First World War. Most of the leadership of the Trades Union Congress had been in favour of the war, and a resolution at the 1916 TUC Conference tried to get an avowed trade-union party formed because many trade unionists recoiled at the thought of forming a strong alliance with elements in the Labour Party who bitterly opposed the war.¹⁶⁰

Likewise, many of the anti-war socialists balked at the idea of increased trade union control over the party. In a January 1917 letter to his wife Beatrice Webb, Sidney Webb, coauthor of the 1918 constitution and longtime member of the Fabian Society, wrote that Ramsay MacDonald said

the trade unions were now a terrible incubus on the Labour Party, but that it had been inevitable to have them. Only by them could the party have got mass support, and money (the Labour Party has now actually £20,000 in hand). He said that the present organization of the party failed totally to represent the rank-and-file; and he looked more and more to the trades councils and similar local bodies.¹⁶¹

Despite the tensions between the so-called "militants" and the trade unionists, the 1918 general election proved Henderson's points about solving the problems of organization and money through closer ties with the trade

¹⁵⁹ Chris Wrigley, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁶¹ As cited in *Ibid.*, p. 87.

unions. British historians Chris Wrigley and Ross McKibbin have commented that "where the Labour Party was strong in 1918 and subsequent elections its strength usually stemmed from a strong trade-union presence in the constituency."¹⁶² Henderson commented that Labour, which managed to field 388 candidates in 1918, was able to do so because "they had an existing trades union organization in every town."¹⁶³ Historian Ross McKibbin has noted that "union predominance was felt at all levels....For the most part, the unions and their officials made up the deficiency of individual members. They provided the volunteer workers, the local party officers and the money."¹⁶⁴

In terms of policy, the Labour Party adopted a policy statement drafted by Sidney Webb as Labour and the New Social Order in June of 1918. This was the first time the Labour Party went into an election with a programme.¹⁶⁵ Unmistakably socialist in message, it was a program that advocated the "socialization of industry" and "planned cooperation in production and distribution for the benefit of all who participate by hand or by brain." It argued for social protection from birth to death, echoing the later ideals of the welfare state that the 1945 Labour government would establish. In fact, many of the proposals in Labour and the New Social Order would become pillars of the Labour message for decades: the establishment of full employment, the democratic control of industry and nationalization, redistribution of wealth for the common good, unemployment insurance, and rights for trade

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁴ R. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ Seaman, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

unionists.¹⁶⁶

With Labour's new organization and program, the party became "His Majesty's Opposition" after the 1918 general election. However, the victory was far from total. Many of the party's leaders paid the price for their pacifist stand on the war. Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, and Arthur Henderson had all gone down to defeat. Arthur Ponsonby, an uncompromising pacifist who was defeated as the Labour candidate in the Shulbrede constituency, wrote in his diary: "The whole thing is absolutely farcical. I am thankful I am not in. I should feel hopelessly isolated."¹⁶⁷

Of Labour's 59 MPs, twenty-five were miners and twenty-four represented other unions. The party was led, until 1921, by a Scottish miner, William Adamson. Beatrice Webb described the Parliamentary Labour Party, without its militant, pacifist members, as "a very tame lion" and said its twenty-five miner MPs were "for general political purposes dead stuff."¹⁶⁸ She described Adamson as "respectable but dull-witted."¹⁶⁹

Despite the immediate loss of quality leadership in the party and the tensions created between the socialist and trade union elements within the party, Labour had been forged anew. The federative nature of the pre-1918 party was destroyed, membership was expanded, finances were stabilized, and links with the trade unions were made official, providing the party with new members and a far more advanced structure, particularly at the constituency level. There was no turning back; Labour's reorganization made the party a

¹⁶⁶ Labour and the New Social Order: A Report on Reconstruction in Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-112

¹⁶⁷ Raymond A. Jones, Arthur Ponsonby: The Politics of Life (London: Christopher Helm, 1989), p. 120.

¹⁶⁸ Beatrice Webb Diaries, entry for 10 January 1919, The Diary of Beatrice Webb Volume Three, 1905-1924, eds. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1984), p. 329.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 329.

national political alternative and entrenched the links with the trade unions forever.

Of course, the development of the links with the trade unions did not stop with the 1918 party constitution. What happened in 1918 was simply a building block for further trade union links within the party. By 1963, affiliated membership through the trade unions accounted for five-sixths of the total Labour Party membership of some 6,000,000.¹⁷⁰ The relationship between the unions and the party was (and still is) an evolving relationship, whose exact character fluctuated with the politics of the day.

In 1929, for example, Egon Wertheimer, a German Social Democratic journalist working in London published The Portrait of the Labour Party, a study notable for its comparisons of the Labour Party with its German socialist counterpart. Wertheimer noted,

In contrast to the German party, the British started life as a federal organization, to which the large trade union groups and socialist societies were affiliated collectively. These groups did not relinquish their own identity on affiliation. They preserved their own form, function, and tradition intact, and the life of the larger party found its greatest expression within their confines. In other words, a trade union branch meeting differed only from the meeting of a local Labour Party in the latter's agenda. Until 1918 the local trade union branches and the constituent socialist organizations provided the only common meeting-places for Labour Party members.¹⁷¹

Wertheimer even uses the phrase "federative structure" to describe the pre-1918 Labour Party. That exact same phrase will be used, later in this chapter, to describe the structure of the Commonwealth Cooperative Federation. Thus, what emerges from this description and the history of the Labour Party

¹⁷⁰ R.M. Punnett, British Government and Politics (London: Heinemann, 1971), p. 124.

¹⁷¹ Egon Wertheimer, "Portrait of the Labour Party," Studies in British Politics, ed. Richard Rose (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 40. Reprinted from Portrait of the Labour Party (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1929).

discussed earlier is that the pre-1918 structure of the Labour Party parallels the structure of the CCF in 1932-33. In the case of the Labour Party, a structural change was made in 1918 with important consequences for the party. It will be argued that the belated 1961 transformation of the CCF into the New Democratic Party exhibits the same process of change, albeit on another continent and in a different political context. The patterns of change are similar, and therefore require greater attention.

Thus, the term "Labour Party model" here refers specifically to the Labour Party after its 1918 reorganization: a political party with close and structural ties to the trade unions. The term "CCF model" refers to the federative structure of the CCF before that party's structural transformation occurred with the creation of the NDP. The federative structure of the pre-1918 Labour Party and the CCF are similar, and both provide a contrast with the reorganized, post-1918 Labour Party or post-1961 NDP. In any case, the comparison is still between two structural models, not two parties.

II. The Commonwealth Cooperative Federation Model: A Federation of Societies

The economic distress caused by the Great Depression of the "Dirty Thirties" ranks it as the worst social and economic disaster for Canada in the twentieth century. Between 1929 and 1932, industrial production declined by one-third, as Canada's gross national product sank by two-fifths during that three year span.¹⁷² As Desmond Morton has put it, statistics "however primitive and incomplete, told part of the story....In 1930, unemployment almost doubled from the previous year to 11 percent. By the end of 1933, one

¹⁷² R.D. Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald Smith, eds., Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1992), p. 268.

Canadian wage earner in four was looking for work. More than 1.5 million Canadians - out of 10 million - depended on direct relief for their existence."¹⁷³

Particularly devastated by the Great Depression were the provinces of the Canadian West, especially Saskatchewan and Alberta. The farmers of Saskatchewan had experienced relative prosperity in the years before the Depression. From 1925 to 1929, gross agricultural income was about \$400 million per year, as wheat crops averaging 260 million bushels were sold at the average price of \$1.¹⁷⁴ The situation had changed drastically by 1930:

From 1930, the farmers of Saskatchewan were destitute. They were affected not only by the decline in the price of wheat, which at one point reached a low of 19 cents a bushel, but by the longest and severest drought in the history...Gross cash income (the average for 1928-30 compared with the average for 1930-37) fell from 100 to 32, while cash operating expenses fell from 100 to 67. The result was that the net cash income fell from 198 million dollars to 20 million dollars, while in the year 1932 there was not sufficient net income to pay the mortgage interest and nothing for living expenses which had to be met out of borrowing, past savings, consumption of capital, and government relief.¹⁷⁵

Statistics are informative, but also dry and they can sometimes obscure the human element which gives them their real meaning. J.S. Woodsworth, first elected to the House of Commons in 1921 and who would become leader of the CCF, was "enraged and frustrated by knowledge of the loss of skills and the degradation of human dignity" across Canada during the "hungry thirties".¹⁷⁶ He attempted to get beyond the mere numbers, and give the

¹⁷³ Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, Working People (Ottawa: Deneau and Greenberg, 1980), p. 139.

¹⁷⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan. A Study in Political Sociology, Second edition. (New York: Anchor, 1968), p. 118.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 118-119.

¹⁷⁶ Kenneth McNaught, A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 236.

Depression a human dimension. He voiced many pleas for action from the government in the House of Commons month after month from 1930 to 1935, and mentioned particularly tragic cases to try to prod the government into action. For example, he said that a Winnipeg man returned home to find that his wife, who had been struggling to survive on poor relief, had drowned their baby boy, strangled their daughter, and then poisoned herself. She left a note: "I owe the drugstore 44 cents. Farewell."¹⁷⁷

Some statistics which do not obscure the human experience of the Depression in Canada may be found in Table 3: Decline in Provincial Incomes, 1928-1933. The data shows that, on average, Canadian incomes decreased by a average of 48% from 1928 to 1933. The prairie provinces were the hardest hit. Saskatchewan and Alberta residents saw their average incomes decline by 72% and 61% respectively.

TABLE 3: *Decline in Provincial Incomes, 1928-1933*¹⁷⁸

<u>Province</u>	<u>1928-29 average (per capita)</u>	<u>1933 average (per capita)</u>	<u>% Decrease</u>
Saskatchewan	\$478	\$135	72
Alberta	\$548	\$212	61
Manitoba	\$466	\$240	49
Canada, national average	\$471	\$247	48
British Columbia	\$594	\$314	47
Prince Edward Island	\$278	\$154	45
Ontario	\$549	\$310	44
Quebec	\$391	\$220	44
New Brunswick	\$292	\$180	39
Nova Scotia	\$322	\$207	36

¹⁷⁷ As cited in R.D. Francis et al., *op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹⁷⁸ Lipset, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

Out of the desperate times of the Depression, the Commonwealth Cooperative Federation (CCF) would emerge. The CCF was not the first attempt to create an organized, socialist party in Canada. In 1900, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, the first major trade union organization in Canada, (similar in function to the Trades Union Congress in Britain) called for "the formation of a labour party separate and distinct from the trade union organization."¹⁷⁹ This call repeated a request made by TLC delegates in 1889 for an independent labour party.¹⁸⁰ In 1906, action was taken to meet this call and provincial labour parties were formed in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario.¹⁸¹ Like the British Labour Party, the TLC-sponsored labour parties were formally non-socialist, but heavily influenced by socialist thought.¹⁸² It was difficult to build a solidified labour party in Canada during the years of national prosperity down to 1913; it would take a crisis to create the circumstances for an independent party. As mentioned in chapter one, one of the TLC-sponsored provincial parties, the ILP of Ontario, made surprising gains in the provincial election of 1919 before its demise in 1923.

The Trades and Labour Congress went even further in 1917, when it sponsored the formation of a Canadian Labour Party (CLP), to be modeled on the British Labour Party, "on a basis which would permit united action on the part of trade unionists, socialists, Fabians, cooperators, and farmers."¹⁸³ This decision was at least partially influenced by skilled worker immigrants from the British Isles, who brought their association with, and knowledge of, the

¹⁷⁹ Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 60.

¹⁸⁰ Morton and Copp, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 60.

British Labour Party to Canada.¹⁸⁴

The CLP, which was officially founded in 1921 but was no more than a paper organization until 1923, was short-lived for a number of reasons. First, the meagre electoral success of the CLP prevented the party from presenting itself as a viable electoral vehicle. Outside of Alberta, where the CLP managed to elect six MLAs in the provincial election of July 1926, the CLP achieved virtually no success in Ontario (where former supporters of independent labour representation refused to support the CLP in the federal election of 1925), British Columbia (where no CLP candidates were returned in the federal elections of 1925 and 1926), Manitoba (where the party had virtually no organization), or the rest of Canada.¹⁸⁵ Second, the CLP's failures hampered efforts to affiliate trade unions, leaving the party weak and small. This weakness allowed communist groups to infiltrate CLP district organizations and take them over.¹⁸⁶ The CLP was never able to coalesce into a national party, and remained a collection of provincial parties similar in structure to those created by the TLC in 1906.

Communist infiltration of the CLP was evident at the fifth annual convention of the Ontario CLP in 1924, where Communist delegates issued a slate of resolutions calling for

instruction of labour delegates to the upcoming British Commonwealth Labour Conference to advocate and support complete independence of all colonial and semi-colonial people within the British Commonwealth and for the unification of the international trade union movement on a world scale in an all-embracing trade union international along the lines of the Russian trade union

¹⁸⁴ Ivan Avakumovic, Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 35.

¹⁸⁵ Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University Press, 1968), pp. 252-255

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 254-255.

movement.¹⁸⁷

This resolution disgusted the local Toronto TLC President Tom Moore, who expressed the view that the resolution did not voice the sentiments of the workers in Canada.¹⁸⁸

As with previous labour parties in Canada, the CLP was too fragmented and regional in character to put the British Labour Party model into practice. However, non-communists in some Ontario branches voted “to follow the example of the British Labour Party at Liverpool and purge the labour political movement of communists.”¹⁸⁹ While the association with the communists discouraged many trade unions from affiliating, the ongoing fight for control of the party continued until 1929, when the remaining trade unionists, socialists, and independent labourites left the party.¹⁹⁰ The CLP imploded and was defunct by 1930.

There were a number of other factors which weakened the CLP from its inception. First, the delay between the call for the creation of a Canadian “Labour Party” and its actual creation shows that there was a certain reluctance in creating a political arm of organized labour, especially since several internationally affiliated unions took strong anti-communist stands.¹⁹¹ From the beginning, communists sat on the executive of the party and used their influence to approve affiliation of Communist Party of Canada branches and organizations to the CLP.¹⁹² The communists hoped to use the CLP as the nucleus of a “popular front” of communists, socialists, farmers, and workers,

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁹¹ Avakumovic, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

as advocated by the Communist International.¹⁹³ The communist infiltration of the C.I.P. was incompatible with the anti-communist trade union element, and the party imploded.

However, the end of the C.I.P. did not sound the death knell for labour politics in Canada. Some sections of the TLC-sponsored independent labour parties remained, and there were independent labour MPs, like J.S. Woodsworth, in the House of Commons. There were a number of smaller labour/socialist parties in existence in the 1920s, including the Labour Representation League, a Federal Labour Party, a Federated Labour Party, a Workers' party, and the Socialist Party of Canada.¹⁹⁴ As the Depression deepened, it was becoming clear that the extremely fragmented nature of the labour movement in Canada not only prevented any socialist response to the economic calamity, but prevented even a strong socialist voice of protest being raised. Stronger, more effective organization was needed if either goal was to be accomplished.

In 1931, an attempt at unity was made at a conference of these small, independent labour parties in Winnipeg, the third such meeting since 1929. The Manitoba Free Press commented at the time that the conference would likely result in the creation of a Canadian party "corresponding to the British Labour Party."¹⁹⁵ Resolutions were passed at the conference that "capitalism must go and socialism be established."¹⁹⁶ For the first time, the phrase "cooperative commonwealth" was used; the "cooperative commonwealth"

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁹⁴ Walter D. Young, The Anatomy of A Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 23.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

was the end result of a farmer-labourer socialist state.¹⁹⁷ While no party modeled on the British Labour Party was created, the delegates agreed to meet the following year in Calgary.

In the words of Walter D. Young, the Calgary meeting was "the culmination of the gradual intermingling of the radical farm and labour movements in western Canada."¹⁹⁸ Indeed, the two movements came together in Calgary to pass a provisional document, known as the Calgary Programme, which advocated the establishment of "a planned system of social economy for the production, distribution, and exchange of all goods and services" to combat the economic havoc of the Great Depression.¹⁹⁹ The Calgary Programme was also significant because it represented an attempt to merge differences and laid the foundation for the organization of a political party, the CCF. Alan Whitehorn has noted that the Calgary Programme provided a brief outline of the proposed party structure:

The CCF was to be a federation of provincial groups drawn from three groups - labour, farmers, and socialists. While its purpose was unequivocally stated as socialist, membership would not be confined to socialists; the CCF would reach out to other groups and include progressive workers who were not necessarily committed to the socialist creed.²⁰⁰

The Cooperative Commonwealth *Federation* was officially established by the 1933 Regina Manifesto at the First National Convention of the CCF, held in Regina in July 1933. Federation, the key word in the proposed party structure of the Calgary Programme, was repeated in the first paragraph of the Regina Manifesto:

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁹⁹ Alan Whitehorn, *Canadian Socialism. Essays on the CCF-NDP* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 37.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation is a federation of organizations whose purpose is the establishment in Canada of a Cooperative Commonwealth in which the principle regulating production, distribution, and exchange will be the supplying of human needs and not the making of profits.²⁰¹

The Regina Manifesto, drafted as it was by Professor Frank Underhill of the University of Toronto, Professor Frank Scott of McGill University, and several members of the League for Social Reconstruction (a group of Canadian intellectuals modeled on the British Fabian Society), is a distinctly socialist statement. It argued for the "establishment of a planned, socialized economic order," the socialization of finance, the socialization of industry (especially transportation, communication, etc.), security for farmers, socialized health services, and for public expenditure on housing, for example.²⁰² From the capitalist's perspective, it ended with these chilling sentiments:

No CCF Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth.²⁰³

The Regina Manifesto is a statement of beliefs and principles, but it says next to nothing about party structure and organization or how the CCF will manage to use "political action" to establish the Cooperative Commonwealth in the first place. The Regina Manifesto makes it clear that political power through non-violent methods is the CCF's goal, and that the CCF is "democratic movement, a federation of farmer, labour, and socialist organizations, financed by its own members and seeking to achieve its ends

²⁰¹ Regina Manifesto, 1933, in Young, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp 304- 313.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

solely by constitutional methods."²⁰⁴

The notion that the CCF is a federation, consisting of three constituent parts (farmer, labour, and socialist) is repeated again and again. Certainly, the CCF had a claim to call itself socialist. The Regina Manifesto, conceived by socialists and loaded with socialist ideas, was clearly a socialist programme. Furthermore, members from socialist parties, such as the Socialist Party of Canada were clearly part of the CCF "melting pot." It is also clear that the suffering inflicted upon many western farmers by the Great Depression made many western farmers willing to embrace the CCF's "new social order." Farmers and farmer groups were also elements of the federation. However, the CCF's claim to "Labour" in its title was tenuous at best.²⁰⁵

Interestingly enough, the Trades and Labour Congress, which had established post-war relationships with mainstream Liberal and Conservative politicians, refused to align itself with the CCF.²⁰⁶ This decision was reinforced by the CCF's association with its bitter enemy in the trade union field, the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL).²⁰⁷ The ACCL had been founded in 1927 as a labour center for national as opposed to international unionism.²⁰⁸ The presence of Aaron Moshier, the leader of the ACCL, at Calgary in 1932 angered many of the craft unions and effectively ended the possibility of a TLC alliance with the CCF at Regina.²⁰⁹ As Desmond Morton has put it: "Spurned by Canada's major labour organization, Woodsworth had to build the CCF on its cantankerous farmer and socialist foundations."²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

²⁰⁵ Morton and Copp, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁰⁶ Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰⁹ Morton and Copp, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

The state of the CCF in 1933 thus paralleled the state of the British Labour Party before 1918, but not after 1918. The CCF was an attempt to merge small, provincial parties, farmers (farmer groups), labourers, trade unions, socialists, and intellectuals (the ISR) into a larger federative entity in the hope of yielding more political clout, specifically to provide those groups a larger voice of protest in the midst of the Great Depression. Like the nature of the pre-1918 Labour Party, discussed earlier in this chapter, the Canadian party was also federative and decentralized. It was composed of trade unions, socialist societies, Fabians, local labour parties, trade councils, and the Labour Representation Committee. In both federative structures, the constituent elements were relatively the same. In both federations, no formal links with the trade unions, a necessity for financial stability and rudimentary organization, existed. Hence, the CCF structural model, a model shared by the pre-1918 Labour Party, refers to a federative structure with no formalized links to the trade unions.

The Labour Party structural model refers to the state of the Labour Party after its links with trade unions had been formalized; in other words, a centralized structure where the party has close and formal ties to the trade unions. In the case of the Labour Party, a structural change involving formalized links with the trade unions was made in 1918. In the case of the CCF, the same type of structural change was made in 1961, with the birth of the New Democratic Party.

This thesis will argue that, in both cases, the process of change is essentially the same within both parties. Only the different rhythm of socioeconomic pressures dictated the different chronological outcome. Attention will therefore be paid to isolating and analyzing those factors which

variegated the two outcomes. Using the model approach, the tension between the two models will be investigated and some judgment will be made as to the pattern of evolutionary change within the democratic socialist movements of Great Britain and Canada.

Chapter Three

Beginnings: The Commonwealth Labour Conferences

I. Introduction

The static historiography of the CCF and the NDP examined in the first chapter underlined the necessity of introducing new interpretive themes into the understanding of Canadian social democracy. Chapter Two established that one such theme is the shared process of structural change within both the British Labour Party and the CCF/NDP, and the underlying tensions between two models for change, the federative, decentralized model of the CCF and the British Labour Party model, within that process.

In order to understand the relationship between these two models in the context of structural change within both parties, the nature of the relationship between the two parties should be examined. Without contacts through which these parties could mutually influence one another, the nature of their organizations would only be revealed as theoretical ideas on paper or in speeches.

In the years following World War I, the scattered labour movements in the British Commonwealth sought to capitalize on a sense of incipient solidarity by moving together through Commonwealth Labour Conferences. These conferences promoted the search for agents/issues that could bind them closer together into a more cohesive, pan-national labour movement. Thus, these conferences provide an excellent opportunity to examine the relationship between the Labour Party and the incipient CCF in a practical way and gauge the degree of influence, particularly structural influences, one party had on the other. If the level of mutual influence was strong, then it

can be argued that the conferences were the vehicle by which the aforementioned party blueprints were transferred.

These two models, the British Labour Party model and the federative model of the CCF, represent two distinct blueprints for the Canadian social democratic movement. This thesis will now turn its attention to the tension between the two models and will try to arrive at some judgment of the appropriateness of the British model to Canadian circumstances. The evolution of these models will be scrutinized from the 1920s through the New Party Convention of 1961, and points of cross-fertilization between the two movements will provide reference points for determining the influence of one movement on the other. The emphasis will be on structural change. The principal focal point of this examination will be the British Commonwealth Labour Conferences, which began in the 1920s. This examination concentrates on the direct influence of the conferences on Canadian social democratic thinking. As such, the evidence of these conferences contained in the archives of the British Labour Party in Manchester speaks to the notion of "influence" in its most direct sense: conference agenda, attendance, and debates, as well as correspondence between the leaders of the respective Commonwealth labour parties. Other forms of influence did exist, but (for reasons of research feasibility) are not considered at length in this thesis. These include the transmission of ideas by means of ethnicity, personal contact, education, and periodical literature. Furthermore, discussion of the British Labour Party model may have taken place peripherally in other forums and correspondence. A good example of this style of influence may be found in the papers of the CCF/NDP retained at

the National Archives of Canada.²¹¹ As has been made apparent in the first chapter of this thesis, the Commonwealth Labour conferences have as yet to receive detailed treatment in the historiography of Canadian social democratic politics.

II. Commonwealth Labour Politics in the 1920s

The following is a brief survey of labour politics in the Commonwealth (specifically Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and South Africa) in period before the first British Commonwealth Labour Conferences took place in the mid to late 1920s. This survey is not intended to be comprehensive, but should inform the reader with enough background information to comprehend the analysis of the Commonwealth Labour Conferences which follows this survey.

Australia

The Australian economy, buoyed by the gold trade in Victoria State, was particularly strong in the 1850s and 1860s and remained so well into the 1890s. In describing Australia's economy during this period, historian Jim Hagan argued that "there were minor [economic] downturns, but it was common in the thirty years between 1861 and 1891 for men, skilled and unskilled, to reach middle age without being unemployed; wages fell, but still stayed much higher than they were at home [in Britain]."²¹² The decisive pressure for the creation of an Australian Labor Party came only with the

²¹¹ See Papers of the CCF/NDP (Manuscript Division), National Archives of Canada, especially MG 28 IV 1, volumes 40, 59-60, 64, and 76 [Trade Union Relations, 1937-39, 1954-55], Finding Aid #427, 83.0 metres.

²¹² Jim Hagan, "The Australian Union Movement: Context and Perspective, 1850-1987," Australian Unions, eds. Bill Ford and David Plowman (Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia, 1989), p. 19.

defeat of the unions in the Great Strikes of the early 1890s.²¹³

Victor S. Clark, sent by the American government to study the state of Australian labour in 1903 and 1904, described 1890 as “the turning point in the history of [Australasian] trade unionism.”²¹⁴ Clark described the 1890 strike as follows:

The pivotal incident was a strike among the seaman in Victoria, which soon extended to other trades throughout Australia and New Zealand. The original point at issue did not relate to wages, but to the right of a ship masters’ and mates’ association to join the Melbourne Trade Hall. The real object of both parties, however, was to settle the relative authority of employers and unions in all lines of business. As the strike extended from trade to trade, industry of every description was paralyzed. Public sympathy was divided. The chief justice of Victoria subscribed \$250 weekly to the strike fund of the unions. When the trouble spread to New Zealand the present chief justice and former premier took the platform in favour of the strikers. But, upon the whole, people sided with employers. This was especially true in New Zealand, where the public resented having the industries of the colony tied up by a dispute originating twelve hundred miles across the ocean. The workers were completely defeated, and the seaman have not even today [referring to 1904] recovered the rate of wages prevailing before this contest. Trade unionism was for a time prostrate, especially in the larger cities.²¹⁵

The Great Strikes left the economy of Australia in turmoil. The per capita share in Australia’s net national product “did not recover to its 1891 level until 1906-1907.”²¹⁶ In these circumstances, Australian unionists could not return to the pre-strike stance that their interests could be effectively represented in Parliament by the “good-as-Labour” men among their

²¹³ Graeme Duncan, “The Australian Labor Party: A Model for others?” Fabian Tract 535 (October 1989), p. 4.

²¹⁴ Victor S. Clark, The Labour Movement in Australasia (New York: Burt Franklin, 1906), p. 61

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²¹⁶ Jim Hagan, “The Australian Union Movement: Context and Perspective, 1850-1987,” Australian Unions, p. 21.

employers.²¹⁷ Therefore, Australian unionists looked to found their own Labour party in the period just after the Great Strikes. In April 1891, the founding conference of the Australian Labour Party was held in the heart of gold country at Ballarat. It must be clearly understood that 1891 was not the beginning of labour/trade union organization, but the beginning of Labour political organization in the electorates.²¹⁸ Describing the reason for this new approach, Australian historian Brian Fitzpatrick wrote:

The Labour movement did not abandon direct action by trade unions, as a strategy, and *substitute* a strategy of political action through Labour Members of Parliament. It went in seriously for politics because Labour people had been forced to realize that almost no strike tactics could succeed for years to come -- until, in fact, the unions had recovered themselves and regained their strength.²¹⁹

For several years after its founding, the Australian Labour Party "continued to function almost as a tail to the Liberal Protectionist Party" and was a non-factor in Australian politics.²²⁰ That status changed in 1901, when the Labour Party held the balance of power between contending Free Trade and Protectionist parties. The ALP supported the Protectionists, but "the cost of their support was the passage of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904."²²¹

The Act provided some protections for working-class Australians, including the White Australia policy, which kept out low-paid Chinese and other Asian immigrants, tariff protection, and a Commonwealth Arbitration

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

²¹⁸ Brian Fitzpatrick, *A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement* (Melbourne: Wilke and Co., 1944), p. 98.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²²⁰ Hagan, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Court which set basic wage rates.²²² This assistance helped the growth of the Australian trade union movement, particularly after 1910, which was a period of significant economic growth.²²³ Economic success was coupled with political success. By 1910, the ALP governed Australia and in two of Australia's six states. The ALP won again in September 1914, and, by the end of 1914, governed in three states.²²⁴

Both the trade union and political wings of the ALP helped create the ideology known as "Labourism."²²⁵ The tenets of "Labourism" were

White Australia, tariff protection, compulsory arbitration, strong unions, and the Labour Party. White Australia would keep out Asiatics who threatened the standard of living and the unions' strength; tariff protection would diminish unemployment and keep wages high; compulsory arbitration would restrain the greedy and unfair employer, a strong union movement would make it possible to enhance and supplement the basic justice that compulsory arbitration provided; and Labour governments would ensure that no one would interfere with these excellent arrangements.²²⁶

By the eve of the first British Commonwealth Conference in 1925, the Australian Labour Party stood as a Commonwealth labour party with considerable electoral success, having formed governments at both the national and state levels. However, the unity which had allowed the party to grow since 1910 was fractured by another series of strikes by seaman and in the manufacturing industry in 1925.²²⁷ The federal and state Labour Parties split over whether the government had the power to maintain "essential services" threatened by strikes, thus increasing the strength of the Arbitration

²²² *Ibid.* p. 22

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Court to punish unions.²²⁸

Canada

The Canadian economy grew during World War I, as the wartime economy demanded increased agricultural and raw material production. Export figures (for metals, wood, pulp, paper, lumber, meat, and livestock) rose to unprecedented levels.²²⁹ With the wartime economy, Canada moved out of the depression of 1913-1914.²³⁰ However, wartime economic growth concealed a number of labour tensions which had been present in the prewar period.

Postwar unrest, particularly by Western industrial labourers and Western farmers, may have been caused by what English historian Lawrence Stone has called the "J-Curve" phenomenon. Stone's contention is that the fundamental impetus towards a revolutionary situation is when rising expectations (particularly economic expectations) are followed by a short-term disappointment of those expectations (referred to as a dysfunction). The dysfunction could be the result of economic recession, governmental reaction, or aristocratic resurgence.²³¹ The important point is that the gap between *expectations* and reality is widened.²³² Stone wrote,

Successful revolution is the work neither of the destitute nor of the well-satisfied, but of those whose actual situation is improving less rapidly than they expect.²³³

Canada made many sacrifices during the war. It is estimated that 61,000

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²²⁹ Kenneth McNaught, The Pelican History of Canada (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 214.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

²³¹ Lawrence Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642 (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 17.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Canadian soldiers were killed.²³⁴ There were sacrifices made on the Home Front, as well; sacrifices that historian John Thompson has argued fell harder on prairie farmers and the West's urban working class than on other classes.²³⁵ Thompson argues that Canada's Prairie West (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) of 1914 was distinctive as a regional entity because of the shared geography, constitutional history, immigrant population, and grain economy.²³⁶ Because of this distinctiveness, Thompson argued that "the Great War left an imprint upon the West different from the one it left upon Canada as a whole."²³⁷ Part of the imprint left by the war upon Canada as a whole came as a result of the mass mobilization of 629,000 soldiers. As a result of this mobilization, the national economy

began to suffer from manpower shortages, rapid cost-of-living increases, imbalances of supply and production and the machinations of unscrupulous men who tried to reap large and undeserved profits from munitions and war supply contracts.²³⁸

Inflation was particularly devastating. As the demand for all sorts of manufactured goods increased, prices increased.²³⁹ However, wages were controlled by Ottawa, often at levels below inflation.²⁴⁰ According to Canadian historian David Bercuson,

on the basis of what data was collected by the federal Department of Labour and published monthly in Labour Gazette, [inflation] increased from fifty to seventy-five percent between 1914 and 1918-1919.²⁴¹

²³⁴ J.M. Winter, The Great War and the British People (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 75.

²³⁵ John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), Chapter 3: The War and the Prairie Economy.

²³⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

²³⁸ David Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike," Readings in Canadian History, Post-Confederation (Second edition), eds. R.D. Francis and D.B. Smith (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986), p. 382.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 382.

²⁴⁰ J.H. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 156-157

²⁴¹ Bercuson, op. cit., p. 382.

While the wartime economy grew, unions took advantage of the situation to better organize themselves. Vast organizing drives were launched throughout the country across a range of industries, as union ranks grew from 143,200 in 1915 to 378,000 by 1919.²⁴²

As the war ended, a number of "J-Curve" phenomena were clearly evident in Canada. For workers who had remained on the Home Front, rising expectations of economic growth and prosperity, which were fueled by the accelerated pace of industrialization in Canada during the war, were disappointed by the high inflation and increasing rates of unemployment of the postwar period. However, many of these workers were now unionized and in a position to do something about their frustrations. Demobilized war veterans expected their just reward after surviving the horrors of trench warfare and demanded a \$2000 re-establishment bonus to ease their return to domestic life. With an estimated price tag of nearly \$1 billion, the government, business leaders, and even some veterans turned against the bonus, leaving some soldiers feeling betrayed.²⁴³ In short, the expected "peace dividend" never materialized in the immediate postwar period.

Revolutions, according to Stone's theory, are not created by a single "J-curve" or a single dysfunction. Rather, when a number of dysfunctions occur, usually in rapid succession, the preconditions exist for revolution. While no revolution occurred in Canada, the period 1918-1919 was certainly full of such preconditions.

In 1909, at the height of the Laurier Boom, only ninety strikes and

²⁴² Desmond Morton, A Short History of Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), p. 179

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 178.

lockouts occurred, involving approximately 18,000 workers.²⁴ Only ten years later, as the postwar frustrations mounted over "dysfunctions" in the economy, "the number of strikes and lockouts had risen to 336, and nearly 150,000 workers were affected by them."²⁵ Industrial strife was at its peak during the Winnipeg General Strike of May and June 1919.

Winnipeg was "the home of the Grain Exchange, the railway shops, and a number of industries that had prospered during the war."²⁶ While union strength had increased in Winnipeg during the war, employers still maintained considerable powers. Three strikes in 1917, for example, were defeated by employers who applied for and received *ex parte* injunctions against picketing.²⁷ However, in May 1918, a civic workers' strike, followed by sympathy strikes throughout Winnipeg, resulted in a victory for the workers: higher pay and recognition of the right of most civic workers to strike were obtained.²⁸ A further victory came in June, when the government presented a new Labour policy, albeit without an enforcement mechanism, that included

the right of employees to organize in unions without interference; the right to decent wages; equal pay for equal work for women; and the right of workers to negotiate with employers about their work, pay, and safety.²⁹

Unions were bolstered by these gains and further union growth throughout 1918 and were antagonized by the government's provocative ban on strikes in

²⁴ Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century, 1867-1967 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 158

²⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

²⁶ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921. A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 311.

²⁷ David Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike," op. cit., p. 383.

²⁸ R. C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, op. cit., p. 311

²⁹ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, Canada 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 164

war-related industries in the fall of 1918. By 1919, the climate in Winnipeg seemed increasingly confrontational.

The Winnipeg metal and building trades workers, who initially demanded only union recognition and better wages and working conditions, walked out on their jobs in April 1919. This amalgam of unions had lost three previous strikes to gain recognition (in 1906, 1917, and July 1918) - strikes which "saw the use of *ex parte* injunctions, damage suits, and professional strike-breaking agencies."²⁵⁰ In May 1919, the Trades and Labour Council of Winnipeg called a general strike in support of the action by the metal and building trades workers, an action which some explain as "the culmination of over twenty years of struggle for the city's unions."²⁵¹

The federal government dispatched Arthur Meighen, minister of the Interior, and Senator Gideon Robertson to Winnipeg to report on the strike. Using the Criminal Code to enlarge the definition of sedition and seditious conspiracy, the Immigration Act to deport British-born immigrants, and mounted police as strike-breakers, the Union government helped defeat the strike.²⁵²

The Winnipeg General Strike is an important dividing line between World War I and the 1920s. While the labour movement had become significant and powerful during the war, much of the momentum had been lost after the defeat of the strikers in Winnipeg. The defeat was also a serious blow to the momentum of the insipient One Big Union (OBU) movement. The OBU movement was a group of western trade unions that had split with the TLC, frustrated by its "conservative," eastern craft union

²⁵⁰ David Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike," *op. cit.*, p. 391.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

²⁵² Creighton, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

leadership, during the expansion of industry that took place during World War I.²⁵³ The leadership of the OBU “sought industrial as opposed to craft organization.”²⁵⁴ They also believed that “direct action expressed through sympathetic strikes was to be the chief method of achieving working class demands.”²⁵⁵ Despite the fact that the OBU was not fully organized by the time the Winnipeg General Strike was launched, having only been formed in March, there were meetings held under the OBU banner²⁵⁶ in Winnipeg to discuss industrial organization and the OBU stood to gain from a victory in Winnipeg because such a victory would have proved the OBU approach, as opposed to the TLC approach, worked.²⁵⁷ Senator Gideon Robertson, who was himself an international unionist, saw the strike as a threat not only to the government, but to his own brand of unionism and encouraged international unions to avoid such a militant action.²⁵⁸ The strike, faced with the collusion of government and international unions, could not withstand such an alliance. Neither could the OBU which, now saddled with failure, began to experience serious declines in membership within four years of the end of the strike.²⁵⁹

Winnipeg was not the only site of a strike failure in Canada. During May, June, and July of 1919 more than 115,000 Canadian workers were participating in 210 strikes. Most of these produced bitter defeats for workers.²⁶⁰

²⁵³ J.C. Cameron and F.J.L. Young, The Status of Trade Unions in Canada (Kingston, Ontario Queen's University Press, 1960), p. 50

²⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 50.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 50.

²⁵⁶ Norman Penner, ed. Winnipeg 1919. The Strikers' own History of the Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1973), p. 3

²⁵⁷ Cameron and Young, op. cit., p. 50

²⁵⁸ Penner, op. cit., p. xix.

²⁵⁹ Cameron and Young, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

²⁶⁰ Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History (Toronto: Lorimer and Co., 1989), p. 59.

While the success of previous strikes had brought power to the trade unionists, Winnipeg illustrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that political power, especially that of the federal government, was a weapon that could thwart even the most comprehensive general strikes.

Labour had made efforts to gain political clout, but the short-term results were lacklustre. As discussed in chapter two, the Independent Labour Party of Ontario, which had been founded during the summer of 1917 to contest the federal election of the same year, failed to elect a single I.L.P. candidate to the House of Commons.²⁶¹

Proposals for direct political action by trade unions had been around since the 1880s. However, independent political action had been problematic in the past for Canadian labour, primarily because such action conflicted with the prevailing attitudes of international trade unionists like Samuel Gompers. International unions, with organizations that started in the United States but with affiliated Canadian locals, had existed in Canada since 1860.²⁶² Some of the earliest international trade unions in Canada were the International Moulders' Union of America, the International Typographical Union, and various railroad organizations.²⁶³ By the 1880s, major union organizations like the Knights of Labour and the American Federation of Labour had spread across Canada.²⁶⁴ This development gave Gompers and "Gomperism" significant clout, particularly with Canadian unions affiliated to the American labour movement.

Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labour

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56

²⁶² Dean E. McHenry, *The Third Force in Canada: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, 1932-1948* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1950), p. 17

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.

from 1886-1894, 1896-1924, had rejected the notion of independent political action (such as the creation of a labour party) outright. He believed labour would be better off as an independent pressure group that cut deals to its own advantage with the traditional political parties in the U.S. and Canada. AFL unions were strongly influenced by "Gomperism": most union members maintained their own individual party loyalties and hence, there was no burning desire to create a political party. Given the diversity of political opinion within the AFL, the creation of a single political entity to represent such a diverse body of opinion was an undertaking likely to cause internal strife.

TLC unions had agreed with Gompers on his rejection of socialism, but declared at their first convention in 1883 that "workers should be represented in parliament by 'men of their own class.'" In 1886, the TLC

advised its affiliates to "bring out" candidates "wherever practicable." Two presidents of the TLC, Ralph Smith and Alphonse Verville, were elected to the House of Commons as independent labour members in 1900 and 1906, respectively.²⁶⁵

By 1889, some TLC delegates called for an independent labour party.²⁶⁶ One such delegate, Patrick Jobin, said, "They [TLC members] ought to be tired of the old parties, which have always appealed, not to intelligence, but to ignorance."²⁶⁷ By 1900, the Trades and Labour Congress agreed in principle to the formation of a labour party "separate and distinct from trade union organization," but took no real action until it authorized provincial labour parties in 1906.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp 59-60.

²⁶⁶ Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, Working People (Ottawa: Deneau and Greenberg, 1980), p. 63

²⁶⁷ Ibid., pp 63-64

²⁶⁸ Horowitz, op. cit., p. 60

While plans were made by the TLC to form an independent labour party, the trade union ranks were growing. In 1897, the number of trade union locals was approximately 320; by 1903 it had reached 1,133.²⁶⁶ Despite this growth and some effort by the TLC, the two-party system easily retained its hegemony assisted, of course, by "Gomperism." The Laurier Liberals proved adept at wooing labour, offering it legislation such as the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act (1907), that prohibited strikes and lockouts in mines or public utilities until a three-member board had investigated the dispute.²⁶⁷ Concessions from the Liberals such as the creation of the Department of Labour or the Disputes Act of 1907 seemed to acknowledge labour's place in the scrum of industrial democracy.²⁶⁸ In 1908, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association described the effect of the fragmentation of labour's political loyalties as follows:

The truth is, there is no such thing as a labour vote at all...The labour vote which the leaders refer to is the union labour vote, and even that, if it were united, which it is not, is only a mere fraction of the total vote cast by labour.²⁶⁹

The war changed the ethos of labour politics in Canada. The lessons about political power that were demonstrated by the failure of the Winnipeg General Strike were not lost on the Canadian labour movement. That movement, despite its fragmented, regional character, approached politics with a new vigour heading into the 1920s. In October 1919 one of the provincial labour parties established by the TLC, the Independent Labour Party of Ontario

²⁶⁶ M. Janine Brodie and Jane Jenson, Crisis, Challenge, and Change: Party and Class in Canada (Toronto: Methuen, 1980), p. 59

²⁶⁷ R. Douglas Francis et al., op. cit., p. 185

²⁶⁸ Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada. A Study of American Continentalism before the First World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 156-157

²⁶⁹ Brodie and Jenson, op. cit., p. 68.

won almost every industrial seat in Ontario outside Toronto, and sent eleven men to the legislature to join the triumphant farmers' movement in a Farmer-Labour government (1919-1923). Similar sweeps brought labour caucuses into the Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia legislatures.²⁷¹

Unfortunately, the demise of the Independent Labour parties and an attempted national labour party, the Canadian Labour Party, soon followed this brief success, for the reasons given in chapters one and two, and both were defunct by 1930. [Please see pages 18 and 61-62, respectively.] Despite this failure, members from the short-lived provincial labour parties and the Canadian Labour Party were very much around and active in 1925 and able to serve as delegates to the British Commonwealth Labour Conference of that same year. Given the problems of internal factionalism within Canadian labour, the conference presented the delegates with an opportunity to view how the British Labour Party had dealt with similar problems.

Great Britain

After the conclusion of World War I, Britain seemed headed for a "return to normalcy." Lloyd George, acclaimed as "the man who won the war" and as "the most dominant political leader since Cromwell," was returned with an overwhelming 526 seat majority in the general election of 1918.²⁷¹ Only 59 Labour MPs and 26 Independent Liberals sat in opposition to Lloyd George's government. The government's vast majority in terms of seats was, however, somewhat deceptive when you consider that the Labour Party received two million more votes than it did in 1910, despite the fact that it gained only seventeen more seats. [Please refer to Table One in chapter two for the exact vote and seat totals.]

²⁷¹Heron, op. cit., p. 61

²⁷⁴Kenneth O Morgan, The Oxford History of Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 595.

The 1918 general election "seemed to confirm that socioeconomic normality in many respects was being rapidly restored."²⁷⁵ The Lloyd George government committed itself to "decontrols," the removal of economic regulations which had come into effect during the war.²⁷⁶ Between 1919 and 1921, trade and shipping controls ceased, food rationing ended, factories of 'war surplus' goods were sold off, and the railways were deregulated.²⁷⁷ However, the economic consequences of this "bonfire of controls" combined with the rapid demobilization of British troops (In 1919 alone, more than four million soldiers were demobilized) proved disastrous soon after the brief, postwar boom was over.²⁷⁸

Signs of Britain's postwar "slump" were everywhere by 1921. Inflation quickly followed the "decontrols," encouraged by rampant capital speculation in industry. By March 1920, the price index stood at 323, as against 100 in July 1914.²⁷⁹ The value of Britain's overseas trade declined. In 1921, exports declined by 47.9 percent while imports declined 43.7 percent.²⁸⁰ Wage rates, which had peaked in 1920, when the index number was 260 (1913=100), declined to 170 by 1922.²⁸¹ However, unemployment was the most serious economic problem of all. As shown in Table 4, unemployment had surpassed the two million mark by June of 1921.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 595

²⁷⁶ David Thomson, England in the Twentieth Century (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 67 During the war, ten new ministries and 160 new boards and commissions had come into existence

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68

²⁸⁰ Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 125

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125

TABLE 4: Unemployment in Great Britain during the post-WWI "Slump"²⁸²

<u>Number of Unemployed Persons covered by unemployment insurance</u>		<u>% of those insured</u>
December 1920	691,103	5.8%
March 1921	1,355,206	11.3%
June 1921	2,171,288	17.8%
December 1921	1,934,030	16.2%
June 1922	1,502,955	12.5%
December 1922	1,431,929	12.2%

TABLE 5: Industries, Districts, and Towns in which Unemployment was heaviest in Britain (December 1921)²⁸³

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Percent of Insured Workers Unemployed</u>
Shipbuilding	36.1%
Iron and Steel	36.7%
Engineering	27.2%
Building	20.5%
<u>Districts and Towns</u>	
NORTHERN IRELAND	25%
SCOTLAND	21%
MIDLANDS	18%
NORTHEAST	18%
Barrow-in-Furness	49%
Hartlepool	60%
Stockton	49%
Jarrow	43%
Brynmawr	47%
Handsworth	44%

The figures shown in both Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that the anticipated "return to normalcy" after the 1918 general election was a shattered illusion by 1920-21. The Labour Party, whose development from the turn of the century is chronicled in chapter two, was able to capitalize on this economic instability and use it to attack a government that had claimed it was

²⁸² *ibid.*, p. 126

²⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 126.

"elected to promote national solidarity and social unity."²⁸⁴ Lloyd George's Liberals were further discredited in the eyes of the British labour movement by using emergency powers and strike-breakers in dealing with national strikes by miners, railwaymen, and others (including the police) in 1919-1921.²⁸⁵ Faced with war in Turkey, the Lloyd George coalition government finally fell in October 1922.

Labour's performance in the November 1922 general election reflected a significant expansion of the party's support. Labour elected 142 MPs and its total vote rose to nearly four and a quarter million. [See chapter two, table one.] With the exception of Birmingham and Liverpool, Labour made significant gains in large cities, especially Glasgow, and began to establish an industrial base.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, the old middle-class leadership, many of whom had protested World War I and had lost their seats in 1918, were returned to office including Philip Snowden, Fred Jowett (an architect of the Bradford H.P.), and George Lansbury (the editor of the Daily Herald). MacDonald was returned to Parliament as MP for Aberavon, a constituency in mid-Glamorgan, South Wales, which had previously been a Lloyd George fief.²⁸⁷ Arthur Henderson, the chief architect of Labour's success, was returned to the House of Commons when he won a by-election victory at Widnes (a seat on the outskirts of Liverpool) in 1919 by a mere 987 votes.²⁸⁸ Although he lost his seat in the general election of 1922, he was returned to Parliament with another by-election election victory at Newcastle East in January 1923.

²⁸⁴ Morgan, op. cit., p. 597.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 597

²⁸⁶ David Howell, British Social Democracy. A Study in Development and Decay (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 23

²⁸⁷ David Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), p. 280.

²⁸⁸ F.M. Leventhal, Arthur Henderson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 100.

Another general election was held in December 1923, after Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin suddenly dissolved Parliament over the tariff reform issue. Tariff reform was generally unpopular in Great Britain, and the election swung against the Conservatives.²⁸⁹ While the reunited Liberals improved their position and won a total of 158 seats, the election produced many three-cornered contests, with complicated transfers of votes.²⁹⁰ As a result of these three-way battles, Labour managed to gain 65 seats while its total vote increased by less than 200,000 votes. While Labour lost eighteen seats due mainly to three-way contests, it also won victories in areas where the party had previously been weak: in London alone fifteen seats were gained.²⁹¹

The December 1923 election left the Conservatives, with 258 MPs, as the largest party in the House. However, the Tories lacked an overall majority, and King George V invited Labour to form a government as the larger of the free trade parties. Thus, despite the admonition of Liberal candidate Winston Churchill that a Labour government would be a "national misfortune such as has usually befallen a great state only on the morrow of defeat in war," Ramsay MacDonald formed the first ever Labour government and became prime minister in January 1924.²⁹²

MacDonald knew that Labour was not even remotely prepared to introduce any sort of socialist programme, even if they could get such a programme passed, which was unlikely given their need for Liberal support for any and all legislation. Instead, MacDonald focused on bolstering Labour's

²⁸⁹ Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 55

²⁹⁰ Howell, op. cit., p. 23

²⁹¹ Pelling, op. cit., p. 55.

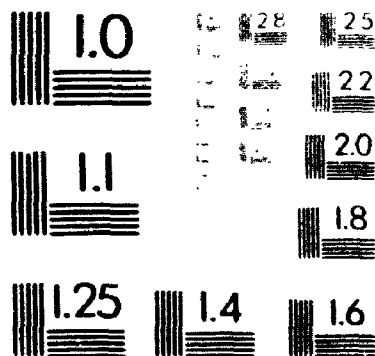
²⁹² Marquand, op. cit., p. 297

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credibility, making Cabinet appointments in a pragmatic spirit to reassure those in the country who felt as Churchill did that "the life of the nation [will] be carried on."²⁹³

MacDonald acted as his own Foreign Secretary, and went outside the party to fill the positions of Lord President, Lord Chancellor, and First Lord of the Admiralty, which were filled by Lord Haldane (a Liberal), Lord Parmoor (a Conservative), and Lord Chelmsford (a Conservative), respectively.

MacDonald kept the hard-line trade union elements to a bare minimum in his cabinet, exemplified by his appointment of J.H. Thomas, general secretary of the railwaymen's union, to the post of colonial secretary. He also tried to keep Henderson, who had previously been a cabinet minister under Asquith and Lloyd George, out of the government altogether.²⁹⁴ Only after pressure from Henderson, Sidney Webb, and others did MacDonald reconsider his decision. Eventually, Henderson was awarded the position of Home Secretary

While the first Labour government was short-lived, there were a number of successes. In the domestic sphere, the party managed to pass the Wheatley Housing Act. Houses built under the act's scheme were eligible for subsidies of £9 per house per annum in urban areas and £12 10s. in rural parishes.²⁹⁵ The incentives in the act restarted house-building at a dramatic pace that even critics acknowledged.²⁹⁶ Under the act, 273,000 houses were built in 1927 (a record), stimulating the economy in the process by getting thousands of building workers back into employment.²⁹⁷

The first Labour government also had successes in foreign policy.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

²⁹⁴ Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²⁹⁵ Ian S. Wood, *John Wheatley* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 135

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

MacDonald's diplomacy, which initiated friendlier relations with the French, also played a crucial role in rallying support for the Dawes Plan, whereby American loans underwrote German reparations.²²⁸ Labour also recognized the Soviet government in Russia, seen by many in the party as a progressive step in normalizing Anglo-Soviet relations. However, the Conservatives used this recognition as a wedge issue, arguing left-wing, pro-Bolshevik lunacy had taken over the Labour Party, and the Labour-Liberal alliance crumbled as a result.²²⁹

In the ensuing general election in October 1924, the Conservatives were returned to power, gaining over eight million votes and securing 419 seats. Labour, which lost 40 seats in the election, actually improved its popular vote total by an additional million votes, receiving a total of 5,489,077 votes (33.0% of the total vote). The Liberals were devastated by the election, losing 118 seats as they were reduced to a rump of 40 seats.

In many ways, the 1924 election secured Labour's position as the alternative major political party to the Conservatives. Labour had proven that it could govern and do so effectively, proving Churchill and their many critics wrong. The party machinery, which had been retooled by Henderson in 1918, was not fully operational. As a result, Labour managed to field 512 candidates in 1924 (a record) and the party's support continued to rise. As the Labour Party headed into the 1925 British Commonwealth Labour Conference, it did so as a well-organized party with government experience that had achieved foreign and domestic accomplishments while in power.

New Zealand

As previously mentioned, Australia elected a Federal Labour

²²⁸ Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 58

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Government as early as 1904. Unlike Australia, New Zealand's Labour Party developed far more slowly, a function of New Zealand's primarily agrarian economy. In fact, the New Zealand Labour Party was not even politically united until 1916.³⁰⁰ This delay was quite understandable because "New Zealand was less industrialized than Australia and less exposed to external ideologies."³⁰¹ The leadership of the New Zealand Labour Party decided that the party would pursue the "parliamentary road."³⁰² The party "based its plans on the idea that working people needed to be realistic, to turn from anarchism, syndicalism, revolution, and 'faddishness,' to win votes and capture political power."³⁰³

Taking the "parliamentary road" first required organization. In the years 1917-1919, the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP) made considerable advances in its organization. In 1917, the NZLP consisted of "a total of 35 organizations, including seven Labour Representation Committees, four Social Democratic Party branches, one Trades Council (Wellington) and 19 unions."³⁰⁴ Shortly after the NZLP's first annual conference, it was resolved, "that members elected under the auspices of the New Zealand Labour Party shall form a separate Party in Parliament, the caucus of which only members pledged to the NZLP shall attend; and no Labour M.P. shall take part in the caucus of any other Party."³⁰⁵ This resolution "formally established the Parliamentary Labour Party, although of course it existed in practice. No

³⁰⁰ R.S. Milne, Political Parties in New Zealand (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1966), p 37

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.37.

³⁰² Stevan Eldred-Grigg, New Zealand Working People (Palmerston North, Australia Dunmore Press, 1990), p. 114.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 114.

³⁰⁴ Bruce Brown, The Rise of New Zealand Labour: A History of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1916 to 1940 (Wellington, NZ: Price Milburn, 1962), p. 32

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

members were actually elected under the NZLP banner until 1918.¹⁰⁶

The NZLP continued its advances in 1918. The 1918 party conference saw an increase in the party's total membership (now 11,000) and the number of unions affiliated with the party (72).¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the party gathered momentum from three important by-election victories, in the constituencies of Grey, Wellington Central, and Wellington South.¹⁰⁸ The 1919 general election established the NZLP as a major electoral force. In that election, the NZLP captured 132,715 votes, 25 percent of the total vote, and elected eight Members of Parliament.

The period from 1919 to 1938 was clearly a period of growth for the New Zealand Labour Party. The NZLP increased its vote total with every general election during that period, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: General Election Results for the New Zealand Labour Party, 1919-38

<u>Year</u>	<u># of Candidates</u>	<u>MPs Elected</u>	<u>Total NZLP Vote</u>	<u>% Total Vote</u>
1919	53	8	132,715	25.0
1922	41	17	145,148	23.3
1925	56	12	184,616	27.5
1928	55	19	196,385	26.9
1931	53	24	241,991	34.9
1935	70	53	392,965	46.1
1938	78	53	528,296	55.8

The year 1919 was also a beginning for Walter Nash, a British immigrant who arrived in New Zealand in 1900. Nash, who had organized a Labour Representation Committee in Taranaki, took a prominent part in deliberations at the 1919 NZLP conference.¹⁰⁹ Nash was elected as his party's National Secretary by 1922, a post he would hold for ten consecutive years.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 33

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37.

Nash would become New Zealand's primary delegate to the British Commonwealth Labour Conferences of the 1920s, described later in this chapter.

At its inception, the NZLP was an uneasy alliance of those who wanted to take "the parliamentary road" and those who preferred doctrinaire Marxist socialism. This unease continued into the 1920s. In May 1920, for example, Arthur Cook, President of the New Zealand Workers' Union criticized "the parliamentary path" of the NZLP's centrist/reformist wing:

Political action in the Labour movement has become too damn respectable...You will gain more in one day by job action than can be obtained in a hundred years by political action.³¹⁰

Despite the tensions between these two wings of the party, exemplified by Mr. Cook's position, divisions within the NZLP gradually dissipated in the early 1920s.³¹¹ This was mainly the result of the post-war economic "slump," which caused wage reductions and a decline in purchasing power for most workers. This economic strife helped heal the divisions within the New Zealand labour movement, and cement an alliance between the various wings of the party. According to historian Bruce Brown, "By 1924-25, at least a practical working unity had been achieved."³¹²

South Africa

In the early 1900s, a number of attempts to establish political parties to represent workers' interests in South Africa were made, but none of the resulting parties (i.e., the Independent Labour Party, the Political Labour League, the Transvaal Labour Party, and the Socialist Labour Party) survived

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 46.

³¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 51.

³¹² *ibid.*, p. 52.

very long.” The only successful political organization was the Labour Representation Committee, which merged into the South African Labour Party in 1909.¹¹³ The similarity with the British Labour Party is unmistakable. As discussed in chapter two, the British Labour Party evolved from the Labour Representation Committee, which had been founded in London in 1900.

In 1912, the South African Labour Party (SALP) “adopted a programme of total geographic and industrial segregation,”¹¹⁴ and advocated a white labour policy, despite the fact its main plank was the “attainment of the socialist objective.”¹¹⁵ The SALP, which never managed to establish links with the South African trade unions, was completely defunct by 1958, when the party failed to elect a single member to Parliament.

As shown below in Table 7, the SALP’s best electoral success occurred in the years 1920-1924, right before the first Commonwealth Labour Conference took place in 1925. The success of the party in the general election of 1920 has been attributed to the SALP’s appeal to disillusioned soldiers who returned from World War I only to face rapid inflation and accelerating labour migration.¹¹⁷

Table 7: General Election Results for the South African Labour Party, 1910-58

<u>Year</u>	<u>% of the Total Votes Polled</u>	<u>Seats Won</u>
1910	4.92	3
1915	7.87	4

¹¹³ Ivan Walker and Ben Weinbren, 2000 Casualties: A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the Union of South Africa (Johannesburg: South African Trade Union Council Press, 1961), p. 319.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹¹⁵ Jon Lewis, Industrialization and Trade Union Organization in South Africa, 1924-55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 20.

¹¹⁶ Walker and Weinbren, op. cit., p. 319.

¹¹⁷ Walker and Weinbren, op. cit., p. 322. See also Eddie Webster, ed., Essays in Southern African Labour History (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), p. 111.

1920	13.30	21
1921	9.94	11
1924	12.80	18
1929	2.99	8
1933	2.61	2
1938	5.06	3
1943	4.12	4
1948	2.76	6
1953	2.78	5
1958	0	0

III. The British Commonwealth Labour Conference of the 1920s

The creation of a "Congress of Labour Parties in the British Commonwealth" was an idea first suggested by the South African Labour Party in its correspondence with the Labour Party of Great Britain in the fall of 1923.³¹⁸ The British Labour Party began corresponding with the labour parties in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand in an attempt to discover if there was any popular support for the conference idea. Canadian J.S. Woodsworth, who would become the first leader of the CCF, responded to the conference proposal in mid-1924 by stating that he "was more than ever convinced that we should establish a much closer relationship between Labour in the Motherland and in the Dominions. Important questions like those of trade and immigration require a very close understanding."³¹⁹ By November 1923, the British Labour Party's Joint International Committee had before it positive responses from South Africa, New Zealand, and Canada. The response was sufficient enough for the Joint International Committee to set a date for the proposed British Commonwealth Labour Conference: August

³¹⁸ Arthur Henderson, letter to P.M. Draper, 14 November 1923, British Commonwealth Labour Conference (hereafter BCLC) Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³¹⁹ J.S. Woodsworth, letter to Arthur Henderson, 16 June 1924, BCLC Papers, File 24/4, Item 42, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England

1924. A preliminary agenda was also proposed, as follows:

I. Inter-Commonwealth Relations

(1) Political

- (a) Defence
- (b) Constitutional

(2) Economic

- (c) Commercial Policy - Tariffs, Preferences, Subsidies, etc.
- (d) Cables
- (e) Shipping
- (f) Co-operative Trading

II. Migration

III. Native or Subject Races

Status, political and economic; military service; unfair competition.

IV. Party Relations

- (a) To each other - exchange of information, etc.
- (b) To the internationals: political (London) and industrial (Amsterdam)

V. The Maintenance of World Peace

- (a) Concerted Action in the Event of threatened war

VI. The Programme of the Labour Parties

- (a) Labor conditions
- (b) Methods of Socialization

The conference began to gather momentum in early 1924. The excitement was, of course, heightened by the formation of the British Labour Party's first government in January 1924 after their success at the polls in the general election of December 1923. Fought over the issue of the protective tariff, the Labour Party gained 191 seats, the Liberal Party gained 159 seats, and the Conservatives gained 258. While Conservative Prime Minister Baldwin

did not at first resign, his Government was soon defeated on a vote of confidence and Labour, the larger of the free trade parties, formed a Government with Liberal voting support in the House of Commons in January 1924

Although the Labour Party's grasp on power was tenuous at best, since Liberal cooperation was essential to their survival, and a full-scale Labour policy such as that pursued by the 1945 Labour Government was an impossibility, the Labour Party's success still resounded throughout the Commonwealth. The Independent Labour Party of Ontario sent a letter to Arthur Henderson in January 1924 which proclaimed,

We are watching with great interest the splendid progress being made by your Party, you are now making History, your actions will be watched by millions of workers throughout the entire world. Your enemies, and they are legion, will watch and elaborate on any mistakes you may make, - if you don't make any they will, as usual, manufacture some for good news purposes - but we have confidence that you are going to make good.¹²¹

William Ivens, General Secretary of the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba, expressed similar sentiments in a February 1924 letter. He stated,

I write to convey to the Labour Government of England the congratulations of the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba on your accession to the government benches, if not to power, and to express our gratitude that you have used your good offices to recognize Russia, to free Gandhi, etc.¹²²

The Canadian labour parties were especially enthusiastic about the conference, and had even begun delegate selection by mid-February. The

¹²¹ L. C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951 (London: Methuen and Co., 1966), p. 169

¹²¹ B. Furey, letter to A. Henderson, 28 January 1924, BCLC Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

¹²² William Ivens, letter to Arthur Henderson, 13 February 1924, BCLC Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

Independent Labour Party of Manitoba, for example, had already selected two Members of Parliament, James S. Woodsworth (Winnipeg) and William Irvine (East Calgary) as delegates by the time Ivens had sent his letter of congratulations to Arthur Henderson.¹²³ The secretary of the Ontario Section of the Canadian Labour Party, James Simpson, also wrote to Mr. Henderson. He explained,

At the conference of delegates to the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, who are identified with the various provincial sections of the Canadian Labour Party, it was the unanimous decision that Canada should be represented at the proposed conference of the Labour Parties of the British Commonwealth.¹²⁴

Despite the initial enthusiasm for the conference idea, several difficulties soon became apparent. Political circumstances made attendance impossible for three important groups of delegates. The South African Labour Party was forced to withdraw all of its delegates because of the general election against General Smuts. Likewise, labour victories in three Australian state elections made the political situation too tenuous for Australian labour leaders to leave. The general election in New Zealand kept New Zealander delegates from attending the conference. By late May 1924, it was clear that a British Commonwealth Labour Conference without delegates from New Zealand and South Africa and with only one delegate from Australia would not possess representative authority.¹²⁵ Therefore, the conference was “regretfully postponed” at the meeting of the National Committees of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party held on 29 May 1924.¹²⁶

¹²³ *Ibid*

¹²⁴ James Simpson, letter to Arthur Henderson, 9 October 1923, BCLC Papers, Correspondence with Canada file, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

¹²⁵ British Labour Party, letter to J.S. Woodsworth, 4 June 1924, BCLC Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

James Simpson wrote back to Arthur Henderson on 24 July 1924, confirming that the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) had received telegrams and letters from the Labour Party confirming the postponement, but made it clear that the leadership of the CLP were hopeful that the conference could go ahead in the next year (1925). The final selection of the Canadian delegation had been made prior to the notice of the conference's postponement. Had the conference not been postponed, J.S. Woodsworth, William Irvine, James Simpson, John MacDonald (Chairman, Communist Party of Canada), and Mrs. Rose Hodgson (Member of the Executive Committee, Canadian Labour Party) would have comprised the official five-member delegation to the conference.²⁷ Woodsworth, who would have led the delegation, wrote in a personal letter to Arthur Henderson that the postponement was a disappointment, but that he could "quite understand that without the delegates from South Africa and Australia the representation would have been very inadequate."²⁸

Despite the initial difficulties and the postponement in 1924, the first British Commonwealth Labour Conference was held at the House of Commons in London from July 27 to August 1, 1925. It was presided over by J. Ramsay MacDonald, who had formed the first Labour government, and attended by delegates from Australia, British Guiana, Canada, Ireland, India, Palestine, and South Africa. Only two of the five Canadian delegates selected to attend the proposed 1924 conference came to the 1925 conference, James Simpson (CLP) and John MacDonald (now a representative of the Canadian Labour Party and not of the Canadian Communist Party). The other two

²⁷ James Simpson, letter to A. Henderson, 14 July 1924, BCLC Papers, Correspondence with Canada file, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

²⁸ J.S. Woodsworth, letter to A. Henderson, 16 June 1924, BCLC Papers, File 24/4, Item 42, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

Canadian delegates were Peter Heenan, M.P.P. and representative for the Independent Labour Party of Ontario, and John Queen, M.I.A. and representative for the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba. With three different political parties represented in the Canadian delegation, more than in any other delegation from the Commonwealth, Canada was simultaneously making a statement about the fragmented nature of social democratic politics back home and a desire to represent that diversity in its delegation.

The Canadian delegation argued strenuously that the conference should be open and accessible to the press. The British Labour Party and Arthur Henderson, in particular, felt that real, open discussions would be hampered by the presence of the capitalist press, and had arranged for press access only to the chairmen's addresses. The Report of the First British Commonwealth Labour Conference made this point absolutely clear. Beneath the "Order of Discussion" for the conference, under the sub-heading "Publicity," it stated that the "chairmen's addresses may be reported by the Press, but otherwise the Conference will be private and an official communique issued to the Press."¹²⁹ The Canadian delegation's argument was that, despite the bias the conference would receive from the capitalist press, the need for publicity was great. Second, MacDonald (CLP) argued that "he did not see why the Chairman should run the risk of misrepresentation, and the delegates should not."¹³⁰ In response, Henderson again restated his position that "because some of them wanted the freest, frankest expression of opinion - not to help the Press but to help themselves - that they desired the

¹²⁹ Report of First British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at the House of Commons (London: The Victoria House Printing Co., Ltd., 1925), p. 8.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 9

exclusion of the Press.”³³¹ The Canadian delegation’s motion to expand access to the press was supported by the Indian delegation but was decisively defeated in a vote. The procedure for voting, which remained consistent throughout the labour conferences of the 1920s, was that each country received one vote and that voting should only take place when there was substantial disagreement as to policy. The Canadian motion was defeated five votes to two; Canada and India voted in favour while Australia, Britain, Ireland, Palestine, and South Africa voted against.³³²

The most interesting speech of the conference was Ramsay MacDonald’s opening statement, because it sought to broaden Labour’s message beyond parochial interests and set forth a vision for a unified labour movement throughout the British Empire. It was also, of course, one of the few speeches the press had access to. MacDonald first made it clear that the assumption that the Conservative Party was the only party that cared anything about the Empire was “all fudge and humbug.”³³³ He noted that

...long before either the Tories or the Liberals ever dreamt of doing anything except talking of the Empire for political purposes the Labour Party was studying the Empire for the purpose of creating *a unified movement*.³³⁴

He stressed that if the Labour movement were to realize their ideals, then “they had now to build up a program of active, practical action which would enable them to realize their ideals.”³³⁵ MacDonald stressed that the common problems of Labour could not simply be fought in Britain, but needed to be fought throughout the Dominions, as well. MacDonald said, “They had to

³³¹ *ibid.*, p. 9.

³³² *ibid.*, p. 9.

³³³ *ibid.*, p. 6.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6. [Italics added.]

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6.

have in mind that Imperial Labour Legislation, international Labour legislation, agreements of standards of living and standards of wages and conditions, must be more and more common if the Dominion Labour Parties and the British Labour Party were going to carry out successfully the industrial and humane programmes they had placed before them."³⁶ This sentiment was reflected in the 1927 Labour Party constitution. Clause 3f of the document, entitled "Party Objects - International," stated it was the goal of the Labour Party to

cooperate with the Labour and Socialist organizations in the Dominions and the Dependencies with a view to promoting the purposes of the Party and to take *common action* for the promotion of a higher standard of social and economic life for the working population of the respective countries.³⁷

The sessions which followed MacDonald's opening statement attempted to define policies and "practical actions" which the Dominion labour parties could rally behind. Unfortunately, creating such policies was easier said than done. The economic, social, and political problems of Britain and the Dominions were not compatible, which encouraged delegates to the conventions to have ideological or theoretical discussions rather than find solutions to irreconcilable differences between the hinterlands and the metropolis. The first session's debate on Inter-Commonwealth Political Relations quickly became rancorous when Mr. T. Johnson, a delegate from the Irish Labour Party, insisted that Ireland and other members of the British Empire/Commonwealth would not automatically be brought into a state of war should Great Britain declare war or become engaged in war in the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁷ Labour Party Constitution and Standing Orders, 1927, Trade Union Documents, ed. W. Milne-Bailey (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1929), p. 384.

future.³³⁸ William Gillies, the secretary of the Joint International Department of the British Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, responded to the debate in a post-conference memorandum in which he tried to allay fears by stating:

It comes to the conclusion that it would be a matter of great difficulty to work out a new and defensible scheme on the basis of each constituent unit bearing full and exclusive responsibility for the consequences of its own policy, if that policy should involve it in war. Fortunately, it is argued that there should be no necessity to work out such a scheme, if the principles of the Geneva Protocol³³⁹ were accepted...³⁴⁰

In a private note, Gillies worried that the Irish position, far from being exceptional, was also strongly supported by the South African and Canadian delegations.³⁴¹ After having been entered into war automatically in 1914, the Canadians were wary about getting dragged into another one of Britain's wars. Liberal leader William Lyon Mackenzie King insisted that Canada be able to decide whether or not it was in its own interest to go to war, and not be limited in its decision making to decide only how much to contribute to a British war effort. As a result of this wariness, the issue was tabled until the second British Commonwealth Labour Conference.

The British Commonwealth Labour Conferences were not held under the aegis of a binding constitution, nor were the parties associated with the

³³⁸ Report of First British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at the House of Commons, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-13.

³³⁹ The Geneva Protocol, which was officially sanctioned at a joint meeting of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress in January 1925, made aggressive war in all circumstances an international crime and resolved that "every international dispute of every kind must be submitted to compulsory arbitration."

³⁴⁰ William Gillies, "Inter-Commonwealth Political Relations and World Peace," memorandum, BCLC Papers, Correspondence 1925-28 Volume II, NMLH, Manchester, England.

³⁴¹ William Gillies, untitled personal note, 1925, BCLC Papers, Correspondence 1925-28 Volume II, NMLH, Manchester, England.

conferences members of a common organization governed in accordance with statutes.³⁴² As none of the organizations were bound by membership to respect the decisions of the conferences, no resolutions of a binding character were accepted by the conference chairmen.³⁴³

While the legalities of what a British declaration of war implied for the Dominions were heavily debated, even to the point where the Joint International Secretary of the Labour Party and the TUC became worried, no binding resolutions were produced by such intense debates. Ultimately, whether the issue was the status of subject peoples or whether Commonwealth wives and children were entitled to workmen's compensation if their family provider was killed in a foreign land, the 1925 conference was in no position to implement decisions even in the event all conference attendees reached unanimous agreement. At best, the conference could serve as an arena for fierce debate and *suggest* paths of action. In this regard, the Commonwealth Labour Conferences followed the same pattern of development as the Commonwealth itself, which was also evolving into a consultative, non-binding organization.

As a result of this, the 1925 British Commonwealth Labour Conference managed to reach only three definitive decisions. Its first decision was that it would recommend to all constituent bodies which made up the conference to "support the demand of India for the immediate grant of self-government."³⁴⁴ Its second decision was to inform the South African trade unions and labour parties that the "question of Indian labour in South Africa was discussed" and

³⁴² William Gillies, untitled personal note, no date [written between 1925 and 1927], BCLC Papers, Correspondence 1925-28 Volume II, NMLH, Manchester, England.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ Report of First British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at the House of Commons, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.

that representatives of South African labour and Indian labour should meet to hammer out a settlement.³⁴⁵ Its third decision was that another British Commonwealth Labour Conference (BCLC) should be held in July or August 1927.³⁴⁶ A second conference was held, but not in 1927. The second BCLC was actually held July 2-6, 1928 in the British Empire Association Rooms of the House of Commons in London.

The agenda for the 1928 conference was nearly identical to the agenda of the 1925 conference. However, attendees of the 1928 conference were required to draft written responses to key questions that arose out of the 1925 debates. The written responses were designed to make the 1928 debates more productive. As he had at the 1925 conference, Ramsay MacDonald presided over the first session as chairman and delivered the second conference's opening address.

MacDonald's speech emphasized three themes: the Empire's food supply, migration, and peace.³⁴⁷ On the subject of the food supply, he urged the Dominion labour parties to join with the Labour Party to create "a great Imperial economic policy."³⁴⁸ He believed that a common policy was needed so that the food supply would be regulated from the point of view of the British Commonwealth as a whole, and not from the point of view of those making the profits.³⁴⁹ Regarding migration, MacDonald urged the Dominion parties to come to some agreed policy on the matter and recommended that the aim of such a policy should be family migration rather than individual

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

³⁴⁷ Report of the Second British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at the House of Commons on Monday, July 2nd, 1928, and following days (London: British TUC and Labour Party, 1928), pp. 4-5.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

migration.³⁵⁰ MacDonald's final theme was peace. He suggested that the British Commonwealth could play an important role as a "just guardian" of peace. He believed that such a role brought with it enormous responsibility, and he rejected the Disraeli notion of the past that Britain should shelve such responsibility and "clear out" of countries in which problems occurred.³⁵¹ MacDonald's comments foreshadowed events that would occur as the British Empire began to dissolve. When the British "cleared out" of India in 1947, they created a Muslim state in Eastern India, Pakistan, almost overnight, leaving behind chaos as ethnic populations moved across the newly-formed borders to their designated homelands.

The discussions on Inter-Commonwealth Political Relations and World Peace at the second conference revealed the different proximities to power of the various delegations. Mr. John Queen, an M.L.A. from Manitoba, found the question of inter-commonwealth relations and the issues raised by the Irish delegation over war at the previous conference to be "rather difficult to discuss."³⁵² He explained that there were only three labour representatives in the Canadian House of Commons, and he could only refer the conference to their opinions as advocated in Canada.³⁵³ Furthermore, he explained that while the chances of another Labour government in Britain were very good, the "chances of the Labour movement in Canada coming into power were very remote."³⁵⁴ He explained that

he did not want to see the Commonwealth as a military unit, but as an association of people for the raising of the standard of life of the people, for the securing of legislation and obtaining reforms that would benefit the people as a whole. He desired a free association of people within

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the Commonwealth.³⁵⁵

Queen also felt that the continuation of a discussion of what happens in the event of war was a useless exercise because "wars today are capitalist wars, waged for advantages of one country over another, and brought no advantages to the workers of any country."³⁵⁶ He believed that the only way to bring about peace was to develop a great Cooperative Commonwealth.³⁵⁷

Other sessions at the second British Commonwealth Labour Conference discussed trading, immigration, social insurance, racial problems, and the question of India. The Indian delegation withdrew in protest from the conference on the grounds that the various labour parties which composed the conference had failed to make the resolution regarding India, passed by the first BCLC, binding. An official statement in response to this protest was drawn up by the conference explaining that the 1925 resolution on India stated that "the delegates at this conference, having heard the views of the delegates, recom mend their constituent bodies to support the demand of India for the immediate grant of self-government." Furthermore, the statement explained

the reasons why the conference declines to adopt binding resolutions on policy is obvious. The executive committee of the organizations in the conference receive no notice of resolutions. The Commonwealth Conference itself has no formal constitution by which the constituent elements bind themselves to pursue a policy laid down by the Conference. The Conferences are held for the purpose of consultation and the exchange of information. The British delegation has never asked the Conference to accept their view of the constitutional position of Ireland in time of war. Neither the Australian nor the Canadian delegations has asked the conference to approve of their policy on migration.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

The sessions "held for the purpose of consultation and the exchange of information" revealed that the movements largely agreed upon what the problems facing the Commonwealth were: unemployment, racial division, how to allow immigration while protecting the standard of living of workers, and world peace.

Delegates gave some sense of how these problems affected their specific countries. The views expressed were mostly predictable, typified by the debate over immigration. British delegates like Labour MP James Stewart saw immigration as beneficial to the Commonwealth because it relieved overpopulated cities in Britain and helped sparsely populated countries like Australia and Canada develop economically. Canadian and Australian delegates worried that since their economies could only expand so fast, excess immigration could bring the cost of labour down to unacceptable levels and thereby hurt workers, particularly union workers. Tom Moore, a delegate from the Canadian TLC, noted that Canada was also concerned it "lost every year as many inhabitants by emigration as she gained by immigration, since some of her people left every year for the U.S. and other places."³⁵⁹ Indian delegates felt the conference saw the problem of immigration *only* from the point of view of the white races.³⁶⁰

In his history of the Labour Party, British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay, David Howell made the point that

apart from their quiescence, the most striking feature of Labour Party conferences in the twenties is the triviality of much of their business... The interminable topic of relationships with the Communist Party

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

occupied much time, and assisted the leadership's mobilization of support. Until 1928, there was little discussion of central issues of policy and strategy.

While the discussions at the early British Commonwealth Labour Conferences were not quiescent, there were times when their informational, consultative nature made the issues discussed seem less than pressing. Despite the occasional appearance of triviality, underneath the calm façade, links were being forged between the parties, information was being exchanged, and the leadership of the Commonwealth's labour movements were brought closer together. The conferences thus educated Commonwealth labour politicians to some of the inevitable realities of inter-Commonwealth relations. In the face of deep differences over economic and social outlook, the labour politicians, like their predecessors before them in more conservative parties, learned to consult rather than dictate.

The influence of these conferences on the Commonwealth labour movements was that they enabled stronger ties between the various parties/countries, especially between Britain and Canada, to develop. These ties became increasingly apparent in the 1930s and 1940s, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

The Later British Commonwealth Labour Conferences and the Canadianization of the British Labour Party Model

The British Commonwealth covered one-quarter of the world's area, included one-quarter of the world's population, and there was scarcely anything needed by industry or human beings that did not get produced in the British Commonwealth. Also produced in the Commonwealth were an enormity of problems, many of which had been around for decades, which reappeared at the third Commonwealth Labour Conference, held at Westminster Hall at the House of Commons in London from July 21 to July 25, 1930. The agenda, finalized at a meeting of the Labour Party National Executive's International Sub-Committee in June 1930, included the following subjects: "Inter-Commonwealth Relations; the International Policy of the British Labour Movement; and the Social Policy of the British Labour Movement."³⁶¹ If one compares this agenda to that of the 1925 and 1928 conferences, one notices very little difference.

Almost no changes were made to the basic organization and procedures laid down at the first British Commonwealth Labour Conference in 1925 and used subsequently in 1928. However, the dispute with the Indian delegation in 1928 over the resolution regarding Indian self-determination passed at the 1925 conference prompted a new conference policy that stated that "resolutions declaring policy will be ruled out of order by the conference chairmen."³⁶² This decision, which was made at the very end of the 1928

³⁶¹ Minutes of a confidential meeting of the Labour Party National Executive's International Sub-Committee, 19 June 1930, BCLC Papers (1930), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³⁶² Report of the Third British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at Westminster Hall at the House of Commons July 21 to July 25, 1930 (London: British TUC and Labour Party, 1930), p. 10.

conference in response to the withdrawal of the Indian delegation, was issued to all potential 1930 conference parties and organizations in their official invitations. The official invitation stated:

In accordance with the decisions of the last Commonwealth Conference, we have to inform you that resolutions declaring policy will not be allowed at this conference, and to intimate that your organization may submit subjects for discussion at the Conference.³⁶³

This decision was, in effect, a resolution to end any and all future resolutions. While it allowed for free and open discussions on the subjects the conference participants elected to discuss, this decision also inhibited any possibility that these consultative conferences would grow into the unified movement that Ramsay MacDonald called for in 1925. In effect, the conference was neutered and reduced to a level of harmless discussion as far as practical outcomes were concerned. If it was impossible for conference delegates to agree upon policy even in a recommendatory and non-binding way (as evidenced by the 1925 conference's resolutions), it was impossible to create a unified labour movement. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Commonwealth itself established its policies along similar lines, produced by non-binding resolutions and consultative meetings.

Despite the fact that no common policies could be arrived at due to the ban on policy resolutions, J.H. Thomas, who had just been made Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in the second Labour Government in June, tried to salvage some justification for the conferences by arguing that

these gatherings were instituted to give an opportunity for those associated with the Labour movement in all parts of the British Empire to come together for a frank interchange of views, so that they might be better able to understand one another and to arrive at a common

³⁶³ William Gillies, letter to conference attendees, 29 April 1930, BCLC Papers (1930), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

solution of the difficulties with which they were faced."³⁸⁴

The historian is therefore left to sort through the deliberations of the 1930 conference in hopes of finding not the tangible but the intangible. From the outset, the conference was able only to build cultural consciousness, and did not serve as a prod to definite action.

While no common solutions were produced by the discussions at the 1930 conference, some subjects, such as Inter-Commonwealth economic relations, did receive a full hearing. Economic relations in the Commonwealth were described by an Australian delegate, P.E. Coleman, as "easily the most vital and acutely controversial question which confronted the conference."³⁸⁵ Given the gathering gloom of the Depression, this was hardly surprising. Labourites in these circumstances were as likely to debate trade -- free or protected -- as their Liberal or Conservative counterparts. Australian and New Zealand delegates argued that tariff protections were necessary to insure that domestic industries were protected from non-union, "sweated" imports.³⁸⁶ Canadian delegate J.T. Foster, a representative from the Trades and Labour Congress, tried to hold the middle-ground by stating that "the trade union movement of Canada could not subscribe to a free trade policy, though it had never been partial to a high tariff policy."³⁸⁷ Ernest Bevin, then a delegate from the British Trades Union Congress, argued that while Britain could not entirely grow its own food supplies and therefore had to import primary products from the Dominions, Britain also had to export

³⁸⁴ Report of the Third British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at Westminster Hall at the House of Commons July 21 to July 25, 1930, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 14-16.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

something.³⁶⁸ He felt that

it would be difficult to buy primary products from the Dominions and balance the purchases with finished products somewhere else. Britain's difficulties could not be regarded as purely here and now: they must be shared with the rest of the Empire...With the Imperial Economic Conference in view they had to approach all these problems afresh.³⁶⁹

Similar logic was in fact being propagated in Britain by Lord Beaverbrook, whose Empire Free Trade programme called for an Imperial trading bloc. The *Express* hailed Prime Minister Baldwin's speech to the Conservative Party conference on 22 November 1929 as an indication that Beaverbrook's policy was now government policy. In that speech, Baldwin acknowledged that

our progress depends on our capacity to visualize the Empire, the Dominions, and the Colonies alike, as one eternal and indestructible unit for production, for consumption, for distribution...³⁷⁰

The debate at the 1930 conference over inter-Commonwealth economic relations mirrored the ensuing debate at the Imperial Economic Conference, held at Ottawa from July 21 to August 20, 1932. The Dominions argued that they could not offer help to British manufacturers without harming their own "infant industries," yet desired increasing concessions from Britain to increase their exports of primary products.³⁷¹ Britain hoped to secure preferences for its manufacturers, while at the same time desired to protect British farmers.³⁷² Just as the delegates at the 1930 British Commonwealth

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³⁷⁰ Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), p. 288.

³⁷¹ C.L. Mowat, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 417.

Labour Conference were at cross-purposes, so were the delegates at the Ottawa Conference, thereby revealing some deep structural differences in the economic make-up of the Commonwealth, differences that no amount of labour solidarity could patch. In the end, Britain, now controlled by a National Government, entered into an upgraded commercial system of tariffs and imperial preferences, due to last until the 1970s.¹⁷³ Under the terms of the agreements Britain signed with the Dominions, Britain

promised to continue and in some cases to increase the imperial preference already given to foodstuffs and other products coming from the Dominions. In return, British imports into the Dominions were to receive preference, but chiefly by increasing the tariff against foreign goods, leaving untouched the rate against British goods, already impossibly high in many cases.¹⁷⁴

The resonance of the issues debated at the 1930 British Commonwealth Labour Conference in the 1932 Ottawa talks proved that labour conferences could produce substantive debates on real issues, especially those issues that had a tangible impact on the Dominions, or at least prepare the way for constructive discussion. Had there been a mechanism in place to follow up conference debates with further communication through joint publications or a joint secretariat, British negotiators may have been able to use information gleaned from such channels to gain a better position in bargaining over tariffs in 1932. This is speculation, of course, but given the fact that the prime minister under the National Government was Ramsay MacDonald, it is unlikely he would have withheld such information from the government if such information would have helped the British delegation in negotiations. MacDonald was not present at the 1930 conference

¹⁷³ K.O. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 611

¹⁷⁴ C.L. Mowat, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

because of governmental responsibilities, and it is unclear whether or not he was ever aware of the debate over inter-Commonwealth economic relations in 1930. It is unlikely he was made aware of the debate in Cabinet because not a single senior or junior cabinet minister attended the conference, ostensibly because of official duties. It is clear, however, that the 1930 British Commonwealth Labour Conference never established official machinery for inter-communication between the various labour movements, even though the possibility of such was briefly discussed at the conclusion of the 1930 conference.³⁷⁵ The Labour movement thus seemed to succumb to the same wariness that inhibited Commonwealth relations. All the parties understood the boundaries of their friendship; they were like-minded but by no means bound to each other.

At the end of the 1930 conference, no time table was established for the holding of a fourth British Commonwealth Labour Conference. It is possible that this was due, in part, to the fact that the Ottawa conference was to be held in 1932. Since the Ottawa conference was to establish a new economic relationship between Britain and the Dominions, the Commonwealth labour movements were, perhaps, waiting to see the effects of those new economic bonds before holding another conference. No attempts were made to hold another conference in the sour economic mood of the 1930s, and with the onset of World War II in 1939, the fourth Commonwealth Labour conference was delayed until 1944.

There were two British Commonwealth Labour conferences held in the 1940s, one held in London in September 1944 and one held in Toronto in September 1947. The 1947 conference, officially called the Dominion Labour

³⁷⁵ Report of the Third British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at Westminster Hall at the House of Commons July 21 to July 25, 1930, op. cit., p. 37

Parties Conference, was the only Commonwealth Labour conference ever held outside of London. These two conferences were also the most significant for Anglo-Canadian relations and for the influence of the British Labour Party model on the CCF.

The 1944 conference was the first Commonwealth Labour conference attended by delegates of the CCF, which had been founded in 1932. The CCF's delegation to the conference consisted of three important and influential members: David Lewis, National Secretary of the CCF, M.J. Coldwell, Leader of the parliamentary party, and the academic and L.S.R. activist Frank Scott, who had helped draft the 1933 Regina Manifesto. David Lewis had been in Great Britain as a Rhodes scholar from 1932 to 1935, during the CCF's formative years.³⁷⁶ He had a number of important contacts with British Labour Party leaders, including William Gillies, Secretary of the Labour Party's International Department and chief organizer of the Commonwealth Labour conferences. In his memoirs, Lewis, who had soaked up the atmosphere of British politics as a Rhodes scholar in the 1930s, wrote that he gained "emotional encouragement [and] intellectual stimulus" from meeting Labour Party members like Arthur Henderson, Arthur Greenwood, a former economics lecturer who had been Minister of Health in the 1929 Labour government, Sir Stafford Cripps, the nephew of Sidney Webb, former Solicitor General, and spokesman for the leftist Socialist League, Herbert Morrison, who helped establish the London Labour Party and became Minister of Transport in 1929, Clement Attlee, who served as Labour Party Leader from 1935 to 1955, and George Lansbury.³⁷⁷ In Britain, Lewis became

³⁷⁶ David Lewis, letter to William Gillies, 28 September 1942, BCLC Papers (1930-44), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³⁷⁷ David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), p. 62.

friends with these Labour Party leaders and others and was allowed to

observe at close range their approach to the national and international crises which were causing so much dissension in their ranks.³⁷⁸

He was also invited to "sit in on meetings of committees and [accompany] some speakers to constituency and other public gatherings."³⁷⁹ While in Britain, Lewis learned of the founding of the CCF "through occasional correspondence with J.S. Woodsworth in Ottawa and with Frank Scott in Montreal."³⁸⁰ His later comments in his memoirs about what he learned from his experience with the British Labour Party are striking: "The application of lessons learned to the Canadian scene remained foremost in my mind."³⁸¹

The British Labour Party's greatest breakthrough came, of course, in July 1945. Churchill expected the 1945 election, held in the wake of victory in World War II, to return the Tories to power. Instead, the British people, weary of years of austerity and anxious not to return to the unplanned economic systems that had begat the Depression, endorsed the post-war vision of Labour, giving them nearly twelve million votes and a 180 seat majority in the House of Commons, as shown in Table 8. A Canadian federal election was also held in 1945, but in mid-June. Coldwell's CCF gained only 28 seats, admittedly 19 more than they won in 1940, but almost all were from the Western provinces. Frank Scott, national chairman of the CCF, wrote to the Labour Party in August 1945 to express his admiration of Labour's success, but also to express regret that the British federal election was held after the Canadian election. He wrote that Labour's

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 61.

splendid victory will be of enormous help to us. Indeed, if our elections had only come after yours we would have made an infinitely better showing. We still have masses of people who will be much more persuaded to socialism by the fact that England has gone that way than by our own best arguments. This, I suppose, is very natural and very human.

Putting it briefly, you have made the world a much more exciting place to live in, and we are all greatly stimulated. Our best wishes for success in the hard pull ahead are with you.³⁸²

Table 8: British General Election Results, July 5, 1945³⁸¹

	<u>Total Votes</u>	<u>MPs Elected</u>	<u>% Share of Total Vote</u>
Labour	11,995,152	393	47.8%
Conservative	9,988,306	213	39.8%
Liberal	2,248,226	12	9.0%

The comparison of the British Labour Party's electoral earthquake in July 1945 with the CCF's performance in June 1945 left the CCF leadership with a number of hard questions to answer. David Lewis, Frank Scott, M.J. Coldwell, and others in the CCF congratulated Labour for its advancement of socialism, while at the same time wondered why the same advancement had not taken place in Canada. A possible explanation is that the Liberal Party under both Laurier and King had hijacked the socialist/welfare state message from the Canadian Left and had therefore pulled away support from Canadian social democratic parties (later the CCF), especially in industrial, eastern Canada. Previously it was mentioned that Lewis made a comment

³⁸² Frank Scott, letter to Morgan Phillips, 5 August 1945, Morgan Phillips Collection, Canada 1949 file, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³⁸³ Butler and Sloman, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

about his stay in Britain in the early 1930s that “the application of lessons learned [from the Labour Party] to the Canadian scene” remained foremost in his mind. Lewis applied the same sentiment to his reassessment of the CCF’s electoral performance in 1945.

Lewis had used the 1944 British Commonwealth Labour Conference to reestablish ties to the Labour Party he had first made in the early 1930s. At the 1944 conference, Canada put post-war reconstruction on the agenda. An entire session was devoted to the subject, chaired by M.J. Coldwell, Frank Scott, and Philip Noel-Baker, who had been a long serving member of the Advisory Committee on International Questions.³⁶⁴ There was general agreement that both a United Nations “with real power” and a world court were needed to maintain the peace, allow for the peaceful resolution of conflict, and provide collective security.³⁶⁵ The discussions about the post-war world were not limited to the international realm, but also focused on the responsibilities of the Commonwealth labour parties.

In From a People’s War to a People’s Peace, a draft manifesto issued by the 1944 conference, a new confidence about democratic socialism was expressed. This new confidence was partly due to the focus and determination brought about by the war effort, but it was also a confidence that when the war was over and victory was had, the Commonwealth labour parties had the vision, the blueprint for building a new post-war world. The manifesto tried to discredit Labour’s potential adversaries by blaming the rise of fascism on capitalist economic conditions:

³⁶⁴ The Advisory Committee on International Questions was established in 1918 to keep the Labour Party informed on foreign affairs.

³⁶⁵ Frank Scott, M.J. Coldwell, P. Noel-Baker, et al., *Fourth British Commonwealth Labour Conference, Tuesday Session on Post-War Reconstruction, 19 September 1944, BCLC Papers (1930-44)*, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

The new democratic world order will not come by hopes alone. It must be built through unremitting struggle and international Labour and Socialist unity. The forces responsible for the rise of Hitlerism must be destroyed for all time. The economic conditions which sow the seeds of Fascism, wherever they may be found, must be eliminated....This requires for all peoples a programme of full employment, rising standards of living, active participation in economic institutions, and membership in a world organization designed to establish and develop the rule of international law in international relations.

Peace to endure needs democracy; democracy to live needs Socialism. This is the unmistakable lesson of the bitter years of capitalist crisis between the wars and of the progress of the war itself.³⁸⁶

The ambitious, confident tone of the 1944 conference was distinctly different from that of the 1930 conference. Whereas the 1930 conference actually disallowed resolutions, the 1944 conference dismissed the "no resolutions" clause and passed a manifesto that returned to the theme of a united Commonwealth movement for a united purpose: the need for socialism, the "unmistakable lesson" of the war.³⁸⁷ An entire clause of the resolution, filled with bold language, was devoted to the responsibility of the Commonwealth labour parties in achieving that purpose:

Through unity in ideas and in action, the Labour and Socialist movements of the Commonwealth cannot only strengthen the bonds of cooperation between their own peoples but can and must give new strength and encouragement to the popular forces everywhere. Ours is a major responsibility to ensure that governments pursue an international policy which will encourage the emergence and victory everywhere of democratic and Socialist forces, which will deny aid and comfort to discredited monarchies, spokesmen of unrepresentative governments, and other past ruling classes; and which will lay so^ld

³⁸⁶ From a People's War to a People's Peace. Manifesto issued by the Conference of Labour Parties of the British Commonwealth of Nations held in London, 12-27 September 1944, BCLC Papers (1930-44), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

foundations for lasting peace through collective security against aggression and through positive measures for economic and social development in all lands. Ours is also a major responsibility to ensure that the unity which has been achieved during the war between the British Commonwealth, the United States, China, and the Soviet Union is carried unbroken and strengthened into the peace.

This Conference accepts the challenge the present world crisis has placed before these parties represented in its discussions. It presses upon those parties the urgency of seeking as swiftly as possible and with all their energy to win the masses to their programme of democratic Socialism. No single factor could be of greater value to the future of the world than Labour and Socialist Governments in each of the nations of the Commonwealth, working unitedly together, in cooperation with similar forces in other countries toward international peace and social justice.³⁸⁸

The enthusiasm of the 1944 conference had different outcomes in different corners of the Commonwealth. The British Labour Party received a clear mandate from the British people in 1945. The New Zealand Labour Party, which formed its first government in 1935 and governed through the end of World War II, was again reelected in the New Zealand general election of 1946. Citing its record during the "Ten Good Years," the New Zealand Labour Party's election themes included "the party's successful conduct of the war, its expansion of industry and production, and its help to the farmers through planning and stabilization."³⁸⁹ Likewise, the Australian Labour Party, which had not formed a government since the fall of the Scullin administration in 1932, formed a government on October 7, 1941 and would hold power until 1949.³⁹⁰ In short, the labour parties in Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia all formed governments in the 1940s. In 1945, the CCF

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ R.S. Milne, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

³⁹⁰ B. Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 174 and Leon Epstein, Political Parties in Western Democracies (London: Frederick Praeger, 1967), p. 161.

hopefully urged Canada to do the same: "Turn Left Canada," M.J. Coldwell urged the nation.³⁹¹ When the same result did not occur in Canada, the CCF leadership tried to understand why the same phenomenon did not occur in Canada, despite some success at the polls in 1945.

The 1944 conference gave David Lewis an opportunity to present a report on the historical development of the CCF. Lewis opened his speech by stating that an outline of the history, structure, and issues of the CCF was needed for two reasons:

First, because perhaps it is less known to most comrades than is the structure and nature of the parties in other parts of the Commonwealth and second, because there are some important differences between the *structure* of our party and the *structure* of the other parties.³⁹²

He related that in the 1930s there was no large-scale socialist movement in Canada, only a scattering of socialist parties, labour parties, and farmers' parties.³⁹³ Lewis explained that the founders of the CCF had the "supreme wisdom of forming the party out of the[se] existing parties," and thus, the CCF became a federation of labour, socialist, and farmer groups.³⁹⁴

As far as the trade unions were concerned, Lewis noted that "all other parties in the Commonwealth are based mainly on trade unions."³⁹⁵ Canada found itself caught between the British tradition and influences from the United States and the intrinsic social, regional, and economic realities of

³⁹¹ M.J. Coldwell, *Left Turn, Canada* (Toronto: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1945).

³⁹² David Lewis, "The Situation in Canada," Fourth British Commonwealth Labour Conference, 12-28 September 1944, London, England, BCLC Papers (1930-44), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

North America.³⁹⁶ Most Canadian unions were international unions with AFL affiliations, and AFL unions, influenced as they were by Gomerism, were prohibited from or chose not to affiliate with the CCF. Lewis told the conference:

For many years, while the CCF passed resolutions inviting the trade unions to unite, and while we constantly won support among the rank and file, the unions did not come into the CCF as corporate bodies.³⁹⁷

Despite the difficulties, Lewis noted that the AFL-CIO split in 1938 had prompted the United Mineworkers' Union to affiliate with the CCF along with a few others to bring the total trade union affiliated membership to 50,000.³⁹⁸ However, Lewis also made it clear that "we do not speak of the CCF as a labour party, as mainly representing industrial workers, and even more particularly the organized industrial workers."³⁹⁹ He also repeated the point that the CCF approach was different from that of the other parties represented at the conference. He reinforced this point in his speech by noting:

As every labour party takes it for granted that its job is to fight the day-to-day issues of the industrial working-class movement, for trade unionism, higher wages, etc., we in the CCF take it that we also fight for the farmer, and his mortgage state, security of tenure, etc. Some of the things which New Zealand has done we have copied with benefit into our programme. Our approach to the farmer is exactly the same as to the Labour problem, to rally the farmers round the things for which they need benefit.⁴⁰⁰

Although his speech was, in many ways, a justification and defense of

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

the CCF's structure, the status of trade unions within the CCF was clearly a gnawing issue for Lewis. While proclaiming that trade union affiliation "was progressing and there is an excellent relationship between us," he also made it clear that the CCF was a federation and that the "trade unions, no more than the farmers or the middle-classes, should not be given at any time a predominant controlling hold on the CCF."⁴⁰¹ He also reaffirmed the CCF's commitment to "one delegate, one vote," a veiled criticism of the trade union bloc voting practices that were used in Labour Party conferences.⁴⁰² Despite Lewis's criticism, he was very generous in his praise of the British Labour Party at the end of the conference:

We from Canada have always realized the very important and decisive role which the British Labour Party has always played, and necessarily must play in the world development when this war ends. We have met members of the British Labour Party - Executive members, Ministers, and members of the rank and file; we have met representatives of the trade unions; we have seen the great cooperative movement of this island at work; and I tell you, without the normal politeness of a guest, but with real sincerity, that we shall leave this Conference, and country, greatly encouraged by what we have seen, and convinced that the Labour Movement of Britain will play a worthy and important role in the building of a post-war world.⁴⁰³

Lewis's expectations for the CCF were nonetheless quite high:

I think it can be said without any exaggeration that the CCF is now a major political force in Canada, and that there is every likelihood that after the next federal election the CCF will be either the first or the second party in the Federal Parliament. It is quite possible that after the next Federal Election no party will have a majority in our Federal Parliament, and the CCF may possibly be the largest single group.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ Lewis, David. Concluding address. Fourth British Commonwealth Labour Conference, 12-28 September 1944, London, England, BCLC Papers (1930-44), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴⁰⁴ Lewis, David. "The Situation in Canada," Fourth British Commonwealth Labour Conference, 12-28 September 1944, London, England, BCLC Papers (1930-44), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

These expectations, expressed at the 1944 conference, did not become reality in the general election of June 1945. The CCF became only the third largest party in the Canadian House of Commons with 28 seats, 39 seats fewer than the 67 ridings controlled by the Conservatives. As previously mentioned, this failure was more than just a domestic setback; it was failure during a period when other labour parties throughout the Commonwealth were winning elections and gaining power.

As the CCF began to reassess its failure to live up to its own expectations and the expectations of its fellow Commonwealth labour parties, Lewis began to question his own assessment at the 1944 conference that the CCF structure was the best model for the Commonwealth labour movements. He wrote to Morgan Phillips, Secretary of the British Labour Party, asking that a fraternal delegate be sent to observe the CCF during the summer of 1946, especially during the 1946 CCF convention.⁴⁰⁵

Sam Watson, a trade union representative from the Durham area National Union of Mineworkers, was dispatched to observe the CCF convention in 1946. Lewis wrote that the "presence of a fraternal delegate from the British Labour Party was the keynote of our convention and gave a tremendous amount to the delegates as well as the people generally."⁴⁰⁶ He spent several months in Canada, returning to Britain in November or December of 1946.⁴⁰⁷ His evaluations of the CCF were published in a report in March 1947.

⁴⁰⁵ Lewis, David. Letter to Morgan Phillips, 16 August 1946, Morgan Phillips Collection, Canada 1946-49 file, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ Watson, Sam. Letter to Denis Healey, 7 December 1946, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

In the report, Watson acknowledged that even the mere threat of its growth was an invaluable stimulus toward social legislation by capitalist governments, even Conservative ones.⁴⁰⁸ He addressed the fact that the development of a working-class labour party came much later in Canada than in other countries in the Commonwealth by stating that

The probable historical reason for the late development of such a movement in Canada lies in the fact that the Canadian Trade Union Movement has always been part of the American Labour Movement. The Samuel Gompers tradition of "no independent politics" was, until very recently, the dominant tradition in Canadian unions. Even today it serves as a barrier to rapid development of trade union political action through and with the CCF. The traditional Gompers attitude is reinforced in modern times by the Communist influence which in Canada, as in the United States, opposes every attempt at independent political action by Labour, unless the Communists can control it. Thus, the Canadian Communists (known as the "Labour Progressive Party") have been as strong a factor, if not stronger, than the Gompers tradition in keeping Canadian unions from following the development of their sister organizations in other parts of the British Commonwealth.⁴⁰⁹

Watson noted that "for these and other reasons...the result has been that the CCF, unlike the labour parties in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand was from the start a genuine combination of both farmer and labour forces...in this sense the Canadian CCF is rather different from its sister labour parties. However, in its general ideology and programme it is very similar."⁴¹⁰ He noted that while David Lewis, who he referred to as "one of the most brilliant men in Canadian political life," had made real and sincere efforts to make the Canadian worker trade union and politically conscious, the fact

⁴⁰⁸ Sam Watson, Report on Canadian Tour on behalf of the Labour Party under the auspices of the Canadian Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, Denis Healey Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

remained that

the great majority of the Canadian workers are not yet organized into the trade union movement and until they are the CCF will lack strong trade union support, and so long as it lacks this, it will be open to the criticism that it is a party of "intellectuals," lacking support and outlook.⁴¹¹

Despite this fundamental difficulty, he noted that discussions were taking place between the Canadian Congress of Labour and the CCF "with a view to political activity in the trade unions in support of the CCF and the possibilities for future liaison seem to be propitious."⁴¹² He concluded his report by stating:

My experience was that sections of the Canadian population are more British than we and are intensely interested in the work of the Labour Government in Britain. In fact we should do all within our power to assist this young and virile Commonwealth party. We have Labour in power in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand and there is no reason why we should not have Labour in power in Canada within the next decade, if we in the Labour movement in Britain give all the assistance we can.⁴¹³

After the Watson Report and the new discussions between the Congress of Labour and the CCF, it was clear that the CCF was taking steps to remould itself in the image of the British Labour Party. The 1947 British Commonwealth Labour Conference, held in Toronto, should have been a conclusive step in the evolution of the Labour Party model in Canada. Held in the wake of labour party successes throughout the Commonwealth, the 1947 conference should have been an opportunity for the CCF to ask its

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*

⁴¹² *ibid.*

⁴¹³ *ibid.*

Dominion colleagues about their experience in achieving and maintaining power, a chance to provide the CCF with some advice about various pitfalls and, of course, about how to forge stronger trade union links.

Much of the enthusiasm of the 1944 to mid-1946 period was lost in the pre-conference planning for the 1947 conference. In November 1946, Lewis himself wrote to the British Labour Party to request a Commonwealth Labour Conference be held in Canada in 1947 "to be open to every Labour party in the Commonwealth and Empire and parties who have the same ideals and objectives as we have."⁴⁴ Lewis felt that if the conference would be held in Canada, the CCF would gain prestige throughout North America. This proposal was agreed to at a meeting of the International Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee on February 19, 1946, but only grudgingly.⁴⁵

The correspondence, particularly from the International Department, was almost entirely discouraging about the prospects of a Commonwealth Labour Conference being held in Canada. An unsigned memorandum to David Lewis from the International Department (from either Arthur Greenwood, Morgan Phillips [unlikely because he put the Canadian conference on the agenda and was supportive of the concept], or R.T. Windle), expressed great dissatisfaction with the CCF's estimates of administrative expenses.⁴⁶ The memorandum suggested that the estimates from the Canadians were too high and recommended that were the conference to be

⁴⁴ Watson, Sam: Letter to Denis Healey, 7 December 1946, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴⁵ Minutes (no. 7) of the International Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee, 19 February 1946, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴⁶ Unsigned memorandum from the Labour Party's International Department from A. Greenwood, M. Phillips, or R.T. Windle, 31 December 1946, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

held in London, the cost would be much cheaper.⁴¹⁷ The memorandum also suggested that the approval for the invitation of delegates from the colonies and emerging independent states in Africa and Asia would not be granted on the grounds that "it is very unlikely that any colonial party could afford to send delegates specially to Canada, and you would tend to get at best local nominees who are incapable of playing any serious part in discussion."⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, the cost and distance of holding a conference in Canada was used as an excuse to say that the British delegation would not contain any ministers or anyone of great authority in the political labour movement in Britain.⁴¹⁹ It is possible that some of this negativity stemmed from the fact that Lewis was so active in pursuing the 1947 conference that he virtually replaced the International Department as the chief conference organizer, perhaps building bureaucratic resentment. In one memorandum, Lewis wrote, "I am taking the liberty of sending copies of this [proposal] to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa."⁴²⁰ Hugh Dalton, who would become Chancellor of the Exchequer in the third Labour government, was the most negative toward the proposal for holding a conference in Canada. He stated that he did not think Canada would be suitable as a location as early as January 1946, and continued to be vehemently opposed to Canada thereafter.⁴²¹ He argued New Zealand was far more suitable.⁴²²

After Canada was approved as the host for the 1947 conference,

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Lewis, David. Letter to Harold Laski, 10 December 1945, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴²¹ Dalton, Hugh. Letter to Morgan Phillips, 3 January 1946, Morgan Phillips Collection, Canada 1946-49 file, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

correspondence continued through July 1947 about the specifics. Lewis continued to push for *invitations* to parties/groups from the non-self-governing parts of the Empire. Time after time, this suggestion was rejected, which left Lewis baffled. He appealed to Labour MP Denis Healey in December 1946, questioning the Labour Party's rigidity on this point:

The point I am trying to make is that there would seem to us to be little reason for maintaining any sort of rigid attitude. After all, the conference itself is not in any sense a legislative or binding body. It is, in the best sense, a medium for the exchange of experience and opinions in order to cement socialist relationships within the British Commonwealth and Empire.⁴²³

For a conference at which Lewis and the CCF proposed to discuss the collaboration of Commonwealth labour parties on information, publications, policy, and the exchange of speakers, it was ironic that the CCF received so very little cooperation from Britain on the 1947 conference. The CCF tried to be accommodating by undertaking whatever administrative costs were associated with the conference. However, in March, the Commonwealth and Imperial Affairs Sub-Committee of the National Executive Committee passed a resolution that agreed

that the scope of the Dominions Conference should not be extended to cover colonial parties and that any initial conference including colonial parties would more properly be held in London.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ Lewis, David. Letter to Denis Healey, 19 December 1946, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴²⁴ Minutes of the Commonwealth and Imperial Affairs Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee, 21 March 1947, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

Lewis responded to this resolution, which he had been informally told of by Denis Healey in February, by stressing the point that

if we limit our conference in the way suggested by you, we would open ourselves to a comparison that would certainly not redound to the credit of the British Labour Party in particular, and the Democratic Socialist movement of the world in general. Here is [the Empire] Communist conference where all the colours and races of the Empire are represented; here, on the other hand, is a Democratic Socialist conference, and only whites are there... All of us in the CCF are convinced that if our conference is limited, certain groups in the United States will not fail to take note of the fact, and to give it widespread, damaging publicity.⁴²⁵

Lewis also stated that the technical objections raised over inviting guests from the non-self-governing parts of the Empire, such as the high cost involved and the fact that some of the colonies lacked well-defined socialist parties, were inflexible and unimaginative, especially since the purpose of the conference would largely be educational.⁴²⁶ Lewis stated that whether a delegation could or could not afford to go had nothing to do with whether the invitation should be offered in the first place.⁴²⁷

The real reason the parties from the non-self-governing parts of the Empire were not invited was finally expressed in a personal letter from Philip Noel-Baker. Noel-Baker explained that the lame technical reasons for preventing invitations from being extended were merely a cover. He explained that the Labour Party's Colonial Secretary (note Labour was in power in 1947), Mr. Creech Jones, was worried about bad press over the fact

⁴²⁵ Lewis, David. Letter to Denis Healey, 15 February 1947, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

Labour had not moved as fast as expected in promoting colonial progress and worried that the race issue would dominate the discussions. He cited, for example, the native Nigerian leader known as Mr. Zik, who might claim to be a socialist, but is, in fact, "a leader of a violent anti-British campaign [who demands] an immediate end to British rule...If such a man came to our Conference, we should, have a colour fight on every question."⁴²⁶ Once again, the British Labour Party had revealed that its ideological commitment to the international labour movement could be tainted by imperial reality.

By July, Lewis acquiesced to an all Dominions meeting, stating that the truth of the matter related in the Noel-Baker letter was reassuring. Lewis wrote, "I must admit were a little worried lest our suggestions had been treated rather lightly."⁴²⁷ While the conference went ahead in September, the resistance to the Canadian efforts by the International Department had clearly damaged the Commonwealth labour movement. While the labour parties shared ideals, the British Labour Party bureaucracy in the International Department was threatened by the usurping of London's position as the centre of the international labour movement and did everything in its power to hinder the success of the Toronto conference. The International Department deliberately failed to inform South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand about plans for the conference and tried to insure that it controlled the flow of information from Canada to the other Dominions. No British ministers attended the 1947 conference, which clearly hurt the feelings of many in the CCF leadership. CCF leaders were expected as a matter of course

⁴²⁶ Noel-Baker, Philip. Letter to David Lewis, 29 April 1947, BCLC Papers, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

⁴²⁷ Lewis, David. Letter to Philip Noel-Baker, 9 July 1947, Commonwealth Subcommittee Reports and Correspondence file (1930/1947-53), BCLC Papers, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England.

to attend the conferences in London, while Labour leaders in London failed to attend the only labour conference held outside of London in 22 years. Thus, just as the Canadian social democratic party prepared to embrace the British Labour Party's model of organization, the Labour Party shunned its embrace.

It would be another ten years before another Commonwealth Labour conference would be held. The hurt feelings dissipated, but the colonial issues did not. The Commonwealth Labour Conference of June 1957, held at Beatrice Webb House near Dorking, Surrey, confronted issues regarding the British withdrawal from Empire. The process of decolonization was changing the very nature of the Commonwealth, and, to a certain extent, the relationship between the British Labour Party and other democratic socialist parties throughout the Commonwealth. If delegates at the 1925 Commonwealth Conference had harboured the opinion that the British Labour Party could serve as the nucleus of a new and united bloc of Commonwealth labour parties which could influence world affairs, those opinions were shattered, if not by the actions of the British Labour Party bureaucrats in 1947, then by the positions of key Labour speakers throughout the 1957 conference.

Hugh Gaitskell, in his address to the delegates of the 1957 conference, argued that the British Labour Party did "not intend to dictate to you or impose our views on you: each country must find its own solutions to its own problems... [T]herefore, I declare that a rigid association would create more difficulties than it would solve."⁴³⁰

Gaitskell's speech exemplifies a dramatic change in tone and message from the earlier BCLC speeches of 1920s in 1925 and 1928, Ramsay MacDonald

⁴³⁰ Rt. Hon. Hugh Gaitskell, address, 1957 BCLC, 28 May 1957, Dorking, England, Records of the Labour Party Press and Publicity Dept., National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England

tried to galvanize the party behind a common policy. He used terms like the "great Imperial economic labour policy." Furthermore, there was some sense that a united Commonwealth organization with the Labour Party in London as its heart or perhaps, more to the point, its leader was not only possible, but necessary to implement the types of united policies that people like MacDonald were pushing. By 1957, the idea of such an organization was described as a "rigid association," unable to be flexible enough to confront regional issues and problems. Of course, this argument was taken one step further. Unlike MacDonald, who felt that the common problems of labour could be solved by common solutions if the labor parties throughout the Commonwealth had the will to unite, Gaitskell argued that Labour did not want to impose or dictate its views. Of course, it followed that Labour no longer wanted to offer suggestions, either. This latter point is further confirmed by Labour's advocacy of regional assemblies to replace the now outdated Commonwealth Labour conferences. After all, if Labour was no longer interested in promoting Commonwealth solutions to Commonwealth problems, what was the use of a Commonwealth Labour Conference?

The Commonwealth Labour Conferences were thus a defunct idea by the early 1960s, thought of as an inflexible tool controlled by the Labour Party in Great Britain, which no longer desired such control. However, the transfer of the British Labour Party model to the CCF had already occurred during the 1944 conference, at the zenith of Commonwealth Labour conference success. This model reemerged as the CCF transformed itself, first through a merger with the Canadian Labour Congress and later when it became the New Democratic Party in 1961.

The importance of the British Labour Party model in the

transformation of the CCF was expressed by Morden Lazarus in The Story of the Formation of the New Canadian Labour Congress in 1956:

Here is the problem. The old TLC was politically neutralist. It followed the old Gompers policy (Gompers was one of the chief architects of the American AF of L) of rewarding your friends and punishing your enemies. Vote for any man, regardless of party, who's presumably on your side. The newer CCL liked the the British pattern -- where the unions are active in politics. The CCL didn't go as far as British Labour which has its own political party. Instead it endorsed the CCF, a ready-made instrument to express its economic and political convictions. But it voted to support the new political party only after that party was already ten years old. It has never affiliated with the CCF.

How were these two points of view being reconciled? The compromise formula was simple. The unions and federations which make up the Congress are free to make their own choice - back a political party or not, as they wish. The Congress itself will have an active Political Education Committee which will work with "kindred spirits" like farm and cooperative organizations, other non-Communist Labour organizations and the CCF.

It is true that the CCF is no longer officially endorsed by the new Congress, but the feeling of a strong group of unions is *that the choice is between the CCF and the formation of a new Labour Party.*⁴³¹

At its April 1958 convention at Winnipeg, the Canadian Labour Congress called for a political realignment and took the first steps toward the formation of what would eventually become the New Democratic Party.⁴³² It was, however, in the same year that the CCF suffered one of its worst general election defeats. Only a year earlier, the CCF had managed to hold twenty-five seats, even though their popular vote had slipped to 9.7 percent, the lowest level of support for the party since 1940.⁴³³ However, the 1958 election, a

⁴³¹ Lazarus, Morden, The Story of the Formation of the New Canadian Labour Congress (Toronto: Across Canada Press, 1956), p. 2.

⁴³² Stanley Knowles, The New Party (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 9.

⁴³³ Desmond Morton, The New Democrats, 1961-1986: The Politics of Change (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), p. 19.

landslide victory for the Diefenbaker Conservatives, who took 65 of the 70 Western seats left the CCF with only eight seats (five in the West) and a mere 9 percent of the vote.⁴³⁴ Leading CCFers M.J. Coldwell and Stanley Knowles were both defeated in their respective ridings. After the 1958 electoral debacle, a clear signal that the party's organizational structure from the 1930s had outlived its usefulness and that there were very evident dangers for a party too dependent upon the support of any one region or class, the CCF accepted the invitation from the Canadian Labour Congress for a political realignment and soon formed a joint CLC-CCF committee, which was rechristened the National Committee for the New Party (NCNP).⁴³⁵

Stanley Knowles, who observed the three-year gestation period of the New Party before it was officially founded at the New Party Convention in 1961, noted that same year that

although labour's interest in legislative matters has been expressed very clearly across the years through pronouncements and representations, Canadian labour has taken its time to decide what course it favours so far as political action is concerned. Should it be indirect and nonpartisan, or should it be direct, either in association with or as part of a particular party?

For many decades the Canadian trade union movement found itself affected by two influences, that of the United Kingdom which called for direct political action, and that of the United States which in perpetuating the Gompers tradition insisted that trade unionists should not align themselves as such with any political party. Even when the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada had as its President a Labour Member of Parliament, in the person of Alphonse Verville of Montreal, it reaffirmed the Gompers tradition in resolutions passed at its annual conventions. But the proposal for direct political action kept coming up. Committees were appointed to study the question. Parties indeed were formed, but their activities were for the most part local and short-lived. What has happened in recent years is that the Canadian trade union movement has resolved this issue. It has made

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

up its mind that something closer to the United Kingdom pattern, rather than the Gompers tradition, meets both the needs of the trade union movement in this country and our parliamentary form of government. The decision taken at Winnipeg in 1958 was thus the culmination of nearly a century of Canadian trade union interest in legislative matters and half a century of searching for the best means of taking political action.¹³⁶

The acknowledgement from Knowles that the decision in 1958 was the culmination of "half a century of searching for the best means of taking political action"⁴³⁷ reveals that the British Labour Party model, whose application to the CCF was so long delayed, was finally relied upon to organize the New Party, thus ending the identity crisis which had so long plagued the CCF. If the federative model of the CCF and the British Labour Party model could be thought of as being engaged in a theoretical struggle, then it was the British Labour Party model that was triumphant in 1961, as centralizing aspects of the British Labour Party constitution finally appeared in the NDP's constitution.

The Draft Constitution which was produced by the New Party Founding Convention of 31 July - 4 August 1961 used the British Labour Party model to reshape the emerging New Democratic Party. It made affiliated membership open to trade unions as long as they undertook "to accept and abide by the constitution and principles of the Party, and are not associated with any other political party."⁴³⁸ It established financial links from the affiliated unions to the party through membership fees; union members contributed to the funds of their party through their union affiliation fees.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴³⁸ Draft Constitution and Programme of the New Party for presentation to the New Party Founding Convention of July 31 - August 4, 1961 (Ottawa: Mutual Press, 1961), p. 7.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

Article V established the right of union delegates to be represented at National Conventions at the rate of one delegate for each 1,000 members.⁴⁴⁰ The delegates to the National Convention were given the right to elect the members of the New Party's National Council which, in turn, elected the members of the National Executive.⁴⁴¹

In short, with the Draft Constitution of the New Party, the CCF and its federative organizational model were abandoned and replaced by the British Labour Party model. Knowles remarked that the relationship between the New Party and the trade union movement was one of the party's greatest strengths. He wrote:

Without trade unions and collective bargaining, there is no rule of law in employer-employee relationships. Without trade unions industry is a dictatorship of the employer. Because we have trade unions, we have what might be called constitutional government in industry. They are as much a part of the process of democracy as the making of laws by an elected council, legislature, or parliament. The very attacks that have been made on the trade union movement have prompted a great deal of public discussion about its role in society, and as that discussion continues our trade unions emerge as one of the distinguishing marks of a free society.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁴² Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 112

Conclusion

When the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was founded in the depths of the Depression, adherents of Canada's existing mainstream parties looked on with a mixture of interest, scepticism and, perhaps, a touch of fear. James Lorimer Ilsey of the Liberals suggested that the CCF would never gain a foothold in Canada because of its lack of essential cohesion. Ilsey, Mackenzie King's hand-picked lieutenant in Nova Scotia, knew the delicate internal balance of Canadian political parties and believed that only the loosest of formal political associations survived in Canada. The Liberal Party was, after all, the National Liberal Federation. Ilsey doubted that the new party born in Regina, with its binding commitment to its farmer, labour, and socialist components within the party, would ever find real party unity.

The founding document of the CCF, the 1933 Regina Manifesto, nonetheless made the federative structure of the party quite clear. The CCF was organized in the midst of economic calamity to provide a socialist answer to the Great Depression, and to provide a voice for groups, like the western farmers and eastern industrial workers, which had been hardest hit by the economic instability of the 1930s.

Great cataclysms, such as economic depressions or wars, produce human suffering by their very nature, but they also allow human beings to unite together around common causes. The CCF was such a cause; it united a collection of fragmented groups and parties which had existed throughout Canada before the Great Depression. These groups were disunited before the Great Depression because they lacked essential cohesion: they were held apart by distinctive Canadian divisions rooted in region, economic interests, and

class. These divisions were temporarily submerged during the Great Depression to allow the CCF to be created, but they remained nonetheless.⁴³

Critics like Ilsley were right in arguing that the fundamental differences over “interests and ideals” between farmers, socialist intellectuals, and trade unionists would reassert themselves and prevent the party from coalescing into a strong political force. Historians have generally echoed this refrain. Our understanding of the evolution of the CCF and its problems of cohesion has, this thesis argues, been stunted by an inadequate historiography dominated by the “protest movement becalmed” tradition. The “protest movement becalmed” tradition has claimed that the CCF was successful in the beginning because it was an ideological protest movement. As the CCF leadership became more interested in winning elections than in maintaining a movement based on socialist principles (i.e. as the CCF became “institutionalized” and adapted to the pragmatism of the Canadian political centre), it lost the momentum born of protest and became another conventional political party, in other words it became “a protest movement becalmed.”

This traditional interpretation of the CCF, which has been oft-repeated to such an extent that it has resulted in questionable historical inbreeding, has obscured a number of important historical considerations. First, the CCF was founded as a political party precisely to avoid the existential problems of separate, small protest movements and groups. Second, the institutionalization argument has concealed an ongoing “identity crisis” within the CCF that finally resolved itself in 1961, when the CCF was transformed into the NDP.

⁴³ See: M. Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University Press, 1968).

An analysis of British Commonwealth labour parties in the mid-twentieth century in this thesis has shown that Commonwealth labour parties generally emerged in a common pattern. Like the federative CCF; labour parties in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand emerged as federative, decentralized entities that brought together smaller political groups into coalitions. These parties initially suffered problems of internal cohesion and financial instability until direct, formalized trade union links were forged. In the case of Great Britain, this reorganization took place in 1918. In that reorganization, the federative party model was replaced by a party model which established direct trade union links. To use the terminology employed in this thesis, the federative (CCF) model was replaced by the British Labour Party model. A similar process occurred in Australia and New Zealand. In Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, the labour parties reorganized under the British Labour Party model used the trade union links to provide financial stability and cohesion and this helped bring each party to the government benches in their respective countries.

As early as the 1920s and stretching until 1957, the labour movements in the British Commonwealth came together through Commonwealth Labour Conferences in search of agents/issues which could bind them together into a unified movement. This thesis argues that these intermittent labour conferences were important transmitters of the British Labour Party model into the Commonwealth. The success of the Labour Party's 1918 reorganization under the British Labour Party model was in evidence at the conferences of the 1920s and beyond. This reorganization was credited with helping Labour gain enough seats to form their first government in 1924, a year before the first conference, which was held in 1925.

The Canadian labour movement had made some attempts to form a party based on the British Labour Party before the CCF was created. The Trades and Labour Congress, for example, sponsored several provincial parties in 1906 and also sponsored the creation of the Canadian Labour Party in 1917. Despite these efforts and despite the establishment of the CCF, the trade union presence in all of these parties remained weak. Unlike unions in other Commonwealth countries, Canadian unions, many of which were affiliated with parent organizations in the United States, came to be influenced by "Gomperism," so named after Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor. Gompers argued that labour, which he feared would be divided over political matters because of the diversity of political opinions within the union movement, would not be effectively served by the creation of its own political party, which would only expose those political differences. Instead, he felt that labour was best served acting as an independent political pressure group which pushed for those interests which united trade unionists. Under his approach, labour would then be in a position to deliver key blocks of votes to whatever political party agreed to advance Labour's interests. The Liberals in Canada played the Gompers game well, and this in part explains why it took so long for a lasting Canadian labour party to be formed.

The CCF was only a quasi-labour party at best, though. Most unions, in any case, failed to back the party, particularly at the leadership level and there was no desire to allow trade unions to control the party through a block affiliation mechanism. However, the British Labour Party model was no secret to the Canadian labour movement. While the realities of political and regional fragmentation in Canada in the 1930s prevented the CCF from using the British Labour Party model as an organizational blueprint in 1933, the

British Labour Party model remained in the Canadian democratic socialist consciousness for decades, partly as a result of the Commonwealth Labour Conferences and partly as a result of internal soul-searching brought about by meagre electoral success, particularly in the light of the successes of fellow travelers in the British Commonwealth.

The participation of the CCF in the British Commonwealth Labour Conferences highlights two very important points that have been, to this point, almost completely ignored in Canadian social democratic historiography. First, all of the statements and actions of Canadian delegates to the Commonwealth Labour Conferences in the 1930s and 1940s demonstrate that the CCF was not a social movement disinterested in party politics. On the contrary, Canadian delegates demonstrated a keen interest not only in domestic party politics, but in the larger realm of Commonwealth politics as well. Even while they succumbed to the pull of Gompersism, they clearly thought in terms of party and demonstrated clear interest in what had brought the British Labour Party and other Commonwealth labour parties to power. The creation of a unified socialist message was a lofty, largely rhetorical, goal, but the conferences also promoted a culture of common action that stressed that labour victories throughout the Commonwealth were more essential to the success of a new world labour order than a unified ideology. The interest of CCF delegates in using the conferences as a measuring stick for their own political successes or lack thereof demonstrates another deficiency in the "protest movement becalmed" literature. This interest in party politics and achieving power shows that the "protest movement becalmed" theory of the CCF overstates the case yet again, and supports the idea most held as anathema by the "protest movement

becalmed” authors: the CCF was founded as and intended to be a political party.

The participation of the CCF in the conferences also highlighted an internal identity crisis over the structure of the party. David Lewis, who had been schooled in British labour politics while a student in Britain in the 1930s, perhaps felt this crisis most keenly. Lewis’s comments from the 1944 conference are quite revealing. At the same time as Lewis’s CCF searched for a new organizational structure, fortified by additional trade union support, to solve his party’s electoral failures, he defended the CCF’s federative structure as the right way for Canadian social democracy, a reflection of distinctive Canadian pressures and realities.

Despite Lewis’s ambivalent defense of a federative structure which had not brought his party to the electoral promised land, it was abundantly clear to Lewis and the other CCF leaders that the structure of the CCF had to be remoulded or the party would die.

The 1947 British Commonwealth Labour Conference, held in Toronto, should have been the crowning moment of the British Labour Party model as the new blueprint for the CCF. The CCF was ready to be recast at that moment. However, the British Labour Party, which had been so keen to show the Commonwealth the way when the conferences were held in London, effectively abandoned its leadership in the Commonwealth when the proverbial mountains no longer came to Mohammed, and the conference was held instead in “colonial” Toronto. As British imperialism raised its ugly head, the British did everything possible to damage the first and only Commonwealth labour conference not to be held on British soil. Damage indeed was wrought - the momentum of the 1944 conference was lost, the

British Labour Party model was not allowed to invigorate a stalled democratic socialist movement in Canada, and the Commonwealth labour conference idea was permanently damaged. One can legitimately speculate whether the CCF's poor electoral showing in the 1950s might have been avoided if the CCF had embraced the British Labour Party model earlier.

Ultimately, the CCF's identity crisis was resolved in 1961, when centralizing elements of the British Labour Party model finally were triumphant and official links were forged between the Canadian unions and the CCF, and the CCF was transformed into the New Democratic Party. In many ways, the resultant NDP was a curious Canadian hybrid: residues of the federative CCF with its powerful farmer component combined with strong union elements modeled on the British Labour Party. However, the electoral evidence suggests that by then it was too late. The union model was adopted so late in the party's development, it ultimately was not effective.

The African-American poet Langston Hughes once pondered the question, "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or does it explode?" Union affiliation has brought no federal victory for the NDP, and despite organizational and financial ties between Canadian labour and the NDP, union affiliation with the NDP has never exceeded fifteen percent of union members.⁴⁴ Perhaps the British Labour Party model was so long deferred in Canada that, like Hughes's shriveled and overripe raisin in the sun, it was useless when finally employed. Whether, as a result of this, the "raisin" ultimately explodes and brings the NDP down with it remains to be seen.

⁴⁴ Keith Archer, "Canadian Unions, the New Democratic Party, and the Problem of Collective Action," *Canadian Working Class History*, eds. L. Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), p. 735.

Faced with the desertion of the autoworkers' union support from the Ontario New Democratic Party in 1995, Premier Bob Rae responded to the workers by saying,

I've never seen joining the NDP as some kind of religious faith. To me, it's a practical question of how we can together advance some important things we believe in. Every party has its pathology. This is the pathology of the NDP. Turning the NDP into a governing party, one that's comfortable with governing, has been one of my life's tasks, and it's been difficult.⁴⁴⁵

This thesis offers no prediction on whether the NDP will be able to root out and remove its post-1961 pathology; that is not the task of history. However, the roots of that pathology, of a British Labour Party model too long deferred from use in the structure of the CCF, have frequently been misdiagnosed. The understanding of that pathology lies not in a "protest movement becalmed," but in the decay of a federative structure and the failure to adapt the British Labour Party model in time to recast the CCF.

⁴⁴⁵ As cited in Sandra Gwyn, "Heart and Soul," *Toronto Life*, February 1995, p. 35.

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