THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY AGENDA

Organizing workplaces, engaging in struggles with employers, and pursuing the other activities described in the last chapter were methods used by Local 27 activists to represent its members in the workplace. But the local also wanted to promote itself in the community. How did the local’s activists rally rank-and-file members around a social sphere rooted in the union hall? What kind of information about the local was conveyed to the community? What role did women and immigrants play in the social agenda? And, finally, how successfully did local activists draw rank-and-file members into union activities beyond the workplace, and how visible were those efforts in the wider community?

Local 27 decided early in its existence to attempt to move beyond its workplaces and become a forceful voice for all workers in London. In its efforts to create a public presence and a working-class identity among workers, the local demonstrated its interest in promoting a program that Local 27 activists felt would help working-class families. This public agenda was shaped by the local’s most active members, the same core of local activists who tended to lead the local’s bargaining units and engage in political activity. But moving beyond the walls of the union hall did not necessarily guarantee the successful establishment of a social presence within London: the local faced the problem of broader received culture. Understanding Local 27’s aspirations in the community thus entails considering how the local and its members lived within the city and how Local 27 went about trying to establish a public presence. Building a union hall and creating an internal communication network through which to reach Local 27’s large membership were two essential elements of that process.
Creating a Sense of Community: The Hall

Constructing a hall was a challenging but necessary step for Local 27. As the preceding chapter illustrates, the shop floor was heavily contested terrain on which the union strove to establish its place as the workers’ representative. The hall was also contested terrain but with decidedly different topography. Here local members could think about and discuss what the union meant to them and where it should go in the future; they could also use it for such activities as celebrating birthdays and commemorating union members who had died. In addition, the hall was a symbol of success to workers contemplating union membership. Its construction thus became a major objective for the local soon after its founding in 1950.

Local 27 meetings and administrative matters were initially handled at a common CIO hall, the London Labour Temple, on Kent Street, where Local 27 officers and UAW staff shared an office. They soon found the small space cramped. Although they belonged to the same labour federation, the CIO unions were hardly a unified bloc and would probably have preferred to have their own offices. A dedicated Local 27 hall would provide needed administrative relief. The local’s desire to have a hall reflected a broader pattern of larger autoworkers’ locals building halls, as they did in St. Catharines and Oshawa. Building a large hall therefore signified that Local 27’s stature in the Canadian UAW was equal to that of the other major autoworkers’ locals.

Construction was complicated from the start by funding issues. The parsimonious spending policies of both the Detroit and Windsor UAW offices compelled the local to finance the hall by itself. This was an enormous undertaking, but it also meant that it was something that members achieved locally and that the national and international offices could not claim to have shaped. In 1960, the local appealed directly to UAW Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey for financial assistance. His response was “that it is not possible for the International Union to loan money to local unions for this purpose” but then advised that a “competent attorney” be hired by the local to assist with creating a building corporation. Mazey then asked that plans for the proposed corporate structure be forwarded
to his office for review and approval by the international union. No money was forthcoming, but patronizing oversight was readily available. Mazey seemed to ignore the fact that the acronym “UAW” would be clearly displayed on the Local 27 hall, serving as a symbol of the international union’s industrial presence even though the local owned the hall. On the other hand, he may also have reasoned that if he granted money to Local 27, he could well have faced a deluge of similar requests from other locals.

Construction of the hall was made possible through a dedicated building fund, which was financed largely through various fundraising activities. In 1960, discussions focused on where to build, what property was available, and how the $16,000 that had been accumulated should be spent. The final location, on First Street, was identified in 1966, and, after years of planning and collecting funds, work began on the building, which would cost a total of $70,000. While not intended to be an architectural marvel, its design included offices, a large meeting room, a kitchen, and a licensed “lounge,” as Local 27 called it, in the lower level. The lounge, which was open only to local members and their families, was not intended to be a major source of profit. Its main purpose was to allow rank-and-file members to enjoy a beer in a space that they could consider their own.

Craig Heron notes that post–World War II drinking establishments were divided into beer parlours and lounges. Local 27 called its bar a lounge. Whereas beer parlours featured an entrance for men only and another for ladies and escorts, the Local 27 lounge did not have separate entrances for men and women. This may have been an acknowledgement of the growing importance of women in the local by the end of the 1960s. The hall’s design was similar to that of the ubiquitous Royal Canadian Legion Halls, Lion’s Clubs, and other community centres that appeared across Canada in the post–World War II decades. But while it was meant to be a symbol of civic participation, it was only open to UAW members. The local soon found itself confined by the size of the hall, and in 1974, it contacted the UAW international office in Detroit for advice and assistance on expanding it.

The hall’s location had enormous symbolic significance, even if Local 27’s leaders may have been unaware of it at the time. First Street, which
runs north-south between two major arteries, Dundas and Oxford, had a combined industrial-residential streetscape: it was lined with small industrial buildings and small working-class homes. 3M was only about two kilometres east down Oxford Street, and GM was a kilometre farther. More significantly, London’s community college, Fanshawe, was less than half a block north of the hall. In many ways, the hall’s proximity to major bargaining units, working-class neighbourhoods, and a large vocational training institute represented a pattern of working-class life. A person could enroll in post-secondary vocational training at Fanshawe, find employment in a plant represented by Local 27, buy a modest home in an east-end neighbourhood, and participate in a range of activities at the union hall. A Local 27 member could commence this pattern as a child growing up in a working-class London neighbourhood, and see her own children be a part of the same milieu through their lifetime.

Social Life

Al Campbell, one of the chief architects of the local’s activities, believed that the focus of those activities should be on families. The local’s social life was therefore deliberately shaped around family-oriented activities, committees, and team sports. Bowling, a sport that gradually lost favour as an organized pastime in Local 27 in the 1970s and 1980s, was clearly popular in the local’s early years. The UAW sponsored a ten-pin bowling league that involved Local 27 teams travelling to Detroit to participate in tournaments. The travelling team was composed entirely of men, but women participated locally. A lack of bowling prowess did not prevent a person from participating in team activities since dart and table tennis leagues involving men and women were also operating in the late 1950s. In fact, women were encouraged to join the table tennis team on an equal basis, having been exhorted by the Local 27 News, “Come on girls, now is your chance to beat the men.” Sports like baseball, at that time considered more suitable for men, involved a greater degree of physicality. The local was not alone in promoting athletics — other organizations, such as the Royal Canadian Legion, offered even more sophisticated sporting activities
— but Local 27’s promotion of sports offered additional recreational choices for members who may have belonged to more than one organization.\textsuperscript{11}

Some athletic activities reflected an overtly masculine orientation, despite obvious efforts to make other activities open to both men and women. For instance, the local sponsored a boy’s bantam baseball team in the late 1950s — the Local 27 Cardinals. The team won the 1959 championship, an event celebrated at a father-son banquet held at a prominent London restaurant.\textsuperscript{12} Staff representative George Specht, in a \textit{Local 27 News} article, linked organized labour’s progress with the ability of young people to participate in sporting activities:

\begin{quote}
A study of union history would show the struggle that labour unions had to abolish child labour. The success we had in this regard makes it possible for so many young people to take part in sports today. We certainly believe that sports is a wonderful thing, and for you young people being good sportsmen is most important.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Sporting activities were thus venues through which virtues like fair play and being a good team member were celebrated. Specht’s comments also suggest that sports inculcates behaviour that forms good union men. Young men could express masculinity in a positive manner through union sport leagues while also being reminded that their good fortune to participate in such activities was directly related to the historic struggles waged by the union. Although sporting activities abated as the decades progressed, with the 1950s and early 1960s being the most active periods, a notable event in the 1980s was the local sponsoring a men’s hockey team that competed in London’s industrial league.\textsuperscript{14}

Other local unions operated sporting teams of various types that also played an important role in workers’ lives, but Local 27 stood out for one main reason: it made a deliberate effort to appeal to both men and women. In contrast, workers at REO in Michigan were heavily involved in hunting and fishing — overwhelmingly male pursuits.\textsuperscript{15} Christine McLaughlin’s research on Oshawa’s UAW Local 222 also points to the importance of fishing in a local union’s social life.\textsuperscript{16} While not a team sport, a pursuit like fishing fostered social bonds between men.
Research on Canadian working-class leisure illustrates the central role of organized sports. Thomas Dunk observes that sporting events offer people a chance to actually participate in the event whereas other forms of entertainment, such as theatre, do not. Athletics — participatory or passive — also helped foster camaraderie among those Local 27 members who engaged in them. Even viewing television broadcasts like the ubiquitous Hockey Night in Canada, which became part of working-class rituals, brought workers together in a social setting. The particular athletic choices that were offered to local members reflected the broader leisure interests of post–World War II Canadian society. Hockey, which looms large in the Canadian psyche, was a clear choice for the local. But a social event at the union hall was not particularly unique compared to functions run by other civic associations: a person who chose to belong to a civic organization would probably have been able to participate in a euchre or ping-pong tournament at a place like a Legion Hall just as easily as at the union hall.

Athletic pursuits, popular though they may have been, were not the choice of all union members. The local ensured that there was an activity for everyone, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the local’s family orientation was evident in the fostering of children’s activities: children’s skating parties were held during the first half of the 1960s, and attendees were promised “the most hilarious and enjoyable afternoon.” Although organized athletic activities for children did not persist into the 1970s and 1980s, perhaps because of the demands of coordinating them, the local continued to sponsor colouring contests, offering cash rewards to the winners such as a $25 First Prize in 1983.

Local 27 Auxiliary and Committees

The various committees formed over the years provided a ready outlet for anyone not interested in table tennis or bowling. The Ladies Auxiliary was one of the most important of these committees. The UAW chartered auxiliary locals within their broader locals, and the group within Local 27 was Auxiliary Local 360. Initially formed in 1959, its intention was
to provide a way for workers’ wives to participate in union activity. Its first anniversary in 1960 was noted in the local’s newspaper with the headline “Baby Is One Year Old!!” The successful establishment of the auxiliary was celebrated in terms usually associated with domesticity rather than labour radicalism. The article began, “One year ago the UAW brought an infant to the family, how has it grown, and has it been well nurtured?”

The Ladies Auxiliary was initially led by Mary Campbell, Al Campbell’s wife and a fellow leftist. Auxiliary social events such as the bowling tournaments of the early 1960s were organized separately from Local 27. Guest speakers were invited to speak at the auxiliary’s meetings, and auxiliary delegates had the chance to attend Canadian Labour Congress education sessions. Regardless, the auxiliary was clearly meant to be a beacon of maternal domesticity within the local while providing family members with separate links to the union. When other committees held meetings and needed a meal supplied, the Ladies Auxiliary took care of it.

The auxiliary played a crucial symbolic role in the local’s history since it formally established a place within the local for women, a venue through which women could show not only that they had a stake in how the union operated but also that they wished to make themselves heard independent of their husbands. The women who joined the auxiliary had their own opinions about the union and its public role. Mary Campbell, for example, may have overseen the preparation of meals for union meetings, but she was also intellectually forceful. She was so committed to social justice that a co-operative housing project in London was posthumously named after her in 1984.

The women’s auxiliary may have been an appropriate vehicle for participation by the wives of male Local 27 members, but by the early 1970s, female members of the local wanted a better form of representation. Julie White, who would become responsible for all CAW women’s programs later in her activist career, described an evolution in how women were involved in the local’s committees:
The auxiliary was, really, I think replaced by the women’s committee. The auxiliary was active in a different way. They provided incredible resources to the local union. Sometimes they did picket line support. They would do fundraising, which was a big thing, but not so much in terms of political activism. That’s where the shift really came, where women were getting involved. They were demanding changes around equality issues. It [the women’s committee] really became active [around the mid-1970s]. It speaks to having women at the top of our national union pushing, and building and organizing local women’s committees. Local women’s committees were getting information around important equality issues, around child care, around violence, around pay equity issues.

The replacement of the Ladies Auxiliary by a women’s committee was thus driven by women who used the national union’s resources and the local hall as a forum for discussing and furthering issues of concern to them as workers and activists, not just as supporters of their husbands’ union activism.25

By the early 1960s, education had become a local priority, and a Local 27 committee was formed to deal with education programs. Open to members and their families, this committee coordinated both formal union training and general interest sessions. For instance, a committee meeting might involve viewing one or two short films on a topic such as technological change in the workplace or UNICEF efforts in Africa.26 Formal union training courses covered diverse topics, including parliamentary procedure, steward training, and labour movement history.27 The education committee thus provided practical advice on how to function in a unionized environment while also expressing a social agenda.

By 1963, there were Local 27 groups dealing with the local’s newspaper, recreation, political action, bylaws, community service, and Labour Day. The latter committee was busy during the entire year, already deliberating over Labour Day preparations in March. This holiday provided an opportunity for the local to forge, through the London Labour Council, a public message that focused on workers and their families. The political action committee focused not only on election preparation but also on coordinating local members’ attendance at meetings in the community.
While all of the local’s groups and committees were intended to be outlets for any local members who wanted to become involved in the union beyond the workplace, they tended to attract the core group of activists who were already involved in union business.28

Union social functions, committees, and other activities in the local hall also seem to have been attended primarily by Canadian-born workers or immigrants with good English-language skills. Some non-English-speaking immigrants participated in a limited fashion in the local’s social activities, but their main social sphere was within their own immigrant group. For instance, John Groenewegen, who emigrated from Holland and found work at Kelvinator, recalled that his participation in the local’s social life was limited to his children enjoying the local’s annual Christmas party.29 Reliance on English as a form of communication facilitated the involvement of immigrants from the United Kingdom; the ease with which they adapted to the local was noted earlier. Rank-and-file workers were generally portrayed in a homogeneous manner in the Local 27 News. Images, both photographic and cartoon, showed white workers, who appeared to share a common ethnicity, at work and social functions: little racial diversity was evident in any images, reflecting the reality of the racial homogeneity across the local’s bargaining units.

Examining London’s postwar Italian community reveals some of the challenges involved with attracting rank-and-file immigrant union members. Italian-Canadian life in post–World War II London revolved around the Marconi Club, founded by the city’s early Italian community in 1900.30 It offered a rich choice of activities to its members and their families. Dances were held two or three times a year during the immediate postwar decades, and people often met their future spouses there.31 A large soccer club was founded in 1963.32 A folk dance troupe was formed, and a Miss Marconi pageant created.33 Club members found work in London’s industrial plants such as GM, but after work, they were more likely to participate in the social life of the Italian community than in the union’s social sphere.34 The fact that the Local 27 hall and the activities that it offered seemed more Anglo-oriented probably encouraged non-English-speaking immigrants to attend functions at halls operated by their own communities.
Local 27’s main method of creating a sense of community among members, aside from the hall and the committees, was the monthly newsletter that began in 1957. Initially a simple typewritten and handwritten document, it had grown into a more sophisticated publication by the 1970s. Largely Al Campbell’s creation, the newspaper was another example of the important contribution of the Left caucus within the local. Campbell edited and published it in its early years; he also drew many of the editorial cartoons. But the newsletter did not always overtly reflect Campbell’s personal political orientation; it discussed a wide range of topics, some of which were not at all related to the work process or collective bargaining.35

From 1957 to 1990, the newsletter always included reports on the local’s various bargaining units, including comments on the progress of negotiations, strikes and lockouts, and the overall working conditions in the plants. At times, however, commentary on broader social issues outweighed coverage of the workplace. For instance, a 1959 edition began with a warning about the presence of Strontium-90 in the nation’s milk supply.36 Since the local was founded and grew during the Cold War decades, issues relating to that ideological struggle were covered. Concerns about nuclear war occasionally appeared, such as a 1962 editorial that discussed a Canadian Peace Research Institute.37 A similar article appeared in 1964, extolling the virtues of a Swedish effort at the United Nations to create a non-nuclear club of countries.38 These two articles may have quietly revealed the political sympathies of activists like Al Campbell. As Reg Whittaker and Gary Marcuse note, the anti-nuclear movement in Canada began with efforts by Communists, of which Al Campbell was one.39

The value of trade unionism was also a frequent theme in the Local 27 News. For instance, a 1982 issue quoted Pope John Paul II’s encyclical On Human Work.40 Religion was scarcely mentioned in union literature, but the newspaper’s editors, who by the 1980s did not include any Communists, clearly felt that quoting the pope was worthwhile if he supported labour. Noting the encyclical may have also appealed to Catholic members of the local and may have been a way of reaching immigrants who belonged to the church.
The *Local 27 News* frequently supported initiatives promoted by the UAW national office and the broader Canadian labour movement. Its 1950s and 1960s editions often advocated the expansion of public health care in Ontario and Canada — a principal labour movement objective. Public health care, while not yet a universal social program across Canada, loomed large on the local’s agenda in those decades. Discussions of various social issues in the newspaper also revealed a consistent current of Canadian nationalism. This became particularly evident in the 1970s in response to Trudeau-era wage and price controls, and in the 1980s with the emergence of free trade during the Mulroney years. For example, the local called for Canadian content in manufacturing and raised concerns about the influx of Japanese autos into the country. Politicians who supported trade liberalization were excoriated in the newspaper. The local held a mock retirement party for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1990, during which a person wearing a Mulroney mask was presented with a cheque for five dollars, the daily wage paid to a Mexican worker at the time.

The newspaper commentary reflected the agency of union activists in the face of ongoing social and economic change. For example, the newspaper’s editors, notably Al Campbell, felt that the issue of nuclear proliferation was of sufficient importance that workers needed to be informed about it. Indeed, many of the editorial positions expressed during the 1950s and the 1960s could be construed as responses to broader Cold War issues. The UAW adopted a liberal policy agenda, but it was not avowedly anti-war until 1970, when Walter Reuther began to publicly oppose the Vietnam conflict. The local, however, adopted an anti–Vietnam War stance before Reuther did, saying that Canada had “blood on her hands” for selling weapons and napalm. Although the editorial views expressed in the *Local 27 News* appear to have originated with the local’s activists, the newspaper nonetheless expressed positions that were at least somewhat in accordance with the union’s broader national and international public policies.

Pamela Sugiman and others note the egregious sexual discrimination encountered by women in auto assembly plants, and the concomitant
imagery. The post–World War II labour movement may have indeed featured women for their bodies, as Joan Sangster suggests, but Local 27 did not hold any beauty contests or other similar events. If anything, women were portrayed exhibiting agency over the domestic sphere and on the job. Overtly sexualized imagery may well have been found in workplaces organized by Local 27, but it was not present in the Local 27 News. The sole exception appears to be the cartoon shown in figure 1.2 in chapter 1, where two women are seen discussing a pin-up of one of them. Women were, however, described in idealized terms in the local’s newspaper. For instance, a 1968 notice described Eaton Auto worker Fay Gardiner as a “Scottish lass with a delightful Glasgow brogue.” Gardiner was taking flying lessons and was quoted as saying, “I’ve always wanted to fly, but gee, it’s tough . . . but I’m determined.”

Some men in leadership roles, such as Al Campbell, valued the role of women in the local and would not have condoned inappropriate editorial content in a publication like the Local 27 News. However, the main reason for the lack of degrading imagery was that women activists would not have tolerated it. Julie White described the presence of sexualized images at 3M in the 1970s. Activists like Beulah Harrison did not work to advance women’s rights in the workplace only to watch while women were objectified in the local’s newspaper.

Women were officially portrayed as benefiting from union membership for several reasons. Women in the 1950s and early 1960s were primarily involved in union affairs to support their husbands, despite having played an important role in Local 27’s initial founding, but by the late 1960s, and certainly into the 1970s, they had assumed local leadership roles. Since women were by then joining the paid workforce in increasing numbers in Canada, depicting them solely as supporters of their husband’s workplace struggles was no longer appropriate. In addition to being portrayed as workers and union members in their own right, they were depicted as using the economic advantages gained through union membership to pursue personal goals: a unionized woman having the resources to obtain a pilot’s licence clearly showed the economic benefits of membership.
Despite these gains for women, images and messages in the Local 27 News illustrated the challenges they continued to face in the 1970s and 1980s. The image in figure 6.1, for example, shows an older man telling a young girl that she can be anything she wants. She responds by asking whether she can be equally paid, to which he replies that she needs to be realistic. The message seems to be that some men still placed limits on a woman’s capacity to achieve equality. Women were free to do the same jobs as men, but they should not expect to receive the same financial recognition. As noted in chapter 1, women activists in Local 27 knew what it meant to have access to the same industrial employment as men while having to struggle for the same rewards. They would have seen some of their own experiences reflected in images such as that in figure 6.1.

Depictions and narratives of women changed, but those dealing with men remained fairly constant, tending to emphasize their roles as breadwinners. Commentary in the Local 27 News in the mid-1970s, years dominated by the furor over the Trudeau government’s implementation of wage and price controls, particularly reinforced breadwinner imagery. Local 27, and other unions in the London area, produced a series of publications that cautioned workers against the possible effects of wage and price restraint. These newsletters, such as one produced by the London and St. Thomas labour councils, prominently featured photos and personal accounts from male workers facing economic turmoil. A photo caption described a “worried man: with 529,000 Canadian workers jobless, this worker has a right to be worried . . . he may be Trudeau’s next victim!” The worker in the photo stares bleakly into the camera, his lunch pail held firmly under his arm. The message is clear: men faithfully trudged to work, but their role as economic provider was threatened by the machinations of the federal government.

Unions in general and the local in particular were always portrayed positively in written materials. As mentioned previously, the Local 27 News contained monthly reports from the various bargaining units about the progress of negotiations, layoffs, and other routine matters. The fact that grievances were in progress was noted in those reports, but details
were not included. The local was invariably portrayed as succeeding at the bargaining table and successfully executing its function as worker representative. The occasionally tense relations between the national office and the local, noted in chapter 2, were never mentioned in the newsletter, and neither was the local’s political split between Left and Right caucuses referred to within the printed material distributed to rank-and-file members. Instead, the local was portrayed as working in concert with the national and international offices. For example, in 1960, the *Local 27 News* published a front-page transcript of a speech given in Chicago by Emil Mazey, who held forth on “Labour’s Stake in Peace” and went on to detail the effects of nuclear fallout and the potential casualties that could result from a nuclear war. National officers were portrayed as labour statesmen (and they were all men) in whom the rank and file could place their faith. Negative comments about other unions never appeared: positive coverage of the national union and the wider labour movement helped build solidarity.

In contrast to coverage of the labour movement, corporations were almost universal objects of derision. Employers were the topic of frequent discussion in the *Local 27 News*. Strike commentaries, in particular, condemned employer behaviour while portraying workers as victims of corporate aggression. The debate over wage and price controls in the mid-1970s most clearly demonstrates this trend. A special publication issued by the local said that wage rollbacks went “to the corporation profits, and they really need it . . . companies like Minnesota Mining, Northern Telecom, Unfin, General Motors, Globe Envelope, International Harvester.” A 1983 editorial on a strike at Tecumseh Products made the accusation that “personnel directors, newspaper editors, politicians, almost everyone who makes fifty thousand a year tells us to take concessions.”

Similar messages were conveyed about corporations through images in the local’s newspaper. One such cartoon from 1983 depicts a manager threatening to lay off a robot, with the man cautioning the robot, “No more complaining . . . remember, you can be replaced by twenty workers.”

The messages conveyed about corporations and those who ran them were consistent from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s. Corporations and
their leaders were greedy, dishonest, and utterly lacking in any respect for workers and their unions. Managers were depicted as white males wearing suits and fixated on technology and profits. In some instances, inept male managers were portrayed dealing with challenges from empowered women workers, such as the manager depicted in figure 6.2. While the cartoon does not explicitly say that corporations cannot be trusted, the evident subtext is that workers should have faith in their union.


Discussions of government attitudes and policy had a similar tone. Governments — generally regarded as corporate lackeys who likewise could not be trusted — were admonished to support workers through public policy and not act against workers’ interests. This message grew in intensity as the local entered the 1970s and 1980s. The local’s reaction to wage and price controls most clearly demonstrated its views on government policy: the federal government was considered the sole cause
of high inflation. In fact, one local publication argued that “Canadian Government monetary and fiscal policies contribute more to inflation than even the gouging price policies of management.” Pierre Trudeau was considered the embodiment of anti-worker economic policy in Canada. A poem included in a 1976 publication on wage and price controls clearly illustrates, in sonorous terms, the disdain felt for the Liberal prime minister:

One year ago, on this very date,
A happening, an act of fate,
Pierre Trudeau, on National T.V.,
Had a Thanksgiving Message for you and me.
He said that something must be done
So that Canada can survive.
And Pierre told us, we must repent!
The worker, He proclaimed,
He is to blame!
He wants too much money,
Shame, shame, shame.55

The *Local 27 News* became more technically sophisticated as Al Campbell’s cartoons from the 1950s and 1960s and simply formatted articles gave way to photographs and more professional print layouts in the 1970s and 1980s. A dedicated committee remained in place to produce the newspaper, which continued to be distributed to workers through their bargaining units. The newspaper’s principal accomplishments were its long-running production and its coverage of such a broad range of issues. Moving beyond the workplace reflected the local’s desire to pursue a social agenda. The newspaper became a social forum even if it did not always reflect the full realities of collective bargaining or dealing with the UAW national and international offices: for instance, problems such as Emil Mazey’s refusal of loans, the complexities of the labour relations system, the need to continually lobby government, and growing interest in the 1970s in an independent Canadian autoworkers’ union were not covered in the *Local 27 News*. 
Trying to provide comprehensive coverage of all issues facing the local would have been difficult. With dozens of bargaining units, it would have been very simple to fill the entire paper with nothing but local reports and discussions of workplace issues. The local could also have chosen to use the newspaper more fully as a forum for educating members about how collective bargaining functioned. As it was, Local 27 chose to use its main written communication tool to build solidarity and to create a sense of union culture among rank-and-file members. In addition, coverage of workplace and union issues was clearly meant not only to portray the union in the best possible terms but also to show its role in wider labour movement struggles.

**Local 27 in Print Media**

Local 27’s leaders had specific messages that they wanted to convey to rank-and-file members and to their families, and they did this principally through the *Local 27 News*. However, the union’s public image, beyond the hall and the workplace, was largely communicated through the London media. The messages they conveyed about organized labour shaped both external perceptions of Local 27 and the views held by its rank-and-file members. The local’s leaders thus took a keen interest in popular media coverage; for many years, every *London Free Press* article that mentioned Local 27 was cut out, dated, and saved. (The local’s archival holdings contain hundreds of such clippings.)

The issues discussed in the *Local 27 News* — from the union’s interest in nuclear disarmament to its position on trade policy — were not the focus of the coverage that the union received in local publications. Instead, articles about Local 27 focused on its members’ affiliation with their workplaces. The local therefore acquired a public identity that tied it closely to the employers with whom it bargained. The union’s social unionism agenda was not nearly as evident in this coverage as was its interest in protecting and advancing the economic interests of its members. Business unionism — with an emphasis on the economic rewards of collective bargaining — therefore occupied centre stage in local coverage of the union.
The media environment in London was shaped by the fact that between 1950 and 1990, the period in the union’s history under consideration here, the main media outlets in London were owned by one family — the Blackburns. The *London Free Press* had been operated by that same family since the mid-nineteenth century, and they later added to their assets an AM radio station and an independent television station. The Blackburns were ideologically conservative and did not like unions. Most *Free Press* employees belonged to an employee association rather than a union. Walter Blackburn made a point of attending each association meeting, ostensibly to monitor any concerns among his employees. The implied threat that his presence represented would certainly have been on the minds of those attending the meetings. The paper’s only major labour dispute during Walter Blackburn’s tenure as publisher was a brief strike by the International Printing and Pressmen’s Assistants Union in 1955, which occurred just after the printing and pressmen’s union had organized a small number of print workers. Blackburn commented: “I believe in a man’s right to work. I see men on the picket line. It’s a pathetic sight. They have not been pushed around by us. It is their own decision.”

**FIG 6.3** 3M strike. This image of a strike was typical of the type of coverage that Local 27’s relations with employers received in the *London Free Press*. Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre, London Free Press Negative Collection, *London Free Press*, 5 July 1974.
Free Press coverage of workplaces organized by Local 27 focused on the initial founding of individual factories and their eventual expansions, strikes, and layoffs. On occasion, the paper did mention social issues, or the products associated with a specific workplace, or the senior managers who ran the factories. But strikes and workplace closures were most prominently featured (as in figure 6.3), with the workers generally portrayed as employees and union members.

The 1964 Wolverine Tube strike illustrates clearly the local media’s interest in industrial conflict and in trying to communicate the reasons for the strike to readers. The strike was the subject of more than thirty Free Press articles over its six-month duration. The newspaper noted the UAW’s impetus for going on strike, an aborted 1962 organizing drive, and discussed the union’s major objective — to be recognized by the company. The unwillingness, or perhaps inability, of the provincial government, personified by Premier John Robarts, to do anything about Wolverine was also duly noted: the London Labour Council unanimously voted to condemn Robarts for what delegates believed to be his inaction in the face of management hostility, and every word of their motion was printed in the Free Press for London citizens to read. Why did the ostensibly anti-union Blackburn family approve such comprehensive coverage of the Wolverine strike? Most likely because it was compelling news that sold papers.

The Wolverine strike became violent at one point, and twelve striking workers were charged following an incident in which two cars were set on fire and stones were thrown. The strike had, by this point, become a cause for the labour movement beyond London. David Lewis, a future leader of the NDP, served as counsel for the twelve accused workers. Three of them were eventually convicted of contempt of court and sentenced to between five and seven days in jail. London Mayor Gordon Stronach criticized Wolverine management, suggesting that they had squandered an opportunity to explain their behaviour during the strike.

The Wolverine strike, which ended in decertification, was followed by other strikes waged by Local 27, many of which were portrayed in the Free Press as essentially economic conflicts. A 1974 strike at Tecumseh
Products was principally about a “six cent an hour increase in each year of a three year contract.” 66 Similarly, a 1981 strike at Sparton of Canada, which was in its nineteenth week by the end of that year, was primarily about company demands to withdraw cost-of-living allowance (COLA) provisions from the collective agreement. 67 Strike votes held in 1986 at Fruehauf Trailer of Canada and Sparton of Canada were also principally about wage and benefit increases. 68 Labour-management conflicts that did not result in strikes were also covered by the Free Press, such as Local 27’s 1984 assertion that Sparton of Canada was in violation of labour law because it did not pay statutory holiday pay one Christmas is an example. 69

Although media reports highlighted workplace conflict and monetary issues, employer resistance to unionization, which characterized the 1950s and 1960s, also occasionally appeared in the London media. The long-running conflict between the UAW and Wilco described in chapter 3 is an example, as is the resistance mounted by AWL Steego over the prospect of its automotive warehousing operation being unionized. London media also covered the Fleck Industries strike in 1979, in which Local 27 was peripherally involved and which symbolized continued employer intransigence. Media messages frequently showed local government interest in industrial relations, as was the case with Mayor Stronach. Public officials were not reported as overtly hostile to union concerns or to the overall plight of workers. Instead, they were often portrayed as sympathetic while also endeavouring not to antagonize the businesses on which the community depended for economic growth.

Media discussions of strikes and labour-management disagreements contrasted considerably with reports of the contributions that industrial employers made to London and, by extension, to their workers. For instance, a 1971 article on Sparton of Canada — which was not a home of amiable labour relations — depicted the firm as being on the leading edge of anti-submarine sonar technology. 70 A 1983 article on Northern Telecom proclaimed that “Harmony is expected to ensure about 1,350 jobs at the London plant of Northern Telecom Canada Ltd.,” and then went on to note that Harmony was the name of a new phone going into production. 71 The company had invested $50 million in the London plant.
in order to “sharpen our competitiveness in the telephone market at a time when there were widespread concerns about the ability of Canadian companies to compete.” This article was accompanied by a photograph that contrasted the new Harmony phone, complete with a push-button key pad, with a cumbersome rotary dial model.

General Motors garnered by far the most frequent attention in the Free Press. The plant’s new, massive Terex dump truck was profiled in a 1971 article that opened by asking, “What else can you say about something that weighs over a quarter-million pounds and can carry 150 tons for a gross weight of more than a half-million pounds?” This description, penned by a reviewer of new cars, was a ringing endorsement of the new truck’s mechanical might, and it could well have been written by a GM staff writer, such were the glowing comments contained therein. GM Diesel’s changing product mix also made for good newspaper copy. The introduction of bus chassis production in 1977 was duly noted, with the addition of new jobs to the London plant prominently mentioned.

But buses and dump trucks of vast proportions, important though they may have been to protecting jobs and conveying an image of corporate innovation, were less central to GM Diesel’s image than its main products: locomotives and light armoured vehicles (LAVs). The LAV became synonymous with the GM Diesel plant. The message that GM obviously wished to convey through the London media was that the plant’s products were important to its workers and, by extension, to the city. In a 1985 “special report” in the Free Press discussing the LAV’s importance, the presence of both Canadian and US military personnel was noted: both militaries maintained offices that tracked production in the plant. Some workers were said to wear ball caps and T-shirts emblazoned with images of the LAV, while a few others were reported to have declined to work in LAV production out of religious convictions or anti-war sentiment.

The views of workers who objected to military production were noted in the media but were usually dismissed. GM Diesel worker and activist Roland Parris (shown in figure 6.4) told the Free Press: “I feel good about the work I do in the locomotive division. I’m helping make a useful product. I don’t feel the same about armoured vehicles. This military stuff is
a damn waste of time as far as I’m concerned.” He went on to say that he did not like the GM Diesel facility being turned into a military production unit. The paper did not refer to the fact that Parris knew something about the nature of the military, having served in the Royal Air Force prior to immigrating to Canada. Although his personal views clearly ran contrary to Local 27’s official position on LAV production, Parris recalled that the local supported his pacifism.

FIG 6.4 Roland Parris. This photograph was taken during Parris’s protest against the building of light armoured vehicles by GM Diesel. Source: Archives and Research Collections Centre, London Free Press Negative Collection, London Free Press, 18 October 1985.

The media stories on workplaces represented by Local 27 provided some insights into what the local did, how it and its members viewed the products that its workers made, and how labour relations were conducted. In some cases, such as Globe Envelopes, the primary public image was of a workplace with comparatively few workers who were frequently on strike. Conversely, larger units — principally, GM Diesel — became the public face of Local 27. Here was a large workplace that produced big, impressive vehicles: indeed, its workers supported national security by assembling military equipment used by Canada’s American neighbour. Northern Telecom was presented as being on the leading edge of the Canadian telecommunication industry. The Free Press always positively
commented on the products that were produced in workplaces organized by Local 27; this aspect of its coverage made the paper a faithful advocate for London’s industrial employers.

The industrial progress shown in the coverage of plant production was not always mirrored in discussions of labour-management relations. The internal debates that occurred within the union were not recounted in the popular media, but the complexities of collective bargaining were sometimes revealed. At other times, somewhat contradictory messages were conveyed: Local 27 members seemed to be frequently on strike, yet they also often supported the business decisions made by management. Archie Baillie, who led the GM Diesel bargaining unit, told the Free Press: “No one wants wars, but they’re going on all over. Somebody has to make these things [light armoured vehicles] and it might as well be us. On the whole, the military vehicles are the best thing that has happened to the plant in years.”

The local was not a passive participant in the news-making process; Local 27’s leaders attempted, with mixed results, to shape the media message. Bob Nickerson and Al Seymour, both former staff representatives, recalled George Specht, the first staff representative assigned to Local 27, taking time to hold press conferences at the London Press Club. Specht also found his way onto news reports for CFPL television. A 1961 segment on unemployment in London saw Specht and Al Campbell address an audience at the London Labour Temple composed entirely of white men — most likely, all union members. Seymour and Nickerson also cultivated ties with local media. Julian Hayashi, the Free Press’s dedicated labour reporter in the 1960s and 1970s, was a frequent visitor to the offices at the Local 27 hall. Hayashi’s reporting on Local 27, and indeed on the UAW, did not favour employers and in fact called management behaviour into question. His four articles on Local 27’s conflict with Wilco clearly illustrate this perspective.

The union was able to go beyond the usual rhetoric that surrounded strikes and lockouts, and communicate through the public media some of the challenges it faced in collective bargaining, which was shown to be a long, demanding process. For instance, a 1984 article in the Free
Press discussed the challenges of negotiating new collective agreements. Seymour and Baillie were part of the UAW master bargaining committee that was facing General Motors of Canada during a strike. Baillie told the paper that “one hotel is the same as another,” even though he was staying at the Royal York in Toronto, and Seymour expressed similar sentiments: “It’s crappy . . . I like those home cooked meals.” Seymour said he walked up to five kilometres per day, frequently with Baillie, to get exercise while also attending six daily meetings.

Clearly, then, Local 27 received considerable attention in the London Free Press and was able to present information about the union to the readers of the paper. Coverage of the local and its struggles was often favourable but limited: the local was usually discussed in terms that closely linked it to the employers with whom it negotiated and with the products that those employers manufactured. 84

**Limitations on the Social Sphere**

The various Local 27 committees and social events provided opportunities for all members who wished to participate. Moreover, activities were meant to appeal to both men and women and, more importantly, were intended to be family oriented. The activities that were promoted were not unlike those offered through other union locals in the United States and Canada. The inclusion of a lounge in the hall was also typical of other civic groups in Canadian society. The local’s social life was thus shaped in such a way that it would be familiar and inviting to rank-and-file members.

The many efforts to engage workers’ families, well intentioned though they were, conceptualized women primarily as occupants of the domestic sphere and secondly as workers. Issues of race and ethnicity also confronted Local 27 in the postwar decades, but the local was largely unresponsive to these changes. Despite the increasing numbers of non-English-speaking immigrants streaming into workplaces represented by Local 27, the voluminous newsletters and other communications disseminated throughout the local were always in English, immediately limiting which immigrant groups could participate actively in the local.
Women and immigrants responded quite differently to the local’s invitations to get involved. Women workers wanted to be active in the local. They responded favourably to entreaties to become activists and expressed their agency by consciously deciding that they wished to shape the local’s bargaining agenda. Immigrants other than those who spoke English well did not actively try to shape the local’s agenda. This was not because immigrant workers in Canada lacked militancy in the postwar period. As Franca Iacovetta shows in her study of postwar Italian immigration, immigrants were capable of engaging in lengthy strikes.\(^\text{85}\) But immigrant life was tightly bound to family and kinships ties, which were considered extremely important. Those ties also involved institutions with which immigrants could readily identify.\(^\text{86}\) Thus, immigrants had other opportunities for solidarity and social interaction that were inevitably in competition with the local’s invitation to become involved in its activities.

The local strove to create a place for its members to call their own when it gathered bricks and mortar, and constructed its hall on First Street, but immigrants assembled bricks and mortar of their own. In the east end of London, where the Local 27 hall was located, two Italian clubs (a club smaller than Marconi also operated), a Portuguese club, a Dutch-Canadian club, and even a club for English immigrants (the St. George’s Society) were constructed in the postwar decades.\(^\text{87}\) Constructing physical spaces with a visible public presence was obviously a priority for immigrant groups, one that could take precedence over other communal pursuits.

Rank-and-file workers also formed social bonds through union membership that expressed themselves in activities organized outside of the union hall. Joe Laporte, a charter member of the local and a former employee of both Eaton Auto and General Motors, remembered attending and hosting parties with co-workers. His recollections reveal an active social life among Local 27 workers in his former workplaces, but it was organized outside of the hall. Those ties were strong: “It was just like a family.” Why did Laporte and his co-workers choose not to organize social life around the hall? It was not due to dissatisfaction with the union, but rather because the notion of unionism with which rank-and-file members
One of the principal obstacles to Local 27’s social agenda was therefore the community in which it existed. Regardless of where in Canada workers lived, belonging to a union in the postwar years involved certain commonalities. For example, the Wagner-based labour relations system was found across the country, and workers belonged to both national and international unions. The communities in which unions organized and operated, however, were far from uniform; belonging to a union in city like Hamilton, which was overwhelmingly associated with the steel industry, was different from belonging to one in London. Some communities, such as Oshawa, were even more completely dominated by one industry and employer: a massive General Motors plant and a local union of equal proportions wielded enormous influence over the community. London, though, was not dominated by one industry or employer.

The local’s social life and community agenda were complicated by another aspect of postwar life over which Local 27 had little control: consumerism. Lizabeth Cohen persuasively argues that it became a fundamental aspect of identity, and of citizenship, in postwar America. According to her analysis, consumerism involved living in an “economy, culture, and politics built around the promises of mass consumption.” Joy Parr makes similar observations about postwar Canada. Consumerism, a theme that forms a central part of the next chapter, is also germane to the current discussion as it relates to the formation of postwar London. The nature of postwar consumer culture in North America was such that in many ways, national boundaries were virtually invisible barriers. Fordism was an essential part of this process since it was the system that organized postwar industrial work. Well-paid unionized industrial jobs such as those in which Local 27 members worked enabled people to participate in consumer culture.

In terms of the role of the local in the community, consumerism gave Local 27 members the ability to enjoy leisure pursuits and social life beyond the workplace. As hard as the union tried, it simply could not counteract the immense influence of this broader received culture.
life outside of the home in 1950s London centred on recreation outlets in the city’s core, including movie theatres and places to dine, imbibe alcohol, and shop. Even though many workers did not own cars at this time, they found their way to these venues: Peter Hensels remembered relying on public transit despite limited service to the city’s periphery where his workplace, Kelvinator, was located.\textsuperscript{94}

As the city grew, automobile ownership increased, as did the range of available social outlets. Newer workplaces organized by Local 27 in the 1960s and 1970s — particularly Northern Telecom — were not accessible by public transit, so workers needed cars. By the 1970s, they were also able to cash their paycheques and spend their money at London’s new shopping malls. London also had a wide array of sports leagues, particularly for children, and spectator sport events. For example, an Ontario Hockey League team, the London Knights, was established in the city in 1965.\textsuperscript{95} The arena in which the team played for many years was less than a kilometre from the Northern Telecom plant, which surely made it easy for Local 27 members working there to head over to a game after work.

London was also home to a range of bars and restaurants by the mid-1970s. One example is Campbell’s, where live music was commonly heard. It was owned for a few years by musician Ronny Hawkins, who played there and who relocated it to part of London’s old city hall in 1971.\textsuperscript{96} Clearly, there were plenty of leisure pursuits available to Local 27 members other than those offered by the union, and those options altered and expanded over time. For instance, in 1970, interested Londoners could visit the Belvedere Hotel to watch “Topless Margie A Go-Go,” a type of entertainment new to the city at that time.\textsuperscript{97} The local’s collective bargaining success rewarded workers with higher incomes, but also gave them access to a range of leisure activities that they may have preferred over social life in the union hall. The activities and functions provided by the local were comparatively limited.

The foregoing discussion should not suggest that Local 27 members were only interested in recreation pursuits that cost money. The London city government created a twenty-year development plan in 1970 that encompassed twenty-one different planning districts within the city’s
boundaries (see figure 6.5). Those districts formed the basis for a subsequent analysis of how social services should be delivered. The districts that included or were close to Local 27 bargaining units and where many Local 27 residents probably lived — Huron Heights, Argyle, Carling, East London, Hamilton Road, Jackson, Westminster, White Oaks, and Glen Cairn — will be referred to as the Local 27 districts in this discussion. The city’s plan revealed much about working-class recreation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.98

**Fig 6.5** London planning districts, 1971. Huron Heights, Argyle, Carling, East London, Hamilton Road, Jackson, Westminster, White Oaks, and Glen Cairn were the districts closest to workplaces organized by Local 27. Source: Family and Children’s Services of London and Middlesex, “Social Profiles of the Twenty-one Planning Districts in the City of London” (London: Family and Children's Services 1972), ii.

Residents of Local 27 districts were quite reliant on city recreation services. Carling residents reported that 75 percent of their children used park and recreation facilities.99 Argyle residents liked using public
recreation facilities but found them inadequate, and often travelled outside of their district for recreation. Demand for public recreation services must indeed have been high since Argyle included a swimming complex, five tennis courts, two wading pools, and a community centre. The city also laid plans in the early 1970s to build an arena in Argyle.\textsuperscript{100} Residents of the Local 27 districts were also reliant on services provided by various agencies and levels of government. Indeed, six of those districts were among the seven highest in the London study in terms of reliance on services such as home care, the Ontario Hearing Society, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Children’s Psychiatric Research Institute, and the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society.\textsuperscript{101} However, they were less reliant on services provided by Manpower Canada than their fellow citizens in west and south London.\textsuperscript{102}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{30-years-of-progress.png}
\caption{Homeowner, citizen, consumer, and union member. Source: Local 27 Archive, file: Miscellaneous UAW/CAW Documents, UAW organizing brochure, circa early 1970s.}
\end{figure}
The union, at both the local and national levels, was aware of the need for public services and sent clear messages to members about their role in the community. They encouraged workers to be engaged in different social spheres. Collective bargaining was used to extract greater economic rewards, but these rewards were also intended to give workers the resources that would allow them to be active in their communities. The theme of community engagement was also evident in the overt messages that the union sent out to its members. An organizing brochure from the early 1970s, shown in figure 6.6, sends the clear message that the union had improved the material circumstances of its members, made them better citizens, and helped them participate fully in society. While the identities of consumer, property owner, and good citizen are presented individually in the brochure, many workers may nonetheless have felt that the message conveyed a collective sense of what union membership meant.

Local unions that formed in the immediate postwar decades, essentially from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, were founded by workers who had experienced either the Depression or World War II. People like Bill Froude knew economic hardship, which led some people to describe him as “funny” because of his frugality. On the other hand, as Doug Owram suggests, the generation of workers who began to work in factories organized by Local 27 had grown up in comparatively more affluent circumstances. Images of Local 27 workers in the 1950s and 1960s generally portray men with short hair and neat clothes, and women wearing dresses and carefully styled hair. Things began to change in the 1970s; the photo in figure 6.7, taken in 1970, shows a generational shift occurring in the local. The baby boom generation, which moved into union leadership roles, had a marked impact on Canada in the postwar decades, significantly shaping the postwar labour movement.

The rise of baby boomers within Local 27’s ranks brought both advantages and challenges. There were no labour actions such as the famed 1973 strike at the General Motors plant in Lordstown, Ohio — in which baby boomer workers played a key role — but the local still clearly changed as baby boomers joined its ranks. One clear advantage was
that the number of workplaces organized by Local 27 expanded, owing to increased economic activity that was fueled in part by demographic change and by the growth of the Canadian and American populations. The most obvious challenge for the local was that the baby boomers who joined its ranks had not experienced many of the pivotal moments that had defined the labour movement. Born, according to Owram, between 1946 and 1962, the baby boomer cohort entered the world just as the Rand Formula was introduced, and the last of them were born twelve years after Local 27 was founded. The oldest baby boomers in the London area might have found work at Northern Electric during the tumultuous process when it was organized by Local 27, but the last of this generation would have been in their early teenage years when the local and the rest of the Canadian labour movement challenged the Trudeau government over wage and price controls. The Local 27 that they joined was a large, established local in a high-profile international industrial union.\textsuperscript{107}

For a generation that created a counterculture and frequently expressed mistrust of their parents, Local 27’s social agenda may well have been something to avoid. Indeed, national and international union leaders were well aware that a generational change was underway in workplaces in the early 1970s. Events like the strike at Lordstown led Walter Reuther to conclude that “a new breed of workers” was now entering factories.\textsuperscript{108} Although Reuther was referring to worker attitudes in the workplace, collecting their union-negotiated wages every week would have enabled someone in his or her late teens or early twenties in the 1970s and 1980s — when all of the baby-boomers were old enough to be in the workforce — to engage in a range of leisure activities. Attending a dart tournament at the union hall was only one of many available pursuits. Some baby boomer union members, like 3M worker and activist Jim Ashton, chose to become active and attend functions at the hall. However, people like him adapted to the existing social and organizational structure of the local in order to become activists. They adapted themselves to the union hall and its activities rather than the union changing its social agenda to attract newer workers.
FIG 6.7 Generational change. Al Campbell and a group of Local 27 members in front of the Local 27 hall, 1970. Source: Local 27 Archive, file: Miscellaneous UAW/CAW Documents.
Beyond the Hall and Workplace

Did Local 27 succeed in moving beyond the workplace and in creating a social agenda? Success is perhaps a relative term. Activists saw crucial aspirations accomplished. A large hall — complete with offices, meeting rooms, and a lounge — was built without assistance from the UAW national and international offices. It was used for a range of activities and became a physical representation of the local’s place in London and within the UAW, and later, the CAW. The local thus strove to be more than a collective bargaining agent in its members’ lives. On the other hand, the hall and the many policy positions formulated within its walls became the domain of a core group of volunteer activists. In Tim Carrie’s words, the union was a way of life for activists. Those activists did not seek to create an exclusivist structure — they wanted to see as many rank-and-file members participate as possible. However, building the hall did not lead to more rank-and-file participation in social activities. In fact, the range of social activities offered to members, such as events for children, appear to have actually narrowed in the years after the hall was constructed. Ultimately, the extent to which a person was already an activist in the workplace appears to have governed how often he or she chose to participate in the local’s social life. The union hall became the theatre, tavern, and recreation room for local activists more than it did for rank-and-file members.

Within the internal communication system rooted in the Local 27 News, articles on a wide range of social issues were provided to members. At times, those discussions eclipsed narratives on collective bargaining. The paper, initially a crudely produced publication, became more technically and culturally sophisticated as time passed. Coverage of women gradually underwent a transformation as they went from inhabiting a domestic sphere to becoming unionized workers who also faced discrimination on the job. The Local 27 News was also used to educate workers on a wide array of issues. For instance, it aligned with the entire Canadian labour movement in railing against wage and price controls in the 1970s, their objections culminating in a national day of protest on 14 October 1976.
Local 27 strove to communicate a public image, often relying on the London media to do so. Regardless, it could not easily separate its identity from the employers with whom it bargained, in part because of the nature of media coverage in London, specifically the London Free Press, but also because of the nature of industrial unionization. The local was invariably associated with the products that its members made and the factories in which they worked. Thus, it had little success conveying a social agenda through the media. Instead, the narrative presented to both union and non-union consumers of London media concentrated on industrial strife and the economic progress made by employers. The full social life of the union would only have been revealed to its members and their families: indeed, only to those who chose to engage in the local’s social sphere. In the public eye, the local remained more of an active participant in collective bargaining than an agent for social change.

But for a full picture of Local 27, its social agenda must be considered along with its workplace bargaining efforts. Existing literature on unions in the post–World War II decades — such as the work compiled by Cy Gonick, Paul Phillips, Leo Panitch, and Don Swartz — tends to focus on the challenges that labour faced from employers and the difficulties that they had with governments.\textsuperscript{111} It seems obvious, however, that, in order to determine the extent of a union’s activities, the union’s place within its community must also be considered. Some research, such as David Halle’s analysis of workers at a chemical plant in New Jersey, has examined aspects of social and family life outside of the workplace.\textsuperscript{112} However, the union that Halle studied does not appear to have aspired to a wider social role outside of the workplace.

Local 27’s ultimate success with creating a social presence cannot be measured simply in terms of how many people attended picnics or union dances. London offered an array of other social activities that attracted the interest of rank-and-file members. The local was trying to build a public presence and a sense of union identity during a time of comparative affluence. Local 27 members did not experience the economic privations suffered by workers described by Lizabeth Cohen in her study of Depression-era Chicago.\textsuperscript{113} However, while it is important to emphasize
that Local 27 members participated in a broader working-class culture in London, they were still members of the city’s working class, which was bigger than Local 27.

The local hall and the policy objectives created therein became important to the local’s working-class activists, but they also influenced the wider community. Legion halls, hockey arenas, and ethnic halls were all part of working-class culture in London, a culture that was not solely shaped by the local but that unionized workers helped create. Significantly, this was accomplished in a city that preferred to point to a university and to corporate offices rather than to factories as symbols of success.

Local activists wanted to convince both workers and the surrounding community that there could be more to a local union than simply arguing over economic rewards and other workplace issues. The union thus encouraged its members to be good consumers and to be active in the community — to pursue interests beyond those of the union itself. At the same time, members were also encouraged to rely on the union and participate in its social activities and political agenda. The UAW national and international leadership probably intended these two spheres of activity to complement each other, but many union members may have seen them as unrelated.

Local 27’s activists attempted to pursue a social unionism agenda through social events and by articulating policy positions on a range of issues. They hoped to make the local an integral part of its members’ lives and sought to struggle on behalf of all workers. This agenda ultimately bore limited results, however: it loomed larger in the lives of the activists than in the lives of most rank-and-file members. Rather than seeing union membership as part of a struggle on behalf of workers everywhere, rank-and-file members instead used their association with the union to build a working-class identity that incorporated only certain aspects of union membership. The hall, and the social agendas that developed within its walls, constituted some part, but not the sum, of how Local 27 members viewed union membership and the role of the local in their lives. It is perhaps not surprising that, as time progressed, many of the activists most deeply committed to social unionism, such as Al Campbell, gradually left the local and moved on.