Chapter Five

Kitchener Days: Organizing the Rubber Workers

The twin cities of Kitchener and Waterloo had a total population less than 40,000 but it was one of the most highly industrialized cities in Canada: home of J.M. Schneiders; four large rubber plants including B.F. Goodrich and Kauffman's, a family-run operation; along with some smaller textile, furniture, and leather factories. None of these plants had unions, although a Workers Unity League affiliate had led a successful strike against some furniture companies back in 1933-4. As in other small cities in this period the trade union movement consisted mainly of small craft locals of the building trades, brewery workers, and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. Wages were low, even below those in similar sized cities, but most large enterprises survived the crash and by 1935 had restored production and employment to mid-1920 levels. Aside from the furniture strike, the industrial relations scene in the area couldn't have been more peaceful — until word got out of the Akron Ohio rubber workers strike led by the new CIO. That was about the time Bill Walsh arrived in Kitchener.

CIO Magic

The emergence of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1935 was the culmination of a decades-long struggle to establish all-inclusive unions representing all industrial workers and not merely the highly skilled minority that comprised the membership of the established craft unions. In 1883 craft unions and their local trades councils formed a national organization called the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC), equivalent to the US-based American Federation of Labor. The question of
who would be permitted union representation and what would be its purpose and goals preoccupied working-class politics for half a century.

A new wave of industrial unionism came in the guise of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), affectionately known as the "Wobblies." They were most heavily represented among the unskilled and poorly paid itinerant workers who moved from job to job on both sides of the border in construction, harvesting, logging, and longshoring. The Wobblies developed a new working-class culture including popular street corner meetings and music like "Solidarity Forever," which would become the anthem of the labour movement. The Wobblies did not believe in written contracts and would agree to no restrictions on their right to strike. They were socialists and their constitution called for the organization of all workers into a single, unifying force for the revolutionary struggle. Their strategy included the possibility of a general strike to bring capitalism to its knees. Wobbly leaders were constantly jailed on a variety of trumped-up charges. State repression along with the economic slump of 1913-14 eliminated their leadership and weakened their labour base.

The years following the end of World War I saw an unprecedented display of working class militancy. Within a few years, the call for a new militant organization went out once again. When radical elements within the Trade and Labor Congress, many of them from Western Canada, saw their program for a new industrial unionism defeated again and again at annual TLC meetings, they organized their own meeting in Calgary. Impressed by what they heard about the Russian Revolution, delegates at the 1919 conference, calling themselves the One Big Union, passed resolutions calling for "the abolition of the present system of production and substituting for it, production for use." 1

In view of the chaos in world affairs, the ruling classes were panic-stricken at what they were hearing. They considered the One Big Union a fulcrum of revolutionary activity in Canada. Though the issue behind the six week-long Winnipeg General Strike (35,000 strikers, fully 20 per cent of that city's population) was collective bargaining rights, to the employers and affluent classes of Winnipeg it was the culmination of a revolutionary conspiracy intended to overthrow established institutions and install a Soviet system in Canada. There was much calculated deceit in this image. But it was widely believed that to defeat this challenge required not merely that it be defeated, but that it be defeated by violent suppression. With the help of federal troops, the arrest of the strike's leaders and the deportation of others, and with the collaboration of the leadership of the craft unions, the Winnipeg General Strike collapsed. Within a few years the OBU was dead.
In the final analysis, as Craig Heron has written, these efforts to create all-embracing unions were defeated by three related forces: "capitalist employers, who had no intention of abandoning exclusive control of their enterprises; the Canadian state, which intensified its pre-war pattern of siding overtly and heavy-handedly with capital in maintaining the subordination of workers; and international craft unionism which, when push came to shove, was ultimately unwilling to loosen up its organizational exclusiveness and its ideological restraint, and which actively collaborated in the undermining of radical, industrial unionist elements in the labour movement."²

Once the OBU and radical elements were in fact eliminated, craft unions were of no further value to employers and they too were vanquished. The 1920s was a dismal decade for trade unions of all stripes. Much of the Left had been united under the banner of the newly founded Communist Party of Canada and initially the Communists elected to stay with the mainstream of the labour movement rather than joining forces with the beleaguered OBU. But they eventually found themselves hounded out which is when, in conjunction with the new line of the Communist International, they created their own union central, the Workers' Unity League (WUL). The League was yet another effort dedicated to militant industrial unionism and socialism.

The WUL never really challenged craft unionism but it did valuable pioneering work in setting about to organize the new mass industries. While only a few of these efforts succeeded, it created a small cadre of superb organizers who were available in the next round of industrial unionism which began in 1935. As already noted, it was around this time that the international Communist movement abandoned its revolutionary phase in favour of working with other groups in "popular fronts" to fight the spread of fascism. The Workers Unity League was disbanded. The decision to rejoin the union mainstream carried with it a resolve to drop the traditional role of "permanent oppositionists" in favour of becoming "responsible leading" unionists.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's decision to push through the Wagner Act forcing US employers to recognize duly certified unions and bargain with them in good faith spurred new efforts to organize the unorganized in the vast smoke stack industries throughout the American midwest. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mineworkers and a vice-president of the AFL, decided that now was the time to abandon the craft principle. Dividing workers in each factory into the various craft unions was a hopeless strategy. Besides being cumbersome, it excluded the vast majority of workers who had no craft and merely worked the assembly lines doing routine work in continuous repetition. As Lewis saw it, there could be only one solution. Every person in a plant should belong to one union as was already the case
in his own United Mine Workers. Lewis had pushed the idea at the 1934 Convention of the AFL but got nowhere. He tried it again in 1935, this time dramatizing his determination by getting into a fist fight with Big Bill Hutcheson, the president of the Carpenters Union. Once more he was rebuffed. A day after that meeting, Lewis brought together several other top leaders in an Atlantic City hotel and they formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). American trade union history would be changed forever. Similar pressures existed in Canada, emanating from within the Trade and Labor Congress.

The CIO had its first important victory with a successful sit-down strike at Goodyear’s Akron plant early in 1936. With its largest base in Lewis’s United Mine Workers, the CIO turned its attention to the steel industry, setting up the Steel Workers’ Organizing Committee (SWOC). Its breakthrough did not occur until 1937. Another target was the automobile industry, to be headed up by the newly formed United Automobile Workers. The December 1936 sit-down strike at GM’s Flint, Michigan plant, the most spectacular strike in US history, sparked numerous other drives that led to new CIO unions. The term “sit-down strike” rocketed into national and international fame.

In the massive confrontations with capital that lay ahead, Lewis knew he had to accept help wherever he could get it. That meant the Communists, for there was no other sizeable group that would work zealously for the cause under horrendous and sometimes dangerous conditions and for little personal gain. Lewis overcame his strong anti-communist bias (his own union boasted a constitutional clause barring Communists from membership) because he had little choice in the matter and hired as many Communists as came forward. It has been claimed that of the approximately 200 full-time organizers on the SWOC payroll, 60 were Communists. Lewis believed that once the unions were established they could and would dump their Communist organizers. This did happen, as in the case of the SWOC, but the process of eliminating the Communist presence turned out to be much harder than he had imagined.

As noted by historian Irving Abella, Canadian workers “captivated by the glamour, the excitement and the monumental breakthroughs of the CIO campaigns in the United States, desperately pleaded with it [the CIO] to come into Canada. Joe Salsberg, head of the CP’s trade union bureau, traveled to New York and Washington to convince CIO leaders to launch campaigns in Canada. But with the limited resources at their disposal and the mammoth job still to be done in the US, they could give very little attention to Canada On their own, without informing the CIO, scores of ex-WUL organizers began organizing CIO unions in Canada. They simply adopted the CIO label, hoping its magic would transcend the US border.
Young Communist zealots under the direction of J.B. Salsberg took charge of the CIO organizing drives in Ontario. Dick Steele led the drive to organize steel workers, along with Harry Hunter and Harry Hamburgh; C.S. Jackson organized electrical workers; Harvey Murphy, miners; Arthur Laverty and Alex Welch, textile workers; and Bill Walsh, rubber workers. At the first CIO convention in Canada (1939), 82 of the 105 delegates represented six unions in which the Communist element was strong or in control. “Without their aid,” Abella has written, “CIO efforts in Canada would have been vastly circumscribed and conceivably even aborted.”

Abella’s statement that “all the organizing had been done by Canadians with no help —nor even encouragement— from the CIO “ was by and large correct. But it was not quite the case, as Abella made it out to be that “not one CIO organizer nor one cent of CIO money had crossed the border.” For, at Salsberg’s request, Allan Haywood, the CIO’s Director of Organization did come to Kitchener. And Haywood, in turn, sent up another CIO organizer from the rubber wars, C.D. Lesley.

Kitchener Has Bed-Bugs Too

It was a dreary cold winter Sunday when Salsberg drove Bill Walsh the 100 or so miles down to Kitchener to meet the new comrades. About 30 of them were huddled together in a damp and dingy meeting hall when they arrived. Salsberg made the introductions. Short, wiry, balding Lou Kenyan, cigar in mouth, chaired the meeting. Most of the members were Pennsylvania Dutch or Ausland Deutsche, Germans from Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. There were also a few Hungarians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, and Anglo-Saxons.

They looked Walsh over — slim, wiry build on a 5’8” frame, thin-faced with high forehead, delicate features, and carefully groomed wavy black hair. Neatly dressed and cigarette-smoking — Anne had taught him that — he wore an intense, somewhat sad look. “Maybe this one will last a little longer than the others,” Ma Becker laughed. Three organizers in succession had been and gone over the past year. “This one is different,” Salsberg assured them. “He’s one of our bright new people, very dedicated. I can vouch for him personally.” It was just a formality but they voted to accept him.

The meeting over, Salsberg took his leave. It was late in the day and after shaking hands with each of the new comrades, it occurred to Walsh that he had only a few pennies in his pocket and nowhere to stay. Apparently, no arrangements had been made. What to do? The same question must have occurred to Lou Kenyan, for he returned and invited Walsh to stay the night with him.
They walked only a half block up the street to the side of a building and up the steps to the Kenyan household on top of a store. It was a tiny flat. Bill lost track of his count, but there were at least five or six Kenyan kids bouncing off the walls and barging through the doors. Most of the furniture looked to be of the home-made variety. Cots were set up in all the rooms. The family was obviously on relief. Walsh felt embarrassed at imposing an extra burden on them, but Lou and Alice Kenyan seemed to take no notice of their abject poverty. Alice served a meager meal, Bill worried that some of the children, already undernourished looking, were being deprived on his account.

Lou lit up a cheap cigar, the one luxury he allowed himself. The Kenyans were in their late 30s, old-timers in this movement. “I know this ain’t much. I ain’t had steady work since ’32. Got so bad that one day we all packed everything off in the old Ford and went down to the States. Got as far as California, working our way across. This here’s a palace compared to what we seen down there. All over the States there’s shanty towns, Hoovervilles they called ‘em, built on city dumps. People there live like animals, eatin’ from the garbage. We seen the fruit-crabs, you know, the Mexican fruit harvesters, living in old packing cases. The only help those poor souls got is from Sally Ann and those other outfits, but before they fed them they made ‘em pray. I tell you it was enough to make a man a Communist. It made me one and Alice too. The only help we’ll get is by organizing’ to the rich.”

There were more stories that night. Bill told them how he and Dick Steele had wandered into Russia and became Communists and how he came to be a party organizer. He spoke about Anne, who would join him in a few weeks. Lou described his experiences as head of the local union of the unemployed. Late that night they prepared to bed down, giving Bill the couch in the living room. His companion that night was the Kenyan’s infant who slept sitting up in a baby seat that hung on the door joint. Bill had protested that he could just as well sleep on the floor rather than take the infant’s bed, but the family would not hear of it. It was soon apparent that the infant was not his only companion. Within minutes after the lights were turned off,
bedbugs streamed over him and he could hear cockroaches crawl along the floor. He remembered the night in Hamburg which seemed to have been so long ago. But what could he do? The bedbugs had a fine harvest that night.

Choosing A Strategy

Walsh spent the next few weeks sizing up his situation, noting the heavy concentration of light industry in the city. He quickly discovered that there were several furniture factories, some tanneries, and meat packing plants, but the largest employer by far was the rubber industry. Four companies, B.F. Goodrich, Dominion Tire, Merchant Rubber, and Kaufman Rubber employed over 4,000 men and women, about a third of the entire labour force in the district. He concluded that the Party must concentrate its labours on organizing rubber workers.

But what did he have to work with? A survey of the Party membership proved not very promising. Most were East European with few connections in the community except among their own ethnic groups — precisely the problem outlined by Muni Ehrlich. Besides May Day and 7 November, there were plenty of club meetings, socials, benefits, and picnics to raise money for the Party newspaper and Spanish Republican defence work, but none of this extended to the general community. Worst of all, most members were small storekeepers or craftsmen with little or no contact with industrial workers.

Not long after his arrival, Bill put his idea to the party's Section Committee. "We're going to help the workers of Kitchener organize a union. Workers who can't defend their jobs and their wages will never be able to make a revolution. This is our first task, comrades, and we must start with the rubber workers." Not surprisingly, they were skeptical, even dumbstruck. "How we going to organize 4,000 rubber workers, Comrade Walsh? We're so few and we know almost nobody works in them plants." As in all the campaigns and negotiations he would conduct in his long career in the labour movement, Walsh had prepared himself thoroughly. Already he had developed a knack of surveying situations, anticipating responses, and designing strategies to overcome obstacles. In this instance his plan of action included approaching the local CCF for help.

The negative response was what he expected, but they agreed that they were too small and isolated to even contemplate doing it on their own and that nothing would be lost in trying. Once the president of the local CCF branch got over his shock at being asked to cooperate with the Communists, he agreed that Walsh could attend a local CCF membership meeting to
present the idea. But the word that got around was different. The new Communist organizer in town had challenged Alderman Jack Walters of the CCF to a public debate, and Walters had accepted.

The room was packed to overflowing, mostly with CCFers. Walsh spoke first. His message was the same one he gave only a few weeks before to his own executive. Jack Walter, a local manufacturer and a member of the national executive of the CCF was a much more accomplished speaker. “You know,” he rebutted, “I met your Mr. Lenin. It was at a meeting of the Socialist International in Switzerland. I can tell you, he would roll over in his grave if he heard your proposal. You know what he would say? ‘If you organize the rubber workers into unions, they will go for higher wages. With higher wages, they are going to buy homes, they are going to have lots of food and clothing and then they will be satisfied. How are you ever going to lead them to socialism once they have made it into the middle class?’ That’s what your Lenin would say. Besides, let’s be realistic. The rubber workers don’t have the guts to organize.”

Now Walsh went to work. He was no orator but he knew enough not to get sidetracked into an ideological debate:

I would suggest that we let Comrade Lenin sleep peacefully in his grave and that we address ourselves to the situation here in Kitchener, Ontario, 1936. My party does not believe we can build socialism out of the misery of the workers. We build it from their consciousness as members of a class of exploited workers. It’s not being poor that causes a person to become socialist. If it was, a majority in this country and in every other country would already be socialists and we wouldn’t need to have this debate. People become socialists by understanding that they are exploited, that capitalism is exploiting them and by believing that capitalism can be defeated. Now the only way they will feel capitalism can be defeated is by winning class victories. They may be small ones like organizing a union, but its on the basis of these victories, large or small, that workers build up a confidence and a capacity to fight. As for guts, we don’t know whether or not rubber workers have guts. They haven’t had a chance to show it. The question in any case is whether the socialists and the communists have guts.

The debate had neither winner nor loser, but at the end about a dozen members of the audience volunteered to help organize the rubber workers. The strategy had worked.
Organizing the Rubber Workers

Finding someone who could lead the rubber workers was the next big problem. It had to be someone who enjoyed their respect. Walsh made enquiries. Several rubber workers mentioned the name Alf Mustin, a longtime worker in the boot room at Merchants Rubber factory who, besides being active in the community, had had something to do with an employee association set up by the companies. On a brisk spring Sunday Walsh decided it was time to look him up. He lived in a little frame house in Bridgeport, a nearby village. Mustin, a clean-cut, good looking man of about 30, answered his knock.

Walsh remembers this first encounter vividly. “I’m Bill Walsh, organizer of the Communist Party. I want to talk to you about organizing of the rubber workers into a union.” This would becomes his standard introduction — he would use it many more times in his career as a CP organizer. Mustin answered. “I don’t understand. Why do you want to talk to me? What’s the Communist Party got to do with it anyway?” He was almost hostile. He had heard about these Communist trouble-makers and here was their organizer on his very doorstep! After some hesitancy Mustin let him in and introduced him to his wife, Violet. Both were suspicious, but also curious.

“You ask how come the Communist Party is interested in this? I’m going to tell you. I’m interested in establishing socialism. I’m not asking that you be interested in that particularly, but from my point of view and from the point of view of people like myself, socialism can’t be built until the working class learns how to defend itself. In Kitchener that means the rubber workers must be organized into a union. You’re interested in the welfare of the rubber workers. That’s why I’ve come to you. You know as well as I that the only way they’re going to advance and you’re going to advance is to organize yourselves into a union. If you stay isolated as individuals you’ll take a drubbing for the rest of your

Alf Mustin, 1935.
lives. You have to advance together or not at all. As we see it, you don't have any other option. So we have this in common. I am also interested in improving the conditions of the rubber workers, and you may also have some interest in advancing the conditions of life of peoples around the world. I don't know. In any case, those things aren't required for you and I to work together."

They met several times more over the next few weeks. Mustin remained hesitant about Walsh's involvement. On more than one occasion he asked him: "What do you get out of it?", not fully taking it all in. But he didn't reject the idea out of hand. In the meantime Walsh was meeting with others to test out the idea. Anne, who had by now arrived, conducted her own investigations which would yield useful information that could be turned into ammunition at the right moment. A large number of rubber workers were regularly sent to the tuberculosis sanitarium in nearby Freeport, victims of industrial pollution. Soon Walsh was holding regular planning organization meetings. As they compared notes and mapped out strategy, they felt more and more confident that the job could be done.

They had to take into account that there were four rubber plants in the city, each with its own peculiarities. Three were US-owned, B.F. Goodrich, Merchants Rubber, and Dominion Tire, part of the US Rubber (Uniroyal) empire. And then there was Kaufman's, a locally owned company that mostly hired local Mennonites whose religious upbringing had taught them to defer to the boss and oppose the very idea of unions. The committee decided to build horizontally in all four companies at the same time, rather than vertically, one at a time.

Along with others in the Organizing Committee, Walsh trudged through the snow evenings and weekends to sign up members. Their strategy was to win over key people in the maintenance departments and to expand from there to key people in production. That meant the tire builders. Physically powerful and skilled, the tire workers, much like underground miners, regarded themselves as the elite among working people in the country.

Members met in Mustin's home. In short order the contacts were made and the target group signed up. They used the name United Rubber Workers of America, the name of one of the new CIO unions that had just conducted a spectacular sit-in in Akron, Ohio against the Goodrich Company. With close to 200 signed up, they would soon have to come into the open and sign up the rest in open warfare.

Throughout this stage, Walsh had his own meetings with J.B. Salsberg and some of the others who were also organizing. Dick Steele had by now been elected the Canadian Secretary of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee. Clarence Jackson headed up the fledgling United Electrical Workers in Canada. Both Steele and Jackson were already in contact with
their American counterparts and Jackson had been named the US representative in Canada. Walsh suggested that it was time to move out of the underground stage into the stage of open organization. Salsberg agreed and promised he would get an American representative of the CIO to come to Kitchener.

Not long after, a telegram arrived from Allan Haywood, CIO Director of Organization. He would be up to check things over. Accompanied by what Walsh described to me as a “gaudy-looking woman friend,” Haywood arrived on a stormy night in late November and registered in Walper House, Kitchener’s finest. Haywood was an Englishman, product of the British miner’s union, and a leader of Lewis’ United Mineworkers in the USA. He was one of the several trusted lieutenants drafted by Lewis to help him organize the CIO.

Dick Steele, speaking on the street (through a mike operated by Bill Walsh).
Anne Weir accompanied Walsh to Haywood's rooms. After the usual preliminaries they got down to business. Walsh explained that the key people were signed up and that in his estimation they were ready to take on at least three of the four companies. He showed Haywood the list of proposals the committee had worked out in in preparation for this meeting.

"Now he raised the question with me," Walsh recalls, "We've got to be careful about Communists. We have lots of them down in the States. They do a good job organizing but we don't want them in leading positions. Know what I mean? What's the situation here?" So I said, 'I'm a Communist.' 'Oh no,' he said, 'you're not a Communist.' He looked to Anne and said 'he's kidding. He's not a Communist.' 'Yes,' she said, 'he is, and I am one too.' Haywood turned to this dame he had with him and he said, 'They're big jokers. I tell you they're not Communists. Anybody can see they're not'."

"Well we are,' I said, 'but what of it. We're helping here just like we're helping in automobiles, the electrical industry and steel. We're the guys doing the job. But you don't have to worry about me. I'm not after a job on your staff. I work for the Party.' He asked me about that, did I want to be on staff, did I want to be in charge and I said no. Maybe that was a mistake. I think I was the only one in this category who stayed as a Party organizer rather than becoming a union official. I didn't visualize that as my role at that time. Anyway, Haywood could see I wasn't joking and asked to meet some of the leaders rubber workers, especially Mustin who everybody knew by then would lead the campaign."

Shortly after that meeting, Haywood assured them that he would take their proposals to John L. Lewis. Not long after C.D. Lesley arrived from Ohio. Lesley was a rubber worker from southern Ohio, more specifically, a tire builder. He had the physical strength, the powerful grip, and the pride that tire builders were famous for. "I'll never forget the boldness of the guy," Bill Walsh recalled. "I took him on a tour of the city and to look over the four rubber plants. He fastened on the Goodrich plant, walked around the main building saying things like 'Let me see, what department is that?' and pointed to a corner of it. 'Okay, those are the windows there that the guys on the sit-down strike will use for making contact with the outside. Here's the way we will get through the fence to bring them food.' The big event was forming in his mind. 'My kind of guy,' I remember thinking. 'He's thinking it all out like a military operation. Nothing left to chance. Wrong in some of his details but we can leave that till later. The important thing is that he thinks big'."
Inevitably, the secret got out that the rubber workers were organizing. The companies made their move. They announced a five-cent-an-hour across the board wage increase — a large increase for those days and the first one in recent memory. The organizing committee was already laying out the first issue of its newspaper when the announcement came through. They changed the headlines to read “UNION WINS ITS FIRST VICTORY”. The story line spoke of the five cents as the first down-payment on all the big gains the workers had coming.

The union packed Kitchener’s largest theatre that night in mid-February for its first public meeting. The tire builders from Goodrich and Dominion turned out in full force along with men and women from Merchants. C.D. Lesley took the chair and the Reverend John Spires addressed the audience. Frank Grillo, international secretary and treasurer of the union, brought fraternal greetings. He told the assembled crowd: “If anyone of these companies fire any of our people, we will shut down that plant and every other plant, and we can do it. We’ll support you all the way. Our people in the US will shut down if necessary, if any of the same companies get fresh with you here.”

An aroma of power filled the theatre. The committee had done its homework and the rubber workers signed membership cards by the hundreds that night. Local charters were issued — Merchants Rubber, Local 67, United Rubber Workers of America (URWA); Goodrich, Local 73; Dominion Tire, Local 80; Kaufman’s, Local 88. Committees were created and presidents elected.

The Strike Strikes

The long-awaited strike finally broke out on 24 March 1937. It was at B.F. Goodrich. C.D. Lesley executed a sit-down strike as planned. The aim of the strike was to establish the URWA as bargaining agent at B.F. Goodrich. Though only half the workers at the factory had signed up, Lesley’s strategy was to force the plant to close by acting as a block and sitting down rather than walking out — a classic CIO action. The company agreed that for the duration it would not try to keep the factory running. In return the union agreed to leave the premises and refrain from picketing. To avoid any semblance of brawls the word went out to stay away from beverage rooms. Members installed recreational and cooking facilities at Union headquarters.

Goodrich broke off negotiations on 2 April. They would not negotiate with Lesley, only with their own employees. Goodrich had learned from General Motors (GM). In Oshawa, GM had just refused to negotiate with
the UAW's Detroit representative. Mustin and his United Rubber Workers would have none of this treatment. Hundreds of strikers stormed down to the Goodrich plant. The company got the message because the next day it settled. Lesley announced the result: improved wages of five to fourteen per cent and a commitment to consult the union prior to any layoffs — but no collective agreement.

The union considered it a victory. With only half the workers signed up, it had demonstrated its ability to close a factory, secure real benefits, and get a form of recognition from the company. Similar concessions were obtained from Dominion Tire and Merchants Rubber. But could they keep their gains? Could they advance the cause? These were the questions on everyone's mind. The answer, some thought, might lie with the events a hundred miles to the north, in Oshawa.

On 8 April when workers there walked out of auto plants by the hundreds and thousands, Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn declared civil war. The entire resources of the Province of Ontario were to be used to keep the CIO
at bay, he said, because Oshawa was “the first open attempt on the part of Lewis and his CIO henchmen to assume the position of dominating and dictating to Canadian industry This is a fight to the finish.” He ordered the Provincial Police to enrol several hundred Special Officers to back up the regular police in case the situation got out of hand. Some called the specials Hepburn’s Hussars. To others they were plain sons of Mitches.

On Saturday, 10 April Bill Walsh, Anne Weir, Alf Mustin, Lou Kenyan, Ma Becker and a dozen other Kitchener stalwarts went to Oshawa and joined in the largest demonstration in Oshawa’s history. UAW president Homer Martin, flew in from Detroit for the occasion. “If General Motors of Canada doesn’t make cars in Canada under union conditions,” he vowed, “they won’t make cars at all.”

Morale had risen to a peak. Each day a truck load of Young Communists arrived from Toronto to join the picket line and hand out copies of the Daily Clarion. Young CCFers joined them there too, anxious to help the pickets by marching, and making coffee and sandwiches. But in the days that followed Homer Martin beat a retreat. He agreed to get workers back on the job immediately with only a promise from the company that negotiations would reopen. It turned out that not only did the CIO have no money to spare for Canadian workers, but Martin reversed his promise to undertake a sympathy strike in the US.

Premier Hepburn was elated. He saw it as a CIO surrender. The Oshawa committee was shocked and demoralized. But on 26 April GM signed a contract after all. This unexpected development drew different interpretations. With no mention of the CIO or even the UAW in the settlement, the Globe and Mail called it a “permanent defeat for Lewisism and Communism in Canada.” But the Daily Clarion called it the dawn of a new era. The Clarion appeared to be right, for the Oshawa victory gave heart to workers everywhere.

Two days later Kitchener rubber workers encountered a brigade of union and party militants handing out handbills at the plant gate. “OSHAWA WORKERS WIN, KITCHENER TOO”. Bill Walsh composed the propaganda the night before. He knew that similar handbills were being composed and handed out that morning by Party members in front of plants in Hamilton, Toronto, Peterborough, London, and other industrial centres. He knew, too, that the auto agreement was the signal for Dick Steele to move ahead with organizing steel workers and C.S. Jackson the electrical workers. Already George Anderson had organized a CIO local in the mining town of Timmins.

Things were moving very rapidly, too rapidly for the CCF. “Everywhere there is the demand for union organizers,” Graham Spry, vice-president of the Ontario CCF wrote to David Lewis, the party’s National Secretary.
"Everywhere there is the cry, ‘labour party,’ everywhere there is a new attitude, a new public opinion, and everywhere the CCF is almost totally ineffective.” Hamilton, Guelph, Galt, and Kitchener were "hives of labour activity" he noted, "but the CCF groups in these cities are hopelessly out of touch with the issues and for practical purposes they are dead." Not so the Communist Party. The CIO had come to Canada and the Communists were among its most capable organizers. Communist Party membership was flourishing too, rising from 5,500 in 1934 to 16,000 in early 1939, according the Party's own records.

A.R. (Ratus) Kaufman was determined that he would halt the unionization momentum. "You can all belong to the union, any union," he told his workers, "but it is the company and the company alone that will run this plant and decide your wages and conditions of work." He insisted that before he would even sit down to negotiate, the union must post a bond against any future damage. And he injected the opinion that "perhaps your union would be more responsible if the executive would consist of exclusively married men over 35 years of age and at least one woman over 25 years.

Local 88 had heard enough. It would teach this capitalist a lesson. On 23 September it declared a strike and a week later the plant was still shut tight, but the apparently undaunted owner issued still another edict: "The men will return to work under the same conditions as when they left and feed out of the hand that fed them for the past thirty years."

Kaufman tried to move carloads of shoes through the picket line. Despite the presence of the police the line would not budge. But rumours of massive police reinforcements a few weeks later and a strong law and order statement by the provincial Labour Minister convinced picketers to allow some shipments out.

This was the crunch. "We need to rally the troops now," Bill Walsh advised, "before their morale begins to sink." He suggested a mass rally. Joe Salsberg arranged to bring in an international representative from the Rubber Workers as well as Art Laverty, chief organizer of the textile workers and a Party supporter from Cornwall. A thousand rubber workers and their families attended the rally. The Akron man, M.H. Eagle, waved a cheque at them. The first strike pay had arrived. The international stood firmly behind them.

Defeat, Everywhere Defeat

But by now the CIO campaign had fizzled out everywhere. The economy had taken a downturn again. Unemployment was once more on the rise,
Organizing the Rubber Workers

businesses pressed. A survey conducted by a business sheet, the Financial Post, revealed that Canadian businessmen would never negotiate with the CIO. They would resist to the very end, they said, and by all the means at their command. Firing and blacklisting of union activists, recruitment of strike breakers and labour spies were in fact all commonplace. Hepburn relentlessly continued his opposition and in Québec, Premier Maurice Duplessis had passed the “Padlock Law”, enabling his government to shut down any union activity suspected of Communist influence. Against this combined offensive, abandoned by their American parent unions, and without the kind of positive federal intervention Roosevelt was providing American unions, battered Canadian organizers saw their fledgling organizations shattered. Hepburn, with the instincts of a prize fighter, seized the time to call a provincial election. His one and only issue, it was clear, was “the CIO in Canada and the Communist danger.”

In a speech to Guelph businessmen, Colonel George Drew elaborated on this theme on the eve of both the election and the strike call at Kaufman’s: “The CIO” he said, “is not a trade union. It is a political movement led by 250 Communists in Ontario. It is not a question of another international trade union coming into Canada but a question of either Communism or democracy in Canada. There can be no compromise. The CIO is not the question. It is the question of whether labour in Ontario will be allowed to be engulfed in the sweep in which Communism is trying to take over governments that rest upon the institutions and the policies of democracy. Toronto has more Communists in it than Russia had in 1917.”

The Communists met to discuss strategy in Kitchener where the CCF intended to run Jack Walters as its standard-bearer. As usual Bill Walsh had his position well worked out: “This election is about the CIO, about organizing industrial workers. Here in Kitchener, the strike at Kaufmans will be the main issue. It’s important that we have a candidate in Kitchener who will defend the interests of the working class. We know that Walters won’t. He opposed the organization of the rubber workers. He still does. After all, he’s an employer himself. Non-union shop at that. He doesn’t understand workers. Certainly he doesn’t understand class politics. On the other hand, it would be wrong on our part to run a candidate against him. We shouldn’t split the working-class vote.” He proposed that Alf Mustin be asked to run as a unity candidate for labour.

Walters and the CCF agreed to a mass meeting in Kitchener to decide whether he or Alf Mustin should be the labour candidate. Both he and Mustin agreed to withdraw from the election should the other win the vote. On 25 September 150 residents crowded into the hall to choose between Walters and Mustin. The Communists were there along with the local Bulgarian and Ukrainian organizations. The rubber workers were there
too. Bill Walsh held the chair. As it turned out, Mustin won all but a dozen votes and became the sole labour candidate — but only for a day. Within 24 hours Walters reneged. The meeting was fixed, he said. He would remain the CCF candidate in North Waterloo. Mustin stayed in the race too. But he ended up spending much of his energy denying Walters’ charge that the Communists controlled his campaign.

The election was no contest. On 6 October the Liberals swept back into office, decimating the CCF. Hepburn promised five more years of industrial peace. Ontario, he said, was the first jurisdiction with the courage to defy and resist the CIO invasion.

In Kitchener the Liberal mayor, Albert Smith, won easily with Alf Mustin a distant second and Jack Walters a miserable fourth. The result sealed a mood of pessimism over union militants. The CIO seemed to be collapsing everywhere. In Kitchener it finally capitulated to Kaufman. For the union the defeat was a disaster. The momentum of the organizational drive begun months earlier with the victory at B.F. Goodrich was lost. Membership dropped off. Even the verbal agreement lapsed. The locals tried to represent their members, but with the economy down they were hard put to hold on to the wages they had.

“At this stage I was no longer in the forefront of the organizing drive,” Walsh explained. “I was in the background which was consistent with how I understood my role, helping Mustin with strategy and preparing speeches, helping to arrange meetings and then stepping back. And working with the Party, building the Party among the rubber workers. It was a different role than most of the other Communists in the trade union movement, being near the leadership, with the leadership, but not the actual leader. That’s why my name doesn’t appear in any of the histories of the trade unions. It’s true the Party was always pushing people to take over key positions. But not me.” Walsh insists he felt no resentment about being left in this position. “Looking back,” he said, “it never occurred to me that I should play any other role.” There is no reason to doubt that this was his feeling at the time, but in view of the number of times he would raise the subject, it seems likely that at some later period he began to wonder about the motivations behind some of the decisions made for him by the Party leadership.

C.D. Lesley insisted on putting him on the payroll for all the work he was doing for the union. Seventy dollars a week was the salary of a union rep. Walsh says he turned it down, reluctantly agreeing to $25 a week and still not feeling right about it. “Why should I take more than the eight dollars other Party organizers get?” is the way he put it many years later. He says he turned over the $25 to the Party, keeping eight for himself when the Party cheques did not come through.
Fighting The Cutbacks

As Party organizer Walsh also worked in other parts of his territory — Stratford, London, and Guelph, and to establish new branches in Galt and Preston. Since his arrival in Kitchener, Party membership in the area had more than tripled. This was a matter of pride for him since a perennial complaint against his work was that too little of his time and energy was devoted to building the Party.

In Guelph as elsewhere, the Town Council cut back relief. The Party branch decided to fight the cutback. The local Association of the Unemployed, headed up by Party member Jack Ritchie, demanded a special meeting of the city council to rescind the cutbacks. Walsh prepared the leaflet for mass distribution. Hundreds jammed into the cramped council chambers; others were left outside.

The meeting began at 8:00 sharp. While the debate raged inside, Bill Walsh composed a satirical verse about each of the city fathers. Periodically he reported outside to the crowd, which grew in both size and impatience. Ritchie appeared nervous. None of this seemed to go down well with him. "This is getting out of hand," he told Bill privately. "We're going to have a riot soon and your little speeches and verses only get them more riled up. I say we disband the crowd before it erupts." A furious Walsh hissed, "Be quiet, Jack. Let me handle this. I'll deal with you later."

According to a City Council by-law, all meetings must end before 10:00. At 9:55 Bill's voice boomed from the gallery, "Gentlemen Aldermen, you have five more minutes." The mayor looked anxiously at his colleagues and they whispered in consultation, finally announcing that Council would continue meeting in the mayor's chambers. As soon as they retired, members of the Unemployment Association replaced them in their chairs with Walsh taking the mayor's position. They barely had time to pass the resolution on behalf of the People's Council, when the aldermen returned to reoccupy their places. They were not amused, but the mayor announced that they had decided to rescind the cutbacks. It was so moved, seconded, and passed.

They had fought back and forced City Hall to retreat. Outside the hall the crowd cheered and recited some of the verses Walsh had composed. He put their victory in context the next evening when the association met to review events. "I want to tell you something about last night. Sure, we put together a crowd. It could have gotten nasty. And that's the very point. Do you think for one moment that those aldermen give a good goddamn about our arguments? We can appeal to the good conscience of each and every one of them till we're blue in the face and it won't do a bit of good. You know what impressed them about us? It was our numbers and our anger."
They knew they couldn't have left those chambers without violence if they hadn't rescinded the bill. Now I have to tell you that one of our leaders showed the white feather. He wanted to call the whole thing off when he saw that we might get involved in something illegal. He's a man in my own Party and so far as I'm concerned, he is expelled."

The Party members among them were shocked. Jack Ritchie was a Party member almost from the time the Party was founded sixteen years before in Fred Farley's barn on the outskirts of this very town. In Russia Moishe Wolofsky had hesitated momentarily before informing on Emma Bumberg. Bill Walsh never lost a moment before informing on Jack Ritchie. The revolution has no time for leaders who hesitate. Men who back away from a struggle must be removed from leadership positions.

The Nazis Of Kitchener

Among the tasks of Section organizers in those days was to arrange weekly time on local radio stations. Fifteen minutes on Kitchener radio cost six dollars. Bill Walsh wrote the scripts and read them on air. On-air appeals for funds covered the cost. Walsh covered local issues and party policy on municipal taxes and relief rates. But more time was spent on union affairs. The big news through much of the summer of 1937 was that the AFL expelled the CIO unions. The policy of the Communist Party was to head off such a split in Canada.

The rise of fascism held a special importance for Kitchener. With its large German-speaking population, it was one of the main centres of Nazism in Canada. The local branch of the National Unity Party, its swastika emblem encircled by maple leaves surmounted by a beaver, was comfortably located in the Concordia Club offices on Kitchener's main avenue. The Nazis also sponsored broadcasts over the local radio station. The Communist policy was uncompromising. On the air, Bill Walsh repeated it often, and at length.

3 June 1937. Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito are the enemies of world democracy. They have their agents everywhere, here in Canada too, in Ontario, yes in Kitchener. They must be exposed, their lies dissected, and their connections with big business revealed. The main Nazi leader in Canada is, of course Adrian Arcand, Chief of the National Unity Party. Here is what Arcand has said about democracy: "Democracy is a terrible disorder. We are ready to make it disappear. We are capable of eliminating it in a few months, because we alone have the doctrine of order."
10 June 1937: Toronto, Montréal, Kitchener, Winnipeg, and other cities have Nazi schools operating. Nearly every page of the primers used breathes the spirit of blind obedience to Hitler. Page 64 of the school book I have in front of me shows the type of subversive doctrine taught Canadian children. Under a picture of Hitler and Von Hindenburg, there is a question addressed to a German child: "Will you follow me, my German child?", asks Herr Hitler. And the child replies, "From father's arms and mother's lap, if you call me I shall tear myself away! Oh, how I wish I were grown up. For my Fatherland and all who die for us I want to live."

Walsh linked the fight against Fascism at home to the bloody struggle to save democracy in Spain. In 1936 Hitler and Mussolini had begun their support of General Franco against the newly elected Republican government in Spain. Walsh put together regular reports of the Canadian contingent on the front lines, the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, and the mobile blood unit organized by Dr. Norman Bethune. But the news over the next eighteen months was not good. Austria had been absorbed into the Reich. Signs pointed to Czechoslovakia as the next to fall. The large German minority there was closely linked to the Austrians by history and blood. Their Austrian cousins joined the great German state. They wished to join it and Hitler was only too willing to “help” them. Edward Benes, Czech president, did what he could to draw France and Britain into the arena. But French Prime Minister Deladier, survivor of the trenches of World War I, shrank with horror from a new war. And British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain insisted that Hitler had a good case! A frustrated Russia got nowhere when Foreign Commissar Litvinov attempted on several occasions to meet with Western Allies to formulate plans to defend Czechoslovakia.

Meanwhile, the civil war in Spain went from bad to worse. With the active military support of the Nazi governments of Germany and Italy, General Franco was winning the war against the elected Republican government. Hitler and Mussolini saw this as an opportunity to test their new weapons and their aircraft, and to test the battle readiness of their officers and troops in what was in fact a dress rehearsal for the big war that was to come. The Soviet Union was the only country supporting the elected government. Britain, Canada, and a group of European states went so far as to sign a non-intervention agreement with Germany and Italy. In 1937 the Canadian government passed legislation making it illegal to join the International Brigades, but this did not deter the Communists. Over 1,200 Canadians, mostly Party members, made their way to the front lines of the civil war. Tens of thousands of Canadians attended public meetings to hear reports from Dr. Norman Bethune, who traveled back and forth raising money for the struggle. In some ways that struggle and the songs, poetry, and literature
that it produced stirred the soul like no other. “We all sang the songs,” Bill told me. “They became part of our culture.”

Spanish heavens spread their brilliant starlight
High above our trenches in the plain;
From the distance morning comes to greet us,
Calling us to battle once again.
Far off is our land,
Yet ready we stand,
We’re fighting and winning for you:
Freedom!

“You know, I wanted to go to Spain, but the Party said no. Norman Freed told me ‘You’re a Party organizer. If you go you’ll never come back,’ and he said it in a way as if only suckers went to Spain. I never forgave him for that.” Towards the end of my interviews with him when I asked Walsh to name the biggest disappointments in his life, defeat in the Spanish Civil War was near the top of the list.

Five months after the defeat of the Spanish government, Hitler swept into Poland. In For Whom the Bell Tolls Ernest Hemingway captured the significance of the Spanish Civil War by quoting a passage from John Dunne:

No man is an island,
every man is a piece of the Continent;
any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind;
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

The Rubber Workers Strike Back

In the midst of this gloom from abroad there were some positive developments at home. In December 1938, workers at Goodrich staged a walkout in response to a three cent wage cut. The Union of Rubber Workers of America moved back into action. Union Local 73 sought a negotiated settlement, the first since the old agreement had been allowed to lapse. Negotiations were also underway at Dominion Rubber and at Merchants.

On 8 February 1939, 500 workers walked out at Dominion Rubber. Five days later Alf Mustin led Local 67 at Merchants off the job. Altogether, more than 1,300 rubber workers were out. The issues were simple: a signed agreement guaranteeing seniority rights and restoration of wage cuts. The companies countered with their proposal: they would negotiate with the
union if workers returned to work immediately. Alf Mustin and the other leaders rejected the offer out-of-hand, but some voices could be heard calling for its acceptance and non-union members demanded an open vote.

A call from J.B. Salsberg at Party headquarters brought Bill Walsh to Toronto to discuss the strike. “What do you think?” Salsberg asked, “Should the union accept the offer?” Stunned, Walsh knew this was not an idle question. The Party had already decided the strike should be called off. Salsberg claimed “It isn’t a defeat. It’s the best we can do under the circumstances. If we don’t accept this, we could lose everything. In our opinion the risk is too great. We want you to advise Mustin to accept the offer.” To himself Walsh said, “This is a mistake. We’ve just begun to gather our strength. If we back down now, the men would know it’s a defeat and they’d be right. I can’t advise Mustin to accept.” To Salsberg he said more tentatively, “Well in my opinion, and I’m sure I’m reflecting the thinking of the local leadership, to accept this offer would be riskier than to continue the fight. The men won’t go along with it.” But he was right. The decision had already been made.

A troubled Bill Walsh rode the train back to Kitchener. This was the first time he had been placed in this position, but it would not be the last. As he liked to point out, his responsibility was to the Party. Unlike his friend Dick Steele and other Party members employed by unions, he was accountable to the Party. The decision was a Party decision. His job was to persuade Mustin that it was the correct one. He knew that Joe Salsberg, as head of the Party’s Trade Union Commission, had taken the matter up with other Party leaders, including Tim Buck and that the Party policy would have been reviewed with comrades in the USA. In coming to its decision, the Party took account of what it liked to call “the big picture”, including the very successful organizing drives south of the border. What it wanted to avoid, above all, was a defeat when a modest victory was possible.

Walsh knew all that but he did not agree with Salsberg’s assessment. The situation required greater concessions from the companies. They needed a victory decisive enough to firmly establish the union in the community, and in any case their strength was sufficient to extract more. He was confused, angered that his views were not solicited before the decision was taken, and concerned about how Mustin would react. The next day he dutifully reported what Salsberg had advised. As he expected, Mustin was furious and he insisted that Bill come clean on where he stood on the question. “A battle raged inside me,” Walsh remembered. “I knew what I was required to do. There were already situations where I had obeyed Party policy without necessarily agreeing with it. On the other hand, this was a critical point in my relationship with Alf Mustin. Since we started on this road together he...
had never really questioned my advice. Now my credibility was in jeopardy. I was torn.”

“I started to say, ‘Well, you know J.B., Alf. He has a great deal of experience and we have to respect his opinion.’ But Mustin wouldn’t have it. He demanded to know where I stood. So I told him. ’I don’t agree with J.B. You’re right, Alf, we’ve just barely begun to mobilize our support. If we agree to this so called settlement we would be letting everyone down. We have to come through big this time. We’ve been waiting for this one. And we can do it. We have the strength’.”

“Mustin just looked at me and smiled. ’I just wanted to know,’ he said, ‘but regardless, we would have carried on. I don’t know on what Salsberg bases his thinking on, but it has nothing to do with conditions here. Let’s get ready for the vote’.”

The vote was taken on 23 February. A majority, including both union and non-union members, decided to back the union and continue the strike. Two weeks later the company conceded defeat, agreeing to recognize the union, accept seniority, regulate hours (50 hours a week at Merchants and 48 at Dominion with time-and-a-half for overtime), and give a slight wage increase.

### Last Days In Kitchener

“I don’t want to spoil the festive mood,” Mustin offered at the celebration party. “But you see now why I would never join the Party. If J.B. had told me to settle three weeks back, I would have had to resign — or be expelled. I don’t ever want to be in that position.”

“Sure, it’s a real problem; that’s the way our Party works,” Walsh countered. “People in the higher circles guide our union work. Mind you, they are mostly very knowledgeable. But they’re not always right. In any event, you would have an opportunity to discuss it with them.”

“Yeah, like you did, eh Bill? Well, I don’t go for these secret meetings that make decisions behind workers’ backs that I’m supposed to turn around and sell to the members. Even if they asked me my opinion, in the end, if we still couldn’t agree, my first responsibility is to the rubber workers. I’d always put them before the Party if it ever came to that.”

“Well, in practice, I don’t see J.B. or any one else playing it that way,” Bill tried. “After all, you’re in a different position than I. I work for the Party. You are a leader of a mass organization, a trade union. Unless it was a matter of fundamental importance, you’d always get your way in the end.”

“But who wants to go through the hassle? I’ve got enough trouble as it is looking after the union and fighting the company,” Mustin argued. “I guess
in the final analysis that's the difference between us," Walsh said by way of summation. "You know that I came into this area to help build this union because our Party is convinced that workers must learn to defend themselves against their bosses and their union is the best way they have. But if we keep politics out of the labour movement than what have we got? Making the best deal we can for our members within the present system. They're better paid slaves. Well, that isn't good enough."

"Look Alf, I know I'm preaching and I can see I'm not convincing you, but I'll say it anyway. Without the Party pointing the way to new demands, explaining to workers why their conditions of work are what they are not just because of greedy bosses, but because the system requires them to act greedy, and explaining that there's a better way of organizing the economy — then nothing really changes, just more of the same. And the union just becomes part of the system and its leaders become part of the problem. Sure we make mistakes. Sometimes we underestimate the workers. Sometime we overestimate their militancy. Maybe we're too cautious for fear of isolating ourselves. It could be. But at least our approach is right."

Though Walsh was indeed convinced of the merits of the "approach", he had to admit that even for him the theory got pretty abstract and difficult to implement. This was especially the case when what the Party required of him defied on-the-ground reality. But the Party was his life. It was not surprising, then, that when a week later he was told to pack his things and get ready to move to Windsor, he accepted this decision without question. Six years earlier, against his own wishes, the movement had instructed him to leave Moscow and return to Montreal. He obeyed, and did so again when it sent him to Kitchener from Toronto three years earlier. The move to Windsor was a foregone conclusion.

The Kitchener years had been satisfying ones for Bill Walsh. As he liked to point out, because he was a Party official working behind the scenes rather than a union leader, his name does not appear in any of the historical accounts of the rise of industrial unionism in Canada. But there can be little doubt that the role he played in unionizing the rubber workers was instrumental. And while, for obvious reasons, organizing rubber workers has drawn far less attention than organizing auto workers or steel workers, it was nevertheless among the more successful of the early CIO efforts in Canada.

Walsh clearly had a huge impact on the life of one rubber worker. Alf Mustin, with whom he maintained sporadic contact until his passing in the 1970s, went on to have an illustrious career in the United Rubber Workers of America. He became a city alderman during World War II and later on was elected mayor of Kitchener.
Walsh left behind many other friends as well — the Trendles, Beckers, Klemmers and others — some of whom he kept in touch with. When Lou Kenyan died in the mid-1960s his daughter, Grace, asked Bill to preside over a meeting in Kitchener to celebrate his life. Though Lou and Grace Kenyan had retired to a resort area on Georgian Bay, Grace arranged for the funeral to be held back in Kitchener where she rented out the same hall in which they all had first met some 30 years earlier.

Unbeknownst to him at the time, Walsh had a particularly profound influence over one of the Kenyan children. Walter Kenyan was in his late teens when Walsh first arrived in Kitchener. A grade eight dropout, Walter had been drifting aimlessly from job to job. He credits Walsh with introducing him to the bigger world, directing him to read history and encouraging him to further his education. In the 1950s Walter Kenyan found his way back to school, went on to university to earn a PhD in anthropology, and became a well known archaeologist and for many years the chief archaeologist of the Royal Ontario Museum.

"Walter idolized Bill," Kenyan's wife Eva related many years later. "But when he met up with him for the first time again in the 1970s, Walter realized that it was partly an illusion. Bill was not the learned man Walter always thought he was and he soon concluded that he had become far more learned than his 'master'."

That this was the case can be readily believed. Walsh was never a voracious reader and certainly had no pretensions of being a scholar. But he obviously knew a lot, absorbed information like a sponge, was articulate with ideas, and possessed a remarkable memory for names and events. No wonder he impressed a young Walter Kenyan so, and by Kenyan’s own account, changed his life.

The Kitchener years also proved to be important ones for Walsh's relationship with Anne Weir. Except for the occasional foray into the outlying area of his district, they were together for the better part of three
years and had grown inseparable. These few years were to be the most normal in their life together.

Notes

5. Incidentally, Haywood's illustrious career ended after he came very close to defeating Walter Reuther for the presidency of the CIO in 1952.