

THE RED BARON OF
IBEW LOCAL 213

Working Canadians: Books from the CCLH

Series editors: Alvin Finkel and Greg Kealey

Working Canadians: Books from the Canadian Committee on Labour History focuses on the lives and struggles of Canada's working people, past and present, and on the unions and other organizations that workers founded to represent their interests.

Series Titles

Champagne and Meatballs: Adventures of a Canadian Communist

Bert Whyte, edited and with an introduction by Larry Hannant

Union Power: Solidarity and Struggle in Niagara

Carmela Patrias and Larry Savage

Working People in Alberta: A History

Alvin Finkel, with contributions by Jason Foster, Winston Gereluk, Jennifer Kelly and Dan Cui, James Muir, Joan Schiebelbein, Jim Selby, and Eric Strikwerda

Provincial Solidarities: A History of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour

David Frank

Solidarités provinciales: Histoire de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Nouveau-Brunswick

David Frank, traduit par Réjean Ouellette

The Wages of Relief: Cities and the Unemployed in Prairie Canada, 1929–39

Eric Strikwerda

Defying Expectations: The Case of UFCW Local 401

Jason Foster

Dissenting Traditions: Essays on Bryan D. Palmer, Marxism, and History

Edited by Sean Carleton, Ted McCoy, and Julia Smith

Cape Breton in the Long Twentieth Century: Formations and Legacies of Industrial Capitalism

Edited by Lachlan MacKinnon and Andrew Parnaby

The Red Baron of IBEW Local 213: Les McDonald, Union Politics, and the 1966 Wildcat Strike at Lenkurt Electric

Ian McDonald

**THE RED
BARON
OF IBEW
LOCAL 213**

Les McDonald, Union Politics, and the
1966 Wildcat Strike at Lenkurt Electric

IAN MCDONALD

 **AU PRESS**



Canadian Committee
on Labour History

Copyright © 2026 Ian McDonald

Co-published by the Canadian Committee on Labour History and AU Press,
Athabasca University
1 University Drive
Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3

<https://doi.org/10.15215/aupress/9781771993470.01>

Cover design by Lara Minja

Cover image: Les McDonald leads Local 213's left faction en route to a demonstration of unemployed building trades workers at Vancouver City Hall, 1960. Les McDonald private collection.

Printed and bound in Canada



CERTIFIED
CANADIAN
PUBLISHER

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: The Red Baron of IBEW Local 213: Les McDonald, union politics, and the 1966 Wildcat Strike at Lenkurt Electric / Ian McDonald.

Names: McDonald, Ian (Retired secondary school teacher), author.

Series: Working Canadians (Edmonton, Alta.)

Description: Series statement: Working Canadians : books from the CCLH | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20250321009 | Canadiana (ebook) 20250321068 |

ISBN 9781771993470 (softcover) | ISBN 9781771993494 (EPUB) |

ISBN 9781771993487 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: McDonald, Les. | LCSH: Labor union members—British

Columbia—Biography. | LCSH: International Brotherhood of Electrical

Workers. Local 213 (British Columbia)—History—20th century. | LCSH:

Lenkurt Electric Company—History—20th century. | LCSH: Labor unions—

British Columbia—History—20th century. | LCSH: Strikes and lockouts—British

Columbia—Burnaby—History—20th century. | LCGFT: Biographies.

Classification: LCC HD6525.M28 M33 2026 | DDC 331.88092—dc23

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund (CBF) for our publishing activities and the assistance provided by the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Media Fund.

Canada

Alberta
Government

This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons licence, Attribution–Noncommercial–No Derivative Works 4.0 International: see www.creativecommons.org. The text may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes, provided that credit is given to the original author. To obtain permission for uses beyond those outlined in the Creative Commons licence, please contact AU Press, Athabasca University, at aupress@athabascau.ca.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS VII ♦ INTRODUCTION 1

- 1 A Brief Retrospective 11
 - 2 Business Unionism 15
 - 3 Left and Right 25
 - 4 Local 213 and Red Trade Unionism 39
 - 5 Rebuilding Local 213 61
 - 6 Les McDonald and IBEW Local 213 93
 - 7 The Lenkurt Electric Strike 137
 - 8 After Lenkurt 175
- Conclusion 223

NOTES 253 ♦ BIBLIOGRAPHY 329 ♦ INDEX 341

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgements

When I sat down to write this book, I naturally assumed that it would be *my* book—my personal accomplishment. As I soon discovered, however, writing a book is a team sport. No matter how long and hard I might have trained, I could not have done it myself.

The first person to whom I turned for direction and advice was Allen Seager, professor emeritus of history at Simon Fraser University—a patient and supportive teacher, if there ever was one, who challenged me to keep asking questions. For early guidance and appraisals, I also got in touch with two of his other former graduate students, Mark Leier and Gordon Hak, both of whom went on to pursue careers in academia. I am grateful to Mark for sharing his experience as a union insider, as well as for his tireless support, and to Gordie especially for his editorial advice and thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of the manuscript.

I also wish to thank Grace Palladino, the doyenne of IBEW history. Although not necessarily in agreement with the philosophical direction of this work, she was generous in her corrections and extremely helpful in forcing me to rethink various sections, in particular certain historical assumptions and statements that were initially unclear. My thanks as well to David Yorke for correcting a number of misstatements and for his first-hand knowledge of many of the people I was attempting to describe.

Another very useful early critique came from a former wrestling teammate of mine, Pat Wolfe, a top-drawer intellect and the holder of an MBA, not a history degree. Pat's use of language is much more precise than mine, and he sent me off on a serious syntactic review, in addition to a search for additional materials and alternate interpretations.

I remain profoundly grateful to two of the key figures in this book, Jess Succamore and Terry Simpson, both now deceased, for retelling the events as they lived them. Their impromptu phone calls, questions, and advice were invaluable in the painstaking and at times frustrating process of attempting

to write accurate, thought-provoking trade union history. Without them, this book would not have been possible. They were living examples of the fact that those who aren't necessarily successful right away often have the sharpest minds and keenest memories, as well as living proof that history's "winners" should not be the only ones permitted to shape our historical consciousness.

Brian Bethel, Jim Dougan, Alfie Huston, Jim MacFarlan, Barry Sharbo, Colin Snell, Dora Stewart, and Bill Zander filled me in on some of the finer details of trade union activism in the building trades and on the Communist left in Vancouver during the 1960s. So did the late Ernie Fulton, an electrical worker who went on to become a national-level championship wrestler.

At UBC Library, archivist Krisztina Laszlo proved an essential guide. Quite apart from the materials that I donated, Rare Books and Special Collections is home to a small mountain of information about trade unions and their history, provided someone knows where to climb.

Finally, as any writer understands, the game isn't over when the manuscript is finished. I am grateful to editor Peter Midgley, who was charged with the unenviable task of pruning the original manuscript down to a somewhat more manageable length. His experience and astute judgment were indispensable. At AU Press, senior editor Pamela Holway supported this project from the very beginning and was exceptionally generous with her time. Again and again, her editorial instincts saved me from losing my focus, and the manuscript benefited enormously from her close and preceptive engagement with the material. A step further down the road, production coordinator Karyn Wisselink provided expert advice about illustrations and carefully oversaw two rounds of corrections in proof. I am grateful for her steady patience and good humour.

Last but of course far from least, my spouse, Mary Anne Higgins, has long been my foremost source of sustenance. She knows my ways, and I am forever in her debt.

People who have been real movers and excitors get left out of histories, and it is because memory itself decides to reject them. These instigators are flamboyant, unscrupulous, hysterical, or even mad, certainly abrasive; but the real point is that they are apparently of a different substance from the smooth, reasonable and sane people who have been inspired by them, and who do not like to remember temporary submersions in lunacy. Often, reading histories, there are events which stick out, do not make enough sense, and one may deduce the existence of some lunatic, male or female, who was equipped with the fiery stuff of inspiration—but was quickly forgotten, since always and at all times the past gets tidied up and made safer. “A rough beast” is usually the real begetter of events.

Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin*

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

My initial motivation to undertake this research was due to my father's advancing Alzheimer's disease. His memory shot, he could no longer remember the pivotal moments of his life nor the individuals who interacted with him at any particular time. The short but violent Lenkurt Electric strike of 1966 was one of those moments. Involving a predominantly female workforce and ostensibly illegal, it pitted cops versus picket lines, split the leadership of Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and generated headlines for several weeks in Vancouver-area newspapers. Only eight years old at the time, I remember the excitement and tension in our house surrounding this event, my dad being absent for several days at a time, then the house being full of visitors. I also remember the phone ringing off the hook, but I remember little else. However, as a graduate student in history at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in the early 1980s I had the opportunity to reconnect with my father, Les McDonald, and had several long conversations with him about the Lenkurt strike. I made notes of some of those conversations. In the end the strike was smashed. Les McDonald initially received a thirty-year suspension from his union, the IBEW, and almost lost his ability to make a living from his trade as an electrician.

At the same time, the loss at Lenkurt contributed to his turn away from trade union politics toward sports, his other passion in life. After many years of rock climbing, playing soccer, mountaineering, alpine skiing, marathon running, and cross-country ski racing, Les eventually took up triathlon, first as an athlete, then as an organizer and administrator. While his ongoing involvement at a competitive level in a variety of athletic endeavours amply attests to his abilities and to his mental and physical toughness, his impact on the sport of triathlon was tremendous, to the point that it has tended to

eclipse his earlier accomplishments. Combined with his charismatic, extroverted personality, there can be little question that his enormous energy, his organizational skills, and his ability to read and motivate people were instrumental in the inclusion of triathlon on the program of the 2000 Summer Olympics, in Sydney, Australia.

Apart from his enthusiastic participation in sports, the other key part of Les McDonald's life was his ten-year passage through the Communist Party of Canada, from 1958 to 1968. For the most part, Les McDonald's left-wing position on issues, when combined with his storytelling abilities, would sometimes confound middle-class triathletes and sport bureaucrats. Les would often attribute the effect he had on people to his background as



Les McDonald competing in a cross-country race in Vancouver's Stanley Park, ca. 1980. Les McDonald private collection.

a “long-time trade unionist,” although that was often just code for his own youth as the son of a leftist coal miner and his time in the Communist Party of Canada. During those years he was exposed to the teachings of Marx and Lenin and to endless discussions on world and trade union politics. His interlocutors included local left-wing luminaries such as Dora and Bill Stewart (“Electrical Bill”), Lionel Edwards, Bruce Yorke, Charlie Caron, Charles Boylan, Betty and Harold (Hal) Griffin, or Alex and Fell Dorland. It was an informal Vancouver-based working-class education, the rigours and demands of the workplace being the traditional starting point for questions and inquiries. Les McDonald’s education was definitely not developed in the classroom or a university setting, but the party nevertheless demanded discipline and thorough study when it came to understanding the political economy of labour in British Columbia and around the world.

Les McDonald’s father, Hugh McDonald, had also been in the Communist Party (of Great Britain), becoming an activist at the beginning of the Great Depression; his mother managed and was part owner of a newsagent’s shop in his hometown of Felling, a colliery village near Gateshead, in the northeast of England. By his own retelling, McDonald’s knowledge of how capitalism worked and figuring out who was on his side on the issues of the day was simply reawakened and reinforced when he arrived in Vancouver. Like so many others before him, he had his socialist roots in Britain hybridized by local experience and grafted onto the Canadian tree of “homegrown radicalism.” How much of the Canadian Communist Party’s program and influence was “homegrown”? In the author’s opinion, its roots and activist base were certainly grounded in the community or regional construct, though the national leadership’s unyielding subservience to Soviet foreign policy over the decades was too often prioritized over both the realities and relevance of Canadian issues.¹ Les McDonald’s party experience would become tightly meshed with some of the background events leading into the Lenkurt strike and was integral to his participation in the left “faction” or “caucus” inside IBEW Local 213. This was an activist Communist grouping that had been an important factor in the life of the local since at least the latter part of the 1930s.²

In August 1968, Les McDonald was sent as a trade union delegate to a labour convention in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He was accompanied by Lionel Edwards, a former captain in the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion—the Canadian contingent of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War—and a stalwart of the Communist Party in BC. Being turned back

by Soviet troops at the Austrian-Czech border with Edwards decisively changed McDonald's worldview and constituted a second hammer blow for him personally. It explains his decision to turn increasingly toward sport as an outlet for his boundless energy. Like so many others before him at other pivotal points in the twists and turns of Soviet history, he and Edwards both then left the Communist Party.

Yet politics was so much a part of his DNA that he took an active part in the fight against a third automobile crossing linking the North Shore to Vancouver in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This preceded his reluctant, though temporary, turn toward social democratic measures as solutions to the problems of society, and realistically the only way to get close to the actual levers of political power. Following his participation in a handful of local riding association meetings, he was even able to win nomination as a New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate in the provincial election of 1972, the election that catapulted a youthful Dave Barrett and the NDP into power for the first time in British Columbia.³ But that was McDonald's last gasp at formal politics. His defeat in the riding of North Vancouver–Capilano signalled a complete shift toward his other passion, sport.

Les McDonald's athletic prowess and his subsequent career in the organizing and promotion of sporting events, particularly in connection with triathlon, has already been documented elsewhere. Yet none of these accounts exhibit much understanding of his earlier life as a trade union activist and Communist Party member.⁴ The most succinct description of Les McDonald from triathlon commentators, however, might have been that of Brad Culp: "McDonald is perhaps the most important and controversial figure in the history of triathlon. The son of Scotch-Irish coal miners, McDonald was tenacious, fiery, outspoken and extremely hard working."⁵ And controversial he remains. I propose to try to bridge the gap between these two defining characteristics in my father's life, viewing them as reciprocal rather than sequential. I embark on this endeavour fully aware of the perils of writing about family members, especially a parent. Objectivity is inevitably a fiction, and I am fully aware of the very real temptation of succumbing to a hagiographical treatment of someone who, in turn, was so influential in my life. I have tried my best to step back far enough to achieve a broader, more balanced perspective, but I realize that I may at times have not been entirely successful. Clio, Greek muse of history, would have been pleased with my dilemma.

Another difficulty I encountered was my father's reluctance to volunteer information about this period of his past or to reflect on it in any great detail. He considered the debacle of the Lenkurt Electric strike a personal defeat, an event whose outcomes he was not particularly fond of recalling. Given that his politics shadowed him throughout the Lenkurt crisis, he was also quite aware of the double-edged sword represented by his adherence to the Communist Party. On the one hand, he was highly cognizant of and thankful for the class-oriented education he received, as well as for the people he met through the party. Equally important were the events that he helped promote and in which he subsequently took part. His status as a trade union activist and as an up-and-comer in the Canadian Communist Party was part and parcel of his identity at the time and to a great extent framed his outlook on the world as a young man.

On the other hand, as he grew older, he became disheartened and dispirited by the knowledge that he had served a party that blindly supported the Soviet Union. He came to realize that the Stalinist regime truly was guilty of numerous heinous crimes—that the nightmare of show trials, the gulags, and the murder of countless numbers in the name of the revolution were not just the inventions or exaggerations of an imperialist, capitalist West. A proud man, rarely admitting to making errors in judgment, he nevertheless acknowledged at least once that choices made and legacies bequeathed can end up in ideological cul-de-sacs. Despite my several conversations with him on the matter, I regret that I never interviewed him at length in a formal, tape-recorded session when he was still of sound mind. As it is, relatively little exists by way of detailed accounts of Communist Party activism within IBEW Local 213 during the 1960s. In the autumn of 2015, however, my mother discovered a sizable collection of documents and photographs that my father had evidently squirreled away in a chest of drawers in the basement of our family home. When Les first became institutionalized, my mother and I decided to sort through them, and they have since joined other documents relating to the history of IBEW Local 213 housed in the Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia. My father's personal notes on the union, on politics, his charges and subsequent correspondence with the International Office of the IBEW, and the newspaper clippings he kept all tell a fascinating story.

Let me make it clear right at the outset, however, that this book is not just about one person or a single event: it is as much about the history of IBEW

Local 213 during the Cold War era as it is about Les McDonald. Telling of the story of Lenkurt and of this era through the life of Les McDonald also sheds light on the patterns of political development inside a specific union local. While there are definitely similarities between all union locals in Canada, especially in the building trades, there are also significant differences. In this regard, Jason Russell's recent work on auto workers within Local 27 of the UAW/CAW in London, Ontario, offers a useful template in that he persuasively argues that the union local, not the national or international organization, is the key labour framework most commonly encountered and used by working-class Canadians to voice their aspirations and advance their interests.⁶ Russell builds on the work of earlier scholars who have drawn similar conclusions—Bill Freeman's exceptional study of Hamilton Local 1005 of the United Steelworkers springs to mind.⁷ To better understand the resulting struggles of rank-and-file workers, historians need to probe more extensively into the internal dynamic of these local union structures. In addition, the labour movement's "militant minority" in British Columbia, so well chronicled in broad brush strokes by historian Benjamin Isitt, should be explored in more detail.⁸ As Isitt documents, the aptly named minority movement was clearly not homogenous. The shifting sands of militancy and of leftist traditions—in particular "vanguardist" practices—inside specific locals, indeed within leading elements of the rank and file, requires a more thorough examination at a personal, individual level.

Much of the emphasis in the pages that follow, in particular chapter 6, will be to track the significant inroads the "left faction" made within Local 213 in the decade after the IBEW's International Office placed the local union under trusteeship in January 1955. Led by a core of remarkable activists, notably Bill Stewart and Les McDonald, this Communist faction renewal within the local would prove to be highly influential as it slowly but surely—and for the second time after World War II—arguably embodied "the social determination of historical contingency."⁹ Over the years, through both word and deed, Communist electrical workers in Vancouver advanced positions that would alter both the course of their own history and the history of IBEW Local 213. That they did so not in feeble and futile individual attempts, but through an organized form of human action and co-ordinated intervention, made all the difference. Critically important in affecting trade union outcomes at different times and at various political junctures, they also left behind distinct signposts entailing an alternative vision for ensuing

generations to identify, discuss, and perhaps even act upon. The antagonism and controlling internal logic of business unionism would, in response, ultimately prompt a significant splinter group from within Local 213 to pursue an alternative trade union trajectory. Les McDonald's persuasive abilities would provide the initial inspiration to pursue this option once the dust had settled and IBEW retribution had been meted out following the upheaval caused by the largely unanticipated Lenkurt strike. Taken together, and with time and distance providing perspective, these events would prove to be a textbook model of history's dialectic dynamic visibly unfolding within the contours of a local union setting.

Although women dominated the workforce at Lenkurt Electric, their experiences are rarely reflected in the available sources. While I have unearthed a partial set of interviews conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, I was able to find only a single woman who was employed by Lenkurt at the time of the strike. However, she did not wish to be interviewed as her memories of the events surrounding the Lenkurt strike were still too bitterly resonant. For that reason, and despite having played what appears to be a significant role, she will remain anonymous.

Moreover, the vast majority of the personal interviews I conducted were recorded in the early 1980s for my master's thesis in history at SFU. Among other things, I was seeking to understand and explain the particularities of Local 213's eight-year experience (1947–1955) in Communist-led trade unionism under the leadership of George Gee, the local's business manager (or "business agent," as the position was known at the time). A substantial number of the interviews thus understandably focused on this period, with the result that information garnered from interviews with major protagonists, such as those with Jack Ross, the representative of the IBEW's International Office responsible for British Columbia, does not extend far enough to include the events immediately leading up to and including the Lenkurt Electric strike. The same largely holds true for my interviews with Angus MacDonald and Art O'Keeffe, respectively president and business manager of Local 213. All three protagonists continued to be politically active in the local all the way through to 1966 and somewhat beyond, and they occasionally offered enlightening nuggets of information regarding events in the 1960s.

At the outset, this book was not meant to be deliberately provocative. Following the chain of evidence, however, has meant that its necessary

conclusions might indeed become vexatious. Not to poke too many people with a stick, in hindsight it is unintentionally provocative to a number of parties: it is provocative to the McDonald family in that the Communist past of the scion of the McDonald clan in Canada is now fully revealed; it is provocative toward the IBEW in that it pierces the veil concealing largely suppressed accounts of Communist agitation and the latter's subsequent contributions originating in Local 213; it is provocative to employers, governments, and conservative union leaders as they worked, at a minimum side by side, to limit the extent of left-wing influence and agitation among rank-and-file electrical workers; it is provocative toward the Communist Party in that its unquestioned loyalty to the Soviet Union was manifestly counterproductive to being more effective in the Canadian context; and it is provocative to the global triathlon community in that the foundational reasons for the confounding outlook of its first president is largely explained. To hopefully clear the air, being provocative is not meant to arbitrarily rile people up for reasons related to a twisted notion of devious amusement; in fact, it is not necessarily a bad thing at all. Provocative histories can help to spark discussions, as they elicit contrasting opinions and just might lead to a greater understanding of the world in which we live.

Finally, and evidentiary provocation aside, if not well researched and carefully explained, important events such as the Lenkurt strike could very easily default to the interpretation of those cast in the same mould as Selig Perlman. A century ago this historian of institutional labour commented from the United States that trade unionism, "despite an occasional revolutionary clamour on its fringes, is a conservative social force."¹⁰ If viewed only from the top down and from the perspective of the alleged "winners in history," there might appear at first glance to be a fair amount of truth to this affirmation. But this is surely not the whole truth, and it certainly masks a fascinating and often discordant narrative. Indeed, as a British authority of note on the subject once intriguingly wrote, the so-called "losers make the best historians."¹¹ Losers can also become winners in their lifetime, in this exceptional case a bold and pioneering Olympic sport administrator.

Equally important in providing energy and a measure of passion to this effort, the captivating Lenkurt episode—as with all labour history—encompasses individuals whose lives and moments in the limelight, no matter how fleeting, often deserve to be retold. They may not be famous politicians, company directors, actors, rock stars, or sports heroes—and

they may even have lost an important battle—but their contributions to the story of what made our society function should not be forgotten. My obvious close familiarity with Les McDonald will also hopefully impart a sense of the history of Local 213 as lived experience. In short, as attempted in the following pages, historians need to delve more deeply into the lives of these interesting working-class characters if they are to get a handle on the sometimes-significant nuances that exist in the pattern of BC's labour and working-class history.

This page intentionally left blank

A Brief Retrospective

In Canada as elsewhere, the 1960s marked a decade of explosive social and cultural change. It witnessed the development of several anti-nuclear war organizations, on-campus student revolts and building occupations, women turning increasingly toward feminist issues, protests against the Vietnam War, the growth of youthful Maoist and Trotskyist circles as rivals of the Communist Party, the political reawakening of First Nations, crises in the self-identity of youth and the use of drugs, and—most compellingly from the point of view of this research—the use of unsanctioned “wildcat” strikes by young workers pushing back against the limits and restrictions of more traditional business union practices. These were troubling yet exciting times, with new issues confronting Canadians regularly on the front pages of their local newspapers, or increasingly on their new colour television sets during supper-time news hour. It is now appropriately a growing topic in Canadian historiography.¹

Yet during at least one key event involving the trade union movement, there was certainly ample evidence of direct continuity from previous decades of class struggle, state repression, and interventions on the part of the IBEW International Office, in Washington, DC. A baby-boom generation of young students in Vancouver’s Lower Mainland were confronted in their educational pursuits by a huge wave of strike activity right across Canada in 1966, including the eruption of the violent Lenkurt Electric strike in the adjoining Vancouver suburb of Burnaby. It was a perplexing case of old problems resurfacing, sparked by a new issue during the turbulent sixties. Supported by a cadre of progressive trade union men,

including a small number of communist electrical workers, scores of women workers fought hard during what was considered an illegal wildcat strike, but then lost a well-publicized fight due to historical factors seemingly beyond their control. Ironically (and the 1960s were full of ironies), these historical factors were definitely not new in either place or circumstance. Originally granted its local union charter in 1901, IBEW Local 213 was proud of its radical tendencies—conservative critics might have categorized them as factional irritants—though there is little doubt that Vancouver electrical workers had long been at odds with their International Office. As a consequence, Local 213 was also not a stranger to subsequent witch-hunting for red agitators.

The Lenkurt Electric strike began toward the end of April 1966, initiated by frustrated women workers forced into doing unwanted overtime work. On the surface, it appeared that a mere morning parking lot “study session” on the issue went sideways quite suddenly and turned into a spontaneous full-blown wildcat walkout. As will be recounted, it quickly became much more than that and helped to precipitate, first, a widening left-right split within Local 213 and yet another heavy-handed intervention by the IBEW’s International Office into the local union’s affairs. Second, the events at Lenkurt also resulted in a strengthening of resolve by other unions in the province toward openly defying BC Supreme Court *ex parte* injunctions that left-wing critics claimed were intent on recriminalizing picket lines. An important mid-decade event in what historian Bryan Palmer has termed the “Rebellious Era,” the Lenkurt episode did not end well for most of the strikers and their supporters. As was dramatically described in front-page Vancouver-area newspaper columns, there were severe repercussions for several high-ranking members of the BC trade union movement. Unlike in other areas of BC and Canada during the decade, the strikers and their supporters were badly beaten, with the end result contributing to the fragmentation of the idea of a single narrative explanation for the era, particularly as it pertains to the labour scene.

The events at Lenkurt harken back to myriad past and darker labour confrontations that erupted with violence on the picket line and prison-time for strike leaders. While putting employers on notice that rank-and-file electrical workers could certainly not be considered pushovers on the collective bargaining front, it nevertheless did not free the local from the clutches of a conservative and an increasingly concerned International Office. When

confronted with the reality of an unsanctioned walkout, the representatives of the International Office in Canada and the American officials in Washington to whom they were answerable, were quickly and overtly amenable to the demands of both employers and the state. Such class collaboration was certainly not a new phenomenon as far as the IBEW was concerned, but it was symbolic of the upheaval of the 1960s that the Lenkurt strikers included a significant number of women workers. Simultaneously, there was also unfinished business to be taken care of in the form of yet another internal inquisition and punishment for left-leaning trade union militants—a cleanup of sorts due largely to a renewal of Communist activism within Local 213 in the 1950s. Caught in the sweep of the conservative IBEW net were Les McDonald and other left-wing members of the local.² More importantly, it would be the third time in less than half a century that the International Office had intervened in Vancouver in a substantial way, provoking serious altercations at union meetings. The first such incident occurred following a vote by the city's electrical workers to join the socialist-oriented One Big Union (OBU) in 1919 and their concomitant participation in the Vancouver general strike. On that occasion the IBEW had revoked Local 213's charter and replaced it with another, that of the relatively short-lived Local 310.³ Following near-physical confrontations at a union meeting in late August and then legal proceedings, Local 213's charter was eventually restored after a four-and-a-half month hiatus.⁴ A fragile understanding of its place in the world and an uneasy *modus operandi* fell into place as the Vancouver-based local limped through the next two decades. The events of the 1960s, then, can perhaps best be described as a re-emerging left-nationalist movement within the ranks of the electrical workers.

The Lenkurt Electric strike represented a strike that was lost for Vancouver-based electrical workers, not won, and this is an important distinction of the era; collective memory seems to want to forget the bitter defeats of the past, when, as those on the "left" might argue, the lessons to be learned from the analysis of a strike that is deemed to have been lost are crucial to eventually formulating winning strategies for future struggles when faced with similar circumstances. Out of the Lenkurt debacle, however, emerged the formation of a new entity in November 1966, the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union (CEWU). Profoundly disillusioned by the response of the IBEW to the strike, the new union was led at first by the persistent and never-say-die George Brown, and staunchly supported

by Jess Succamore. Within three years, in 1969, the CEWU merged with the Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW), which became a founding member that same year of the Council of Canadian Unions (CCU), both dedicated to becoming democratic Canadian union organizations.⁵

2

Business Unionism

Almost everyone who joins a trade union and is active within it does so for reasons of mutual protection against the uncertainties and predatory behaviours of the economic system at large. Historically, this has meant that arguments on different sides within the trade union movement largely unfolded within the context of how best to interact with employers to gain better security of employment and a decent standard of living. In order to resolve these difficult issues, the concept of “business unionism” quickly became the generally agreed-upon outlook for the IBEW, a secure philosophical anchor in sometimes dangerous seas. What was business unionism? Put in forthright and unambiguous language, the term has been used by certain left-wing critics to describe unions that leave “unquestioned capital’s dominance, both on the job and in society as a whole.”¹ In the case of the IBEW, founded in St. Louis in 1891, it has also traditionally meshed this point of view with a narrow trade (or craft) outlook, as opposed to any other perspective. The outward appearance of these “sensible” unions is such that their organizations champion a business-like approach to trade unionism, often appearing even as supporters to employers, including outsized salaries for their own leaders.² They are highly centralized, in that decision-making and political power rests with a small group at the top of the union structure, which, in the case of the IBEW, consisted of individuals at its International Office in Washington, DC. Philosophically, then, the core of the argument put forward by champions of business unionism was equally candid and readily promoted by one of its own: “We recognize that labor cannot receive a fair wage unless business receives a

just profit for its investment.”³ The result was that craft-oriented business unions like the IBEW did not like to deviate very far from promoting the narrow and religious-like trilogy of higher wages, better working conditions, and job security. Outside political entanglements were mostly to be avoided, as they would serve only to divide the rank and file and divert funds away from immediate membership-specific needs. Yet, constantly threatened from within and without, business unionism was not like a ready-made and off-the-shelf item found in a grocery store; on the contrary, it was honed and moulded over many decades of actual lived experience, with demonstrable success in this case, as the IBEW steadily grew in numbers and influence. As can well be imagined, the growth and importance of business unions was not accomplished in predictable sequential and linear fashion. Serious setbacks sometimes occurred and included, but were not limited to, sudden economic downturns and depressions with employers going out of existence, expensive court battles, picket line defeats, and serious internal factional splits—such as the one lasting six years that divided the IBEW into two competing entities from 1908 to 1914.⁴ When encountering stormy waters, business unionism was nevertheless a fundamentally proven safe harbour in which to moor the union boat. While individual electrical locals might challenge the hours of work required per week or deplore the myriad ways in which employers found ways to circumvent aspects of the collective agreement, the International Office rarely ventured into such treacherous ideological terrain. Capitalism was here to stay, needed to be embraced, and both employers and employees would benefit as long as there was a bit of give-and-take from both sides to make it work.

Competing ideological currents, such as business unionism’s main competitor in the twentieth century—that of a Marxist-oriented labour theory of surplus value and an accompanying class struggle set of strategies—were repeatedly rejected as too radical for the membership, too combative, often ruinously expensive, and lacking in pragmatism.⁵ Considered beyond the pale in this regard would have been the preamble of the amended constitution of industrial unions such as the International Union of Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers (or simply “Mine-Mill”). Highlighted as a point of comparison since it briefly became an issue in IBEW Local 213, Mine-Mill brought under one industrial union roof what was considered mostly a large mass of unskilled workers. By 1951 its constitution had six main clauses. The first two clauses affirmed basic Marxist tenets for true believers, in

that it declared “there is a class struggle in Society,” and that this “is caused by economic conditions” with the “producer . . . exploited of the wealth which he produces.” What really put up the proverbial red flag for business unionists, however, was clause 3, which boldly stated: “We hold that the class struggle will continue until the producer is recognized as the sole master of his product.”⁶ Following the successes of the Russian revolution in 1917, Marxist-inspired ideas such as these were effectively belittled by the IBEW’s International Office as communistic—the foreign ideas of a belligerent power, the sum total of evil that was incompatible with American trade union interests. By the mid-twentieth century, one of its regional representatives in California could even confidently testify that, in the United States at least: “We have always construed it that the Communists were a dual organization and had as its purpose the destruction of the American Federation of Labor. Therefore any proven Communist would not be eligible to get membership or retain membership in the IBEW.”⁷ As well, pursued to its logical conclusion, collective agreements with employers would be yet more difficult to achieve if there was a constant disputative basis questioning the right of the latter to fundamentally exist; though, of course, a reciprocal understanding did not always hold true as employers had successfully argued in both Canada and the United States that unions, in certain circumstances, should be considered criminal conspiracies engaged in restraint of trade standing in the way of a company’s God-given right to make a profit.⁸ Business unions like the IBEW thus fell back and relied upon an uneasy, yet practical analysis. Relying on reasoning that had its origin in simple financial theory relating to the fundamentals of supply-and-demand economics, it believed the relative scarcity of most electrical workers’ highly specialized set of skills allowed it to demand that the profits generated for employers be more equitably shared.⁹ Even more, that good working conditions be encouraged as it led to increases in productivity, and that continuity of employment be maintained as much as was feasible to retain the loyalty of reliable workers.

The IBEW, tired of endless conflict and close to financial ruin on several occasions, achieved a perceived breakthrough in the United States with the successful establishment in 1920 of the Council on Industrial Relations (CIR). This was a bipartite body made up of equal numbers of management and union representatives and tasked with the goal of resolving collective bargaining disputes before they occurred. Even though unanimous consent

is required from both sides (a difficult proposition for any organization), the CIR continues to function to this day, with the IBEW even proudly proclaiming to its members that it is “the most important IBEW program you haven’t heard about.” James P. Noonan, IBEW International president in 1921, explained the union’s original rationale for its commitment to the CIR: “It is the part of good judgment to cooperate with employers who are fair to organized labor and further strengthen the reasons why such employers favor organization among their employees.” He added: “It is useless to make the sacrifices which strikes occasion if it is possible to reach an honourable adjustment by conciliatory methods.”¹⁰ Part of an obviously long-term outlook on the superiority of discussing issues as opposed to any of the alternatives, the IBEW’s International Office has been firmly committed to the belief that unions like their own can peacefully co-exist with capital. For this to succeed, an important part of what was required was to have in place neutral structures like the CIR that would ensure constant conversations with employers took place, leading eventually, it was hoped, to consensual agreements.

Critics, on the other hand, have pointed out that these labour-management bodies are often used by employers to impose their own agenda on participating unions, manipulating the latter into participating in the exploitation of its own rank and file. The so-called greater good often masks the reality of workers continually putting aside their interests for corporate efficiency and the never-ending quest for a more profitable bottom line. There is also a get-out-of-jail card as organizations such as the CIR constitute a consultative body only; employers, if they so choose, can simply walk away from the table and ignore its findings. That the obverse is also true, that the IBEW can also walk away from any CIR findings, makes its century of existence all the more remarkable. In the “Report on the IBEW Pension Benefit Trust Fund,” submitted to the US Senate, the Board of Trustees recounts an incident involving a reporter who attended one of the CIR’s quarterly meetings and captured the problem with the union’s involvement with the CIR succinctly. During an opportune moment he said to someone who was waiting to address the meeting: “I’ve observed for over an hour and listened to the questions asked by the Council members, but I can’t distinguish at all, which men are management and which union. Can you point out which is which?”¹¹ That corporate executives and top-flight union officers might be able to reconcile the traditional gap in

their respective outlooks speaks volumes about the potential for social and cultural convergence by sitting around a table on a regular basis. That this meeting of the minds at the top did not always miraculously reproduce itself to reflect positively in wages received or conditions experienced on actual job sites, was only too predictable. A few chummy men in expensive suits figuring out what was good for the thousands who were putting in repetitive weekly grinds at work could easily leave out the people most affected by these decisions. When rank-and-file electrical workers eventually learned of the CIR's existence, they might have consequently been openly cynical and unsurprisingly skeptical as to its value. While the CIR was originally called the "Council on Industrial Relations for the Electrical Contracting Industry in the United States and Canada," the country references were eventually dropped. By 1966, the year of the Lenkurt strike, an equivalent of the CIR for electrical contractors and the IBEW in Canada did not functionally exist.¹²

The IBEW also had large, powerful, and innovative locals within its organization, such as New York City's Local 3, which historically ran ahead of the conservative International Office. Yet the early history of Local 3 was not very pretty. In the early 1920s it was the theatre of a dark period of internal corruption and racketeering. It was then subject to what has been portrayed as a "draconian" six-year trusteeship imposed by the IBEW's International Office. Emerging in 1932 out of this morass was a fierce yet visionary union man, Harry Van Arsdale Jr., who subsequently became Local 3's business manager from 1933 to 1968; in addition he also served as president of New York City's Central Labour Council from 1959 to 1986.¹³ A devout Catholic, but not much of a saint as a young adult, Van Arsdale Jr. did not hesitate to resort to strong-arm tactics to continue the rigid practices imposed by the International Office and also to silence critics within Local 3.¹⁴ He was eventually able to recruit a like-minded executive board, then successfully construct what has been described as an innovative "hybrid industrial/horizontal and craft/vertical organization."¹⁵ Emulated to this day elsewhere in the labour movement, this confusing term meant he took the opportunity to bring in all kinds of electrical workers, both from an assembly-line industrial setting and from a skill-based craft setting, and had them all participate together in the political and organizational structure evolving in Local 3. This trade union hybrid form and

content was considered groundbreaking in the IBEW at the time and was emulated, seemingly by osmosis, in remote Vancouver-based Local 213.

Local 3's big breakthrough occurred in the latter half of the 1930s when Van Arsdale Jr. managed to convince New York City's electrical contractors to support the city's electricians in refusing to install manufactured equipment that did not bear the IBEW Local 3 label—a co-operative relationship that was formalized in 1943 through the establishment of the Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry (JIB). This combined union-industry boycott effectively froze out competitors behind what was later described as a “Chinese Wall” around New York City.¹⁶ Adversaries of this tactic, not unsurprisingly both non-IBEW manufacturers and contractors, immediately accused Van Arsdale Jr. of having craftily built a monopoly within the electrical construction industry and of having then mounted an unrelenting campaign to enforce it. The assailed business manager did not deny the accusations, but at the same time he argued that “we have the legal right to do it. We're protecting union members' jobs against non-union competition from out-of-town.”¹⁷ The “legal right” to which Van Arsdale Jr. was referring was conferred by a U.S. Court of Appeals judgment that sided with Local 3 by reversing an earlier unfavorable ruling by a district court. But it was not to be. In a landmark decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 18, 1945, Justice Hugo Black, speaking on behalf of the Supreme Court, declared, “Finding no purpose of Congress to immunize labor unions who aid and abet manufacturers and traders in violating the Sherman Act, we hold that the district court correctly concluded that the respondents had violated the Act.”¹⁸

Yet, as was the case with the entire trade union movement, it was mostly the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act that became an important impediment to Local 3's exceptional influence, as the government legislation banned the use of the local's successful secondary boycott campaign.¹⁹ Van Arsdale Jr., however, was not deterred. He forged ahead, helping to pioneer a myriad of impressive breakthroughs for his local, most notably a continent-wide five-hour workday in 1962 with no commensurate loss in pay. Van Arsdale Jr.'s long-term goal in this regard was to consolidate his vision of systematic work-sharing. Shorter hours were meant to “not only ameliorate unemployment” (a constant scourge of those toiling away in the building trades), but with the time now made available to promote a consequential and laudable “self-improvement of the individual.”²⁰

Despite unavoidably having to lead his local into strikes every so often, Van Arsdale Jr. firmly believed that workers “can gain the most benefit by working co-operatively with employers” as they were in a relationship that was “symbiotic by necessity.” Strikes, he believed, were a weapon of last resort and a physical manifestation of flaws inherent to the human condition; more accurately, organized work stoppages were a sign that something had failed in the collective bargaining process. As with the earlier creation of the CIR in Washington, he openly invited employers to consensually agree to collective agreements through New York’s JIB and to work together with IBEW Local 3 for the greater good. To the general public, Van Arsdale Jr. exemplified the positive results that could be attained by union leaders who sought to expand the boundaries of traditional relationships and had the backbone to follow up on these ideas. Local 3’s business manager never tired of pointing out that a union which negotiates a collective agreement only is not a real union: “It must go further and try to improve the life and welfare of its members in many other ways too. Of course, the contract helps in that regard, but it’s not enough.”²¹ Not to overemphasize a key point, it goes without saying that much of his success was dependent on the International Office having backed off on its habit of sometimes micro-managing locals with which it had disagreements and permitting the exploration of doing things differently. Having secured a precarious autonomy from the Washington office, Van Arsdale Jr. was arguably a successful pioneer of what came to be widely known later on as “social unionism,” though his efforts were largely concentrated within the supportive contours of IBEW Local 3.²²

What helps to explain Van Arsdale’s undeniable success was that he and the 30,000 electrical workers he came to lead in Local 3 (one of the largest locals in the IBEW) benefited from the “long boom.” This was a huge and unusually long-lasting postwar expansion in the economy that lasted from 1945 to about 1973.²³ Taking advantage of this economic expansion following the Great Depression of the 1930s wasn’t exactly an effortless, uncomplicated exercise in collective bargaining, but it was certainly easier than in earlier business cycles. As an outlier in the IBEW, it should also be pointed out that Local 3’s successes were not systematically reproduced elsewhere in the union’s continent-wide sphere of influence. Along with the inevitable conflicts and sometimes physically oriented strikes with recalcitrant companies, Harry Van Arsdale Jr. and the electrical workers in Local 3 nevertheless tirelessly worked to prove that their sometimes strong-armed

brand of business unionism could indeed help produce a more stable civil society. This was a form of imposed social democracy, in which all could live and prosper within a capitalist economy.

While Local 3 could loudly trumpet for a while its motto of “always leading the way,” outwardly projecting a hopeful and progressive image of society from its hard-won fortress in New York City, the IBEW in the past had generally tried to ignore the struggles of unskilled labour elsewhere in the electrical sector of the economy. More often than not centred in large-scale manufacturing plants, these hundreds of thousands of production workers had tried before to improve their circumstances through a bona fide union organization, but to no avail. Employed in huge electric and radio production factories, such as those owned throughout the United States and Canada by General Electric, Westinghouse, or the Radio Corporation of America (RCA Victor), they had been mostly bypassed by the IBEW as they were considered too troublesome and not skilled enough to be able to exert any serious leverage on employers. That began to change in the mid-1930s when the IBEW suddenly took notice of a growing demand for some sort of union representation and the security of collective agreements among the masses of assembly-line production workers. But these previously unorganized workers mostly chose to give their allegiance initially to a new and assertive industrial union, the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE). Under the combined auspices of the protective umbrellas provided both by the Wagner Act and the upstart Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO), UE was spearheaded during the latter half of the 1930s by well-known socialists or self-proclaimed Communists in the United States such as James Matles, Julius Emspak, or William Sentner; in Canada their Ontario-based counterparts and kindred spirits became George Harris and C. S. (Jack) Jackson.²⁴ While they had to accept the legal boundaries of the existing business union model, UE’s leaders worked tirelessly to transform their new union into something better than their denunciations of the rival IBEW; the latter was castigated as a dictatorial top-down organization that long permitted the informal exclusion of African-Americans from full membership, and that did little to have employers stop discriminating against lower-paid women.²⁵ These accusations were accompanied by periodic denunciations that the IBEW devalued factory production workers in general, since a 1935 clause in the IBEW constitution granted them fewer voting rights and mere “Class B” status

(a Class “BA” membership was inaugurated in 1946).²⁶ Though the IBEW had succeeded in registering thirty-one B locals by 1937, these were mostly anchored in smaller manufacturing plants.²⁷ When the IBEW came up against UE in organizing conflicts, the new kid on the block didn’t hesitate to accuse the IBEW of toadying up to management and giving the appearance of company unionism. A UE organizer in Pennsylvania even went so far as to write accusingly in 1937 that the IBEW was “being used as a disruptive agency with Company assistance and consent.”²⁸ Comments such as these would unfortunately prove not to be unusual as there would be other, equally distressing episodes, in this hostile relationship.²⁹ In contrast, the procedures and militant bargaining tactics employed by left-wing CIO unions in this era were much more oriented toward an oft-highlighted egalitarian “rank-and-file democracy” and were evidently grounded in something much less hierarchical and more progressive than the usual business unionism.³⁰ Communist UE activists in the 1930s would occasionally cite Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin at mass meetings, sit-down strikes, and on picket lines, to the extent that they were known for regarding unions as “a weapon for the liberation of the working-class.”³¹ In the end it became inevitable that neither side would be completely innocent in the ugly cut-and-thrust of competing unionization drives.

Organizations such as the “socially transformative” UE and more traditional business unions like the IBEW soon came into regular conflict. In an illustrative incident, in 1940, when the IBEW lost a representational vote at the RCA plant in Camden, New Jersey, International President Daniel Tracy immediately proceeded to red-bait the winners. Standing firm in what appeared to be the customary anti-Communist stance of the International Office, Tracy declared that the UE is “nothing more nor less than a branch of the secret service of Joseph Stalin . . . a puppet of the Communist executive board” and “a branch of the so-called Communist Party.”³² Even more concerning was the accompanying revelation that the secretary of the International Office, G. M. (Gus) Bugniazet, had, at the same time, initiated a contract with a private detective agency in order “to follow up leads on suspected Communists.”³³ Reading between the lines, the message from Tracy and Bugniazet was unambiguous: if electrical workers were to be organized, both employers and employees would have been far better off with the IBEW, a representative organization that did not fundamentally question the existing economic and political framework of society. As far as

the IBEW was concerned, it was both naïve and dangerous to believe there might be a superior alternative to a business-friendly union.

Eventually overtaken in the manufacturing category in 1949 by the founding of the equally anti-communist International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE), the IBEW nevertheless maintained a presence in this sector. Perusing the few existing histories relating to the IBEW, it becomes apparent that problems with workers involved in industrial forms of production would plague the union throughout its existence.³⁴ This extended to British Columbia as a province and to Canada as a country. Though the political economy north of the forty-ninth parallel was distinct from that which had evolved in the United States, there were nevertheless both similarities and continuities in development, particularly on the trade union front.

3

Left and Right

Trade union history can be complicated. For example, what do “left” and “right” or “conservative” and “progressive” mean in the context of the labour milieu? It is not that these overly used terms are helpful in neatly categorizing trade union activists; they most certainly are not, and sometimes they even confuse the issues at hand. However, an attempt to distinguish between them should be made as these labels were commonly bandied about in the labour milieu in the past and continue to be in use today. Analyzing them also facilitates an understanding of how politics and trade unions could be on a fluid spectrum of values. While there was definitely continuity, terms and their definitions kept shifting over the years and could lose some of their traditional meanings. In particular, since the Communist Party of Canada played a major underlying role in the events leading up to and including the Lenkurt Electric strike, tracking part of its evolution in British Columbia is key to a better understanding of the politics of labour within IBEW Local 213. Figuring out “left” and “right” would thus depend on time and place and the union in question. In the case of Local 213 in the post-World War II era—and somewhat before—through to the 1960s, the answers might best be understood through the prism of class relations in both British Columbia and Canada.

Riding a surge in popularity for socialist ideals issuing mostly from the reality of hardships during the Great Depression and progressive laws passed by labour-oriented governments elsewhere in the English-speaking world—the perceived successes of the Russian revolution undoubtedly also being a major contributing factor—the Co-operative Commonwealth

Federation (CCF) won 33.4% of the popular vote in a 1941 BC provincial election.¹ As a result, the relatively new socialist party had a record-breaking fourteen MLAs, and it looked to many like a government-in-waiting. It was the second provincial election in which the CCF managed to garner more than 30% of the popular vote.² Adding fuel to the left-wing fire was that this upward trend seemed directly connected to the decades of confrontation, futility, and often violent battles by workers who were attempting to establish basic trade union recognition in British Columbia.³ Achieving legally enforceable collective agreements in the resource extractive sectors, the goal of countless activists and their sympathizers, was then suddenly aided by a major cataclysmic event in the form of World War II. On the labour relations front, the consequence in British Columbia, as in the rest of Canada, was persistent organizational turmoil backstopped by a shortage of labour. In order primarily to get re-elected, the governing Liberal-Conservative coalition of the day felt enough pressure to present friendly amendments in the British Columbia Legislature to the long-standing, but virtually toothless, Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration (ICA) Act. After decades of weak and unenforceable language, and in various iterations, these amendments for once became strongly worded and finally forced employers to negotiate directly with the union officials who represented their employees. The amendments to the ICA Act were presented to the provincial Legislature in early 1943 by George Pearson, Minister of Labour and, in a rare show of political unanimity, passed without dissent by all sitting members. It was his second effort at bringing about reforms to the Act, and Pearson hoped the new amendments would allow employers and employees to negotiate collective agreements “without that battling and disturbance and bitterness” that had characterized much of the labour strife during the previous decade.⁴ Nigel Morgan, a well-known Communist, and one of the leaders in British Columbia of the International Woodworkers’ of America (IWA), approved of the ostensibly pro-union amendments.⁵ He had notably declared in an earlier newspaper interview that “If these amendments are passed the basic cause of two-thirds of the industrial disputes—the question of union recognition—will be eliminated.”⁶ Providing path-breaking room for new industrial unions like the IWA to finally secure their place in society, the ICA Act amendments were, according to BC labour historian Paul Phillips, “the most advanced in Canada.”⁷

Initiated by a normally business-oriented British Columbia coalition government, though not always in an amenable political entente, the progressive amendments to the ICA Act permitted the ruling parties to appear sympathetic to the left; they had now passed legislation facilitating the recognition of unions, a long-standing goal of a large and significant number of industrial workers and their organizations in the province. Despite an increase in the popular vote for the CCF in the 1945 provincial elections, the governing Liberal/Conservative coalition won a majority of seats yet again as it had apparently done enough to retain political power.

A similar dynamic took place a year later at the federal level in February 1944, when federal order-in-council PC 1003 was passed under the War Measures' Act. The order meant that employers were legally required to negotiate with unions across the whole of the country and could no longer bypass the collective will of the workers in their employ. As in British Columbia a year earlier, this provided immediate security of sorts with collective agreements being required by law if a majority of workers so desired. Provincial laws with similar intent finally followed in the remaining provinces under the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act, which remained in force until 1947. The result was that industrial workers who had never before been union members, or who had abandoned these fledgling organizations as a result of unemployment during the hungry thirties, flocked into a burgeoning trade union movement. Union membership across Canada jumped from 16.3% of the non-agricultural workforce in 1940 to 24.2% in 1945, and to 28.4% in 1950.⁸ In British Columbia, the province with arguably the most combative trade union movement in the entire country, particularly in the dominant resource extractive sectors, union membership went from an estimated 12.7% of the non-agricultural workforce in 1939 to a Canadian-best 53.9% by 1958.⁹

Legal recognition meant that accommodations now had to be made with employers within the significant confines of signed collective agreements, and the effect was soon noticeable. Prior to the provincial ICA Act in 1943 and Ottawa's PC 1003 a year later, several of the contracts achieved by IBEW Local 213 in the construction industry were verbal contracts, based on the goodwill of both employers—who needed skilled workers—and the union. Signed contracts with these employers came back into force during the war years, as there was now a shortage of labour and the union temporarily had the upper hand.¹⁰ For many newly organized workers, the hope

was that wage increases would quickly follow and that class war encounters in their rawest forms, with picket lines, physical confrontations, imprisonment, and even gunplay, would henceforth be reduced in scope and number. Conversely, as both PC 1003 and subsequent legislation explicitly outlawed strikes during the term of a collective agreement, workforce stability and continuity of production would also be promoted during the all-out war effort. That these two policy objectives might be continued after the worldwide conflict was likely the hope of employers and the federal government. The strikes that had impeded industrial production at home during the war in 1943, the largest wave of strikes in Canada since labour's national revolt in 1919, would hopefully become "errors" of the past, soon to be forgotten, though 13,000 steelworkers in Trenton, Hamilton, Sydney, and Sault-Ste-Marie had other ideas at the time: they wanted enduring, entrenched union recognition, and an end to war-time wage controls.¹¹ At this crucial point during World War II, their pressure through strike action and the accompanying surge in popular support for the CCF across the country is what ultimately helped turned the tide toward the promulgation of PC 1003. As in British Columbia previously, moving "left" with progressive legislation on the union question was one of the pivotal strategies used by the federal Liberal Party to retain popular support. Led by Canada's shrewd and manipulative prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, his game plan appeared to work as the federal Liberals similarly won national re-election in 1945, though the immediate results delivered an unexpected minority government outcome.

Despite multiple pronouncements of sympathy toward organized labour, Prime Minister Mackenzie King would quickly steer the trade union movement toward acceptance of tripartite councils and "neutral" government agencies. These government bodies occasionally appeared to be fair upon pronouncing decisions during episodes requiring their intervention, but they were rarely neutral. In return for an increase in wages and semi-security in terms of continuity of employment, the result was eventually characterized by a system of pattern bargaining and master contracts. These covered both large industries such as steel and auto manufacturing or, in the case of electrical workers, "international agreements," that is, contracts between industrial contractors and the International Offices of the building trade unions. These agreements allowed the industrial contractors to operate without having to involve themselves in the troublesome process

of collective bargaining at the local level. On many levels, the term was synonymous with master contracts. International agreements were imposed on multi-jurisdictional construction sites encompassing long-term mega-projects such as pulp mills or hydroelectric dams and sometimes elicited resentment in less capital-intensive business ventures and the collective agreements agreed to at the local level.¹² This was paralleled by the growing acceptance by labour of the bureaucratic-driven concept of the “legal strike,” brokered by a “neutral” state, and was exchanged for growth in purchasing power and a social safety net of increasing quality and extent. New social programs, such as family allowances and unemployment insurance, were underpinned at the same time by significant government spending and legislative subsidies for business.¹³ The mostly positive upward spiral in the economy was noticeable and a virtuous circle of Keynesian production and consumption seemed to be taking place; this provided a distinct contrast with the hopelessness of the Great Depression and the global conflict of World War II. But it became abundantly clear with the passage of time that working people and their unions would need to continue to struggle and go on strike to get their piece of the pie, while property relations, the often-aggravating management prerogatives of employers, and capitalism writ large would remain intact.

When the responsibility for labour laws reverted back to the provinces in 1947, a succession of business-friendly governments in British Columbia attempted to impose a more controlling framework of laws and regulations governing the new reality of corporate-union relationships. Between 1947 and 1972 at least six major amendments to the ICA Act were passed by governing parties, whether they were a Liberal-Conservative coalition variant or Social Credit Party. While the new postwar political and economic realities of Canada would not permit a reversion to the barely disguised anti-union pre-war pattern, workers and their organizations now had to deal with a series of bills that tried to impose restrictive legislation on their efforts surrounding collective bargaining. Ben Isitt writes that these were all hotly contested in the (not so) Pacific province, and that bitter fights erupted “over the laws of union certification, bargaining, and picketing, and rulings of the Labour Relations Board and Workmen’s Compensation Board.” Between 1947 and 1972, these included Bills 33, 39, 42, 43, 87, and 128.¹⁴ In 1948, at the beginning of this cycle of constant disputation, when asked for his opinion on Justice Henry Bird’s proposed amendments to the

ICA Act, Harvey Murphy, a well-known left-wing labour leader from the industrial smelter town of Trail in the West Kootenays, summed up the labour movement's suspicions during the entire epoch: "His proposals are ridiculous. They boil down to compulsory arbitration, and the establishment of labour courts to settle wages. Maybe he doesn't want trade unions at all."¹⁵

Union leaders were faced with a number of choices upon encountering these new bureaucratic layers after World War II had come to an end. Those who looked for accommodation with employers through strict adherence to the letter of the law and what was written in collective agreements and who, if at all possible, avoided conflict through strikes, even punishing their own rank and file who had the audacity to organize walkouts during the term of a collective agreement, might be deemed "conservative" or "right-wing" trade unionists. Those activist workers who were less accommodating to the articles agreed to in collective agreements, and who argued that contracts were signed in the context of an unequal playing field during bargaining sessions, with the employer almost always holding the upper hand, might be deemed "progressive" or "left-wing." Yet, politically, both of these groups would for the most part have identified themselves as CCF and, by 1961, when the latter formally became allied with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), NDP voters. Indeed, many trade union leaders in British Columbia were card-carrying members of Canada's largest left-wing party. Others were even Liberal supporters; very few would have identified themselves as politically conservative. Most believed in a social democratic Canada of sorts, from a tepid version, in which CCF-NDP governments are elected to provide safeguards for working people within the framework of a capitalist economy, to more interventionist versions. The supporters of interventionist approaches were more inclined to include the nationalization of key industries. In the case of activists within Local 213, these would have included the BC Electric Company and the BC Telephone Company, both monopolies—or near monopolies—of electric utilities in BC.

Although in some ways interesting, at the end of the day these political differences were not all that significant. What was emphatically important is that unions increasingly began to discipline their own members if they got too far out of line. Co-authors Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz have described this evolutionary aspect of Canadian trade union history in an expressive and telling juxtaposition: "What before had taken the appearance

of the charge of the Mounties now increasingly took the form of the rule of law by which unions policed themselves in most instances.¹⁶

Prime targets for trade union law-and-order types among Vancouver's electrical workers were the so-called "dangerous elements" within Local 213. These were the electrical workers who were often disparaging of the perceived ameliorating reforms emanating from CCF-NDP oriented trade unionists. Mostly Communist-inclined workers, they believed that the dual aims of job security and wage gains were best pursued through the immediate and complete abolition of the capitalist system. This could most readily be accomplished through a vanguard of educated and enlightened workers agitating both at work and in the political arena. Trade unions were particularly important in this regard. Lenin had famously declared, "We must remain in the reactionary unions, work there, conquer the masses, drive out the leaders and turn the unions into organs of the revolution," but the scenario he outlined was seriously stalled and certainly quite some distance in the future in Canada.¹⁷ To use a sports analogy, the traditional Communist solution to wage and employment insecurity for workers was to change the game being played, not to try to do a better job of playing the existing game, with all of its restrictive laws and exploitive rules in place. Depending on the period of time being considered, these militant and class-conscious workers could be considered even further to the "left" of the other trade unionists.

What sometimes blurred and made inadequate these facile political distinctions within the trade union movement was that within a decade of its inception in 1921, the Communist Party of Canada—like many Communist parties around the world—had become a near-appendage to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Taking their direction from Moscow through the Communist International, or Comintern, this meant that Communists in Canada became well known in the 1920s and 1930s for periodically changing their line and shifting their critiques of capitalism and world affairs. Many of these ideological zigzags were an attempt to promote the previously unfamiliar notion of preserving "socialism in one country." Then World War II erupted. At the start of the worldwide conflagration, Communist parties around the world derided the conflict as similar to the First World War, in that it was described as an imperialist war between rival capitalist nations. After June 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in contravention of their previously ratified Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which attempted to

keep the Russians out of the looming armed conflict, Communists immediately changed their line and suddenly became enthusiastic allies of the war against fascism. The party in Canada grew in size and prestige again, to the point that, in 1943, Fred Rose, a Communist (and an electrician by trade), was elected as a member of Parliament for the federal riding of Cartier in Montréal. The all-out effort to defeat the Axis powers also meant that the Communist Party officially campaigned after 1941 for a no-strike pledge at their places of work for the remainder of the war. Ironically, this now meant that critics could easily castigate its members for taking the same position as right-wing supporters of employers and the exigencies of duly signed collective agreements. The political landscape in British Columbia got even more contradictory in the autumn of 1943 (before PC 1003), when the Communist-led IWA sanctioned a two-week strike in a crucial part of the war industry on the Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii). Under federal jurisdiction at the time due to the war, and hence not within the provisions of the provincial ICA Act, the strike was fortuitously well-timed as it temporarily brought to a crashing halt the harvest of giant Sitka spruce used in the production of airplane wings for the famous and fast-flying wood-built Mosquito bomber. For the first time ever, and with concerned federal government officials prompting both sides, restless loggers on the remote and rain-soaked Islands succeeded in forcing employers to sign a one-year collective agreement.¹⁸ The strike demonstrated that out on the west coast, as elsewhere and in other unions, the Communist Party did not have monolithic control of a militant and determined membership; on occasions such as these national party directives would have to be temporarily shelved in order to win a long-sought-after collective agreement with a traditionally anti-union set of companies.¹⁹ The “battle of the Charlottes” was strategically crucial to the IWA’s goal of achieving a province-wide collective agreement in the forest industry.²⁰ In short, being a “left-winger” on the job during the war years could easily lead to some confusion. Politics did indeed make for strange bedfellows.

The positive feelings the Communist Party evoked during the all-out war effort could not last. In fact, the second half of the 1940s proved to be a disaster for the Communist parties in both Canada and the United States.²¹ Western capitalist countries soon rejected their alliance with the Soviet Union and their pre-war abhorrence of all things Communist came back with a vengeance. In the ensuing Cold War, no direct conflict between the

Soviet Union and the major western powers took place, but small proxy wars around the globe kept international tensions high. In Canada, additional internal dynamics fed into this postwar shift of sentiment against the Soviet Union. Armed with sensational spy stories told by the 1945 defection of Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk working in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, the Canadian state renewed its anti-Communist efforts. It soon fell into lockstep with efforts south of the border to root out all Communists from positions of societal importance, including the trade union movement. McCarthy-era witch hunt for Communists in all walks of life had a severe and damaging effect on the entire North American political landscape. In the trade union movement, Communist activists were rooted out or fired from elected positions or were suspended from Canada's central labour bodies by their unions. The result was that organized labour lost, or sometimes appeared to deliberately hamstring, much of the class consciousness and militancy that had taken decades to build up in different regions of the country. The purge of the reds and the ensuing trade union in-fighting in no small measure helped to embolden increasingly business-friendly provincial and federal governments; a weakened labour movement could do little to oppose the imposition of a controlling postwar framework of industrial relations policies and procedures.²² The end result was that in some local unions, such as Vancouver-based IBEW Local 213, the Communist Party by the early 1950s became visibly cautious in advocating identifiably socialist policies. The realities of McCarthyism and Cold War politics had forced Communists in Canada to burrow deep into the organizations to which they belonged—and this is indeed what happened in Local 213.²³

Few in number, Communists in British Columbia trade unions during the two decades following World War II nevertheless survived and had a notable influence that reached far beyond their numbers. This was understandable as they were often the ones who had organized membership drives during the 1930s in the nascent CIO-affiliated industrial unions, then led the fight for better wages and working conditions during and after World War II. The popularity of Communist leadership was a combination of being highly sensitive to rank-and-file and community concerns, being able to successfully direct workers through job action at the work site, and their skill as negotiators. For many Canadian workers this is what mattered most. Foreign policy and events in distant lands were not always of prime concern if there were kids at home to feed and a mortgage to pay. Communist trade

unionists in Canada had seemingly come a long way from 1928 when they were condemned by then secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Labor, Frank Morrison. According to labour historian John Manley, Morrison saw in the expulsion of Tim Buck from the International Associations of Machinists a reflection of a “labourist consensus” that “a man cannot be a Communist and at the same time a union man, because Communists are constantly working to destroy the union.”²⁴ But by the 1940s and 1950s Communist trade union activists were still occasionally in leadership positions in British Columbia. Societal circumstances in part then forced them to moderate their efforts to openly use trade union structures as leading instruments of social and political change in the direction of socialism. Important legal decisions, followed by successive governmental laws, led to the institutionalization of most left-led trade unions. Undoubtedly the best-known of these legal renderings was the Rand formula of 1946, which made the payment of union dues by all employees in a bargaining unit compulsory if a majority wanted to be represented by a trade union. Individuals who had philosophical differences with the union, or who did not want to belong to the organization, were nevertheless forced to pay monthly dues as it was acknowledged that the collective agreement from which everyone benefited—including the anti-union types—had been the result of union bargaining efforts. The most important aspect of this famous arbitration decision that ended the 1945 strike in Ford’s auto plant in Windsor, Ontario was that it also made the union check-off compulsory. This meant that union representatives no longer had to contact each of their members individually to collect monthly union dues as these were taken directly off workers’ paycheques. Though it was not immediately implemented across the country, a major unintended consequence was that an important source of regular contact and interchange of ideas between union representatives and rank-and-file workers was lost. Local unions henceforth simply collected their dues through a company cheque that was then deposited in the former’s credit union account. Worse, employers could stop the flow of union dues if the collective agreement was violated by an illegal walkout. A parallel process of internal bureaucratization then gradually separated the left-leaning leadership from the rank and file. Two BC-focused historians, Mark Leier and Stephen Gray, have each in their own way reflected on this process of growth of working-class officialdom. Leier, in his extensive study of the early years of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, describes

how bureaucracy was not a “crafty invention” of trade union representatives. Instead, faced with an increasing number of labour laws formulated with the passage of time by state-employed legal advisers, “it is negligent for unions not to hire and train their own experts to cope.” The growing and incremental necessity of specialists being hired, or trained by the unions themselves, exerted a discernible hand of influence upon this organized portion of the working class. With the imposition of the Rand formula, the dues check-off thus inadvertently created a source of stable income, the financial means to create a divide that had previously not been as visible or as extensive as before:

Obviously, it is good for shop stewards to know more, not less, about a wide variety of matters. When under attack, or pressing home an advantage, it is useful to have experienced, practical, and tested leaders at the helm. If members, or potential members, are apathetic or cowed, the union’s survival may depend on a cadre of class-conscious, highly motivated officials who have been removed from the day-to-day shop-floor struggle and can devote their time, energy, and knowledge to the cause.²⁵

Stephen Gray, for his part, has commented only briefly—yet incisively—on this phenomenon and its outcome in the context of the Communist-led IWA, the largest union by far in British Columbia’s immediate post-World War II period. Despite, or perhaps as a result of, the massive thirty-seven-day forest industry strike of 1946—the largest in British Columbia to that date—he perceptively points out that governmental laws and groundbreaking legal decisions worked in tandem with the process of bureaucratization. The unintended result, in the IWA at least, was that it “ultimately proscribed the project of synthesizing industrial and political activity within the existing structure of trade unionism and industrial relations.”²⁶

It followed that in unions where Communists managed to hang on to leadership positions, such as Mine-Mill, they were ironically—yet logically—forced to accommodate major employers through the confines of successive collective agreements. Harvey Murphy, for instance, led the industrial workforce at the massive Trail smelter on an official strike only once during the twenty-three years of his leadership—a two-day strike in 1964.²⁷ Though there were Mine-Mill supported strikes of hard-rock miners elsewhere in BC’s extractive-oriented hinterland, the lack of consistent

revolutionary rhetoric or symbolically resonant work stoppages was sometimes lacking in Communist-led unions; the Cold War, combined with McCarthyism, and the security of new collective agreements in the labour movement, had successfully stifled any possibility of an insurgent or revolutionary impulse in much of Canada's working class.²⁸ Referred to unsympathetically by critics for his infamous and alcohol-fuelled 1948 "underpants speech," it was nevertheless emphatically meaningful that Harvey Murphy became regionally renowned as lead negotiator for over a decade on behalf of the Mine-Mill union.²⁹ His shrewd efforts in successfully diverting more of Cominco's profits to its workforce were rewarded in 1953 with the remarkable statistic that the town of Trail had the highest per capita income in all of Canada.³⁰ Not that all that income flowed directly to the thousands of smelter workers toiling away on the Hill, or that there was an unusual number of Italian-style mansions proliferating in the nearby ethnic neighbourhood "Gulch"—far from it—but Murphy and his small team of dedicated comrades were convincing enough, and delivered enough—despite repeated high-profile raiding and red-baiting from the steelworkers' union—to get consistently re-elected to represent Trail's working-class interests. Despite the era's backdrop of trade union compromise, and even concessions, across the country in exchange for an increase in wages and tenuous contractual security, Mine-Mill's leadership focused on building a community-oriented and rank-and-file political culture in the West Kootenays.³¹ But this was unusual in post-World War II British Columbia; Trail, it should be pointed out, was also a town divided, as there was clearly a limit to what a Communist leader could accomplish during this period within the confines of a trade union.

The increasing standard of living by workers across British Columbia and Canada after the Second World War contrasted sharply with the difficulties of life during the Great Depression. One of the consequences was that the traditional political categories of left and right became somewhat more fluid. Workers could change their positions, with initially "conservative" workers becoming more "progressive" over time. Again, this was unusual. In most cases young workers who did not have much to lose lashed out at the imposition of seemingly arbitrary rules, and often became more conservative as time went by. Much of this fluidity depended on how much was at stake for workers involved in "playing the game." Home ownership, paid holidays, and health benefits all helped to produce "conservative" workers

who increasingly desired stability with employers through good collective agreements. Yet very little of this was given away by benevolent and generous employers during the so-called “postwar settlement” of industrial legality and regulation; difficult negotiations, confrontations, and strikes were too often required in this type of economy before an expectant rank and file could hope to see a difference in their material quality of life. Even though he didn’t invent the turn of phrase, W. A. C. Bennett, long-time premier of British Columbia during the 1950s and 1960s, ignored this increasingly disruptive reality and repeatedly used the alluring term “the good life” during elections to describe the growing appeal of a steadily improving economy in Canada’s westernmost province. Combined with warnings about “godless socialists,” while at the same time aptly co-ordinating the often disparate ambitions of big business and the regional interests of small town entrepreneurs, he was impressive in winning a significant percentage of the BC working-class vote in seven successive provincial elections. His peculiar “free enterprise” coalition of right-wing and business-oriented politicians under the Social Credit political umbrella could also turn definitions on their head. In 1958, Bennett’s Social Credit government nationalized the privately owned Black Ball ferries, followed by the BC Electric Company in 1961—both with full compensation—transforming them overnight into Crown corporations. Public control of the production of electricity had become particularly important to the premier, as he didn’t want a private company in charge of this vital resource unless it shared the premier’s vision of the kind of growth the province needed.³² His underlying belief was that key infrastructure projects built at government expense were necessary to promote private capital investments elsewhere in the economy more efficiently.³³ The immediate effect on the political culture of his province was that the “right-wing” Bennett appeared simultaneously to have effectively stolen a major policy platform from the left. Politics could definitely prove to be a slippery slope in this period for those seeking to deploy traditionally tidy definitions in British Columbia.

Appeals of this nature from the Social Credit government of the day could also be tempting for less combative trade union leaders who desired and sought what were described as “good” relationships with employers through accommodating collective agreements. The problem was that employers, like capitalists everywhere, would seek to maximize their profit to survive against competitive rivals, satisfy their shareholders, and control

an ever-increasing percentage of the marketplace. This created instability and led to inflation, unemployment, mandatory overtime, or the inability to provide for their families if union leaders were unable to win the basics of regular wage increases and better working conditions. The pressure put on union leaders was particularly pronounced in the boom-and-bust resource extractive industries of British Columbia which, moreover, were filled with physically arduous and dangerous occupations. However, this competitive environment was less noticeable in the electrical trades during the postwar period than in other fields of employment. The comparatively high degree of specialization required to become a powerhouse operator, a lineman, a construction wireman, or a shipyard electrician often shielded these workers from the unpredictable excesses of the capitalist system.

But this was not always true.

In short, trade union leadership was a fine balancing act, reflected in both the personalities and politics of the individuals involved. This became especially noteworthy in the structure and make-up of the leadership of IBEW Local 213.

Local 213 and Red Trade Unionism

The 1966 Lenkurt Electric strike erupted in the decade following the transition of labour from the more militant Communist-controlled Old Left in the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) to a more ameliorative, social democratic left. To say the least, this was not a smooth transition. During World War II the Communist Party of Canada had gained control of BCFL affiliates to the Canadian Congress of Labour and by 1948 the state of politics within this CIO version of the BCFL has trenchantly been described as “Moscow on the Fraser.”¹ Several of the leading industrial unions, particularly the IWA in British Columbia’s massive forest industry, had been organized, and indeed were run, by some of the leading lights of the party out on the west coast. But as the anti-communist shadow of McCarthyism moved steadily northwards from the United States, union leaders with Communist affiliations, or even simply “red” reputations, found themselves ousted from leading and commanding positions within their organizations. Having done all the hard slogging during the challenging years of the open shop in the 1930s, then to win union recognition and the first enforceable collective agreements from employers in the early 1940s, appeared to be of no avail. Conservative factions—the “white bloc” in the case of the IWA—were able to forge, or arguably re-forge, an unholy oppositional alliance beginning in the late 1940s in Canada that was able to oust the reds from leadership functions in their respective unions. In this highly focused endeavour, they were supported by union members belonging to the Communist Party’s main trade union rival, the CCF, in addition to the International headquarters of the union (meaning their American headquarters), the state, and employers.²

George Gee was in many ways representative of the evolution of Depression-era young men in Canada. He was also to become the first of several human lightning-rods in the Communist issue in IBEW Local 213. Born in 1908 in Virden, Manitoba, he was the youngest of ten children whose father had died when he was only nine months old. The family hung on until the early 1920s, when, unable to meet rising mortgage payments, the small farm they had homesteaded was foreclosed. In the family breakup that followed, brothers and sisters scattered across Canada, while a teenage George went to work at any job he could find. After a stint as a labourer for the Manitoba Power Commission in 1926 and 1927, he became a lineman, repairing wires and climbing poles. The stock market crash of 1929 then cast George into the swelling ranks of the unemployed. Since he had two brothers raising horses near Princeton, BC, he set out with a friend to rejoin them in 1930. He was to call Princeton home during the next five years, occasionally joining the thousands then riding the rails across the country in search of work.

While in Princeton, George Gee increasingly came under the influence of one of his older brothers, Bill, who had joined the Communist Party in 1932. He was also exposed to the dynamic leadership of well-known Communist organizer, Arthur “Slim” Evans, when asked to help in the Tulameen coal miners’ strike of 1932–33.³ In 1935, the younger Gee left Princeton when a sleet storm knocked power lines down all along the Fraser Valley. Rushing into Vancouver with his lineman’s tools, George found temporary employment with Peterson Electric, that is, Peterson Electrical Construction, a well-known line contracting company. Laid off again and fed up with the Depression and the way the country was being run, he joined the Communist Party himself later that same year. In 1936 he headed south of the border to secure another lineman’s job in Washington State. Gee worked steadily in the Pacific Northwest for about a year, in the process joining IBEW Local 77 in the gritty working-class mill-town of Everett, north of Seattle. He then returned to Vancouver in 1937 as he had heard that work was picking up again with the BC Electric Company and its major subcontractors. That’s when he started his career in Local 213, working first on permit, then being officially inducted as a member on August 4, 1939.

Upon his return to Vancouver, George Gee found that there was already a small Communist activist grouping organized in Local 213. He spearheaded

the campaign to elect fellow comrade, Jack Ross, as business manager of Local 213 in 1939 and was publicly lauded for his ability to raise crucially required war bonds for Canada's Second World War effort. When Ross was elevated to the position of an IBEW International representative in 1947, Gee ran for the now-vacant post of business manager and won.⁴

George Gee soon garnered well-deserved acclaim as a popular and shrewd union negotiator, a potentially budding northern version of Harry Van Arsdale Jr. The provincial economy was booming, Local 213 grew from a membership base of about 700 in 1946 to over 2,000 by 1953, and Gee was able to sign steadily improving collective agreements on behalf of Vancouver electrical workers. Wages increased on a regular basis and the construction contractors in the early 1950s were coerced into paying the full cost of an employee welfare plan, a first for IBEW inside wiremen in Canada.⁵ Additionally, improved provisions were made with all unionized electrical contractors, covering both electricians and linemen, one of the key changes being to ensure that the ratio of apprentices to journeymen not exceed one apprentice to two journeymen. This effectively limited the previous ability of employers from stacking their job sites and balance sheets with lower-paid apprentices.⁶ One of Gee's principal critics, Angus MacDonald, was forced to admit: "It was right after the war and the world was open for good contracts. And George was a good business manager and won good contracts."⁷ Under Gee's leadership, Local 213 grew from having three units to having six, reproducing a parallel organization and structure to faraway New York's hybridized Local 3. By 1955, the six Vancouver units were Utilities, Line Contractors, Marine, Gas, Manufacturing, and Inside Wiremen.⁸ George Gee thus won four successive elections as business manager of Local 213 by over 80 percent of the votes cast.⁹

However, unlike Harry Van Arsdale Jr. and International President Daniel Tracy, George Gee was not a devout Roman Catholic; as already mentioned he was a member of the Communist Party of Canada, known from 1943 to 1959 as the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP). Given the strident anti-Communist political climate that erupted in the immediate postwar era, Gee understandably held his personal political cards close. A newspaper reporter of the period described him as "an effective, intelligent person with a likeable way about him. He conducts himself in a suave manner, if with somewhat ungrammatical language, and is a genius at meeting technique. He is never caught mouthing the tiresome phrases of the

Marxist front-man.” On the other hand, it was clear that Gee, the head of a Trades and Labour Congress-affiliated local, was “an interesting example of depression-born radicalism . . . a hard-hitting ex-lineman [who] has a long memory of bitter days.”¹⁰

But the political winds were shifting. During the pervasive anti-left obsessions of the McCarthy period, George Gee’s formative experience absorbed during the Great Depression was increasingly deemed a handicap by his critics, not an asset. Cognizant of both the anti-Communist sentiment in Canada and in an attempt to mitigate official IBEW scrutiny, Gee sent a letter in 1948 to the International Office officially announcing his resignation from the LPP.¹¹ Gee’s resignation was also a response to the Taft-Hartley Act, which officially demanded that each and every trade union official, from International president to local executive board member, file a sworn affidavit “disclaiming Communist membership or proscribed beliefs.”¹² In the United States, if even one elected officer refused to file an affidavit, the entire union could lose its ability to rely on the certification framework overseen by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). As several Communist-influenced unions south of the border were to discover to their dismay, this meant they had great difficulty in defending themselves in the face of ensuing membership raids from more conservative-led organizations.¹³ Though certain aspects of Taft-Hartley were thoroughly criticized by IBEW officials, the International’s executive board had no compunction signing anti-Communist affidavits. Investigations into local union administration followed, even in Canada, where American law supposedly did not apply. Though the anti-Communist affidavits were eventually declared unconstitutional in 1965, several provisions of Taft-Hartley remain on the books to this day in the United States.¹⁴ It quickly became a foundation stone for sustained right-wing attacks within the labour movement, but a millstone around the neck for anyone even remotely associated with the Communist Party. The American legislation made it difficult for Vancouver electrical workers espousing a “progressive” angle at Local 213’s union meetings to manoeuvre, or to publish cogent articles critical of capitalism in the local labour press, since that might be construed as identifiably overlapping with Communist-LPP positions.

George Gee’s official resignation from the Communist Party did not change the way he viewed the world or the way he interacted with others within it. He continued to fulfill his functions as business manager of IBEW

Local 213 in much the same way as he did before. It was most likely a fake resignation, designed to disarm his enemies in both the trade union movement and the corporate sector. Bill White of the Boilermakers' union in North Vancouver's Burrard Dry Dock, at the time a member of the Communist Party, certainly thought so. In Howard White's *A Hard Man to Beat: The Story of Bill White, Labour Leader, Historian, Shipyard Worker, Raconteur*, he says Gee was part of the BC LPP-trade union brain trust of the period, helping to design and direct ensuing sectoral tactics for bargaining in the province.¹⁵ Following very much in the footsteps of others at the time in Canada who denied their political affiliation—UE's C. S. (Jack) Jackson or the steelworkers' Tom McClure in Ontario spring to mind—Gee admitted as much when he once declared in an interview: "Now I never worked any different when I was in the Party, or whether I was climbing poles. A communist is not something different from the bloody working class—they [*sic*] are the working class!"¹⁶

What bothered his critics more than anything else was that George Gee appeared to allow Local 213's membership rolls to become a safe haven for well-known but unemployed Communists, or reputed close collaborators of the party, some of whom were blacklisted from other industries for their previous union activism. Employers could easily point to a handful of newly sworn-in members of Local 213, such as former IWA organizers Ed Simpson, Al Parkin, and John McCuish; or a colourful assortment of workers from other sectors of the economy, such as Alex Dorland, Dusty Greenwell, Carl Rush, and Tom and Stan Forkin. In a family connection appearing to promote literal brotherhood, not just the trade union variety, the business manager's very own siblings, Bill and Robert (Ed) Gee, were also admitted as members of Local 213. Even though most of them originated from among the secondary and rank-and-file cadre of left-wing labour organizers in British Columbia, employers did not appreciate the prospect of having some of these controversial figures on their job sites, potentially fomenting grievances or work stoppages and exerting an unwanted critical influence on their fellow workers. Henry Ayling, for instance, personnel manager for BC Bridge and Dredging, had expressed his concerns to Jack Ross, the Vancouver-based representative of the IBEW's International Office. In 1951, Ayling asserted that there "seems to be a definite Communistic trend" in Local 213 and complained specifically about a clearance given to Al Parkin, formerly active in the red bloc of the IWA. Well aware of Parkin's militant

reputation and political preferences, Ayling “sent him back to the Local and informed them that I could not possibly hire a man with such a record as he has.”¹⁷ Anti-Communist electricians within Local 213 itself also commented on the new members. Decidedly not impressed, one of them declared that some of the newly inducted electrical workers “are of such poor calibre that they . . . are continually being sent back as soon as the foreman sees, either, that he can’t do the work, or won’t give a reasonable 8 hrs work for a day’s pay.”¹⁸ Such an assessment probably needed to be taken with a grain of salt, but reflected the pressure the Communist Party put on George Gee to accept unqualified party members in need of employment.

The distrust and denunciations then turned to become focused on one of Gee’s assistants, the militant and outspoken Don Wilson. Disliked by several employers for his strict policing of collective agreements and accused of being a Communist, Wilson defended himself by asserting that the first point meant that he was just doing his job well; as for the second accusation, he claimed that he “was not and never had been” a member of the party.¹⁹ The denial was hard to believe, given Wilson’s close working relationship and friendship with the head business manager. Suspicions sufficiently aroused, Jack Ross wrote in 1954 to John Raymond, vice-president of the Canadian district of the IBEW, headquartered in Toronto, to ask whether he had information on Wilson. By way of confirming Ross’s suspicions, Raymond replied that their files showed he was a paid-up member of the Communist Party in 1951. “We have not been able to get anything in the way of definite proof that he has paid dues since that time,” he added. “This should be sufficient for your needs.”²⁰

The International Office of the IBEW disliked Don Wilson not only for his Communist links, but also for his brazen outspokenness. The assistant business manager, responsible for the contract linemen, pulled no punches in criticizing his own organization if he felt the situation warranted a public chastisement. Given subsequent events, this was undoubtedly unwise. George Gee recalled a speech Wilson had made at the August 1954 TLC convention in Regina as a delegate from Local 213:

Don blasted away there at the International and their role in regards to the telephone workers. They’d sat on their backside doing absolutely nothing, and we’d spent quite a bit of money trying to organize the telephone workers. They were in a company union at the time.

So Don blasted the IBEW for signing yellow dog contracts and what have you. That was the main reason they wanted him dumped.

On top of that he threatened to pull a strike at Revelstoke that I needed like a hole in the head. I didn't know the bloody thing was almost out until I received a phone call from the mayor [of Revelstoke] one morning. Don hadn't told me. He was thinking of pulling the guys off the job. Anyway, they wanted me to fire him and I said no bloody way. When he did something I didn't agree with, then I might.²¹

There was little doubt within and without the electrical workers that George Gee was promoting party activism and building up support for a left-wing outlook within Local 213.²² As with other Communist-influenced unions like UE or Mine-Mill at the time, this was largely channelled through a re-orientation toward rank-and-file participation in the decision-making process surrounding Local 213's policies. The most important of these new democratic measures concerned the rotation of work among the inside wiremen. A representative committee decided that laid-off electricians would have to go to the bottom of Local 213's unemployed list and wait their turn for a new job to be offered from the union's dispatching office. Despite massive support for the new strategy, complaints immediately ensued from a previously privileged minority, as "it means we lose all seniority we have with the shops we have worked for, some of us for over 20 years."²³ Important reforms such as these were intermittently combined at meetings with Local 213's support for ostensibly left-wing issues, such as its periodic \$5 to \$25 contributions to the *Pacific Tribune*, the Vancouver-based weekly Communist Party newspaper; the Stockholm Appeal for Peace; demands that the United States government free the "framed up" Rosenberg couple; or that the expelled Canadian Seaman's Union (CSU) and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU) be readmitted to the TLC. Though these measures could hardly be considered revolutionary and were soft-pedalled by appearing sporadically from the floor under "New Business" at the local's monthly membership meetings, some inside wiremen, like Charles E. Sumpton, believed that the insertion of these issues constituted an unappealing and unwanted political slant. Sumpton would subsequently write to Jack Ross regarding his perception that "there were too many 'Reds' . . . in key positions with 'Red' ideas."²⁴ The ensuing political

atmosphere became so poisonous that it even affected workers on a number of job sites. Dave Clark, a former BC Electric employee and LPP member, recalled:

The top shop stewards [in Local 213], the good shop stewards, were all Party people. But at that time it was getting so that there was too much pressure on anybody that was a left-winger. So the Party people would not always take the lead. They would organize, set it up, and let the other guys get the cream. They did this by telling them how to go about it. Then no one could nail that guy for being a Communist because he wasn't. But we still got condemnation from everybody. We still got accused of being "god-damned left-wingers" and stuff like this, you know.²⁵

There was also a cultural and political resonance to Gee's leadership efforts. Tremendously popular hockey, soccer, softball, and bowling teams were established, with the local also organizing impressive turnouts at annual May Day and Labour Day parades. Speakers' workshops were also successfully promoted under Gee, to the extent that some applicants were turned away on the grounds that "attendance in these is at the maximum number allowed."²⁶

Among other issues, the Vancouver business manager had also been keen to help Mine-Mill's Harvey Murphy in the organization of his outdoor Peace Arch concerts featuring the famous African-American bass baritone, Paul Robeson. Gee sent out volunteer electricians to wire the flatbed sound truck from which Robeson, a self-proclaimed Communist sympathizer, was to sing at Peace Arch Park on the Canada-United States border.²⁷ Much more disturbing to Gee's opponents was that an "Electrical Club" had been established that caucused before Local 213's union meetings to strategize on the main issues of the day. Communist Party members were also in key positions, and the electrical workers' leader was able to convey a regular analysis of events through the founding of the local's monthly newspaper, *Live Wire*, which published its first issue in 1949.²⁸ Under the editorship of the tremendously capable and similarly minded Tom Forkin, the newspaper covered everything from the signing of new agreements to the latest results of the local's newly founded sport and recreation clubs. The monthly newspaper provided a healthy combination of political commentary, historical analysis, and personal anecdotes—all interlaced with Forkin's wry sense



Electrical workers from IBEW Local 213 assembling for the 1953 Labour Day parade in Vancouver, during the George Gee era. *Local 213 IBEW Live Wire*, September 1953, 1.

of humour. It went without saying that the contents continually warned the electrical workers to be on their guard, because even “if a bit of give and take on the job is always necessary . . . if you start giving away on clauses in your agreement, pretty soon you’re doing all the giving and the boss is doing all the taking.”²⁹

But there was far from unanimous support within Local 213 for these easily noticeable changes. An unsympathetic Fred Allison, who at one time had been elected shop steward at one of BC Electric’s multiple dam projects on the Bridge River, recalled in an interview that a close analysis of the local’s internal functioning brought to light what he believed were extremely disturbing practices:

Local 213 was a very well run organization. It was run by the Communist Party, no question of doubt about that. If you went to a meeting, everything was sort of programmed. They had an Electrical Club that used to hold pre-meetings before they had the union meeting to decide on policy and what was going to be debated, what was going to be talked about. If you were a maverick, or a lone wolf, they had everything covered. If you got up to speak, three would get up to

speak behind you, maybe four. You know, it doesn't take very many people to dominate a local union. It takes only a fairly small group who are willing to talk and to contribute.³⁰

Complicating the political landscape within the Vancouver electrical workers' local was the fact that IBEW's International representative for British Columbia, Jack Ross, had re-oriented his opinions in line with his new responsibilities, which consisted of watching, reporting, helping British Columbia locals in negotiating collective agreements, and intervening if necessary on behalf of the union's American headquarters. Within union circles, he soon became known as a watchful and meddlesome anti-Communist. A key and important figure in the postwar history of Local 213, Jack Noble Ross was born in 1905 in Aberdeen, Scotland, and had immigrated to Saskatchewan with his parents as a teenager. Following numerous adventures working odd jobs while wandering the Canadian west, he became a lineman in his early twenties near Cranbrook, British Columbia. Eventually settling in Vancouver during the Great Depression, he joined the Communist Party in 1934 and teamed up with George Gee inside Local 213 to defeat long-time business manager Teddy Morrison in the pivotal executive board elections of 1939. Owing to serious disagreements over Soviet foreign policy in connection with the non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR signed in August 1939, Ross left the Communist Party.³¹ Involving himself in the political manoeuvring of the upper echelons of the IBEW immediately following World War II, Ross backed the efforts of the winning anti-Communist presidential candidate, Daniel Tracy, and in 1947 was rewarded with his appointment as the International representative for British Columbia.

Rid of his political affiliation with the party, he could now keep an eye on the growing influence of the Communists within Local 213, centred around George Gee. His subsequent estrangement from his former comrade—working in the same building, they were understandably wary of one another—meant that Ross was detested on the left as a trade union and political turncoat. All the same, he was well acquainted with the political platforms and tactics used by key labour activists from BC's Communist Party.

For the IBEW's International Office, Ross had the ideal background to carry out his duties. Don Wilson, former assistant to Gee, believed that Ross conveniently left behind his working-class roots and the harsh lessons

learned in Canada during the Great Depression. When Ross moved up to the post of business manager of Local 213 at the start of World War II and then to International representative in 1947, “his trade unionism sunk.” Instead, “the Constitution became his Bible.”³² In the 1950s and 1960s, Ross shared an office with Les Crampton, business manager of Prince Rupert Local 344, upstairs in the Dunsmuir Street union hall, where they worked together on providing union clearance for electrical workers applying for out-of-town jobs.

Most descriptions of Jack Ross were uniformly negative, to the point of being reprehensible. But they were shared at the time by many of the politically active and straight-shooting electrical workers. Like most workmen, they did not pussyfoot around in their use of language. One of them recalled: “He used to sit in that office upstairs with Les Crampton from Local 344 and they used to look like some old mafia dons. They had shifty eyes; they would never look at you directly . . . I just knew what a bloody slime-ball Jack Ross was.”³³

During the 1940s and early 1950s Ross had fed his superiors in Washington a constant stream of documentation on Communist influence inside the electrical workers’ local. These documents included newspaper clippings, reports on declarations and votes made at labour conventions by Local 213’s delegates, employer complaints about red-leaning electrical workers, the close relationship business manager George Gee had with well-known Communist labour leaders such as Mine-Mill leader Harvey Murphy from Trail (who rented an office for about three years in the union hall) or general unease at the control Gee and his supporters appeared to exert within Local 213.³⁴ Having been a lineman like Gee, even doing line repairs as a partner with him on several occasions when they “worked the tools,” former soul-mate Ross had similarly been forced to tough it out to survive the Great Depression. His circumstances growing up would serve him well as a long-lasting officer in the IBEW; allied with a rasping, gravelly voice that demanded attention whenever he spoke, he too was endowed with an impressively acute political compass. He thus became a constant shadow tracking Local 213’s political ins and outs and was often the focal point of the black clouds of division that seemed to hover persistently over the Vancouver electrical workers.

Unlike Harvey Murphy who was protected at the time within a larger left-wing organization, the International Mine-Mill union, George Gee was

isolated in the conservative IBEW. Within the four walls of his very own union building, he was more than cognizant that the union's International representative was increasingly hostile, though he was also aware that his former Comrade had no real authority in terms of the day-to-day functioning of Local 213. This reality did not stop Ross from relaying his growing concerns about the increasing influence of the Communist Party inside the electrical workers' union to his superiors in Washington, DC. One surviving letter was sent to J. Scott Milne, at the time International Secretary of the IBEW. A Canadian originally from the Vancouver area, Milne was naturally interested in and curious about unfolding events in Local 213. But Ross was worried:

Day after day, they and their party members are gaining complete control of this once conservative and respected organization. To-day, the I.B.E.W. name is treated with justifiable suspicion. From every quarter I run into open hostility when endeavouring to conduct I.B.E.W. business . . . Rats breed dam fast when they are in a warm protected nest, and if the breeding is allowed to go on much longer, it will be a big job even for a Pied Piper from Washington.³⁵

The catalyst that served to precipitate George Gee's eventual lifetime expulsion from the IBEW were his attempts over several years to bring in BC Electric's 250 gas workers into the fold of Local 213. As might be suspected, the company did not want the gas workers in Local 213 for easy-to-understand financial reasons. Larry Jack, former general secretary with BC Electric, recalled that it was really all "very simple." The small size of Gas Workers Federal Union, Local 225, meant that they "just didn't have the resources to bargain as effectively as the IBEW . . . There were so few of them paying dues that they couldn't afford the required help. They managed to reach settlements that, comparatively speaking, were advantageous to the company for quite a long time."³⁶

As part of several public denunciations that took place during the first few months of 1954, BC Electric's opening salvo directed at George Gee occurred in early January when H. L. (Henry) Purdy, BC Electric's vice-president, accused the local's left-wing leader of being "closely connected with Communist organizations and it has been the company's sad experience that, since he became Business Agent . . . of the local which represents the company's electrical workers, our relations with those workers have



After years of jurisdictional disputes with the BC Electric Company, George Gee is finally able to sign the gas workers into IBEW Local 213. From left to right: Bob Woodward, George Gee, and Jack Cody. *Local 213 IBEW Live Wire*, October 1954, 1.

deteriorated.” In this front-page newspaper story, Purdy went on to say that he did not think it was appropriate that Local 213 continue in its historical direction of behaving more like an industrial, rather than a strict and exclusionary craft union. He let it be known to the press that he did “not think it desirable” that workers who were not employed at BC Electric “should take part in decisions of the local that affect us directly, or that our employees should, by being members of the same local, become involved in any disputes which those other members may have with their own employees.”³⁷ While corporate executives like Purdy were obviously not in agreement with the direction of Local 213’s political and economic outlook, it should be noted that throughout his tenure as business manager of Local 213, George Gee never once led the BC Electric workers out on strike against the company. Like a number of other Communist trade union representatives in the province at the time, he had a reputation for being a skillful negotiator;

the problem was that his political underpinnings, combined with occasional threats to pull workers from the job at the giant utility, eventually got under the skin of his conservative counterparts at the bargaining table.³⁸ At the same time, as Bert Marcuse ironically asked in a letter to a Vancouver-based newspaper reporter, aren't all union leaders "reds at negotiation time?"³⁹ Gee had won leadership in a local union with a troubled past, and to the employers' dismay he was more than capable of keeping pace with ambitious business unionists in winning substantial improvements in collective agreements. What perturbed employers even more than his negotiation skills was that Gee appeared to be trying to steer Local 213 in the direction of a hybridized industrial union with a red-hued twist.

A year later McCarthyism as a live, visible, and interventionist force caught up to Local 213. Codifying long-standing leadership beliefs held south of the border, a new preamble to the IBEW constitution was approved at the union's September 1954 Chicago convention. One of its articles pointedly noted: "This Brotherhood will continue to oppose communism, Nazism or any other subversive 'ism.'"⁴⁰ Decisive action quickly followed this broad philosophical declaration, though at first it was made to appear that the effort to oust Gee from Local 213 genuinely came from within the ranks of concerned electrical workers. Seven anti-Communist members of the executive board had previously posted a letter south to request a meeting with IBEW International President Milne in Chicago. George Gee and Don Wilson, who had also been elected to represent the interests of Local 213 at the convention, were conveniently absent from the Windy City as they had been refused entry into the United States by American border officials; whether by accident or by design during the McCarthy period, this was a convenient occurrence enforced on numerous occasions by border authorities against several Communist-inclined representatives of international unions, particularly those of the more "notorious" industrial unions like the IWA, UE, Mine-Mill, and the ILWU. As their plans could now not be derailed by either left-winger, Angus MacDonald recounts what took place at this crucial conclave:

We were an innocent group of people that wanted to clean up 213 in the best way we could and the best way we thought. . . . There was no flag waving, it was quiet, clear, and what I would consider a very mature meeting. We discussed whether we should do this or whether

we shouldn't, because none of us really wanted to do what we did, but we couldn't see any other way of stopping what we considered the Communist tide coming into 213 . . . Looking back on it now, we were reacting to George being too loyal to people we thought were not doing him or 213 any good, people like Alex Dorland, Don Wilson, Sid Sheard, and Harvey Murphy.⁴¹

The concerned delegates in attendance from Local 213—John (Jack) Waplington, Angus MacDonald, Bill Daley, Jack McSorley, and Art O'Keeffe—then affirmed that they were indeed five of the seven electrical workers from Vancouver who had affixed their names to charges incriminating George Gee and stated that he was unfit for union office. In particular they declared that George Gee was a Communist Party member working “in the interest and direction of Soviet Russia,” which was “against the interest and welfare of all members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers throughout Canada.”⁴²

In January 1955, the international headquarters of the IBEW sent out International Representatives Alfred Terry and Andrew Johnson to Vancouver to clean up the thorny issue of one of its locals with a growing red reputation. The gun-packing and intimidating IBEW representatives were evidently well-practiced and did their job well—Terry in particular gained a reputation for using “more than his voice to be persuasive.”⁴³ On the appointed day—Monday, January 17, 1955—approximately 1,200 electrical workers jammed themselves into their union hall to learn more of what they had read in the weekend's newspapers, namely that George Gee had been expelled by the IBEW for “working in behalf of Communist causes.”⁴⁴ Missing from their usual places were business manager George Gee and his assistants, Don Wilson and a newly appointed Art Goy, a likeable and a reliable trade union figure who had doubtless been appointed by Gee precisely because he was not a member of the Communist Party; Gee was increasingly aware that he needed to prove he did not surround himself solely with appointed party advocates. Seemingly replacing the three were a pair of strangers, large and tough-looking individuals both, one of whom—according to some observers—had a noticeable bulge under the left side of his overcoat.⁴⁵

Acting chairman Art O'Keeffe started the meeting by taking a roll call of Local 213's executive board. The assembly thus learned that the two strangers

were none other than Alfred Terry and Andrew Johnson, International representatives for the IBEW (commonly known as “roadmen”), that Bob Woodward and Cec McEwen had both resigned their positions, and that Bert Marcuse had been fired from his job.⁴⁶ O’Keeffe then granted the traditional opening motion, duly seconded and carried unanimously, that the minutes from the previous meeting be accepted as read.

Events then occurred in rapid succession. Don Wilson was asked to come up to the platform from the back of the Hall and was told by Alfred Terry that “as he, Bro. Wilson, was suspended, he could not attend this meeting.”⁴⁷ Wilson responded by asking that Terry show his credentials from the IBEW. When the Roadman complied, Wilson spoke up and read to the packed throng the letter from Terry suspending him “from attendance at Local Union meetings or representing Local 213 in any official capacity pending the completion of [a] hearing and [a] decision . . . on charges.” He said that he had been suspended “in accordance with Article 4, section 4 of the I.B.E.W. Constitution” and informed the meeting that George Gee had been suspended under identical charges.⁴⁸ He then left the meeting, a rising tide of applause and shouts of encouragement ringing in his ears.⁴⁹

Following Wilson’s departure, O’Keeffe attempted to proceed with regular business and announced that a meeting of unemployed brothers would be held at 7:00 p.m. the following night. Other union members, however, had different ideas. Someone angrily presented a motion, quickly seconded, of non-concurrence in a yet-to-be-read report from the executive board detailing the changes in the local union’s personnel. O’Keeffe would not accept the motion and ruled it out of order amid much hooting and hollering. Jack Waplinton, president of Local 213, then stood up to address the angry throng. He stated he was doing so “in the temporary position of Business Manager, maybe for two weeks, until the Bro. Gee case is cleared up.” But he was shouted down, and again non-concurrence was moved and seconded only to be ruled out of order once more by O’Keeffe. Conscious of the vehemence building up against those sitting on the platform, brother Vern Shuttleworth then announced that he was resigning from his appointed position on the executive board. Loud cheers greeted his decision, turning to jeers when brother Edward Moore was appointed to take his place temporarily.

At long last International Representative Alfred Terry got up to address the crowd. He was met by a swelling chorus of boos and shouts of “Go back

to the States, you McCarthyites!” and “Yankee go home!” but brazenly stood his ground and told the electrical workers that “he had been assigned to come to Vancouver by J. Scott Milne, president of IBEW International, to clear up the situation that existed in Local 213 of the IBEW.” He added that President Milne had “great affection for . . . and is anxious to do everything possible to assist our Bros. in Canada. [But] he is presently very much concerned [about] Local 213.” Before introducing his assistant, Andrew Johnson (the one with the bulge), Terry assured the meeting that the two of them would “do a good job in clearing up the situation . . . and nobody would be unfairly dealt with.” Johnson then attempted to make a short speech, repeating much of what Terry had said. But someone shouted, “Let’s take the meeting over!” and several electrical workers started toward the stage area to take control of the microphone. Brother Vern Bigelow then got into a shoving match at the back of the platform, and other scuffles also broke out in the aisles between the seats. Present in the Dunsmuir union hall that night was Tom Forkin, editor of *Live Wire*, who remembered what happened quite vividly:

Suffering cats! It came as close as anything to a bloody insurrection at that meeting . . . But we advised the men on the floor who were ready to fight to keep their god-damned shirts on and to attack this thing in a mature and moderate fashion. Of course the backbone of this unruly element was the line department. They were ready to fight and they were gonna clean the clocks of the international representatives.⁵⁰

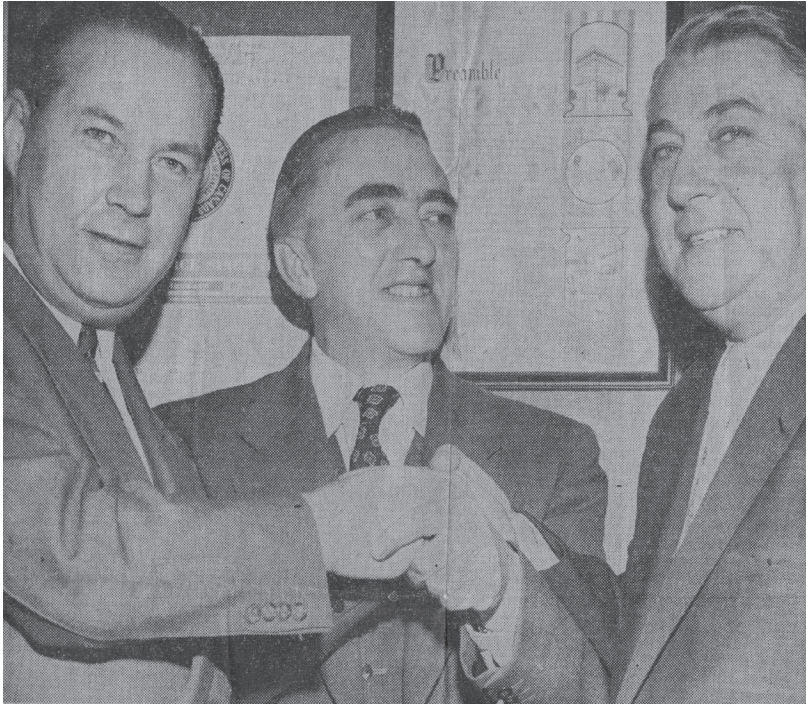
Forkin and others were heard, saner heads prevailed, and a sense of order was momentarily re-established, particularly once the stage was cleared of rank-and-file electrical workers. Brother Bill Turner then jumped up and loudly proclaimed that he was a member of the Labor-Progressive Party. Others quickly followed. Amid attempts by O’Keeffe to pursue another line of business and filibuster the time remaining, the turmoil spread again. Brothers Jack Gillett and Herbie Welch then announced that they, too, were members of the LPP, the first-named adding “and proud of it!” In an atmosphere of bedlam, just before adjourning at 11 p.m., the executive board suspended another twenty-two members in addition to Wilson, Gee, and Goy.⁵¹ But they agreed, in a show of apparent clemency and understanding, “that nothing will be released to the press that will be detrimental, or

harmful to the Bro's. Cases." Then apart from Terry and Johnson who walked in seemingly accustomed, measured paces, those present on the platform hurriedly made their way to a back door leading to the comparative safety of the union offices.

Jack Waplington's declaration that the Gee case would take only two weeks to clear up proved to be wishful thinking. Local 213 was initially placed into trusteeship for what would prove to be five very onerous and troublesome years, as all executive board members, office staff, and delegates representing the local to city, provincial, or national trade union bodies had to be approved beforehand by the International Office. In addition, although its individual trade units could meet separately, the 2,400-member Vancouver-based local learned that general meetings would be suspended during the same time period.⁵² Eighteen electrical workers were eventually handed suspensions ranging from ten to thirty years, while Local 213's business manager, George Gee, was expelled for life.⁵³ Moreover, four out of the thirteen members of Local 213's executive board resigned rather than serve under the dictatorial rule of the International Office, and seven of the local's office staff were either fired or quit.⁵⁴ Eventually, as the dust from the intervention settled and the numbers became better known, the suspended electrical workers labelled themselves the "21 Club" after the New York club of the same name, an infamous upscale former prohibition-era speakeasy.⁵⁵ Coincidence perhaps, but in left-led Mine-Mill, the organization's entire constitution was upended later that same year to provide complete autonomy to its Canadian membership.⁵⁶ This provided a barrier of protection for its Communist-led locals in Canada from the very real possibility of unilateral intervention, particularly if its international leadership in the United States was ousted and replaced with more conservative, business union types.

A. E. (Dal) Grauer, president of the BC Power Corporation, the parent entity of the BC Electric Company, would have approved of the IBEW's house-cleaning efforts in Vancouver. A native British Columbian who strongly believed that "socialism was the major threat" to the province's prosperity, he had flown a year earlier to Washington, DC, to talk directly with leading officers of the union.⁵⁷ The specific reason for the unusual trip was to discuss his perception of a disturbing labour relations problem affecting the BC Electric Company. It was recorded in the minutes of meetings of their board of directors that Grauer had returned from Washington

56 *The Red Baron of IBEW Local 213*



The depths of the Cold War: George Gee, accused of being a member of the Communist Party, has been ousted as IBEW Local 213's business agent. Andrew Johnson (left) and Alfred Terry (right), two International officers of the IBEW, share in congratulations with Jack Waplinton (centre), president of Local 213, on a job well done. *Daily Province*, January 17, 1955, 5.

having been assured by the union's International Office that "the left-wing leadership of Local 213, which has been the company's objection all along," was going to be changed to include representatives more to his liking. Continuing in the same vein, he reported to his board of directors that "there are now strong indications" that Gee and his left-wing assistants were "in the process of being replaced by men of more stable and responsible caliber."⁵⁸ J. Scott Milne, the new IBEW International president, would later confirm in a letter to Grauer that leadership changes would be forthcoming in Local 213, writing to his irritated counterpart at the BC Electric Company that "Mr. Al Terry, one of our International Representatives, will be in Vancouver in the early part of January in connection with the subject matter which we have

discussed on several occasions. As I told you, we will put our house in order about the first of the year.”⁵⁹ A meeting of minds had evidently taken place in Washington. Not surprisingly, as this was no longer required, the public attacks on George Gee in the local press literally stopped following Grauer’s return from Washington.

Don Wilson, Gee’s embattled assistant, recalled that the Electrical Club (later to be known as the “left faction”) considered a major fightback against the local’s trusteeship. But the idea was quickly abandoned:

The only way our opponents could tackle the union was with the communist bogey. And we knew we couldn’t fight that. Because if we had fought back, there would have been hundreds of guys who would have lost their jobs, been expelled, and got their heads beaten in. We had the example of the SIU, CSU, and IWA. There was just no way we could win that fight. Not at that time anyway.⁶⁰

Others believed there should have been a major pushback and that it was a tactical mistake to focus everything on George Gee’s reinstatement to the IBEW. As events transpired, there did indeed appear to be a focus on George Gee throughout 1955 to the exclusion of the other suspended electrical workers in the 21 Club. According to Terry Simpson, the eldest son of suspended Communist Ed Simpson, one consequence of the singular focus on Gee was that “a number of people who had been the backbone of the union in fact drifted on a sort of current off to one side . . . and left the union wide open to all kinds of in-fighting and back-biting, which occurs when there’s a sudden power vacuum.”⁶¹

Amid this union turmoil in Vancouver, 1956 occurred. It was a fateful year for international relations involving the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe. The Khrushchev revelations in February 1956, outlining the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, became public knowledge by June, followed in November by news of Soviet tanks rolling into Hungary. Remarkably, only a single IBEW commentator interviewed by the author referenced Soviet policies as a reason for their personal outlook on Local 213’s internal affairs: this was Jack Ross. All the same, these faraway international events must surely have had an effect on the willingness of ordinary Vancouver Communists, including Communist electrical workers, to stay the course and “fight the good fight.” Outside commentators like Grace Tickson, a long-time party stalwart from Vancouver Island, thought the events of 1956 “provided an excuse” for

those already unhappy with the party's fortunes in British Columbia and in Canada. "Some of them wanted to leave and they had an excuse," she said. "They were wanting to go anyhow 'cause things weren't going right."⁶² So for some like Ed Simpson, who left the party, drifting away "on a sort of current off to one side," global events involving the Soviet Union undoubtedly provided an essential reason to distance themselves from the Communist Party and Local 213's internal trade union politics.⁶³

In Vancouver, as elsewhere in the country, the party was becoming yet more fragmented, though this generally accepted assessment should not preclude the possibility that a few of the fragments might grow in size again. Nor should it be discounted that British Columbia might have been an outlier in Canada, having a significant percentage of Communist Party members who paid less serious attention than those elsewhere to these distant discordant calamities.⁶⁴ The party's Provincial Committee went one step further and made a decision not to distribute some of the damning evidence. An order went out to discreetly light a fire in an oil drum so as to destroy "the contentious [*Canadian*] *Tribune* supplement" reporting the official Khrushchev revelations.⁶⁵ Though there were searing arguments back and forth among the leadership cadre, as Jack Scott, a member of the Labor-Progressive Party (as the Communist Party was known at the time), recalled, "Out here, it didn't hit that hard." Historian Karen Levine has since pointed out that "not one member left the Saskatchewan party in this period" and that out on the far west coast "similar loyalty was evident in British Columbia."⁶⁶

It is worth noting in this regard that in France and in Italy the massive electoral popularity of their respective Communist parties was hardly affected by the events of 1956. If, however, two hundred thousand Italian Communists "simply dropped affiliation with their Moscow-aligned political organization" and, a year later in Canada, almost "half of the National Executive Committee resigned from the Party," in British Columbia, as in Saskatchewan and parts of western Europe, these tragic events seem, somewhat perplexingly, to have had less impact.⁶⁷ Concurrent with all these unsettling national and international developments, Local 213 would have to find the human resources to revitalize itself, to find other ways to recommit to protecting and furthering the interests of Vancouver-based electrical workers.

This page intentionally left blank

Rebuilding Local 213

It would appear at first glance that the IBEW had successfully solved one of its thornier internal problems out on the west coast. In very Canadian terms, it looked like peace, order, and good government were on the horizon for Vancouver's electrical workers. On a recommendation from Jack Ross, Malcolm Morrison was recruited in mid-1955 as interim business manager from his position as a powerhouse operator on the isolated Bridge River series of dams and powerhouses, about 250 kilometres north of Vancouver. More importantly, he was supposedly a reliable ally of the anti-Communist group of conspirators, but someone who was not directly connected to the successful ousting of George Gee and his left-wing allies in the local. The son of former long-time business manager Teddy Morrison, who had served in that position for Local 213 throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Malcolm Morrison had briefly been on the employer-oriented Executive of the Aluminum Council in Kitimat while working on the large postwar construction of that project. He had also been a candidate for business manager against George Gee in 1953, losing to him in a decidedly lopsided vote.¹ Morrison was contacted by two leading members of Local 213's recently appointed executive board, Jack Waplington and Angus MacDonald, who "pleaded with him" to take on the job as business manager.² Installed into office by the International representatives of the IBEW, the saviour turned out to be a poor choice as he did not get along with the rest of the local's appointed executive board and, more significantly, because of his clandestine backroom manoeuvrings involving both a major employer and his own local union. One of the executive board members would even go so

far as to write that Morrison's "attitude was secretive, cunning and at times decisions with employers appeared bad and underhanded."³ John Carson, a former director of Industrial Relations with the BC Electric Company, recalls that Morrison developed "a very funny and strange relationship with myself; he would come to my home in the evening to talk or we would have a few drinks together at the University Club." And since the president of BC Electric, Dal Grauer, "did counsel me to get close to Morrison, I acceded to these overtures of friendship."⁴

What really doomed Malcolm Morrison to trade union political oblivion was not just his crass or covert class collaboration. The first part of the issue leading to his quick fall from favour was that he misled the Inside Wiremen's unit about having received strike sanction from the International Office to bolster their collective bargaining position during negotiations in the fall of 1956. It was a complete fabrication. In fact, the International Office had sent a telegram expressly denying strike sanction as they had been informed by Jack Ross that it looked as if a tentative agreement was going to be reached with the electrical building contractors.⁵ About a year later, an activist crew of shop stewards, forged and developed during the Gee era, provoked another point of contention. With Morrison's written approval, they led rank-and-file electricians in job action on a construction site at the Hooker Chemical plant in North Vancouver. Did Morrison support their militancy to bolster future claims of trade union legitimacy, to prove that he was not just a patsy for the International Office? In the end it didn't matter. Jack Ross recalled that Morrison was "either a bloody fool or crooked . . . and I should really have had him thrown out of the IBEW."⁶

The other part of the issue was that Malcolm Morrison then got caught in a second trap, this time of his own making. In late 1957, and on the face of it in contradiction to his support of the militancy exhibited by the inside wiremen, Morrison refused to consider a strike vote to provide much-needed pressure in negotiations with the BC Electric Company and the province's two major line contracting companies: Hume and Rumble Electrical Contractors and Peterson Electrical Construction. As he stated in an interview with the local press, he did not want to potentially put the public at risk in case of a sudden breakdown in the supply of electricity around the province: "There is no thought of a strike. We know our responsibilities and we don't intend to embarrass anyone."⁷ Evidently viewed as an extremely poor

approach to collective bargaining, the result, as John Carson remembered, was that Morrison was “eased out” by his very own union in December 1957.

As events transpired, the IBEW flew its Canadian vice-president, John Raymond, into Vancouver to have him removed. It was the second time in just under three years that the International Office had seen fit to replace Local 213’s business manager. The *Vancouver Sun* covered the story of Morrison’s removal under the telling headline “Electricians Most Embattled Union.”⁸ In contrast, the local’s *Minute Books* attempted to render an innocuous tone of diplomacy to the event in revealing that the switch in business managers had merely been ordered by Raymond “in line with further re-organization in the business office.”⁹ It masked what was in reality a head-spinning supplanting of at least a half-dozen of Local 213’s leadership personnel.¹⁰ Ironically, Morrison’s replacement, Jack Waplington, had been George Gee’s original “interim” replacement in 1955. Waplington had been one of the ringleaders and had personally crafted the wording of charges laid against George Gee in 1955.¹¹ These purported to show that Gee was acting against the interests of the electrical workers’ union local, had made decisions contrary to the constitution of the IBEW, and was in fact a Communist.

The ouster and suspension of the foremost Communists from Local 213 in 1955 would continue to haunt the unsettled leadership group even after the unreliable Morrison had been dismissed. This bedeviling and recurrent theme became apparent three years later during the ongoing negotiations for a new collective agreement with the BC Electric Company and the two line contracting companies. During these important negotiations, George Gee was in the BC Supreme Court trying unsuccessfully to have his lifetime dismissal from the IBEW reversed. It was reported in the local press on February 11 that the hard-talking John Raymond, IBEW Canadian vice-president, had testified that the IBEW was resolved “to seek out members of the Labor Progressive Party and expel them . . . My experience with Commies, which L-PP members are, is that they are in opposition to free trade unions.”¹² Gee replied in court a few days later, accusing Raymond of masterminding his ouster. He claimed there was a conspiracy to oust him from the union because he had refused to fire his tenacious and spirited assistant business manager, Don Wilson. According to the *Pacific Tribune*, Gee testified that “I was told that unless I fired Wilson the union would

get me” and that “Raymond also told me that if I mentioned his threat he would deny it.”¹³

The BC Supreme Court case was undoubtedly viewed as an unnecessary and distracting sideshow by most of those involved in the collective bargaining process. There is no question that in 1958 there was a more important and pressure-inducing factor looming on the horizon during negotiations—inflation became a menace that threatened every electrical worker’s standard of living. Several front-page reports in the local newspapers in the following weeks noted that the consumer price index had reached a record 123.7 by the start of February based on 1949 prices equaling 100, with higher food prices accounting for most of the increase.¹⁴ This inflationary price cycle coincided with a year of record-high net profit of \$13,792,214 in 1957 for BC Electric’s holding company, the BC Power Corporation.¹⁵ In the interim, the BC Electric Company had asked for a conciliation board to intervene and had agreed to its findings that wage boosts of up to 19 percent over two years were in order.¹⁶ The newly appointed leadership team of Local 213, however, rejected the findings of the conciliation board, asking instead for wage increases of up to 40 percent, more than double what the conciliation board had proposed. Contrary to what Malcolm Morrison had presumably imagined, a contentious three-week strike would ensue, involving some fifteen hundred discontented members of Local 213.¹⁷ The two major newspaper dailies in Vancouver, the *Sun* and the *Daily Province*, would both publish strongly worded editorials against the strike. The *Sun*, in particular, editorialized: “There’d be no trick about paying the 40 percent more demanded by B.C. Electric linemen. Just slap it on everybody’s light bill. But who’s going to pay—if the linemen win—the extra 40 percent that all other unions will demand to keep pace?”¹⁸

Local 213 countered, pointing out in an officially published statement in the *Sun* that the electric utility wage rate across Canada since 1949 had increased 70 percent, so its rejection of the proposed 19 percent wage increase was not out of line. Further, dividends for BC Electric shareholders had gone up by 75 percent during the same time frame, and earnings per common share had gone up 100 percent. Recent record profits meant that BC Electric could easily afford a 40 percent wage increase. Local 213 concluded its arguments by mockingly asking for a “wage freeze” for all “B.C. Electric executives” in order to save the company money.¹⁹ In defending his local’s demands, newly appointed president, Art O’Keeffe, had told attending

delegates at a packed meeting of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, that “we won’t crawl like Lazarus to get crumbs from Grauer’s table.”²⁰

Then an intrepid labour reporter from the *Daily Province* newspaper got involved. The research Doug Collins undertook convinced him to offer a completely different interpretation of the strike. In a front-page article, he argued that wages “are only part of the story.” As a result of the machinations and backroom manoeuvrings that had occurred in 1955, the appointed leadership of Local 213 was “caught in the web of their own dictatorship.” They were afraid that “if they don’t make spectacular gains leadership of the local will slip from their grasp when the union comes out of trusteeship later this year.” He further surmised that every labour leader in Vancouver was aware of the political dynamic behind the strike but would never admit to this angle publicly because once a strike had started “no labour man would do anything but support his own side.” He also pointed out that, among other reforms intended to counter George Gee’s Communist legacy, the politically inclined “shop steward system was abolished.”

“The IBEW leaders are a law unto themselves,” he continued. “They were not elected to office. They were put there by the international organization, and are answerable to the membership only to the extent they choose to be.” Moreover, the members know “that orders come from the top down rather than from the bottom up. They know that although there have been unit meetings, there have been no general meetings in three years. They know that opposing their leaders can be dangerous.” At the same time, he noted, “the IBEW chiefs were caught in a dilemma. If they accepted the award of up to 19 per cent over two years . . . they could be accused of being soft. If they didn’t they could be accused of being fools. As one of them says: ‘*We’re damned if we do, and we’re damned if we don’t.*’”²¹

Local 213 was not long in responding. Ramsay McCullough, chairman of the union’s Publicity Committee, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Daily Province*. In a lengthy defence of the IBEW, in particular of the McCarthyist-style intervention by its International Office in 1955, he argued that “communistic influences received a jolt by the removal from the union of key figures.” He stood by the suspension of General Membership meetings, pointing out the current executive board “was brought to its required numerical strength by appointment under the constitution with representation from the different sections.” Monthly unit meetings were democratic “with complete freedom for expression of opinion” and open to all members,

except for “those who stand suspended because of subversive activity.” He then zeroed in on the Communist threat to free trade unions:

This is as democratic a procedure as can be visualized in an organization wrestling with an element busily fomenting unrest and disruption, and which had gained considerable influence over a long period of time. When a festering, cancerous sore attaches itself to a healthy body, definite, positive and prolonged treatment is a necessary part of the cure. Communistic activity in unions must be stamped out and prolonged treatment is a necessary part of the cure. Communistic activity in unions must be stamped out or it will eventually lead to destruction.

In a telling statement, he concluded his extensive arguments by nevertheless admitting that “Employer and management have taken full advantage of L.U. [Local Union] 213 during this period of unrest,” but he also lambasted the newspaper for “giving a distorted presentation to the general public.”²²

On the ground, meanwhile, tension during the strike was high as engineers and supervisory personnel attempted to keep BC Electric’s grid from falling into disrepair. It was reported in the *Sun* that an engineer in Abbotsford “was dragged down a short flight of stairs by a picketer.” In another incident, a group of picketers yelled “erroneous advice” to engineers repairing a broken-down power line.²³ The *Pacific Tribune* also got into the act. Initially critical of the conduct of the strike, the Communist Party weekly pointed out that although the hourly earnings of electrical workers appeared high on first impressions, contract linemen were “risking their lives” and “have to make it in nine months” due to the “seasonal” nature of work in much of the electrical industry.²⁴ It also made a jab at the International Office of the IBEW and Malcolm Morrison’s two-year appointed stint in office, citing Jack Waplinton to the effect that Local 213 would “not be satisfied with peanuts this time.”²⁵ Not much more was made of Local 213’s trusteeship and George Gee’s lifetime expulsion, perhaps in the interests of unity and the fact that the former business manager’s case was then being decided in BC Supreme Court.

The strike grew in intensity on March 19 when the electrical workers made the traditional threat to join forces with the street railwaymen’s union, and shut down all facets of BC Electric’s operations, including the transportation side of its giant corporate empire. However, Charles Stewart,

Communist business manager for what was then a predominantly bus drivers' organization, counselled moderation. As he thoughtfully observed: "No strike has ever been settled without a session around the bargaining table."²⁶ He may also have understandably been unwilling to give his support to a right-wing cabal of appointed "leaders," a group of plotters who had only recently help oust one of his erstwhile comrades from trade union office.

It was evident that personal relations between Local 213 and major employers like the BC Electric Company remained in symbiotic flux even under the newly appointed leadership. On the one hand, the sudden and new-found militancy of the local's appointed leadership was the result of a basic requirement to appear as solid trade union men who could effectively represent their fellow electrical workers at the bargaining table; on the other hand, BC Electric's exigencies to safeguard record profits meant that even a "moderate" trade union leadership representing its employees could be backed into an unpalatable political corner. Extracting a measure of cooperation from its union was one thing but safeguarding the long-term bottom line was evidently the priority. The BC Electric Company's John Carson recalls Jack Waplington phoning him late at night before Local 213 was going out on strike against the giant electrical utility and told him "not to do anything stupid." The men wanted a strike and the best thing to do was to "let them get it out of their system." The strike began at the start of March, and Carson recalled how it ended: "After three weeks Waplington came back and asked to go to binding arbitration. The Company agreed but the union lost as the arbitrator handed down the same decision as the Conciliation Report."²⁷

It thus appeared that being more conservative in political outlook did not necessarily mean that traditional trade union vocabulary and suitable posturing, or especially picket lines, could ever be abandoned. More to the point, as business unionists had always done everywhere, there appeared to be a concerted effort by Local 213's appointed leadership group to delineate the crucial differences between conservative-led militant strikes and political radicalism.²⁸ The way the strike was eventually settled also clearly demonstrated that impartial umpires—judges in this case—could, in fact, be quite partial. Of considerable importance, the BC Electric strike of 1958 kept open the divisive wounds from the McCarthyist intervention by the IBEW's International Office three years before. Yet more was to follow, the tension between the perceived renewal of a Communist revival and a

majority right-wing leadership providing a major underlying theme to the politics of Local 213.

While the BC Electric strike took centre stage, there were also two work stoppages of the inside wiremen during the turbulent years of the late 1950s; one by those employed by the City of Vancouver, the other a defensive struggle involving 1,200 electricians locked out by the electrical building contractors across Canada's third-largest metropolitan area.²⁹ The latter was by far the more significant of the two as the work stoppage was much longer in duration and the working-hours lost considerably more than in the BC Electric conflagration. The lengthy stand-off also briefly revealed the existence of an intriguing left-wing political stratagem in the building trade unions. The employers' lockout began on May 30, 1958, as the electrical contractors sought a wage freeze at the previous rate of pay of \$2.99 per hour. This aggressive action followed on the heels of a similar lockout imposed on the plumbers' union on April 31. R. K. (Rollie) Gervin, the contractor's spokesman, and far removed from his brief post-World War II stint on the BC Executive of the TLC, stated in characteristic employer language, that the industry "must keep down prices at the present level and . . . cannot condone another round of wage increases." Pro tem president of the Vancouver local, Art O'Keeffe, described Gervin's announcement as a "stab-in-the-back [and] . . . a treacherous breach of faith," as it had earlier been agreed to by both sides that "no lockout or strike would take place while talks continued."³⁰ With growing unemployment now a major threat in the construction trades, and led by an appointed leadership of unproven qualities, the sentiment expressed earlier during the BC Electric strike was presumably also widespread among the inside wiremen; it was now the construction companies' turn to try and take full advantage of the electrical workers and extract a financial gain from Local 213's political quagmire.

After a collective bargaining impasse lasting almost three months and halting work on a record \$52 million worth of construction projects, the provincial government appointed H. Carl Goldenberg, a prominent Montréal-based lawyer, to head up a special industrial inquiry commission, to be made up of labour and employer representatives, that would propose a collective agreement to end the impasse in bargaining.³¹ Local 213 nominated R. J. (Russ) St. Eloi, business manager of Local 170 of the Plumbers and Pipefitters' union to represent them. Out of the blue, and in a public thumbing of his nose at the hierarchy of the building trades, the politically

middle-of-the-road St. Eloi in turn brazenly nominated none other than George Gee to represent Local 213 on the Goldenberg Commission. St. Eloi was quoted by a Vancouver journalist to the effect that the swap of union representatives to the commission of inquiry was merely to prove that “no collusion exists between the unions.” He went on to nonchalantly tell the reporter that he did not think that anyone in Local 213 knew that he would nominate the previously ousted George Gee: “It just happened that way.”³² Blithely ignoring the recent past in his comments, this was quite obviously a sensational and politically loaded nomination. While it may have been part of a blatant retaliatory move by St. Eloi over jurisdictional disputes with Local 213 dating back a number of years, the *Pacific Tribune* reported that the Plumbers and Pipefitters’ International Office threatened to take punitive action immediately if Gee’s name was allowed to stand.³³ Such talk, according to the *Tribune*, “incensed union members, who recognize that contractors had counted heavily on being able to provoke international intervention and so break their militant stand.”³⁴ The unspoken point, however, is that St. Eloi’s nomination of George Gee to the Goldenberg Commission was also an unambiguous and prescient message to the construction companies: come to an acceptable agreement with us or be forced to deal with the Reds. In the midst of a prolonged and unnecessary lock-out, it was clear that desperate times required desperate measures. And Communists were waiting in the wings in several Vancouver locals of the building trades. If employers didn’t want them opposite at the bargaining table, then they needed to negotiate and settle with non-Communist, or even anti-Communist, union representatives. Otherwise, the membership would find ways to have Reds represent their interests again. The question publicly posed was made abundantly clear: who would the construction companies rather deal with, them or us?

In the end, employers and the inside wiremen pre-empted the Goldenberg Commission and agreed to a collective agreement on their own accord on August 15.³⁵ The employers’ decision may have been hastened by a court ruling that found two major Vancouver electrical contracting firms, Hume and Rumble Limited and J. H. McRae Company Limited, guilty of “having illegally locked out their . . . electricians.”³⁶ On the other hand, given the dubious end result in the recently settled BC Electric dispute, the electricians had every reason to be wary of yet another “neutral” government-brokered decision; equally as important, the inside wiremen avoided a potential

industry-wide imposition of a collective agreement and were thus able to continue to play one building trade agreement with any particular union against another to their advantage.³⁷ On August 30, it was announced that Local 213 had climbed down from its initial ambitious demands—first a sixty cents per hour increase, then thirty-six cents per hour—and signed a new contract for a much more modest eleven cents, to \$3.10 per hour—or a 3.3% increase.³⁸ The agreed-upon raise of eleven cents nevertheless made the inside wiremen for the first time the top wage-earning group in the construction industry. The *Vancouver Sun* reported that “the pace-setting electricians have [also] won fringe benefits that are the envy of the other trades—like coffee breaks twice a day.”³⁹ The International Office of the IBEW, meanwhile, had to live with the fact that a red tinge of influence had briefly been given back to George Gee as he was again in the public lime-light, this time as Local 213’s representative on the Goldenberg Commission. But they were able to extract some measure of revenge: the provocative and defiant Russ St. Eloi was quickly dropped as Local 213’s nominee and replaced by the more politically conservative Les Crampton, representing distant and isolated Prince Rupert IBEW Local 344.⁴⁰ St. Eloi, an evident agitator, was thanked for his input and told to keep his pants on straight, while Gee was short-circuited yet again as the lockout quickly ended and the Goldenberg Commission packed up its bags and was dissolved. Not that the International Office was paying close attention as it may have been in talks in Washington with American employers at meetings of the Council on Industrial Relations. However, before disappearing, the inquiring task force issued a terse and economically discerning statement: “it is evident to this Commission that a chaotic condition exists in the Building Construction Industry in B.C.”⁴¹ The longest and costliest construction industry work stoppage up to that date in British Columbia was over.⁴²

Hoping that the recent strikes had proved the worth of Local 213’s anti-Communist leadership group, the IBEW’s International Office partially lifted the trusteeship in July 1958. Elections were going to be allowed earlier than originally announced, but general meetings were deemed too unpredictable to be resumed at this early date.⁴³ The electoral contest witnessed a curious “right-wing fight for power,” with mostly Gee-era coup plotters running against similarly conservative candidates.⁴⁴ The left, still apparently somewhat in disarray, chose to focus its efforts and contest only a few positions in these elections. The recent strikes and current lockout had

demonstrated to a discerning rank and file that conservative trade unionists could also be militant; spearheading job action was clearly not the sole prerogative of the “left.” The appointed executive board had not allowed itself to be bullied by employers overtly seeking to take advantage of the recent turmoil within Local 213, and it had also managed to downplay the irritating interventions and pronouncements of a remote International Office.⁴⁵ Justifying Doug Collins’s earlier suppositions, John Carson thought that because of the ongoing political problems existing within the local union, the appointed leadership at the time needed to fly their trade union colours and was “going for too much.”⁴⁶

The balloting, fortuitously timed to take place toward the middle of the employers’ lockout of the embattled inside wiremen, saw the hoped-for politically anti-Communist majority returned. Angus MacDonald, for example, comfortably won the influential position of president of Local 213.⁴⁷ Holding in check the conservative majority on the newly elected executive board was Jack Cody, formerly known as John “Curly” Wilson, a Mackenzie-Papineau veteran, and at the very least a quiet supporter of Communist Party activists within Local 213. A popular leader of the BC Electric gas workers, Cody won the powerful post of business manager by defeating Art O’Keeffe by a minuscule forty-eight vote margin, 1,174 votes to 1,126.⁴⁸ There were at least three others sympathetic to the local’s left faction (among them John Kapalka, Ben Margolese, and David Caverly) also elected as representatives of their respective trade units.

There are several reasons that explain Cody’s notable electoral success toward the end of the anti-communist McCarthyist era. First, the new political landscape emerging within Local 213 in 1958 reflected the continuing reality of a majority composed largely of workers employed by the BC Electric Company. The latter retained a conservative trade union outlook, as they enjoyed good benefits and year-round employment. The left, meanwhile, knew that most of its support would come from the line contractors (Unit 2) and the inside wiremen (Unit 6), where physically arduous working conditions and periodic unemployment were constant reminders of the need for a strong and militant leadership; Cody proved temporarily capable of winning votes from these two historically intertwined groups as he was both from the BC Electric Company and also on the left of the political spectrum. Second, the residual anger directed at supporters of the trusteeship imposed upon the local union by the IBEW’s International Office, a number of

whom had been candidates, lingered. Third was the bitterness engendered within some of the membership by the failed tactic of the recently wasted three-week strike against the BC Electric Company; it was not an insignificant factor that the negotiating team in this regard had been headed by appointed business manager Jack Waplinton, one of the lead conspirators in the scheme resulting in George Gee's lifetime expulsion from the union. Finally, the divisions in the anti-Communist group were undeniably helpful to Cody's electoral success. Local 213's hotly contested election for business manager witnessed previously private in-fighting between the appointed executive board members now come into public view. Eager to enjoy the status and power associated with union office, the previous co-operation of this politically anti-Communist group was now discarded and thrown to the curb. Lineman John Kapalka, who was briefly on the executive board at this time, remembered well the relationships among the leading personalities of the board during the early part of the trusteeship: "They didn't get along . . . they were fighting like crazy."⁴⁹ Running for the only significant salaried position in Local 213, that of business manager, were Jack Waplinton, Malcolm Morrison, Jack McSorley, and Art O'Keeffe. They criticized each other relentlessly during the electioneering. Art O'Keeffe, in particular, felt he was being snubbed by his former allies and lashed out at a meeting of the inside wiremen on May 26, 1958. It was only two months before the mail-in balloting was to take place. He had been directing the meeting but asked Brother Charles Sumpton to temporarily take the chair so he could speak his mind from the floor on the latest executive board report:

He began to speak against the Executive Board report . . . [but was] ruled out of order. After some altercations . . . Bro. O'Keeffe started to speak again in the same vein and was [again] ruled out of order. Uproar from the floor, Bro. Sumpton vacated the Chair.⁵⁰

Jack Cody had obviously also participated in this first round of voting. As no one candidate received more than the required 50 percent of the votes on the first ballot, a second run-off was required between the two highest vote-getters from the initial round, Art O'Keeffe and Jack Cody. With a hard-working campaign committee putting in a lot of sweat-equity, and little or no solidarity on the right, Cody squeaked through as the winner. He was evidently assisted by the already-elected president Angus MacDonald's

personal dislike of candidate Art O’Keeffe, to the point that O’Keeffe later wrote: “he [Angus MacDonald] most actively supported Bro. J. Cody against myself.”⁵¹ Personal animosities and their ensuing political fallouts have a place in history, and within the frame of reference of Local 213 during the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, this might be a fitting illustration.

Riding the wave of militancy into office, the mostly unassuming and easy-going Jack Cody was unable to publicly advance his cause to the rank and file as an effective business manager. Even though he might have pulled some strings in the St. Eloi affair immediately following his election, he could not promote himself in the columns of the local’s monthly newspaper, the *Business Manager’s News Letter* (which had replaced *Live Wire*), as George Gee had been able to do, since editorial control had been taken out of the hands of its founder, the articulate and hard-working scribe, Tom Forkin, in June 1955. Held in high regard, Forkin was the youngest brother from the Irish-Canadian family of six radical siblings from Brandon, Manitoba, and an often-eloquent exponent of the twin merits of trade unionism and socialism. Control of the local’s mailing list, always a source of controversy, had also been seized by the more conservative members of the board. They promptly spoon-fed the rank and file, hundreds of whom were new members during this growth period in British Columbia and held traditional views that did not question the status quo. Cody, however, prompted by apparently newfound supporters from the inside wiremen’s unit, in particular a certain William E. (“Electrical Bill”) Stewart, who “raised the question of the International Trusteeship” in February 1959, was insistent that Local 213’s autonomy be returned.⁵² A few months later, at an executive board meeting of the local April 23, 1959, the “question of autonomy was discussed for four hours” and Cody also threatened to resign unless the International Office relented a year early in its initial five-year suspension of the local union.⁵³ Cody’s threat to resign could not easily be shrugged off by the powers that be in the IBEW since he had almost single-handedly brought the BC Electric’s gas workers into Local 213 only a few years before, in 1954; hypothetically, at least, he might also have been capable of taking the now approximately three hundred dues-paying members out. By May 28 of that year John Raymond, International vice-president, had sent a telegram “giving permission for General Meetings in June.”⁵⁴ It was probably the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion veteran’s most important political victory during his two-year stint as business manager. Incisive, but often

cynical in his analysis of key figures in the history of Local 213, Terry Simpson volunteered a more critical assessment as to why Cody soon became a one-term business manager:

Jack Cody was not the kind of guy that liked to be in the limelight, he didn't like to be in a leadership position, he always had to be persuaded to take one. I remember supporting him for Business Agent and he was a terrible disappointment. He always had this tendency to be the nice guy. . . . He couldn't take the heat. And if he wasn't an alcoholic, he was verging on being one, so his health suffered. . . . There were all kinds of times when he didn't come to meetings. . . . But if pressed directly he would flare back with great courage, élan, verve; he was great under momentary, visible pressure. Jack was a great guy but he was pushed into a position in which he really should not have been.⁵⁵

The biennial executive board elections of September 1960 were preceded by the resignations in February of executive board members John Kapalka and Dave Caverly after the IBEW International Office vetoed the election of delegates to the Canadian Labour Congress convention, scheduled to take place in Montréal in April. The Washington-based International Office had seen fit to unilaterally replace Local 213's delegates with electrical workers of its own choosing. The veto followed on the heels of the arbitrary removal of the assistant business manager, Art Goy, who had been appointed by Jack Cody. The dismissal of the wiremen's representative (for the second time in his career) was apparently connected to a petition eventually signed by 1,066 electrical workers, which asked the BC Federation of Labour to assist them in regaining the autonomy Local 213 had once enjoyed.⁵⁶ But the petition was predictably rejected by the International Office. When contacted by the BCFL, International President Gordon Freeman replied like a remonstrating father that "it was up to the local union members to conduct themselves properly and in line with [IBEW] international policies."⁵⁷ Perhaps too sincere in what he perceived to be the truth of the matter, John Kapalka declared to the press that the IBEW was wrongly informed on a key issue: "The international is using the Communist bogey to keep the local in trusteeship, but I know there is not a single Communist on the board."⁵⁸

Local 213's 1960 elections thus witnessed slates representing left and right run against each other, the tumultuous events of the recent past having

succeeded, if nothing else, in polarizing the electrical workers. The right had meanwhile managed temporarily to patch up its differences, while Jack Cody was convinced to abandon the post of business manager and run for president against Angus MacDonald. This was an electoral contest in which he lost by a 30 percent difference in the final vote count, along with the other representatives of the left-wing slate.⁵⁹ The remnants, and rebuilding elements, of the Communist faction inside Local 213 could sense even then that Angus MacDonald was an important stumbling block to progressive policies within Local 213, and that he was the executive board figure who needed to be defeated in elections. At the national labour convention in Montréal, appointed delegate MacDonald had even made a name for himself as a Gompers-type of trade unionist when he had strongly objected to the CLC's vote of entering into a formal political alliance with the CCF.⁶⁰ This long-advocated monetary and political alliance, similar in nature to the relationship with unions inside the Labour Party in Britain, led the following year to the founding of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Canada. But Angus MacDonald strongly disapproved. Following on directives from Vice-President John Raymond and their union's International Office, he led a forty-man IBEW delegation out of the vast CLC meeting hall in Montréal in protest.⁶¹ MacDonald declared that the trade union movement should remain politically neutral as it was in the United States and that its participation in the new party "would be detrimental to our union . . . we favour instead intensive political education."⁶² Returning from his trip to Montréal, Angus MacDonald then faced off against Jack Cody in Local 213's presidential election contest. John Kapalka was to run for the post of business manager against Art O'Keeffe; the left faction's idea of running a non-Communist—a "fellow traveller" in the McCarthyist vocabulary of the time—for the local's top position was an all-too-transparent attempt to deflect the anticipated Red smear campaign.⁶³ However, relying on a reliable tactic used against left-wing administrations everywhere, Angus MacDonald and the right-wing slate focused immediately on Cody's perceived weak financial acumen and demanded that "we examine L.U. 213 deficit and . . . all Unit Executive Committee members . . . be called for discussion of this problem."⁶⁴ Subsequent column headlines in the Vancouver newspapers give a distinct indication as to the inevitable public red-baiting flavour of the campaigning that took place side by side with the internal focus on union finances. The *Vancouver Sun* titled a report "Anti-Red Slate

Named by Union,” while the *Daily Province* crowed about the results in a column headlined “Reds Lose in Union Elections.”⁶⁵ Upon releasing these pleasing electoral results to the public, a spokesman for the new executive board pointedly informed a reporter “that the removal of Communist influence from the union could mean removal of the trusteeship the union was placed under by the International in 1955.” In another politically incisive remark, this same reporter interviewed an unidentified electrical worker, apparently an anti-Communist, following Cody’s defeat. He commented with typical McCarthyist vocabulary: “Now we have a mandate from the members showing they want us to run a trade union and not a political party like the Reds try to make it.”⁶⁶

There followed a succession of difficult, yet ultimately successful, negotiations with employers. Led by newly elected business manager, Art O’Keeffe, and riding an attendant wave of media publicity, the anti-Communist executive board would essentially stay in place until 1966. Tight control of mailing lists and careful editorial supervision of the *Business Manager’s News Letter*, followed by outbursts of suitably militant statements to the local press during negotiations—along with good collective agreements—ensured a succession of seemingly unassailable solid election victories for a conservative majority.⁶⁷ Despite the false start with Malcolm Morrison, it appeared the hopes of the International Office of the IBEW were now in the process of being realized; Local 213 was finally going to revert to a quiescent business union model with the usual bumps along the road when it came to collective bargaining, but trade union “normalcy” being the hoped-for frame of reference.

Jack Cody did not then merely disappear from the stage of Local 213’s political drama. He was unceremoniously kicked out, along with four other left-wing supporters in April 1962. With large mega-projects such as the Peace River Dam commencing in the far northern reaches of British Columbia, master contracts or “international agreements,” were imposed on the multi-jurisdictional job sites. With several local unions from the IBEW having members present on such large construction crews, the result was that the electrical workers would have to pay two sets of union dues, one to the local union whose jurisdiction covered the site, the other to their local of origin. As a circular surreptitiously mailed to the homes of several hundred members of Local 213 explained in November 1961, this set-up meant that it “provides for double taxation for single representation.” There were other

issues covered by the non-sanctioned circular as well, mostly having to do with an increase in Local 213's dues structure that would help to reduce the deficit and cover an increase in salary for the local's new leadership team. The proposed increase in dues was also intended to stabilize the Electrical Estates corporation, set up in 1949, during the Gee era, to handle the Dunsmuir Street union hall and ancillary expenses, such as the cafeteria, off IBEW accounts. Finally, the circular asked that Local 213 adhere to past policies of the inside wiremen's dispatching method, the "Union Seniority Hiring Policy."⁶⁸

Changes to the way unemployed electricians were chosen for companies requesting electrical workers might lead to favouritism and an unfair distribution of available jobs. These points of discussion appeared at first glance to be middle-of-the-road matters, expressions of common sense and, at most, calls for review relating to a sense of democracy and fairness. No inflammatory language or intent can be discovered anywhere in the pamphlet. Yet it was still too much for the conservative group now in charge of Local 213. In particular, questions and criticism relating to a more "flexible" approach in dispatching, whereby unemployed electricians were sent out to various job sites, was not to be permitted if companies were able to recall by name a few of the more productive wiremen they might already know. Despite the record-long lockout during the construction work stoppage of 1958, relations with employers were apparently considered to be of paramount importance and so needed to be repaired. No discussion of how the spare-board at the union office might be manipulated, was permitted.⁶⁹ As the circular was non-authorized and only the former business manager would have had access to membership addresses, Jack Cody was immediately accused of complicity. Under questioning at an executive board meeting, he openly admitted to having written the circular and even to having signed his name to the original. For that, he received a four-year suspension from union activities. His presumably left-wing co-conspirators were also suspended. George Sharpe and George Ferarro received four-year suspensions as well, while Ian Gow and Norman Read received two years each.⁷⁰

Jack Ross cut to the chase in his assessment of the non-authorized circular. The International representative wanted to make clear "he was talking purely [of] the Communist Party and their sympathizers."⁷¹ Having the executive board then mop up the remnants of what might have been missed in 1955, the IBEW watchdog was just doing his job.

Art O’Keeffe’s election as business manager in 1960 was significant. O’Keeffe had been part of the initial group of seven electrical workers on the local’s executive board who had actively plotted the ouster of the Communists in 1955. A Catholic trade unionist originally from Campbellton, New Brunswick, he was, to all outside appearances, a loud and opinionated union man who had definitely not been shy of demonstrating his dislike for the Communist Party in the 1950s. Also a former lightweight boxing champion, he had even once declared in alliterative fashion that Canadians in “democratic institutions such as unions,” were very unlike “the tub thumping claquing clique of parroting proletariats eagerly ready to adopt every stereotyped formula proffered by those countries or people who espouse communist doctrines.”⁷² But publicly proclaiming an anti-Communist outlook did not mean that O’Keeffe was anti-union or pro-employer. On the contrary, John Carson recalled that Art O’Keeffe was always “a very difficult person to deal with . . . he had a very strong streak of orneriness” about him and was also very “distrustful of management.”⁷³ Terry Simpson was far more disparaging:

Art O’Keeffe had a history that went back to the George Gee era . . . He had a lot of drive, a lot of ambition. He picked up over the years a fair amount of savvy. He was not, in the theoretical sense, particularly clever politically. But in a practical way he was a political animal: he had a phenomenal memory for names and he was a real political glad-hander. But he was involved in the George Gee affair on the wrong side . . . his personal political ambition led him into it. In later years he has treated the George Gee affair as if he wasn’t involved or as if he was a by-stander. That’s rationalizing. He was directly involved, he was in it. He was part of having my dad [Ed] suspended.

Once he had carved out his own turf, Art O’Keeffe was not the kind of creature that you might have expected, or certainly he was not what the International expected . . . He was a real bulldog. He was . . . if there is such a thing, a pure and simple trade unionist.⁷⁴

Art O’Keeffe was to remain business manager of Local 213 throughout the remainder of the 1960s leading up to the Lenkurt strike. The members of the executive board continued to squabble bitterly among themselves, to the point even of bringing charges against each other to the IBEW

International Office in January 1963. In a letter of defence written to Bill Ladyman, soon to be appointed Canadian vice-president of the IBEW, O’Keeffe successfully resisted charges of public slander brought against him by Angus MacDonald. In his written defence to the International Office, the combative business manager presciently declared: “I have nothing to apologize for . . . I can assure Brother MacDonald and the members that I shall not stand idly by and see him recklessly endeavor to have me supplanted as business manager through his betrayal, treachery, deceit and unprincipled actions now, or in the future.”⁷⁵ Upon successfully defending himself against the charges brought upon him by his own local union president, a precarious truce ensued.⁷⁶ This lull in hostilities between former allies remained in place throughout the next three years.

What may have brought an abrupt end to the internecine skirmishes in Local 213’s leadership group was the reminder that the International Office of the IBEW could be ruthless and unpredictable in its interventions in local affairs, even with anti-Communist officers in charge. A prime example of unwarranted interference came in the spring of 1963. The circumstances involved a group of linemen and their ground crews working for Peterson Electric at Shalalth and Kelly Lake, near Lillooet. Temporarily headquartered in the historic gold rush-associated town, the project involved erecting a new set of hydro lines connecting the remote Bridge River series of dams and powerhouses to Prince George. Untested technology was being integrated into the construction of these hydro lines, in this case in the form of an ultramodern and powerful Sikorsky FV-58 helicopter. The company planned to have the new helicopter carry two 9,500-pound power poles simultaneously, in contrast to the usual load of a single pole. At issue, while working in extremely rugged terrain on the eastern slopes of the Coast Mountain range, was the very real concern that working in, and under, an unproven helicopter could be dangerous and life-threatening. As events transpired, the new helicopter proved not to be sturdy enough. There were serious problems in controlling weight-shifting and its effects on the stabilizer rotator, particularly when unloading a significantly heavy object. Spilling one or both of the power poles from height could also prove deadly if it occurred before a helpless and exposed ground crew was ready to receive them.⁷⁷ Unrelated reports of an accident leading to the hospitalization of Brother Orr at Kelly Lake and another much more unnerving incident at Shalalth that led to the death of Brother Toby Lee did not help

ease tensions.⁷⁸ These incidents were jarring reminders to the line crews of the dangers inherent in their jobs, and they became noticeably edgy about working conditions as it appeared that International vice-president John Raymond had given Peterson Electric his unilateral assent to the experimental use of the helicopter prior to notifying Local 213. The members had demanded at the previous Unit meeting “That Bro. Raymond consult the Local Union *before* [underlining in original] the employer is, on matters of working conditions.”⁷⁹ As negotiations had also been ongoing for a new collective agreement with the line contractors during the preceding nineteen months, it was felt that it was time for additional pressure to be exerted on the employers.⁸⁰ In consideration of the recent accidents in the Bridge River area, it was decided that “No member of Local 213 under the light of present circumstances shall work under helicopters.”⁸¹ Art O’Keeffe met with the provincial deputy minister of Labour May 5, with the result that a stand-off based on concerning and outright dangerous safety issues appeared to be in the making.⁸²

A pronouncement of astonishing proportions was then delivered from faraway Toronto. IBEW Canadian vice-president, John Raymond, announced that seventeen linemen employed by Peterson Electric were suspended from the IBEW. The linemen’s unwillingness to put their lives at risk had resulted in Peterson Electric complaining about what appeared, on the surface, to be a complicit and collaborationist International officer. It is more than plausible that Raymond received his information on the helicopter issue from his colleague in BC, the omnipresent Jack Ross. And, as the line contracting operations were a closed shop, the immediate consequence was that the company fired the seventeen safety-conscious electrical workers.

It was as if someone had set off a fire alarm. Committees were hastily put in place, negotiations with Peterson Electric instantly intensified, and a telegram was immediately sent off to Joseph Keenan, International Secretary of the IBEW in Washington.⁸³ Voicing the outrage and very real safety concerns of Local 213’s executive board, the telegram strongly protested “the action of I.V.P. [International vice-president] J. A. Raymond in sending a directive which has resulted in the dismissal of seventeen members of the L.U. [Local Union] employed by Peterson Elect. Construction on this project. Directives of this nature in our opinion make it impossible to implement the normal process of collective bargaining.” The lengthy

telegram then expressly demanded that an “immediate job conference be held with our Bus. Mangr. to establish safety and working conditions on the project, & the members be immediately returned to work. We earnestly request your support on this important issue.”⁸⁴

The IBEW could not sweep injury and death while working on the job under the carpet. The death and injury of two union members trumped concerns that Peterson Electric might be forced to go over budget and spend yet more money on safety procedures. Moreover, veteran lineman John Kapalka had already pointedly asked in a meeting “why conditions on H & R [Hume and Rumble] Ashcroft job did not apply to Peterson Elec. job at Shalalth?”⁸⁵ The end result was a complete victory for Local 213. The long, drawn-out negotiations with the line contractors went to arbitration and was settled before the end of June, while Keenan backed the Vancouver local to the hilt. All seventeen linemen were reinstated with full backpay, and it was announced at a Unit 2 meeting June 3 that John Raymond was going to resign from his post as Canadian vice-president.⁸⁶ Art O’Keeffe and his fellow linemen could savour a rare win over both a reckless company that put workers’ lives at risk and an interventionist International officer who opposed them. But the events surrounding the “Peterson Seventeen” served to remind the Vancouver electrical workers of the sometimes difficult and contradictory oppositional context in which they functioned. Having forced an International officer to step down, Art O’Keeffe might also have unknowingly painted a very large and visible target on his back. When he heard the news about Toby Lee’s death and John Raymond’s resignation, former lineman George Gee might have shaken his head in simultaneous disgust and disbelief.

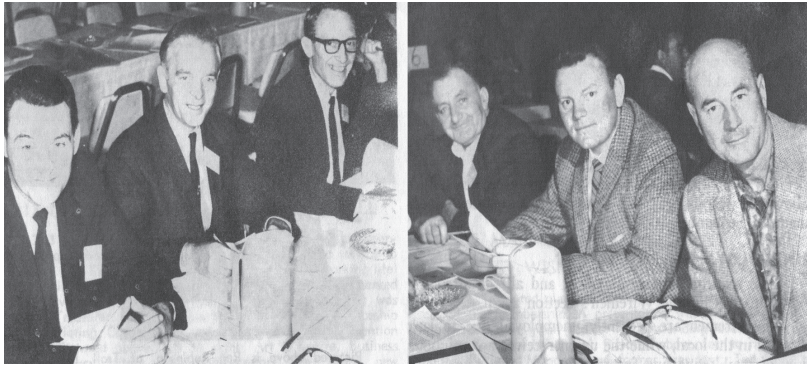
While real events from the world of work intervened on an intermittent basis to stun some of the leading personalities involved in trying to shape the political culture of Local 213, successive biennial executive board elections returned many of the leading personalities in the local union to positions of influence, including several key players from what has playfully been described as the “Carrall Street gang”—workers based out of Carrall Street in Vancouver’s historic Gastown district.⁸⁷ With steady jobs in Vancouver and good pay, this conservative group of electrical workers attracted politically similar people within the local, such as five of the seven original signatories of the charges filed against George Gee. Those who were more to the left, meanwhile, though greatly depleted in number by the 1955 purge,

still managed on occasion to elect non-Communist, left-wing representatives from one of Local 213's six units—among others, Tom Forkin and John Kapalka from the line contractors, and Sam Shannon and George Angus from the inside wiremen. Jack Cody, then head of the gas workers unit, still appeared to have tangible links with the Communist Party.⁸⁸

The units met on different days of the week each month, but once the trusteeship was finally lifted in its entirety in 1961, the most important meeting was the general meeting held on the first Monday of every month at Local 213's spacious and impressive union hall at 111 Dunsmuir Street, closely adjacent to downtown Vancouver.⁸⁹ Despite its internal troubles, the large Vancouver local remained remarkably in character with its historical claim to be a hybrid structure integrating the horizontal features of industrial unions into the vertical and exclusionary organization of craft unions.⁹⁰ In addition, as Communist Party members attempted to rebuild their political caucus within the electrical workers, notably among the inside wiremen during the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were sometimes supported by their allies in the progressive, non-Communist left. These allies and sympathizers were often elected as Local 213's delegates to the provincial Building Trades Council, to the Vancouver and District Labour Council, to the BC Federation of Labour, or to the Canadian Labour Congress. In 1965, Local 213 sent six such delegates to the BC Federation of Labour Convention—Les McDonald, Tom Forkin, George Angus, Sam Shannon, Jim Kinnaird, and Tom Constable.⁹¹

If the electoral results of executive board elections were the only lens through which to view the Vancouver electrical workers' local, it would appear from the outside to have the usual internal political tensions between left and right, and sometimes irreconcilable personality differences on the "right," but for all intents and purposes the local gave the impression that it was politically stable enough during the first half of the 1960s. As events transpired, electoral results were misleading and the apparent stability was built on quicksand, a calm before the storm of the Lenkurt Electric strike in 1966.

A major issue that continually dogged Vancouver electrical workers in the postwar era was that of accessing jobs outside their immediate geographic jurisdiction, a concern that related specifically to Jack Ross. On multiple occasions it appeared that Ross made recommendations higher up the IBEW chain-of-command that were intended to limit the jurisdiction



Local 213's six delegates at the BC Federation of Labour convention, November 1965. On the left: George Angus, Tom Constable, and Les McDonald. On the right: Sam Shannon, Jim Kinnaird, and Tom Forkin. *Local 213 IBEW Business Manager's News Letter*, December 1965, 6.

of Local 213 around the province. While there is no conclusive proof of a direct link, the end result was that workers from his former home local had difficulty in being dispatched to the electricity-oriented mega-projects then being built in British Columbia. There were specific complaints going back to the construction of the massive aluminum-focused Kitimat–Kemano project in the early 1950s, where there is also evidence of undercover RCMP surveillance of the workforce.⁹² As the militancy of the electrical workers in the Vancouver-based local was well known to employers, an effort to control and minimize its sway became apparent via the granting of jurisdiction to recently created Local 344 in Prince Rupert. Given that the federal government had designated Kitimat–Kemano as being of “highest priority” for “defence needs,” it appeared that Local 344 was granted its charter for purely political reasons.⁹³ The supposition was that Ross and his superiors in the International Office had awarded the tiny northern local jurisdiction for the Canadian aluminum project to be able to control access to the gigantic worksite. Particularly infuriating to members of Local 213 was that Local 344 could arbitrarily accept, or reject, applications to work “on permit” from electrical workers belonging to other IBEW locals. No explanation was required for the approval or denial of these individual, cross-jurisdictional, work-permits.⁹⁴ But it certainly helped to clarify why Les Crampton and Jack Ross shared office space in the Dunsmuir Street union hall.

The IBEW's reduction of Local 213's jurisdiction in British Columbia continued into the 1960s and was vehemently protested by the Vancouver-based electrical workers. On July 25, 1960, a resolution was passed at a general meeting that was direct in its request for a change in policy: "That Local 213 appeal the decision of I.V.P. [International vice-president] Raymond in granting the jurisdiction of the Revelstoke dam project to Local 993 Kamloops. That a wire to this effect be sent immediately violently protesting the decision."⁹⁵ Ross also tried to meddle with elections in the various component units of Local 213. Following election results in 1964, "Bro. Shannon asked President MacDonald for a statement regarding the interference of Bro. Ross on Local Elections."⁹⁶ In January 1965, Sam Shannon, the long-serving aggrieved chair of the inside wiremen's unit, offered a telling report to his members in which he "pointed out on a map of details of jurisdiction of BC locals. Said he is very displeased with the way jurisdiction has been handled and that we were not given time to make any representation before a decision was made in the Vernon area."⁹⁷

To their credit the IBEW brass in Toronto responded. John Raymond had "retired for health reasons," so newly appointed Canadian vice-president, Bill Ladyman, flew out to Vancouver on July 5, 1965, and ordered the "Executive Committee of Units #1-3-4 & 6 and Ex. Board of LU 213" to be at a "Special Meeting" with himself and Jack Ross.⁹⁸ He explained to the assembled leaders of the local union that he, and he alone, "was responsible for disposition of jurisdiction in Canada. Will do what is right for best interest of members in BC."⁹⁹ The implication was that the Vancouver local should stop the campaign of vilification aimed at their International representative. Local 213's *Minute Books* do not indicate the tone of the ensuing discussion or whether the assembled local leaders asked how Ladyman could possibly make an informed decision on jurisdiction without information from someone on the ground in British Columbia—in other words, Jack Ross.

The "Special Meeting" and Ladyman's remonstrations do not seem to have made much of a difference. In November, it was moved "we recommend that we appeal to the I. P. [International president] the allocation of jurisdiction on the Peace & Columbia & the assignment of our jurisdiction to other Locals."¹⁰⁰ The complaints about jurisdiction, and hence access to jobs for members of Local 213, were persistent and appeared on a semi-regular basis. These complaints were often tied to the surge in demand by employers during the periodic construction of large construction projects



Bill Ladyman, Canadian vice-president of the IBEW, speaking at the Western Progress Meeting in Saskatoon, May 1965. Les McDonald private collection.

around the province.¹⁰¹ Rightly or wrongly, the Vancouver electrical workers felt that Jack Ross was directly involved in these important decisions.

Further aggravation from the International representative helps to explain his persistently poor reputation. By mid-1965 the focal point for Local 213's growing and documented unhappiness with Jack Ross was his questionable dealings with the BC District Telegraph Company (BCDT). The company, which specialized in installing and maintaining fire and burglar alarms, had been stalling in the midst of a year-long set of difficult negotiations with Local 213. A breakthrough seemingly appeared when one division of BCDT's unionized workforce voted by a narrow margin on February 8, 1965 to accept an offer of a collective agreement put to them by the company.¹⁰² However, Art O'Keeffe and the rest of his negotiating team repudiated the vote from this single coterie of workers among the larger group and decided to wait for approval from the International Office to conduct a strike. It is unclear from court documents as to how BCDT was able to conduct a vote unilaterally within the lone section—without Local 213's participation or assent—but it was to prove the undoing of the attempt to wrest more concessions during bargaining. Then, on April 22, a disgruntled Art O'Keeffe reported at a union meeting the unsettling news that "six out of 12 men in Plant Dept. were terminated."¹⁰³ Even more insidious, there was

a company-supported move at the same time “to support dissidents [who] endeavoured to throw out the I.B.E.W. by applying for decertification and revoking the check-off.”¹⁰⁴ But the heart of the issue was that Local 213’s negotiating team refused to sign the proffered collective agreement. Instead, they patiently persisted in waiting for permission from their International Office to use the traditional threat of a strike to motivate the company to increase its offer. None of this was unusual in the collective bargaining arena, though the refusal to accede to a majority vote of one group of workers could be considered somewhat risky.

The move to wait for strike approval backfired. To the local union’s shock and dismay, it was discovered on May 30 that Jack Ross had personally intervened two weeks before and signed the proffered agreement with BCDT on behalf of Local 213.¹⁰⁵ The Washington headquarters of the IBEW had apparently been aware of the secret and parallel set of negotiations with the company and may even have instigated the intervention.¹⁰⁶ Months later the International Office was still insisting that Local 213 officials recognize “the right of the International and in particular of Jack Ross, International Representative . . . to sign the agreement.”¹⁰⁷ Art O’Keeffe and his negotiating team had, it seemed, been betrayed in their collective bargaining efforts.

Initially stunned, O’Keeffe was naturally outraged and repudiated Ross’ actions. Considering the newly signed contract to be to its advantage and exploiting the divisions within the union, the company immediately paid an increase in wages to all its employees retroactive to February 8 as per their hoped-for agreement. It simultaneously embarked on court proceedings in an attempt to have the contract signed with Ross recognized as a legal document in good standing. This distressing state of affairs was turned on its head with Local 213’s victory in BC Supreme Court and by their increasingly indignant business manager, Art O’Keeffe. On November 30, 1965, Justice G. F. (George) Gregory dismissed the case initiated by the company and found that “only the local as certified bargaining agent had the authority to agree to the terms and . . . execute the agreement.”¹⁰⁸ The judge was complimentary, even generous, in his initial comments directed toward Jack Ross, writing that the International representative “was acting in what he thought was the best interests of the Brotherhood and perhaps of the trade union movement generally.” Changing his tone, Justice Gregory then sternly concluded: “His good intentions, however, are not sufficient to give

him authority to sign on behalf of the Local and I hold as a matter of law he did not have that authority.”¹⁰⁹

Despite the decisive legal ruling, the damage was done. Art O’Keeffe would be stymied in his attempt to restart serious negotiations with BCDT. A telegram from International President Gordon Freeman dated January 4, 1966, once again denied Local 213 permission to strike.¹¹⁰ Persistent to the end, O’Keeffe planned to address the IBEW convention, the last step of any appeal process within the electrical workers’ organization, to render a verdict in his favour. In his letter of appeal the embattled and increasingly exasperated business manager commented:

Local 213 I.B.E.W. did everything humanly possible to restore unity with the BC District Telegraph Co. Ltd. Employees . . . all efforts were expended on the part of Local 213 to ensure that the I.B.E.W. continued as a certified bargaining agent for all employees under the British Columbia Labour Laws. The Union received no support or co-operation from the International Office and the Union was impeded in its efforts to do a proper job. The dispute took approximately one year to settle. The entire case has been most time consuming, complicated and very costly to Local 213, all of which was completely unnecessary because of the attitude of International Representative Ross and International Vice-President Ladyman.¹¹¹

The IBEW convention was slated to take place in St. Louis in September. It was a long way off and the appeal would eventually be denied as other events would intercede and sidetrack the attempts to have the local union’s bargaining tactics respected. A collective agreement was eventually signed with the BCDT in February 1966, and was much the same as had been rejected by the negotiating team a year earlier. Despite local union efforts, the settlement finally agreed to must have been viewed as a setback. As Art O’Keeffe had ironically complained years earlier, it appeared once again that employers were attempting to obtain the desired results by “trying to use our International Offices as their wailing walls.”¹¹²

The real problem, yet again, was that the divisions between the leadership of the local union and the American headquarters of the IBEW were now apparent to all interested observers, as was the enmity directed toward the latter’s veteran representative in Vancouver, Jack Ross. The rank and file in Local 213 was not long in responding. At a general meeting on November 1,

1965, a resolution was proposed calling for the immediate replacement of Jack Ross as the International representative for BC.¹¹³ Union activists were undoubtedly emboldened by the outcome in the Peterson Electric tragedy two years earlier, wherein International vice-president John Raymond had been forced to retire, and were seeking a similar dénouement in relation to Jack Ross. But the resolution was tabled to a future gathering, demonstrating, perhaps, the reluctance of the local's leadership to totally condemn one of their own, a high-ranking and powerful officer of the union. Undeniably, however, a sizable proportion of the membership had had enough.

Another factor adding pressure to this crescendo of disharmony and increasingly unstable political state of affairs was the sheer number of new electrical workers sworn into Local 213 in the 1960s. The number of new workers becoming members of the Vancouver local from 1956 to about 1964 was low to stable. Even then, by 1960, Local 213 could boast that: "We are [the] largest [IBEW] local in Canada."¹¹⁴ But 1965 and 1966 were especially noteworthy for the number of new workers being inducted into the union. For example, in one month alone, September 1965, fifty-nine new electrical workers were initiated into Local 213, and then seventy-seven members were inducted on March 31, 1966. There were now around 3,300 members in the Vancouver local.¹¹⁵ This flood of new members consisted mostly of workers (many of them from Britain) who hadn't experienced the Great Depression as adults and were only peripherally affected by the McCarthy era as young men. The majority had attained some level of high school education, were literate, and expected well-paying jobs during the postwar boom. They surrounded the older members of Local 213 with their brashness and willingness to be adventurous and try out new ways of doing things. If pushed, they could also challenge authority. As historian Ian Milligan has written about this emerging generation's effect across the country, "they brought a new inquisitive energy to a labour movement that had become increasingly staid, refusing to accept the old ways and sending a strong message to their aging leadership."¹¹⁶

Though he had been inducted into the IBEW somewhat earlier, Jess Succamore, who became one of the key actors during the Lenkurt strike, was a good illustration of this new wave of workers coming into Local 213. Born in 1931, he had grown up in a working-class family in the county of Lancashire, England. His father had been a union shop steward but was not politically active outside the confines of the factory floor. Jess Succamore immigrated

to Canada as a young man in 1952. After working odd jobs in Montréal and Toronto, he by chance landed a high-paying post as a lineman on the Kemano construction site near Kitimat, BC. He knew nothing about line work but was fortunate in that he only had to erect new steel and aluminum towers, not string electric wires. Working occasionally at dizzying heights, Succamore and his neophyte workmates survived by listening carefully to the foreman's instructions and sticking close to the few real linemen on the job. That's when he also fell in love with the natural beauty of British Columbia and decided to stay out on the west coast, working for various employers during successive years and all the while paying his union dues to the IBEW. At the beginning of the 1960s he secured a job at Phillips Cables in Vancouver, which had been organized years earlier under the umbrella of the manufacturing unit of Local 213.¹¹⁷ Succamore had only occasionally attended union meetings before then and knew very little about the electrical workers' local before a marathon five-months-long strike broke out in 1962 at his place of work:

During that strike there was no money coming from the International. I couldn't believe it. The people involved with us from Local 213 were generally good; O'Keeffe and all of them, there were no problems, but we had to raise the money ourselves to keep the strike afloat . . . it was the first time I got to look at the IBEW constitution. It said that the union's strike fund shall not be allowed to go below two million dollars. And I says: "So what?" That's like going to the bloody doctor with a snake bite and the doctor telling the patient: "Sorry we've only got one serum and we have to save that for an emergency." Well, the patient is obviously going to die. And that's precisely the situation we were potentially facing during the Phillips strike.¹¹⁸

It was during the Phillips strike that Succamore started attending Local 213's meetings on a more regular basis. He was part of the new wave of workers entering Local 213, discovering the Vancouver electrical workers' local for the first time. He was not entirely happy with what he found, especially as it was revealed to him that it was not uncommon for IBEW headquarters in Washington to refuse to contribute financially to its own striking electrical workers.¹¹⁹ In Succamore's opinion some of the local's leadership group were solid trade union men, like Art O'Keeffe, but others in the front office most definitely were not:

I got into a real argument with John Morrison, one of the assistant business agents. He tried to con people at a union meeting about what had taken place during the Phillips strike. I had never spoken before at a local meeting, other than to ask a question, but I stood up and took him on. Well, he was going to charge me and put me in my place . . . it was a bullshit thing, and of course it never happened. That was the first time I was noticed by those people in the union office. Before that, I was just a faceless guy.¹²⁰

Tom Constable replaced John Morrison as assistant business manager four years later, but it had little to do with Morrison's difficult relationship with Jess Succamore or with the workers who had been on strike at Phillips Cables. It was Jack Ross who again intervened and had Morrison sent back to the ranks of the working stiffs, filing complaints of "slandering or otherwise wronging a member of the I.B.E.W." against him owing to "the background and dispute over Collins Radio."¹²¹ The controversy that led to Morrison's ousting began in late 1965 when electricians from Local 213 found non-union workers from Texas working on new BC Hydro microwave system towers. When Morrison confronted Ross with the presence in BC of these "Collins Radio cowboys," he was told that Ross himself "had cleared the men as supervisory personnel, who did not have to belong to the union."¹²² At first glance it appeared that a simple question, even one couched in patronizing tones, received a similarly simple answer. On the surface there was nothing to it. But according to the defence filed at the union hearing by Morrison's counsel, none other than Art O'Keeffe was purportedly railroaded by accompanying accusations of slander directed at Jack Ross. These accusations came via "unsubstantiated evidence presented by non I.B.E.W. person, Mrs. Ann MacDonald." As this was presumably Angus MacDonald's wife, not exactly an objective person to have testify, O'Keeffe maintained he had "never witnessed such flagrant flouting of justice as was demonstrated . . . at this hearing."¹²³ The electrical workers could probably be forgiven if they doubted the credibility of President Angus MacDonald's spouse as the main witness in the charges of defamation of character brought against John Morrison. The immediate consequence of this "she said—he said" soap opera was that Morrison lost his position in early March 1966, a post in which he had built up ten years of valuable experience. He was also suspended for three years from attending union

meetings or involving himself whatsoever in Local 213's affairs.¹²⁴ The BC Telegraph affair only served to belittle the serious responsibility the membership expected from their leaders. Though the right-wing Morrison was not the most popular of assistant business managers, this arbitrary change in the leadership team simply served to rile up the membership even more. At a general meeting held on January 3, 1966, rank-and-file members again presented the previously tabled resolution from November 1 to have Jack Ross replaced as International representative. This time the assembled electrical workers voted on the resolution and returned a "near unanimous" vote for his removal.¹²⁵ Art O'Keeffe added salt to the wound by recounting the "many instances over past two years during negotiations with BC Hydro where I.O. [International Office] appeared to be working against us. Read considerable correspondence to illustrate his point."¹²⁶ An increasingly combative O'Keeffe was visibly choosing sides in the internecine battles that were now becoming readily apparent to the rank and file in Local 213.

Bill Ladyman, the new Canadian vice-president of the IBEW, flew out from Toronto again to meet with Local 213's executive board on January 13, 1966. One of the electrical workers present at the meeting kept copious notes of what transpired. Bill Ladyman expressed himself forcefully: he was alarmed at the growing Communist influence in Local 213. According to the notes, Ladyman's solution to the problems facing the Vancouver electrical workers was to "get rid of reds in 213." He refused to discuss the question of International Office interference or listen to the information supplied by the executive board members about Jack Ross. He preferred, instead, to "turn clock back 10 yrs . . . to McCarthyism and witch hunts." He insisted that Local 213's perceived problems with the International Office and Jack Ross were the "fault of Communists."¹²⁷ To an outside observer his commentary would seem to have come straight out of right field and was, on the surface, completely unrelated to the issues at hand. Having addressed himself to a knowledgeable group of insiders, Bill Ladyman's angry and exasperated remarks must have been more than somewhat disconcerting to the assembled representatives of the executive board.

This, then, was the unhappy set of circumstances leading up to the Lenkurt Electric strike. Within an enduring framework of class tensions, and sometimes open class conflict, it was literally also a viper's nest of personal intrigue, political factionalism, and a constant whirlwind of activity. Perhaps

no different from other IBEW locals, and despite the backdrop of a firmly entrenched Washington-based version of business union co-operation with employers, Local 213's leadership circle nevertheless appeared forced to extricate itself from a repeated set of bewildering crises.

Meanwhile, what of Les McDonald?

6

Les McDonald and IBEW Local 213

Leslie (Les) McDonald was born in Newcastle upon Tyne on April 30, 1933, and grew up in the nearby coal-mining village of Felling. His father, Hugh, had been a pitman at Felling Colliery but had switched over to Heworth Colliery when the mine at Felling closed in 1931. Les had a difficult childhood. Starting at eight years of age, he was delivering newspapers morning and evenings for his mother's newspaper shop, as well as doing subscription collections on Sundays; this meant he would often miss school and had no time for homework. His father, Hugh, was an alcoholic and often physically abusive toward his mother, Catherine, and then was absent for five years during World War II. When Hugh came home, the drinking and abuse started up again. It got so bad that Les was forced to live with his maternal grandparents for about three years when he was a teenager. Finally, as a young adult, Les had had enough and physically kicked his father out of the house. It was a difficult time and affected him for the rest of his life. Estranged from his father, he rarely talked about it.

On a more positive note, Les grew up surrounded by very strong women. In particular, his maternal grandmother, Margaret Davidson—known in the family as “Ma Daver”—was philosophically and politically very much inclined to the left. According to family lore, she had been an early suffragette in the Tyneside area, later working alongside the socialist and Labour Party member Ellen Wilkinson, who served from 1935 to 1947 as member of Parliament for the town of Jarrow.¹ The strong women surrounding Les had a massive impact on the young man's outlook and his perspectives on the way the world worked. Though he was often left to his own devices as

a youngster when not out on his newspaper route, it was evident that both mother—and especially his grandmother—had inculcated him with perspectives on the ways of the world he would never forget.

As a fourteen-year-old fresh out of school, and following in his father's footsteps, Les "gan doon the pit" for six weeks before deciding to try his hand at various other occupations. This was followed by his mandatory two-year stint of National Service in the British military between 1952 and 1954. His horizons were then broadened by occasional ski outings in winter, and, more importantly, once the weather improved, rock climbing every weekend with the informal Dunsdale Ski and Climbing Club, based in Northumberland's Cheviot Hills, which straddle the border with Scotland. In those days, skiing often meant a lengthy uphill slog through deep snow drifts, carrying wooden skis on one's shoulders, followed by a less than two-minute run down an ungroomed hill. But rock climbing exerted a special pull, and Les quickly became hooked on this thrilling new sport. He seemed to have a knack for finding seemingly impossible holds along cracks and ledges while perilously perched on the face of imposing rock walls.

Les did not merely "play" at rock climbing: he worked at perfecting his abilities every spare moment he had. In the liberating era that was post-World War II Britain, he was away from home every weekend on his motorbike, part of the wave of working-class climbers invading a hitherto middle-class pursuit. Les climbed many of the most difficult routes of the day. In his home ground of Northumberland, and with other leading Dunsdale lads, he opened up climbing in the Hen Hole, a rocky chasm on The Cheviot, the highest summit in the area. In Scotland, his climbing would encompass expeditions to Glencoe and to the Isle of Skye, while in England's Lake District the group undertook difficult ascents mainly on Great Gable mountain and on Scafell and some of the other Langdale Pikes. With the talented Danny McCleod in the lead, Les and another Dunsdale member, Harry Warmington, helped to conquer the Central Buttress on Scafell, reputed at the time to be the hardest climb in the Lake District. Like the rest of his Dunsdale friends, he was ethically opposed to being over-reliant on pitons and similar artificial aids, principles he maintained throughout his climbing career. Known to be adventurous and full of energy, he soon garnered the reputation of being one of the young climbers of note to watch for in the northeast of England.²

Along the way he had met up with Monique Richer, a French university student working as a teacher's assistant at a local high school; he proposed to her following a whirlwind romance. Monique agreed to his marriage proposal and to emigrate with him to Vancouver as they had heard that it was a beautiful city full of opportunity.³ Les arrived on Canada's Pacific Coast in 1955, allowing time for Monique to finish her English degree at the Université de Bordeaux. He worked odd jobs at first, mostly on the green chain in a sawmill in North Vancouver, then married Monique in 1956. Three children followed: Ian (1957), Helen (1958), and Daniel (1962).

What was Les McDonald like? Physically, he appeared to be very average, even on the small side, as he was only five foot nine inches tall and weighed about 140 pounds. His slender build, however, camouflaged an enormous



In a new country without much money. Les and Monique McDonald on the first day of their honeymoon, rock climbing on "The Camel," a peak northwest of Grouse Mountain, not far from Vancouver. June 10, 1956. Les McDonald private collection.

aerobic machine and also a superlative weight–strength ratio. Les McDonald had a surprising ability to work unrelentingly at any task, whether it was physical or mental, and many a friend and adversary over the years has commented on this aspect of Les McDonald’s approach to the challenges he was periodically forced to contend with. His ruddy face was topped by an increasingly unruly mop of dark red hair that he sometimes let grow as he began to develop bald patches early on that he regularly tried to hide with a comb-over. He had dark brown eyes and visually he could have been a family cousin to BC labour martyr, Albert (Ginger) Goodwin. Temperamentally, Les was problematic. On a personal level, he was short tempered and did not bear fools gladly. He could sometimes be cruel in berating those less able than himself in the give-and-take of heated political or philosophical discussions. One of his close companions from his Dunsdale ski and climbing days, Gerard MacGill, described him as “highly intelligent, funny and infuriating by turn.”⁴ This meant he had many admirers but few very good friends, though the handful he did have usually stuck with him for life. Growing up, his children sometimes suffered due to his impatience with their lack of maturity and *savoir-faire*. Les had always been a voracious reader, with the passage of time expanding his breadth of knowledge on history and world affairs, and soon became a champion debater during informal discussions. His foes quickly learned he was possessed of a highly effective combination of verve, turn of phrase, and rapier-like wit, often at their expense. During more formal occasions in front of large crowds, he was equally impressive, usually speaking off the cuff at the microphone with emphasis and poetic flourish; he could, for example, recite Robbie Burns, Scotland’s national ploughman’s poet, at will. Les was often able to win over audiences with his sense of humour and histrionic anecdotes, but he would then quickly veer off to make telling political and philosophical points. Sarah Springman, British triathlon personality and one-time political adversary to Les McDonald, had once been a target of his withering form of criticism. She spoke of her impressions of him years later, when he had already left the trade union movement far behind: “Les is a real autodidact. He will make you think he knows more than he does, but he is incredibly brilliant.” His wife, Monique, was equally complimentary of her husband’s character: “He’s a born leader. This is because he can make decisions quickly, even harsh ones, and above everything else he has this amazing ability to be a brilliant judge of character.”⁵ Later on in life she would write more critically of her husband:

He was demanding of his friends, tyrannical with his collaborators, ruthless towards his enemies. Sometimes people transited without knowing it from one category to another. His charm exerted itself especially on strangers, newcomers, who he could astonish and dazzle. For family and friends, however, this charm took on a form of *déjà-vu* and was often irritating.⁶

Les McDonald's physical and intellectual abilities would serve him well in British Columbia. On the job front, things changed in 1957 when he was picked up on a tryout basis by St. Andrew's Football Club of North Vancouver in the Pacific Coast Soccer League and scored three goals in his first game. As often happens in the sports world, arrangements were made for him in the subsequent change room banter to get a more solid and better-paying occupation. He was told to report to Burrard Dry Dock in North Vancouver, speak to the supervising manager, and a labouring position would be his for the asking.

Once he was working on the shipbuilding site in North Vancouver, it became clear that he was capable of more than labouring. As Les had been in the electronic-reliant communications battalion of the Royal Corps of Signals for two years, someone suggested that he should begin his apprenticeship as an electrician. So he did.

It was while he was working in Burrard Dry Dock in 1958 that Les McDonald's combative temperament became apparent. While overseeing the installation of new wiring on a vessel in for repairs, a foreman had taken exception to the slow rate of work of "Taffy" Jones, an older worker who was close to retirement. The foreman scolded Jones, a gentle fellow with obvious Welsh origins, and then laid him off. Les was furious. Ingrained with a deep hostility toward an arbitrary abuse of authority, he immediately demanded that Jones be reinstated. When the foreman ignored him and told him to go take a hike, Les gathered the work crew around him, explained what had happened, and convinced them all to immediately begin a sit-down strike in the bowels of the ship. It was his first "wobble," a term widely used among unionized construction workers on the west coast to refer to what is elsewhere known as a "wildcat strike."⁷ The hastily organized protest also exemplified why Gerard MacGill, not entirely tongue-in-cheek, had discerningly commented about his energetic and fearless climbing companion: "Les could be dangerous to know."⁸

The company was perplexed: who was this young red-haired upstart? Why hadn't the union gone through the proper grievance channels? But the point was made: the wobble had nothing to do with the union, it was spontaneous or, at least, spontaneous in the sense that a young Les McDonald had led his small crew of shipyard workers to sit down and stop work until the older worker was brought back into the fold. After heated discussions, the crew's senior workmate was eventually reinstated and the men went back to work repairing the ship.⁹

Les was immediately accosted by the union shop stewards in Burrard Dry Dock. Many of them were current, or had been, members of the Communist Party while working in the shipyard, though the party's influence was definitely waning by the late 1950s at the previously massive work site.¹⁰ Who was he? What the hell was going on? After work, when calm had reasserted itself, the union leadership took Les out to the bar for a beer and a chat. The upshot was that in the following month there was a knock on the door of Les and Monique's recently purchased, modest split-level home in Pemberton Heights in North Vancouver; it was Jack Gillett, a suspended member of Local 213 and a journeyman electrician from the shipyard. Monique remembers him vaguely as "a quiet guy, very serious."¹¹

One of the members of the 21 Club formed following the anti-Communist purge of Local 213 in 1955, Jack Gillett was there as a representative of the Communist Party. He explained to Les that the party had done some research through its counterpart in Britain and it was confirmed what had come up in previous conversations; that Hugh McDonald, Les's father, was indeed in the Communist Party back in England. Gillett explained that the party in Vancouver thought he would make an excellent addition to their group in-fighting on behalf of working people in their daily struggles and for the long-term goal of building a socialist Canada. Would he join? After a short discussion, and curiously having not disclosed the bitter personal estrangement from his father, Les McDonald agreed to become a member of the Communist Party of Canada. The ideas and discussions he had absorbed in his youth were evidently deep-rooted and part of the cultural fabric that existed in his family when he was growing up. Any personal enmity he may have harboured against an abusive father seemingly did not weigh that heavily in the balance when he made the choice to join the party in Canada.¹²

Les did not think it was that big a deal. His father, after all, had been in the Communist Party for years in and around the Tyneside area and he

had grown up knowing Communists on a personal level. These were active, committed, and interesting people. Socially, then, there was no issue with Les as far as associating with Communists was concerned. Another point, which cannot be downplayed, was that he had discovered upon his arrival in British Columbia that the circumstances of work in Canada's westernmost province could sometimes be worse than in the old country. If wages were unquestionably higher, so too was the cost of food and housing, while the boss seemingly encountered fewer checks and balances in this new country from a less militant trade union movement. These unsettling factors pushed people like Les McDonald to become active on the left. It was an echo of the experience Ernie Winch had forty-five years earlier when his family arrived in Vancouver in 1910 to begin a new life. The Winch family came with "orthodox views on politics, hoping to better themselves in a land of the future." Instead, Ernie and his son, Harold—who in the 1920s and the early part of the 1930s was an electrician working out of Local 213—found "a more vicious kind of competition and exploitation than they had seen at home."¹³ Winch father and son would eventually become well-known icons of the socialist-inclined CCF in British Columbia.

The party required at the time that wives agree to their husbands' decision to become members of the Communist Party. Monique accepted with little hesitation. In her youth she had been a keen follower of the social Catholic movement of the time that promoted the ideas of worker-priests and anti-poverty clerics like Henri Grouès, popularly known as "l'Abbé Pierre." Monique remembered that "this certainly influenced my sympathy for a better world through communism."¹⁴ Having also been an avid outdoor enthusiast while growing up, hiking and skiing in the nearby Pyrénées, she agreed to her husband's adherence to the Communist Party in part, also, "because of my years of friendship and admiration for Henri 'Coucou' Barrio, a charismatic French mountaineer, war-time resistance fighter, and Communist."¹⁵ Busy raising her three kids, working part-time, and later involved in doing graduate work in linguistics Monique, however, never personally joined the party.

Soviet foreign policy decisions or Khrushchev's revelations on Stalin's horrifying murderous misdeeds had not yet entered the equation for either one of them. Both Les and Monique came from areas of Europe where the anti-Communist, American-based McCarthyist hysteria did not easily convince all ordinary working and middle-class people and were often

viewed as curious diatribes on American newsreel highlights before movies at the local theatre. Political and generational influences originating in the United States did not always travel well over large geographic distances in the immediate post-World War II era, nor did it affect all social classes equally. Les claimed on several occasions that he had not personally met anyone who did not vote Labour, or parties further to the left, until he departed from Felling to do his mandatory two years of National (Military) Service between 1952 and 1954. In the public sphere, the often frenetic McCarthyist attacks on the Communist Party and its fellow travellers had evidently not taken place to the same extent in Britain as they had in the United States and Canada. Although there would definitely be some echoes in the trade union movement—specifically in the 1961 Electrical Trade Union (ETU) trial following allegations of election-rigging on the part of the British Communist Party—historians have since pointed out that the political background unfolding around McDonald during his youth was such that academic scrutiny and writing on the topic of anti-communism has been intermittent at best.¹⁶ One author underscored that it was evident “there were broader patterns of political toleration in Britain,” even going so far as to write that compared to the United States, “British anticommunism is a historiographical nonentity.”¹⁷ Despite having his own family war heroes he could look to for personal inspiration, the resounding exploits of the victorious Red Army during World War II also reverberated with Les and his relatives during the ensuing decades. These sensibilities and left-wing political outlook were typical of the coal-mining basins of Britain, even after the mines had closed down.¹⁸ In France, meanwhile, there were entire unions, including easily the largest labour federation, “la Confédération Générale du Travail” (CGT), that were bastions of Communist influence and were often Communist-led. The strength of the Parti communiste français (PCF) was such that in nationwide elections it regularly polled between 20 and 25 percent of the popular vote between 1945 to 1969. Although the rare political discussions involving Les and his in-laws created huge and discomfiting rows during otherwise cordial evening meal conversations, it was not unusual in France to find individual family members in otherwise conservative families sympathetic to “le Parti des Fusillés.”¹⁹

As a Communist electrical worker, but still an apprentice until 1963, Les fell immediately under the influence of William Evans Stewart, better known as “Electrical Bill” Stewart. Electrical Bill was given his nickname

so as not to confuse him with “Boilermaker Bill Stewart,” at the time the Communist secretary-treasurer of the Marine Workers’ and Boilermakers’ Union, also centred in Burrard Dry Dock.²⁰ Having met at the same job-site and often working together, Electrical Bill soon became a mentor to Les and was often at the house in North Vancouver discussing history, politics, and trade union tactics; there is little doubt that he fundamentally altered the trajectory of McDonald’s life. Having grown up in Hamilton, Ontario, Bill Stewart had deep roots in the country as he was a fifth generation Canadian originally of United Empire Loyalist stock. He had become a member of the Communist Party during the latter part of the 1930s, then decided to enlist with the Canadian Army in 1942 to fight fascism. As part of the tank corps, he was sent first to North Africa but was severely wounded near Lake Trasimeno north of Rome in the ensuing Italian Campaign, was hospitalized, decorated for bravery, then sent home. Following a lengthy convalescence and several years of work in Ontario, he relocated with his young family to Vancouver in 1953 and began working at one of the grain elevators on the waterfront. In about 1957 Stewart found work in Burrard Dry Dock in North Vancouver and he, too, became an electrician. A huge shipyard during World War II with close to 14,000 workers at its peak, Burrard Dry Dock had been a noted Communist Party centre of activism since the middle of the war, but with a workforce steadily diminishing in numbers during the postwar years.²¹

Not yet a member of Local 213 during the George Gee era, Bill Stewart came into the union after the events of 1955.²² It is hard to know for certain whether Stewart was parachuted by the party into Local 213 to revive its fortunes in the local union, but it is likely. The witch hunt for Communists in Local 213 in 1955 had not been that efficient—it had, for instance, initially missed John McCuish, former marine pilot in the IWA’s Loggers’ Navy in the 1940s. If he was indeed parachuted in, Stewart thus had a small nucleus of party comrades to start work with, and he became very active in the local. Through sheer force of intelligence, a fun-loving personality, and an ability to speak persuasively to audiences during public forums, Stewart set about influencing his fellow electricians wherever he found himself at work. Terry Simpson characterized his red-tinged reputation with the following commentary:

Bill Stewart was very effective. He had that way about him that colourful people with a certain amount of courage, flair, and



Communist “Electrical Bill” Stewart featured on a 1965 federal election poster. Courtesy of Dora Stewart.

excitement are able to have on those around them. He was able to inject a dose of enthusiasm on others that they don't normally have. In that way he seemed to be a throwback to the type of individuals the Communist Party had in the thirties and forties, when there was a great deal of excitement surrounding the organization of working people.²³

Les McDonald described his good friend and Comrade, Bill, in similar terms. According to McDonald, Bill Stewart was a “quixotic personality who could transform himself from gleeful juvenile pranks to heights of oratorical clarity and wisdom in the space of one day; it was always an astonishing transformation to behold.” Les, as was his custom, provided a

story to illustrate his point. It was the late 1950s and they had just met at Burrard Dry Dock and were working inside the hold of a battleship in berth for a refit, a Restigouche-class destroyer. Les played soccer with another apprentice, Bill Cassie, who Bill Stewart had coaxed into a seaman's locker at lunch, surreptitiously locking and trapping him inside the confined space. "We then passed judgment: '*Bread and Water only*' in the brig. We gleefully fed him sandwiches through the grill, then poured water on him. How we laughed, such fun, no cares." Bill Stewart then convinced the playful gang working on the ship to go to the electrical workers' Unit meeting that night—Les picks up the story:

But Bill the comic was no more. A half hour into the meeting he stood up and analyzed the stupidity of the Cold War, of defense spending, a collaborationist union leadership. . . . He spoke about the dignity of working men, as he often did . . . He began by saying, instead of "Brother Chairman and Brothers" he would say "Comrade Chairman and Comrades," then pause long enough as the jaws dropped and the eyes opened wide, to say "Oh sorry, thought I was in the Legion Hall." That was a memorable evening, and it was in retrospect the first call in a moribund, beaten union, that was to transform it to be the most militant local in the province, throw off the trusteeship, establish a fair hiring system, and accomplished by Bill, not single-handedly of course, but by a combination of skills, human and intellectual—and a passion for unity—plus a non-affected humility . . . then [he] drifted back into the shadows of near obscurity.²⁴

Bill Stewart and a young Les McDonald set about attempting to rebuild the Communist-led left caucus inside Local 213. It was not easily done. Neither one of them had roots in British Columbia, so other than the older and suspended members of the 21 Club, they really didn't know anyone. But they were busy on the job, trying to educate their fellow workers on the contradictions and exploitive foundations of capitalism and ready to take the lead if worksite agitation became necessary. It also appears that their left caucus did not strictly demand Communist Party membership: close sympathizers could belong. The importance of Bill Stewart's engaging personality in this respect cannot be overstated as he appeared to have had a mostly positive impact on those with whom he interacted. Ernie Fulton,

then a young apprentice wireman, remembered well Stewart's congenial presence on various construction sites: "I was on a job once with Bill Stewart. After some discussion at lunch, one of the guys asked a question: 'What's a Communist?' Bill Stewart pulls out his wallet and out comes a card. 'It's a guy who has one of these.' Well, it's as if we had seen a ghost, we were that stunned . . . he was a great guy."²⁵

Once general meetings were finally reinstated in June 1959, both Stewart and McDonald went to the larger meetings at the IBEW hall on Dunsmuir Street, all the while trying to consolidate and grow the left caucus inside Local 213. Times had changed, and they had only had a couple of years with the inside wiremen's unit to build relationships with their fellow workers, so it took hard work and dedication. McCarthyism had also undeniably had a profound effect on the outlook of working people in Canada. But the two comrades persevered and often worked in tandem. Dora Stewart, Bill's spouse—now widow—remembered their relationship with fondness:

People like Bill and Les understood that the struggle was just ongoing. . . . I think Bill helped Les sustain optimism. People with as much talent as Les needed guidance. So Bill helped Les at a certain stage of his development. You know, Bill used to tackle Les on a whole range of issues. . . . Now, take Bill's attitude towards property. You know, he dented Les's car by jumping up and down on the hood to teach him a lesson. . . . Bill taught us all how to re-evaluate things and he had all the courage in the world in order to do so.²⁶

Two reporters for a short-lived Vancouver-based newspaper, the *Western Voice* (described on its masthead as "A Newspaper of Working Class Struggle"), claimed in an extensive 1975 historical retrospective of Local 213 that Bill Stewart, "Party organizer, entered the local in 1957 and over the next four years built a group of 20 young Communists; some new recruits, others the remnants of those purged in '55."²⁷ Although relatively small in number, the members of this group were undeniably influential in terms of the inroads Stewart was able to make rebuilding Communist Party strength inside Local 213. There is no question that in this process Les McDonald became his left-hand man. And when Stewart began to involve himself more extensively with the Communist Party and could no longer devote himself entirely to the electrical workers, Les McDonald naturally took his

place as the leader of the Communist group, popularly known as the “left faction,” within Local 213.

What was Communist Party life like for Les McDonald? To begin with, he had to attend a minimum of two bi-monthly Club meetings and contribute dues of three to five dollars per month to the party. He would also have been given a political assignment, whether it was within a trade union, civic politics, or the peace movement.²⁸ The Communist Party did not dictate to him how he should live his life; the party was more about a set of guiding principles than an organization that would tell him how he should live day-to-day or conduct himself when interacting with others. The most appropriate analogy might be that it was the North Star of his political outlook during this period of his development. Les would have agreed wholeheartedly with the description of former IWA organizer John McCuish, who, blacklisted from the forest industry, had been taken in as a non-skilled groundman in IBEW Local 213 during the Gee era.²⁹ McCuish was once paraphrased as emphasizing that “being a red in the trade union movement had nothing to do with doing Moscow’s dirty work, rather it was . . . a way of being a trade unionist.” A staunch party member, he brazenly ignored in his statement some serious zigzags in the “line” required of Canadian Communists in the past. Considered a likeable rogue, the rough-and-tumble McCuish also managed to put into the historical record an intriguing and heartfelt question. He asked of those who questioned his twin allegiances, was it possible to have successful unions “without a Marxist theory?”³⁰ For McCuish, this theory probably alluded to a fundamental Marxist idea relating to the labour theory of surplus value, the notion of profit as a form of theft. McCuish would have argued that unions have been formed, in large part, to reduce the “theft” surrounding the wages that capitalists pay their employees.

Even as Les was coming to grips with these ideas, being a Communist trade unionist could be energizing and stimulating. Les definitely liked certain aspects of life in the party, in particular for the opportunity to socialize with like-minded people. He enjoyed discussing the latest Marxist-oriented history book, attending concerts when Pete Seeger or the Soviet Red Army chorus was in town, participating in semi-regular public demonstrations, or meeting Eastern-bloc athletes when they came to Vancouver to participate in Canadian competitions (among them the legendary Soviet gymnast Boris Shakhlin, who visited Vancouver just a few years after his triumph at

the 1960 Summer Olympics). This personal aspect of the Communist Party grew in importance as his friendship with Bill Stewart and others, such as Lionel Edwards or Charlie Caron, flourished.

Following on Stewart's lead, Les gradually came to be recognized as an effective rank-and-file trade union activist. Stewart would have emphasized to him several times over that the cause of working-class progress could not be realized by "merely joining an organization; acting on ideas is what changes the world."³¹ Transforming into reality this crucial Marxist notion, that human agency can indeed be a causal force for change in the world, required long hours and continuous effort. Going to Communist Party and union meetings, caucusing ahead of time with the party's left faction to decide on what position to take on various issues and choose who would present resolutions and speak to them, and afterwards to deconstruct what had happened and plan ahead again—and then be up at the crack of dawn to work the tools the next day—was both time-consuming and potentially exhausting, and Les noted as much in an interview years later: "We'd meet every day, seven days a week, meeting after meeting. What you have to understand is a party member will get up at 6 a.m. and work until midnight."³² One of his good friends recalled of this time in the Communist Party that whenever there was an important issue that arose, "it seemed like we would have a meeting just to call a meeting."³³ Though they may have somewhat inflated their recall of the hours they committed to party activism, Les's dedicated work and his commitment to bringing about a shift in the political outlook of Local 213 would bear fruit by the mid-1960s.

At the same time, Canada experienced a slowdown in economic growth in the late 1950s, accompanied by an increase in levels of unemployment. The impact of such downturns on the construction industry meant that lack of employment was a constant concern, and it hampered efforts to rebuild the Communist Party numbers inside Local 213. Periodic declines in the number of new construction projects made steady employment a priority for inside wiremen. This was also true of the contract linemen, who mainly worked for Hume and Rumble or Peterson Electric. But the linemen seemed more willing to do what they had often done in the past: they became "boomers," picking up stakes to follow the jobs elsewhere across the continent while working "on permit" via other locals of the IBEW.³⁴ In contrast, the concern about job loss was much less pronounced among the utility workers employed on a steady basis by BC Electric.

The fact that British Columbia's economy was heavily dependent on mining and timber further left it vulnerable to shifts in the overall demand for raw materials. This economic instability hit Les and Monique hard in the early fall of 1960 when Les was laid off from a \$50 million megaproject to build the American-owned Celgar pulp mill near the town of Castlegar, while yet another downturn hit the economy on the coast.³⁵ This meant that suddenly Les could no longer contribute to the young couple's monthly mortgage payments for their newly purchased home. The layoff from the Castlegar work site was definitely of a political and punitive nature, as Les had been involved in a work stoppage of several days' duration at the Celgar construction site. This event took place within the constraints of an imposed international agreement. The evident shortcomings of this type of contract had already been vehemently protested that year by the inside wiremen from a geographically adjoining jurisdiction. IBEW Local 46 in Seattle, Washington, had angrily resolved at a union meeting in May "that a letter of censure [be] sent to International President Gordon Freeman from the Washington State Electrical Workers Association in regard to these agreements."³⁶

In the description of the *Pacific Tribune*, the struggle on the ground in Castlegar concerned the fact that "the company packed the men into cramped trailer accommodations far below the standards set by provincial regulations." As the paper noted, however, the underlying question was whether "the job stewards movement in the construction trades is to be a genuine movement with power of decision or whether it is to be a meek instrument of the International Roadmen to carry out their collaborationist policies."³⁷

One of the principal engineers on the Celgar project, Al Fisher, had met Les in the late fifties when Fisher was still the head coach for the UBC ski team and Les used to tag along on training sessions at nearby Grouse Mountain. The two ran into each other again in Castlegar, where Les was working as an apprentice electrician and living on the Celgar worksite. Fisher was not yet aware of high-level trade union developments aimed at reducing the traditional authority of onsite shop stewards: for him, the immediate issue had to do with meeting provincial regulatory standards in connection with the living quarters available to the 3,000-strong construction crews. Les strongly objected to the "two-bunks-in-one-trailer set-up" for the work crews, insisting instead on only one bunk per trailer, for the sake of privacy.

And “damn it if Les didn’t help lead a wobble on that job over camp conditions!” Fisher recalled.

Fisher agreed with Les’s position and persuaded Tom Simons, president of H. A. Simons Engineering, to agree to expanding the work camp for all the crews coming and going on the project so that there would be only one worker per trailer. “It delayed our project by about a month and cost a stack of money,” Fisher remembered, and in the meanwhile “Les was being hounded by the construction bosses, the union roadmen, and even the cops.” In the end, he reported, “we got Les out of there before he got into serious trouble and back home safe and sound to North Van.”³⁸

After Les returned from Castlegar, he and Monique had several discussions that ended up with the young couple deciding to move to Dax—Monique’s hometown—and rent out the house in North Vancouver while they waited for the economy to pick up again on the west coast. But the economy may not have been the sole factor in their departure. Al Fisher certainly thought that Les’s recent experience with IBEW roadmen contributed to their decision to go and live in France for a while.³⁹

After a brief trip back to the Tyneside area in late September to visit Les’s family and friends, off to France they went. While living with his in-laws, Les played midfield on the local soccer team and worked in a nearby creosote plant, Bois Imprégnés, which specialized in railway ties. It was not a good situation, given that Monique’s parents were fairly conservative, but the young couple made the best they could of their difficult circumstances while they waited out the recession in Canada and hoped that by the time the economy picked up the furor surrounding Les’s problematic departure from Castlegar would have blown over.

Somehow, sports always seemed to find Les McDonald wherever he was located. While he was in France, he got a letter from a Vancouver friend, Declan Daley, who had taken up ski racing with him with the Grouse Mountain Tyee, a well-known ski club located in North Vancouver’s backyard. Declan was going to Wengen, Switzerland, to try out for the British National ski team and wondered whether Les would be interested in coming along and trying out as well. Happy to get a break from his in-laws and the creosote plant, Les jumped at the chance. Even though rock climbing was by far what he did best, Les made it onto the British ski team that participated in the Low Countries ski championships. Among his teammates was twenty-three-year-old Karim Aga Khan, who had, upon the recent death of his grandfather,

become the leader of the Nizari group of Ismaili Muslims and was by all reports easily the most talented skier on the British team. In Wengen, both of them participated in the Lauberhorn Downhill, the longest downhill ski race in the world. Les never forgot the experience and the chance to watch skiers like Toni Sailer, Pepi Stiegler, and Guy Périllat up close.

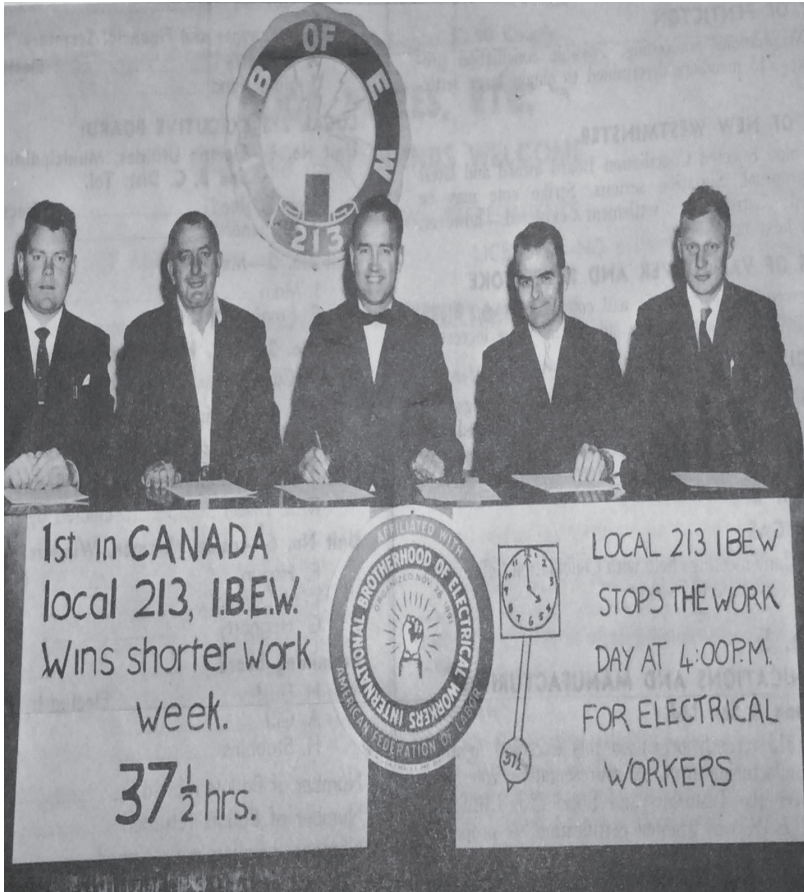
In the late spring of 1961, Monique and Les returned to North Vancouver, after only eight months in France. Les soon threw himself back into local politics, becoming an unsuccessful labour-backed municipal candidate for North Vancouver District Council in November 1962.⁴⁰ He also went back to work as an apprentice electrician and passed his exams, becoming a journeyman at the end of March 1963.

During negotiations with employers in the construction industry in the spring of 1964, Les McDonald would again bring himself to the attention of the leadership structure of Local 213. Incapable of taking a back seat to anyone for very long, he wanted to demonstrate his mettle to his fellow workers and to the local union leadership. Encouraged by Bill Stewart, Les zeroed in on the possibility of a shorter work week for Vancouver-based electrical workers. This age-old objective of the working class around the world was felt to be in reach due to the advances of automation at the workplace. One man could now do the work of three compared to fifty years ago, so why shouldn't the remaining workers garner part of the tremendous increase in surplus value by getting a shorter work week? Having been Local 213's delegate to the BC Federation of Labour conference on precisely this issue earlier in the year, Les was also pointed in the direction of the Communist-led and -directed Trade Union Research Bureau (TURB), run by Marxist economist Emil Bjarnason.⁴¹ In short order he quickly founded the Shorter Work Week Committee of the Inside Wiremen (Unit 6) during negotiations. At an inside wiremen's meeting on May 25, 1964, he then produced a report from the floor "stating reasons labour is entitled to shorter work week." He listed a number of examples where the thirty-five-hour work week was already being implemented elsewhere around the world—in this regard he perhaps cited New York City's path-breaking IBEW Local 3—and listed a number of occupations being lost to automation in a variety of industries. Significantly, he did not think that a shorter work week in the province could be accomplished through a united front with the other building trades in British Columbia, as the other unions had already signed five-year collective agreements. Opting for a shorter duration for any prospective agreement

meant that the wiremen, as with the other construction trades, could continue to “whipsaw”—that is, to play off as rivals—one group of contractors against another. Les McDonald concluded: “We must go and out and fight for it ourselves.” The wiremen’s unit was so impressed that the membership asked that “Bro. Les McDonald’s report be condensed and sent to executive board, mimeographed and distributed to members at next card-called meeting.”⁴² Business manager Art O’Keeffe was enthused by the boldly stated claim for a shorter work week as he had previously tried to negotiate a 35-hour work week with the electrical contractors in 1958, but to no avail. He was thus more than predisposed to the idea, and quickly came on board to make it a priority during negotiations. He reported to the membership that during initial talks with employers “the demand for the shorter work week was stressed. We will receive strong opposition to this, but we should dig our heels in and go after it.”⁴³

And go after it they did. Desperate for stability due to a massive boom that had begun in the construction sector, the employers caved.⁴⁴ At the July 31 card-called meeting of the wiremen’s unit, which only certified electricians were permitted to attend, Art O’Keeffe gave a synopsis of the proposed four-year agreement that offered a 37.5-hour work week and urged the workers to accept the offer, crowing even that it “would probably make some history in this country.”⁴⁵ The vote that followed was near-unanimous and the first shortened work week in decades for construction workers in Canada became a reality. At the press conference that took place after ratification of the new collective agreement, O’Keeffe proudly outlined how electricians would continue to be “the highest paid workmen in BC’s contract industry” and, most importantly, that the shorter work week was “a major breakthrough.”⁴⁶ Messages of congratulations were sent from the International Office in Washington, from Canadian headquarters in Toronto, and from local unions in British Columbia.⁴⁷ Art O’Keeffe and his team of assistant business managers had made their mark. While not directly involved with negotiations, Les McDonald had helped as well; indeed, his contributions were deemed important enough to have been placed into the historical record. Unfortunately it appears that Local 213 has since had to dial back its 37.5-hour work week, as the latest collective agreement specifies a forty-hour work week.⁴⁸

Naturally Les also caught the immediate attention of Communist Party officials. Impressed by both the research and presentation abilities of the



The members of the negotiating team for the inside wiremen pose for a picture after Local 213 wins the 37.5-hour work week, in August 1964. From left to right: Jim Kinnaird, Sam Shannon, Art O’Keeffe, Frank Stepney, and W. A. “Dusty” Rhodes. *Local 213 IBEW Business Manager’s News Letter*, October 1964, 1.

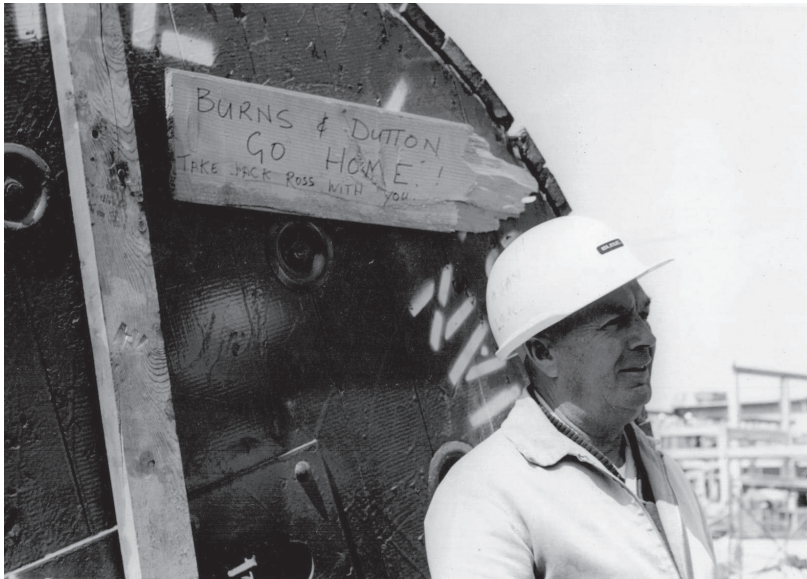
persuasive ginger-headed wireman, in July 1964 they requested that he attend a one-week educational camp hosted by the Communist Party of Canada in Sylvan Lake, Alberta. The first lecture he attended was delivered by Stanley Ryerson on the topic of “Philosophy in Today’s World.” Ryerson was a historian of some repute in Canada, and also a leading intellectual and long-standing member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Other sessions followed on “Philosophical Materialism,” “Dialectical and Historical Materialism,” and “Universal Forms of Existence of the Material World.” The final address to the students was given by Leslie Morris, general secretary of the Communist Party of Canada, on the looming “Challenge of the 60’s.”

Making efforts to be a model student, Les filled his scribbler with copious notes on the talks given at the Sylvan Lake retreat. Perhaps the most striking feature of his notes is his obvious focus on dialectics, a philosophical and historical theme that would characterize his time in both the trade union movement and in the sports world. One note in particular summarizes Les’s views: “In class society the struggle of two opposites produces progress. The greater the struggle the greater the rewards. No struggle, no victory.”⁴⁹

Between periodic bouts of unemployment during which he went climbing or skiing, Les McDonald was dispatched by Local 213 to various large industrial jobs then occurring around the province. These included the building, or expansion, of pulp mills in Castlegar and Port Mellon, modernizing the electrical system used underground at the Britannia Beach copper mine, building Simon Fraser University, and working on the construction of the FMC Corporation’s \$12-million chemical plant in Squamish. Despite the tribulations that led to his and Monique’s sojourn in France, McDonald participated in a sanctioned strike at the Britannia Beach Copper Mine in September 1964 that involved both a few electrical workers from Local 213 and the much larger Mine-Mill union. But it was during a heated two-week wobble involving “mystery pickets” and a deliberate jobsite slowdown at the FMC construction site in the summer of 1965 that much of his character as a workplace activist became evident. The issue was fairly straightforward for the fifty-seven electricians employed by Burns and Dutton Construction, the Alberta-based electrical contractor for the project: the company was not paying the men who chose not to live in the supplied living quarters the same living-out allowance as on other worksites in the province. In addition, Burns and Dutton was skimping on how much it was spending in terms of the upkeep of the camp itself.

Les, who had a lifelong interest in photography, took a series of black-and-white snapshots of the strike action that ensued at the end of July and the beginning of August in that year. The first picture in the set shows fellow worker Reg Wiley standing under a crude wooden sign where someone had written “Burns & Dutton Go Home, take Jack Ross with you.”



Electrician Reg Wiley stands by a signpost issuing an invitation to both the construction company and IBEW's International representative. Squamish, July 1965. Les McDonald private collection.

The electricians' dislike for Jack Ross had evidently become evidently a public issue, something the targeted IBEW representative was not likely to ignore or to forget.

The second picture is of a long line of electricians engaged in a slow-down tactic by checking in and out of camp on a daily basis, despite the fact that they are living on the site and hence have no need to do so. The tactic served to stall the beginning of the workday and then to create chaos in the company office in the afternoon, thereby substantially reducing levels of worker productivity. The third picture says even more about Les McDonald—a sign in Irish Gaelic on his IBEW hard hat reads: “Ten dollars a day living out allowance.” Reaching out to some of his fellow electrical workers in their native language and culture to win them over to his side of the class struggle was a classic McDonald move. Having grown up in Felling with immigrants from the Emerald Isle, and with Irish family parentage himself, Les could play the Irish accent to perfection, and he realized that this small gesture would appeal to the electricians with Irish surnames on the site and in the pictures—people like Jim Aherne, Paddy Griffin, and Bert Clancy. More



Workers deliberately undermining productivity by checking into and out of the camp at the beginning and end of the work day. Squamish, July 1965. Les McDonald private collection.



Les McDonald's Irish Gaelic hard hat. Squamish, July 1965. Les McDonald private collection.

importantly, the Gaelic-inscribed hard hats very obviously played to Art O’Keeffe’s ethnic sensibilities, reaching out to Local 213’s business manager to keep him onside in the growing dispute.

Faced with an intransigent employer, the next tactic was to make a phone call. The result was that two non-IBEW mystery pickets appeared on the road leading to the chemical plant in short order, their signs proudly worn on this occasion by volunteer recruits identified in Les McDonald’s photo album as Don Cox and Dennis Rankin. Neither Cox nor Rankin were electricians and had been recruited from the roster of available left-wing labour supporters to set up the mystery picket line.⁵⁰ These mystery pickets lasted only a single day as the company was quick to react and had, in turn, made a phone call of its own: according to the *Vancouver Sun*, “a Supreme Court injunction banned mystery picket lines that appeared at the site.”⁵¹

Mystery pickets were not unusual in British Columbia at the time, and the electricians evidently felt it necessary to use the tactic in Squamish. Following the new BC Trades-Union Act passed in 1959, which permitted the use of temporary *ex parte* injunctions to safeguard public order or to prevent “substantial or irreparable injury to property,” Supreme Court injunctions, specifically in connection with union picketing, were issued in vastly increasing numbers in the ensuing years, especially if pickets appeared when the term of a collective agreement had not yet expired.⁵² Mystery pickets made these injunctions a little more difficult: if some of the picketers could not be identified as members, against which union or other organization should the injunction be issued? In response, *ex parte* injunctions began to include a “John Doe provision” against any and all persons blocking the entrance to a particular workplace. And this is precisely what happened in Squamish, with the result that the mystery picket line had to be abandoned as a tactic so that the anonymous volunteers would not be arrested.

To avoid the strict interdictions of the injunction, the electricians absconded to the nearby park at Alice Lake for a picnic and a study session on what to do next. Among the people in the pictures Les McDonald took of this occasion, we see Bert Adair, the former leader in Burrard Dry Dock of the independent All-Canadian Electrical Workers (ACEW) conversing with the likes of Bob Towle and Dan Martin, two members of the left faction in Local 213. When the Burns Detective Agency appeared on the work site with five of their finest, another grey-haired electrician employed on the Squamish site, Sid Sheard, stood on the walkway to face them down.



Mystery picketers Don Cox and Dennis Rankin at the FMC chemical plant construction site. Squamish, July 1965. Les McDonald private collection.



Electrical workers discussing tactics at Alice Lake Park, near Squamish, August 1965, after picketing was banned at the FMC construction site. In the first of the two photographs, from left to right are Daniel McDonald (child), Bert Adair, Bob Towle, Dan Martin, and Phil Gould. In the second, from left to right are Fred Guertin (standing), Frank Stepney, Herb Crabtree, Ernie Fulton, and Foster Dixon. Les McDonald private collection.

A long-time and militant Communist originally from Birmingham, England, Sheard had been one of the 21 Club members suspended alongside George Gee in 1955, but was evidently back at work, this time alongside an energetic and youthful Les McDonald. Jack Gillett, who had officially recruited Les into the Communist Party, was also part of the Burns and Dutton crew.⁵³

Old left was meeting young left and the conversations appeared to be vigorous and passionate. The classic combination of agitation at work alongside political education was taking place, and a continuity of experience was being transmitted between the generations. Also among the picnic-goers is shop steward Herb Crabtree, who left a very positive impression on thirty-two-year-old Les McDonald.⁵⁴ Crabtree had been instrumental in leading a wobble earlier in the year at an \$85-million construction site for the expansion of a pulp mill in Prince George, a dispute that resulted in the extraordinary firing of thirty-five inside wiremen from the giant Marwell Construction site, and the accompanying immediate suspension from the union of seven of the leading participants.⁵⁵ In later years, Les described his fellow wireman as “a man who would rather lose an argument than a friend,” and who had developed within himself “the greatest of all virtues, class consciousness.”⁵⁶

Several carloads of RCMP officers then arrived at the FMC jobsite accompanied by a German Shepherd, which bit then-apprentice Ernie



Sid Sheard stares down approaching operatives from the Burns Detective Agency at the FMC chemical plant. Squamish, August 1965. Les McDonald private collection.

Fulton in the leg during the ensuing confrontation.⁵⁷ As Fulton had to get stitches to heal the wound, that bloody incident proved completely unacceptable to the electricians, so much so that they refused to go back to work under the police threat. A stand-off ensued with the result that no work was done that day. Nor was there much production the following week as the vast majority of electrical workers all reported in sick to protest the laying off of thirteen electricians at the work site, including Herb Crabtree.⁵⁸ These tactics were all innovative ways to get around BC Supreme Court injunctions against picketing, even if only temporarily, and also to find ways to retaliate against an initially unyielding Alberta employer.

Local 213 sent Frank Stepney, the wiremen's new assistant business manager, to investigate the events then unfolding in Squamish. At the general meeting on August 2, he relayed his account of the events he had witnessed with the security guards, the RCMP, and the continuing impasse with Burns and Dutton.⁵⁹ Eventually, as the *Vancouver Sun* reported, a settlement was arrived at whereby the company agreed to increase living-out allowances

and maintain a better-quality camp. But the presence of the police was vigorously protested. Championing the position of the Squamish electrical workers, Art O’Keeffe was quoted as saying he “considered the presence of police . . . provocative.”⁶⁰ The membership of Local 213 also jumped into the fray, passing a resolution fully supporting their embattled brethren at the north end of Howe Sound.⁶¹ There was no word in the *Sun* on whether or not the laid-off men and the shop steward were rehired, but the *Pacific Tribune* recounted via an anonymous reporter, that “the 13 men who have been fired have been reinstated with full pay for the entire period of the ‘lay off.’”⁶² Local 213’s *Minute Books* stated that the “Shop Steward was reinstated after much discussion.”⁶³ BC Attorney General Robert Bonner also got into the act as he had received a telegram signed by “The Workers” complaining that they were being harassed by private security guards carrying side arms. The signature on the telegram was typical of Les McDonald, raising a crucial issue with the powers that be but crafty enough still not to be singled out for retaliation in the process.⁶⁴ The gun-packing issue was to be investigated by the attorney general, so work on the expansion of the chemical plant finally resumed.⁶⁵ The *Pacific Tribune* trumpeted the electrical workers’ collective triumph, declaring: “The company obviously had notions of cracking the whip and showing the workers who’s boss. But they just as obviously failed to reckon with the high degree of militancy and unity of BC workers.”⁶⁶

One disconcerting detail about the events in Squamish that emerged from the Local 213 *Minute Books* was the announcement that there was an upcoming three-way meeting of “a Special Representative from Burns & Dutton with A.B.M. [assistant business manager] Stepney and Bro. Ross, Int. Rep.”⁶⁷ Jack Ross had been busy investigating the internal dynamics of the events in Squamish. It was definitely not a good omen for future endeavours.

The contrast between the Burns & Dutton events and the strike some years earlier at the Phillips Cables’ plant is edifying. The wiremen in Squamish, isolated as they were from Vancouver, had developed and deployed their own innovative tactics without help or interference from the officials in the union hall on Dunsmuir Street. Nor does it appear that Communist Party headquarters in Vancouver intruded in the matter at any point; it was mainly party activists on the ground that helped guide and carry out the tactically imaginative wobble. There is no question that the

apolitical rank-and-file electricians took part, and were entirely supportive, of the actions undertaken in Squamish. The pictures in Les McDonald's photo album show that the confrontation with Burns and Dutton appeared to be meticulously planned and that young McDonald had a hand in it, from the use of Irish on his hard hat to the appearance of mystery pickets at the entrance to the jobsite. The Phillips strike, on the other hand, while not lost, had engendered bad blood between some of the workers and local union officialdom. These two currents would have met in Vancouver at Local 213's general meetings and become acquainted with one another once the Squamish job was completed. The electricians who had been employed by Burns and Dutton would have gone home to Vancouver, waiting to be dispatched to another construction site by the union. In the meantime, Les McDonald returned to attending Communist Party meetings, and planning and participating in demonstrations on issues such as banning the bomb. He was also elected to various labour conventions as a delegate from Local 213, intermittently played soccer on the weekends, climbed on the Squamish Chief in warm weather, participated in ski races on Grouse Mountain and Mount Seymour in winter, and published the occasional article in the *Pacific*



Les training for ski racing on Grouse Mountain, 1958. Les McDonald private collection.

Tribune.⁶⁸ When he had time, which wasn't very often, he would also lend a hand in raising his three kids.

The events in Squamish and the earlier strike at Phillips Cables were symptomatic of a wider current of increasing working-class militancy that spread across Canada over four decades. In every ten-year tranche, from the 1940s through to the 1970s, strike action grew on a national scale. The constantly rising cost of living was one important factor that helps to explain this militancy within Canada's working class, as was the attempt to gain job security through the initial signing of collective agreements or, as was more often the case, to achieve wage increases and improvements in job-security language in the context of already-existing collective agreements. But what is most singular in the thicket of statistics on this issue is the regional concentration of wildcat strikes, or what Les McDonald and his fellow electrical workers persistently described as "wobbles." The proportion of wobbles during this forty-year time frame was higher in British Columbia than in both Canada and the United States combined—36 percent of all strikes in BC were wobbles, versus 30 percent in the rest of North America. In particular, there was a spike in these types of "illegal" work stoppages between 1965 and 1969 and again between 1970 and 1973.⁶⁹ The events in Squamish and a year later, at Lenkurt Electric, were thus right at the beginning of this concentration of unsanctioned collective actions that directly contravened provincial labour laws. While it would be foolish to extrapolate the experience of the electrical workers to the rest of British Columbia, it is nevertheless worth noting that both of these wobbles were begun because of employer-initiated provocation toward their workers.

By the mid-1960s the best-known of the successful wobbles, or wildcat strikes, involving BC working-class militancy took place at the Shellburn oil refinery located toward the eastern end of Burrard Inlet. Reacting to speed-up and increasing mechanization, a young group of workers led by Jerry Lebourdais, president of the Burnaby local (Local 9-601) of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union (OCAW), organized a sit-down strike at this oil refinery in October 1965. The occupation of the refinery by the young workers triggered an OCAW-led province-wide strike against the British American (B-A) Oil Company, which meant that the Shellburn refinery was not the only one behind picket lines. Significantly, Lebourdais was also a member of the Progressive Workers' Movement (PWM), founded a year earlier in 1964.⁷⁰ Jack Scott, an ex-Communist by then,

and also the founder and leader of the same Maoist-oriented group that was attempting to make inroads into organized labour in BC, recalled that “Lebourdais had led the thing but didn’t know where it was going. I told him you don’t do things like that.” He added: “It was something that took place spontaneously . . . it was quite a wrong tactic to pursue.”⁷¹ Moreover, due to a complete lack of progress in negotiations and a situation wherein “large scale scabbery and wholesale injunctions” were taking place, the BCFL began the process of organizing a supporting forty-eight hour general strike.⁷² The provincial Cabinet convened an emergency meeting to discuss the potentially looming crisis, and Premier W. A. C. Bennett had to personally intervene before the BCFL general strike deadline of November 24. In the ensuing settlement, the striking oil workers received a thirty-five cent per hour increase in wages, consultation on automation, stronger language on job protection and, if necessary, retraining for displaced workers.⁷³ Lebourdais lost his job, the only worker at the Shellburn refinery to do so, but it was considered a massive victory for workers at the time. The *Pacific Tribune* was jubilant: “This was a smashing victory for organized labor against some of the biggest monopolies in the world and, most importantly, a breakthrough in harnessing the benefits of automation.”⁷⁴

Tribune reporter Jerry Shack should probably have adopted a more cautious tone. It was misguided to believe that workers in BC could be recklessly militant, threaten a general strike, then simply chalk up victories in the win column for organized labour. But these were heady times and the *Pacific Tribune’s* triumphant tone was understandable, even if over the top. A less cavalier regard for the history of successful labour strategies would have shown that spontaneous militancy at the workplace did not always lead to victories, especially if it was not thoroughly planned to begin with. Though Lebourdais suffered personally, the other oil workers were lucky, perhaps even a historical anomaly in BC. Lebourdais ended up leaving the labour scene altogether in the Lower Mainland and founded a number of agricultural communes in his home region of the Cariboo in the central interior of British Columbia. He also got involved in mainstream politics as a candidate in Vancouver East for the PWM, first in the 1965 federal election and later taking on Social Credit cabinet minister Alex Fraser, during successive provincial elections as an NDP candidate in the 1980s.⁷⁵ But the earlier strike he helped spark in October of 1965 demonstrated that there

were now other currents of communist-inspired working class groupings to contend with in British Columbia in the mid-1960s.

Though the Communist Party of Canada easily remained the major actor in this respect on the provincial scene, in particular within the ranks of organized labour, it was increasingly being challenged. In Local 213, in addition to Chief Shop Steward George Brown, a former Trotskyist active in the manufacturing unit, there appeared to be at least two young adherents to the Progressive Workers' Movement among the inside wiremen: John Wood and Dave Unger. But the latter were neophytes, still ensconced in the apprenticeship program and relative newcomers to the trade union scene. Their influence as a third potential vanguardist group thus appears to have been inconsequential at first glance, but that may be only a superficial impression.⁷⁶ It is worth pointing out that Local 213 donated \$2,000 to help the embattled oil workers during their struggle. This was a donation that went to an "illegal" strike, both in terms of then-existing provincial law and in terms of the IBEW's own constitution.⁷⁷ The only real note of dissent came from Local 213's president, Angus MacDonald, who argued at a Special Meeting that passing a motion supporting the oil workers "does not give members right to take part in 48 hour strike."⁷⁸ His legalist position, bordering on sophistry, was ignored and drowned in a tidal wave of support for the OCAW union. As a point of contrast, a short time later, at another local union conclave, Les McDonald praised Art O'Keeffe effusively for his handling of a dicey situation within the executive council of the BC Federation of Labour. "The oil companies," he declared, were "trying to break the union movement in BC," but Local 213's business manager "did an exceptional job of unifying the [BCFL] members during the meeting."⁷⁹ McDonald may have taken this opportunity to describe part of the debate that had taken place within the leadership of the BCFL on the feasibility of conducting a province-wide general strike in support of the embattled oil workers. At a crucial moment, when the Building Trades Council threatened a veto of the proposed two-day walkout, O'Keeffe surprisingly supported Communist Lorne Robson of Local 452 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, and the two of them "negated the veto by voting for strike."⁸⁰ Les was visibly warming up to Art O'Keeffe's style of leadership, despite the latter's well-known role in the successful ouster of former business manager George Gee. More importantly, McDonald, and others in Local 213's left faction, would have made a mental note of the tempting

tactical template provided by the oil workers. When faced with similar, though not identical circumstances, they would attempt to revert to what appeared to be a winning formula.

By the fall of 1965 and the winter of 1966, Les McDonald was as active in the affairs of Local 213 as he would ever be, slowly growing the Communist Party faction to around fifteen members and affecting the decisions of the executive board.⁸¹ In October he presented a series of eleven resolutions to Local 213, which he hoped would be part of the resolutions package at the forthcoming BC Federation of Labour Convention in November. Elected as a delegate from the electrical workers' local, he wanted the approval of Local 213 before presenting them at the BCFL convention. Seven of these resolutions were reproduced in full in the *Minute Books*. This was a curious and unusual occurrence as resolutions were rarely reproduced in their entirety in the *Minute Books* prior to conventions.⁸² Perhaps the most contentious of the resolutions McDonald presented were the second and third, whereby he asked that it be resolved:

2. "that the BC Fed. of Labour petition the C.L.C. to admit all expelled unions without delay"; and
3. "that the BC Fed. of Labour demand of the Provincial Govt. that they take over the BC Tel. Co."⁸³

These resolutions were important as the cat was now out of the bag. If politically active electrical workers in Local 213 were not cognizant of it before, they now had before them someone who was loudly advocating well-known Communist Party positions at their meetings.⁸⁴ Though it could be humorously and ironically argued that the normally enthusiastic free enterprise premier of British Columbia, W. A. C. Bennett, had just recently nationalized the BC Electric Company in 1961, calls for the nationalization of major industries in 1965 were more often than not Communist-promulgated positions in the general political discourse across the country.⁸⁵ Even if the NDP in British Columbia under leader Robert Strachan also had in its platform a policy-position in favour of the nationalization of the telephone company, this was systematically soft-pedalled in the face of periodic electoral warnings by Premier W. A. C. Bennett about "the socialist hordes being at the gates."⁸⁶ It was a not too subtle attempt by Les McDonald trying to leverage the NDP's platform to advantage where it intersected with the

Communist Party's position on the issue. Not all of McDonald's proposals were approved, including resolution 2, which showed that while the Communist-led left faction had indeed made inroads again among the electrical workers since the Gee expulsions, it was by no means the dominant influence. However, contrary to the Gee years when discussions initiated on the left appeared to have been largely contained within the backroom caucus of the local, Communist-generated issues were now brazenly put on the agenda and openly being debated. It was a momentous change. On matters of internal union debate it appeared that McCarthyism and the stifling of left-led initiatives were being challenged. Or, perhaps unwisely, that Les McDonald and the Communist-led left caucus believed they could be.

A startling new legal ruling had seemingly opened the door for the presentation of these spirited initiatives. In June 1965, the US Supreme Court had repealed the anti-communist union provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act in *United States v. Brown*, and closer to home, Pat O'Neal, the secretary-treasurer of IBEW (and certainly not a Communist) was quoted in the *Pacific Tribune* saying that "there is an urgent need of clearing the way for the inclusion of these vitally important '*independent*' [italics in original] unions inside the BCFL, since all the 'reasons' given for their exclusion no longer exist."⁸⁷

An episode of some interest then took place at the November 1965 BCFL convention in Vancouver. It was vintage Les McDonald and also spoke to a philosophical current visibly existing both among the Vancouver electrical workers and a significant portion of BC's labour movement. In response to the wobbles increasingly taking place in British Columbia, McDonald came out in support of a last-minute resolution put forward by IBEW Local 213, arguing for the right to strike during the term of an agreement.⁸⁸

The resolution had not previously been endorsed by Local 213, but after discussion, it was approved by the executive of the BCFL. The resolution from the floor did not come out of the blue, however. It appears that "Boilermaker Bill" Stewart's union, Marine Workers Local 1, based out of North Vancouver's Burrard Dry Dock, had been the originators of the resolution, but it had to be amended. It was then represented anew from the floor by Local 213 in order to pass.⁸⁹ McDonald's intervention at the microphone is highly informative of the latter's view of the use of the strike weapon to enforce both the spirit and letter of collective agreements. The resolution

neatly echoed the actions that had recently taken place in Squamish with the electricians and on Burrard Inlet with the oil workers.⁹⁰ It also perfectly illustrated McDonald's sometime audacious behaviour during public events. Regardless of how it got onto the floor of the convention to be discussed and voted upon, the more important point is that the resolution indicated that Les McDonald, and undoubtedly some of the other delegates from Local 213, might have been tactical soul mates to a long-held position of the historically important—yet, in 1965, barely existing—IWW and their syndicalist sympathizers. The Communist electrician argued:

The ink is hardly dry on new negotiated contracts when Management with some of their lawyers begin to pore over the new agreement with a microscope. And soon they come up with new interpretations of the agreement which we never dreamt could ever been seen in there. We feel that the only way these problems can be resolved is through our right to strike.⁹¹

In the Communist Party Les McDonald might have been highly regarded as an up-and-coming talent, to be simultaneously nurtured and tolerated. But he was always a “little over the top,” as a former Comrade described him, “a little prone to play close to the edge” of what was acceptable, and what was not.⁹² His evident left-syndicalist sympathies would have been noted and discussed, and he might have been reprimanded by IBEW observers in attendance, such as a suddenly attentive Jack Ross, for somehow manipulating an unsanctioned resolution onto the agenda. Les McDonald would have replied that there was a reawakening taking place on job sites around British Columbia and that the BCFL needed to take the lead on this question, or risk being led. He would have pointed out that direct action and participation in wobbles were part and parcel of the wider picture of class conflict increasingly afflicting British Columbia in mid-decade. Perhaps then referencing events that had recently taken place that summer, he might have crowed about Local 213's very own direct action victory in Squamish within the constraints of a duly signed collective agreement. Continuing to defend himself, McDonald would have reminded any interested IBEW cadres that the reworked resolution from Local 213 was part and parcel of a co-ordinated thrust on this issue, spearheaded by “Boilermaker Bill” Stewart, a respected stalwart in the province's trade union movement and—yes—so what if he was a well-known veteran of the party! The resolution also mirrored an

important concession previously won by several Communist-led CIO unions in the United States where the 1935 Wagner Act in the United States had not prohibited mid-contract “wildcat” walkouts.⁹³ In discussions with similar-minded convention delegates, McDonald would, in contrast, have learned about the party’s view on the perceived dead end of IWW tactics and philosophy, in particular the latter’s disdain for electoral political action, their weakly articulated view of the role of the state, and their perceived “cult of spontaneity.” The latter, a gross misrepresentation of Wobbly labour tactics, would no doubt have been blithely accepted by an unknowing Les McDonald.⁹⁴ Ironically, it might then have been pointed out to him that the Communist Party, in British Columbia at least, did indeed seek to support well-planned and co-ordinated “spontaneous” work stoppages during jobsite disputes.

An overview of the 1960s reveals that there certainly were wobbles involving Communist electrical workers on large construction sites that took place before Local 213’s resolution from the floor—in Castlegar in 1960 and Prince George and Squamish in July 1965—and others that followed it, such as that in Powell River in 1967 and perhaps also the walkout a year earlier at the Keenleyside Dam construction site north of Revelstoke. Such instances of stoppages suggest that there might indeed have been a deliberate policy of sparking wobbles on these often massive work sites, notably around the issues of camp living conditions and the extent of authority of local unions, elected shop stewards, and the validity of imposed “international agreements.”

The internal dynamic of wobbles on BC construction sites is poorly documented, if at all, but it is clear that labour-management relations in 1965 were definitely heating up. As so well described by historian Ben Isitt, the post-World War II history of labour in Canada’s Pacific province was not one that could be framed as it was elsewhere as a social pact, a historic compromise between capital and labour; instead, in British Columbia, it ended up as a “tug-of-war” between contending classes.⁹⁵

Simultaneous with the Communist Party making a push in Local 213 from below, events from elsewhere in the political evolution of Canada’s socialist left were being introduced to the Vancouver electrical workers and, by all accounts, were loudly applauded. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, Canada’s largest socialist party since its founding convention in 1932, had combined with the Canadian Labour Congress in 1961 to form the

New Democratic Party (NDP). Increasingly social democratic, and often outspoken in its opposition to the Communist Party, the NDP saw electoral politics as the main arena for resolving class struggle issues, as opposed to figuring them out immediately at the workplace or within the trade union movement generally. Following business manager's Art O'Keeffe's initiative, Local 213's executive board agreed to have Harold Winch, NDP member of Parliament for Vancouver East, speak to the assembled rank-and-file electrical workers during a general meeting in November 1965. The former Vancouver electrician "strenuously advocated regularly scheduled I.B.E.W. conventions of Canadian locals." Given the multiple and well-known interferences by the American-based International Office into the affairs of Local 213, and also the lack of co-ordination among Canadian locals, "his remarks were enthusiastically received by the membership who have long recognized this overdue and vitally essential need."⁹⁶

Not everyone would have agreed with O'Keeffe and the executive board's decision to mesh with the British Columbia NDP. A resolution on precisely this question had been defeated two months before by a vote of 115 to 94.⁹⁷ President Angus MacDonald and conservative supporters of the International Office would undoubtedly have reminded everyone at the time of the long-standing position of the IBEW on political neutrality. Communist activists may also have objected; they obviously had their own political organization they would have liked unions in BC to support.

Les McDonald's exposure to the very different reality of trade union politics in France, in particular with the dominant Communist-influenced CGT, might have led him to see different potential outcomes on this issue. Closer to home, the examples of outspoken left-wing critics of the NDP within Mine-Mill, the Fishermen, and the Longshoring union would also have resonated. As with Ohm's law and electricity, there was obviously more than one current to the political voices then existing inside the electrical workers' local.

Jim Kinnaird, future president of the BC Federation of Labour, was a young wireman at the time working out of Local 213. He, too, would socialize with the members of the Communist-led caucus, discuss politics, and even agree to common positions on issues of the day. Described as a man who held a "steady gaze" and who used "measured words in a quiet voice," Kinnaird was politically active and right behind Les McDonald in terms of garnering votes as a delegate to various trade union conventions.⁹⁸ But the

immigrant Scotsman was still in the process of learning the ropes. On occasion, Les tried to take him under his wing and provide some semblance of guidance. For instance, they co-operated on producing a paper for a Labour-Management conference.⁹⁹ They also played Pacific Coast League soccer together for the lower-division Vancouver Thistles. Les was supportive of his well-spoken new Scottish friend and, along with Comrade Bob Towle, was part of the unanimous vote of the inside wiremen's executive committee to nominate Jim Kinnaird as the second assistant business manager for Unit 6 in October of that year.¹⁰⁰ With an economic boom taking place in British Columbia, the inside wiremen's unit was now growing so fast they required a second assistant business manager to help out with the local's leadership team. In a second scribbler where McDonald kept copious notes, this time on his trade union activities in 1965 and 1966, he wrote of Jim Kinnaird that he expected the likeable Scotsman to "work closely with the Executive Committee and take direction from the membership . . . we expect great things."¹⁰¹ Kinnaird listened politely to the advice and the support proffered by Les McDonald and his comrades and accepted it on occasion, but he did not consistently agree on all the issues. As Ernie Fulton noted, "Jim Kinnaird was friends with the left, but he wasn't really part of the left . . . Jim was just pretty well thought of by the middle-of-the-road people in the union."¹⁰²

Despite the attempt from some on the executive board to drum up support for the four-year old NDP, there is little doubt that Les McDonald, Communist, was a rising star in Local 213 during the mid-1960s. Mentored and often supported from the floor of meetings by Comrade Bill Stewart, he had even been elected vice-chair of Unit 6 in 1964, representing the inside wiremen. This now gave him the opportunity to participate in executive board meetings of the entire union local when the chair of the wiremen, George Angus, was unavailable. The membership of the wiremen's section alone was reported at 1,500 members in that year, so it was not inconsequential.¹⁰³ On several occasions Les McDonald was also elected as a Local 213 delegate to labour bodies or conventions. In May 1965, for example, he was elected as a delegate to the Western Progress Meeting of the IBEW in Saskatoon, along with business manager Art O'Keefe. In September he became the wiremen's delegate to the Vancouver and District Labour Council.¹⁰⁴ As previously noted, he was also elected to attend the BC Federation of Labour Convention in November of that same year. Moreover, the assembled members of Local 213 nominated him as a candidate for the post



The IBEW Western Progress Meeting, in Saskatoon, May 1965. Les McDonald is the second person from the left in the second row. To his immediate left is Jack Ross, while Art O’Keeffe is fifth from the left in the same row. Bill Ladyman is seated in the front row, third from the left. Les McDonald private collection.

of third vice-president of the provincial labour body, an electoral contest, however, that he did not win.¹⁰⁵ He would then be elected as a delegate to attend the April 1966 Canadian Labour Congress in Winnipeg, topping the polls with the assembled electrical workers.¹⁰⁶ While his career as a political force inside Local 213 was only just beginning, it was visibly on an upward trajectory.

Les McDonald’s confidence and ability at public speaking was also improving. After spending several years working on out-of-town industrial projects, inside wireman Terry Simpson returned to Vancouver and began attending general meetings once again in December 1965. He remembered one winter evening particularly well when a slightly built, fit, and confident-looking young man, caught his attention:

The Carrall Street regulars were all speaking in favour of an increase to the International President's salary. But then a guy got up and started to really work them over. First of all he asked them what the President was making at the time. And here they were approving an increase to his salary and they didn't even know what his salary was . . . Well, he went up and down them, he had figures on not only Freeman's salary, but also his pension. He knew how much George Meany was making, he knew what George Meany's pension was . . . Well, he just demolished them! I had never seen this guy before, but I went home and told my wife that I thought I'd just seen a guy in action who was going to take us out of this mess the union had been in for several years. And that was Les McDonald . . . by Jesus, Les could really perform when he got his wind up and he was prepared. I hadn't seen that kind of debate carried on before . . . he really let loose that night.¹⁰⁷

Interesting and well researched lectures delivered from the floor of meetings were just one arrow in the traditional quiver of tactics used by the left faction. Positions of principle were espoused whenever possible, and there were also predictable interventions on points of trade union and parliamentary democracy. All of these started to have an accumulative effect on the electrical workers who were politically active and attuned to affairs in Local 213. Despite explicit warning signals from the higher ups in the IBEW, Les appeared confident of success and was even preparing a slate of candidates in upcoming union elections in June to challenge most of the positions on the executive board, except for the position of business manager. Art O'Keeffe was not to be challenged, as the left faction evidently felt the need for the feisty business manager to remain as the public face of Local 213. He was someone whom the left faction felt they were increasingly winning over to their side as he was being both pressured and persuaded to adopt a more progressive position on a whole slew of issues.¹⁰⁸ Increasingly isolated from the more conservative members of his own executive board, Art O'Keeffe certainly needed all the allies he could get. Ernie Fulton, who would eventually gravitate from electrician to becoming a lineman, thought that Les and Bill Stewart had become tremendously influential in this regard: "The wiremen had been working on O'Keeffe; Bill Stewart was one of them, Les McDonald was another. They had really started to embarrass O'Keeffe. I

think union principles, which they always emphasized, caught up to him . . . O’Keeffe was caught in the grind.”¹⁰⁹

Les McDonald’s confidence and growing political maturity apparently extended to internal debates within the Communist Party. Though he rarely talked about interactions with his comrades at Communist Party meetings, Monique remembers that he did not enjoy local Club meetings in North Vancouver as he found these to be tedious and ineffective. He even stopped going after a while. His prime focus was the party’s Vancouver branch. That’s where the possibility of real change could be discussed and debated, particularly as it related to rebuilding the left faction within Local 213, and trade union matters generally. Jim MacFarlan, future president of the BC Teachers’ Federation (1973–75), participated alongside Les in the Vancouver meetings during the 1960s. He has a distinct memory of the North Vancouver electrician when the Labour Committee of the Communist Party used to meet in the Ford building at Hastings and Main: “Les McDonald was not a favourite at the Ford building in Vancouver. He did not toe the party line on every issue. Nigel Morgan, Maurice Rush, et. al. [Party leaders] were wary of him because Les definitely did not kiss ass.”¹¹⁰

Continuing on in this line of thought in a second interview, MacFarlan elaborated on his assessment of the growing and maturing working-class activist: “Les McDonald could not have survived much longer in the Party Church. He was too much of a free thinker and someone who wouldn’t hesitate to challenge the orthodox priests of an increasingly hide-bound and top-down institution.”¹¹¹

Elected as a delegate to yet another convention, this time for the Canadian Labour Congress convention in Winnipeg held in April 1966, Les McDonald helped prepare a set of sixteen resolutions that were debated prior to the convention and, this time, all passed by the membership. It seemed like a major hurdle had been overcome, as at least one of the resolutions was nearly identical to that presented, but non-concurred in, for the BC Federation of Labour Convention some months earlier. This was the resolution that urged that the necessary steps be taken “to admit all the legitimate unions currently outside the C.L.C. now, so that it can become the true parliament of all Canadian labour.”¹¹² The Communist-led caucus inside Local 213 appeared to be gaining in strength and in influence. Again, the resolutions were reproduced in full in the *Minute Books* by J. P. Milner, Local 213’s recording secretary. The first resolution, which requested that the

Canadian Labour Congress work toward furthering the rights of Canadian members of international unions, reflected a major historical grievance within Local 213. The second resolution continued in a similar nationalist vein, in that it outlined how policies decided by international unions “tend to reflect the needs and views of our American brothers” which could sometimes be “in complete opposition to the sovereign rights of our Canadian membership.” In order to get yet more wiggle room for progressive Canadian policies, it also requested the CLC to “establish a Building Trades Department with branches in all major Canadian areas, which would rule on matters of jurisdiction and take over all the prerogatives of the Building Trades Dept. now located in Washington, D.C.”¹¹³

These were not new initiatives on either the left or the right in Canada. The Communist Party in the early 1920s, then known as the “Workers’ Party,” had proposed “that Canadian departments of International unions be conceded the sole authority and the initiation and the right to strike.”¹¹⁴ The remnants of the One Big Union, along with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour, denounced American interference in Canadian internal affairs. Percy Bengough, president of the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) had advocated for greater Canadian trade union autonomy throughout his career.¹¹⁵ As late as 1963, at the AFL-CIO convention in New York, CLC executive director, Joe Morris—former IWA white-bloc activist and future president of the CLC—had even formally supported Canadian workers in international unions to retain the right “to make decisions concerning our own national affairs.”¹¹⁶ However, serious disagreement from the American-based unions meant that the timid leadership in the Canadian labour movement had done little to actually force the issue because they were afraid of losing the financial contributions to the CLC from dues-paying “international” unions.¹¹⁷ Former Comrade Jim MacFarlan characterized these, and other politically oriented resolutions that Local 213 presented to the 1966 CLC convention in Winnipeg, as having “come right out of the Party play book.” MacFarlan would go on to compliment Les McDonald’s leadership and evident powers of persuasion as the Communist electrician had, in his view, successfully “formulated what was a Party position in a way which won support far beyond the small party circle.”¹¹⁸

Other resolutions from the Vancouver electrical workers dealt with petitioning the federal government to enact legislation guaranteeing the right to strike; vigorously opposing compulsory and binding arbitration for union

members of public utilities, such as those employed by BC Hydro; opposing giving away Canadian water resources to the United States; pressuring the Canadian government to explore the possibility of a new Constitution for Canada establishing the national equality of what was considered then by the Communist Party to be the country's two founding peoples; getting the CLC to fund free Labour Colleges in all of the provinces of Canada; having the CLC pressure the Canadian government to have a foreign policy distinct from that of Canada's neighbour to the south, particularly as it pertained to the Organization of American States; and, undoubtedly the most favoured by Les McDonald as it was his special area of expertise, the necessity of the CLC to combat automation by "completely supporting the objective of at least the thirty-five hour work week."¹¹⁹ Local 213's resolutions deftly tried to replicate what the Communist Party had attempted in an earlier era when it controlled the British Columbia leadership of the IWA in the immediate post-World War II years; that is, to break the restrictive bonds of business unionism, to transform economic struggle into class struggle and, with a new program in mind, "to use trade union positions to oppose the new political and economic formation being constructed by American imperialism."¹²⁰

Art O'Keeffe and Angus MacDonald, the other two elected delegates from Local 213, accompanied Les McDonald; Jack Ross also attended. It must have made for a week of strained conversations, as Les and Art were becoming increasingly friendly and would stick together, leaving Angus MacDonald and Jack Ross to their own devices.

When the package of Local 213's resolutions had been mailed out to meet the appropriate deadline prior to the CLC convention, little did the three elected delegates from Vancouver suspect that the chair of the Constitution and Laws Committee would be none other than their very own Bill Ladyman, Canadian vice-president of the IBEW.¹²¹ He would be heading one of the most influential groups in Winnipeg, responsible for vetting all 398 resolutions submitted to the convention before they were permitted to hit the floor during proceedings. Ladyman would have personally read each one of Local 213's resolutions. He also chaired several sessions of the CLC convention in Winnipeg. It was not unexpected, then, that the resolution calling for the readmission of Communist-led unions to the national labour body were rejected by the Executive, as were near-identical resolutions from several other unions, as it ran counter to a long-standing CLC constitutional

provision that disqualified “any organization controlled or dominated by communists, fascists or other totalitarians.”¹²² In the meantime, the two resolutions calling for Canadian autonomy within international unions and the establishment of a Canadian Building Trades Council, were referred back to the Resolutions Committee. Both were predictably watered down to become virtually meaningless. The latter resolution, for example, was eventually worded to instruct incoming CLC officers to “consult” the Building Trades Unions “with a view to establishing a C.L.C. Building Trades Department in Canada.”¹²³ On the other hand, it must have been a pleasant surprise to the electrical workers from Vancouver that at least five of their resolutions made it to the floor of the convention, were debated, and then approved by the assembled delegates. Two more were pushed through in “composite form” after being fused with other similar resolutions.¹²⁴ In addition, the words of one of the opening speakers in Winnipeg would have caught their immediate attention. Claude Jodoin, president of the CLC, spoke at length about the necessity of the labour movement to stand up and fight the evils of *ex parte* injunctions. He spoke of his dislike of the fact that “some employers . . . resort to legal technicalities in an effort to defeat unions.”¹²⁵ Better yet, a resolution on the last day of the convention specifically condemning *ex parte* injunctions and urging affiliated unions to challenge them was presented and approved by the trade union representatives.¹²⁶

The three elected delegates from Local 213 undoubtedly listened attentively. They would have approved of the suitably combative words used by both their French-Canadian CLC president and the delegates from across the country who spoke in favour of the resolution. But it was precisely when they were away in Winnipeg that the Lenkurt Electric strike broke out in Burnaby.

This page intentionally left blank

The Lenkurt Electric Strike

Lenkurt Electric was a wholly owned subsidiary of General Telephone and Electronics Corporation (GTE), based out of Stamford, Connecticut, and was the largest manufacturer of telecommunications equipment in Canada. Its Burnaby factory was situated on a large twenty-acre property at 6960 Lougheed Highway, with an annual payroll of more than \$3.5 million. It specialized in producing microwave parts for the various telephone companies across North America, but also produced components of classified communications systems for Canada's Department of National Defence.¹ The company was known for its hard-headed approach to collective bargaining and its dislike for unions in general. Charles "Chuck" Hunter, president of Lenkurt, was once described as a "blunt, tough, bull-of-the-woods industrialist."² In its Burnaby plant, the company had about 800 employees on its payroll in 1966, approximately 400 of whom were members of Unit 5, the manufacturing unit belonging to IBEW Local 213.³ Lenkurt Electric was a "union" shop, not a closed shop, which meant the employer could hire whoever it wanted, but new employees had to join Local 213 upon being offered a job; in the Vancouver local's other units, the closed shop prevailed and employers were obliged to request electrical workers directly from the union itself. In the spring of 1966, Lenkurt workers thus made up just over 12 percent of Local 213's estimated total membership enrolment of 3,300.⁴ They did not have Class A membership in the IBEW, only Class BA membership. Not that it was ever raised as a substantive issue of debate, but this meant that while they paid the same percentage per capita dues and had the same voting rights as the linemen and inside wiremen—the "A"

members—Lenkurt employees received fewer death and pension benefits.⁵ Priding itself since its inception in 1901 on being more of an industrial union than a strict craft union, the reality of the post–World War II era success in organizing a number of manufacturing plants was now going to divide Local 213. Moreover, many of the Unit 5 workers on the plant floor at Lenkurt were women, who were paid a fairly low starting rate of pay of \$1.51 per hour, recalling the almost parallel situation involving Local 213 and the BC Telephone operators in 1919.⁶ Like a spirit from strike episodes past, this aspect of its history was now going to reappear and haunt the local union.

The Lenkurt workplace scenario presented a deplorable state of affairs, and also begged the question as to why UE had not seen fit to organize in the Vancouver area. The Communist leadership of Local 213 during World War II, and afterwards, had undoubtedly dissuaded the left-wing electrical manufacturing union from attempting to establish roots out on the west coast and enter into competition with the similarly left-leaning IBEW local.⁷ As events worked themselves out, C. S. Jackson and George Harris, UE's Communist-oriented leadership pair in Ontario's industrial heartland, would later hire the unemployed George Gee as an organizer, first in Edmonton then in Vancouver.⁸ But there was no Communist Party presence within the ranks of the Lenkurt employees in the spring of 1966. There was thus little possibility of co-ordinating any potential or foreseeable job action with the Communist-led left caucus inside Local 213, now mostly centred around Les McDonald in the wiremen's unit.

Yet, within the Lenkurt plant, there was a highly skilled and well-paid group of workers employed in the metal shop who picked up the mantle of trade union leadership. This included tool-and-die maker George Brown and metal shop supervisor Jess Succamore. Brown, a Scotsman, was elected chief shop steward at the plant in early 1966. He replaced a moribund union representative who had not been to a union meeting at the plant in nearly two years.⁹ Brown immediately began to deal with the backlog of grievances that had begun to accumulate before his election. Known by some as “a hell of a good guy,” and also as a tough and principled left-wing trade unionist, he provided a refreshing contrast to what had existed before at Lenkurt.¹⁰ But the mostly progressive metal shop workers were geographically separated from the plant floor workers within Lenkurt as both groups toiled away in separate departments. The men in the metal shop did not even have lunch together with the women, so there were no real opportunities for friendship

and camaraderie to develop. Slogging through the backlog of accumulated grievances, Brown immediately began to bridge this divide, garnering along the way well-earned respect and admiration through his efforts. However, he simply did not have enough time to make the organic links required to ensure successful job action. Brian Bethel, for example, worked as part of a team of eight in the preliminary test room, which made communication with either Brown or Succamore difficult. As with others with a supportive union outlook at Lenkurt, they relied as best they could on the roving quality control inspectors to keep everyone informed as to what was happening in the different departments.¹¹

Complicating matters was that George Brown had already been “through” the Communist Party after having previously been elected as a shop steward in the late 1950s at the massive Ford Motor plant in Dagenham, near London, England. Brown had apparently left the party over tactical disagreements on the shop floor leading up to a potential strike and had become a Trotskyist while still in Britain.¹² Those on the left who knew Brown in Canada recalled that he was discreet about his personal political views, but that he definitely had formerly belonged to the rival groupuscule, abandoning his political activism shortly after his arrival in Vancouver. Brian Bethel’s initial opinion on the newly elected Lenkurt shop steward was that “George Brown did not spout Trotskyism left, right and centre. But he was very vocal. He was very committed to what he thought we should be doing. He didn’t come across at the time as being a Trotskyite.”¹³ Jess Succamore noted that “Brown and Les McDonald didn’t see eye-to-eye on all things, so they mostly avoided each other during the Lenkurt strike.”¹⁴ Part of a shadowy presence throughout this part of the story, the mutual suspicion recounted here reflected the decades-long animosity between the Trotskyist League for Socialist Action (LSA) and the Communist Party of Canada, as to which one should wear the mantle as constituting the “true” revolutionary vanguard of the working class.¹⁵ McDonald would inevitably have met members of the LSA at public demonstrations, where they handed out leaflets in support of the “Fair Play for Cuba Committee” or sold their newspaper, the *Workers’ Vanguard*. They undoubtedly came across as a mostly unavoidable cluster composed of irredeemable anti-Soviet left-wing splitters, seemingly more interested in provoking nuisance arguments on arcane details of “correct” Marxist analysis, or in covertly infiltrating the NDP via the controversial tactic of “entryism” than in co-operating with

other leftist groups on the ground. Much as they probably made an irritating impression, as only a resentful minority splinter group from within an original minority movement could do, Les McDonald did not openly carry a grudge against Trotskyists; in fact, given the Trotskyists' minuscule numbers in British Columbia's trade union movement, in addition to their self-imposed disputations among themselves, it's not at all clear if Les McDonald was even personally acquainted with any Trotskyists.¹⁶ There certainly is no historical evidence of any past Trotskyist presence in IBEW Local 213. Yet there most definitely was a pre-existing culture of mistrust and antagonism in both camps that was counterproductive in terms of building a positive relationship. Not to make a mountain out of a molehill—indeed, it should be pointed out that McDonald had written George Brown's name in his notebook for consideration on his projected unity slate—but between the Communist Party's left faction leader in Local 213 and Lenkurt's chief shop steward, a key collaborative piece for eventual success appeared to be problematic right from the start.

George Brown, along with his resourceful and insightful workmate, Jess Succamore, became active just as the collective agreement was coming to an end on March 4, 1966. During four months of negotiations, the company's only offer had been to extend the previous contract for another year with no increase in wages for the production floor workers.¹⁷ Another fly in the ointment was that John Morrison, Unit 5's assistant business manager for Local 213, had just been suspended for slander directed at Jack Ross.¹⁸ The continuity in worker representation was now completely broken as a relatively inexperienced Tom Constable was appointed by Art O'Keeffe to take his place. Constable, a future mayor of Burnaby (1973–79), would come to rely on George Brown during the next few months; as one Lenkurt employee put it: "Brown and Constable were very close on the trade union front."¹⁹ These new faces representing Local 213 were confronted with a Lenkurt management group that had precipitated a crisis in production at their plant by demoting seven women supervisors who wanted to be paid seventeen cents per hour more to bring them up to parity with male supervisors doing the same job. The underpaid women supervisors "would not abandon grievances calling for equal pay for equal work."²⁰ But the company would not budge. It relied on a weak collective agreement that contained a management clause wherein it was specified the company had "the right to hire, reassign, promote, demote . . . employees."²¹ A government-appointed

conciliation officer eventually sided with Lenkurt, even though another clause in the collective agreement read: “no employee shall suffer any reduction in wages or less favourable conditions of employment as a result of any provision in this agreement.”²² The latest internal leadership crisis within Local 213 certainly didn’t help matters, so the demoted women remained resentfully on the plant floor. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the end result was that production and efficiency at Lenkurt suffered. It soon became apparent that management had under-estimated the amount of time required to produce the company’s specialized equipment without the know-how and efficiency of an experienced group of supervisors. Nor should the possibility of a solidarity-based deliberate slowdown by the mostly female workforce be discounted. As there were financial penalties that would accrue to Lenkurt if their products were not delivered on the contracted dates, forcing overtime was the only way to meet the company’s obligations.²³

The consequence was that the working atmosphere in the plant became extremely tense. On one side were the shop stewards and a Lenkurt Steering Committee that urged their fellow workers not to work overtime, thereby continuing to bring financial pressure on the company. On the other side, management began to give preferential treatment to employees who agreed to work overtime, while threatening to fire others who would not work overtime. It was an untenable situation.²⁴

Even more than that, the demanded overtime created a very real human problem. A significant number of the women working at the plant were single mothers who had to get home right after work to make dinner and look after their kids. Working overtime meant their children would have to be looked after by a relative, an understanding neighbour, or worse, be left alone at home. But there were only so many times when the single moms could call on the support of relatives or sympathetic friends. Jess Succamore recalled:

Tom Constable, the Assistant Business Agent of 213, basically said that we had to stop this . . . The women workers were really stressed because of the demands for extra hours of work, and a lot of them were single-parent mothers—it was a big piece of the puzzle and something that’s never really reported. And I saw it myself, women crying; they didn’t want to work the overtime because they had to get home to look after their kids. But if they didn’t work the overtime,

they were going to get fired. Now that really hit us hard. Myself and the boys down in the metal shop—there was a bunch of Scots guys like Charles McCafferty—were ready to do anything. Now if they had picked on us, it wouldn't have mattered as much. But when they started to pick on those women, I really got pissed off and so did a lot of the guys. That was the core of the issue.²⁵

Even with conciliation officer Jack Laffling present to assist in negotiations with Lenkurt during seven separate meetings, rookie assistant business manager Tom Constable was forced to report “that no progress had been made.”²⁶ The company's offer for a new contract was the old contract. They offered no changes in language, no improvement in benefits, no wage increases.²⁷ Then, in a motion moved and presented from the floor at a Unit 5 meeting on March 17, around 200 of mostly plant production workers from Lenkurt voted in favour of a ban on overtime work.²⁸ Negotiations over a new collective agreement were getting serious.

Talks with Lenkurt's management personnel began anew after the vote to ban overtime work. The company immediately came around and offered a 15% wage increase over a three-year contract, but the offer was rejected as “insufficient” and the ban on overtime continued.²⁹ Even though the previous collective agreement also contained a provision that stated unambiguously that “the selection of employees requested to work overtime shall be the responsibility of the Company exclusively,” the contract had expired and the affected women clearly saw this as an opportunity to refuse to work the demanded extra hours, though some of them continued to do so under company pressure.³⁰ The very real personal issues they raised on the crucial matter of unattended kids at home eventually tweaked management's conscience. An initially sympathetic Lenkurt vice-president, Mark Swails, promised in mid-April that employees of the company would not be required to do any more overtime until a new collective agreement had been agreed to and put in place. Unfortunately, he made the promise while President Hunter was away at a conference at Harrison Hot Springs, in the upper reaches of the Fraser Valley. When the hard-nosed Hunter returned to Burnaby the following week, on Monday, April 25, he immediately countermanded his underling's undertaking and reimposed the overtime requirement.³¹ A crew of twenty on shift that very Monday was given orders to work overtime “or they were going to get fired.”³² In response, the workers

decided to support a plan by Tom Constable to walk off the job later on in the week for a brief “study session” in the factory parking lot.

Laws governing collective bargaining had been modified several times since the introduction of the progressive amendments to the ICA Act in 1943. The 1959 Trade Unions Act had clarified that unions were legal entities that could be sued or be subject to *ex parte* injunctions.³³ The 1954 British Columbia Labour Relations Act had clarified that trade unions that were part of a lapsed agreement could not authorize a strike unless they “had bargained collectively and have failed to conclude a renewal or revision of the agreement.”³⁴ In other words, even though the collective agreement had lapsed, talks had to continue with conciliation officer Jack Laffling until he decided further discussions would be to no avail.³⁵ That had not happened when the majority of workers at Lenkurt decided to wobble the job for about an hour at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, April 27, 1966.

A dubious George Brown thought the walkout premature and was initially opposed to Constable’s idea of a work stoppage, no matter how brief.³⁶ The circumstances were certainly risky at this particular juncture: the proposed walkout was technically illegal, Art O’Keeffe was away in Winnipeg, the mostly female production floor workforce was unfamiliar with job action, and Tom Constable was young, brash, and inexperienced. What may have tempted Brown was the double success the previous year of the two-week wobble against Burns and Dutton in Squamish, and, closer to home, the oil workers’ sit-down strike on Burrard Inlet sparked by Jerry Lebourdais. Even more important, the Lenkurt wobble was only supposed to be for an hour. In hindsight, George Brown should have resisted temptation, argued for patience, told Constable to cool it, and followed his trade union instincts. He tried but did not win the tactical debate; as assistant business manager, Tom Constable had the last word. And at the end of the day it didn’t seem to matter: “It was really the workers who were determined and walked out.”³⁷

At first, everything went according to plan. Brown and Constable were meeting with Lenkurt management personnel at 9:45 a.m. on April 27 to briefly discuss the overtime ban. They had just sat down in a management office when the sound of a multitude of footsteps could be heard outside the closed office door. The production floor workers were leaving several minutes earlier than planned, and without any of their leaders. Constable and Brown were forced to follow in the footsteps of the mass of several

hundred workers some time later, which might have made for good strategy as it genuinely appeared that the walkout was spontaneous. No one from the union could now be accused of having organized, or led, the wobble. As one of the mass of workers who streamed out of the Lenkurt plant and into the parking lot, metal shop supervisor Jess Succamore explained what happened next:

The original plan was to walk out at 10 a.m. . . . My understanding was that we were going to walk out into the parking lot, have a meeting, then go back in and talk to the plant manager. But we get outside, and someone yells: '*Let's go down to the union hall!*' So, I think there was only about twenty people left in the plant, and we all got in our cars and went down to the union hall.³⁸

If the workers had remained disciplined and gone back to work as planned after their study session in the parking lot, there might have been fewer problems and the Lenkurt strike might never have taken place, except as a very minor footnote in BC labour history. But they did not. There was no one there to control or block any unplanned and spontaneous impulse to "go down to the union hall." It was a grievous tactical error that was to have a precipitative knock-on effect with serious unintended consequences. What might sum up the conundrum best was a lesson Jess Succamore learned from his father: "The easiest thing in the world is to walk out, the hardest thing to do is to walk back in with your head up."³⁹

Having arrived at 111 Dunsmuir Street, the 265 electrical workers signed an attendance roster, issued a press release, and elected a six-member Workers' Committee, with Brian Bethel as chair.⁴⁰ The purpose of the committee was to represent the workers who had wobbled the job and to talk with the company about the labour relations impasse.⁴¹ As unions were potentially liable if their officers were involved in breaking provincial labour laws, Brown and Constable were not able to be on the committee for logical legal reasons.⁴² More concerning was the fact that even though it was mostly female workers who were adversely affected by the mandatory overtime, the meeting did not see fit to have a woman lead the committee.⁴³ At least twenty-eight unionized production workers refused to participate in the walkout and stayed at work on the factory floor.⁴⁴ The company claimed that another 140 had also remained at their posts elsewhere in the building.⁴⁵ With Local 213's workforce within the Lenkurt plant divided right from the

beginning, it was definitely not a good start to the job action. Inexperienced and overwhelmed by bigger forces at play, Brian Bethel and the rank-and-file committee soon faded from view.

In the short term, however, the 265 plant workers and their rank-and-file committee were immediately confronted with a serious dilemma. The company had seized the opportunity of the illegal work stoppage to fire five employees—one of whom, in a symbolic twist, was a deaf-mute—chosen at random from among the workers who had left the Lenkurt plant and proceeded to the Dunsmuir union hall.⁴⁶ President Hunter then notified all the employees to be at work for their next shift or be fired in turn. It was also announced that the five employees already dismissed by Lenkurt would not be reinstated, and that two more unidentified militants had been added to the list. Only seven of the original 265 striking workers showed up for work as demanded on Wednesday, April 28. In retaliation, the company sent out 258 telegrams the very next evening to the home addresses of the remaining workers that management had identified as missing from their posts, threatening each of them with the loss of their jobs unless they all returned to work the morning of Friday, April 29. Only one worker showed up at Lenkurt as demanded in the telegrams.⁴⁷ As threatened, the 257 remaining and defiant employees were all immediately fired. Lenkurt had already applied for a BC Supreme Court *ex parte* injunction outlawing picketing at its Burnaby plant. When the company duly received the powerful legal document from a compliant BC Supreme Court judge, a Justice Neill Brown, it provocatively advertised in the weekend edition of both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* to fill the vacancies left by the dismissals.⁴⁸

Another ad hoc group composed of Lenkurt shop stewards, led by Tom Constable, arranged to meet with Chuck Hunter and his management team before the end of the week, with the intention of finding out if common ground could be found between the two contending parties. Brian Bethel was shocked, but not surprised, by what Hunter told the trade unionists:

I was at a meeting with Chuck Hunter, Tom Constable, and a bunch of the shop stewards. He told us we had done him a favour. We had created a labour dispute which allowed him to avoid penalties in the contracts. The contracts, as I was led to understand, were paid if products were shipped by a pre-determined delivery date. If Lenkurt didn't meet that delivery date, there was a penalty. We could

realize on the shop floor that things were getting tense trying to meet delivery dates. It was creating problems and tensions among the employees. A walkout was inevitable. To me, Hunter organized that behind the scenes. He precipitated the strike deliberately because the company was falling behind on delivery dates and losing money on its contracts. Tom Constable and the others played right into his hands. They got sucked in.⁴⁹

As with the other IBEW representatives, Bethel fell for Hunter's aggressive assertions at the meeting. Without access to company accounts, there was no way of ascertaining the truth of his remarks; Lenkurt may, or may not, have been in arrears in terms of meeting its obligations on delivery dates. It was almost beside the point. With declarations like these, it was obvious that Chuck Hunter had succeeded in sowing seeds of doubt in the minds and thoughts of some of the Lenkurt workers.

Alarm bells immediately went off among some of the more experienced cadres within the electrical workers' local. John Kapalka, long-time line-men's representative of Unit 2 and Les McDonald's chosen candidate to contest the post of president during the upcoming elections in Local 213, telegraphed Art O'Keeffe mid-week in Winnipeg at the CLC convention. He did not receive a response.⁵⁰ Kapalka was not the only one worried by the sudden turn of events. A very concerned Jess Succamore went to the airport in Vancouver to meet the three delegates from the Vancouver local (and Jack Ross) as they disembarked from their plane Friday, April 29:

I grabbed O'Keeffe at the airport. He was half-cut as were the other [British Columbia trade union] delegates getting off the plane . . . And I told him that this situation at Lenkurt was really serious. He replied at first: "Don't worry, it's just a wobble." I told him: "No, it was really serious, the whole bloody plant is shut down, the workers are all off the job. You've got to find out what's going on." I was thinking of two things: one, the workers involved; and two, I didn't want the union to get involved in a big lawsuit.⁵¹

On Wednesday, May 4, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that Lenkurt had received more than 1,300 job applications since advertising in BC's largest daily newspaper for employees to replace the 257 that had been let go. Seventy-five had already been hired.⁵² A suddenly very sober Art O'Keeffe

announced that he and other union officials had arranged to meet with Lenkurt management personnel in an attempt to resolve the issue and have all the workers reinstated.⁵³ First, however, an emergency meeting of Local 213's executive board took place at the union hall on Dunsmuir Street. Although it may have been a surprise to some less cynically inclined observers, the RCMP's directorate of security and intelligence had been monitoring events within the Vancouver electrical workers' local.⁵⁴ This was undoubtedly a continuation of their documented reporting on left-wing activists within the local union, which went as far back as to at least 1940. Focusing their attention on the persuasive and energetic Communist from the inside wiremen's unit in 1966, their operative(s) in Division "E" (that is, British Columbia) reported on what happened at this crucial conclave:

Les McDONALD . . . explained that he had been out to the plant and found nothing being done, the employees were going to work . . . [he] advised O'KEEFFE must contact Pat O'NEAL [secretary-treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour] . . . and have the Federation brought in on this issue. Angus MacDONALD (President, Local 213) argued strongly against Les McDONALD's suggestions and became angry with McDONALD. However, Les McDONALD was able to persuade O'KEEFFE to convince O'NEAL to attend the committee meeting.⁵⁵

To the uninitiated, it might appear that Les McDonald was merely more persuasive than Angus MacDonald. But that would be to miss some essential points. There were at least three probable reasons why Art O'Keeffe sided with Les McDonald. First, there was the success of the oil workers wobble in Port Moody in the previous year that had grown to include the threat of a general strike by the BCFL. Premier W. A. C. Bennett had chosen not to play the confrontation card on that occasion, instead backing down and largely giving in to the workers' demands. It was a lesson not lost on those who wanted to further press the demands of labour. Second, Art O'Keeffe was sentimentally attached to all things and all persons Irish. He would have trusted Pat O'Neal to do the right thing by Local 213 and to himself. Moreover, Les McDonald and Art O'Keeffe had just spent a week together in Winnipeg attending the CLC convention. There was no question that Les McDonald had made a positive impression on the latter with his verve, his public speaking ability in front of a large crowd of

attentive trade union delegates, and his own humorous use of the Irish “blarney.” Combined with the resounding resolution from the CLC convention on the necessity “to challenge injunctions wherever and whenever they are granted,” it was probably enough to win over O’Keeffe’s support at this crucial moment. Third, the personal rift between Angus MacDonald and Art O’Keeffe had widened noticeably in the previous months. The suspension of John Morrison, O’Keeffe’s assistant business manager, precipitated by Mrs. Ann MacDonald’s dubious testimony in Local 213’s most recent internal trial—the Jack Ross slander case—certainly hadn’t helped matters. Temporarily fused together in the mid-1950s at the height of the McCarthy period, the political alliance between Art O’Keeffe and Angus MacDonald appeared to be definitely over. The prominent business manager was not going to side this time with his cautious and conservative-minded president on how best to find a solution to the looming crisis at Lenkurt. Instead, O’Keeffe followed the advice of Les McDonald, the leading red in Local 213. O’Keeffe’s decision may have been driven in part by the knowledge that elections were coming up, and it would help him if he was willing to co-operate with the left.⁵⁶ He may also have been seeking redemption for past trade union sins, in particular his role in having helped to frame George Gee.⁵⁷ In any case, and hypothetical propositions aside, the die was cast and the main actors in this unfolding drama would have to live with the consequences of their decision.

The RCMP informant(s) continued to describe how, in front of “approximately 300 people at the Hall,” the committee meeting put forward the following short-term action-plan:

O’NEAL pledged the support of the B.C. Federation of Labour to the employees. Les McDONALD further arranged for 10 girls to hand out leaflets at the Lenkurt plant, the Unemployment Insurance Commission office, Eaton’s Dept. store and Woodward’s Dept. store (downtown store). The IBEW was going to release a statement to the Press and McDONALD intended to have some of the girls from the plant attend the Vancouver Labour Council meeting of 3-5-66, in order to seek support from the Vancouver Labour Council [*sic*].⁵⁸

Both the BC Federation of Labour and the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) publicly announced full financial and moral support for the fired employees May 3.⁵⁹ Subsequent events were to prove it a

hollow promise. Meanwhile, on the other side of the bargaining fence, the first *ex parte* injunction against picketing had expired. In order to keep potentially angry trade unionists at bay, Lenkurt had already secured another very wide-ranging and all-encompassing order on May 2, this time from a Justice W. Kirke Smith.

During the week of May 2–6, there were several meetings with the fired Lenkurt Electric employees at the Dunsmuir union hall. Briefly united in the heated spirit of the moment, both Art O’Keeffe and Angus MacDonald told the Lenkurt strikers that what they had done was “a grave thing” and illegal under BC labour laws. But they had to make the best of a bad situation, and the best tactic at this point was unity. Marion Bachewich repeated this statement and remembered clearly that Angus MacDonald was quite specific when he told them “that we must all stick together and nobody . . . should start dwindling back to work. The union was going to stand behind us and do everything in their power to get us back to work on the conditions that we left.”⁶⁰ With Jim Kinnaird and Fred Allison also giving their approval to the proposed course of action, it became a typical demonstration of union solidarity. At one of the first gatherings, business manager Art O’Keeffe made an infamous faux pas when he proclaimed that he was unsure of how to express himself in front of all these women workers, but would more confidently “know what to do if only I had two hundred hairy chested linemen” with which to reason.⁶¹ The crowd, led by a young and bespectacled Diane Larsen, immediately exploded in condemnation; women who had never before spoken at a union meeting jumped to their feet to call him to task over his awkward attempt at a ribald sense of humour.⁶² As elsewhere in Canada in the 1960s, the issue of women participating in union affairs and being treated as equals was bubbling to the surface. O’Keeffe’s cringe-worthy intervention, followed by Larsen’s angry rebuke, was undoubtedly considered a minor anecdote at the time, but it could also be considered symbolic of the larger issue of gender and social relations becoming visibly ingrained in class conflict episodes.⁶³

Jockeying for position, the two sides began circling each other with conciliation officer Jack Laffling as their object of control. Citing section seven of the Labour Relations Act, Lenkurt demanded that Laffling process its demand for a “cease-and-desist order” against Local 213. The company accused the union of harassing employees who had agreed voluntarily to work overtime at the company’s request. Section seven required that “no

person or union shall engage in activities that could limit production.” Engaging in a little bit of give-and-take, O’Keeffe and Constable initially offered to rescind the overtime ban if the company cancelled its request for the cease and desist order. The *Vancouver Sun* reported that President Chuck Hunter refused this compromise position.⁶⁴ More importantly, Hunter was adamant that the fired Lenkurt employees would have to reapply for their former jobs, and that the company reserved the right to “consider employees on an individual and selective basis with no regard to seniority.” Representatives of Local 213 were outraged. An unidentified spokesman retorted that “no self-respecting trade unionist could re-apply for work under these terms.”⁶⁵ But with the law on their side, it was abundantly clear that it was their way or the highway for the Lenkurt Electric Company.

Well-known Communist Charles Stewart, head of the Amalgamated Transit Union and a veteran labour representative, then briefly stepped into the limelight. The Scottish-born Stewart was outspoken in his denunciation of what was happening across British Columbia. There were pending work stoppages by the IWA in the forest industry, the Civic Outside Workers in Vancouver were actually on strike, mediators were being assigned to adjudicate labour disputes involving carpenters, pulp and paper workers, and in the aluminum industry. And now 257 members of IBEW Local 213 had been fired from Lenkurt. At a meeting of the VDLC, Stewart asserted: “It’s time the public was acquainted with the fact that employers throughout this province are provoking labor and trying to make it appear as though we’re responsible for the unrest. . . . The employers are the ones that are creating the unrest.” He was supported by Nick Podovnikoff, fellow Communist and delegate from Local 452 of the carpenters’ union, who accused W. A. C. Bennett of playing a blame game. “Our union believes Bennett is trying to make us the whipping boy for his failure to estimate the costs of the Peace and Columbia power projects,” Podovnikoff declared.⁶⁶ These pronouncements from a left-wing labour point of view put what was happening at Lenkurt into a broader perspective. Contrary to what had occurred the previous year surrounding the unexpected oil workers’ victory, the rope in the tug-of-war of BC class relations was now visibly in the process of being pulled over to the employer’s side of the contest.

Despite Justice Kirke Smith’s Supreme Court injunction specifically banning picket lines at the Lenkurt Electric plant, contingents of non-placard carrying workers, who did not want to be identified as “official” strikers,

relayed each other in shifts around the company premises. Some of them even carried “mystery picket” signs in a futile attempt to avoid trouble with the law. Yet trouble predictably began at the end of the week when the company had its newly hired replacement workers, or “scabs,” arrive at the plant to begin filling the jobs obtained through the ads placed in the *Vancouver Sun*. The inevitable scuffles ensued as picketers tried to stop the newly hired employees from entering the plant, resuming production, and taking on the newly posted jobs.

After two weeks of job action, the Lenkurt strikers had still not received any strike pay, which would shortly become a major issue, since the executive board had recommended on May 5 that the terminated employees be granted financial assistance.⁶⁷ Sensing the potential of even more disorder, the BCFL sent a telegram to BC labour minister, Leslie Peterson, warning him that “the Lenkurt dispute will spread and involve other unions and operations.” The provincial labour organization urged his department “to attempt to resolve this dispute before it becomes more troublesome.”⁶⁸ Art O’Keeffe also fired off a telegram to BC’s minister of Labour. As was his style, the pugnacious business manager was more direct in his condemnation of Lenkurt’s actions: “The extremely critical situation is rapidly worsening . . . the local labour movement is aroused and prepared to support the fired employees against an unprincipled and unjust employer.”⁶⁹ There was no reply to either telegram.

In the interim, also on May 5, the RCMP’s Sergeant B. L. Northrop held a meeting with three unidentified executive officers at Lenkurt. They described to him the details surrounding the escalating dispute “which the Company officials believed would result in violence on the part of the union.”⁷⁰ Of some significance, the brief RCMP report gives the distinct impression that management at Lenkurt were leaning on police authorities to sway them to act on behalf of the company; more to the point, as an *ex parte* injunction against picketing had already been issued on May 2 by a Justice Smith, Lenkurt wanted it enforced immediately. When yet another *ex parte* injunction by another judge was issued, they appeared to have been successful as the police would soon do precisely that.

Events were about to spin out of control for Local 213.

Top union officials from Local 213 were finally able to convene with Lenkurt representatives on Monday, May 9. Quite unexpectedly, Art O’Keeffe was not part of Local 213’s delegation attending the meeting. Instead, Jack

Ross and Angus MacDonald were the only two representatives of the Vancouver local who went into closed-door discussions with the company. O’Keeffe recalled that Ross told him before the meeting that “the Company did not choose to meet with me . . . that there would be only two attending the meeting.”⁷¹ It was clear he was being blindsided once again by Jack Ross; despite holding the key post of business manager, O’Keeffe’s authority was being bypassed in important talks with employers. To be fair, he was probably reluctant to participate in proceedings that might lead to the potential sabotage of a fair and decent contract for the Lenkurt employees. The end result, however, is that a significant split within Local 213’s inner circle of power was again visible for all to see. Angus MacDonald was now publicly in an alliance with Jack Ross. The International representative had convinced MacDonald to make common cause with him in an attempt to deal both with the growing crisis at Lenkurt and a business manager who, in the past several years, had been openly defiant and oppositional. In the process, Jack Ross was using the personal enmity between Angus MacDonald and Art O’Keeffe to his advantage.

Jack Ross and Angus MacDonald emerged from the meeting with Lenkurt officials with an agreement of sorts. Signed by President MacDonald, and not by Jack Ross, who had been firmly rebuked by Justice Gregory in the BCDT case, it specified that all 257 fired employees could reapply for their former jobs and that their participation in the walkout would not be raised as an issue if they were deemed suitable for employment again by the company. They would nonetheless lose all seniority, some of their pension, health and life insurance benefits, and it was also unclear as to how many of the strikers would actually be rehired by a predictably vindictive President Hunter.⁷² The wording in the very first clause of the agreement made abundantly clear that the workers who were on strike would only “be considered for re-employment upon application.”⁷³ Despite public assurances to the contrary, the company would not issue any guarantees for all the striking workers without discrimination.⁷⁴ Union activists, or individuals deemed by Lenkurt to be troublemakers, would have no protection. Not surprisingly, union members found the document completely unacceptable. When Angus MacDonald tried to have the “agreement” accepted that evening at a general meeting attended by close to 600 members, he was harassed and booed from beginning to end by an infuriated crowd.⁷⁵ Even though the obstinate president tried to get the message across that the strike was illegal

under BC labour laws and that this was all that was possible under the circumstances, the tentative framework for a return to work was unanimously rejected.⁷⁶ Instead, in a direct reference to the BCDT case, the angry meeting declared that Art O’Keeffe, as business manager, “is required for signing the contracts of this L.U. 213”; that to help resolve the Lenkurt impasse, the local needed “the support and guidance of the BC Fed. & Van. Labour Council”; and, lastly, “that we restate the principle of complete re-instatement for all fired members without discrimination in any shape or form.”⁷⁷

The meeting then decided to up the ante and formed a new steering committee composed of representatives from the BC Federation of Labour, the Vancouver and District Labour Council, and Local 213. Elected to this steering committee were Len Guy (BCFL), Charles Stewart (VDLC), Paddy Neale (VDLC), and Les McDonald (Local 213). The unity required to win was being forged from the bottom up. With all the necessary alliances in place at different levels, the scenario that had been successfully employed in the recent oil workers’ strike could, at least on paper, be potentially re-enacted. Complete unity was clearly not possible, however, as this potential province-wide alliance pointedly did not include a single representative from the conservative leadership elements of Local 213. Ignoring this crucial breach in solidarity within the Vancouver local, the newly formed steering committee immediately set about recruiting as many people as they could to form a massive picket line beginning the morning of Wednesday, May 11. They made no secret of their plans to stop scab labour from entering the struck Lenkurt Electric plant. It was plain that the CLC resolution “to challenge injunctions wherever and whenever they are granted” was being taken seriously. Unfortunately, it appeared that provincial legal authorities were also taking it seriously.

At 7 a.m. the morning of May 11 approximately 200 demonstrators and seven carloads of RCMP officers squared off at the Lenkurt plant. When a sheriff attempted to read aloud the latest Supreme Court injunction against picketing, a mass coughing fit overcame the demonstrators, effectively drowning out his words. Picketers shouted down the injunction read by sheriffs, trampled the documents underfoot when handed them, and scuffled with both scabs and police. Trying to hold the line, picketers jumped on cars, roughed up scabs, and manhandled a sheriff. Foul and abusive language, accompanied by threats, filled the air.⁷⁸ The press identified the leading lights of the Vancouver labour movement who were present



Violence on the picket line. An unidentified demonstrator scuffles with police at the Lenkurt Electric plant. On the left, note the demonstrator's fingers grasping at the policeman's revolver. *Vancouver Sun*, 11 May 1966, 1.

at the scene, but did not participate in the physical confrontations; they were a who's-who of the left-wing side of the local labour movement, including Doug Evans and Tom Clarke of the IWA, Paddy Neale of the VDLC, Craig Pritchett of the ILWU, "Boilermaker Bill" Stewart, Lorne Robson of the carpenters' union, and, most importantly, Les McDonald, Tom Constable, and Art O'Keeffe from Local 213.⁷⁹

At 9 a.m. the demonstrators decamped to a different union building, the IWA hall on Commercial Drive, symbolically demonstrating the potentially widening scope of the confrontation. Once at the IWA hall, they announced that their chosen leaders, not Ross and MacDonald, would attempt to negotiate an acceptable agreement with Lenkurt. Paddy Neale, who had been in Winnipeg representing the VDLC just two weeks before, was quoted in the *Vancouver Sun* saying that only about sixty production employees had reported for work that day, and that the labour movement was prepared to shut down the plant completely until serious talks had taken place: "If necessary we'll have another picket line out there Thursday—a bigger one."⁸⁰ There was no question that a larger picket line was necessary. Even if Neale tried to make light of the number, the fact that sixty plant floor employees were brazen enough to cross a massed and angry picket line was definitely not good news.

Alerted by Lenkurt lawyers and alarmed by the blatant disregard of his colleague's *ex parte* injunction against picketing, another Supreme Court judge, Justice John S. Aikins, that very same afternoon issued yet a third injunction, this time banning the BCFL, the VDLC, and members of Local 213 from putting up a picket line. He also specifically named high-ranking officials from these labour organizations who were not even allowed to be in the vicinity of the Lenkurt plant during the next four clear days. These included, among others, Paddy Neale and Art O'Keeffe.⁸¹ A visibly agitated Chuck Hunter was also in no mood for talks or compromise. Interviewed by a reporter from the *Daily Province*, the Lenkurt president lashed out against the recently constituted joint committee: "The company sees no purpose in meeting with the joint committee which set itself outside the law and has demonstrated this today [Wednesday], with violent actions in roughing up employees and damaging cars."⁸²

Les McDonald had a favourite saying that he picked up from "Electrical Bill" Stewart and used on a semi-regular basis for years after Lenkurt: "Spontaneity went out with Spartacus!"⁸³ He loathed any lack of planning and careful deliberation, and especially the lack of clear purpose on the trade union side before embarking on class confrontations. Without these factors anchored firmly in place, any job action could only lead to defeat, just as Spartacus's slave revolt had ultimately ended in defeat. But faced with a dilemma of growing proportions, especially the dilemma involving desperate single-parent mothers, what was he supposed to do? The notion

of a temporary tactical retreat, as proposed in the “Joint Statement” that had arrogantly been pronounced from on high by Jack Ross and Angus MacDonald, was deemed at this juncture to be a complete and utter sell-out. Also, Les had already thrown in his lot on the side of the fired Lenkurt employees. Supporting women in need was part of his family upbringing and he considered his position on the issue as simply the right thing to do, regardless of the spontaneous and perilous legal nature of circumstances up to this point. In addition, Communists were supposed to help take the lead when class struggle episodes erupted in moments like these. As his closest friends knew, Les McDonald was also a very “them-and-us” type of militant who was not afraid of a good fight.⁸⁴ The problem is that he was increasingly being drawn into an untenable situation. While hoping to recruit enough volunteers to build an impassable picket line that would stop production completely at Lenkurt, Les McDonald was now being countermanded by a powerful leadership faction from Local 213’s very own executive board that wanted those who were out to now go back in. The circumstances at this crucial point were truly unpalatable; the tentative agreement Ross and MacDonald had brokered on their own with the company stipulated conditions that were identical, or worse, than those under which the 257 fired employees had originally left. Something had to give.

Another real issue was that “Electrical Bill” Stewart was unavailable to dispense his usual insightful tactical advice. To Les McDonald’s longstanding chagrin, the Communist Party had relocated him to Toronto earlier that year, and so the veteran sage, the “guide on the side,” was not available during this increasingly perilous situation; Les McDonald, the still relatively young and inexperienced leader of the left faction, was left to sink or swim on his own.⁸⁵

Early Thursday morning, May 12, more serious physical confrontations took place. Close to forty uniformed Mounties arrived at the Lenkurt plant to help escort scab labour across picket lines and to enforce the latest *ex parte* injunction issued by Justice Aikins. Approximately four hundred workers opposed them. Initially driving their vehicles through the crowd blocking the three main entrances to the plant, the Mounties attempted to break the picket lines but succeeded only temporarily; the demonstrators simply closed ranks again behind the police car that was obstructing their way. To counter this tactic, the police then came on foot and physically maintained an opening on the road leading through one of the plant gates. The picket

line activists would need a different strategy needed to close the ensuing gap. Ernie Fulton, apprentice to Les McDonald and the future Canadian light heavyweight wrestling champion in 1969, recalled what happened that morning:

Les came to see me and said we're going to have to break the line the cops have made to herd the scabs in, so he recruited some of the bigger guys like me . . . and Tom Clarke [vice-president of IWA Local 1-217], another big guy. The plan was to distract two of the cops there and walk them back in the opposite direction. Tom and I would walk together and at a pre-arranged signal the people in front of us would all step aside and we would run at the cops and form a spearhead with all the other people behind us, then we would surge across the entrance and block it. It seemed like a good idea. Things ran according to plan. We had the people step aside, we ran at the cops, I tackled one of them around the waist and Tom tackled the guy next to him. What happened after that I don't really know because the four of us tumbled into a ditch. I turned around and as I went down, I could see all the other people surging across the entrance and pushing the cops aside. I thought "Well, we've accomplished what we set out to do, now I can try and keep myself out of jail." But instead of helping his guy up like I did, Tom Clarke started punching the shit out of him, so the cop I was with turned around and the two of them arrested him. I walked away and joined the picket line.⁸⁶

At another entrance to the plant, the slender and lightly built Brian Bethel recalled what he did to help out with the picketing: "I just laid down in front of a vehicle. About four or five of my fellow picketers yelled at the driver to stop or he would run over me. And that's how I stopped a scab from getting in and plugged up access to the plant for a while."⁸⁷

When the physical confrontations had come to an end, Tom Clarke and eight other picketers had been arrested by the RCMP.⁸⁸ One of Lenkurt's lawyers, Charles Locke, accused the demonstrators of "mass intimidation" and suggested publicly to Justice Aikins that "contempt action should be taken."⁸⁹ Art O'Keeffe, moreover, had been identified as being present on company premises by a second Lenkurt solicitor, lawyer David Vickers, who announced to the press that he would be more than happy to testify in court that Local 213's business manager had been in contempt of Judge Aikins'



RCMP at Lenkurt Electric handcuffing demonstrator Tom Clarke. One of nine arrested, Clarke would eventually spend six months in prison. *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 1.

injunction. Lenkurt's personnel manager, William Clements, also told a reporter he saw Tom Constable and Art O'Keeffe "mingle with the picketers, patting some on the back and apparently giving them moral support."⁹⁰ Unafraid of the consequences, Art O'Keeffe was stepping up to the plate and endorsing the picket lines, thus providing a vivid contrast to Jack Ross and Angus MacDonald. More critical observers, on the other hand, might

have chastised the electrical workers' leader as naïve, embodying the old adage of being brave but foolish.

Les McDonald, meanwhile, was deeply concerned. There were undercover cops everywhere, who stayed back in the crowd as spotters to identify the ringleaders on the picket line, then acting as *agents provocateurs* by pretending to jostle the uniformed policemen while passing on their information.⁹¹ Equally as disturbing was that Frank Hogan, a key member of Local 213's executive board, was also present, mixing with the others but not participating in the effort to stop scabs from crossing the picket lines. Part of the conservative leadership group supporting Ross and Angus MacDonald, Les felt Hogan was there to identify rank-and-file members of the local union for future retribution. He was not far wrong. Les also remembered being warned at a crucial moment by Ernie Fulton that company officials were pointing at him from the factory rooftop, and that he had better decamp before he, too, was arrested by the RCMP. With Fulton providing an escort, he quickly hurried away from the swarming police officers. Years later, after hearing several accounts of this harrowing event, it is abundantly clear that Les was highly fortunate in managing to escape arrest.

Following the early-morning picket line confrontations at the Lenkurt plant, Art O'Keeffe was busy mapping out a strategy of his own to force the company back to the bargaining table. As there had been repeated roadblocks put in his way in terms of resurrecting the threat of a province-wide general strike, he had telephoned the BCFL to have a supportive Bert Johns, general secretary of the Federation of Telephone Workers of British Columbia, investigate the possibility of putting pressure on the General Telephone and Electronics Corporation (GTE), the parent company that owned Lenkurt and also had a controlling interest in the BC Telephone Company. The obvious card in play at this point was the threat of a secondary strike at BC Tel by putting it behind picket lines. The tactic worked: Johns was able to report in the late afternoon that, after three hours of discussion, "I obtained assurance that the representatives of Lenkurt would be prepared to resume negotiations."⁹² O'Keeffe, for his part, recalled a slightly different outcome, in that Bert Johns "asked me to attend a meeting with the top management official of the BC Tel. to resolve the Lenkurt Electric dispute."⁹³ Regardless of who exactly would be at this particular meeting, it seemed as though a breakthrough and a potentially new negotiating dynamic was

within reach; however, other events later on in the day prevented a fresh set of negotiations.

That very evening violence broke out again, but this time in Local 213's union hall on Dunsmuir Street. Still-supportive rank-and-file members working within the Lenkurt plant had notified the local's left faction that Angus MacDonald had been at the plant during the afternoon; with management permission, he had announced at a hastily called gathering of the remaining production floor workers that Art O'Keeffe had been suspended and that he, Angus MacDonald, had been named by the IBEW's International Office to replace O'Keeffe as business manager and would now be looking after their interests.⁹⁴ This news quickly filtered out to other union members. That evening, prior to a specially called membership meeting, the executive board gathered in a large room adjacent to the hall's amphitheatre. About thirty union members, including Jess Succamore and Les McDonald, were waiting outside in the hallway. Angus MacDonald was chairing the proceedings and shocked the unknowing assembled executive board representatives by producing a telegram from the IBEW's Canadian vice-president, Bill Ladyman ordering the suspension and dismissal of Art O'Keeffe "because of his action in aiding and abetting an illegal work stoppage at Lenkurt Electric."⁹⁵ The telegram also read, in part, that Ladyman was taking these draconian measures "under the authority given him by the IBEW's International Office in Washington, D.C."⁹⁶ Further, the telegram asked that Art O'Keeffe turn over his keys to the union hall and any assets or union property that he had in his possession. O'Keeffe refused to comply and left the meeting room. No sooner had the door closed behind him, and before MacDonald could proceed any further, the door to the executive board meeting room flew open again. Pushed from behind by the other waiting electrical workers in the hallway, an angry Jess Succamore crashed into the meeting room. He was immediately accosted by John Hiebert who stood in the way, barring his entry. Physically pushing him aside, the burly and unafraid Succamore created the necessary space for the group of outraged rank-and-file members behind him as they burst through the door.⁹⁷ Once inside, they began by cursing at Ross and MacDonald, accusing the two of them of having sold out the Lenkurt employees. Fists began to fly. Somebody yelled "Get that bastard!"⁹⁸ and Angus MacDonald was hit several times, "viciously inflicting injuries that required medical attention over a considerable period of time."⁹⁹ An impassioned Jess Succamore, who had

become a Lenkurt picket captain, sprang across the room and managed to nail Jack Ross “right on the kisser.”¹⁰⁰ Ross left the premises immediately, while Angus MacDonald was forcibly ejected. All entrances to the building and its offices were blocked. Guards were posted to stop Local 213’s president from re-entering the Dunsmuir union hall, which he attempted to do about ninety minutes later.¹⁰¹ As 213s recording secretary J. P. Milner noted in his synopsis of events, “Never in the 65-year history of Local 213, has such violence occurred.”¹⁰²

The special membership meeting then began in the amphitheatre of the Dunsmuir union hall. There was an angry, determined atmosphere, with a large crowd, “most of them women,” in attendance.¹⁰³ Given a chance to speak, the assembled electrical workers heard first from a defiant Art O’Keeffe. In a statement that shocked his supporters, the embattled business manager for Local 213 announced that he was the 258th employee to be fired. He repeated what had been read to him from Ladyman’s telegram and explained to the crowd that the International Office of the IBEW had seen fit to remove him because he refused to support the tentative “contract” agreed to by MacDonald and Ross. The legality, or illegality, of the situation did not enter the equation. It was clear O’Keeffe wanted to do what he perceived to be morally right. As he later explained to waiting reporters, “I will not accept Ladyman’s decision. The membership will never accept Ladyman’s decision. The membership of Local 213, in conjunction with the trade union movement, are trying to protect the jobs and livelihood of 257 people. The continuous, unwarranted interference in the affairs of Local 213 could wreck the union.”¹⁰⁴

The meeting then presented, debated, and passed five resolutions:

1. That contrary to his refusal so far, that Angus MacDonald be ordered to sign IBEW strike cheques for the affected Lenkurt employees
2. That no confidence be declared in President Angus MacDonald
3. That Angus MacDonald to be barred from all future meetings
4. That Art O’Keeffe be supported in his struggle with the International Office
5. That a further meeting on Saturday be authorized.

The anger directed at Angus MacDonald was understandable. There was a war chest of \$35,916 in one of Local 213’s bank accounts, a strike fund

that had been accumulated for moments of crisis precisely like these.¹⁰⁵ As indicated during an earlier meeting, both the BCFL and VDLC had pledged their “full financial and moral support.” The two labour organizations were probably expecting to go through Local 213 to distribute the sorely needed funds, and they undoubtedly did not expect to have to identify the striking Lenkurt employees on their own. But due to the technically illegal nature of the Lenkurt walkout, Angus MacDonald would not co-operate and steadfastly refused to sign the cheques. He was following Bill Ladyman’s lead, who had told a *Daily Province* newspaper reporter in a telephone call, that “we have a signed contract.” Any disagreements or difficulties with that contract could be dealt with “through proper procedures under the laws of the province and our constitution.”¹⁰⁶ In contrast, others interpreted Angus MacDonald’s unyielding support of Ladyman’s law-and-order attitude as a “callous act” and morally bankrupt. These critics emphasized that this was the main reason for the anger and physical violence being vented against him. An unidentified electrical worker commented: “Many of these girls are breadwinners. They are widows, or divorced, or married to sick or unemployed men. They’ve got no money coming in. No wonder they’re mad at [Angus] MacDonald—he’s starving them and their families.”¹⁰⁷

Art O’Keeffe’s firing was a real blow to the Lenkurt strikers. Whereas in his previous leadership position he might have had enough leverage on the local’s executive board to secure access to the strike funds, his dismissal meant he no longer had any influence at all. At the end of the day the Lenkurt strikers were left blowing in the wind without any monetary help to sustain them through this difficult period in their lives.

In hindsight, Art O’Keeffe should have been more cautious. Getting too close to the action in picket line violence was a risky proposition for any business manager surrounded by conservative critics on his very own executive board. Given recent circumstances and events, the Lenkurt strike represented an opportune time for the International Office to get rid of an irritating thorn in their side. O’Keeffe’s dismissal, of course, was about more than just Lenkurt. His own personal militancy and growing affinity for Les McDonald and the Communist-led left faction over the last several years was one reason; his increasingly pointed and public criticism of Jack Ross and the International Office was another. In particular, O’Keeffe’s support of the resolutions in the preceding months to have Ross replaced as International representative was probably the straw that broke

the proverbial camel's back.¹⁰⁸ Combined, these aspects of Local 213's now divided leadership was the logic that better explain his removal. It was also definitely personal: Jack Ross eliminated Art O'Keefe before Art O'Keefe could eliminate Jack Ross. With little care for decorum or image, the IBEW's International Office thus deposed a third business manager from Local 213 in eleven years and replaced him with his old nemesis, Angus MacDonald. It was a definite and unambiguous statement about who wielded the real power within the Vancouver electrical workers' union.¹⁰⁹

Over and above the imposing and aggressive police presence at the Lenkurt plant, the state then made a public appearance. It was not what the BCFL and Art O'Keefe had been hoping for. On his return from a vacation in Arizona, the Social Credit labour minister, Leslie Peterson, said he was prepared to give reasonable and sympathetic considerations to any request that either labour or management might make. But the final responsibility for strikes or lockouts rested squarely on the parties involved in the dispute. No mention was made of the original issue of equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender; nor of the plight of single mothers forced to work overtime or face dismissal. Instead, Peterson parroted an identical sentence that Angus MacDonald had used a day earlier:

It seems there are some people in British Columbia who are anxious to carry on a program of civil disobedience. But I do not condone any such action and everyone, including representatives of labor and management, must abide by the laws of the land or suffer the consequences of an illegal act . . . once they precipitate this action they know better than to expect the government to perform miracles and pull the coal out of the fire.¹¹⁰

More alarmingly, Attorney General Robert Bonner was not as detached from events in Burnaby as it might seem. While not providing a personal interview, his department nevertheless announced the appointment of a lawyer, George L. Murray, QC, to assist Justice Aikins to "deal with demonstrators who battled with police outside the Lenkurt Electric plant."¹¹¹ The state was now preparing to intervene directly from a legal perspective, but not on the side of the strikers.

Later that evening, Angus MacDonald publicly asked for picketing to cease at the Lenkurt plant. The newly appointed business manager of Local 213 saw as his responsibility "the stabilization of the situation in the

current dispute.”¹¹² As Ross had done earlier, he called for the cessation of demonstrations and the withdrawal of the BCFL and the VDLC from the conflict. Undoubtedly mindful of Murray’s appointment, and in shock and disarray following O’Keeffe’s dismissal, the two labour bodies quickly went into reverse and put out the word that there was to be a hiatus in mass picketing and told their members to “remain away from the company premises to avoid further violence.”¹¹³ What may have also incited the VDLC and the BCFL to take down the picket lines was the continuing possibility of disruption from a handful of members of the Progressive Workers’ Movement (PWM) who had parachuted themselves uninvited onto the picket line. Jack Moore, vice-president of the BCFL, characterized their intervention as unnerving because events at Lenkurt had started with a “peaceful picket line but Progressive Workers somehow entered into strike causing much strife.”¹¹⁴ Moore’s description of a “peaceful picket line” at the start of the walkout wasn’t entirely accurate—Jack Ross may have deliberately misinformed him to amplify the effect of the picket line appearance of the PWM. Gord Larkin, who was on the Lenkurt picket line with the PWM over several days, certainly disagreed with Moore’s assessment. “Sometimes we handed out leaflets,” he recalled, and “probably we did a little bit of yelling,” but “to say that five people from the PWM caused a lot of strife is—well—bullshit. We were just there like everybody else, doing the same thing . . . we were not in a leadership position.” As he added, “it’s nice to think that we had that power, but I never witnessed it.”¹¹⁵

The following morning, Friday, May 13, only about thirty people showed up to picket at the Lenkurt plant, as did forty RCMP officers to intervene if necessary. The demonstrators soon began to drift away as it became evident that there were very few trade unionists present, and that there would be no large and potentially confrontational picketing, as had been the case on the previous two days. Before leaving, some of them handed out leaflets protesting the suspension of Art O’Keeffe. Published by the PWM it read, in part: “Electrical workers are refusing to be intimidated by bosses, courts, police and Yankee union bureaucrats.”¹¹⁶ True enough, but the five Maoist-inclined militants, led by Jerry Lebourdais, and probably alerted by John Wood and Dave Unger, were effectively being frozen out of the dispute.¹¹⁷ Considered a disruptive and distracting sideshow unrelated to the central dynamic of events at this time, there was really no one outside the Lenkurt plant to read the new organization’s leaflet.¹¹⁸ A more positive contribution

from the PWM to the struggle of the electrical workers would eventually come several months later.

Critics seized the opportunity presented by the PWM presence and began to demonize all picket line participants, regardless of political affiliation. This was the lever required to underscore the optic of losing trade union control of an increasingly violent picket line to maverick “outsiders.” Having already been subject to at least one strategically organized attack on uniformed police officers, it was also apparent that the Burnaby plant could very easily become the site of a return to the era of mass arrests and arbitrary beatings. Real and violent class upheaval was taking place and its potential for spiralling out of control was no doubt an unnerving prospect for much of the conventional leadership in the trade union movement. Cognizant of the CLC’s call-to-arms relating to employer reliance on *ex parte* injunctions in the recent resolution passed in Winnipeg, the BCFL and VDLC nonetheless announced a retreat from what was becoming increasingly an unwinnable scenario based on traditional—and normally unremarkable—picket line tactics. Three days later, overcoming the pain of several broken ribs, Local 213’s Angus MacDonald was interviewed by Doug Collins on the CBC’s citywide *The 7 O’Clock Show*. Highlighting “Left-wing infiltration” of his local, MacDonald played up the supposed role “for the past 12 to 15 years . . . of the Progressive Workers Movement as well as . . . C. P. of C. supporters. . . . [They] have damaged the image of the union.”¹¹⁹ As far as he was concerned, given the nefarious influence of these two organized groups, he then provocatively asserted that management at Lenkurt Electric had been “completely justified in the actions it had taken, it had acted in a responsible manner.”¹²⁰ While accurate in his finger-pointing at the role of the Communist Party, he was clearly misrepresenting the disruptive role—if any—played by the young Maoist acolytes within Local 213. Founded only two years previously in 1964 as a result of a breakaway movement from the Communist Party, the minuscule PWM had now conveniently become the bogeyman of the hour and its newsworthy notoriety was being used to tarnish everyone else.

In the meantime, at around midnight Thursday, May 12, activists at the union hall on Dunsmuir Street decided to occupy and guard the building against an incursion by Angus MacDonald and his conservative supporters on the executive board. Their fear was that the newly appointed business manager might padlock the hall and they wouldn’t have a place to meet

and conduct the strike.¹²¹ One of the leaders of the occupation was Les McDonald. The first item of business was to change the locks and secure the building for themselves. Les then provided sleeping bags to about a dozen electrical workers who didn't have one, and they were accordingly joined by scores of other supporters.¹²² Discussing the Lenkurt impasse, trade union history, the potential for workers' control, politics in general, and singing labour songs and playing chess, these militant and committed union members would eventually spend almost an entire week at the hall. Even though he didn't stay every night, McDonald would have engaged in tactical discussions with Brown, Succamore, Bethel, Wood, Unger, and Pooghkay, which would have given him a clearer impression of their personal histories and political outlook. In addition, Succamore remembers that there was always "a cadre of the old Party guys" present, and that the relatively young by comparison Cliff Rundgren—"Comrade Dirty Raincoat"—went back and forth to headquarters in the Ford building to give updates and get "the latest Party orders."¹²³ Veteran Tom Forkin, for his part, recalled that Les played a decisive leadership role from a cultural and political perspective, and that the occupation of the hall was an amazing moment in time—in his words, "it was just crazy."¹²⁴

On the morning of Saturday, May 14, over a thousand electrical workers turned up for an emergency membership meeting.¹²⁵ The meeting recalled the turmoil the union had experienced in 1919 with the One Big Union and the Vancouver General Strike, and in 1955 with the Communist expulsions relating to George Gee. The atmosphere produced by this massive turnout of Vancouver electrical workers was—literally—electric. The local's executive board marched in and Vice-President Fred Allison took on the role of chairman of the meeting in place of an injured Angus MacDonald. To everyone's surprise, Art O'Keeffe was on the platform as well and sat in his customary chair of business manager.¹²⁶ John Kapalka emphasized that the executive board had agreed prior to the general meeting that Art O'Keeffe would be given a chance to speak.¹²⁷ Kapalka didn't know it at the time, but, as lead candidate in upcoming union elections for the post of president of Local 213, he had been set up.

Fred Allison opened the proceedings and read a telegram from the IBEW's International Office that gave Bill Ladyman authority over Local 213. The recording secretary for this eventful meeting, Stan Reed, who had replaced the temporarily unavailable J. P. Milner, then proceeded to read

the contents of the telegram from Bill Ladyman suspending Art O’Keeffe from his position as business manager. He explained this draconian measure was due to his contravening of the IBEW constitution requiring all members of the union to respect collective agreements. As a consequence of this second telegram, the chair, Fred Allison, asked Art O’Keeffe to leave the meeting. O’Keeffe, who looked surprised on hearing this request, was defiant and refused to leave. The crowd applauded him for staying on the platform. Rank-and-file electrical worker Norm Read then challenged the chair to allow the deposed business manager a chance to speak and state his case. Allison refused to permit a vote to challenge his position as chair because O’Keeffe’s case was “a constitutional issue.” He explained that the IBEW constitution took precedence and could not be challenged in the context of a local union meeting and that it was “clear on this matter.”¹²⁸ Allison was supported by three members in succession, including executive board members Frank Hogan and John Hiebert, while a rising chorus of boos and catcalls filled the union hall. Tom Constable and John Kapalka then spoke in favour of the challenge to the chair, the latter adding that Art O’Keeffe should understand that the unfolding events could be detrimental to his case and that he could not take on the International Office. Kapalka ended his heartfelt appeal by telling O’Keeffe and the meeting, “I am with you no matter what happens.”

Back and forth it went, the tone and vehemence of each of the speakers increasing in turn. Lenkurt’s chief shop steward, George Brown, attempted to bypass the issue of the challenge to the chair and demanded “that Art O’Keeffe be kept on as Bus Mngr.” Eventually, the highly respected Tom Forkin was recognized on a point of privilege. He argued that the chair could not hide behind the IBEW’s constitution because Robert’s Rules of Order took precedence in this situation and “the chair was compelled to accept the challenge and must put the matter to a vote.” Moreover, he said, “the authority here is with the membership and not with the Int. Office.”

Allison, born and raised in Belfast, stubbornly refused to agree and against the backdrop of a crescendo of noise impeding his ability to be heard, “ruled that the constitution shall stand.” Two more speakers followed supporting the chair before George Angus spoke. The chair of the inside wiremen’s unit, an unapologetic critic of the International Office, “moved a standing vote, that O’Keeffe be allowed to address the meeting.” His request was accompanied by “more yells & more general disorder.” Then “a gang of

men” jumped onto the stage and took control of the PA system. Without asking permission to speak, left faction member Bill Hohlachoff challenged the chair yet again “and wanted to deal with the motion put previously by Bro. George Angus.” Reed, the recording secretary, kept on writing as the events around him unfolded:

The P.A. system cord was disconnected and the cord was thrown across the floor to the corner. There were about ten men guarding the P.A. System and the Chair was unable to speak and the control of the meeting was lost. Bro. O’Keeffe spoke instead of the Chair [while the latter] attempted to restore order. While Bro. O’Keeffe was speaking the Chair adjourned the meeting. All Exec. Board left except Bro. John Kapalka who remained on the platform.¹²⁹

John Kapalka, the acknowledged safety expert from the line contracting unit, assumed the chair.¹³⁰ He restarted the meeting and finally allowed Art O’Keeffe to say his piece. With successive rounds of applause and shouts of encouragement ringing in his ears, the deposed business manager explained his predicament yet again and that of the 257 fired Lenkurt employees. While trying to sound optimistic about the possible success of appeals, first to the International Office, then, if necessary, to the delegates at the IBEW’s quadrennial convention—the last step of any appeal—the game was up and everyone knew it. Nevertheless, the new meeting passed a vote of confidence in both Art O’Keeffe and John Morrison, then called for the dismissal of Jack Ross.¹³¹ The decision was made to hang on for as long as possible. A still excited, yet more sombre crowd, exited the building and headed home.¹³²

The political pressure exerted by this extraordinary meeting produced a result the very next day, Sunday, May 16. A hastily thrown-together committee composed of Syd Thompson (IWA), Jack Moore (BCFL), Jack Ross and John Hiebert (both IBEW), met with management from Lenkurt. That the composition of the committee wasn’t the same as originally voted on May 9 in repudiation of the MacDonald and Ross “Joint Statement” agreement, was telling of the compromises that had to be made just to get Lenkurt management officials to meet—Len Guy, Paddy Neale, Charles Stewart and Les McDonald had all been replaced. Two newcomers from outside Local 213, Thompson and Moore, were there to satisfy the voices that called for a broadening of the fight against Lenkurt, but so too were Jack Ross and John Hiebert, two of the most conservative voices from within the electrical

workers' union leadership structure. Absolutely no progress was made at the meeting. Syd Thompson, the normally combative and outspoken president of IWA Local 1–217, emerged disillusioned with what had taken place during the discussions: “The company refused point blank to compromise on its offer of May 9 to the strikers. We pointed out that the labour movement would never tolerate these terms but we got nowhere. The company’s out to fight us on the picket lines and in the courts.”¹³³

Paddy Neale, who was excluded from the meeting, thought that arrangements had already been made beforehand behind everyone’s backs: “Ross, Ladyman, and MacDonald were making back door deals with Hunter . . . That is why we weren’t getting anywhere with him.”¹³⁴ Bill Ladyman then jumped into the fray. In a telephone interview from Toronto, the IBEW International vice-president pulled no punches in his condemnation of the attempt to involve the BCFL in the Lenkurt dispute. There was to be no repetition of the oil workers’ scenario as far as the IBEW was concerned. For the International Office, the mere hint of a general strike in contravention of provincial labour laws was definitely a non-starter. The term itself was too loaded with implications of insurgent intent. Ladyman chastised the BCFL: “The Federation has had a habit in recent years of getting into things. The international has not asked for help . . . We are quite big enough to settle this ourselves.”¹³⁵ Jack Ross put the final nail in the coffin. Paddy Neale remembered that Ross had ominously let slip at a meeting that Lenkurt’s position “was not such a bad thing” because it gave the company “an opportunity to get rid of troublemakers, and the union would be able to get rid of people it didn’t want.”¹³⁶

Everyone’s attention now turned to watch how the powers that be would deal with the union rebels. In order not to have to continue meeting in a downtown hotel room, the first step of the executive board, now under the leadership of a new business manager, was to oust those who had been participating in the sit-in at the Dunsmuir Street union hall since May 12.¹³⁷ Angus MacDonald and Frank Hogan applied for a Supreme Court injunction to have the occupiers evicted by force if necessary. Justice John G. Ruttan duly complied with the request and “ordered Brother O’Keeffe and his extremist group to cease and desist from interfering with the proper function of the Local Union.”¹³⁸ To the surprise of the executive board, O’Keeffe refused to accept the injunction issued by Justice Ruttan, asking instead that the judge’s order be re-examined at the BC Court of Appeal.

He revealed to the press that he had learned of a plot whereby members of the BC Hydro unit, undoubtedly angry members of the “Carrall Street gang,” were planning to storm the union office and take back control from Les McDonald and the sit-in group. He made a phone call: “I had a few sharp words with Mr. Shrum [Hydro co-chairman] and that was all there was to it.”¹³⁹ Predictably, however, the several judges sitting on this very powerful bench at the next legal level met within the week and were unanimous in their dismissal of O’Keeffe’s appeal.¹⁴⁰ Les McDonald and his group of supporters were thus forced to vacate the union hall the morning of May 18.¹⁴¹ Donna Pooghkay, one of the leading women activists on the production floor at Lenkurt, was disappointed with the court’s decision. She commented: “We always thought it was our hall. But the courts ruled it belonged to the International.”¹⁴²

Once the sit-in group of rank-and-file electrical workers had been evicted, the executive board turned its attention to reaching a settlement with the Lenkurt Electric Company. Negotiations were renewed based on the “Joint Statement” of May 9 signed by Angus MacDonald and brokered by Jack Ross. Not unexpectedly, a new tentative contract was quickly agreed to. The next step was to have it approved by the workers themselves. A meeting of sombre and subdued Lenkurt employees alone was held Saturday morning, May 28, at the boilermakers’ union hall in East Vancouver, popularly known as the Pender Auditorium. Local 213’s hall was unavailable for this meeting as several of the leading members of the Lenkurt Strike Committee were now legally barred from entering the Dunsmuir facility. Present at the meeting and sitting in the crowd were three members of Local 213’s executive board: Fred Allison, John Hiebert, and Stan Reed. After the chair of the Strike Committee, George Brown, had presented a synopsis of events, he also presented two resolutions to be voted on by the assembled workers. The first called for the repudiation of the proposed settlement as a duplicitous and unacceptable behind-closed-doors agreement. The second resolution was a reluctant recommendation to return to work. Those present voted unanimously in favour of both resolutions. Except for the three executive board members, everyone in the auditorium agreed that the proposed collective agreement was a complete and utter sell-out. Knowing full well what the outcome of the second vote would be after the workers had endured several weeks with little or no income, the Strike Committee refused to participate in its own humiliation. The representatives stood up and left.¹⁴³

Before departing, George Brown turned to the three executive board members present, and, in a dramatic flourish loud enough for everyone to hear, scornfully berated them in biblical terms: “You are the Judas Iscariots of the Labour movement, and some day you shall be cleansed from it.”¹⁴⁴

That afternoon a second meeting took place at the Dunsmuir union hall, this time between only sixty-nine of the remaining Lenkurt strikers and the same three executive board members. In a comprehensive six-page document written by recording secretary J. P. Milner, and later distributed to all members of Local 213, the executive board described their efforts to bring peace and stability back to the electrical workers’ local. Sanctimonious at first in their presentation of the proposed collective agreement, they highlighted the fact that “no settlement was reached until order was restored in your Local Union and the proper constitutional officers of the Local entered into negotiations with Lenkurt Electric.” The executive board then told the meeting that the company had begun legal proceedings in BC Supreme Court seeking damages for trespass, violation of the Trade Union Act, and for costs. If successful, the suit would likely run into several hundred thousand dollars “and could wipe out our local completely,” although it was to be hoped that a “return to work will lead to some success in bringing about the withdrawal of this legal action.” Highlighting the potential demise of the entire local union was a real and frightening prospect for the vast majority of electrical workers, but publicly saying so was clearly an intimidation tactic intended to have a wide-ranging and dampening effect. The executive board was proud, on the other hand, to have helped produce “a new contract which will be a leading example for the Electronic Manufacturing Industry in this country.”¹⁴⁵ The proposed agreement would nevertheless subject the workers to what the executive board tried to dress up as “a fair and equitable sharing of any overtime,” although the official collective agreement, when it was officially distributed several months later, had a more explicit clause: “If conditions arise necessitating overtime, employees will cooperate.”¹⁴⁶ Additionally, each employee would have to undergo the oft-derided and humiliating interview process with management personnel before returning to work. William Clement, Lenkurt’s personnel manager, was unambiguous about the objective of the process when he admitted on May 30 that some employees would be rejected as “troublemakers,” and that between forty and seventy might fall into this category.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, the proposed agreement revealed an immediate increase in wages

up to a “basic rate of \$1.72 per hour for female employees, a basic rate of \$2.17 per hour for male, rising to a rate of \$3.25 per hour.”¹⁴⁸ These increases counterbalanced the detested overtime requirements and was an unquestionable “win” of sorts for the union as incomes would now increase by 19% over a three-year period.¹⁴⁹ This was 4% more than what had been deemed as “insufficient” at the end of April. Even if it meant taking it on the chin in the process, standing up to the boss definitely had its rewards. The downside was that in addition to the detested overtime requirement, no matter how attractive it was made to appear, the even more important principle of equal pay for work of equal value still appeared some way off. While garnering a substantial increase over three years, it was apparent that the mostly female production floor workers (the “General Assembler” and “Production Worker” categories) would still be paid less than their male counterparts during the life of the contract. Indeed, Local 213’s *Minute Books* revealed that “all conditions remain the same except wages.”¹⁵⁰ Yet, having won at least something out of their month-long ordeal, the financially stressed workers would eventually vote seventy percent in favour of the proposed agreement.¹⁵¹

Angus MacDonald tried to get the last word in during an interview with the *Vancouver Sun*. He remarked to a reporter that “had the strikers not been misled, they could have been back at work a long time ago.”¹⁵² It was a deliberately irritating and arguable point, and it is not clear that he was referring to the parking lot study session and the call to “go down to the union hall.” Nor did he mention that during the first few days of the strike that, as president of Local 213, he had been viewed as publicly onside and outwardly supportive of the striking female workforce. In hindsight it was easy for him to criticize the leadership of the losing side following events. The newly appointed business manager of Local 213 ignored the crucial mitigating factor that the defeated workers not only had to fight the traditional alliance between employer and the state but, in this case, partway through the strike, there was added to the mix the duplicity of a powerful conservative leadership faction from within their very own union. Critics might also have pointed out that Angus MacDonald’s unpopular decision-making throughout the latter part of the Lenkurt imbroglio was certainly defensible from a strictly legal perspective—he would have argued, in fact, that his actions constituted the only viable path out of an unwinnable deadlock. Given the provocative circumstances of employer abuse targeting

a largely insecure and vulnerable female workforce, MacDonald appeared to be morally on the wrong side of an ethical divide. To paraphrase a famous and inimitable author, in specific cases the law was sometimes an ass and deserved to be ignored. As wayward as they might have been, this was clearly the position of a substantial number of Local 213's membership. Shepherded by fellow business unionist Jack Ross, MacDonald would have shot back that continuing the tactic of illegal confrontations through massed picket lines was far too risky. By his actions, unpopular as they might have been, he, Angus MacDonald, was able to preserve an IBEW presence at the Lenkurt Electric plant and safeguard both Local 213's legal and financial stability, key elements ensuring the fundamental cohesion of the Vancouver union that might otherwise have been lost. In so doing, however, his leadership credibility had been irreversibly tainted. It was, apparently, one thing to have been a noteworthy plotter against George Gee and his cohort of Communist Party supporters at the height of the McCarthyist red scare; it was quite another, just over a decade later, to abandon any semblance of a combative response supporting hundreds of women workers in need. Meanwhile, regardless of the merits or not of his analysis, the bitter dispute in Burnaby appeared at long last to be over.

This page intentionally left blank

After Lenkurt

It was not over. There were important repercussions. The most immediate and personal of these was that the Lenkurt Electric Company rejected seventy-six of the original 257 strikers.¹ As threatened, the 181 who were taken on again lost all their accumulated seniority. Their pension, as well as their health and life insurance contributions would also be restored only after a year of work starting from the date of their rehiring.² Most of those who were rejected by Lenkurt as unemployable troublemakers eventually drifted off into other areas of work. Brian Bethel, for instance, was provided a six-month stint as a longshoreman by the ILWU before becoming a long-time cable television installer, then supervisor, for Shaw Cable.³ As could be expected, none of the shop stewards were rehired. Les McDonald's initial wish list for a unity slate of the left in the upcoming executive board elections in Local 213 was dealt an initial blow when George Brown, Lenkurt's chief shop steward, was immediately rejected by the company upon reapplication for employment. As a tool-and-die maker, not an electrician, he had little hope of ever becoming a member of Local 213 again.

More was to come, this time from the IBEW itself. Leading activists involved in the Lenkurt strike were put on trial by the executive board of Local 213 "with added members sitting as Trial Board."⁴ One of these was Jack Shirkie, International representative from Winnipeg. He replaced the now widely detested Jack Ross, who was making himself scarce. The charges were for participating in an illegal strike and for contravening several other clauses in the IBEW's constitution. The internal trials ran from June 21 to July 19 at the Dunsmuir Street union hall, with suspensions handed down

ranging from one to forty years. In addition to Art O’Keeffe, twenty-six electrical workers were charged with having violated the IBEW’s constitution.⁵ Significantly, this was more than had been suspended in the aftermath of the George Gee affair in 1955 and began a series of events demonstrating that the Lenkurt strike would be even more impactful. Those suspended included some of the main activists in the local union—Les McDonald, Jess Succamore, John Kapalka, Tom Constable, Sam Shannon, George Angus, George Brown, George Sharpe, and Barry Sharbo—plus some sixteen other Lenkurt members.⁶ But hardly any of the accused, whom the executive board described as “the extremist group who were responsible for leading 257 members of Lenkurt Electric on an illegal walk-out,” appeared to defend themselves.⁷ Having seen this movie before, the accused had decided beforehand that the Trial Board and its methods constituted a kangaroo court whose decisions had already been decided behind closed doors; the outcome was that the pronouncements on the severity of their punishment would be made in absentia. In a written submission, Les McDonald tried to delay the inevitable, pointing out that BC Supreme Court trials were about to begin and could be prejudiced by accusations and evidence presented in the union proceedings. But his plea for delay fell on deaf ears.⁸ John Kapalka was given a one-year suspension for permitting Art O’Keeffe to speak at the May 15 special general meeting, as he had been led to believe was agreed to by everyone on the executive board. The presidential hopeful and rival of Angus MacDonald on the unity slate was now also out of contention for the executive board elections. Tom Constable was fired from his position as assistant business manager, then suspended for three years; George Angus received a fourteen-year suspension; George Brown received a fifteen-year suspension. But the most severe sentences were meted out to Jess Succamore and Les McDonald. Succamore received two sentences for a total of twenty-five years, to be served consecutively. McDonald, also for two consecutive sentences, received a total of thirty years’ suspension. Both eventually appealed. Succamore’s appeal for having violated Article XXVII, Section 2, Subsection 12, of the IBEW constitution was initially successful, his sentence being reduced to five years by a Local 213 Trial Board review panel. Bill Ladyman, however, reimposed the original twenty-five-year sentence; it is not too much of a stretch to think that Jack Ross’s fat lip might have had something to do with it.⁹ Les McDonald also garnered little sympathy as he was symbolically the first electrical worker ordered to appear

before the Trial Board.¹⁰ He had been targeted right from the beginning of proceedings, and it undoubtedly did not help his case that an informer in Division “E” of the RCMP Special Intelligence Branch had noted that “Les McDonald has been one of the key figures in promoting agitation” within Local 213.¹¹ Did the RCMP Special Intelligence Branch co-ordinate its information with the International Office of the IBEW? The answer to this intriguing question remains unknown; it is not as if the International Office needed the RCMP’s help, as it was already fully informed about who was doing what in their agitated Vancouver local. But it certainly didn’t help matters. In two separate registered letters, Les McDonald was accused, like the others, of having violated the IBEW’s constitution. His first suspension was for having contravened the same constitutional provision as Jess Sucamore. This was for his participation in disrupting the executive meeting of May 9 and for being present in the executive board meeting room when Angus MacDonald and Jack Ross were assaulted. The second fifteen-year suspension was for the role he played while being present during the violence on the Lenkurt picket lines.¹² His thirty-year sentence, unquestionably



Les McDonald in his North Vancouver backyard not long after receiving a thirty-year suspension from the IBEW. Les McDonald private collection.

meant to act as a deterrent to other potential reds, was the longest initially meted out to any member of Local 213 involved in the Lenkurt dispute. He was later able to have his sentence reduced to fifteen years on appeal as he raised substantial and reasonable doubt about the role he played, or did not play, in the action that led to the physical assaults on Angus MacDonald and Jack Ross.¹³

Art O’Keeffe, meanwhile, was suspended for forty years for his role in encouraging the Lenkurt strikers. But because his sentences were to be served concurrently, the forty years ended up being a fifteen-year suspension in total.¹⁴ He fought back tooth and nail and via his personal bank account to rid himself of the black mark now imprinted next to his name. He was eventually successful in having his sentences lifted in their entirety in 1970 at the IBEW’s International Convention in Seattle, Washington.¹⁵ Having been at work in the interim again as a power lineman for BC Hydro, Art O’Keeffe now felt compelled to go after the International Office to be reimbursed for lost wages and his expenses as “the cost and hardship on my family has been tremendous.”¹⁶ In that endeavour, however, it appears he might have been unsuccessful, and it remains unclear if the provincial labour body compensated him entirely for his exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses.¹⁷ His last public statement on the issue was a telling testament to his stubborn character: “I still feel I was not guilty.”¹⁸

Jess Succamore was generally positive in his summation of Art O’Keeffe’s role throughout his six years as business manager of Local 213, and in particular during the conflict at Lenkurt. It stands in sharp contrast to Terry Simpson’s earlier and mostly unfavourable assessment. Succamore thought O’Keeffe had evolved over time and became emblematic of Local 213’s “fighting tradition”:

I got to know Art O’Keeffe quite well. He told me on more than one occasion that he got caught up in the red scare, the McCarthy period, and regretted being a party to the charges against George Gee. He said he lost his footing a bit in that era; the other thing was that Local 213 was so factionalized back then . . . I got the impression that Art O’Keeffe got more progressive as he got older. Most people go the other way . . . it’s kind of dangerous to categorize people and think they are going to go through life unchanged. . . . After Lenkurt, I never heard him knock anyone who took a

progressive position. And, at the end of it all, I had a grudging admiration for O’Keeffe.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the deposed business manager was scathing in his public condemnations of Bill Ladyman and the IBEW hierarchy. He considered the suspensions imposed by the IBEW on leading activist members of Local 213 to be “revengeful retaliation designed to crush all opposition to themselves and the international office and to further eliminate certain members from seeking elected offices.” Always colourful in his use of language, he continued: “Their foul actions following their cruel and callous disregard for the jobs and livelihood of the terminated employees [at Lenkurt] is their final unsavoury act before being swept out of office in the forthcoming elections.” Predicting difficult times ahead for the IBEW in Canada, O’Keeffe concluded: “Ladyman’s vicious vindictive attitude, coupled with the local executive board’s unprincipled, undemocratic procedure of giving extremely severe sentences is a terrific boost for those who advocate Canadian unions for Canadian workers.”²⁰ He did not own a crystal ball that foretold the future nor was he revealing his sources, yet his predictions would prove to be more than wishful thinking.

Art O’Keeffe’s diatribes against officers of his own union, critical of an organization he had belonged to most of his adult life, may have also been sparked in 1966 by a June 28 meeting of the Vancouver chapter of the Electrical Contractors’ Association. Speaking to an attentive combination of employers, the “Terrible Troika” of the IBEW publicly flew their true colours.²¹ Ken Rose, executive assistant to Bill Ladyman, was the first of the union representatives to the microphone. He explained that labour must realize when it is in error and discipline local unions when they fall out of line. He made specific reference to the revocation of Local 28’s charter in Baltimore, Maryland in August 1961. Following multiple court cases, the IBEW had replaced Local 28 with a new local union, Local 24, even though an overwhelming majority of the local’s members supported the union executive.²² He then zeroed in on the Lenkurt dispute: “Our own union vigorously disciplines errant locals when they are wrong.” Rose, who in 1973 would succeed Ladyman as the IBEW’s Canadian vice-president, went on to say: “Labor and management must sit down and decide where common interests lie . . . only in this way can stability within the industry be effected.” Angus MacDonald followed Ken Rose, stressing the law-and-order



"Art O'Keeffe . . . climbing to new job." Not easily daunted, former IBEW Local 213 business manager poses midway up a hydro pole. *Vancouver Sun*, January 4, 1967, 56.

campaign that had repeatedly characterized his public pronouncements throughout his career: "It's my opinion that labour has to operate within constitutional, provincial and federal law." As for International Representative Jack Ross, the cagey veteran was reported to have pledged "full support for a better understanding for management problems while solving the problems of the electrical workers."²³ Pronouncements such as these made it clear that the three IBEW spokesmen felt co-operation and collaboration with employers were key to the survival and continued existence of trade unions. The original issue at Lenkurt, that of equal pay and working conditions for women who did the same job as men, was not deemed to be important enough to mention. Equally significant, the brief but violent episode in Burnaby that laid bare the raw class antagonisms that erupted out of this vital issue was ignored as much as was feasibly possible.

Whether Art O'Keeffe pondered the significance of these overtures is open to conjecture. He was not overly frightened by a suspension from union office or of having to go back to climbing hydro poles. But they were the least of his concerns at this point in his life, as he was now in a real court, on trial for having defied *ex parte* BC Supreme Court injunctions. He was not alone. The very next Monday following the weekend meeting of the defeated Lenkurt employees at the Pender Auditorium, George Murray, QC, who had earlier assisted Justice Aikins, now assisted Justice James MacDonald in identifying and arraigning an unprecedented seventy-six trade unionists and their supporters for contempt of court.²⁴ The writ asked that "imprisonment, fines or other appropriate penalties or punishment be levied against them if they are found in contempt."²⁵ The initial seventy-six cited by Murray was later reduced to a more manageable thirty, then finally twenty-nine when one charge (against Douglas Evans) was stayed. Everyone's attention would now be focused on the action in court. Witnesses were called, testimony taken, and punishment was eventually meted out over a four-month time period. At the end of the legal process seven of the charged were acquitted, while twenty-two individuals, all connected to the labour movement, were convicted of having violated Supreme Court injunctions against picketing. Justice Macdonald found the twenty-two guilty as charged on September 19, then passed sentence on September 30. On September 28, two days before sentencing was to be pronounced by the judge, Premier W. A. C. Bennett proclaimed that he was ordering his labour minister, on purely economic grounds, to take the necessary steps to ban all overtime in

British Columbia as the province “can go on to higher prosperity or into a recession.”²⁶ Judge MacDonald, however, did not mention this proclamation, which inadvertently addressed the reason that led to the Lenkurt strike.

Most of the twenty-two convicted were fined, in varying amounts from \$100 to \$500, but four ended up at Oakalla Prison, in Burnaby. Paddy Neale, president of the VDLC, and Tom Clarke, vice-president of IWA Local 1–217, each received a six-month sentence; Art O’Keeffe, formerly Local 213’s business manager, was sentenced to four months; and Jeff Power, of the Vancouver Marine Workers’ and Boilermakers’ Industrial Union, to three months.²⁷ As they were being led down the courthouse steps to a waiting paddy wagon, a supportive George Gee, like a spectre haunting Local 213, was heard to murmur in melodramatic tones: “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”²⁸ Headlines printed in enormous type appeared in the *Sun* and the *Daily Province*, both loudly proclaiming that trade union leaders had been sentenced to jail.²⁹ While they eventually all got time off at Christmas to spend time with their families, it was the symbolic gesture of sending union leaders to jail that had the greatest public effect.³⁰ There was no mistaking the message: union leaders and union members had better obey the laws of the land, no



Lenkurt prisoners home for the holidays. From left to right: Paddy Neale, Tom Clarke, Art O’Keeffe, and Jeffrey Power. *Daily Province*, December 23, 1966, 10.

matter how unjust the situation or how unfair the laws. Justice might indeed be blind, but the law was the law.

Undoubtedly the most dramatic moment during the trials occurred when Tom Clarke ignored the advice of his lawyer, Tom Berger, the future leader of the BC NDP and eventually a BC Supreme Court judge himself. Clarke stood up before Justice Macdonald read the sentence and offered a lengthy declaration that captures some of the essential meaning of the Lenkurt strike from a left-wing union point of view:

I will not be intimidated by courts or court action or people of your ilk when in my opinion I am morally right. Nor will I stand idly by and watch my fellow workers and fellow trade unionists treated in a like manner.

It has always been a basic premise of the trade union movement that an injury to one is an injury to all and when one is injured it behoves all to come to their assistance.

This I will do.

As you are well aware some of the rights that society as a whole enjoys today were won by the blood of working men and women. The employer has always used all at his disposal to retard the growth of trade unions and free thought, resorting to murder, so-called “legal execution,” troops, police, spies, stool pigeons, scabs and what have you, all to no avail. In this day and age the employer has become [a] little more sophisticated and does not generally resort to the tactics of old but he still retains this inclination. He now uses the courts to do what he cannot accomplish himself.

I wish to make my position quite clear. I do not wish you, your lordship, to be under any illusions as to my actions. If a picket line appeared around this building tomorrow and you were to grant an injunction prohibiting picketing, I would join that picket line if requested to do so.

In closing I will say that I refuse to apologize to you, this court or anyone else for my actions. What I did was what I know was right.³¹

Beaten, a significant number of Local 213's militant minority did not simply drift away into the world of family and work. Those who had been most active on the picket lines at Lenkurt, then in the subsequent dramatic events at the Dunsmuir union hall, convened in the latter part of September

at the Pender Auditorium in Vancouver. About sixty people were in attendance and they listened to speeches of sympathy from three representatives of the BCFL: Ray Haynes, Len Guy, and Charles Stewart. Their speeches hit the expected notes: the cause had been just, the Lenkurt workers had been wronged, and they were disappointed that more was not achieved to turn the tide of events in their favour. There was polite applause. People began to leave. However, the real question that was left begging was the classic and celebrated one formerly posed by Vladimir Lenin: "What is to be done?" Succumbing to a long-contained sense of passion, Les McDonald leaped onto the stage and took control of the microphone. In what Jess Succamore has described as "a marvellous speech" he recapped the events of the last few months, concluding that "what we need is a new Canadian Electrical Workers' Union." This new union would be run by and for Canadians, would be based on truly democratic principles and, most importantly, would be free of dictatorial control imposed from south of the border. The meeting erupted in enthusiasm for the idea. Tom Constable stated that he was sure he could get the gas workers to join. George Brown agreed that the timing for the formation of just such a union was propitious.³² Most of the main left-wing activists involved with the Lenkurt dispute were on the same page, and enthusiastic about the possibility of change. It was a momentous speech, and though he didn't realize it at the time, it would become one of the highlights of Les McDonald's trade union career.³³

But then the Communist Party intervened and called Les McDonald and Local 213's left faction to a meeting. The party explained its recent historical experience in trying to set up separate, independent, and progressive unions in other jurisdictions. Especially important in its view was what had happened in British Columbia to the Woodworkers' Industrial Union of Canada (WIUC), which had split from an increasingly conservative and anti-Communist IWA international leadership group in 1948. Other than for an isolated local in the East Kootenay town of Cranbrook, the WIUC was to become inconsequential and eventually fade away in the face of a combined employer and IWA red-baiting campaign.³⁴ The party did not want the same detrimental and self-defeating experience to be repeated with electrical workers in the IBEW. On the one hand, this was logical enough and in keeping with the Communist Party's recent past.

What was somewhat puzzling, on the other hand, was how it rejected a nearby phenomenon. Almost simultaneously with the events at Lenkurt,

the eight hundred union workers employed at the Harmac pulp and paper mill in Nanaimo, just 60 kilometres away across Georgia Strait, had had a contrasting experience. Emerging from the stifling political atmosphere of the McCarthy period in the early 1960s, the pulp and paper workers in British Columbia were in the process of breaking away from their international union and backing the formation of the Pulp and Paper Workers' of Canada (PPWC).³⁵ Led by union leaders who, in the past, had co-operated with Communist labour and political activists, the PPWC and its new Harmac local was to be ultimately successful in being able to survive with their new identity and win collective agreements from employers.³⁶ Including the earlier emergence in 1960 of other national unions, such as the Canadian Union of Operating Engineers or the Confederation of National Trade Unions in Québec, careful analysis might have concluded that the conditions of labour relations in 1966 were in flux and measurably improving for independent Canadian unions.

Despite the sympathy of some of the heavyweights in the upper echelons of the Communist Party's leadership, the discussion did not end with a willingness to explore new tactics.³⁷ The PPWC was not Communist-led or organized, so did not fall into the party's historical frame of reference. Another important point to consider was that the leadership of the PPWC's former international union was also not as ruthless or as bloody-minded as those in the building trades.³⁸ Ernie Fulton described what happened at this crucial moment within the left faction of IBEW Local 213:

Yes, there was talk of secession from the IBEW at that time. George Angus was involved with it as well as many other people. I remember we went to a meeting on it, and Jack Cody was there. Cody led us to some extent in coming to the final decision, which was, though some of us might want to leave, we wouldn't be able to get enough of the total membership to leave the International to be able to survive. Really all that would happen is that we would be taking ourselves out of the IBEW and the union would then bring other people in to do our job. So, while there was talk about secession, it was judged not to be the best thing to do.³⁹

A few days later, and in accordance with party discipline, Les McDonald recanted his previous enthusiasm for an independent Canadian electrical workers' union. He told a subsequent meeting of activists that the formation

of a Canadian electrical workers' union was merely his projection of an "idealistic" world. He hadn't really thought such an important matter through to its logical ramifications.⁴⁰ Les announced he would appeal his suspension but stay in Local 213 and the ranks of the IBEW. Lenin was to be taken at his word: Communists had to "remain in the reactionary unions, work there, conquer the masses, drive out the leaders."⁴¹ Though Les never talked about it later on in life, the ideological flip-flop he was forced to perform publicly was without question difficult and probably humiliating, especially as he did not easily admit to the error of his ways. A proud, combative guy, he had been forced to reflect on the possible negative consequences of this intensely earnest *carpe diem* episode, then backtrack shortly afterwards and repudiate his spontaneous attempt to seize the day.

To make a brief but important point, his heartfelt speech begged the question as to the very notion of spontaneity as a negative aspect of the human condition, of how progress is made in the world. Progress, however defined, is arguably both the product of thoughtful planning *and* spontaneity. In fact, it could be argued that these are intrinsically linked as the very foundation stones of human existence; both, probably for good evolutionary reasons, are part of our DNA. Spontaneous decisions very often do lead down figurative and literal *culs-de-sacs*; but they can, on occasion, also lead to exciting new ways of seeing and doing things. Spontaneity always begins as mostly accidental—an involuntary reflex, a moment of passion. But slowly, mostly by trial and error, and given a positive nurturing environment, it can then lead to better understanding; it can then also lead both to the adoption of fundamentally better patterns of behaviour and a critical rethink in relation to effective forms of organization.

Swallowing his pride, Les McDonald did as he was told by the Communist cadres in the BC trade union movement. Undertaking the formation of a breakaway union at this particular point in time was still considered too risky as the party did not want to repeat the catastrophe of the 1948 WIUC split from the IWA. Their thinking was that an independent Canadian electrical workers' union was foolhardy, reckless, and undoubtedly doomed to failure. Instead, it proposed to do what it had done in 1960 in the context of a potential breakaway within the Ironworkers in Vancouver, when it had urged workers to fight for "Canadian autonomy" within international unions, because "the answer to US control and domination . . . cannot be found in the secession of individual locals or splinter movements."⁴² What

should not be overlooked is that party analysis must surely have pointed out the disreputable mixed bag of vanguardist rivals involved with the Lenkurt defeat, out of which came support for the idea of a new and independent Canadian electrical workers' union. Shop steward George Brown was a former Trotskyist, and so considered unreliable, while the Maoist-oriented PWM militants had shown up on the picket lines uninvited, drawing attention to themselves with unplanned, unco-ordinated, and aggressive picket line behaviour, all the while handing out factional leaflets promoting their cause. As far as the Communist Party was concerned this was dangerous company to keep in any projected new union; control, let alone a preponderant influence, would be difficult to assert. Left-wing unity evidently had some limits. It just wasn't going to happen. Les McDonald thus remained disciplined in 1966 and hewed to the party line. It was momentarily ironic; the Communist Party was asking Les McDonald to take the same position as the ossified officialdom from the IBEW's International Office. His Comrade on the City Committee, Jim MacFarlan, reflected on this episode years later:

Les McDonald was labelled an "adventurist" only because he challenged the usual way of doing things. Yet the Communist Party recognized he was potentially an outstanding trade union leader. Immediately after Lenkurt Les McDonald needed to be brought to heel, but the Party knew full well that he could still be extremely valuable. After his famous speech they appeared to be understanding with him, judiciously pointing out the error of his ways.⁴³

The possibility of a concerted drive to organize a Canada-only electrical workers' union was arguably an opportunity missed. Jess Succamore, for example, disagreed almost immediately with McDonald's decision to toe the party line and stay in the IBEW. In the process, his own Lenkurt-based leadership group was open to criticism for its lack of willingness to admit that it, too, had exhibited a lack of foresight and discipline after their parking lot "study session." Even once they were back at the union hall, circumstances make it appear that the spontaneous decision not to go back into work was allowed to disastrously play itself out. At the end of the day Succamore commented on the issue with his usual sense of humour: "The only successful spontaneous revolutions are the well-planned ones!"⁴⁴ On

a more serious note he would also go on to compliment Les McDonald's role during the Lenkurt strike:

Les was the most supportive guy from the other units in Local 213 during the Lenkurt strike. He understood the issues quite well. I have no qualms about saying that at all. Through that issue he was really good, supportive, and he coerced the leadership of the local to do the right things. He commanded a real presence on the floor of any meeting. He would articulate principled positions, so he was pretty impressive in that role. And he was quite obviously the leader of the left faction within Local 213. Ernie Fulton was part of it then too . . . as was Cliff Rundgren and Bob Towle.⁴⁵

In addition to Succamore, not all the Lenkurt activists shared Les McDonald and the Communist Party's point of view. Galvanized by McDonald's inspirational speech on the necessity of starting a democratic, independent Canadian union, George Angus, George Brown, Donna Pooghkay, Barry Sharbo, John Wood, Dave Unger and Jess Succamore decided to leave the IBEW and inaugurate the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union. Part of a small group of seventeen activists, they would constitute the first elected executive board at the founding of the new electrical union on November 6, 1966. The deliberately chosen date was significant as it was precisely sixty-five years earlier that Local 213 had been granted its charter by the IBEW. The fledgling executive board sided with the views of the Canadian Autonomy Council, a group of reform-oriented IBEW members based in eastern Canada. Council members had written to IBEW International President Gordon Freeman, stating: "We have lost faith in you and what you call democracy." Jess Succamore wanted an immediate change to the well-known fact "that the Canadian trade unionist is the only worker in the world who is controlled by a foreign country." In terms of what had happened in Local 213 and the perspective from the west coast, Donna Pooghkay probably summed up their feelings best about the IBEW: "By the time we finished fighting them, we knew there was nothing we could do in that union. . . . There is still nothing you can do in that union."⁴⁶

An already-existing alternative for the unhappy group of electrical workers might have been UE. The group did consider the Communist-led international union, mostly based in electrical manufacturing plants in the United States and eastern Canada, but ultimately rejected it. Even though UE

provided for Canadian autonomy, the risk of having that autonomy rescinded under unpredictable future circumstances was too great. It was better to belong to a purely Canadian union so no American organization, with or without a left-wing leadership, could take it away. Citing the merger of Harvey Murphy's Communist-led Mine-Mill local in Trail, BC, with the United Steelworkers in 1967, George Brown felt vindicated in his earlier rejection of UE as he noted the latter "supported the move." He wondered if UE would make a similar decision if, after convincing workers to join their organization, it decided "to join hands with the I.B.E.W. at a later date?"⁴⁷ Brown's political past, as well as Wood and Unger's membership in the PWM—castigated by the Communist Party for being China-oriented Maoists—were decisive factors in the final decision.⁴⁸ Their refusal to subordinate themselves to the Communist Party's political ideology weighed heavily in the balance and was likewise fortified by the appeal of Canadian nationalism. Politically non-aligned, but always willing to work with those he could agree with on trade union issues, Succamore concluded: "UE didn't seem to quite fit the bill."⁴⁹

The political composition of the fledgling CEWU executive board is undoubtedly what kept Les McDonald and Local 213's Communist-led left faction from co-operating with the new union. Not to overemphasize a point, but relationships between the party and competing communist groupings were rarely friendly, with any contact between them quickly deteriorating into outright hostility. The dynamic of the debacle that became the Lenkurt Electric strike, having to some extent been initially set in motion by a shop steward with a Trotskyist background, certainly didn't help matters and was to harden McDonald's increasingly negative attitude toward rival vanguard organizations.⁵⁰ With limited presence or experience to draw on within the other five unit sections of Local 213, there was also no political base a Trotskyist-tinted faction or the PWM could rely on to build support for a mass exodus from the IBEW and into an independent Canadian union. As a united front of left-wing electrical workers no longer appeared to be in the cards following the dispute at Lenkurt, the mere suggestion of secession from the IBEW therefore quickly became a non-starter for the vast majority of rank-and-file members in Local 213.

There were nevertheless about seventy-five "mostly wiremen" who secretly took out individual membership cards in the CEWU at a cost of \$1.25 each to show support for the brand-new Canadian electrical workers' union.⁵¹ Fearing retribution from the IBEW in case his identity was revealed,

one anonymous electrician from Local 213 wrote a critique of the lack of real democracy in the American-based union. Meshed into a substantial nationalist perspective, the electrician, in his evaluation of recent events, candidly declared his support for an organization that was made in Canada and was for Canadian workers only.⁵² As critics might have pointed out, his outlook raised the question of whether or not the bullying and employer-friendly forces that had emerged over decades of growing bureaucratic interference by the IBEW was not also a very real possibility in a Canadian union. And what of the issue of the mobility of international capital? After all, Lenkurt Electric was an American company. Should this reality not be matched by truly international unions?⁵³

Avoiding an attempt to address these serious questions, the unhappy wireman might have retorted that these were nice theoretical concepts, something picked up, perhaps, while on a visit with Peter Pan to Neverland. He would have pressed his point further by latching onto the last question and pointing out that the concept of “internationalism” itself was mostly delusional, a notion that ignored the history of the vast majority of American-controlled international unions. Referring to Local 213’s recent turmoil in Vancouver, the anonymous electrical worker underscored his firm belief in the necessity of having unions that would start within national boundaries, establish democratic fundamentals, then “go in any direction chosen by a Canadian membership.”

To me, it is a matter of simple democracy, a right to form our own policy through a democratic Canadian constitution. . . . It is not a subject to be questioned, but a right that must be established. This duty must be carried out by the rank and file, let us not suffer the illusion that our present so-called leadership will fight for these rights: on the contrary, the large percentage of these American lackeys will leave no stone unturned to see we don’t get them. But there is no doubt that workers in Canada are on the move, and the growing tide of resentment against dictatorship from Washington through our own Canadian stooges is growing irresistible. We will never be satisfied until our needs and grievances get the sympathetic ear of a Canadian union for Canadians.⁵⁴

Combined with the persuasiveness of Les McDonald’s firebrand speech at the Pender Auditorium and despite circumventing some critical issues,

this one-sided type of argumentation focusing on the seeming lack of democracy and Canadian autonomy in the IBEW, proved to be enough to inspire the small group of secessionists.⁵⁵

To avoid the problematic field of construction work and the inside wiremen in the context of a breakaway union, the freshly minted CEWU concentrated its efforts on electrical manufacturing. Eventually, in May 1967, the new union found its moorings and won its first certification by winning over the 114 workers from the IBEW at Phillips Cables in Vancouver. This success was partly due to the fact that Jess Succamore still had contacts within the plant from his previous employment at Phillips before working at Lenkurt. He was fully cognizant of the bitterness engendered by the past work stoppages at Phillips, with no strike funds coming from the IBEW, and was able to leverage this unhappiness to good account. Support was also provided by the brand-new PPWC, which provided speakers and helped distribute literature. The main thrust of the campaign was to “vote Canadian” as part of their very own “Canadian Centennial project.”⁵⁶ The push to win over the workers at Phillips was also helped in no small measure by Jack Scott and the PWM. Scott, who had left the Communist Party in 1964, and the PWM he subsequently founded held that the Canadian economy was increasingly dominated by American capital and that the initial struggle of workers should be directed at breaking the domination of the United States over the Canadian economy. As a key corollary to this position, the PWM promoted the independence of Canadian unions vis-à-vis international unions in the CLC.⁵⁷ Commented Scott on the breakaway CEWU: “We used to print their material for them, do it for nothing . . . If they wanted to print leaflets we did it and we printed the original membership forms for them and so on . . . [But] we didn’t do it openly.”⁵⁸ Spearheaded by the politically neutral Succamore, who was in desperate need of support and would visibly accept help from all and sundry, the collective effort at Phillips Cables was eventually successful, with a slim fifty-seven to fifty margin voting for the newly founded CEWU.⁵⁹ This was followed by another successful raid on yet another unhappy manufacturing local of the IBEW, this time in Sentinel, Alberta (near Blairmore). Despite public red-baiting accusations by Jack Ross in the wild rose province that the CEWU was headed by “Trotskyites” and that Alberta electrical workers in manufacturing “were being led astray,” the new Canadian union was off and running, though for the most part it struggled financially and for recognition.⁶⁰ Following many

trials and tribulations, and yet more minor successes—such as at previously unorganized Cascade Electronics in Port Moody—it merged with CAIMAW in 1969. The merger initiated a new direction in organizing for the CEWU in that it no longer restricted itself to the electrical sector. Prior to merging with the Canadian Auto Workers, which later became Unifor, it was successful in organizing over 7,000 members from various labour sectors, becoming the major voice for Canadian unionism in Western Canada. As a senior officer for both CAIMAW and the CCU, Jess Succamore directed the organizational efforts of several new Canadian unions. While he profusely lauds the leadership given him by George Brown and Kent Rowley during these organizing drives, he freely acknowledges that for him and his close collaborators the event that let the genie of Canadian unionism out of the bottle was Les McDonald's rousing speech at the Pender Auditorium.⁶¹

Local 213's elections were supposed to be held in June 1966, but were delayed until July 30 by Bill Ladyman, on the recommendation of the executive board.⁶² The left unity slate that had been proposed by Les McDonald to sweep out the conservative group in the local union would itself be partly swept out of the political landscape since several of its key representatives found themselves suspended and ineligible for election by the nomination deadline of July 15. In any case, the executive board had informed the membership on June 29 that "all former nominations are void."⁶³ Who was left? The answer to this question—a deliberate double-entendre—were those who had not personally participated in the Lenkurt debacle, either on the picket line or in the ensuing drama at the union hall, but who were still motivated enough to wanting to be politically active in Local 213. Most of them were socialists or social democrats of varying hues, though a few names might make for an interesting starting point for discussion. Led by Jim Kinnaird, who was elected to the business manager's position, the new participants on the executive board were a progressive amalgam of old and new and included John Leslie (president), Tom Forkin (vice-president), Norm Read (recording secretary), and Stuart Houston (secretary-treasurer). As his four-year suspension had recently come to an end, veteran Jack Cody was re-elected chair of the Gas Unit, while Art Goy—third time lucky—became the representative for the inside wiremen. The conservative stalwarts, led by Angus MacDonald, and including Fred Allison, John Hiebert, J. P. Milner, and Frank Hogan, were all soundly defeated. It was a complete reversal of the election results in 1960. Unabashedly elated, Art O'Keefe declared

to the press that: "This is a smashing victory and membership repudiation of the tactics of the old Executive."⁶⁴ But as Les McDonald has recounted to the author, the real movers and shakers, the Lenkurt militants and union rebels, were also now all on the outside looking in. This group was effectively eliminated, its chief activist figures not even being permitted to participate in Local 213's unit and general meetings as they had for the most part been suspended. On the surface, the clear electoral choices between left and right created by the Lenkurt dispute was then won by those who were "left" rather than the real, militant and activist left. Those who won election in 1966 were individuals whose left-wing politics were safe as their ideological positions were only verbal, individuals who now saw their chance to potentially win leadership positions. An argument could be made that Jim Kinnaird's subsequent rise in influence within the BC Federation of Labour was precisely because he did not participate in the Lenkurt dispute. He stood on the sidelines, cheered on the good guys, expressed sympathy for the workers who had lost their jobs, then jumped into the leadership race when everyone else had already played their hand. In his defence he had a family to support, and probably didn't want to risk getting hurt or being arrested on the picket lines at the Lenkurt Electric plant. All reasonable justifications, and from a certain perspective an indication of intelligence and good survival instincts; it was just so very cautious and so very safe. In an echo of what had happened almost fifty years earlier in the trade union movement across Canada, the "reformers" within the Vancouver electrical workers had simply bided their time, watching and cheering from the sidelines as the "rebels and revolutionaries" took a stand on the Lenkurt issue and were subsequently enmeshed in an internal union crisis.⁶⁵ Then, when they had eliminated themselves via predictable International Office intervention, the reformers stepped into executive board positions that went begging for anyone with a progressive bone in their body. In no way was it planned with any foresight or anticipation of being able to grasp the local levers of power, but it happened. It was more by accident than by design, yet the position of business manager fell into Jim Kinnaird's lap. As he recalled: "I really had no ambition, but guys kept promoting me."⁶⁶ At any particular moment in time, history usually consists of elements of chance and uncertainty. Good things can come to those who wait. The aftermath of the Lenkurt Electric strike might be a case in point.

One of the first tasks of Local 213's new executive board was to constitute a review panel for the trials undertaken by the outgoing executive board. These took place from November 15, 1966, to January 4, 1967. Chaired by long-time socialist and former Communist, Tom Forkin, a reconstituted Trial Board encouraged appeals to the original sentences imposed in June and July. As the accused had not appeared in person at their original trials, new evidence was now available after they had testified or had counsel represent them. After the second Trial Board had also listened to the tapes of the original trials, most of the sentences were reduced in duration, and some were completely dismissed. Marion Bachewich, Betty Bradley, and nine other Lenkurt employees, for example, were exonerated of "having participated in an unauthorized work stoppage" as "we find the charges to not be substantiated and our decision is that all penalties . . . be quashed."⁶⁷ But Jack Ross, Bill Ladyman, and the International Office were all watching to see how far the new reform-minded executive board would go. It was apparently too risky to completely reverse all the original sentences. The new Trial Board members tried to reduce Jess Succamore's heavy-handed penalty to five years but, as mentioned previously, his original sentence was reimposed by a vigilant Bill Ladyman. However, they were partially successful with Les McDonald as his suspension was reduced to fifteen years when he appealed. Jess Succamore was scornful in his appraisal of the timidity exhibited by the new Trial Board. He argued that its reluctance to completely exonerate him from his sentence had "condoned the conduct of the previous trial board in everything except the fact that they decided the sentence was overly zealous."⁶⁸

Merely attempting to reduce the stiff sentences initially foisted on the Lenkurt rebels and activists appeared to be too much for the International Office. It added to the perception that the IBEW was not able to control a continuously defiant local. On February 28, 1967, Bill Ladyman dropped a structural bombshell when he announced that Local 213 was to be split into three component parts: Local 258 was to be the new contract linemen and BC Hydro local; Local 264 was to be the new manufacturing local; while Local 213 would carry on as a smaller entity with the inside wiremen, neon, and communication workers. With the creation of two new electrical locals in Vancouver, no one group within what remained of Local 213 could now unduly influence another as before and the Communist Party-led left faction, in particular, could be contained within the inside wiremen's unit

where it was now largely concentrated. The recent electoral sweep in 1966 by the remnants of the unity slate was all for naught. Everyone would have to start all over again, and within smaller, less influential groups. As a way to contain its critics, it was a brilliant tactical manoeuvre by the International Office. Bill Ladyman defended his actions by announcing that the new locals would provide “a greater degree of autonomy for the membership.” He went on to write:

Coming so soon after the “Lenkurt affair,” I am sure there will be those who, for their own personal reasons, will raise the cry of “International dictatorship.” However, regardless of any innuendoes, I have made my decision based solely on the continuing problem which appears to be confronting our members in the manufacturing field . . . Since becoming Vice-President of the First District I have directed my efforts towards amalgamating Local Unions for greater strength and stability within the various branches of our industry. At the same time, as with the situation in Local 213, we must be realistic and acknowledge the fact that where our membership is discontented and where it is apparent the existing status quo does not serve the best interests of the said membership, I must reluctantly agree to create new Local Unions.⁶⁹

Ernie Fulton thought otherwise. His analysis of the division of Local 213 into three distinct entities was that Ladyman’s focus on the manufacturing unit was a smokescreen designed to distract his audience. The real fear of the International Office was potential instability and political opposition within the workforce of BC Hydro, the single largest employer of electrical workers within the Vancouver local. As Fulton put it, “Local 213 was split up, it seems to me, in order to stop the Hydro workers from being affected by the left wing that was now centred in the wiremen’s section.”⁷⁰ Conjecture, certainly, but given the decades-long series of crises within the local, it was a not unreasonable conclusion.

Initially in disarray, the inside wiremen concentrated on rebuilding their forces and learning the ropes within their reduced scope of operations. They also had to cautiously learn an altered political dance with the usual partners: Jack Ross, Bill Ladyman, Ken Rose, and the International Office. This process became increasingly awkward as the nascent CEWU was now taking public potshots at the new leadership of Local 213, accusing it of being overly

cautious and even of trying to entice back to the IBEW fold some of its more outspoken leaders. Jess Succamore, for example, was offered a job through Local 213's dispatcher three or four months after Lenkurt because, as he wrote at the time, "the C.E.W.U. had started signing up workers at Phillips Cables."⁷¹ He also resented the fact that the Communist Party appeared to be embarking on a political campaign of character assassination vis-à-vis the supporters of Canadian unionism. It was ironic "that the persons who are doing the political RED baiting are among those in the (C. P.) Communist Party machinery that exists within Local 213 . . . the red baiting tactics of the C. P. boys are taken somewhat with a laugh . . . but it does put the local party boys on a par with the antics of the International."⁷² While certainly not defending the Communist Party, Local 213's new business manager, Jim Kinnaird, fired back at the CEWU, with the opinion that "the trade union movement is being once again plagued by demagogues who hope to niche out a shelf to park themselves, knowing only too well that when they step off into the stream of negotiations they will not only sink themselves but take everyone else down with them . . . They are using your Union as an escape for their own frustrated failings in the union movement."⁷³ Relationships on the left were starting to become seriously frayed.

It got worse in the next few months as Succamore accused Kinnaird of continuing with his political smear campaign. Kinnaird, he alleged, had tarnished the leadership of the new Canadian union "as dissidents, ne'er do-wells, and Peking Communists." And this from "a business agent whose name was on the Communist Party slate circulated before the last general union election."⁷⁴ He wondered where Kinnaird would stop, and if his attacks were not just a way to ingratiate himself with the International Office. It was unfortunate, but the non-partisan Succamore was clearly being judged by the company he kept. It got to the point that the PWM's John Wood and Dave Unger volunteered to step down from the inaugural executive board of the CEWU as "it was just giving the labour brass an opportunity to attack them."⁷⁵ Both Brown and Succamore refused their offer on the grounds that political affiliations should not be used to disqualify anyone in the CEWU from active participation in the trade union movement. Regardless, the left among Vancouver electrical workers, no longer together in the same organizational tent, was now at war with itself and visibly tearing each of its constituent factions apart.⁷⁶

Still more was to widen the gulf between the contending groups. In the spring and summer of 1967, there was a lengthy three-month electrical workers' strike in Kelowna. Local 213 still had jurisdiction in the Okanagan's largest municipality and chief shop steward, Mike Scheer, had attempted during the strike "to prevent an imported scab from carrying out repair work on a utility pole." The widely respected union man had charges of assault laid against him and two of his fellow electrical workers. Worse, the charges against the shop steward, "the backbone of the strikers in Kelowna," included the much more serious "assault with intent." At the end of July, several weeks after this regrettable physical confrontation had occurred, three IBEW officials flew into Kelowna from Vancouver in an attempt to end the ongoing work stoppage. The group included newly elected Jim Kinnaird and John Leslie, respectively business manager and president of Local 213, and International Representative Jack Ross. They used the IWA offices in Kelowna to negotiate with municipal officials. A reporter for *The Western Canadian Lumber Worker* wrote: "IBEW informants state that Kinnaird told them that the strike could be settled but one of the conditions was that Mike Scheer's job was to be terminated." Additionally, civic officials working alongside the prosecuting Crown counsel gave the perplexing appearance of a perfidious mixing of legal proceedings with the bargaining process: "City officials would reduce the charges to minor assault if the strikers ratified the agreement."⁷⁷ Rather than fight for both a reasonable contract and Mike Scheer's complete reinstatement, the newly elected leaders of Local 213 convinced the Kelowna membership that the easiest path to ending the lengthy dispute was to compromise on the fate of their chief shop steward. The Kelowna electrical workers could get both a collective agreement and save Mike Scheer certain jail time; the unsavoury trade-off was that they would have to agree to the employer's demand that his position be eliminated. Left unstated was the consequence that the dedicated union man would effectively be fired. After a short discussion on the lack of integrity ingrained in the proposal, the deal was agreed to. It is unclear as to whether or not Scheer participated in the give-and-take at the meeting; if he did, he probably volunteered to play the martyr to bring an end to the financial hardships of his fellow workers. A collective agreement was then duly signed. Scheer was found guilty in court of the lesser charge of minor assault, given a one-year suspended sentence, and was ordered to post a \$500 bond to keep the peace. But the agreed-upon compromise was that the post

Scheer had occupied then got axed by his vengeful employer.⁷⁸ And with the axing of the Kelowna utility position, so too went the veteran lineman with nineteen years' experience. Kinnaird, Leslie, and Ross would have argued that the outcome of the Kelowna strike was part and parcel of the difficult choices faced by trade union leadership when thrust into unpredictable and volatile circumstances. They also had a card up their sleeve that they had not yet revealed. However, as could now only be expected, the CEWU was scathing in its condemnation of this Solomonic-type agreement. Kinnaird and Leslie, it charged, "have proven to be mere puppets cavorting in the hands of Jack Ross, the International's leading string puller. The actors have changed but the play remains the same."⁷⁹ As events were to later prove, the CEWU was far too hasty to rush to judgment, but it was nevertheless a damnable indictment on how Mike Scheer's fate was used in the bargaining process. No longer fearful of retribution, the CEWU pioneers were eager to point fingers at Jack Ross and his all too apparent willingness to sacrifice an electrical worker. A short time later, Kinnaird, Leslie, and Ross played their trump card. As was his prerogative, Jim Kinnaird appointed Mike Scheer assistant business manager for Unit 1, a paid union position. It was an innovative solution to a thorny problem and helped solve the collective bargaining impasse in Kelowna. To the linemen's presumed delight and the electrical utility's dismay, the militant Scheer was now not going anywhere; more than ever he was going to be a thorn in the employer's side, enforcing the newly signed collective agreement.⁸⁰ While appearing at the outset as a difficult and necessary sacrifice, the eventual solution proved as creative as was possible under the circumstances. As many of the political activists in Local 213 already knew, Jim Kinnaird knew how to play the game. He would run unopposed for the post of business manager in Local 213's biennial elections during the next two election cycles.

At about the same time that Jim Kinnaird was proving his worth in Kelowna, both the CLC and the IBEW got busy studying the issues surrounding international unions in Canada. The national labour body first established a Commission on Constitution and Structure to conduct an extensive study of the Canadian labour movement; Bill Ladyman served on the commission "to look at questions of structure, mergers between unions, affiliation and unity." Then, in both 1966 and 1970, the IBEW put together committees to address the Canadian sovereignty issue. In all three cases the responses of the Canadian IBEW locals could best be categorized

as lukewarm and favouring non-involvement. Historian Edward Seymour thought the process was flawed from the outset: "Some believed they were dealing with a stacked deck, others were quite satisfied with the status quo, while still others felt that no matter what the committee recommended action would not be taken."⁸¹ Despite the consequential pressures resulting from the foundation of the CEWU and other nationalist movements within unions in Canada, the result was that not much of anything changed.⁸²

In seemingly almost perpetual estrangement from its parent organization, the progressive "left" grouping now in charge of the executive board of Local 213 at last tried to engage in reforming the IBEW from within. In April 1970, at a general meeting, and in keeping with the Vancouver electrical workers' decades of frustration with the lack of national and local autonomy within the IBEW, they supported Jim Kinnaird's bid to replace Bill Ladyman as International vice-president for Canada.⁸³ Bill Ladyman was targeted because the Vancouver electrical workers felt he was historically unfriendly to Local 213, and a too-willing puppet of the International Office of the IBEW. He was known for having previously categorized some of the critics of international unions from his home country as "subversive left-wing elements," and as someone who was not prepared to fight and demand "on behalf of the Canadian membership certain fundamental rights that lie well within the structure of our own brotherhood." In particular, Ladyman was derided for having treated Canadian delegates to the IBEW convention in Seattle in 1970 as "errant school children."⁸⁴ Not to adopt too cynical a view, but Kinnaird's education on the upper echelons of the IBEW would follow the same steep learning curve as had been exhibited by at least two of his outspoken predecessors, George Gee and Art O'Keeffe. As in previous decades, the IBEW machine proved too powerful. Tainted by the mass firings and accompanying political upheaval during the Lenkurt affair, Kinnaird would not be successful in winning what had recently become an elected post to the IBEW's International Office.⁸⁵ Ken Rose, who succeeded Bill Ladyman as Canadian vice-president in 1973, would then oppose Kinnaird publicly, inasmuch as he was convinced that in Vancouver "political radicals were orchestrating dissent for their own purposes."⁸⁶ A short time later, as president of the BC and Yukon Building Trades Council, Jim Kinnaird would counter Rose's one-sided assessment and would author a "Canadian autonomy" submission to the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO. As a result of his strongly worded "appeal to

reason,” Jim Kinnaird would be viewed with suspicion south of the border and as a threat to American control of Canadian locals. In particular, his call to international unions to recognize “a people’s march for a recognized national status” went over like a lead balloon.⁸⁷ Visibly frustrated, he gave up on the unchanging IBEW.⁸⁸ Turning his attention elsewhere, he was to become assistant deputy labour minister in BC’s first NDP government in 1973, then subsequently rise to the post of president of the BC Federation of Labour in 1978, and was to die in office five years later in 1983.

In 1973, Cliff Rundgren succeeded Jim Kinnaird as business manager of Local 213. Jack Cody, who had been elected president by acclamation, pointed out in his regular column in *213 LiveWire* that “no one is happy. . . . The losers because the margin was close and a slightly altered run could well have meant the difference between victory and defeat. . . . The victors, unhappy because the mandate, though clear, was not substantial [enough] for comfort.”⁸⁹ Rundgren, a former acolyte to Les McDonald within Local 213’s Communist-led left faction, would arguably travel full circle and increasingly be on guard against the remaining activists within the Vancouver electrical local. He was also to become increasingly gun-shy after having to deal simultaneously with emerging and related developments in the new decade: slow economic growth combined with surging price increases, or “stagflation.”

Cliff Rundgren was initially remarkably successful, managing (as an assistant to Kinnaird in 1972) to help negotiate industry-leading wage increases in addition to loudly proposing a trend-setting reduction in the work week to thirty-seven hours per week. Two years later, now as head business manager, he was even able to wrangle a tentative deal for a thirty-four hour work week with forty-eight independent electrical contractors who had been targeted by the union as they had remained outside the new corporate umbrella, the Construction Labour Relations Association (CLRA), founded in 1969.⁹⁰ Rundgren’s push for a thirty-four-hour week was in response to a demand from Local 213 for a reduced work week to combat unemployment.⁹¹ But negotiations were difficult precisely because of unemployment, and so the reduction in the work week to thirty-four hours was not to be.⁹² The CLRA successfully pressured the independents to toe the corporate line and retract the potentially groundbreaking agreement.⁹³ Hoping undoubtedly to capitalize on the recent strife within Local 213, and



Les McDonald (third from the left) on strike with the BC and Yukon Building Trades Council in Vancouver, May 1, 1974. Les McDonald private collection.

echoing what had been attempted before in 1958, the newly formed CLRA had, in 1970 and 1972, instigated massive lockouts.⁹⁴

This last-mentioned year was particularly unnerving—during negotiations, the CLRA attacked the dispatch system used by the unions. In response, the electricians, carpenters, plumbers, boilermakers, cement masons, and heat and frost workers formed a “Six-Pact” alliance to fight the issues. Within days of announcing their pact, RCMP officers raided Local 213’s union hall, along with five other offices belonging to the Six-Pact.⁹⁵ The raid was followed two years later by a difficult and long, drawn-out nine-week strike of the building trades “Ten-Pact” in May and June of 1974. This sequence of events undoubtedly contributed to Rundgren’s growing caution.⁹⁶ The British Columbia construction employers were attempting to force the building trades into bargaining together, thereby putting an end to the often-successful contractual union whipsaw and leapfrog strategies

of past decades. The federal government then upset the traditional apple cart of local-led negotiations when Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau contentiously imposed a national system of wage and price controls from 1975 through to 1978. Under Cliff Rundgren's leadership, which has been described by his critics as mostly aloof and growingly cynical in outlook, Local 213's well-known militancy went into decline after these frustratingly long picket line experiences and heavy-handed government interventions.

Within the IBEW itself, a distinctive note of warning to any unruly local in Canada was sounded yet again in 1977 when Toronto Local 353's business manager, Warren Chapman, was summarily dismissed by International vice-president Ken Rose; Chapman was replaced by Bill Hardy, the very man he had duly defeated in the 1975 local union elections. According to historian Edward Seymour, Chapman was charged "with not conducting the affairs of the local in a proper manner."⁹⁷ As with Local 213, his sins apparently centred on the way the dispatching system (the spare-board) was managed in the local union. Chapman had ignored the employers' constant demand to be able to recall by name any unemployed electrician they wanted, sometimes a relative or a friend, but normally the most productive one available. Having reached the top of the spare-board, fussy electricians would also no longer have the luxury of refusing offers and waiting to cherry-pick a potentially advantageous long-term job assignment, whether it was in Toronto or out-of-town. Seymour noted that business manager Chapman had decided to implement the new procedures, even if they were contentious: "When a member reached the top of the [spare-board] list he was given the option to take available work in town and had three days to make a decision. Refusing the available work would move him to the bottom of the list and the process was repeated."⁹⁸ A year later, in 1978, the situation in Toronto worsened as Local 353 was placed entirely under trusteeship, the ousted executive board members claiming they were "victims of trumped up charges by the International office."⁹⁹ Regardless of the precise truth in the matter, Cliff Rundgren obviously paid close attention to the interventionist repercussions of such actions. As with John Raymond and Bill Ladyman previously, International vice-president Ken Rose was evidently not someone to be trifled with. Forced to become politically reactive, the Vancouver business manager was assailed and boxed in by a succession of major events, mostly out of his control. His critics within Local 213, such as Paul Yorke, remembered that the adverse effects of the defeat at Lenkurt—the splitting up of Local 213,

the police raid on Local 213's office, combined with the strikes and lockouts of the 1970s and the IBEW's continuing heavy-handedness with a wayward Ontario local—meant that the new business manager was understandably wary of offending the IBEW's International Office.¹⁰⁰

Nor was Cliff Rundgren probably all that keen to work the tools again as a rank-and-file wireman. In fact, as time passed, the embattled business manager appeared more focused on perfecting a well-known and time-honoured transformation: becoming a well-entrenched and efficient trade union representative. In alignment with his predecessors, he learned to successfully manipulate the levers of local union power, such that his particular interests were presented “as the universal interests” of IBEW Local 213.¹⁰¹ To his vocal critics he also appeared to become increasingly fixated on neutralizing his opponents within the Vancouver electrical workers' local. Anecdotal sources such as Alfred (Alfie) Huston, who was president for Local 213 from 1985 to 1988, recounted how the dispatching system at the union hall was eventually altered to match those put in place in Ontario to help reach this objective. These changes, in turn, appear to have been an ameliorative modification of what was imposed on IBEW construction locals on behalf of employers in the United States. Huston had a close-up view of the circumstances leading to this eventful change in hiring hall procedures that he felt had distinct political overtones. It would prove to be a momentous example of what can happen when crisis meets opportunity:

When an unemployed member signed onto the list, he was situated by the number of days he had worked in the last year. 365 days put you at the bottom of the list, 0 at the top. This was the most fair hiring system you could possibly get, it also protected the militants from being black listed off the jobs. This was eventually changed by the Rundgren regime to a 50% name request and 50% by order of the list position. This worked out well for the employers, they just hired extra bodies and laid off the ones they didn't request. They would do that a few times and have everyone they wanted. This worked well for Rundgren, too, as he now had most of his opposition unemployed and not on job sites keeping the employer and other members honest.¹⁰²

Not unsurprisingly, Cliff Rundgren's supporters saw matters through a much more positive lens. Influential electrical workers such as John

Neilson, an assistant business manager, then at the heart of the matter as Job Dispatcher for Local 213, did not disagree with Huston's assessment. But he immediately added an important caveat: "Rundgren had no choice."¹⁰³ Alfie Huston, a second-generation Vancouver electrical worker, disagreed. He thought that it was not as if "Rundgren had no choice; it is always better to do the right thing, than duck and run. The truth is he didn't have the guts for a fight, also no intentions of ever going back on the tools. He handed us over to the IO [International Office] with the help of the CLRA."¹⁰⁴ The best that Rundgren could do was to keep the altered dispatching system as an "informal arrangement," such that it was never officially in the collective agreement. Both the hostile political climate under the rejuvenated Bill Bennett Socredits and a growing unemployment calamity was such that employers were unrelenting in pressing for concessions. Safeguarding long-standing provisions in the collective agreement would have been an arduous task for anyone responsible for the welfare of electrical workers. Given the difficult circumstances, Neilson found that the business manager was "very good at his job, a good leader, not dictatorial."¹⁰⁵ Other Rundgren supporters, such as Jagdish (Jack) Saran, had similar sentiments about the former Communist. Saran found him to be approachable, calm, kind and considerate: "I would walk into his office, unstopped by the office staff, was not interrupted, and go into his office to talk to him about any problem our union was going through. . . . I had the impression that this guy could get things done without any yelling or screaming." He thought Cliff Rundgren was hard-working and was somewhat perplexed with the continuous barrage of criticism aimed at the embattled business manager. Saran wisely observed that unions were complicated entities, where almost nobody is completely right or completely wrong. He tried to compare the political issues to the family squabbles he had witnessed growing up in India: "I grew up with the attitude that there are different family members who have different opinions and different likes and dislikes. But that doesn't mean that you start hating each other just because he or she does not agree with you one hundred percent."¹⁰⁶

The IBEW would become one of the key construction unions that shook up Canadian labour organizations in later years. In 1970, Local 568, the major local in Montréal, was placed into trusteeship following "une désobéissance massive" (a massive act of disobedience). Two years later, 13,000 electrical workers in Québec decided that they did not want to have an expensive but voluntary pension plan become compulsory.¹⁰⁷ Demonstrably

unhappy, they left the IBEW en masse between 1972 and 1974 and formed the *Fraternité interprovinciale des ouvriers en électricité* (FIPOE).¹⁰⁸ These almost entirely francophone electrical workers would become the first of seventeen construction unions in “la belle province” to eventually leave their international organization. While they maintained that departing from the IBEW was really about “practical reasons,” and held out an olive branch in the form of maintaining “fraternal ties” with the American-based union, in hindsight it was arguably a pretext for becoming “*maitres chez nous*.” As with other construction unions, FIPOE then immediately affiliated with the Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL), exploring channels to get a direct charter from the CLC.¹⁰⁹ The new union might have inadvertently been facilitated by Henri Gagnon’s resignation as president of Local 568 in 1971. Elected to this influential local union position in 1968, Gagnon was viewed with suspicion by the IBEW for at least two reasons: first, he had strenuously argued against American insistence on the pension issue, their decision to place the Montréal local under trusteeship, and the imposition of an International Office overseer.¹¹⁰ Second, Henri Gagnon was well known in Montréal as a renegade Communist as he had been in and out of the party’s Central Committee during his lifetime. In this regard, and arguably equally impactful, he had been suspended by the IBEW in the early 1950s for his previous Communist Party affiliation. Gagnon’s resignation in 1971, along with that of business manager Guy Perrault, unwittingly opened the door to a pair of independence-minded candidates: Guy Daoust (president) and Roland Fiset (business manager). In the face of continuing IBEW intransigence, the Québécois nationalists would successfully oversee a transfer of loyalty with a huge majority of Local 568’s membership moving en masse into FIPOE. Enigmatic characters like Gagnon were then left on the outside looking in, especially as he would famously criticize FIPOE for its “banditry” and for breaking away from the IBEW “under the false banner of nationalism.”¹¹¹ His public disapproval of the methods used by FIPOE to assert itself during its early days were, unfortunately, not an exaggeration. As famously described in a two-year Royal Commission headed by Justice Robert Cliche (1974–1975), several of Québec’s construction unions—including FIPOE—had become discouragingly enmeshed in a pervasive and sinister gangster-like culture of “violence, sabotage, walkouts and blackmail.”¹¹² Even Gagnon got savagely beaten.¹¹³

The immediate result was that the French Canadians in the newly formed FIPOE were, in turn, put under trusteeship between 1975 and 1978 by the government of Québec. This preceded a wide-ranging provincially imposed system of government oversight of construction unions and their employers (which is still in place), ameliorated by closed shop conditions on all major Québec construction sites.¹¹⁴ At the beginning of a huge and historical parallel debate in Canada, with two subsequent referendums on the separation of Québec from the rest of the country, the subsequent inaction of the CLC on this complicated file was completely understandable.¹¹⁵ Evidently fearful of losing a substantial component of the Canadian trade union movement to an independent French-Canadian nation, the CLC quietly tolerated the majority French-speaking electrical workers departing from an anglophone and American-controlled international union, yet still belonging to the QFL and hence the CLC.¹¹⁶

Compounded by the lack of action on the part of Canada's national house of labour, the IBEW's response to having lost 95 percent of its electrical workers in Québec was, in turn, tremendously consequential. Undoubtedly embittered that the provincial government had not forced electrical workers to return to the IBEW fold at the end of its trusteeship of FIPOE, the AFL-CIO building trades department first voted in 1979 to expel the French-Canadian electrical workers and demanded that Louis Laberge, head of the QFL, do the same. Having earlier in his career become a public supporter of the Parti Québécois, the French-Canadian nationalist and "indépendentiste" flatly refused to do so, instead strengthening the hand of "QFL-Construction," a newly created building trades department directly affiliated to the Quebec Federation of Labour; it immediately became a parallel organization to the international unions' Québec Building Trades Council. When the CLC continued to tolerate QFL-Construction, more than ever a blatant expression of dual unionism, a second, more dramatic step, was evidently required; it came in the form of the English-speaking Canadian building trades outside Québec withholding their share of per capita dues to the CLC. Matching them tit-for-tat, in 1981 an increasingly assertive national labour organization refused to buckle under, instead suspending the international construction unions from the CLC.¹¹⁷ The IBEW and most of the building trades in English Canada then raised the stakes—at the direction of IBEW vice-president Ken Rose, they left the CLC and formed their own national labour body, the Canadian Federation

of Labour (CFL), which lasted from 1982 to 1997.¹¹⁸ The IBEW's action reflected the increasingly loud nationalist voices within the construction unions; however, not all the building trades outside Québec immediately joined the CFL—the carpenters, ironworkers, and labourers, all three with a history of noteworthy Canadian autonomy disputes, initially refused to adhere to the new labour organization.¹¹⁹ Just so that there were no misunderstandings, an intolerant Ken Rose warned any potential electrical local with similar ideas in the rest of the country, “that any IBEW local that affiliated with the CLC would be placed in trusteeship.”¹²⁰ The result was that organized labour across Canada was badly divided for fifteen years. As the CEWU in Vancouver had split from Local 213 in 1966, and FIPOE from the IBEW in Québec in the period from 1972 to 1974, so did the IBEW and eleven other building trades unions secede from the CLC in 1982. Having been suitably educated on the matter, his trade union career having rewarded him at times with the fruits of solidarity, Les McDonald would subsequently argue that nothing good could come from all this splintering within the ranks of organized labour.¹²¹

While the IBEW and the CLC dealt with the broader ramifications of splits and secessions in Canada's organized labour, the fallout from Lenkurt continued to reverberate locally in British Columbia. An event of some significance occurred in early 1969 when Local 213 amalgamated with about 250 members of Local 999 in the West Kootenays, based in Castlegar. This event, which curiously went against the historical tide of reducing Local 213's jurisdiction in British Columbia, was initiated by Jim Kinnaird and surprisingly supported by Bill Ladyman and Jim Wolfgang, the latter who had replaced the now-retired Jack Ross.¹²² The reason for the International Office representatives' change in attitude became evident a few years later when Kinnaird argued in *213 LiveWire* that geographically outlying electrical workers were politically unhappy and that “the overall membership had better recognize this shift and move away from complete and absolute Vancouver authority.”¹²³

Cliff Rundgren would echo this position when he, in turn, was elected business manager in 1973. It was demonstrably unfair, he wrote, that the increasing number of Local 213 members outside the Lower Mainland would “lose their input since they have limited access to Vancouver general meetings.”¹²⁴ When many of the electrical workers were on summer holiday, Rundgren then presided over the elimination of general meetings

in August 1974, when Local 213's new by-laws "were handed down from the I.O. [International Office]."¹²⁵ It was a fundamental change. As with Bill Ladyman's decision to split up Local 213 into three separate entities in 1967, on the surface it appeared that the elimination of general meetings was a much-needed reform based on a sense of geographic fairness and that it improved the democratic process. On a practical level, though, it now meant that for a resolution to become local policy it first had to be presented as a notice-of-motion at all five units in the same month, then brought to the floor and voted on in all the units the following month. Some of the units met on the same date, a meeting that now had to include the new unit in far-off Castlegar. Realistically, only the local's executive board would be able to successfully co-ordinate political action and promote their version of trade union philosophy in the remaining units of Local 213.

The isolation of the activist left-wing elements in the Vancouver-based inside wiremen's unit was virtually assured once the IBEW had successfully implemented a strategy that enabled closer control of these dangerous, unruly elements and their accompanying insurgent ideas.¹²⁶ As a young cable worker in the Vancouver electrical local at the time, Paul Yorke recalled: "The election of Cliff Rundgren as Business Agent was the last nail in the coffin of Local 213. . . . The membership's ability to take action was dead."¹²⁷ In the late 1990s, during a CLC-sanctioned raid, Yorke would help lead a section of unhappy cable workers out of Local 213 and into the Telecommunications Workers' Union, at the time an independent Canadian union.¹²⁸

As events transpired, Cliff Rundgren did not have much to fear; the Communist faction, for instance, was no longer a factor within Local 213. The aftermath of the Lenkurt dispute, followed by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, had succeeded in eradicating the party for good among the Vancouver electrical workers. Terry Simpson commented on the declining profile of the party: "The Party was a pushover in the 1960s as compared to what had existed in the 1950s. It was like sinking a coastal steamer as compared to a battleship. By 1973 the Party was more or less defunct."¹²⁹ The IBEW also sold the Dunsmuir union hall and established a much smaller one on Nordlund Avenue in Burnaby. It has since relocated yet again and is now situated in Port Coquitlam.

Immediately following the Lenkurt strike, Les McDonald was without work. No company would hire him, nor would Local 213 authorize a dispatch as the new executive board had not yet taken office. Then one late summer

evening, a fortuitous knock at the door of the modest Pemberton Heights split-level home changed his fate. It was the aging Fred Hume, retired head of Hume and Rumble, the largest electrical contracting company in Western Canada, and also former mayor of both New Westminster and Vancouver. He commiserated with Les, then offered him a job as a groundman in the line contracting section of the company, now run by his son, while affairs at the union blew over. A lineman in his youth, Fred Hume had always been sympathetic to some of the leading activists within Local 213 and was known to have been particularly friendly with Ed Simpson (Terry's father), a long-time member of the Communist Party of Canada and coach of Hume and Rumble's industrial ice hockey team.¹³⁰ Hockey, and sports in general, had always been important to Hume, and he was quite aware of the newspaper stories describing Les McDonald's role as part of a citywide committee to attract an NHL franchise earlier in the year to Vancouver.¹³¹ Hume was also cognizant of George Gee's fate following his lifetime expulsion from Local 213 eleven years earlier and did not want that history of unemployment to repeat itself.¹³² Les thus continued to bring in an income to support his family and was eventually able to work again as an inside wireman after about six months as a groundman for Hume and Rumble. Ever the optimist, he looked forward eventually to regaining the right to fully participate in Local 213's political affairs.

Two years later Les McDonald left the Communist Party. Having been appropriately enlightened over his decade of progress to the existence in the increasingly staid organization of a Soviet-directed "cascading series of marionettes," he had visibly matured and was finally able to come to terms with the meanings of Stalinism.¹³³ That his introduction to the Communist Party had been mostly through trade union circles might explain how he had been largely shielded from some of the more sordid political machinations of the Toronto-based Central Committee.¹³⁴

But it could not last. What may have helped precipitate Les McDonald's increasing disillusionment about the Communist Party and its leading lights were allegations that he was an agent of the RCMP. On August 11, 1967, a police mole had reported on a (presumably recent) meeting of the trade union branch of the Party in Vancouver. First, the mole reported that those at the meeting spent most of their time discussing what to do about "some friction that existed between two comrades" in the same field, namely George Gee and Les McDonald. According to the mole, Gee (who,

unlike Les, was in attendance) was particularly accusatory about “some of McDONALD’s escapades during the time that the International moved in to break up Local #213 and [create] three other separate Locals.” More concerning was that the meeting chairman, Nigel Morgan, had stated that “although there was nothing that a person could put their finger on for proof there were circumstances that were very questionable, with regard to McDONALD, from a viewpoint of security.” As the mole further reported someone as saying, “It may also be proven that he is just an impossible Leftist and not an agent.” But the seeds of doubt had been planted. What appeared to stop the former union heavyweights from acting, the mole noted, was that if the Party were to “lower the boom” on McDonald, they ran the risk of becoming “public enemy number One where he is concerned and he would attack GEE, the Party and the United Electrical Workers.” Additionally, the party’s trade union director, Charles Caron, “seemed to have a great deal of faith in McDONALD and was very disturbed when it had been suggested that McDONALD was a police agent.” The RCMP mole concluded his remarks with the following analysis: “It would appear that McDONALD’s allegiance is under question by the Party and McDONALD can expect to be given a rough time in the very near future.”¹³⁵

Quite apart from suspicions that he had been an RCMP informer, two additional political issues came to confound McDonald. The first was that his restless, challenging spirit chafed at the Communist Party’s ideological devotion to democratic centralism, especially as it was revealed over time as much more arbitrarily centralist than it was democratic. He was not alone in holding this view. After touring British Columbia to hear opinions on the issue, Ben Swankey, a key BC Communist Party executive member in the late 1960s, presented similar findings to the Central Committee in Toronto: “I fought hard for the elimination of democratic centralism, which I didn’t think was very democratic.”¹³⁶ Conjecture perhaps, but it would have been informative if he could have gone beyond the specific context and critiqued the endemic authoritarianism seemingly required in all vanguardist parties? What should also be considered is that Les McDonald embodied a rare breed of lefty as he was both a Communist and a sport individualist and his independent streak chafed against the irritating restrictions of party discipline. Second, and more importantly, promoting a party-oriented agenda or engaging in class struggle skirmishes, attractive as they might be, could no longer overshadow the reality of Soviet tyranny. His experience at the

Czech border in 1968 meant that for Les, real, live, existing communism became the God that failed.¹³⁷ His disillusionment with the failings of Soviet-style communism was reinforced in 1977 during a two-week visit to East Germany as part of a large Canadian sports and coaching delegation.¹³⁸ Like so many others before him and since, he had now come through the Communist Party.¹³⁹

After the fateful summer of 1968, Les McDonald joined the growing ranks of ex-Communists looking for ways to continue the struggle against oppression independently. In April 1969, he presented an eight-page discussion paper to a forum of formerly Communist and left-leaning trade unionists, in which he criticized breakaway unions in Canada for producing “fractured organizations.” He also recognized that the existence of specifically Canadian branches within the framework of so-called progressive international unions (such as in Mine-Mill or UE), even if they could claim autonomy, “still implies a higher authority which can exercise suzerainty.” Rather than get caught up in this dilemma, however, he focused on the growing, and increasingly disquieting, corporate and political control of Canada by the United States. “The deepening crisis of imperialism and resulting offensive against the working people on the home front,” he argued, “calls for militant policy and a new outlook that recognizes the need for social change.” Marxists had a special role in this respect to assist labour in developing such an outlook. Although this would be challenging, he acknowledged, “the outcome will be to place labor in its rightful role as a leader for social change and independence in Canada.” He wanted to see workers in Canada not merely aid, but in fact “play a leading role in the struggle for economic and political emancipation of itself as a class, and our nation as a whole.”¹⁴⁰

On the issue of the Communist Party and its vanguardist role on this important question, Les McDonald would have agreed wholeheartedly with Homer Stevens, Communist leader of the Fishermen’s union, who argued retrospectively: “Not that the working class can solve everything on its own. But to make changes in our system can’t be done by following someone else’s ideas and strategies.”¹⁴¹ As the years went by and the Communist Party in Canada inexorably shrank, McDonald would nevertheless have concluded, along with former Comrade Jim MacFarlan, that “the party smacks of death and defeat; it’s a dinosaur.”¹⁴² The NDP, a disheartening and continuously compromising social democratic party, temporarily became

his hard-to-accept alternative on the left. Following his frustrations with the Dave Barrett-led government, in particular its back-to-work legislation aimed at the strike-bound members of the pulp and paper workers in 1975, Les would recast himself as an independent socialist. For a number of years, however, he appeared genuinely irritated and uncomfortable that the political North Star of his young adulthood had irremediably gone askew. In any case, he had other outlets for his energies, and, with time, it became apparent that his new North Star was the organizing and promoting of mass participation in sports events. On the political-personal front, despite an ongoing disagreement over Czechoslovakia that lasted several decades, he eventually re-established a relationship of sorts with Bill Stewart. Both Bill and Dora had remained unapologetic defenders of the Soviet Union, and Bill had retired from his political career with the Communist Party of Canada having risen through the ranks to become Party leader in Ontario. Agreeing to disagree, at least up to a point, Les began corresponding intermittently with his once-activist friend and former mentor retired to the small Okanagan community of Peachland, BC, in 1988.¹⁴³ But that was as far as it went: they rarely, if ever, met face-to-face again, their political disagreements ruling out a potential renewal of their former friendship.

Les McDonald's break with the Communist Party did not mean that his jobsite activism or political acumen had been entirely extinguished. In the 1972 lockout he teamed up with a young electrician, Alfie Huston, "running flying picket squads" to help co-ordinate the shutdown of Vancouver-area construction sites.¹⁴⁴ Three years later, unable to curb his combative instincts and continuing to loathe a perceived IBEW-permitted exploitation of workers, particularly when he felt personally victimized, McDonald was identified in the local press when he helped lead a two-day wobble on Vancouver's Pacific Centre construction site. Alongside eight other left-leaning electricians who were protesting out-of-town workers on permit being kept on the job by the company, Canadian Electrical Contractors, while Local 213's members were laid off—leading notably to the firing of an exasperated Fred Reilly, the electrical crew's shop steward—Les McDonald was reprimanded and charged by Cliff Rundgren. On the face of it referencing Rundgren's past political preferences, it came to be known as "the 1975 purge."¹⁴⁵ The *Vancouver Sun* reported that the resulting union trial "stemmed from internal disputes over handling of layoffs out of seniority order on some Greater Vancouver construction sites. . . . The charges

alleged slandering of other members, advocating or causing work stoppages, usurping responsibilities of leaders, and failing to follow rules and procedures for resolving differences.”¹⁴⁶ Six of the electricians suspended by the union would appeal to the International Office, then eventually launch legal proceedings against Local 213.¹⁴⁷ Their expensive judicial appeal through the British Columbia legal system would be mercifully short-circuited as the matter was settled out of court. Terry Simpson, the previously unsuccessful rival to Cliff Rundgren, started the ball rolling by registering a very rare win in his appeal to the International Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1978.¹⁴⁸ His redemption was followed by the unusually benign intervention of the International Office whereupon it admitted defeat, lifted all the associated suspensions, and agreed to cover the legal expenses of the affected electricians.¹⁴⁹

The peace between the contending groups did not last. A year later, in 1979, during Local 213’s now triennial elections, the background described as a “bitter internal union dispute . . . amid pleas for Canadian autonomy,” Terry Simpson was fined \$1,000 and suspended for six years in relation to “an anti-establishment election leaflet . . . containing statements about [Cliff Rundgren’s] performance and handling of union funds.” W. A. (Dusty) Rhodes, Sharon Boudier (the first fully certified female electrician in Local 213), Keith Apps, Alfie Huston, Robert Duffey, Richard Mathews, Gerry Halferty, and Paul Yorke were fined a matching \$1,000 and suspended for between three and six years each.¹⁵⁰ Having run on a third opposition slate alongside Jim Gee, the newly elected president, W. Lloyd Fedewa, was put in charge of overseeing a Trial Board panel. But he refused to have the previously appointed group of “establishment executive members” sit on the panel as they had “issued a leaflet of their own defending Rundgren and attacking the rebel unionists.” In an interview with a *Sun* reporter, Fedewa thought the initial Rundgren-supporting panel appointees had already “pre-judged the situation.” His line of logic would unfortunately not be shared. The IBEW’s top representative in Canada, Ken Rose, had taken an interest in the affair, advising Fedewa along the way not to proceed with any changes as these would contravene the union’s constitution. The newly elected local president brazenly refused to heed the advice, instead conducting an initial hearing with a freshly minted Trial Board. Demonstrating historical continuity in Local 213, what happened next did not surprise knowledgeable observers; for his efforts in attempting to exercise a minimal level of

independence, the International Office intervened and relieved Lloyd Fedewa of his presidential duties. It then laid a variety of charges against him, including alleging slander, then suspended him for one year.¹⁵¹ Reacting in turn, the recently deposed president commented: "It's the Canadian autonomy issue again. We just don't have it." He concluded by declaring that Cliff Rundgren had seemingly become a willing servant of establishment forces in the IBEW as he was now "in the international's camp. When he gets in trouble, he just cries to the international."¹⁵² Having recently felt the sting of suspension, Fedewa was perhaps too quick to judge. It nevertheless appeared that Local 213's business manager had discovered which side his bread was buttered on and was now prepared to adopt the IBEW's view of the world. As with so many of his predecessors, Cliff Rundgren didn't really change the position of business manager or the way his local functioned in a business union environment; instead, as his critics never tired of pointing out, the position gradually appeared to change him.¹⁵³

In October 1982, a BC Supreme Court trial was held in the matter of the fines and suspensions. Two of the original nine did not join the expensive lawsuit. Represented by Vancouver lawyers Leo McGrady and Stuart Rush, the aggrieved members of Local 213 alleged that the IBEW had unlawfully "removed a newly elected president and wrongfully suspended six other members following an election dispute."¹⁵⁴ Three weeks into the trial, realizing they might lose, the union again threw in the towel. The International Office agreed to lift Terry Simpson's six-year suspension and reinstate him as a member in good standing. It also agreed to pay out a substantial \$56,000 to cover legal costs incurred by the plaintiffs, as well as overturn all outstanding suspensions. An essential point, however, had been made yet again: challenging the IBEW's near-predicable arbitrary and mean-spirited responses meant risking expensive legal action. A relieved Simpson commented: "Workers in Canada and the United States are held in the same thrall by international unions like the IBEW. They hold them in a real iron grip. Well, maybe we've loosened their pinky a little bit." He concluded by promising to help organize yet another opposition slate for the next executive board elections in Local 213, some two-and-a-half years into the future.¹⁵⁵

Another important lesson to be learned from this lamentable series of events is that the cohesion and internal discipline of the former Communist-led left faction within Local 213 was now completely torn

asunder. Dismayingly endowed with an easily triggered and often unforgiving personality, Les McDonald should have been more willing to listen to others who understood that the Communist Party was constituted of imperfect human beings “who make use of the positions they are elected to [to] perpetuate their personal outlook.”¹⁵⁶ That Les was either not capable, or unwilling, to bend even a little to the opinion of others with whom he had previously worked, and who now had the audacity to tell him what procedures he needed to follow in terms of policing a collective agreement, explains his second suspension in 1975.

At the same time, crack-down on unruly elements among the inside wiremen during Local 213 elections in 1979 helps to illustrate the subsequent turmoil within the union. Having been forged during the 1950s and 1960s, this particular edition of the Communist-led opposition caucus had irreparably fractured and devolved into a toxic pit of personality differences and incessant in-fighting. It was a sorry time.¹⁵⁷ Les loved to sing working-class songs and ballads, particularly those recounting episodes of rebellion or the brotherhood of man: in an earlier era he might well have been a classic itinerant, troubadour-type Wobbly.

The incorrigible McDonald, now nicknamed the “Red Baron” by his fellow electrical workers, was finally able to fully reintegrate Local 213 in 1981. Fifteen years had elapsed since his initial suspension from the Lenkurt affair. As Bill Stewart had done before in his relationship with him, he now assumed the role of mentor to younger electrical workers. He was an integral part in trying to protect and keep the “bubbly crew,” or “bubblyies” (a colourful nickname for alcoholics), somewhat productive on worksites, and advised a politically engaged “variegated left” faction within Local 213.¹⁵⁸ But time was passing him by and the personalities and issues had changed; things were not the same. In Trail, British Columbia’s industrial hinterland, a red-tinged beacon of inspiration, for example, had been extinguished as a fatigued and aging Harvey Murphy (born in 1900) had seemingly given up the fight against his anti-Communist business union rivals; in exchange for a pension, he led his Mine-Mill local into the waiting arms of the United Steelworkers in 1967. Within Local 213, too, the older Gee-era cadre of Communists had either all retired or passed away. In 1973 the first, and single-term, NDP government in BC under Dave Barrett’s leadership removed jurisdiction surrounding labour disputes from the hands of injunction-enthused Supreme Court judges when, under Bill

King's ministerial guidance, it brought into existence a completely revamped provincial Labour Relations Board. Seemingly a deliberate counterpoint, severe governmental cutbacks into British Columbia's social safety net were imposed in the early 1980s by a rejuvenated Social Credit Party, followed by the neutering of Operation Solidarity by the IWA's Jack Munro in a back-room deal with a second-generation Bennett premier, Bill ("Mini-WAC") Bennett. An emboldened anti-labour Social Credit government had then immediately afterwards facilitated construction of the Pennyfarthing condominium development in Vancouver's False Creek with non-union workers; provincial legislation applied to "special economic development projects" now permitted companies to legally skirt the building trades' non-affiliation clause. Being able to do so meant that union workers could henceforth be forced to work alongside non-union workers on these "mixed" construction sites. Alfie Huston remembered that Les and Monique were "serving soup to the picketers" on the Expo site, but it was to no avail.¹⁵⁹ Court cases ensued and the building trades lost. An additional phenomenon, "double-breasting," did not help, either. Under this practice, traditionally organized companies opened up a non-union twin and then shifted all their work to the latter, which meant that a large portion of IBEW members remained unemployed.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that electricians continued to make a living while continuing to pay their union dues. They did this by working for non-union contractors in BC, becoming small-time contractors themselves, finding employment in other trades, or moving to Alberta and Ontario where they worked on permit through other locals. Travelling wiremen were now adopting the itinerant lifestyles of the "boomer" linemen of previous decades who moved around the continent following employment, but the boom conditions of the 1960s had given way to the bust of the 1980s, and work was scarce. It also meant that the trade union movement in BC and its activist members were yet again forced to give up rope in the perpetual tug-of-war of contested class relations. As ever, it seemed, a hoped-for enduring and progressive turn to the left had been either undermined or quashed.

Les McDonald's time away from local union politics certainly hadn't helped matters. No longer as driven to rise up the union ladder as before, he did not wield the same level of influence at union meetings. Yet it appears he still had enough residual reputation to be nominated as a delegate to

the IBEW's International Convention in Toronto in 1986. In the midst of the campaigning alongside a new generation of oppositional activists, Cliff Rundgren named him personally in a newsletter headlined "Credibility Counts." Mailed to every member of Local 213, it spurred a startled McDonald to react prior to the vote by writing an indignant letter of protest to Alfie Huston, who had recently been elected president of Local 213. Normally not one to overreact to personal attacks, the North Vancouver electrician pointed out the obvious intent of this one-sided procedural intervention from on high. He thought Rundgren's comments were "extremely derogatory . . . highly libelous and personal[ly] vindictive," and considered it "impossible to measure the influence such an unsubstantiated slur on the members named, or its [*sic*] effect on the vote being conducted."¹⁶⁰ As could only be expected, however, the election of delegates was now slanted in favour of the "Rundgren Team." Having been directly targeted as being part of an oppositional, nefarious, and Rundgren-described "Wrecking Crew," with no right of reply by way of the local's closely guarded mailing list, Les McDonald was unable to earn a spot as one of Local 213's ten representatives; instead, he finished a dismal seventeenth out of twenty-one candidates.¹⁶¹ Though he had been making his way toward the exits for quite some time, it was a momentous blow to his ego and contributed to the increasing disinterest he exhibited for participating in trade union politics. Adding to his disenchantment was that Local 213's resolution "calling for the I.B.E.W. to reaffiliate with the C.L.C."—something that he adamantly supported—did not find favour with the Resolutions Committee at the Toronto convention and so failed to pass; the same held true for eighteen out of the nineteen resolutions presented by the Vancouver local.¹⁶² The unchanging stranglehold of the International Office on its own electrical locals in English-speaking Canada remained overwhelmingly apparent. As with Jim Kinnaird years earlier, it dawned on McDonald after reading the convention report that it might not be possible to reform the IBEW in his lifetime. The fact that Montréal's Local 568 was placed under trusteeship for the second time in eleven years in 1985 did not help either.¹⁶³ Disillusioned, trade union activism increasingly became the road not taken.¹⁶⁴

In addition, other activities diverted Les McDonald's energy during his suspension. Turning back to sport, his first passion in life, he was selected to take part in the government-sponsored Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition in the summer of 1967, during which multiple teams of climbers scaled



Les McDonald standing at the summit of the newly named Good Neighbour Peak, as a member of the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition in the summer of 1967. Located in the St. Elias range, the 4,785-metre peak straddles the Alaska-Yukon border, and McDonald accordingly holds the Alaska state flag next to the Canadian one. Les McDonald private collection.

upwards of a dozen peaks in the remote St. Elias range. Specifically, Les was a member of the team of climbers, four Canadian and four American, who made the inaugural ascent of what came to be called Good Neighbour Peak, which straddles the Yukon-Alaska border. It was fortuitous timing as he definitely needed distraction from the disastrous outcomes of the Lenkurt strike. Training and preparing for several months in advance was a good way to clear his head and focus on something else.¹⁶⁵ In contrast to his experience in the building trades in general and the IBEW in particular, Les's latest cross-border effort ended well. He and the other team members successfully scaled the 4,785-metre peak and, after sitting out a major snowstorm, slowly but safely made their way back to base camp.¹⁶⁶

Having worked as an assistant coach of the Whistler Mountain Ski Club from roughly 1969 to 1973, and having helped design and spearhead competitions on the Harmony Bowl downhill course at Whistler (known at

the time as the “Back Bowl”), he then explored the possibility of gaining a position in the late 1960s on the executive board of the Canadian Alpine Ski Association. Rebuffed by the bemused conservative guard of the ski racing association, he turned his attention instead to other outdoor athletic endeavours. With a number of good friends, most notably Al Fisher and Loreen Barnett, he established the Alta Lake Sports Club and organized a number of annual events in and around Vancouver and the Whistler valley. He organized the first women’s-only Stanley Park seawall race in 1973, then switched ski codes in the winter and moved away from alpine skiing due largely to the growing and exponential costs of participation. With Fisher and Barnett helping, he directed family and friends over several years in the rehabilitation of long-abandoned and overgrown logging roads to create the nucleus of the cross-country ski trails intertwined around picturesque Lost Lake.¹⁶⁷ The first triathlon he organized was in 1981 at Jericho Beach in Vancouver. Ever the sportsman, he became a world-class triathlete in his own right, zealously training every day with (not always) compatible friends, rain or shine.

Les was not just a sportsman; he was also an administrator. He was president of Triathlon Canada from 1984 through to 1996, and also spearheaded the founding convention in 1989 of the International Triathlon Union (ITU) in Avignon, France. Having been elected president of the ITU in Avignon, he relied on his experience as a “long-time trade unionist” to skillfully inaugurate a World Cup circuit in 1991 for the best triathletes on the planet, insisting that triathlon must be the first sport to offer equal prize money for men and women athletes.¹⁶⁸ Les McDonald had evidently not forsaken his upbringing nor forgotten the bitter struggle of the women at Lenkurt. Having retired from the electrical trades in 1993, at the age of sixty, he then proceeded to guide triathlon into the Olympic Games and the multi-sport event had its debut at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. It was unquestionably his greatest political triumph. In retrospect, it was also the culmination of his exposure and commitment to “proletarian internationalism,” the Leninist ideal of building transnational bonds between working people around the world. The easy transference of this long-term objective to middle-class triathletes was to have positive and long-lasting effects on the triathlon community. Although he was not always on good terms with the sometimes-polarizing ITU president, Scott Zagarino, the former vice-president of USA Triathlon was nevertheless forced to admit: “At the bottom of it all he is the most



Les McDonald with Governor General David Johnston, immediately after his formal investiture into the Order of Canada, November 17, 2013. Les McDonald private collection.

passionate person in the world about the importance of sport in bringing different cultures together.”¹⁶⁹

It’s a cliché, of course, but out of the ashes of defeat at Lenkurt, Les McDonald rose like the legendary phoenix to Olympian heights in triathlon. He was ITU president for nineteen years, from its inception in 1989 to 2008. He was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 2007 and into the BC Sports Hall of Fame in 2009, he received the Olympic Order from IOC president Jacques Rogge in 2010, and he was also the recipient of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012. Most importantly for him, though, he was invested into the Order of Canada in 2013. Its motto was particularly poignant for the now-retired sport administrator: *desiderantes meliorem patriam*—“they desire a better country.” Indeed, Les McDonald did wish this for Canada, but it hadn’t always been through the vehicle of sport.

Bernard St-Jean, long-time functionary of the French Triathlon Federation (FFTri), was one of Les McDonald’s most trusted lieutenants in

Europe. Originally from Dax, St-Jean's description of the ITU president's irrepressible temperament is worth reproducing. His retrospective and very personal account of the success of this charismatic character in building an Olympic sport that was differently directed—McDonald, pointedly, never tired of telling his triathlon audience that “nous ne sommes pas comme les autres” (“we are not like the others”), which lends insight into how he might have impacted the world of trade union politics in an earlier phase of life. As St-Jean remarked:

I think often . . . of Les who comes alive in my memory at unpredictable times. Not only does he appear in my imagination during my regular contact with the triathlon world, but also when I find myself in the street and simply meet with someone for the first time. Les left an impression on me with his overwhelming communicative enthusiasm and his permanent thirst to know, to advance a position, and to persuade his audience. We both had an exacting degree of discipline, but he had a capacity to demonstrate that I do not have, allied with an ambition to change people's minds come what may. Never weary—or at least Les never showed any signs of fatigue—he was always ready to defy the impossible.¹⁷⁰

Triathlon's gain might have been the labour movement's loss.

This page intentionally left blank

Conclusion

The story of Les McDonald's early life in Canada, intrinsically meshed as it is with the evolution of IBEW Local 213 and the Lenkurt Electric strike, could be considered both an inspiring and a cautionary tale. It is an inspiring tale in that Les McDonald's career as a mover and shaker among Vancouver electrical workers can be compared to a briefly glimpsed meteor streaking across the larger labour firmament in British Columbia. McDonald came to Vancouver in the mid-1950s with virtually nothing. He became an accomplished athlete, worked hard at becoming an effective labour activist through Local 213 of the IBEW, and motivated those around him to work toward a common goal so that ordinary working people could get a better deal in life. That he championed labour's cause through the Communist Party for a decade was uncommon but not that unusual in British Columbia's trade union movement of the time, though the party's galvanizing effect was much less pronounced than in earlier decades. That he left behind enough evidence to allow historians to view some of the intricate interplay between himself, his local union, the Communist Party, and employers is not that unique either, though it certainly is in the building trades.¹ McDonald had a number of notable contributions: first, his high risk and evidently rookie attempt in 1960 at improving conditions in Castlegar; second, the factual and argumentative focus he gave Local 213's negotiators in reducing the work week for the inside wiremen in 1964; third, his participation in, and photographic record-keeping of, the successful Squamish wobble in 1965; fourth, the relentless democratic and politically progressive pressure he and Bill Stewart were able to exert by co-ordinating the efforts of the left faction behind the scenes and from the floor of Local 213's union meetings; and fifth, his combative and contributory role in trying to stave off defeat during the 1966 Lenkurt Electric strike. It all adds up to a laudable résumé

for a decidedly imperfect, initially penniless, British immigrant to Canada. The cautionary aspect of his personal tale is that it was perilous to be a union activist while at the same time belonging to the Communist Party. Fellow workers, while viscerally supportive of a variety of strategies for better wages and working conditions, were also leery in the post-World War II anti-Soviet era of any tactics proposed by Communists. Convincing workers of any, and all, political stripes to follow the lead of party activists was seldom easy or straightforward, even when the McCarthy period had supposedly come to an end by the 1960s.

What facilitated matters for the growing and increasingly influential left faction were the several strikes and/or lockout defensive strategies in which the appointed anti-Communist executive board engaged during the latter part of the 1950s. The members of the politically tainted executive board wanted to be successful when biennial elections were once again permitted by the IBEW's International Office in June and July of 1958; in the meantime, the appointees were out to prove themselves to a skeptical rank-and-file.² While not attractive or spectacular in any special or innovative way—the one exception might have been the St. Eloi incident—the subsequent strike and lockout scenarios played right into the hands of the left.³ Suitably combative language and strike precedents were henceforth set by the local's right-wing leaders, and space had unwittingly been created for other kinds of jobsite militancy and work stoppages. Neither should it be overlooked that when elections were once again permitted, initially conservative business managers like Art O'Keeffe might not have been unsympathetic to mid-contract illegal walkouts. He did not have the time to be involved in constant legal disputations with employers, nor was he inclined to play the role of a trade union counterpart to that of popular television lawyer, the fictional Perry Mason. O'Keeffe could clearly use the occasional wobble to promote both his own leadership qualities with the electrical workers and to police to immediate effect Local 213's collective agreements. Forcing chiselling and recalcitrant employers to do the right thing and to comply with the spirit and specific, agreed-upon written requirements previously agreed upon contractually, was much easier if immediate job action took place. That a brief wobble might even be quietly promoted by one of his very own assistant business managers, Tom Constable, to get the attention of management at Lenkurt Electric, speaks volumes about its acceptability in certain cases as a tactical ploy.

Even though mid-contract walkouts were expressly forbidden by provincial labour law and in the IBEW constitution, the bureaucratic red tape and delays involved in proceeding with official grievance procedures could be effectively short-circuited by an organized and motivated group of rank-and-file members in Local 213. For the vanguard-infused left faction, as ever, wobbles could immediately impart a heightened sense of class consciousness on the participating workers. As in Squamish or with the oil workers in 1965, these worksite confrontations might then potentially grow into something more; given fortuitous circumstances combined with elements of foresight and detailed planning, mid-contract walkouts could win not only immediate improvements in wages or working conditions but also focus attention on the importance of political power. On the other hand, as with events at Lenkurt, a wobble might go irredeemably sideways if the balance of forces at play was not carefully weighed before walking out, or if there was not the flexibility and accompanying discipline to retreat and temporarily head back to work.

Whether these impromptu actions were “legal” or not, of course, quickly became the issue for law-and-order business unionists in the IBEW. While everyone in Local 213 conceded that militancy was necessary to set up picket lines and shut down company operations during legal strike situations, the crucial point is that the more conservative elements in the union’s hierarchy were on high alert, looking for potential rebels and revolutionaries they suspected might be lurking in the midst of these—and any other type—of class conflict scenarios with employers. Indeed, although Joseph McCarthy had lost all political influence south of the border by the time Bill Stewart and Les McDonald appeared on the scene, the periodic collusion between employers and top IBEW officials was visible to all interested observers. Corporate interests might have been forced by law to recognize and negotiate with unions, but they did so reluctantly and only if the latter were able to control its rebellious and revolutionary elements. The fundamentals of class relations, it seemed, had not really changed all that much.

Within Local 213’s sphere of influence, the dynamic of constant internal strife among members of the leadership group was dangerous to critics, Communist or not; woe betide anyone who might publicly vilify the wrong person on the executive board! But the history of personal enmity within this leadership group also presented opportunities for the left faction. Art O’Keeffe was living proof that intelligent activism, combined with the

dynamic of bold and impressive personalities, could successfully create wedges and bridgeheads, such that it eventually produced mutual understanding and sometimes outright co-operation from a former opponent. Without doubt people can change—and be changed—to become more progressive in outlook, and leadership is seldom a stagnant, straightforward proposition. However, the reverse, that trade union leaders go the other way and in time become more conservative, is the usual scenario. Being forced by necessity to try and develop stable relationships with aggressive, profit-motivated employers, while at the same time arriving at fundamental understandings with a business union hierarchy, tends to produce a pliant, equally conservative leadership at the local level. This far more common process might best be illustrated by Cliff Rundgren's enduring career as business manager in the decades following the tumultuous events in Burnaby.

In retrospect, Les McDonald and the Lenkurt activists had very little chance of success during the strike episode itself. The presence of a police mole—or several moles—within the electrical workers' union who reported to the RCMP's intelligence branch meant that Les McDonald's every move and utterance at the union hall on Dunsmuir Street was known almost immediately by RCMP commanding officers in British Columbia.⁴ The ensuing near-certainty of the interaction and co-ordination between these police commanders with BC Attorney General Robert Bonner and possibly also Lenkurt president, Chuck Hunter, would help explain the unusually large and intimidating police presence on the picket lines in Burnaby. The result was that uniformed and undercover plainclothes police officers were there en masse during the most acute days of the physical confrontations that took place on May 11 and 12, 1966. Unnerving to middle-of-the-road trade union officials in the BCFL, the sight of uniformed policemen assisting scabs across violent picket lines—with the additional provocations of undercover agents—explains in large part the sudden retreat of the labour movement from the increasingly intense encounters taking place on the ground. From this perspective, and right from the start of the Lenkurt quandary, the possibility of Les McDonald pulling off a “win” in this troubling strike scenario was thus highly unlikely. Some PWM supporters argued that stacking the picket lines with yet more labour supporters should have been the preferred option, though the possibility of continuing and selective arrests, along with union-crippling fines, would have been a predictable and damaging worse-case scenario for all concerned. Or would the Social Credit

government of the day and Chuck Hunter have backed down? The recent victory a year earlier in the oil workers' dispute cannot be ignored when considering denser picket lines from this angle. The only possible answer is a loud and resounding "maybe." In hindsight, somehow coming up with a cautious and face-saving retreat right at the beginning of the walkout, while quietly planning and co-ordinating more effective tactics, might undoubtedly have been preferred. Hindsight being twenty-twenty, these are ideas to be chewed over with labour strategists, keeping in mind that none of these hypothetical scenarios is of course what actually happened.

Deeply disturbing, though not altogether surprising, the resources and financial costs expended to watch, listen, and inform on Communists and other left-wingers within the labour movement must have been—continues to be (?)—enormous.⁵ It also reveals much about the Canadian state's close monitoring of labour activists and their subsequent strategic manoeuvrings, either politically or on the jobsite. Though the Communist Party was perfectly legal in Canada, Les McDonald and his supporters in Local 213's left faction were evidently considered and designated carriers and disseminators of "Dangerous New Ideas"—though they were hardly either—to be monitored and countered whenever possible.⁶ The labour movement in general, and its left-wingers in particular, were forced to act within a predictable and limited range of behaviour. Going beyond established boundaries could result in swift and foreseeable punishment. Within the IBEW itself, the Soviet-associated Marxist class struggle was to be derided, brushed aside, and replaced with the more easily understood cash struggle. Militant tactics might indeed need to be deployed, but more was simply better. Getting to "the good life," repeatedly propounded during a 1968 provincial election campaign by long-standing BC premier, W. A. C. Bennett, was surely just around the corner.⁷ If this basic and simplistic outlook was not well and truly absorbed, the courts and legal system might need to be invoked, in addition to internal trade union disciplinary measures.

The latter could often appear to be as equally as severe as the former. Ed Finn, a Newfoundlander and top official of the CLC in the 1960s, was a keen observer of the political machinations within the top echelons of organized labour. He commented several years later that the leadership's "conservatism is appalling," yet the reformist goals of the labour movement were admirable, "and its function of redistributing the nation's wealth indispensable." Caught up in a gigantic and continually evolving scenario of seemingly

inevitable class antagonisms—outwardly apparent during strike and lockout episodes, often less visible between contracts—unions in Canada in either case behaved “like a nation at war; they expected blind obedience within their ranks to their policies and decisions.” Concluding with a compelling medieval imagery, Finn declared: “Its sentries patrol the ramparts of Fortress Labor, ready to repel invaders armed with Dangerous New Ideas. Inside, its ‘Holy Office’ keeps a vigilant eye on suspected heretics, ready to send them to Coventry if they deviate too far from official dogma.”⁸

Looking forward from the defeat at Lenkurt, it is evident that this short but violent episode in BC labour history was part of a serious pushback by organized labour against employer-initiated *ex parte* injunctions. Minor as it might have been considered in the big picture, the Lenkurt strike was an important event in the struggle by the BCFL against the systematic abuse by employers of this judicial weapon during labour disputes. Probably the best-known of union opposition in the province against these injunctions came from the Fishermen’s union. Editor George North was cited for contempt of court and jailed for three months in 1959 for having written an editorial in his union newspaper, *The Fisherman*.⁹ Then, the year after Lenkurt, Homer Stevens (secretary-treasurer) and Steve Stavenes (president) of the UFAWU, spent an entire year in jail for defying a BC Supreme Court injunction in the Prince Rupert Fishermen’s Co-op strike of 1967.¹⁰ Their fate prompted a declaration by Roy Smith of the ILWU that “injunctions are used more extensively in B.C. than anywhere else in the world, and . . . the sentences now imposed constitute a new record for the Commonwealth.” Echoing the words of CLC president Claude Jodoin in 1966, he called for a Canada-wide battle against court-issued injunctions outlawing the right to strike and being able to picket an employer’s premises.¹¹ Simply put, *ex parte* injunctions in labour disputes would have to be challenged to be withdrawn as a weapon used by employers and to be exposed for what they represented: a distinct trend toward the recriminalization of the hard-won right to picket. Ben Isitt framed the ensuing issue arising out of the Lenkurt dispute, along with other union battles at the time, as a “crisis of legal legitimacy.” Contrary to the IBEW’s articulated approval of existing labour laws, no matter how unjust they appeared to be, several industrial unions in British Columbia explicitly disagreed with the conservative leadership of the electrical workers; these left-leaning unions very quickly anchored themselves to the “widespread belief that it was ethically sound to defy

the court's authority."¹² Isitt goes on to give examples of how, in "a tangible way, the judiciary intervened to legally delineate the spaces around workplaces as employers' property—demonstrating the contestation of space in relation to protest."¹³ He might have simplified his arguments by frankly stating that barring memorable labour struggles, lengthy legal battles, and accompanying noteworthy political exceptions, "they who have the gold make the rules." As stated earlier, the first NDP government of 1972–1975 broke the cycle of employer-initiated *ex parte* injunctions on picketing in the province, though contemporary events make it appear it might only have been a temporary reprieve.

More importantly, the events at Lenkurt beg the question as to whether or not *ex parte* injunctions were, in fact, successful in intimidating unions and their workers, to the point that the latter would return to the jobsite and be as productive as before the dispute. In the case of the Lenkurt Electric Company, the defeat of the strikers meant that production of electronic equipment could continue as before according to company requirements, but henceforth with a much more compliant workforce. *The Fisherman's* George North was perhaps too optimistic. Despite occasional violence and the necessary imprisonment of union leaders and their hard-core militant supporters, employers became reliant on *ex parte* injunctions precisely because they worked. As Les McDonald aptly declared during a public panel discussion in Vancouver in October 1966, "Injunctions are being used to clobber the labor movement. It used to be the police, armed forces, goons or scabs, now it's injunctions."¹⁴ It took an exceptionally spirited campaign from left-wing sections of organized labour and its legal and political allies, to put a stop "to the system of free-wheeling injunctions."¹⁵

Yet even though the BCFL had quickly pivoted to focus on the evils of *ex parte* injunctions and the way this legal weapon was systematically abused by employers in labour disputes, the Lenkurt strike and its aftermath was just as much about settling old scores. Conservative forces in the IBEW were determined not to let Communist electrical workers and their supporters gain a foothold once again within Local 213. They were also not going to allow business manager Art O'Keeffe to be increasingly on the same side as Party activists during internal trade union debates. Most importantly, they did not want someone like O'Keeffe to allow criticism of Jack Ross, the IBEW's veteran International representative in Vancouver, to erupt from the floor of general meetings or for him to be embarrassed in

such visible and public forums as the BC Supreme Court. The walkout at Lenkurt provided the union hierarchy with an unexpected opportunity to eradicate much of the work done by Bill Stewart, Les McDonald, and the comrades in rebuilding the left faction among the electrical workers. When this political lens is applied to the internal crisis that gripped the electrical workers' local in the mid-1960s, it becomes evident that the shop-floor struggle by the Lenkurt women to win wage parity with their male counterparts, to stop the imposition of arbitrary overtime, and be treated as equals within the IBEW, quickly became a catalyst that triggered a series of events that were much larger in scope. On one side of the proverbial coin, Lenkurt provided a fortuitous reason for the subsequent intervention of the IBEW's International Office; on the other, once the strike was defeated and punishments meted out, it provided the launching pad for the rebirth of efforts to build an independent and democratic Canadian trade union movement. This mostly involved younger workers who were fed up with the controlling and often class-collaborationist values of the old guard ensconced in the upper echelons of the IBEW; at the same time, they were not prepared to toe the line of the Communist Party of Canada on the trade union question. The nascent grouping within the leadership of the CEWU contained political elements of Trotskyism, Maoism, and trade union labourites with strong Canadian nationalist leanings. It could reasonably be argued that a left-nationalist formation from within organized labour had emerged from the ranks of the electrical workers. It was not the "New Left," in the sense that the sectarianism so visibly on display in different student groupings of the time often led to bitter in-fighting, isolation, and their eventual collapse.¹⁶ The hard-working and tenacious Jess Succamore made sure that the political views of this nascent leadership group were either completely abandoned or tightly reigned in. Despite the schismatic accusations of the Communist Party at its founding, the prime focus of the CEWU—and later on CAIMAW and the CCU—was complete and total independence from American-controlled "international" unions. For this group at least it was no longer acceptable to be submissive, to be either a distant offshoot of the fast-fading British identity, or to take lying down George Grant's memorable 1965 lament that "the Canadian ruling class looks across the border for its final authority in both politics and culture."¹⁷ Meanwhile, while not entirely forsaken, the fate of the Lenkurt shop-floor women workers very quickly faded from view. A sad indictment

of everyone involved, it would foreshadow a similar dispute a year later in Peterborough, Ontario. As in Burnaby, the epilogue of the Tilco battle against *ex parte* injunctions was such that “the strike went from being a just struggle of women against their employer to a heroic war of men sent to jail for their principles.”¹⁸

Historically important even if it was only to last three years as a separate entity before joining CAIMAW, the founding of the CEWU on November 6, 1966, was symbolically preceded by a notable trilogy of baptismal violence that heralded its uneasy birth: serious physical confrontations with police on the picket lines, an old-fashion punch-up in the executive board meeting room at the union hall, and the jailing for several months each of four of the leading trade unionists in the BC labour movement. The CEWU preceded the foundation of FIPOE in Québec by only a handful of years, and these several episodes of physical confrontations meant that the CEWU was born tough, its nationalist and democratic argumentation proving to be resilient and longer-lasting than even its most vocal critics might have expected. Their similar beginnings underscore the often-unfortunate requirement of physical violence continuing into this time period as an apparently necessary handmaiden of fundamental political and social change in the trade union movement.¹⁹ Physical confrontations, it seemed, were required to escape from the clutches of the IBEW elsewhere in Canada, too. Opening a brief hypothetical parenthesis, even if events in Vancouver and Montréal had somehow wondrously been synchronized to happen at precisely the same time, profound differences in language and culture would have been compounded by the country’s vast geography. In the era before the internet it meant that the tiny manufacturing-oriented CEWU would probably have been unable to successfully link up with the larger breakaway and dominant French-speaking electricians, linemen, and cable workers who left the IBEW to join the FIPOE. It is highly improbable, in any case, that Louis Laberge would have contemplated for more than an instant supporting the departure of the construction unions in the Quebec Federation of Labour from American-dominated outfits, only to turn around and join forces with “les maudits anglais,” the traditional exploiters of the French-Canadian working class. Not that a potential compact ever crossed their minds—it did not—but in this regard it would have been equally impossible for George Brown, Jess Succamore, or their allies to overlook the disquieting profiles of several of the new construction unions in Québec, including an unproven FIPOE.

As with the early years of New York Local 3's existence, it is disturbing to note how easily trade union politics can descend into a bottomless pit of corruption and a violence-tinged culture.²⁰

Given the critical body blows delivered to Local 213 via the crucible of the Lenkurt strike, informed observers might also have legitimately paraphrased Abraham Lincoln: how could a union so divided against itself still stand? On at least three occasions during the first part of the twentieth century, the underlying contradictions endemic to the functioning of the Vancouver electrical workers' union exploded to the surface for all to see. Was the troubled evolution of Local 213 merely an accident of history? Something completely out of the ordinary as compared to the vast majority of locals in the IBEW? While the reply to these last two questions is probably a qualified "yes," much more comparative research is required before clear and incontrovertible answers can be proposed. As could only be expected, Jess Succamore, lead figure in the founding of the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union, would have immediately advanced a preliminary and necessary step as a way out of these problems: the complete abandonment of the IBEW by rank-and-file Canadian electrical workers, and to replace the American-focused union with the thoroughly democratic and Canada-only CEWU.²¹ Succamore and his companions took this decisive breakaway decision in the electrical manufacturing sector despite serious disagreements from within the ranks of Local 213 itself; influential critics like Jack Cody were quick to point out the predictable negative outcomes of trade union nationalism being applied as a solution to the ills of IBEW business unionism. As already pointed out, Cody's argumentation was not just a lonely voice crying in the wilderness. The BC labour movement's still-influential Communist Party persuaded lead activists like Les McDonald to backtrack from their original pronouncements, which meant that a nationalist membership movement out of international unions—and yet another potential crisis—was avoided in British Columbia's construction sector.

As with the hostility and hatred that family disputes can generate and leave in their wake, it makes healing painstakingly difficult. Those in charge must pay special attention to the fires that fuelled these conflicts in the first place, as they continue to smoulder away invisibly underground, waiting to be reignited by fresh doses of oxygen. In this regard, the IBEW did little to resolve the repeated internal crises that erupted in its troubled Vancouver local amicably, preferring instead to intervene in heavy-handed ways

to crush the dissenters. Following the unilateral replacement of a defiant business manager, then multiple internal trials and suspensions, the preferred solution the year after Lenkurt was to split up Local 213 into more manageable parts, isolating from each other the inside wiremen, hydro and contract linemen, and the agitated manufacturing unit. The International Office could now focus on each of these groups separately, rather than having to deal with a seemingly inevitable alliance of opponents, melded together at monthly general meetings via the left faction, or any other oppositional aspect of the militant minority. In this, the IBEW might have finally been at least somewhat successful: alongside the elimination of general meetings and the parallel collapse of the Communist Party, there appears—outwardly at least—to have been a marked decrease these past few decades in the traditional internal tensions that have historically characterized the union and Vancouver electrical workers. Forced upon him or not, Cliff Rundgren’s successful manipulation of the dispatching office to suppress the use of the wobble as a left faction guerrilla tactic has also seemingly been remarkably effective; there are no longer multiple newspaper-worthy mid-contract walkouts featuring Local 213 on union construction sites in British Columbia.

In one of his last interviews, Jess Succamore ruminated on the impact of the Lenkurt Electric strike. If nothing else, it was a classic example of how a breakdown in the collective bargaining process can subsequently shape the political life of its participants.²² Succamore is emphatic in arguing that in the post–World War II era the unanticipated walkout, with all of its encompassing conflicts, trials, tribulations, and outcomes, “might have been one of the most important events in BC labour history.”²³ Not to quibble too much with his assessment, but the 1948 split in the British Columbia IWA, precipitated by its Communist leadership, and Operation Solidarity in 1983 might vie for the title of “most important.” However, during the turbulent decade of the 1960s, Lenkurt truly was important, even if abandoned Mine-Mill supporters in Trail in 1967, or jailed UFAWU representatives George North, Steve Stavenes, and Homer Stevens, might understandably disagree. But for Succamore himself, Lenkurt certainly was significant as the moment that initiated his consequent peregrination through a new form of trade union movement that he joined, then helped personally to influence and guide. His comment is also well worth considering in the context of the

larger picture of the evolution of labour representation and class conflict in British Columbia.

The most problematic issue arising out of a synopsis of Les McDonald's activist career as an electrical worker is assessing the role of the Communist Party within Local 213. Creating a vanguard of the working class to lead the electrical workers was never going to be a simple task as an unholy trinity of employers, the state, and conservative union officials would work, seemingly hand-in-hand, to oppose even the hint of a Communist agenda at play. But in case the evidence is not yet clear enough, at one level—a visible level—the Communist Party's impact within the local union in the 1950s and 1960s was not as a “revolutionary vanguard of the working class.” Over the decades the party in Canada had drifted away from the revolutionary aspect of its program and, within the trade union bureaucracy at least, had become a “reformist vanguard” of the working class. Norman Penner, in his valuable insights into the internal dynamic of the party, has even argued that Communist trade unionists who won elected positions in unions across the country “were accorded those offices not as revolutionaries but for their excellence in trade union functions, which are, by their very nature in capitalist society, reformist.”²⁴ Harvey Murphy, the western representative of the Mine-Mill union, and Local 213's very own George Gee offer classic examples of fine Communist trade union leaders with democratic mindsets who won good collective agreements. Like most Communist second-tier leaders, they undoubtedly discussed exploring alternative options and viewed their stellar trade union work as part of a larger effort to establish a socialist society. Murphy, who arguably elevated his struggles and prominence to untouchable status in the Communist Party—he was once described as “lord over all he surveys”—also visibly tried to do things differently from the security of Trail, his West Kootenay industrial citadel straddling the Columbia River.²⁵ Boldly venturing out, his successful staging of the four famous and successive Paul Robeson Peace Arch concerts starting in 1952 is a prime example, as was his union's well-publicized showing of blacklisted *Salt of the Earth* at the Castle Theatre in nearby Castlegar. But Communist trade union leaders were limited by the very real constraints of 1950s Canada, McCarthyism, the Cold War, and the restrictive bonds of trade unionism itself. On the surface, what largely differentiated Communist trade union officials from those with other left-leaning political affiliations was their commitment to rank-and-file democracy and an unswerving loyalty to the Soviet Union.

With all the noise in the discussions within Mine-Mill and Local 213 about workplace grievances and trade union politics, this unquestioned loyalty to the Soviet Union often quickly receded to the background. Yet it is clear that the democratic and reformist measures championed by the Communist Party were important to the electrical workers and cannot be ignored. Activists within the Communist Party were certainly and measurably present within Local 213: as already described, they worked tirelessly to bring democracy and membership control back to the local union after the George Gee expulsion and subsequent suspensions and trusteeship; and Party members did play important roles in numerous conflicts, both external and internal, that afflicted the Vancouver electrical workers' union. The influence in this respect of the generation of Communist electrical workers whose outlook had been forged in the Great Depression and World War II—or at least its remnants—Bill Stewart, Sid Sheard, Bill Gee, Jack Gillett, and others, cannot be ignored. While the majority for the most part was still suspended due to the 1955 George Gee debacle and thus unable to attend union meetings, they were nevertheless dispatched to various job sites by Local 213 to earn a living. It is not too far of a stretch to imagine their influence during lunch-time conversations initiated with their fellow workers on the inequities of capitalist society and the sometimes-duplicitous role of the IBEW within it. The left faction was arguably even on the verge of winning back some measure of direct executive board influence when the unanticipated Lenkurt Electric strike broke out. This pivotal event dashed any possibility of the party—through Les McDonald—having key individuals elected on the proposed “unity” slate in 1966; though, even if the entire slate had been elected, the eventual long-term impact on the life of the local would undoubtedly make for a lively series of discussions.

As another aside and for argument's sake, these discussions might have included the very plausible scenario that the defeated conservative group would now have been on the outside looking in, and would have simply demanded more from an oppositional point of view: traditionally, from them, it was limited to amicable relations with employers whenever possible, better contracts, internal financial accountability, and political neutrality. Eventually there might have been an electoral alternation of groups, the “left” sometimes in, then sometimes out; Local 213 would in some years wear a red trade union tuque, in other years a blue trade union tuque. As Art O’Keeffe—followed by Jim Kinnaird, and even Cliff Rundgren—were

to exemplify throughout their tenures as business managers, despite their valiant efforts to garner more autonomy for Canadian IBEW locals, it arguably wouldn't have changed much of anything at all as Local 213 would still be wearing its traditional trade union tuque. The structural root of the problem was that being a cog in the wheel of an American-based international business union had historically been their entire "raison d'être." Was there the potential for something different? For something more than a pure and simple business union engaged in repeated acts of militancy as required? Yes, definitely. This, of course, is an enormous theoretical and political minefield of hotly contested terrain. Henri Gagnon, the Québécois electrical worker and (intermittent) Communist, had once written a warning about expecting too much from left-controlled unions. In an echo of similar critiques, he remarked:

In some cases, our work will be limited to winning certain strategic posts to then reign by decree on specific branches of working-class movements. In other cases, the discussion of problems and the taking of decisions will limit themselves to the office and to the executive of the union, then be transmitted by decree to the industrial groups. Put another way, if there is no concerted struggle against economism, it means a slide towards bureaucratic trade unionism.²⁶

Suffice it to say that the left faction attempted at times during informal discussions to untangle this Gordian knot of competing ideas. Looking back, at the very least its activists were searching for ways to reconnect electrical workers with the symbiotic relationship of the early trade union movement and socialism. They would have completely rejected the controlling labour aristocracy entrenched in the IBEW's International Office, an orthodox and seemingly unchanging group, almost impossible to be recalled by the membership. Instead, they would have searched for ways to move toward a less hierarchical trade union movement, one oriented much more toward class solidarity and real, substantive rank-and-file democracy, in an effort to enhance the lives of all working people. They were visibly trying to think their way out of the restrictive framework of collective bargaining only. Looking forward, and despite being a card-carrying Communist, Les McDonald would have been sympathetic toward a left-syndicalist approach, whereby trade unions participate directly in the management of state-owned

companies involved in construction. Though he refrained from publicly articulating these strongly held views later on in life, he most likely would not have disagreed with Harry Bridges, the well-known and outspoken leader of the west coast longshoremen in both Canada and the United States. As president of the ILWU, an international union with a distinctly different form and outlook—as with several Communist-influenced unions, his salary was no more than that of the highest-paid worker in the industry—and while giving a speech during the late 1930s at the University of Washington, Bridges had once memorably argued:

We take the stand that we as workers have nothing in common with the employers. We are in a class struggle, and we subscribe to the belief that if the employer is not in business his products will still be necessary and we still will be providing them when there is no employing class. We frankly believe that day is coming.²⁷

As critics have pointed out about the former Soviet bloc of countries, if a socialist society in Canada were to appear magically in place overnight, might a trade union such as Local 213 have risked being transformed into a mere conveyor belt for Communist Party directives, a sort of red company union as in the former USSR? If so, Les would have fought long and hard against any such notion. Provoked, he would have been more than capable of quoting Lenin himself, who wrote in 1919:

We must ever more broaden the participation of the workers themselves in the direction of the economy . . . if we fail to convert the trade unions into organs educating the masses, on a scale ten times larger than at present, for the immediate participation in the direction of the state, then we shall not achieve our objective in building communism.²⁸

At the same time, the indefatigable McDonald would have reminded his audience that regardless of the nature of the boss and type of society in which we live, workers will forever have to wake up early during dark and chilly winter mornings, get to the jobsite on time, and be productive come what may. Dreaming for a moment of what might be, whom workers toil away for—and why—would obviously be key motivating factors in a utopian worker-guided society.

In this context, it would have been fascinating to listen in one evening on a hypothetical discussion in the early 1970s between Harry Van Arsdale Jr. and Les McDonald. Neither one of them lived within the context of a society on the verge of revolutionary upheaval, though the Great Depression of the 1930s they both experienced at different stages in their lives arguably held some potential for cataclysmic change. Afterwards, as the economy soared with the spending stimulus initially provided by World War II, could Van Arsdale Jr. not honestly have asked if his piloting of Local 3's undeniable success was not the limit of what was possible? That in North America in a post-McCarthyist era, where the traditional left had effectively been neutralized, were they not heading ineluctably toward an ideological trap of sorts, soon to be touted as a TINA environment—There Is No Alternative? Why go down the communist path, when internationally the only living examples meant the oppression of the Soviet Union or Mao's China? Moreover, at home, such an outlook led only to defeat, misery, and a foreseeable dead end. Les McDonald's reply might have taken some time, starting perhaps with the retort that the supposed "dead end" of an activist left-wing approach to trade union politics in North America was in no small part due to a reactionary trade union leadership that, as in the IBEW, was mostly unable, or unwilling—outside of New York's exceptional Local 3—to permit the exploration of anything off the beaten path.²⁹ There had to be more to life than higher wages and the philosophy of accumulating "more"; that's why he'd willingly been part of a vanguard that he believed existed to push the limits of the possible. Allied to intelligent, passionate struggle, the impossible was not unachievable; with the right leadership and organizational structures, nothing in life was irreversible or inevitable.

Les might have conceded the point on the USSR and China, though he could then have fallen back on the classic defence of former Communists, in that the path to Western socialism did not have to mean Marx-Lenin-Stalin/Mao. He could also have cited the fastest growing Gross Domestic Product in the world over several decades in those two countries during the twentieth century, astonishingly raising in record time the standard of living of hundreds of millions of generations of previously poverty-stricken, illiterate peasants. As well, North American wealth had not been attained without first removing by disease, starvation, or bullets, millions of Indigenous people who stood in the way of a systematic industrial assault upon the continent's resources. Nor could the massive exploitation of millions of

enslaved Black people in mostly southern states, or of the ground-down immigrant women, children, and working-class families that followed, be ignored in the loudly trumpeted “success story” of North American capitalism. His main point, however, would have been about who took the lead on the job or at union meetings whenever there was an issue at work; as far as his personal experience told him, it was mostly the party guys. As with the generation before him, you couldn’t trust anyone else to speak up and actually do something, especially champions of social democratic and parliamentary gradualism, the so-called “liberals in a hurry.”³⁰ And, frankly, as far as he was concerned, that made all the difference! In addition, under capitalism, there were constant eruptions of working-class revolts and experiments in trying to do things differently. He might have cited working-class surges across Canada and the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and elsewhere around the world, such as the massive strikes in Italy, particularly at car-maker FIAT in Turin; a worker-led takeover of the Lip watch-manufacturing factory in Besançon, France; the nine months “work-in” by Clyde-side shipbuilders in Glasgow led by Jimmy Reid that attempted to do the same; or perhaps even an example of working-class diligence and stability, the long-term and still-existing giant Mondragon manufacturing co-op in Spain’s Basque region (today it has over 74,000 worker-owners). Les might then have pointed at the Joint Industrial Board in New York City or the Council on Industrial Relations in Washington as examples of existing structures, already in place, that could potentially be transformed; with local union and democratic rank-and-file participation, the society of the future could be built within the ashes of the old.

Needless to say, the conversation, morphing undoubtedly at one point into a monopolizing discourse from Les about what might accrue with a differently organized workplace—his close friends would knowingly smile at this point—would have continued long into the night. Though one was devoutly Roman Catholic in his outlook on the world and the other now an independent-minded socialist, they might have been able—just maybe—to come to some kind of mutual consensus, particularly as they had similarly been champions of the shorter workday and the necessity to harness technology for the benefit of workers. As Van Arsdale Jr. once shrewdly observed: “A labor union must go forward or it will slip backward—there’s no middle ground.”³¹ He added yet another motherhood and apple pie-type statement they both could have instantly agreed upon: “The electricians bring light

to the world. Why shouldn't we lead the way?"³² Aside from an overarching McDonald-imposed question of who, indeed, owns and controls the means of production in any given country, and everything that derives from this fundamental issue, they were perhaps not all that far apart. Author Gene Ruffini describes well why Van Arsdale Jr.'s view of the world and personality may have eventually meshed with Les McDonald's: "Van Arsdale's sense and practice of fraternity, his self-sacrifice, and his communal philosophies were in the best traditions of worker societies and guilds since their inception."³³ Elsewhere, Ruffini quotes another Van Arsdale quote that resonates: "He had great social vision which sometimes you didn't quite realize until you knew him because he was a rough and ready fellow in many ways."³⁴

Not as fraught with controversy and in keeping with his athletic passions, Les McDonald would definitely have been keen to implement a portion of the Soviet model and of left-led labour organizations around the world, wherein cultural practices such as sport and leisure activities are part and parcel of the existential outreach to union members and their families. Sport and leisure quite obviously promote health and fitness and a better quality of life for masses of people. More applicable to his way of thinking, they also help mould a working-class culture and identity, which is part of the process of changing the very soul of a business union model like the IBEW. His wife, Monique, once remarked in this regard that "my husband always tended to be more active as a sportsman than as a Communist."³⁵ Les McDonald was never confronted with the reality of having to make decisions regarding these issues—surely not his only choices—so we will never know what political and cultural options he would have settled on. As with a few outspoken BC trade union activists in the Communist Party at the time, he believed that being part of something bigger than himself with a history of perceived successes around the world, gave him, in Homer Stevens's words, "a longer-term perspective on the changing nature of the struggle against capitalism and what I hoped and expected would ultimately be the transition to socialism."³⁶

Back in the real world, if breaking away from the IBEW was not in the cards for Communist electrical workers and their allies in 1966, then affecting some sense of progressive change on even a part of the leadership structure in the International Office was unquestionably part of the desired end-goal for these left faction activists. But other than working in sometime innovative fashion during local class conflict scenarios and advocating for

change at conventions, making even the slightest inroad into this deeply rooted, conservative, and American-based hierarchy was at best a task of herculean proportions. Being geographically and politically isolated on the Canadian west coast certainly didn't help matters. The Lenkurt strike then precipitated a serious schism in the oppositional left within Local 213. A small nationalist and necessarily secessionist union was created, the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union, which took with it other emerging political activists from the IBEW. That the Communist Party opposed the creation of an independent Canadian electrical workers' union spoke both to its own internationalist perspective and its earlier unsuccessful venture in parting ways with the IWA in 1948. Arguably, however, times were changing: not supporting the creation of the CEWU in 1966 might have been an opportunity lost.³⁷ It also meant there would be a minimum fifteen-year hiatus for the "Red Baron" from being directly involved in Local 213's politics again. Agreeing to toe the party line on the breakaway CEWU ironically signalled the beginning of the end of Les McDonald's trade union political career.³⁸ More significantly, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 created yet another crisis within the Communist Party of Canada, one important side-effect being that organized Party influence within Local 213 virtually disappeared from the scene by the early 1970s. Along with its disappearance went an easily identifiable section of the militant minority within the Vancouver electrical local.³⁹ In hindsight it also brought about a seismic break with the political and activist tradition that had long been a hallmark of IBEW Local 213.

Did the Communist Party play a positive role in the history of Local 213 and in the lives of ordinary electrical workers? Despite its steadfast devotion to the Soviet Union and its own top-down style of leadership, given the historical evidence surrounding its activists, the short answer is "yes." Other BC historians have already written sympathetically on this important question in terms of its role in the province's unions.⁴⁰ Again, Les McDonald's notable contribution in successfully promoting the historic shorter work week in 1964 on behalf of the inside wiremen, is convincing evidence that Communists were interacting with the electrical workers' union and its rank and file in a positive way. The educational role that Party activists played both at jobsite interactions and at union meetings was also crucial from a historical perspective. Even though they might have been skeptical as to the endgame of the Communist Party of Canada, young electrical

workers such as Les McDonald, Jim Kinnaird, George Angus, Jess Succamore, or Tom Constable indubitably benefited from myriad explanations of the labour theory of surplus value, exposés on the inherent predatory behaviour of monopoly capitalism, and analyses linking Canadian foreign policy to the violent military interventions of American imperialism. An important measure of the self-confidence in their heightened intellectual acumen was that several of these activists would later venture out from the familiar confines of their local union, competing successfully for office in other spheres of public and trade union endeavour.⁴¹ Jack Ross, the sharp-eyed and veteran observer of Communist tactics amid the electrical workers, once perceptively complained that “there was too much emphasis on politics” within Local 213.⁴² He was almost certainly right. At another very important level, one that is barely visible level for most historians as there is normally very little documentation, rank-and-file workers also benefited from learning how to stage effective workplace resistance in opposition to avaricious employers from Communist veterans like Sid Sheard, Bob Towle, Jack Gillett, or even a young and audacious Les McDonald himself.⁴³ But it was not the all-out embodiment of a vanguard-led revolutionary program. It couldn’t be in the first place as the Communist Party’s program did not call for a revolutionary plan of action.⁴⁴ In the second place, though in a growth period within IBEW Local 213 and increasingly impactful, the vanguard itself was still too small and couldn’t yet influence enough electrical workers to embrace more effective strategies. Instead, these were limited class struggle retaliatory manoeuvres, akin to tactical skirmishes.

That the Communist Party was intrinsically involved in leading a tactically innovative and successful workplace wobble in Squamish, a very minor dress-rehearsal of sorts for what Party members probably envisioned as good practice for larger scale vanguard-led scenarios, is instructive—even useful—when compared to the spontaneous start to the Lenkurt Electric strike. In the Burnaby scenario there was no Communist Party involvement in planning or directing effective job action “at the point-of-production.” This lack of effective cohesion among the Lenkurt workers—even though their actions were partly quarterbacked by Shop Steward George Brown, a former Communist Party activist in Britain who, it was to be hoped, was well-schooled in successful workplace tactics—ultimately led to their defeat and the firing of seventy-six of the company’s most militant workers. That a cohesive and disciplined vanguard was not in place to direct effective

job action—by patiently staying at work, refusing to work overtime, and slowing down production, as in Brown’s initial plan—arguably cost the Lenkurt strikers any chance of victory. Lacking the discipline and unwilling to go back to work after their parking lot “study session” at the beginning of the strike became crucial in the face of what might have been a deliberately staged crisis by the employer. Brian Bethel’s impressions on listening to Chuck Hunter, president of Lenkurt, at a meeting early in the cycle of workplace confrontation, has probably more merit than first impressions might convey. Bethel might have been correct: the whole of the debacle was deliberately staged by the company for beneficial financial reasons. Getting “sucked in” to staging a walkout the employer wanted in the first place was not going to end well.

A final appraisal of the activism of Communist Party members within Local 213 is that it led to healthy discussions and a heightened sense of class consciousness within the local union. During a rebellious, but non-revolutionary decade, arguably this was the Communist Party’s most important contribution to the culture of Vancouver-based electrical workers. Local 213 was justly renowned for its ability to produce outstanding delegates to various labour bodies and annual conventions. It was certainly not an accident of history. On the contrary, it was one of the logical outcomes of the critical debates that Communists generated within the local union.⁴⁵ Chris Locke, an integral part of the Rundgren Team and long-time chief administrator of Local 213’s Welfare and Pension Plans (1980–2005) has commented that “the union was quite the training ground.”⁴⁶ And it wasn’t just at meetings; bold and persuasive figures like Les McDonald could, on occasion, help precipitate forms of jobsite initiatives and direct action tactics that were informed by theory but that, in turn, were shaped by creative practice at the ground level. In this regard, McDonald personified initiative from below and was not just trying to interpret the world around him; when he could, he was also trying to change it.⁴⁷ There is no question this Marxist dialectic in action proved attractive to a significant minority of Vancouver electrical workers—Local 213’s militant minority—and had an important impact on their political outlook within the local union. That Les McDonald was tentatively searching for an alternative, less hierarchical and less traditional form of trade unionism, is clearly apparent. But the events at Lenkurt derailed everything. As Jim MacFarlan mused years later,

The lessons of Lenkurt, which the general labour movement probably has not learned, is that the strike—for all its militancy—was the antithesis of what Les believed should have been done. Strikes are like armies going into battle. Understand the relative strength of both sides; who are potential allies; what are the objectives, and what is the fallback position. Armies need leaders. The whole regiment can't be the leader. . . . Ranged against that knowledge was his gut working-class instinct to fight regardless, to defend the defenceless, in this case poorly paid, overworked female workers.⁴⁸

In his introduction to the autobiography of long-time Canadian Communist, Jack Scott, historian Bryan D. Palmer points to how, on the one hand, the Stalinism of the Canadian party “squandered so much human material” and “subverted the course of revolutionary communism.” On the other hand, Palmer emphasizes that the party played a positive role in that it “provided the formative political experience for so many class-conscious workers who managed to find their way out of the trap that the C.P. had become.”⁴⁹ This latter description is very much Les McDonald's story. Put another way, the tragedy that became the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Canada did not necessarily mean that Les McDonald's trajectory through the party was also completely tragic. He was able to jettison most of his negative experiences yet retain a critical Marxist lens through which to view the world, a perspective he never relinquished.⁵⁰

Of the several related political lessons to be learned through the medium of this history, perhaps one of the more impactful ones is that despite its many failings, the Communist Party and the handful of activists within it, left behind a model and a legacy that should not be ignored. In the period under consideration, the party consistently embodied a central issue within any analysis of trade union history throughout much of the twentieth century; that is, how best to deal with the complicated and often intractable question of dealing with competing political interests on the left.⁵¹ Regardless of what had taken place in earlier decades, Communist-led CIO unions in both the United States and Canada by the late 1930s were often pointed to as models of trade union democracy, especially as compared to their business union rivals. They found common ground when they could with potential left-leaning rivals, and forged unity around new or predictable concerns.⁵² It is what explains in no small part their remarkable successes

and post-World War II longevity in notable unions like UE, Mine-Mill, the ILWU, or the UFAWU, though their every move and utterance was critically dissected by opponents under an analytical microscope. Within the Vancouver electrical workers' union, Bill Stewart and Les McDonald were visibly working toward this increasingly attainable goal of left-wing unity, such that it might effectively challenge the conservative stranglehold on Local 213's power structure. Even during the dramatic events of the union meeting May 14, when the stage was taken over by rank-and-file electrical workers, the intervenors from the floor precipitating some of these more sensational moments appear to have included Lenkurt's chief shop steward, George Brown, as part of the larger wiremen's left faction. If it was planned beforehand, as it probably was, they were all still on the same page. Yet, one of the unintended results of the defeated strike and its aftermath is that it brought this epoch's version of the binary oppositional relationship between left and right to a screeching halt. Problematic as it might be, anyone interested in advancing the cause of labour in this troubled day and age needs to pick up the pieces left behind and wrestle with its conflicted contributions.

For a former view from the trenches, from one of the grizzled veterans in IBEW Local 213 throughout much of the epoch covered in this research, Bill Stewart's perspective on what is required to organize and contribute to labour's vitality—he might even argue, to safeguard its very existence as a viable entity—is worth noting. On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, Stewart had sent a letter of thanks and reminiscences to Les McDonald. The latter had written a series of anecdotes for the celebration recounting some of Stewart's more impactful contributions to the Vancouver electrical workers' local. Considered a thoughtful rank-and-file strategist whenever he was able to contribute, and a discerning observer generally, Stewart artfully asks a chicken-and-egg question on the disappearance of a crucial organizational element in the modern-day labour movement: an educated, disciplined, and well-organized leadership of a vanguard of workers, structured to creatively channel rank-and-file dissent and ensure measurable trade union progress. The parallel attempts of this left-led vanguard seeking to transform electrical workers as a proletarian class “in itself” into one that was “for itself” is obvious. As with Les McDonald, his former associate and comrade, Stewart evidently did not believe in relying solely on executive board members to resolve the problems that seem to crop up on every jobsite. Indeed, Les and Bill would have instantly agreed that distant and self-important

representatives too often have the tendency to get fat while sipping coffee in the comfortable surroundings of a heated and air-conditioned union office. Nor, in the IBEW at least, was a powerless shop steward generally able to make much of a difference if he was left to his own devices without meaningful support. Bill Stewart began his letter with a brief synopsis of his near-decade-long period of collaboration and friendship with McDonald. He writes briefly of the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s in British Columbia and then poses a critical question regarding the present landscape:

The workers were really on the move. Lay them off, and they would show up a week later in demonstrations of the unemployed or lobbies to Victoria. Chisel on the contract, and they would shut the job down. Pick on a good shop steward, and down she'd go again . . . more often than not, led by communists. Hard to see that comparison between that and today's labour movement. Which raises an interesting question . . . Is the labour movement so acquiescent because of the lack of communists, or is the lack of communists due to the acquiescent labour movement?

Carrying on with his thoughts, now looking into the future, the aging Stewart passed judgment on having inevitably to pass the torch to a new generation. He was hopeful that young people would not ignore or forget the enduring and compounding clues left behind indicating past struggles and tactics employed. It was part of the alternative narrative offered up for scrutiny by the so-called losers of history. He suggested that "what we put in the pot will be part of the stew the working class will cook up in defence of its needs, its country and socialism."⁵³

The fact that this type of fast-fading narrative has not been preserved or passed on in any meaningful way is deeply concerning, even for dispassionate observers. Yet it is intriguing to note how clusters of rank-and-file activists within local unions continue to sporadically appear, loaded with latent organizational talent and lashing out to challenge the status quo.⁵⁴ Like mushrooms after several days of rain, these are often associated with significant movements of ordinary working people, unexpectedly popping up spontaneously in loosely defined, often ad-hoc organizations. Stewart and McDonald would both have immediately pointed out that the inherent instability surrounding the accumulation of capital creates repeated economic and social crises that cry out for a response. But the modern-day

labour movement in North America does not yet appear to want to be involved as an organic part of these persistent historical phenomena to help direct spontaneous rank-and-file insurgencies or related social movements. From the perspective of organized labour, these potentially creative mass struggle allies are inherently unstable, agitating unpredictably, and moving in uncontrollable directions. The latter, in turn, do not easily accept labour's inherent ability to provide consequential shape and leadership; the trade union movement's mostly tamed, incorporated existence within market capitalism has meant it has been rendered largely ineffective against the impoverishing forces of a devastating neoliberal globalization. What might be missing in this awkward pas-de-deux is a coherent vision of an alternative society both groups could agree upon, a vision that, on the one hand, necessarily moves beyond defending and promoting yesterday's oppressive statist program of "socialism in one country"; and, on the other hand—brief successes like New York City's IBEW Local 3 notwithstanding—the failure to implement a widespread and durable vision of "social unionism" in visibly reluctant, yet previously accommodating, capitalist economies.⁵⁵

While far from being the only reason for this absence of co-ordinated synergy, akin to trapping lightning in a bottle, the damage caused by suspicions of left-wing agendas in general, and anti-communism in particular, echoes down to the present day. Simple, yet related statistical comparisons through the decades, speak loudly: despite massive increases in the country's overall wealth during the intervening decades, in 2023 the home ownership rate of 65.7 percent in the United States was almost precisely the same as it had been in 1960. Masking an identical home "ownership" rate were commensurate massive increases in the mortgage debt owed by individual American workers.⁵⁶ Home ownership can be a misleading and problematic measurement on the transfer of wealth between capital and labour, but the nub of the matter is that the average American family has been unable to capture a larger piece of the economic pie for itself. A mostly consistently shrinking trade union movement has certainly not helped in this important financial matter.⁵⁷ When combined with growing student college loans, car debt, credit card debt, and ongoing high medical costs, the average American working-class family unfortunately appears to have been headed in the wrong direction for quite some time.⁵⁸ There are, of course, other equally damning sources on growing inequality in that country. Accompanying these telling statistics about the marked reduction in

wealth transfers between capital and labour is the fact that union workforce density in the United States now persistently hovers at around 10 percent. In Canada, meanwhile, the situation appears to be only marginally better as home ownership in 2021 (the year of the last countrywide census) sat at 66.5 percent, accompanied by a much higher union penetration figure of 28.7 percent of the workforce. Disconcertingly, home ownership in Canada has statistically declined over the previous decade, from a high point of 69 percent of households in 2011. Both a record level of immigration and institutional investment in housing as a financial commodity appears to have upset the traditional balance of supply and demand in the succeeding decade.⁵⁹ A more predominant Canadian trade union movement and an arguably more tolerant attitude toward the notion of “class” in the northern reaches of the continent, has evidently been unable in the short term to stop the erosion of working people being able to keep a larger piece of the home ownership pie.⁶⁰

Returning the focus to south of the border, even non-aligned critics such as this author are forced to recognize that, with over 130 years of nurturing by the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions, organized labour’s persistent and decades-long fostering of a “working-class conservatism” has had serious and manifestly deleterious effects. Obsessive to the point of paranoia in safeguarding a careful and cautious approach to its existence, the central labour body has consistently fused its conservative outlook with long-standing anti-statism, anti-labour party entanglements, and what has artfully been described as “commonsense anti-communism.”⁶¹ Notwithstanding the descriptive niceties of this term, and recalling the pronouncement of early-twentieth-century historian Selig Perlman, the associated support for pragmatic business union practices was also decidedly capable of unleashing a vindictive form of anti-communist intervention that was deployed whenever and wherever it was deemed necessary. Entirely supportive of this systemic form of direct intervention and worn seemingly as a badge of honour, Joseph D. Keenan, the IBEW’s International Secretary from 1954 to 1976, was not shy about describing himself as being “anti-communist to my very bones.”⁶² In seeming lockstep with his declaration, the IBEW took every opportunity to demonstrate its reliability to employers, loudly proclaiming to anyone who might be interested in these issues what it was not.

From a business union’s perspective, this hard-won place of legitimacy within the prevailing economic system was one of the main underlying

reasons accounting for the union's survival and success. That employers might then turn on the "legitimate" trade union movement once the perceived threat of the radicals was removed did not appear to enter into their way of thinking. Like them or loathe them—they rarely left anyone indifferent—a serious conundrum soon emerged: with its core of organized left-wing activists either expunged or neutralized, who was available to do the heavy lifting? To volunteer to educate, create tactics, expose the off-shore movements of capital, take risks on the ground, build community support, and defend collective agreements? While certainly not the only reason, this naïveté, combined with a well-documented and successful corporate counter-offensive beginning in the mid-1970s, goes a long way in explaining the end of the period of exceptional growth in the American trade union movement.⁶³

Up north in Canada, too, branch-plant affiliates of the AFL-CIO all had well-entrenched suspicions of any individual or organized group that tried to deviate too far from the beaten path. While militancy on occasion was deemed to be absolutely necessary—as in Local 213, part and parcel of any trade unionist's array of requisite tactics—radical political groups or left-wing personalities who became too influential were tracked by the powers that be, viewed with distrust and misgivings, and dealt with mercilessly if circumstances required a response. Intrinsically tied through its international craft union connection to the conservative philosophical and political outlook of the IBEW's American command structure, the Lenkurt Electric strike and its aftermath was but one briefly intense and significant variation on this deep-rooted historical theme. That it took place in the mid-1960s meant that this captivating event carried within it the contrasting cultural and political elements of that decade, in this specific instance highlighted by the struggle of a majority underpaid and exploited female workforce employed at the Lenkurt plant in Burnaby. It had important repercussions on the immediate trade union landscape in British Columbia, in particular with the emergence of the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union, the well-known fight carried on against BC Supreme Court *ex parte* labour injunctions, and within the structure of IBEW Local 213 itself.

In the case of this author's father, a working-class immigrant who was actively struggling toward achieving something beyond capitalism and business unionism, it also had a life-changing impact.⁶⁴ In an essay on "Red Rebels and Red Baiters" early in his writing career, historian and former

BC-based labour administrator Ron Verzuh was succinct on the persistent and long-term effects of the internal war the labour movement has long fought with itself. Though he was writing mostly about CIO-organized industrial unions in an earlier epoch during the Cold War, and especially on McCarthyism and its effects on the left within organized labour in British Columbia, the same ruins of division arguably held true for the decades that followed right across all trade union organizations: “The enduring cost is visible today in the wasteland of unorganized workers and the lost promise of a democratic labour movement that would embrace all working people.”⁶⁵

Though he remained somewhat faithful to his British roots in terms of cultural and political developments, subscribed as he was for decades to the *New Statesman* and the *Manchester Guardian*, Les McDonald nevertheless had a wide-ranging appetite for news from any source. In this regard, he remained a subscriber for many years to the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Pacific Tribune*, and (with Monique) to the French-language weekly, the socialist-inclined *Le Monde*.⁶⁶ Les also liked the more pointed historical commentaries that were connected to the United States and his union, the IBEW, in which he stayed as a member to the very end of his life. But he was certainly not what most critics would describe as an unthinking “loyal” member. On the contrary, he would have completely agreed with the highly respected Eugene Debs, five times the presidential candidate on behalf of the American Socialist Party. Debs, apparently, knew a whole slew of people like the Vancouver electrician:

If it had not been for the discontent of a few fellows who had not been satisfied with their conditions you would still be living in caves. You never would have emerged from the jungle. Intelligent discontent is the mainspring of civilization. Progress is born of agitation. It is agitation or stagnation. I have taken my choice.⁶⁷

The last word about Les McDonald, past member of Canada’s Communist Party in British Columbia, should probably go to his French-born wife, Monique. Though the two-part description of her husband was not as oppositional as she believed it to be—over the long term, and with bumps along the way, one meshed eventually with the other—she compared her husband the Communist and trade union activist to her husband the athlete and sports official. In this case, she did not equivocate:

Les was much more interesting when he was in the Communist Party and being active in Local 213. He believed he was trying to change the world for good. Sport is such a self-centred and egocentric activity, it just doesn't begin to compare. I much preferred my husband the trade unionist to my husband the sports politician. He was a better man then.⁶⁸

Les McDonald died on Labour Day Monday, September 4, 2017. An appropriate date, it was also bittersweet.

This page intentionally left blank

Notes

Introduction

1. On the related American experience, see Palmer, “Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,” 149–61, particularly his critique on the historical treatment of home-grown radicals. Sixteen years later, in a more abbreviated article, he dials back his criticisms somewhat and comments that “local and particularistic studies and attention to rank-and-file activism adds vital flesh and blood to our understanding of Communism in contextualized settings.” Palmer, “How Can We Write Better Histories of Communism?” 218.
2. See, in particular, I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” chaps. 5 and 6.
3. Les had previously been elected president of the Pemberton Heights Ratepayers’ Association in 1970 for a two-year term. Thirty years after his arrival in Vancouver, he reminisced about his upbringing: “If you grew up in the party, you get socialism for breakfast, lunch and dinner. . . . It bred in you a kind of guilt, so that being politically active is a duty.” Quoted in Ward, “Reds,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 14, 1985, A12.
4. One notable exception is Steven Threndyle’s “The Great Pro Triathlon Revolution,” which offers a clear-sighted assessment of McDonald’s politics and philosophical outlook. See also Ken McAlpine, “Triathlon’s Trumpeter,” *Competitor Magazine*, December 1990, and Susan Grant’s illuminating and informative (but somewhat error-sprinkled) “The Paradigm Shifter.” In “American Expansion, Russian Threat and Active Democracy,” Andrey Adelfinsky paints an unflattering portrait of McDonald as a personally ambitious individual who deployed his own version of what he called “direct democracy” to undermine the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne.
5. Brad Culp, “Triathlon at the Olympic Games: A History Lesson,” World Triathlon Championship Series, accessed June 5, 2024, https://hamburg.triathlon.org/en/news/article/triathlon_bei_den_olympischen_spielen_eine_geschichtsstunde, although the page has since been taken down.

6. Russell, *Our Union: UAW/CAW Local 27 from 1950 to 1990*.
7. Freeman, 1005; *Political Life in a Local Union*. Other examples include the essays in Copp, ed., *Industrial Unionism in Kitchener, 1937–47*; Copp, *The IUE in Canada*; and Bernard, *The Long Distance Feeling*. South of the border, notable publications focusing on locals in the industrial union field include Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936–1939*; and Schatz, *The Electrical Workers*.
8. Isitt, *Militant Minority*.
9. Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, 30; original italic removed.
10. Perlman, *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States*, 303.
11. Eric Hobsbawm, quoted in Corey Robin, “Eric Hobsbawm, The Communist Who Explained History,” *The New Yorker*, May 9, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/eric-hobsbawm-the-communist-who-explained-history>.

Chapter 1: A Brief Retrospective

1. See, for example, Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*; Troper, *The Defining Decade*; Campbell, Clement, and Kealey, *Debating Dissent*; and Milligan, *Rebel Youth*.
2. While it wasn’t precisely the same, the events of the 1960s within IBEW Local 213 echoed two of the more dominant themes faced by Canadian labour throughout much of the twentieth century, in particular in its industrial unions. As Irving Abella wrote many decades ago, from a social democratic perspective these could succinctly be described as “the internal threat from the Communists and the external threat from the Americans,” *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour*, v.
3. In mid-April 1919, in a referendum sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour, electrical workers in Vancouver had voted 170–103 to join the OBU, which was then in the process of formation. I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 69 and 76n93. On the subsequent political and legal cul-de-sac in which the electrical workers found themselves as a result of their vote, including the difficulties posed by the creation of Local 310, see I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” chap. 3. Specifically, a substantial number of telephone workers unexpectedly joined Local 310 when it appeared that the OBU (and perhaps also Local 213) was going to be crushed. BC Tel immediately signed a closed-shop collective agreement with the new and apparently more malleable local, thereby freezing out the activists in Local 213. The new IBEW local in Vancouver, which became largely a telephone workers’ local when its charter was legally upheld in BC Supreme Court in 1921,

survived until 1926. In that year the BC Telephone company revealed its true intentions when it refused to negotiate with IBEW Local 310 and restored non-union relations with its employees. The resounding consequence was that Local 310 was relatively short-lived; it was quietly dissolved in 1929, then disappeared from history.

4. See I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," 79–80, 82–83.
5. The Council of Canadian Unions was renamed the Confederation of Canadian Unions in 1973. On CAIMAW, the CEWU, and the CCU, see Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 151–61.

Chapter 2: Business Unionism

1. Kim Moody has described the term in succinctly Marxist terms. Part of a larger critique, some key additional definitions include: "Business unionism as an outlook is fundamentally conservative in that . . . it seeks only to negotiate the price of [capital's] domination. This it does through the businesslike negotiation of a contractual relationship with a limited sector of capital and for a limited portion of the working class . . . it is difficult if not impossible for the business unionist to comprehend a shift in power relations between social classes in any terms other than the profit margins or market shares of specific employers, votes taken by 'friends' and enemies in legislatures, or the dollars and cents of influence peddling." Moody, *An Injury to All*, 15.
2. Salaries paid to many union officials in Canada, for example, continued to outpace those of the workers they represented well into the second half of the twentieth century. In 1980, investigative reporter Peter Comparelli found "the highest paid Canadian unionists are representatives of U.S.-based international unions, with the building trades leading the way." He placed Ken Rose, the IBEW vice-president responsible for Canada, tenth out of forty-eight trade union representatives whose salaries were listed as part of the article. Peter Comparelli, "A Big-Money Brotherhood," *Vancouver Sun*, August 20, 1980, F8.
3. Quoted in Murray Morgan, *Skid Road*, 266. These words belong to former Teamster's union president Dave Beck but could very easily have been pronounced by any number of IBEW officials.
4. As with many electrical workers in the west, mostly linemen's locals, Vancouver's Local 213 supported the losing side in this dispute, the Reid-Murphy faction. In opposition to the position taken by both an important Ohio court judgment in 1912 and by Samuel Gompers, the founding and longest-serving president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), this

breakaway group had been much more inclined to a socialist and industrial union-type of outlook for the IBEW. See I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 53–57.

5. Samuel Gompers would have agreed wholeheartedly with the ongoing critiques by organized labour—and excision if necessary—of anti-capitalist working-class organizations. Their ideas threatened the AFL, which risked in different decades being outflanked by the Knights of Labor, the IWW, the CIO, or a different form of trade unionism altogether. In a debate with Morris Hillquit, the moderate leader of the Socialist Party of America, Gompers famously declared: “Really, a fish is caught by the tempting bait: a mouse or a rat is caught in a trap by the tempting bait; the intelligent, comprehensive common-sense workmen prefer to deal with the problems of today, the problem which confronts them today, with which they are bound to contend if they want to advance, rather than to deal with a picture and a dream which has never had, and I am sure never will have, any reality in the affairs of humanity, and which threaten[s], if it could be introduced, the worst system of circumscriptional [*sic*] effort and activity that has ever been invented by the ken of the human kind.” Testimony of Samuel Gompers, May 22, 1914, U.S. Congress, Senate, *Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations*, 1527.
6. Amendments to Mine-Mill constitution adopted in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1951 and quoted in Clawson, “Union Security Clauses and the Right to Work,” 148–49.
7. Testimony of George A. Mulkey, International Representative, IBEW, February 27, 1948, U.S. Congress, House, *Jurisdictional Disputes in the Motion-Picture Industry*, 1667. At the start of his testimony, Mulkey described his duties: “To organize, to adjust differences between locals, assist members in securing employment in different parts of the country, and generally to represent our international” (1627).
8. The concept of unions as criminal conspiracies in restraint of trade in Canada, followed by their early evolution, is explored in Tucker, “‘That Indefinite Area of Toleration.’” In the United States, the 1908 Danbury Hatters’ (*Loewe v. Lawlor*, 208 U.S. 274) case resulted in the US Supreme Court finding that the union’s secondary boycott of a non-union firm violated the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. The union was subsequently held liable and fined treble costs for the heavy damages previously put in place by the Sherman Act. The evolution of law through governmental legislation eventually decriminalized union attempts to organize and carry out strategies in the United States that might benefit its membership, though this again was narrowed with the passing of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act and the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act.

9. In its willingness to “share” the profits of employers, the IBEW was deviating somewhat from the philosophy espoused by Samuel Gompers. Gompers had once memorably declared in 1890: “We do want more, and when it becomes more we shall still want more. And we shall never cease to demand more until we have received the results of our labor.” “A News Account of an Address in Louisville,” in *The Samuel Gompers Papers*, 314.
10. IBEW, “A Century of Compromise: The Most Important IBEW Program You Haven’t Heard About,” IBEW Media Center, May 27, 2020, <https://ibew.org/untitled-article-15/>.
11. See U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 112, pt. 10 (June 15, 1966), 13268. The journalist’s remark is part of the report of the IBEW Pension Benefit Trust Fund submitted by the fund’s Board of Trustees.
12. On its website, the Canadian Electrical Contractors Association notes that although the association was chartered on November 9, 1955, “the early years were difficult ones for CECA and it wasn’t until 1973 that we actually became a viable and active national body.” “About Us,” The Canadian Electrical Contractors Association, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://ceca.org/about-us/>. NETCO, Canada’s National Electrical Trade Council, wasn’t founded until 2012. It bills itself as the “authoritative pan-Canadian voice of electrical contractors and IBEW local unions representing apprentices and journeypersons in every province and territory.” National Electrical Trade Council, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://netco.org/>. In the face of this information and given the subsequent history of Local 213, its loudly trumpeted alleviating effect on collective bargaining wasn’t readily apparent in British Columbia in the three decades following World War II.
13. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale Jr.*, 16.
14. In 1933, Van Arsdale Jr. and another Local 3 member, Max Rosenberg, were convicted in a New York City court “in the shooting of William Sorensen of an opposing union faction,” but on appeal the charges were dropped. On Van Arsdale Jr.’s arrest and initial conviction, see *New York Daily News*: “Two Wounded as Shots End Union Parley,” February 25, 1933, Brooklyn Section, 7; Tom Cassidy, “Valentine Checks Police Racket Trial Testimony,” January 24, 1933, 12; “Pleads Mistake at Assault Trial,” January 26, 1934, Brooklyn Section, 1; “2 Found Guilty in Labor Gunning,” January 30, 1934, 6; and “2 Union Men Get Sing Sing Terms,” February 9, 1934, 42. For two unsympathetic accounts of his controversy-filled past, see Westbrook Pegler, “Fair Enough,” *Santa Ana Register*, August 20, 1941, 16; and Lloyd Wendt, “The Men Who Prey on Labor,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, August 24, 1941, 2.

15. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale Jr*, 64. As Ruffini goes on to explain, IBEW Local 3 “uniquely encompassed the vertical union philosophy of the CIO, representing more than one trade or skill as opposed to a horizontal union, embracing only one.”
16. Journalist Lester Velie used the term “Chinese Wall” in “The Union That Gives More to the Boss,” an article on IBEW Local 3 that originally appeared in the January 1956 issue of *Reader’s Digest* and was subsequently entered into the *Congressional Record* on March 13, 1956, by Democratic Congressman Abraham J. Multer. See “Extension of Remarks of Hon. Abraham J. Multer of New York,” *Congressional Record*, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 102, Appendixes (Parts 14–20), A2304–05 at A2305. Founded to promote cooperative relationships between employers and employees, the Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry in New York City currently administers all the plans and benefits that are collectively bargained between IBEW Local 3 and the electrical contractors in its jurisdiction.
17. Van Arsdale Jr. quoted in Lester Velie, “The Union That Gives More to the Boss,” A2305.
18. Justice Hugo Black quoted in U.S. Congress, *Amendments to the National Labor Relations Act, Hearings Before the Committee on Education and Labor*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1919. Harry Van Arsdale Jr. quoted in Lester Velie, “The Union That Gives More to the Boss,” reproduced in “Extension of Remarks of Hon. Abraham J. Multer of New York,” U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 102, Appendixes, March 13, 1956, A2305.
19. From a labour perspective, the Taft-Hartley Act was a draconian piece of legislation as it permitted employers to sue unions for “breach” of collective agreements, excluded foremen and supervisory personnel from a union if they so chose, promoted the use of legal injunctions against workers engaged in wildcat strikes, and, most importantly, in reducing Local 3’s influence in New York City, banned the use of the secondary boycott. Though it didn’t affect Local 3 to any great extent as Communist activists in the New York local had been basically neutralized by the mid-1930s, Taft-Hartley also required that all union representatives, from local union executive boards right up to its International officers, sign affidavits affirming that they were not members of the Communist Party. Failure to do so would lead to the loss of all protection under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of that union as a bona fide representational organization for workers in the United States.
20. Van Haaren, “Lessons from a Champion of Labor,” 7. Among his many other accomplishments on behalf of Local 3, Van Arsdale Jr. successfully

negotiated an employer-paid pension plan, a death benefit plan, insurance and supplemental pay for members during illness or injury, and a medical, dental, and employee assistance program.

21. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, 104.
22. For more on the different concepts of social unionism, see Ross, “Varieties of Social Unionism.”
23. See Levinson, *An Extraordinary Time*, esp. chaps. 1–3.
24. Historian Walter Galenson even went so far as to write that the UE’s organizational forays in most of the 1930s “had no competition from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which had been unable to make any substantial inroads into the manufacturing end of the electrical industry.” *The CIO Challenge to the AFL*, 265. IBEW Local 3 might have been the obvious exception to this general observation.
25. See, in particular, Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, chaps. 7 and 8.
26. The new 1946 “BA” membership enjoyed equal rights to the “A” membership but received fewer death and pension benefits “for which ‘A’ members pay additional dues.” Stephenson, *History and Structure*, 24.
27. On IBEW local B numbers and its associated constitutional reduction in representation in the union, see Palladino, *Dreams of Dignity*, 158, 162.
28. Ernest DeMaio to Julius Emspak, May 9, 1937, quoted in Palladino, *Dreams of Dignity*, 163.
29. There were several other occasions on which the IBEW collaborated with employers in order to keep the UE out. See, for example, Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest*, 60; and Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 124.
30. See Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, in particular chaps. 3, 4, and 6.
31. That Communist activists in the UE did so from time to time is recounted in Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, 85.
32. Quoted in Palladino, *Dreams of Dignity*, 172.
33. Palladino, *Dreams of Dignity*, 172.
34. As the pre-eminent chronicler of the IBEW’s past, Grace Palladino, pointed out, “The differences between (and conflicts that arise between) building trades workers and manufacturing workers are . . . endemic in IBEW history.” Grace Palladino, email message to author, April 1, 2020.

Chapter 3: Left and Right

1. Elections British Columbia, *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871–1986*, 193.

2. The CCF had also garnered 32% of the popular vote in 1933, dipping to 29% in 1937. Elections British Columbia, *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871–1986*, 173 and 183.
3. Notable battles fought by labour during the previous ten years in British Columbia included the following mostly lost confrontations: the 1932–33 Tulameen miners' strike, the 1935 Corbin Miners' strike, the 1935 Battle of Ballantyne Pier, the IWA's 1938 Battle of Blubber Bay, and the Pioneer Mine sit-down strike of 1940 near Bralorne.
4. "Gov't Will Give Labor Its Chance," *Vancouver Sun*, March 12, 1943, 29.
5. For more on the specific (often physical) battles the IWA had to go through in the 1930s to be recognized as the legitimate representative organization of BC woodworkers, see Parnaby "What's Law Got to Do with It?" 10.
6. "City Labor Leaders Approve Amendments," *Vancouver Daily Province* (hereafter *Daily Province*), March 6, 1943, 29. It should be noted that other left-wing unions were more guarded in their analysis of the amendments passed by the legislature. *The Fisherman* (the newspaper of the incipient United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union [UFAWU]) objected to the wording of the amendments on the grounds that under the revised ICA Act, "company unions are placed in a preferential position" and that "all organizations other than trade unions should, accordingly, be eliminated from the act." Quoted in "Fishermen Charge 'Company Union Preference' in ICA Act," *Vancouver Sun*, March 3, 1943, 21.
7. Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 129.
8. Riddell, "Unionization in Canada and the United States," 110, Table 4.1.
9. Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 169; and Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 252n17.
10. Interview with Jack Ross, November 15, 1982. See also Ross's remarks in support of Fred Hume's candidacy for the office of Mayor of Vancouver, in which he wrote with reference to Hume and Rumble Contracting Ltd., that "for many years the contract was merely a verbal one." "A Man of His Word," *Vancouver Sun*, November 23, 1950, 27.
11. For a description and explanation of the historically important steel strikes of 1943, see MacDowell, "The 1943 Steel Strike Against Wartime Wage Controls."
12. The Stone and Webster Construction Company, as well as the firm of Brown and Root, were large American dam construction specialists that held international agreements with the IBEW in British Columbia. Henry Ayling, former head of personnel and labour relations for BC Bridge and Dredging, another company with international agreements in the province, recalls the hard feelings that were engendered by his company's special status: "Now a local union could strike a local contractor, but they couldn't strike us because we were under an agreement with the International. We were very unpopular

- among certain members of the electrical contractors because they couldn't get the same conditions." Interview with Henry Ayling, April 26, 1983.
13. The federal government's support for business in the immediate post-World War II period is exemplified in the "double depreciation" allowances, allowing corporations to rebuild their facilities at public expense. See McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation*, chap. 2.
 14. Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 7.
 15. Harvey's remarks were in reaction to Justice H. I. (Henry) Bird's proposals for amendments to the ICA Act, "Proposals Rapped by Labor," *Vancouver Sun*, September 28, 1948, 2.
 16. Panitch and Swartz, *From Consent to Coercion*, 14–15.
 17. Quoted in Abraham Losovsky, "Lenin and the Trade Union Movement," TUEL Labor Herald Library pamphlet no. 14, marxists.org, 23 October 2024, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lozovsky/1924/14.htm>.
 18. For a brief recounting of this episode in the history of "red trade unionism" in BC, see Mickleburgh, *On the Line*, 112.
 19. In Canada, Communist organizers were active in several other disputes and strikes during World War II, including coal miners of the Crowsnest Pass area of UMWA District 18. For further discussion, see Langford and Frazer, "The Cold War and Working-Class Politics," 50. For treatment of war-time working-class job action in the US, see Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, 144–58.
 20. See Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," chap. 4.
 21. See Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, chap. 4.
 22. McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation*, chap. 5. From a non-academic perspective, Dave Werlin, a self-avowed member of the Communist Party of Canada and a former president of the Alberta Federation of Labour (1983–89), analyzed the effects of McCarthyism on the Canadian labour movement in the following way:

It was because of the international unions that were dominant in Canada at that time, it was an easy pipeline to bring it into Canada. Many of the trade union leaders were social democrats. They were spooked. They thought they'd have to cleanse themselves. They don't want to be part of this attack. So they turned on themselves, turned on the trade union movement from the leadership angle. Mackenzie King was right, he didn't have to unleash the cops on the trade union movement. They did it to themselves. The social democrats picked it up and ran with it. Werlin, interviewed by Winston Gereluk and Don Bouzek, November 12, 2004, 19.
 23. I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," 160.

24. Quoted in Manley, “Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging?” 177; Morrison’s comment originally appeared in *Labor News*, May 28, 1928. Manley describes “labourism” as “the peculiar Canadian variant” of what the Comintern termed “reformism” (148). For his description of the labourist ideology, see 153.
25. Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 40–41.
26. Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy,” 8.
27. There were approximately 9,000 employees of CM&S (Cominco) in 1951. Murphy, *A Time to Remember*, 17. For a brief, yet thorough, chronology of Murphy’s life, see Verzuh, “The Reddest Rose: Harvey Murphy Is Little-Known in B.C. Labour History,” *BCBookLook*, September 27, 2016. See also Verzuh’s “The Raiding of Local 480,” 82. Murphy was arguably adopting a careful position on collective bargaining that also happened elsewhere in Communist-led unions in Canada. For more on collective bargaining elsewhere in Canada, see Smith, *Cold Warrior*, 111–13.
28. Harold Pritchett, unabashed Communist and president of the IWA in British Columbia, declared to a *Vancouver Sun* reporter in 1947 that he could not force his political beliefs on rank-and-file woodworkers: “It would be foolish—and impossible—for us to try and force socialism into Canada, until the people want it.” The IWA, he added, “was willing to operate within the framework of capitalism. . . . The forest industry means our livelihood. . . . We need it every bit as much as the operators do.” Quoted in Mickleburgh, *On the Line*, 128. Mickleburgh is quoting from Don Carlson, “Communism Fears Called Pipe-Dream,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 6, 1947, 22, in which Pritchett’s remarks originally appeared.
29. For the circumstances surrounding Harvey’s Murphy’s 1948 underpants speech, see Mickleburgh, *On the Line*, 131.
30. The *Trail Daily Times* (December 3, 1953, 4) was succinct: “Figures from the bureau of statistics published earlier this year indicated that Trail had the highest per capita income in Canada.”
31. Verzuh, “Divided Loyalties”; Community attempts to do things differently in the West Kootenays, particularly Trail, are described in additional writings by Verzuh, including “Remembering Salt” and “Mine-Mill’s Peace Arch Concerts.” Labour lawyer John Stanton, who would represent several left-leaning unions throughout his career, characterized Mine-Mill as a “protector of its members” and a “respected force” for community concerns. Stanton, *Never Say Die!* 29.
32. See Bennett’s remarks on this issue in Keane and Humphreys, *Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett*, 34, 116.

33. See Tieleman, “The Political Economy of Nationalization” for an in-depth discussion surrounding the nationalization of BC Electric Company.

Chapter 4: Local 213 and Red Trade Unionism

1. “Moscow on the Fraser” is the title of chapter 2 in Isitt, *Militant Minority*. It should be pointed out that there were two provincial “BCFL” labour federations at the time, one for the newly organized industrial unions affiliated with the CCL, the other for the older craft-oriented unions (like IBEW Local 213) affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC). The same held true at the municipal level, with CCL affiliates in the Vancouver Labour Council; the older TLC affiliates were in the parallel Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC). Amalgamation occurred shortly after the fusion of the CCL and the TLC in 1956 to create the modern-day Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). This was a Canadian copycat reflection of the AFL-CIO, whose amalgamation had taken place a year earlier, in 1955.
2. Similar countrywide alliances have taken place periodically throughout Canada’s trade union history, the previous one of note having taken place in the aftermath of labour’s national upsurge in 1919.
3. On Evans and the strike, see Bartlett and Ruebsaat, *Soviet Princeton*.
4. Interview with George Gee, November 6, 1982.
5. See Alex Dorland, “Wiremen’s Welfare Plan Makes History for 213,” *I.B.E.W. Local 213 Live Wire* (hereafter *Live Wire*), September 1950, 1.
6. “Certain Electrical Contractors and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213,” *Labour Gazette*, January–June 1953, 882–83.
7. Interview with Angus MacDonald, January 6, 1983.
8. From the 1920s through to the end of during World War II, under business managers Teddy Morrison and Jack Ross, Local 213 had been composed of only three units: Utilities, Line Contractors, and Inside Wiremen.
9. For details of the results, see George Gee, “In Defence of My Right to Work,” n.d., George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2–12, Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver.
10. Ecroyd, “Red Is for Danger!”
11. George Gee to the Provincial Executive, Labor-Progressive Party, October 1, 1948. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2-12.
12. Quoted in Green, *What’s Happening to Labor*, 35.
13. If any union refused to sign the anti-Communist affidavits, they would not appear on the ballot when a rival trade union triggered a representational vote. This was often devastating in workplaces where there were competing

interests seeking worker allegiance. It is interesting to note in this regard that a Republican trade union leader, John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), a champion of “democratic capitalism,” refused to require his officers to sign the anti-communist affidavits. With no rival unions on the horizon in the post–World War II period to challenge the hegemony of the UMWA, his principled stand on non-compliance with Taft-Hartley had no visibly deleterious effects on the once-massive coal miners’ union. Summers, “Union Schism in Perspective,” 261.

14. “Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley Act),” Influence Watch, 15 October 2024, <https://www.influencewatch.org/legislation/labor-management-relations-act-of-1947-taft-hartley-act/>. See in particular the last section, “Effects.”
15. White, *A Hard Man to Beat*, 158.
16. Citation in text from interview with George Gee, 6 November 1982. On Jackson’s problematic relations with the Communist Party, including his denial of membership, see “The Party Life” in Smith, *Cold Warrior*, 105–13; on the highly respected Tom McClure, who also denied his Party membership in the 1940s and was an early president of Local 1005 of the United Steelworker in Hamilton, see Freeman, *1005: Political Life in a Local Union*, 74 and 256n10.
17. Henry Ayling to Jack Ross, February 1, 1951. See also similar complaint from L. G. Sewell, head of the Building and Construction Exchange, to George Gee, March 26, 1952. Both letters in George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2–12.
18. Letter from Charles E. Sumpton to Jack Ross, January 10, 1953, George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2–12.
19. Interview with Don Wilson, January 26, 1983.
20. John Raymond to Jack Ross, October 12, 1954, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-02 (Jack Ross files), Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver. In his defence, Wilson claimed that he only had a loose relationship with the party as he could be counted on to support some of its policies. He even volunteered that, on occasion, he gave it money when asked to do so on a personal level. His protestations about Communist Party membership might thus have been disingenuous at best.
21. Interview with George Gee, 6 November 1982. Again, it should be noted that the Vancouver-area telephone workers had been an integral part of Local 213 prior to 1919. There were also numerous IBEW locals of telephone workers elsewhere across North America. The question left hanging is whether the IBEW’s inaction in Vancouver at the time was due to incompetence and lack of interest or to International Office concerns about an even larger number of electrical workers out on Canada’s west coast coming under Communist

- influence. On Local 213 expending money and effort to bring the telephone workers back into the Vancouver local, see “Telephone Workers to Remain ‘Outside,’” *Live Wire*, December 1951, 1.
22. See I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” chap. 5, for more detail on Gee’s building of the Communist left in Local 213.
 23. John Spargo, Miles Spargo, and Angus McInnes to John Raymond, August 9, 1952. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-20, Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver. Contrary to the hoped-for intent and result of the letter, the new policies of work rotation among the wiremen appeared to be hugely popular. At a meeting of Local 213, the policy was passed with only two votes dissenting. IBEW Local 213, *Minute Books* (hereafter simply *Minute Books*), December 29, 1952, n.p. Local 213’s *Minute Books* are located in the IBEW Local 213 fonds, RBSC-ARC-1278, Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver.
 24. Charles E. Sumpton to Jack Ross, January 10, 1953. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2–12, Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver.
 25. Interview with Dave Clark, September 29, 1984.
 26. Letter from Bert Marcuse to unidentified electrical worker, November 17, 1954. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1–17 (Bert Marcuse file), Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver.
 27. In a 1952 recording of the inaugural Paul Robeson Peace Arch concert, Harvey Murphy can be heard in his introductory remarks thanking the electrical workers from IBEW Local 213 for setting up the necessary sound equipment. Indeed, the charges that the IBEW laid against Gee in 1955 for “communist domination” include his participation and co-operation with Murphy in the staging of the famous Robeson concerts at the border. Robeson’s passport had been confiscated by the US government, so he was unable to cross into Canada to perform. For the charges against the business manager, see George Gee, “To All Members of Local 213,” George Gee fonds, file 3–01. For Justice James Wilson’s ruling, see *Gee v. Freeman*, 1958 CanLII 258 (BC SC). See also Laurel Sefton MacDowell, “Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story,” for a discussion of the Peace Arch concerts.
 28. Local 213’s newspaper went through several iterations. From 1949 to 1959, it was called *Local 213 I.B.E.W. Live Wire* (or simply *Live Wire*). In 1960, it was replaced by the *Business Manager’s News Letter*, in which form it remained until 1966. Then, starting from 1967, it returned under the name *213 LiveWire*. Copies of *Live Wire* and of *213 LiveWire* can be found in the Trade Union Research Bureau (TURB) fonds, RBSC-ARC-1557, box 56, files 2a to 2d, and box 73, file 1, respectively. Note that Local 213’s paper is not to be confused with the *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, a paper published from 1967 to 1969 by the breakaway Canadian Electrical Workers’ Union.

29. Alex Dorland, "Inside Stuff—Police the Contract Check Infractions," *Live Wire*, January 1950, 6.
30. Interview with Fred Allison, December 19, 1982.
31. Interview with Jack Ross, November 15, 1982.
32. Interview with Don Wilson, January 26, 1983. Wilson was Gee's assistant business manager and almost certainly a member of the Communist Party during the 1950s.
33. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 9, 2016.
34. In particular, see I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," chaps. 5 and 6. On the mention of Mine-Mill renting an office for about three years in Local 213's union hall, see "Union 'Red Purge' Promises to Spread," *Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 1955, 2.
35. Jack Ross to J. Scott Milne, February 1, 1951. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-02 (Jack Ross files). Milne would eventually become president of IBEW International in 1954 but died after only one year in office. During his brief stint as the head of the IBEW, he nevertheless ordered that George Gee be expelled and that Local 213 be placed under trusteeship.
36. Some of Larry Jack's more distasteful memories while employed at BC Electric were related to those occasions when "Mr. Grauer instructed me to find out if Gee was in fact a Communist." Interview with Larry Jack, February 16, 1983.
37. "Gas Strike Threat Red Move Says BCE," *Vancouver Sun*, January 14, 1954, 1. For more on BC Electric and how they publicly red-baited Gee, see I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," chap. 6. It should be made clear that "card-called meetings" were held to vote on collective agreements. This meant that only electrical workers in that particular unit could attend, discuss, and vote on the contractual issues affecting their unit of Local 213. Fully aware of this dynamic within the electrical workers' union, BC Electric was purposely clouding the issue for their own public relations advantage.
38. See, for example, Gee's public threat to disregard a mediation report in 1953 and, if necessary, to put BC Electric's facilities behind picket lines. The business manager was to the point, declaring to the press that "if we can't get a settlement we must shut down the industry." "TLC Backs Demand for City B.E.G. Pool," *Daily Province*, October 7, 1953, 8. This was noteworthy and provocative language in terms of the relationship between Local 213 and the BC Electric Company, particularly as the last strike at the provincial utility had taken place in 1921, a distant twenty-two years before.
39. Letter from Bert Marcuse to Jack Scott (*Vancouver Sun* reporter), January 21, 1955, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-17 (Bert Marcuse file). Marcuse was working at the time as an independent research director for Local 213, helping to develop a statistical framework for Gee's use in arguments during negotiations.

40. Proceedings, Twenty-fifth Convention of the IBEW, Chicago, Illinois, August 30–September 4, 1954, 164. See copy of 1954 constitution in George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 2–14.
41. Interview with Angus MacDonald, January 9, 1983.
42. For a complete list of the charges drawn up against him, see “To: International Vice President—John H. Raymond,” George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, file 3–01. The other two signatories to the original charges were Al McDiarmid and Harold Stubbins.
43. Quoted in Frank P. L. Somerville “Hearing Ends in Union Row,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 22, 1961, 16. See also Justice James Wilson’s remarks in *Gee v. Freeman*, 1958 CanLII 258 (BC SC), at 67 and 71.
44. “Electrical Union Chief Suspended,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 15, 1955, 1.
45. Don Wilson later on authored a series of hand-drawn caricatural scenes relating events in Local 213 to a wider audience. In a key reference in one of these scenes, he placed Andrew Johnson on the right side of the picture with the distinct outline of a revolver appearing under his jacket. On Wilson’s handicraft, see McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 217.
46. Interview with Bert Marcuse, 17 June 1983.
47. *Minute Books*, 17 January 1955, 237.
48. Alfred Terry to Don Wilson, 17 January 1955, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-23.
49. Account of meeting is an amalgam from the following sources: *Minute Books*, January 17, 1955, 237–48; interviews with Tom Forkin, December 15, 1982, and Vernon Bigelow, October 18, 1984; “Union ‘Red Purge’ Promises to Spread,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 1955, 2; “2nd Agent Purged in Electrical Union,” *Daily Province*, January 17, 1955, 5; letters from Andrew Johnson to Norman Wilson and Vernon Bigelow, February 7, 1955, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1–21.
50. Interview with Tom Forkin, December 15, 1982. This altercation was reminiscent of one that had occurred more than half a century earlier, after Local 213 members voted 170–103 to join the newly created OBU and the IBEW International Office subsequently suspended Local 213’s charter. On 27 August 1919, Ernest Ingles, the Canadian vice-president of the IBEW, was addressing the “loyal” minority of Local 213 at the Vancouver labour temple when the OBU contingent showed up at the meeting. Within minutes there erupted “a general mix-up.” As the Vancouver *Daily World* described the scene: “Ingles had only just started his address at labor headquarters when the other faction entered the hall in a body and proceeded to make things lively for the speaker. At first the new arrivals were content to obtain whatever satisfaction they could get in this manner. It was when several jumped up and started for the platform with the evident intention of impressing their views on Ingles

in forcible fashion that the situation took on a really serious aspect. The clash was only averted when one of the audience sitting in the front row, rose and urged the meeting to maintain order and to conduct its business in a parliamentary fashion.” “Hot Time at Labor Temple,” *Daily World*, 28 August 1919, 20; see also I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 79–80.

51. The twenty-two members who were also immediately suspended were W. J. Robson, W. A. Dorland, S. Sheard, J. Thomas, D. B. Greenwell, H. L. Welch, J. Gillett, J. S. Duff, J. W. Worobetz, E. S. Simpson, H. Wainwright, A. J. Sowerby, W. J. Turner, W. J. Gee, Carl Rush, R. S. Skefley, P. C. Nichols, Bruce Clarke, R. V. Bigelow, Norm Wilson, Fred Duff, and Jim Jackson. *Minute Books*, January 17, 1955, 248.
52. “2nd Agent Purged in Electrical Union,” *Daily Province*, January 17, 1955, 5.
53. *Minute Books*, January 17, 1955, 248.
54. See also “Report on Charges and Trials,” n.d., RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-23.
55. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
56. Verzuh, “The Raiding of Local 480,” 115.
57. See Kluckner, *Vancouver: The Way It Was*, 113. Kluckner was commenting on Grauer’s “power tower” on Burrard Street in downtown Vancouver. He was entirely accurate in his description of Grauer’s political outlook. See also “Dal Grauer Assails Communism, Socialism,” *Daily Province*, January 29, 1947, 6, which describes in detail “an outspoken address” that the scion of the BC business community gave at the sixtieth anniversary of the Vancouver Board of Trade.
58. For Grauer’s objection to Gee and his visit to Washington, DC, see Minutes, Board of Directors’ Meetings, British Columbia Power Corporation, vol. 12, February 25, 1954, 2683; and July 12, 1954, 2719–20. The quotations in the text are from the minutes of the meeting on October 28, 1954, 2742, BC Hydro Library and Archives, Burnaby, BC.
59. Letter from J. Scott Milne to A. E. Grauer, December 21, 1954, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 1-02 (Jack Ross files).
60. Interview with Don Wilson, January 26, 1983.
61. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
62. Quoted in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 75.
63. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
64. For a broader Canadian contextualization, see Hak, “The Communists and the Unemployed,” 45–61.
65. Quoted in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 76. See also Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 242.
66. “Out here” comment in Scott, *A Communist Life*, 133. See also Levine, “The Labor-Progressive Party in Crisis, 1956–1957,” 177.

67. On the Italian Communists, see Palmer, "Canadian Communism at the Crossroads," 154; for the resignations from the National Executive Committee, see Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 250.

Chapter 5: Rebuilding Local 213

1. The outcome of the vote published on June 15, 1953: Gee received 1,246 votes, while Morrison garnered only 356. "Results," *Live Wire*, June 1953, 1.
2. Interview with Malcolm Morrison, January 14, 1983. For a brief description of Morrison's background, see Dan Illingworth, "B.C. Heads of Labour Congress from Opposite Sides of Fence," *Daily Province*, April 27, 1956, 5.
3. "Personal Memoirs of Art O'Keefe," January 26, 1958, RBSC-ARC-1783, O'Keefe papers.
4. Telephone interview with John Carson, February 14, 1983.
5. Interview with Jack Ross, November 15, 1982. See also the concurrent articles in the *Vancouver News-Herald*, October 5, 1956, 13, and, in particular, in the *Daily Province*, according to which "a union spokesman said the men had voted 96 percent for a walkout but a decision on the strike deadline would be made at a special meeting 'shortly.'" Dan Illingworth, "Electrical Union Wins Top Wage," October 25, 1956, 4.
6. Interview with Jack Ross, November 15, 1982. The *Minute Books* of the inside wiremen (Unit 6) are more explicit about the Hooker Chemical incident: "Letters by A. M. [Cal] Morrison to stewards regarding their actions at Hooker job read and telegrams from [International Vice-President] Bro. Raymond read explaining that he has no authority for this." Unit 6, *Minute Books*, December 23, 1957, 73.
7. "Despite Dispute, Union Plans to Stay on Job," *Daily Province*, December 17, 1957, 25.
8. "Electricians Most Embattled Union," *Vancouver Sun*, March 13, 1958, 64.
9. *Minute Books*, January 2, 1958, 249. After having been "promptly demoted to assistant business manager" for his troubles, "two months later" Morrison was completely let go. "Electricians Most Embattled Union," *Vancouver Sun*, March 13, 1958, 64.
10. For more detail on the power struggles within Local 213, see Unit 6, *Minute Books*, December 23, 1957, 73; and also "Showdown Sought by Union," *Daily Province*, January 24, 1958, 17.
11. Jack Waplington admitted to writing the charges against Gee while testifying in BC Supreme Court, "Successor to Gee Laid Charges," *Daily Province*, February 11, 1958, 15.

12. "Union to 'Seek Out' Labor-Progressives," *Vancouver Sun*, February 11, 1958, 9.
13. "Gee Tells Court of Threats 'To Get Him,'" *Pacific Tribune*, February 14, 1958, 7.
14. "Living Cost Hits Record," *Vancouver Sun*, March 4, 1958, 1; and "Food Costs Push up 'Barometer,'" *Daily Province*, March 5, 1958, 1.
15. "B.C. Electric Profit Higher," *Vancouver Sun*, March 12, 1958, 15.
16. The *Pacific Tribune* rebutted the well-publicized offer of 19 percent. It editorialized: "The BCE [BC Electric] says it offered yearly wage increases up to 19 percent. The actual offer was 12½ percent for linemen, 7½ percent for groundmen and 5 percent for labourers. The additional offer of 6½ percent, 4½ percent and 3 percent for these categories was for an additional year's agreement." "BCE Distorts Strike Issue," *Pacific Tribune*, March 14, 1958, 8.
17. The controversial work stoppage at the mammoth electric utility was the first since 1921—in this regard, see I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," 226. For a brief explanation of the 1921 strike against the BC Electric Company, see also "Make Fight for Award: Electrical Workers Strike to Enforce Finding of Conciliation Board," *Daily Province*, February 22, 1921, 1, 7.
18. "Higher Wages Can Shrink Payrolls," *Vancouver Sun*, March 1, 1958, 1.
19. "Electrical Workers' Statement," *Vancouver Sun*, March 12, 1958, 23.
20. "Electrical Workers Nail BCE Pay Claims," *Pacific Tribune*, March 7, 1958, 1.
21. Doug Collins, "Here's Story Behind Strike," *Daily Province*, March 8, 1958, 1. Collins's future poor reputation as a litigious employee, right-wing racist, and embattled Reform Party of Canada nominee in British Columbia in 1988—whose nomination leader Preston Manning rejected—should not detract from his sleuthing thirty years earlier on the labour beat for the *Daily Province* newspaper. In an editorial three days later, the *Daily Province* was in full agreement with its labour reporter when it opined that the 40 percent wage demand by the IBEW "is a piece of internal political posturing by a non-elected leadership which has to do something spectacular to hang on to its job when the union comes out of trusteeship later this year." "Strike and Public Emergency," March 11, 1958, 4.
22. Ramsay McCullough, "Electricians State Their Case." Letters to the Editor, *Daily Province*, March 13, 1958, 4.
23. "Charges Fly, Tension High in Strike of Electricians," *Vancouver Sun*, March 10, 1958, 1.
24. "BCE Distorts Strike Issue," *Pacific Tribune*, March 14, 1958, 8. One of the IBEW's historical nicknames, "I Bum Every Winter," was a clear indicator of the precarious financial realities for some electrical workers. See also Tom McEwen's critical commentary on the conduct of the strike just after it started from the Communist Party's point of view. McEwen began one of his weekly

- columns with the disapproving statement: "How Not to Win a Strike," *Pacific Tribune*, February 28, 1958, 5.
25. "Electrical Workers Nail BCE Pay Claims," *Pacific Tribune*, March 7, 1958,
 1. The Communist Party weekly gave some concrete numbers to back up Waplington's contentious "peanuts" comment, an obvious jab at Malcolm Morrison's short stint as Local 213's business manager. It stated, in regard to the BC Electric negotiations, that: "In the past three years linemen have received only approximately three cents an hour wage increases." "Electrical," *Pacific Tribune*, March 7, 1958, 7.
 26. "B.C. Electric, Union Agree to Renew Talks in Strike: Labour Council Arranges Meeting," *Vancouver Sun*, March 19, 1958, 1.
 27. Telephone interview with John Carson, February 14, 1983. For a newspaper account of the settlement, see "High Court Judge Will Set Wage Scale—Electricians' Union Agrees to End Strike with BCE," *Daily Province*, March 25, 1958, 1; and "Judge Rules Electricians' Boost 'Fair'-Workers Lose Fight for Hike Above 19 Per Cent," *Vancouver Sun*, April 12, 1958, 23. A system of compulsory arbitration initiated by the provincial government soon after the formation of BC Hydro in 1961 meant that this was the last strike of IBEW maintenance or construction workers employed by either BC Electric or BC Hydro.
 28. See the short, but important, discussion on the difference between conservative militancy and political radicalism within the context of the American trade union movement in Luff, "Rethinking Interwar Conservatism, Communism, and State Repression."
 29. The inside wiremen's strike against the city of Vancouver began on June 6, 1957, and was settled on July 26, 1957, in the electricians' favour. Casting the deciding vote on city council to sign the collective agreement was a subdued Mayor Fred Hume, a former lineman himself and owner of Hume and Rumble Limited, the largest electrical contracting company in western Canada. The conservative council of the day had made threats to fire the "striking electricians after the strike is settled . . . if forced to meet wage demands." "Final Offer Made to Electricians," *Vancouver Sun*, July 25, 1957, 1, 2. Perhaps the most contentious issue that emerged during the strike was Local 213's Strike Committee that had a twenty-four-hour emergency crew standing by but reserved the right to define an "emergency." With echoes from the Committee of 1,000 during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, and reeking of irony, Vancouver magistrate Alex McDonald declared his outrage that the strikers felt they could take the "safety of citizens" into their own hands. He declared: "It is fantastic—a disgrace, that these men should have the power to decide what is an emergency

- situation . . . who do these union leaders think they are? What do they know about safety?" "Strike," *Vancouver Sun*, July 24, 1957, 2. For a synopsis of the event, see I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," 224–25.
30. "No Choice, Say Contractors; Electricians Cry 'Treachery,'" *Vancouver Sun*, June 4, 1958, 3.
 31. "Goldenberg Heads B.C. Strike Probe," *Daily Province*, August 12, 1958.
 32. "Building Unions Do Double Switch," *Vancouver Sun*, August 7, 1958, 21.
 33. For the story relating to the jurisdictional dispute involving a brief walkout of plumbers and pipefitters working on installing natural gas lines into Vancouver see Bruce Young, "Union Dispute May Delay Natural Gas," *Daily Province*, September 14, 1956, 29. On additional accusations of Local 213 raiding by other unions, see "Electricians Facing Expulsion Attempts," *Daily Province*, October 4, 1957, 25.
 34. See the analysis in "Contractors Lockout Threat to Economy," *Pacific Tribune*, June 6, 1958, 1, 12.
 35. Doug Collins, "Strike Settled by Electricians; Plumbers Out," *Vancouver Sun*, August 16, 1958, 1.
 36. Hal Dornan, "Plumbers' Wages Game of Leapfrog," *Vancouver Sun*, August 30, 1958, 25.
 37. Jim Dougan, former business manager of Local 170, in a telephone interview, October 2, 2019.
 38. Doug Collins, "Electricians to Start Work Today with 11-Cent Increase," *Daily Province*, August 21, 1958, 1.
 39. See the chart comparing wage rates in the building trades in Hal Dornan, "Plumbers' Wages Game of Leapfrog," *Vancouver Sun*, August 30, 1958, 25.
 40. "Crampton Named by Electricians," *Vancouver Sun*, August 8, 1958, 25.
 41. See the one-page majority opinion written by Commissioners H. Carl Goldenberg and E. A. Jamieson, Industrial Inquiry Commission on the Electrical and Plumbing Industries (1958), GR-1332, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria, <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/industrial-inquiry-commission-on-electrical-and-plumbing-industries-1958>. See also "B.C. Building Industry in 'Chaotic' State," *Vancouver Sun*, August 19, 1958, 1.
 42. The *Vancouver Sun* reported on the Plumbers and Pipefitters eventual collective agreement, which contained a leap-frogging 26 cent per hour wage increase, far more than the other trades in British Columbia. Hal Dornan, "Strike End Possible Soon," *Vancouver Sun*, 25 August 1. St. Eloi's audacious use of a Communist bogeyman, combined with his whipsawing tactics, had evidently prevailed in this round of bargaining, as it clearly resulted in a collective agreement in favour of Local 170 of the Plumbers and Pipefitters.

43. Gordon Freeman, IBEW International president, stated: "Granting permission for the election of officers is not to be construed as changing in any way international supervision of the local union's affairs." Jack Waplington added that the Vancouver electrical workers would have to prove that "we are capable" before the trusteeship could be lifted in its entirety. "Electricians Most Embattled Union," *Vancouver Sun*, March 13, 1958, 16.
44. Doug Collins, "Fight for Power Waged in Electricians' Local," *Daily Province*, June 17, 1958, 15.
45. The *Daily Province* reported that the IBEW's International Office had declared, in patronizing fashion yet again, that "if the union shows responsibility in its affairs," the trusteeship would eventually be lifted in its entirety. "Gas Workers' Officer Named Electrical Union Secretary," *Daily Province*, July 29, 1958, 1.
46. Interview with John Carson, February 14, 1983.
47. For the complete election results, see *Live Wire*, July 1958, 1.
48. "Gas Workers' Officer Named Electrical Union Secretary," *Daily Province*, July 29, 1958, 1.
49. Interview with John Kapalka, December 24, 1982.
50. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, May 26, 1958, 121.
51. Letter from Art O'Keeffe to W. Ladyman, "Re: Charges filed by Bro. A. D. MacDonald, Pres. L.U. 213, against Bro. A. O'Keeffe, Business Mgr. L.U. 213," January 14, 1963, 6, RBSC-ARC-1783, Art O'Keeffe papers file 4-11.
52. Local 213, Unit 6, *Minute Books*, February 23, 1959, 170. A month later, on March 23, 1959, the inside wiremen also passed the following resolution: "That Wiremen's Unit endorse position of Brother Cody re his letter to International asking for the lifting of the trusteeship, granting this local autonomy," 171. But complete autonomy was not restored until June 30, 1961. See Unit 6, *Minute Books*, June 5, 1961, 103.
53. *Minute Books*, April 23, 1959, 24.
54. *Minute Books*, May 28, 1959, 39.
55. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985. Bob Towle, an inside wireman and long-time Communist, also attested to Jack Cody's problems with the bottle. In January 1967, Towle became the inaugural editor of *213 Live Wire*. Founded by the inside wiremen's unit, the monthly newspaper was a revival of the local's earlier paper, *Live Wire*, which had lapsed at the end of 1959. Interview with Bob Towle, December 4, 1982. See also *213 Live Wire*, February 1968.
56. An affidavit sworn by William Evans ("Electrical Bill") Stewart in Vancouver on April 4, 1960, attests to the bona fide existence of the petition and the 1,066

signatures he had managed to secure. RBSC-ARC-1783. The fact that Stewart, a well-known Communist electrician, was the driving force behind the democratically oriented petition was apparently enough to cost Goy his position of assistant business manager once again. He would consequently become noticeably shy in terms of extending his co-operation to the left faction in general and to Communist electrical workers in particular.

57. Doug Collins, "Electrical Union Officers Resign," *Vancouver Sun*, February 11, 1960, 21. See also "Electricians Ask Freedom from U.S.," *Daily Province*, October 7, 1959, 17.
58. "Electrical Worker Officials Claim Discontent in Union," *Daily Province*, February 12, 1960, 16. Cody might have been engaging in the same cloak-and-dagger scenario that Gee had half-heartedly attempted; that is, to stop being a formal member of the Communist Party in order not to contravene the IBEW's constitution and therefore risk being charged and suspended.
59. "Local 213 Election Results," *Minute Books*, September 1960, 416. It was an interesting electoral contest that pitted left against right toward the end of the McCarthyist period. For the position of president, Jack Cody lost to Angus MacDonald by 961 votes to 1,359; for vice-president, Tom Forkin lost to Fred Allison 893 to 1,398; for treasurer, Art Goy lost to Ted Knight 732 to 1,553; for business manager it was Ramsay McCullough 431, John Kapalka (on the left-wing slate) 627, and Art O'Keeffe 1,262. The really interesting race, however, was for recording secretary. In that contest, relative newcomer William Stewart lost to J. P. Milner by only a 68-vote margin: 1,100 votes to 1,168.
60. Samuel Gompers was known to resist formal alliances with any political party. Instead, his slogan for working men casting their ballots in elections was the simple and well-known advice: "Reward your friends, punish your enemies."
61. In a history of IBEW Local 353 in Toronto written for its centenary in 2003, Edward Seymour recounts how "John Raymond . . . called a meeting of the IBEW delegates attending the CLC convention to discuss the resolution. The IBEW delegates voted overwhelmingly to go on record as being opposed to sending any portion of IBEW per capita to the CLC for use in support of any political party and that the union should adopt a position of political neutrality." *Illuminating the Past, Brightening the Future*, 110.
62. Robert Rice, "CLC Backs New Political Party; City Delegate Leads Opponents," *Daily Province*, April 28, 1960, 2. The IBEW's position on involvement in politics has not changed very much over the years. According to its mission

statement, the IBEW's National Political Action Committee is officially mandated "to provide leadership through educating, motivating, and mobilizing all IBEW members to participate in the national political process in Canada to improve the quality of life of our members, their families, and all Canadians." *IBEW Votes: Political Action Committee Toolkit*, <http://www.ibewcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Final-IBEW-PAC-Toolkit.pdf>, 6. The toolkit is available at "Political Action: Unions and Politics," IBEW Canada, accessed November 22, 2025, <https://www.ibewcanada.ca/political-action-centre/>.

63. Kapalka had grown up in the left-leaning town of Coleman in the Crowsnest Pass during the 1920s and 1930s but was never a Communist.
64. *Minute Books*, July 14, 1960, 371. See also apparently raucous debate that ensued during "Special Order of Business to Discuss Financial Affairs of Local 213 IBEW," July 28, 1960, 378–79. These debates on the financial affairs of Local 213 coincidentally took place just prior to the electrical workers casting their ballots; they neatly echoed the political tactics of the "white bloc" that had occurred in the IWA a dozen years before.
65. "Anti-Red Slate Named by Union," *Vancouver Sun*, September 13, 1960, 6; "Reds Lose in Union Elections," *Daily Province*, September 13, 1960, 30.
66. "Anti-Red Slate Named by Union," *Vancouver Sun*, September 13, 1960, 6.
67. Even under Cody's stewardship, the newsletter was evidently tightly controlled by his opposition. At a meeting of the inside wiremen's unit in 1959, "Electrical Bill" Stewart pointedly "raised the question of appointment of brothers to editorial board of *Livewire*, [sic]," Unit 6, *Minute Books*, March 23, 1959, 171.
68. As the circular further advised, "No dues increase should be contemplated until every means of economy has been explored." Most of the circular was reproduced in the *Minute Books*, December 4, 1961, 247–49. Regarding the Electrical Estates, see *Live Wire*, February 25, 1949, 2.
69. Even though it was a main theme of the circular, very little discussion of the use and potential abuse of the spare-board was recorded on this occasion in Local 213's *Minute Books*. Given subsequent events, it appears that the union's business manager, Art O'Keefe, was able to fend off any substantive changes to its organization. The question, of course, is whether this evidentiary omission on a crucial question was deliberate. It certainly helped to hide the identity of those who might have argued in favour of modifying access to employment by electrical workers in Local 213.
70. *Minute Books*, April 4, 1962, 340. The "circular five" were all suspended under Article 27, section 2, of the 1962 IBEW constitution, which read in part,

“Creating or attempting to create dissatisfaction among any members or among L.U.’s of the I.B.E.W.”

71. *Minute Books*, December 4, 1961, 256.
72. Art O’Keeffe, “Veep Questions BM for Statement in October Report,” *Live Wire*, December 1954, 4.
73. Interview with John Carson, February 14, 1983.
74. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
75. Letter from Art O’Keeffe to W. Ladyman, “Re: Charges filed by Bro. A. D. MacDonald,” January 14, 1963, 12.
76. See “BC Hydro Rapped on Emergency Job,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 12, 1962, 1, and “Power Job Attack Called Unjustified,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 13, 1962, 2, for context surrounding the charges.
77. For a description of the project, see “Coming and Current,” *Daily Province*, March 28, 1963, 14; and “Transmission Line Near Crucial Stage,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 26, 1963, 10.
78. Unit 2, *Minute Books*, April 17, 1963, n.p. A month later, at the next unit meeting, there was a minute of silence recorded in the linemen’s *Minute Books* for Toby Lee “who passed away due to injuries at work.” Unit 2, *Minute Books*, May 15, 1963, n.p. For further information about the initial accidents, see “Two Escape in Crash of Helicopter,” *Daily Province*, April 24, 1963, 2; and “Copter Crash Bruises Two,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 24, 1963, 3.
79. Unit 2, *Minute Books*, March 20, 1963, n.p.
80. It appears that workers employed by Hume and Rumble and Peterson Electric had not always bargained directly with the companies. In the immediate post–World War II era, for example, they were given a percentage of the gains made in negotiations by IBEW members employed by the BC Electric Company, called BC Hydro by 1961. Partway through his eight-year tenure in office, George Gee had tried to alter this cozy arrangement between the three companies but had not been entirely successful in his endeavour. For further detail, see “Board Split on Linemen Pay Scale,” *Daily Province*, April 5, 1950, 16; and Jack McCaugherty, “On the Labor Front—IWA, Firms Discuss Catch-up on Logging,” *Daily Province*, August 8, 1951, 5.
81. Unit 2, *Minute Books*, May 4, 1963, n.p.
82. *Minute Books*, May 6, 1963, 86.
83. See Unit 2, *Minute Books*, May 11, May 15, and June 15, 1963, n.p.
84. For the telegram to Keenan, see *Minute Books*, June 3, 1963, 99.
85. Unit 2, *Minute Books*, May 4, 1963, n.p.
86. Unit 2, *Minute Books*, June 20, 1963, 107.
87. The nickname was provided in an interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.

88. In his letter of defence in 1963 to Bill Ladyman, Art O’Keeffe referred to the internal union hearings wherein Local 213’s president, Angus MacDonald, is said to have “made some disparaging remarks against Brother Cody in his evidence, claiming or implying he was Left Wing, or had Communist leanings.” Letter from Art O’Keeffe to W. Ladyman, “Re: Charges filed by Bro. A. D. MacDonald,” 6.
89. A project initiated by George Gee, the \$60,000 Dunsmuir Street union hall had opened on January 15, 1950, with a housewarming party that included a dinner and dance for six hundred guests. The new union hall gave physical expression to the evolving social unionism he was constructing. In the description of the Sun, “The remodelled building has a large auditorium, union offices, several smaller halls, recreation rooms and a coffee bar. It is one of the largest labor buildings in B.C.” “Electrical Workers Open New Home on Dunsmuir,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 16, 1950, 11. The hall reflected Gee’s desire to give visual expression to the presence of labour unions on the broader social landscape, as well as to foster a sense of community among union members, in part by giving them a place to meet up, whether for social or business purposes.
90. In 1919, Local 213’s president, Dan McDougall, was quite specific when he stated: “I believe Local 213 to be the pioneers of industrial organizations in British Columbia. They have taken in everything in the way of an electrical worker.” “Proceedings of the B.C. Federation of Labor Convention,” *BC Federationist*, April 4, 1919, 6–7.
91. Tom Forkin, the founder and inaugural editor of *Live Wire*, would go on in 1970 to be elected president of IBEW Local 258, the recently created BC Hydro and contract linemen’s local in Vancouver. In 1966, George Angus, president of Local 213’s Unit 6 (the inside wiremen), would become the first president of the Canadian Electrical Workers’ Union. Sam Shannon was the chair of Unit 6 and would eventually celebrate a fifty-year membership in Local 213, Jim Kinnaird served as president of the BC Federation of Labour from 1978 to 1983, and in 1973 Tom Constable was elected mayor of Burnaby.
92. It has been claimed that there were at least three undercover police officers working on the Kitimat–Kemano project in the 1950s under the direction of a Captain Thomas. One of these undercover officers, Walter Schmidt, reminisced that “Moscow planned to totally destroy the powerhouse in 1954.” He further asserted: “Later it turned out that at least one dozen Communist agents had infiltrated the work force.” Though it didn’t quite work out the way he thought it would, Schmidt also wrote: “I had the satisfaction of knowing that all of the saboteurs would be arrested.” Walter Schmidt, “Intrigue and Espionage

in Kitimat's Past," letter to Kitimat Mayor Joanne Monaghan, 10 February 2011, Kitimat Museum and Archives. It should be noted that Schmidt's recollections appear somewhat exaggerated as there is no record (other than his own) of workers being fired or arrests being made due to political outlook. His affirmations should therefore be read with caution. However, in this prioritized defence project at the height of the Cold War there is every reason to believe that there might, indeed, have been RCMP surveillance of the workforce. See also Walter Schmidt, "Something About Schmidt Was Appealing to Canada," *Vancouver Sun*, September 5, 2008, 19.

93. "Highest Priorities Sure for Aluminum Project," *Daily Province*, February 15, 1951, 35.
94. As pointed out in 1971, Article 25 of the IBEW constitution "places in the local union the authority to accept or reject traveling cards, as the local union decides," *The Electrical Worker's Journal* (September 1971), 25–26. See also I. McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," chaps. 5 and 6. On the Kitimat–Kimano project and sidelining Local 213 employees, see Unit 6, *Minute Books*, August 13, 1951, 161; and "Checkmate for Reds at Alcan," *The Northern Sentinel* (Kitimat), April 22, 1954, 2, reprinted from the *Financial Post*.
95. *Minute Books*, July 25, 1960, 7.
96. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, June 22, 1964, 155.
97. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, January 25, 1965, 180. Moreover, working on permit in another local's jurisdiction was also proving difficult. At a "Special Meeting" of Local 213 on July 5, 1965, "Bro. Turner reported men could not get work in Interior [of BC] because they were from LU 213." *Minute Books*, July 5, 1965, 52.
98. *National Post*, August 10, 1963, 18 ("retired for health reasons"); *Minute Books*, July 5, 1965, 51.
99. *Minute Books*, July 5, 1965, 51.
100. *Minute Books*, November 1, 1965, 124.
101. See Unit 1, *Minute Books*, February 21, 1966, 118.
102. "Union Agreement Found Not Binding," *Vancouver Sun*, December 10, 1965, 30.
103. *Minute Books*, April 22, 1965, 3.
104. Letter from Art O'Keeffe to Gordon M. Freeman, "Re: A. O'Keeffe—2 appeals," December 20, 1966, 3. According to O'Keeffe, the company stool pigeon within BCDT appeared to be a certain Jack Whiting. O'Keeffe wrote of Whiting: "He is the party, in collusion with the Company, who tried to sell out the members." See "Appeal of A. O'Keeffe to International President I.B.E.W. Gordon M. Freeman re Suspension," August 5, 1966, 8, RBSC-ARC-1783, O'Keeffe papers.

105. The precise date was May 11, 1965. Letter from Art O’Keeffe to W. Ladyman, “Re: BC District Telegraph Co. Ltd.,” November 15, 1965, 1, RBSC-ARC-1783, O’Keeffe papers.
106. The International Office of the IBEW may have been pressuring Jack Ross to intervene directly, perhaps without realizing that Canada’s labour laws were sometimes very different from those in the United States. In a 1963 decision in the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, the IO won a landmark ruling against Local 28 of Baltimore, Maryland. The ruling empowered the IO to revoke Local 28’s charter and hand over the local’s former jurisdiction to the newly founded Local 24. In a dissenting opinion, Judge Soper noted, “In order to break the strike the IP brought in workers from outside the State, and persuaded union men in other trades not to respect the Local’s picket line. The IP was angry with the union because it would not do his bidding and it is obvious that instead of supporting the Local in the dispute he used his weight in support of the employing contractors.” As he went on to point out, “This was the only case in which the IP [International president] had refused his consent to a strike by a Local Union when it desired to strike in order to maintain its position in a legitimate labor dispute.” See *John E. Parks, Jr., and Robert M. Foote and Albert Mchugh and Paul Ziegler and Silvio Stamerro, Individually and as Representatives of the Members of Local 28, IBEW, in a Class Action, and Local Union 28, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Appellees and Cross-appellants, v. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Appellant and Cross-appellee. Local Union No. 24 (IBEW), Intervenor*, 314 F.2d 886 (4th Cir. 1963), <http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/314/886/263348/> (unpaginated).
107. Quoted in letter from Art O’Keeffe to W. Ladyman, “Re: BC District Telegraph Co. Ltd.”
108. “BC District Telegraph Co. Ltd. v. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213 et al.,” British Columbia Supreme Court, November 30, 1965, in *Canadian Labour Law Cases*, vol. 3, 1964–1966, 334–35.
109. “BC District Telegraph Co. Ltd. v. International Brotherhood,” 335. See also “Union Agreement Found Not Binding,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 10, 1965, 30.
110. Letter from O’Keeffe to J. D. Keenan, “Re: Local 213 I.B.E.W. Appeal to the I.B.E.W. Convention,” March 23, 1966, 2. RBSC-ARC-1783, O’Keeffe papers.
111. Letter from Art O’Keeffe to J. D. Keenan, “Re: Local 213 I.B.E.W. Appeal to the I.B.E.W. Convention.”
112. Art O’Keeffe to W. Ladyman “Re: Charges filed by Bro. A. D. MacDonald,” 10.

113. The resolution read: "That Bro. J. Ross be replaced as Int. Rep for BC & that the I.P. [International President] G.M. Freeman & the Int. Executive Board be petitioned to that effect & that a brief be prepared to substantiate LU 213's position." *Minute Books*, "General Meeting," November 1, 1965, 126. Jess Succamore recalled that it was either, or perhaps both, Les McDonald and George Angus from the wiremen's unit that moved and/or seconded this particular resolution, as well as two other resolutions that targeted Ross in the ensuing months. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 9, 2016.
114. *Minute Books*, September 26, 1960, 12. Historian Edward Seymour reported that in 1964 the IBEW had approximately 40,000 members in Canada. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past, Brightening the Future*, 111.
115. *Minute Books*, September 15, 1965, 94; September 30, 1965, 101; and March 31, 1966, 229–31. Les McDonald cites "around 3,000" members in Local 213 in 1965 in his scribbler, "The Union, 1965–66," n.p., RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–12. The *Vancouver Sun* cites 3,300 members a year later. "Union President Ejected from Hall," *Vancouver Sun*, 13 May 1966, C2.
116. Milligan, *Rebel Youth*, 38.
117. Phillips Cables's workers had also been on a seventeen-day strike in 1958. "New Pact Ends Alarm System Strike," *Vancouver Sun*, March 11, 1958, 1. The company appeared not to have a history of amicable collective bargaining with its electrical workers. The workers would eventually abandon the IBEW in 1967 and join the newly formed Canadian Electrical Workers Union (CEWU).
118. Interview with Succamore, September 25, 2016.
119. See Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 114–15.
120. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
121. Letter from Art O'Keeffe to W. Ladyman, "Re: International Representative J. N. Ross charges against John Morrison, Assistant Business Manager, Local 213," February 8, 1966, RBSC-ARC-1783, Art O'Keeffe papers, file 4-11.
122. "Re: International Representative J. N. Ross charges against John Morrison." "Collins Radio cowboys" is from Les McDonald's scribbler "The Union, 1965–66," n.p., but it is likely he picked up the expression from conversing with Morrison himself. For details of the contract let to Collins Radio by BC Hydro, see "B.C. Hydro Awards \$1 Million Contract," *Daily Province*, July 2, 1965, 22.
123. "Re: International Representative J. N. Ross charges against John Morrison." It should be made clear that Ann MacDonald's testimony was provided in an affidavit rather than in person.

124. John Morrison appealed his dismissal, but the appeal was predictably denied. The announcement that he had lost his assistant's position was officially recorded in the *Minute Books*, March 8, 1966, 216. For a general outline of the story in the local press that broke two days later, see "Union Agent to Appeal Suspension," *Vancouver Sun*, March 10, 1966, 37. On Art O'Keeffe's opinion of Morrison's dismissal by Ross, which he considered "vindictive and retaliatory," see "Hearing of A. O'Keeffe Appeal Before International Executive Council," Salt Lake City, Utah, June 10, 1966, 3. RBSC-ARC-1783, O'Keeffe papers.
125. Les McDonald noted the "near unanimous demand for removal" of Jack Ross as International representative. "The Union, 1965-66." Local 213's *Minute Books*, however, appear to be problematic: despite clear evidence of the discussion and vote, the record is silent as to the voting outcome of the resolution. *Minute Books*, "Special Order of Business" during General Meeting, June 3, 1966, 167-68.
126. *Minute Books*, June 3, 1966, 168.
127. Les McDonald, "The Union, 1965-66," n.p.

Chapter 6: Les McDonald and IBEW Local 213

1. As an adult, Les insisted that his earliest childhood memory was seeing the torches lit at night for the beginning of the Jarrow Crusade, a hunger march that began on October 5, 1936, and ran throughout the month and was strongly supported by MP Ellen Wilkinson. A family photograph seems to indicate that his father, Hugh, was a participant in the early part of the 282-mile-long march to London.
2. Information regarding Les McDonald's climbing abilities and reputation has been gathered from conversations over the years with his old friends from the Tyneside area, in particular brothers Joe and Alec Collerton, Harry (Chum) Warmington, Derek Hodgson, and Gerard MacGill. Decades later, MacGill still recalled Les as possessing "a singular trait of fearlessness." Gerard MacGill, email message to author, July 5, 2021.
3. Les and his fiancée, Monique Richer, were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that in Newcastle "Canada was clamouring for immigrants, there were posters everywhere." Then, while they were on a ferry in the Geirangerfjord in Norway, discussing which country and city they should emigrate to, an American from California overheard them. He interrupted the conversation and suggested Vancouver, Canada. They had never heard of the city before, but the American obviously sold them on the idea. Personal notes from Monique McDonald, in the author's possession.

4. Gerard MacGill, “The Not Quite Famous Five—a Fairly Reliable Wallsend Memoir,” 14. Draft of a personal memoir dated July 5, 2021, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 6-03.
5. Sarah Springman and Monique McDonald, quoted in Susan Grant, “The Paradigm Shifter,” 32.
6. “Il était exigeant pour ses amis, tyrannique avec ses collaborateurs, impitoyable envers ses ennemis. On passait parfois sans transition de l’une à l’autre catégorie. Son charme s’exerçait surtout sur les étrangers, les nouveaux venus, qu’il étonnait et éblouissait. Pour ses proches, ce charme était émoussé ou même irritant.” Monique McDonald, personal notes, in author’s possession; author’s translation.
7. The term “wobble” attests to the historical importance of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), popularly known as “the Wobblies,” an industrial union representing workers in all trades that rose to prominence early in the twentieth century. In the Pacific Northwest, the term “wobble” was heard on both sides of the border. It was commonly used by members of Seattle-based IBEW Local 46 to describe a mid-contract walkout that aimed to force an immediate resolution to a dispute—a tactic in line with the IWW’s emphasis on direct action at the workplace. See Nicole Grant, “Seattle’s Electrical Workers Minority Caucus: A History.”
8. Gerard MacGill, email message to author, August 16, 2021.
9. Les McDonald, “Mourn Not His Passing—Celebrate His Life,” eulogy for Bill Stewart’s funeral, February 2, 2008. RBSC-ARC-1783.
10. See White, *A Hard Man to Beat*.
11. Interview with Monique McDonald, September 18, 2016.
12. Les did not realize it at the time, but the year prior to his arrival in Canada a small independent electrical workers’ union (the ACEWA—the All Canadian Electrical Workers’ Association), based in the North Vancouver shipyard and led by Bert Adair, had been the union of choice for the shipyard electricians for decades. In *A Hard Man to Beat*, Bill White maintains they were double-crossed by the Communist-led Marine Workers and Boilermakers Union in 1954–55, which led to the independent union collapsing and having to join Local 213 of the IBEW. Ironically, and almost simultaneously, the Communist leadership of Local 213 was then ousted by their International Office. Neither side won anything. When his own workers, encouraged by Communist shop stewards, crossed the independent electricians’ picket line, Bill White resigned in disgust as president of the Boilermakers in late December 1954. He also quit the Communist Party. White, *A Hard Man to Beat*, 206–7.

13. Quoted in Ross Johnson, “No Compromise—No Political Trading: the Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia,” 193.
14. Interview with Monique McDonald, September 18, 2016.
15. Henri “Coucou” Barrio was a famous mountain climber both before and after World War II in and around the Aspe Valley in the Pyrénées, particularly the alpine refuge at l’Abérouat. He was also a teacher, a lifelong Communist, and a noted participant in the Resistance during the war.
16. On the ETU, see Rolph, *All Those in Favour?* From a Communist historical perspective, see also Graham Stevenson, “The ETU and the Communist Party,” Graham Stevenson, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://grahamstevenson.me.uk/2014/10/29/the-etu-and-the-communist-party/>.
17. Luff, “Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America,” 113. Even though lifelong Communist intellectuals, such as the highly regarded historian, Eric Hobsbawm, were systematically monitored by MI5—in Hobsbawm’s case then forced to teach at lower-level Birkbeck College in order to make a living—Luff emphatically illustrates her argument on the absence in the country of a co-ordinated, damaging, and publicly virulent anti-communism: “There was no British analogue to the House Un-American Activities Committee, Senator Joseph McCarthy’s lists of alleged communist spies, the Hollywood blacklist, or the atomic espionage trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In Britain, ‘there is no complacency, no panic, no hysteria’ over communism” (133). More to the point, perhaps, is that despite despicable backroom governmental targeting, Eric Hobsbawm nevertheless became “Britain’s most respected historian of any kind.” Martin Kettle and Dorothy Wedderburn, “Historian in the Marxist Tradition with a Global Reach,” *The Guardian*, October 1, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/oct/01/eric-hobsbawm>.
18. For their loyal political allegiance to the politics of the Labour Party, see Frank Jacobs, “Carbon Copy Maps: Digging Coal, Digging Labour,” *Daily Scientific News*, May 19, 2015, <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/carbon-copy-maps-digging-coal-digging-labour>. In particular, Jacobs writes that even as Labour Party electoral successes appear to be slowly receding into history, the common denominator between most of its remaining working-class strongholds and the past is “King Coal, even decades after his dethronement.”
19. “Le Parti des Fusillés” (The Party of the Executed) was the PCF’s nickname immediately following World War II. I still remember witnessing such family rows. After multiple glasses of red wine, Les’s increasingly angry tone with his conservative “bourgeois” in-laws always began with the following pointed

question: “So what did you actually do during the German Occupation?” The discussion would degenerate from there. Monique stayed calm, trying (unsuccessfully) to bridge the gap between what was often described as a “clash of cultures.” On at least one occasion, my relatives teasingly reminded me, after Les had stormed out, that this kind of behaviour was to be expected because, after all, the English were hereditary enemies (“la perfide alblion”) and were responsible for having had Joan of Arc burned at the stake.

20. Canadian born-and-bred “Electrical Bill” was also sometimes called “Burnaby Bill” Stewart. “Boilermaker Bill,” however, had emigrated from Scotland and lived in Vancouver; his full name was William Angus Stewart.
21. See White, *A Hard Man to Beat*, 86–87.
22. See I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 276–78.
23. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
24. Les McDonald, “To Lecia Stewart, On the Celebration of Your Father’s 75th Birthday,” 2–5. RBSC-ARC-1783, Box 4–06. The *Minute Books* recording the general meetings strongly hint at a corroboration of this story—“Bro. W. Stewart raised the question of the International Trusteeship of Local 213 I.B.E.W.” *Minute Books*, February 23, 1959, 171.
25. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
26. Interview with Dora Stewart, October 19, 2016. As a young boy, I witnessed this car-denting incident, an in-your-face type of lesson on anti-materialism.
27. Gord Foster and Bill Harper, “Local 213 Militancy Survives International Purges,” *Western Voice*, May 8–June 10, 1975, 8–9. Ernie Fulton later put the number at fifteen, Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
28. These are one Fred Wilson’s descriptions of required Communist Party commitments. The approximate amount for the monthly Communist Party dues required in the 1950s and 1960s are an extrapolation from the amount cited in 1985. Doug Ward, “Reds,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 14, 1985, A1, A12.
29. John McCuish was subsequently blacklisted from the IBEW beginning in December 1955. See accusatory affidavit from McCuish in this regard in I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 276–79. The affidavit contains fascinating details about the very real probability of RCMP co-ordination in the suspension of Communist-inclined electrical workers from Local 213 in 1955.
30. McCuish, quoted in Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*, 120.
31. Interview with Dora Stewart, July 15, 2019.
32. Doug Ward, “Reds,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 14, 1985, A12.
33. Interview with Colin Snell, August 11, 2014.
34. Art O’Keeffe reminisced that the local lost a significant number of its contract linemen in the late 1950s and early 1960s to a lucrative job market in southern

- California. He also pointed out that working on permit outside one's own local when times were tough was one of the big advantages of belonging to an "international" union. Interview with Art O'Keeffe, December 4, 1982.
35. In this regard, see "100 Laid Off at Drydock," *Vancouver Sun*, November 2, 1959, 1; "Warship Finished; 175 Men Lose Jobs," *Vancouver Sun*, November 6, 1959, 15. See also "Jobless Crisis Grows—Action Demanded Now," *Pacific Tribune*, February 26, 1960, 1.
 36. "1960–1968," IBEW, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://ibew46.com/history/1960-1969/>.
 37. For these comments and a general description of the wobble in Castlegar and the role that shop stewards played in the larger union movement, see "Construction Workers Fight Boss, Roadmen," *Pacific Tribune*, September 16, 1960, 6. The article pointed to a June 1958 meeting in Calgary at which "building trades roadmen and representatives of prime contractors of B.C. and Alberta" discussed their "mutual interests" and agreed that these "would be best served by stripping the shop stewards movement of its authority." The notion of organized shop stewards who would have expansive authority on job sites, originally a British idea, had also been promoted in Ontario by UE and other Communist-influenced unions. It was opposed by more conservative trade unionists not only because of its political colouring but also because it often acted as a rank-and-file counterweight to top-down union bureaucrats. See Smith, *Cold Warrior*, 71–73.
 38. Telephone interview with Al Fisher, December 13, 2017.
 39. Telephone interview with Al Fisher, December 13, 2017.
 40. See "Labour Candidates in Civic Elections Deserve Your Support," *The Labor Statesman*, November 1962, 7.
 41. On his election as a delegate to the 1964 BC Federation of Labour Convention, see the entry, "History as a delegate for Local 213," in Les McDonald, "The Union, 1965–66," n.p.
 42. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, May 25, 1964, 150.
 43. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, May 25, 1964, 151. For O'Keeffe's previous efforts in trying to negotiate on his own a 35-hour work week with the construction contractors in 1958, see "'No Choice,' Say Contractors; Electricians Cry 'Treachery,'" *Vancouver Sun*, June 4, 1958, 3.
 44. See "Building Pace Nears Record," *Vancouver Sun*, August 6, 1964, 23.
 45. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, July 31, 1964, 159.
 46. Bryce Williams, "Electricians Win 37½-Hour Week," *Vancouver Sun*, August 1, 1964, 1. See also synopsis of the collective agreement in "37½ hr. Week for Electricians, B.C. Labor Scores Big Gains," *Pacific Tribune*, August 7, 1964, 11.

The main points contained the wage increments over the term of the contract and the implementation of the 37.5-hour week in the third year of the contract, beginning in 1967. The electricians were already the highest-paid BC building trades workers and had been since 1958.

47. *Minute Books*, September 8, 1964, 371.
48. "Inside Electrical Workers Collective Agreement, May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2026," <https://assets.clra-bc.com/2021/08/2023-2026-Inside-Electrical-Workers-Collective-Agreement-Signed.pdf>.
49. Les McDonald notebook, Communist Party Educational Camp, Sylvan Lake, Alberta, July 13–18, 1964, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–08.
50. Telephone interview with Dennis Rankin, December 29, 2020. (No relation to Vancouver lawyer and civic activist Harry Rankin.)
51. "50 Electricians Fail to Report," *Vancouver Sun*, August 3, 1965, 3.
52. According to Benjamin Isitt, "Between 1946 and 1955, the BC Supreme Court received 69 applications for injunctions relating to labour disputes and granted all but two; from 1956 to 1965, this trend intensified, with the courts granting 224 of 226 applications for ex parte injunctions, where the union was denied notice or hearing." *Militant Minority*, 139.
53. See roster of "Squamish Job" wiremen in 1965, RBSC-ARC-1783, Les McDonald papers.
54. It is not certain that Herb Crabtree was a member of the Communist Party, although Terry Simpson definitely thought that he was a member in 1965.
55. "35 Fired with Okay of Union," *Vancouver Sun*, March 13, 1965, 5. For part of the story on the seven union members subsequently suspended from Local 213 on the Prince George job site, see "Introductory Editorial," *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, January 1967, 1, RBSC-ARC-1783, Barry Sharbo papers, file 4-16. See also "Electricians Carry Grievance to Court," *Prince George Citizen*, September 24, 1965, 3; "100 Pulp Mill Workers Idle in Snap Strike," *Prince George Citizen*, March 15, 1965, 1; and "Electricians Strike Goes to Arbitration," *Prince George Citizen*, March 16, 1965, 1.
56. Notes from Les McDonald for his eulogy at Herb Crabtree's funeral, 1–2, n.d., RBSC-ARC-1783.
57. See Les McDonald's brief account of the police dog attacking Ernie Fulton in British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings*, 1965, 196.
58. "50 Electricians Fail to Report," *Vancouver Sun*, August 3, 1965, 3.
59. *Minute Books*, August 2, 1965, 68–70.
60. "50 Electricians Fail to Report," *Vancouver Sun*, August 3, 1965, 3.
61. *Minute Books*, August 2, 1965, 69.

62. "IBEW Wins at Squamish," *Pacific Tribune*, August 13, 1965, 8. That McDonald ghost wrote (or co-wrote) both the August 6 and August 13 articles is suggested by the two photos of the strike that appeared August 6 in the *Pacific Tribune*. Both are attributed to him in the weekly paper and are to be found in one of his personal photo albums.
63. *Minute Books*, August 2, 1965, 69.
64. The precise telegram to Attorney General Bonner is also written by hand in one of Les McDonald's union scribbles (the "Green Scribbler"). RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-12.
65. *Vancouver Sun*, March 13, 1965, 5.
66. "IBEW Wins at Squamish," *Pacific Tribune*, August 13, 1965, 8.
67. *Minute Books*, August 2, 1965, 70.
68. See the following articles in the *Pacific Tribune*: "Spotlight," April 1, 1960, 7; "Spotlight," May 6, 1960, 7; "Cold War Winds Hit Sports Scene," February 12, 1960, 7; "Canada and the Rome Olympics," June 30, 1960, 7; "Indian Days— a Real Pageant," June 18, 1963, 11-12; "Garibaldi Must Remain in Hands of BC People," July 19, 1963, 5; "No Nuclear Arms Parade Draws Large City Turnout," April 24, 1964, 3.
69. See Fisher, "Strike Activity and Wildcat Strikes in British Columbia." Of note is that fully half of all strike activity in Nova Scotia during this forty-year time period were wildcat strikes, beating British Columbia's notorious proclivity for worker militancy.
70. For a description of the short-lived Progressive Workers' Movement (1964-70), see "The Progressive Workers' Movement," *Next Year Country: A Saskatchewan Socialist News Blog*, <http://nextyearcountrynews.blogspot.ca/2010/12/progressive-workers-movement.html>. For a period piece in the popular press (with accompanying headshots of Jack Scott, "Electrical Bill" Stewart, and Jerry Lebourdais), see Tom Hazlitt, "Militant New Reds Rise from Conflict," *Daily Province*, November 14, 1964, 5.
71. Jack Scott, *A Communist Life*, 5, 182, 183.
72. "Solidarity Wins for Labor—Every Time," *Pacific Tribune*, December 24, 1965, 12.
73. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 421-22. For the Communist perspective, see also Jerry Shack, "Union Solidarity Scores Victory for Oilworkers," *Pacific Tribune*, November 26, 1965, 1.
74. Shack, "Union Solidarity Scores Victory for Oilworkers."
75. See Jerry Lebourdais's obituary, "Jeremie (Jerry) Louis Quesnel Lebourdais," Community Enhancement and Economic Development Society, October 27, 2024, <http://www.horselakefarmcoop.ca/ceeds/jerry-lebourdais.html>.
76. Substantiated in interview with Jess Succamore, June 11, 2017; and also in Scott, *A Communist Life*, 180.

77. A telegram from the International Office on the possibility of a general strike in support of the oil workers was read at a Special Meeting of Local 213—it noted clearly that “stating strike action is illegal . . . and only [International] Pres. G. M. Freeman can authorize strike,” *Minute Books*, November 22, 1965; 140, 144. See also John Olding, “Truce Formula Proposed to Avert General Strike,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 23, 1965, 2. Evidently choosing to ignore the directives of a meddling International officer, the \$2,000 donation was made in any case at the meeting; the reported 609 members in attendance voted unanimously to donate the money. *Minute Books*, November 22, 1965, 140, 144. See also *Business Manager’s News Letter*, December 1965, 4, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 2-14.
78. *Minute Books*, November 22, 1965, 143. Bill Ladyman immediately inserted himself into the debate. In a lengthy telegram to Art O’Keeffe, somehow obtained and published by the *Vancouver Sun*, the International vice-president declared: “While this office has no objection to your local giving every possible legal assistance to the OCAW during current difficulties, the general strike action . . . is illegal under provincial law and in violation of IBEW constitution. B.C. Federation has no authority or autonomy over IBEW local unions and only international president (Gordon) Freeman can sanction strike action. Therefore all IBEW locals are hereby directed to perform normal duties and honor all existing collective agreements regardless of federation directive.” “Truce Formula Proposed to Avert General Strike,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 23, 1965, 2.
79. Les McDonald was reporting in this instance as an invited speaker to the line contracting unit. See Unit 2, *Minute Books*, December 7, 1965, 117.
80. “Solidarity Wins for Labor—Every Time,” *Pacific Tribune*, December 24, 1965, 12.
81. This was Ernie Fulton’s estimate of Communist Party numbers in the wiremen’s unit of Local 213. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
82. *Minute Books*, September 3, 1965, 96–100.
83. *Minute Books*, September 3, 1965, 96–97.
84. In addition, two weeks later, in a second discussion on declarations of note from the BCFL convention, the *Pacific Tribune* reported that “electrical workers delegate, Les McDonald, reported his union in full support of the BCFL-OCAW 48-hour strike, and that his union has already told their company if the latter has a ‘hot line’ with the provincial government, they had better use it.” “VLC Gives Its Full Support to Oil Strike,” *Pacific Tribune*, November 19, 1965, 3.
85. Robert Strachan, leader of the British Columbia CCF had called for the nationalization of the BC Telephone Company in 1959, but the NDP, Canada’s socialist (then eventually social democratic) party, had distanced itself from

- this position by 1965. On Strachan's position in 1959 see "Bennett Statement Causes Wonder," *Vancouver Sun*, November 3, 1959, 40.
86. Plecas, *Bill Bennett: A Mandarin's View*, 106.
 87. *United States v. Brown*, 381 U.S. 437 (1965); Tom McEwen, "A Milestone in B.C.'s Labor History," *Pacific Tribune*, November 12, 1965, 3.
 88. British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*, 110.
 89. British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*, 106.
 90. The resolutions approved by Local 213 for the 1965 BCFL convention do not include one arguing in favour of the "right to strike" while a collective agreement was in force. See the resolutions that were approved in the *Minute Books*, October 14, 1965, 109–11.
 91. British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*, 110.
 92. Jim MacFarlan, written commentary on Les McDonald, November 20, 2018, 7, in the author's possession.
 93. See Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*, 177.
 94. On the deliberate misuse of this latter term by the Communist Party, see Campbell, "The Cult of Spontaneity." For a short description of the IWW and its attitude toward politics and the role of the state vis-à-vis that of the Communist Party, see Klas Balato, "The IWW, the State, and International Affiliations," libcom.org, January 8, 2014, <https://libcom.org/library/iww-state-international-affiliations>.
 95. See Isitt, "Tug-of-War."
 96. *Business Manager's News Letter*, December 1965, 3.
 97. "Special Meeting" *Minute Books*, September 29, 1965, 95.
 98. Dave Barrett, "Kinnaird's Spirit, Dedication Will Live in Hearts and Memories," *The Democrat*, March 1983, 4. In the election of delegates to the 1965 BC Federation of Labour Convention, Les McDonald was elected as a delegate, while Kinnaird was an alternate. Fred Allison, originally elected, couldn't go, so first alternate Jim Kinnaird did. Meeting of the executive board, Unit 6, *Minute Books*, October 3, 1965, 254.
 99. Les McDonald and Jim Kinnaird, "Labour-Management Conference of Economic and Technological Changes in the Sixties, 19–20 May 1965, Bayshore Inn," RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–09.
 100. Within a year, Kinnaird would be followed on the inside wiremen's executive board by Cliff Rundgren, at the time a member of the electrical workers' Communist Party-led caucus. The election of Rundgren to the inside

wiremen's executive board exemplified how the Party was making inroads into the wiremen's leadership structure.

101. See notes from February 3, 1966, in Les McDonald, "The Union, 1965-66," n.p.
102. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
103. Unit 6, *Minute Books*, July 27, 1964, 157.
104. See notation on Les McDonald's election as a delegate from Local 213 to the VDLC, Unit 6, *Minute Books*, September 27, 1965, 249.
105. *Minute Books*, Special Meeting, November 22, 1965, 152. McDonald lost by a vote of 208 to 174. British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*, 164.
106. The votes were as follows: Les McDonald 101, Tom Constable 78, Angus MacDonald 67. But Constable ended up not being able to go, so third place finisher Angus MacDonald went in his place at the last moment. *Minute Books*, "General Meeting," February 7, 1966, 196.
107. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
108. Actually nominated for office on the unity slate for the upcoming June elections in Local 213 were an interesting and politically heterogeneous group. See *Minute Books*, May 9, 1966, 253-58. The altered slate included John Kapalka, Les McDonald, George Brown, Brian Bethel, Jess Succamore, Donna Pooghkay, Art Goy, Ernie Fulton, Bob Towle, and Cliff Rundgren. The first six of these candidates would subsequently have their nominations refused by the International Office following the events at Lenkurt.
109. Interview with Ernie Fulton. Jess Succamore agreed: "Ernie Fulton is right about Stewart and McDonald putting O'Keefe through the grind over the years. I agree with him completely." Interview with Jess Succamore, October 30, 2016.
110. Telephone interview with Jim MacFarlan, November 1, 2018.
111. Interview with Jim MacFarlan, November 20, 2018.
112. *Minute Books*, February 7, 1966, 199. See also resolution no. 151 submitted by IBEW Local 213 in "Resolutions, Submitted to the Sixth Constitutional Convention, Canadian Labour Congress," Winnipeg, Manitoba, April 25-29, 1966, 39-40, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-11. There were, in total, 398 resolutions.
113. *Minute Books*, February 7, 1966, 198-99. These were much more carefully worded resolutions compared to the previous CLC convention in 1964. A resolution submitted in Montréal by the North Burnaby local of the OCAW (Local 9-601, led by Jerry Lebourdais) had been blunt: "Be it resolved that the Canadian Labour Congress press for complete Canadian autonomy for Canadian members within international unions." It was rejected by the attending delegates by a margin of 3-1. *Labour Gazette*, June 30, 1964, 467.

114. "Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (1924)," 102, quoted in Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, 259–60. On the larger issue of Canadian autonomy during the 1923 TLC Convention in Vancouver, see Manley, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging?" 160–61.
115. On Percy Bengough's nationalist sympathies, see Marcuse, "Labour's Cold War," 201.
116. Quoted in the *Labour Gazette*, January 1964, 24.
117. What undoubtedly didn't help Local 213's cause was that the only international unions in the early 1960s that offered real autonomy to their Canadian locals had elements of Communist leadership: UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America), the West Coast Longshoremens (ILWU), and Mine-Mill (IUMMSW).
118. Jim MacFarlan, written commentary on Les McDonald, 7, in the author's possession.
119. *Minute Books*, February 7, 1966, 198–204. See also Les McDonald's notes at the back of his personal copy of "Resolutions, Submitted to the Sixth Constitutional Convention, Canadian Labour Congress," RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–11.
120. Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 249.
121. List of Committees, Sixth Constitutional Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress, Winnipeg, April 25–29, 1966, 8.
122. Quoted in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 64. There were several resolutions to readmit the ousted left-led unions. New Westminster Local 1928 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners had championed the cause, arguing that "the recent victory of the Oil Workers in B.C. . . . demonstrated the results that labour unity can bring about" in support of their resolution. "Resolutions," no. 140, 37. Similar requests also came from Vancouver Local 452 of the same union; Vancouver Local 15 of the Office and Technical Employees Union (OTEU); Local 1 of the Vancouver Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Union; and the BC Federation of Labour. Even the London and District Labour Council called for a "conference to which we would invite representation from all organized labour unions presently outside our jurisdiction." There was support from other union representatives as well. See resolutions nos. 139, 140, 141, 143, 152, 153, and 158, "Resolutions," 36–41. Two years later, in 1968, the CLC voted to delete the general philosophical and policy statements barring Communists, or Communist-led unions, from belonging to the national labour body. For the context and an explanation of this important change in policy, see Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada*, 250–51.
123. Les McDonald, note in his personal copy of "Resolutions," 35.

124. These were resolutions numbered 19, 136, 142, 245, and 314. They are those listed in the body of the essay, except for the one on automation and a shorter work week. It is not clear whether the latter resolution, or a similar one—there were several—passed. See also Les McDonald's notes on the fate of Local 213's resolutions at the back of his personal Resolutions package.
125. Speech of Claude Jodoin, Sixth Constitutional Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress, 5.
126. Sixth Constitutional Convention, 102–3. This important and comprehensive resolution had a general preamble and four subsections condemning the use of provincial Supreme Court *ex parte* injunctions. Militant in both tone and content, it had replaced a weaker resolution on the same topic introduced on the first day of the convention, but which was withdrawn after much criticism. See Sixth Constitutional Convention, 14. See also “Labor to Battle Court Injunctions,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 30, 1966, 21.

Chapter 7: The Lenkurt Electric Strike

1. The address was later renumbered to 7018 Lougheed Highway. Information about the specialization in microwave equipment was supplied by former Lenkurt employee, Brian Bethel, in an interview on February 19, 2017. For more on Department of National Defence contracts, see also *Collective Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Company and IBEW Local Union 213*, February 20, 1964–March 4, 1966, Part 7, Article 9, subsection 9, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria.
2. Fox, *Toxic Work*, 31–32.
3. Number of unionized Lenkurt workers cited in “Application for a Conciliation Officer,” December 21, 1965, 3, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria.
4. If the total membership of Local 213 in 1966 was approximately 3,300 members, then 400 Lenkurt workers make up 12.12% of the total. See “Union President Ejected from Hall,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 2, for approximate numbers of union members in Local 213.
5. See Stephenson, *History and Structure*, 24.
6. Wage rate of women Lenkurt workers cited in Atherton, “CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union,” 91. See also “Schedule A, Job Classifications,” *Collective Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Company and IBEW Local Union 213*, 10. At the time, some women workers represented by the more effective UE at a General Electric plant in Peterborough, Ontario, “could make as much as \$2 per hour.” Sangster, “We No Longer Respect the Law,” 51.

7. On how UE survived the Cold War in Canada basically intact, see Turk, “Surviving the Cold War.”
8. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 180. As an example of his efforts in Vancouver, see pamphlet from George Gee, National Representative U.E., “To: Employees, Federal Pacific Electric,” August 8, 1967, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 4–16.
9. Joyce Cameron, Virginia Reimer, and Cathy Walker, “Lenkurt Strike 1966,” undergraduate paper, British Columbia Institute of Technology, 1971, 2, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–02.
10. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 178.
11. Interview with Brian Bethel, February 19, 2017.
12. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
13. Interview with Brian Bethel, February 19, 2017.
14. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
15. The Trotskyist League for Socialist Action functioned in several guises and iterations between 1934 and 1977—the result of constant splintering within the Trotskyist movement. Brown and his wife, Helen, for example, had reportedly formed a “micro-faction” within the Socialist Labour League while in Scotland, then tried briefly to do the same upon their arrival and their joining of the LSA in Canada in 1963. Yet, shortly after settling in the Vancouver area, the newly arrived couple appeared to give up on Trotskyism completely, abandoning their previous vanguardist activism. Ernie Tate, a leading member of the LSA in Vancouver at the time, intriguingly reports that although Brown was “active in the union,” he “never ever seemed to be able to discuss with us what he was doing there [in IBEW Local 213], keeping it all secret from us.” Tate, *Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s and 60s*, 234–35.
16. Reg and Ruth Bullock, Bill and Lillian Whitney, Ernie Tate, and probably poets Milton Acorn and Al Purdy (the latter being a sympathizer) might have been the only Trotskyists Les McDonald knew by name. McDonald appeared to work closely with Charlie Caron, the Party’s trade union director of the Provincial Executive, who undoubtedly kept him informed as to the doings of the other lefts.
17. The metal shop workers were, however, offered an increase in wages. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
18. See *Minute Books*, March 8, 1966, 216–17.
19. Interview with Brian Bethel, February 19, 2017. Jess Succamore agreed that “Brown and Constable were very close.” Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
20. Bob Clair, “Strike Action Legal? You Decide,” *The Barker*, May 1966, 3. Clair probably got much of his information on the goings-on at Lenkurt from

Donna Pooghkay, wife of Walter Pooghkay, who was a leading IWA shop-floor activist in Local 1–217.

21. *Collective Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Company and IBEW Local Union 213*, Part 2, Article 5, 2–3.
22. *Collective Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Company and IBEW Local Union 213*, Part 7, Article 8, 9.
23. Clair, “Strike Action Legal?” 3.
24. Clair, “Strike Action Legal?” 3.
25. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
26. J. P. Milner, “To All Members of Local 213, IBEW. From: Executive Board Local 213, I.B.E.W.,” July 20, 1966, 2, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5–08.
27. Unit 5, *Minute Books*, March 10, 1966, 182, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5–08.
28. Milner, “To All Members of Local 213,” 2.
29. “Lenkurt Electric—1966 Negotiations,” Proposal No. 8, 2, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria. There appears to be a discrepancy of 1% as the *Minute Books* report a company offer of 16% over three years after the ban on overtime. See Unit 5, *Minute Books*, April 21, 1966, 191.
30. *Collective Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Company and IBEW Local Union 213*, Part 7, Article 4, subsection (c), 8. Lenkurt had also asked Jack Laffling to continue to process its application for a cease-and-desist order against Local 213 to stop harassing employees over what it called “their voluntary, individual decision to work overtime at company request.” “Secret Conciliation Plan Rejected by Firm,” *Daily Province*, May 4, 1966, 8. On the overtime issue, see Unit 5, *Minute Books*, April 18, 1966, 188.
31. Atherton, “CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union,” 92–93.
32. Jess Succamore, identified in the *Sun* as a Lenkurt Employees’ Committee “spokesman,” is mentioned in the article. “257 Employees Fired by Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 29, 1966, 2.
33. See clauses 6 and 7(2) of the An Act Relating to Trade-unions, SBC 1959, c. 90, cited in Carrothers, “The British Columbia Trades Union Act, 1959,” 297.
34. See clause 47(a) of the Labour Relations Act, SBC 1954, c. 17.
35. “257 Employees Fired by Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 29, 1966, 2.
36. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016. See also Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, “Lenkurt Strike 1966,” 4–5. Jack Scott stressed that Brown “strongly advised against going on strike.” Scott, *A Communist Life*, 178.
37. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 178. Scott probably got this important impression of “workers who were determined” directly from Lenkurt Shop Steward George Brown himself, with whom he became subsequently acquainted.

38. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016. The identity of the person who yelled “Let’s go down to the union hall” is unknown.
39. Interview with Jess Succamore, January 31, 2017.
40. In the press release, Jess Succamore is quoted in the *Sun*: “We left our job by individual choice, and not on the union’s advice. It was a walkout to protest intimidation—the management said that if employees didn’t work overtime they were going to get fired.” “257 Employees Fired by Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 29, 1966, 2. Succamore’s declaration directly contradicted Lenkurt’s personnel manager, William Clement, who had been quoted two days earlier as saying that working overtime at the plant was “on a strictly voluntary basis.” “100 Workers Walk Out,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 27, 1966, 2.
41. Interview with Brian Bethel, February 19, 2017.
42. Constable even went so far as to say to the press two days later that “the union had advised the employees not to leave their jobs.” “257 Employees Fired by Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 29, 1966, 2.
43. In July, however, Donna Pooghkay was nominated to represent the Lenkurt employees at a Conciliation Board hearing chaired by Brian Dysart. See “Board of Conciliation Report in the Matter of a Dispute Between Lenkurt Electric and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 213,” July 12, 1966, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria.
44. If there were 400 members of Local 213’s Unit 5 at Lenkurt and 265 participated in the wobble, then that leaves 135 workers at the plant. For approximate numbers, see “Mounties, Pickets Scuffle at Lenkurt Plant Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 1966, 2.
45. For more claims and counter-claims on the numbers, see “Labor Forms United Front over Dispute with Lenkurt,” *Daily Province*, May 12, 1966, 2. The important point is that apparently a significant number of unionized workers did not participate in the wobble.
46. Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, “Lenkurt Strike 1966,” 5.
47. Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, “Lenkurt Strike 1966,” 6.
48. See the advertisements in *Vancouver Sun*, April 30, 1966, 37, and in the *Daily Province*, April 30, 1966, 34. See also “Firm ‘Hires’ in Strike,” *Daily Province*, April 30, 1966, 9.
49. Interview with Brian Bethel, September 19, 2017.
50. Interview with John Kapalka, December 24, 1982.
51. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 30, 2016.
52. “City Unions Back Fired Electricians,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 4, 1966, 13. Two days later it was reported that Lenkurt had received an increase to 1,800 job

- applications, including sixty-five from discharged employees. "Labor Group Asks Minister to Intervene at Lenkurt," *Daily Province*, May 6, 1966, 13.
53. "Tell Labor's Side of It in Ads, Urges Council," *Daily Province*, May 4, 1966, 2.
 54. This accurately reflected what Donald Muldoon has described as the internal security focus of successive federal governments in Canada, which produced in the RCMP an "almost pathological obsession with the left which resulted in state repression becoming a hallmark of communist history." Muldoon, "Capitalism Unchallenged," 25.
 55. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940–2013, Reference file A-2011-00496/DS, Stack 14, RCMP 6981, Code 90, 001443. Capitalization and spelling of surnames as in the original. The RCMP surveillance files series contains Gee's personal subject file, along with related files. At one point, the surveillance records switch over for a few pages to reporting on Les McDonald and Communist Party meetings in Vancouver.
 56. On the left's willingness to work with Art O'Keeffe, and vice versa, see Les McDonald, "The Union, 1965–66," n.p.
 57. Interview with Angus MacDonald, January 9, 1983.
 58. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940–2013, RCMP 6981, Code 90, 001443.
 59. "Tell Labor's Side of It in Ads, Urges Council," *Daily Province*, May 4, 1966, 2.
 60. Testimony of Marion Bachewich, Local 213 *Trial Board Minutes* (review panel), Lenkurt Dispute, *Minute Books*, November 15, 1966, 12–13.
 61. Quoted in Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, "Lenkurt Strike 1966," 4. Diane Larsen's intervention in reaction to Art O'Keeffe's verbal gaffe is also recounted in interview with Jess Succamore March 26, 2017.
 62. Jess Succamore, "Notes for Ian McDonald—Lenkurt Strike," June 11, 2017, 1. In the author's possession.
 63. For a comprehensive commentary on the historiography of Canadian publications on the subject, see the introduction in Sangster, *Through Feminist Eyes*.
 64. "Harassed Company Seeks Union Curb," *Vancouver Sun*, May 3, 1966, 45.
 65. "Labor Forms United Front over Dispute with Lenkurt," *Daily Province*, May 12, 1966, 2.
 66. "Labor to Put Case," *Vancouver Sun*, May 4, 1966, 13.
 67. *Minute Books*, May 5, 1966, 252.
 68. Quoted in "Labor Group Asks Minister to Intervene at Lenkurt," *Daily Province*, May 6, 1966, 13.
 69. Telegram, "Art O'Keeffe to Hon. L. R. Peterson, Minister of Labour," May 6, 1966, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria.

70. Report from May 5, 1966. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940–2013, RCMP 6981, Code 90, 001443.
71. “Hearing of A. O’Keeffe Appeal Before International Executive Council,” 2.
72. “Labor Forms United Front over Dispute with Lenkurt,” *Daily Province*, May 12, 1966, 2.
73. “Joint Statement made the 9th day of May 1966, by: Lenkurt Electric Co. of Canada, Ltd. and Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,” signed by C. Hunter and Angus MacDonald. Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, “Lenkurt Strike 1966,” Appendix.
74. “Settlement ‘Out,’” *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 1966, 31.
75. “Settlement ‘Out,’” *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 1966, 31.
76. The BCFL also publicly announced that it would not endorse Angus MacDonald’s agreement with Lenkurt. Art O’Keeffe, for his part, told the press: “600 members of the local unanimously rejected the agreement signed by local president Angus MacDonald” “Settlement ‘Out,’” *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 1966, 31.
77. *Minute Books*, May 9, 1966, 260.
78. *Minute Books*, May 9, 1966, 260. See also “Mounties, Pickets Scuffle at Lenkurt Plant Protest,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 1966, 1. Having this meeting at the IWA hall would also help deflect attention from the IBEW and stall potential lawsuits from Lenkurt against the local union.
79. “Labor Forms United Front over Dispute with Lenkurt,” *Daily Province*, May 12, 1966, 2.
80. “Pickets Scuffle,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 1966, 2. In the same article, the *Sun* claimed that a “total of 168 union members stayed on the job.”
81. “R v Neale, Clarke, O’Keeffe, and Power,” November 22, 1966, *Dominion Law Reports*, 2nd ser., vol. 60, 619–29. The others specifically named were E. T. Staley, president of the BCFL; E. P. O’Neil, secretary-treasurer of the BCFL; and E. Sims, president of the VDLC.
82. “Peace Talks on Way to Stem Plant Violence?” *Daily Province*, May 12, 1966, 1.
83. While the historical reference to the famous slave revolt is clear, the uninitiated may not fully appreciate the allusion to a very Leninist concept: “Lenin, understanding that revolutionary consciousness did not develop ‘spontaneously’ but had to be constantly fought for, set out to build a vanguard party capable of fighting for the Marxist program and transforming the revolutionary potential of spontaneous militancy into revolutionary consciousness.” “The Leninist Concept of the Revolutionary Vanguard Party,” accessed October 21, 2024, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/socialistvoice/partyPR46.html>.

84. Although he was not a close friend, Brian Bethel remembered Les McDonald as “a rah-rah kind of guy, rallying the troops. He was very proactive, telling people what had taken place. According to him: ‘The company was this, the company was that.’ I remember him maligning the company quite a bit. But that was just par for the course . . . I would say that Les McDonald always had some kind of agenda.” Interview with Brian Bethel, February 19, 2017.
85. McDonald celebrated his thirty-third birthday at the start of the Lenkurt strike, 30 April 1966. On Stewart’s absence, McDonald later wrote: “We would never have got into the Lenkurt Electric mess if Bill had been in Vancouver.” Les McDonald, “To Lecia Stewart, On the Celebration of Your Father’s 75th Birthday,” 10. Dora Stewart would add: “Les was actually quite angry when the Party transferred Bill back to Toronto.” Interview with Dora Stewart, July 15, 2019.
86. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
87. Interview with Brian Bethel, February 20, 2017. Although the article does not identify Bethel by name, his part in risking his life during the picket line action is corroborated in “Story of Violence Heard by Inquiry,” *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 2.
88. “Nine Arrested in Strike Clash,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 12, 1966, 1. The nine arrested were Tom Clarke, Tom Turbett, Walter Pooghkay (all three IWA), John Wood, George Sharpe (both IBEW 213), Jeff Power (Boilermakers), Harold Borris (Carpenters’ Union 452), Jack Longworth (ILWU), Edna Sheard (wife of Communist electrician Sid Sheard). “Union President Ejected from Hall,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 2. A labour newspaper humorously noted that Edna Sheard had been arrested for “allegedly pinching a police officer,” *The Fisherman*, May 13, 1966, 1. Although his name does not appear in the list published in the *Sun*, Ernie Fulton recalls the Boilermaker Bill Stewart was arrested, too. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
89. “Bonner Intervenes In Lenkurt Clash,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 12, 1966, 1.
90. “Story of Violence Heard by Inquiry,” *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 2.
91. Doug Evans, business manager of IWA local 1–217 (located in Vancouver), confirmed this observation in an interview with the press, accusing the RCMP of “infiltration.” “Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 14, 1966, 2. See also “RCMP Disguised at Lenkurt Row,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 21, 1966, 7. The *Pacific Tribune*, as could be expected, was more direct in its condemnation, citing an unidentified VDLC spokesman to the effect that it was “a planned attempt to create incidents of violence for which labor could be blamed.”

- “Labor Hits RCMP Violence at Lenkurt,” *Pacific Tribune*, May 20, 1966, 1. There also appeared to have been several private Pinkerton agents present: see “Labor Bosses Gain Electrical Truce,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1966, 3.
92. There had been talks regarding an organizational renewal of ties between the telephone workers and the IBEW in Vancouver, but when Bill Ladyman phoned Bert Johns from Toronto and “was insulting not only to my person, but to my intelligence,” conversations such as Ladyman’s telephone call quickly put an end to it. Letter from B. J. Johns to Appeals Committee, International Convention, IBEW, “Re: Bro. A. O’Keeffe” September 10, 1970, 2. See also “Appeal of A. O’Keeffe to International President I.B.E.W. Gordon M. Freeman re Suspension,” August 5, 1966, 8. Both in RBSC-ARC-1783, Art O’Keeffe papers, file 4-12.
93. “Appeal of A. O’Keeffe to International President I.B.E.W. Gordon M. Freeman re Suspension,” August 5, 1966, 9.
94. Jack Clarke, “Lenkurt Unionists in Revolt,” *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 1.
95. Milner, “To All Members of Local 213,” 4, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5-08.
96. “Labor Bosses Gain Electrical Truce,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1966, 3.
97. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 29, 2016.
98. Though he strenuously denied uttering the aggressive sentence, it was probably Les McDonald. He used that turn of phrase more than once in his life.
99. Milner, “To All Members of Local 213,” 4. Angus MacDonald received “three broken and two cracked ribs” during the assault. “Report by Executive Board to membership of Local Union 213 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,” June 1, 1966, 2. RBSC-ARC-1783, Barry Sharbo papers, file 4-16.
100. Succamore also described how Walter Pooghkay helped create the space for the other waiting members of the left faction in the hallway; he pushed Succamore from behind into the executive board room. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 29, 2016.
101. “Union President Ejected from Hall,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 2.
102. Milner, “To All Members of Local 213,” 5.
103. “Angry Electrical Workers Oust President from Hall,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 1.
104. Jack Clarke, “Union Waves Olive Branch, Big Stick,” *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 1.
105. “Executive Board Meeting,” *Minute Books*, May 5, 1966, 252.
106. Bill Ladyman’s full law-and-order comments with *Daily Province* reporter Jack Clarke can be found in “Story of Violence Heard by Inquiry,” *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 2.

107. "Story of Violence Heard by Inquiry," *Daily Province*, May 13, 1966, 2.
108. There were at least three of these resolutions: November 1, 1965; January 3, 1966; and March 8, 1966.
109. The embattled membership of Local 213 would also accuse of Bill Ladyman of having deceived top officials of the BCFL. See handbill, "Local 213 I.B.E.W. Members, Vote Out Executive Dictatorship! Vote in a Democratic Union!" July 1966. RBSC-ARC-1783, Box 5-08.
110. Ian Macalpine, "Peterson Raps Strike 'Rowdies,'" *Vancouver Sun*, May 14, 1966, 29.
111. "Nine Arrested in Strike Clash," *Vancouver Sun*, May 12, 1966, 1.
112. Ian Macalpine, "Peterson Raps Strike 'Rowdies,'" *Vancouver Sun*, May 14, 1966, 29.
113. "Union President Ejected from Hall," *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 2.
114. "Special Ex. Board Meeting," *Minute Books*, May 16, 1966, 277.
115. Interview with Gordon Larkin, January 3, 2019.
116. Ian Macalpine, "Peterson Raps Strike 'Rowdies,'" *Vancouver Sun*, May 14, 1966, 29; and also "Labor Bosses Gain Electrical Truce," *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1966, 3.
117. The approximate number of potential picketers that day was reported by the RCMP, as was the presence of five PWM activists. Identified at the Lenkurt Electric plant were Jerry Lebourdais, Joe Hendsbee, John Wood, Jim Neish, and Gordon Larkin. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940-2013, May 25, 1966, 6, 001443-001444.
118. Sympathizers of the PWM considered the decision to call off picketing at Lenkurt May 13, "the turning point of the strike." When a supporter of the fired Lenkurt workers attempted to reach the plant early Friday morning to participate in the picketing "she was caught in a major traffic jam caused by cars being turned away. She estimated over 1,000 picketers would have been in force on Friday if the demonstration had not been called off" Cameron, Reimer, and Walker, "Lenkurt Strike 1966," 9-10. One can only speculate at what might have happened if the picketing had been reinforced and amped up, not ended. See corroboration in Scott, *A Communist Life*, 173.
119. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940-2013, 001444. In the interview with Doug Collins, the new business manager of Local 213, Angus MacDonald would go on to admit that "there has been for some time a split in the union local."
120. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940-2013, 001444.
121. See "Angry Electrical Workers Oust President from Hall," *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 1.

122. An estimated “80 people were involved in a 24-hour a day siege of the Union Hall and offices and this was kept up about one week.” Milner, “To All Members of Local 213,” 5. See also brief story in “Lenkurt,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 14, 1966, 2.
123. The unfortunate nickname was apparently given to him by George Angus. Telephone conversation with Jess Succamore, February 16, 2021.
124. Interview with Tom Forkin, 15 December 1982. Forkin had some experience in these matters as he had helped organize the 1935 occupations in Vancouver of both the downtown Hudson’s Bay Company store and the Carnegie Library by a large group of unemployed demonstrators from government relief camps.
125. For general background to this event and for estimated numbers at meeting, see Jack Clarke, “Strike Chaos Brings Plea from Federation,” *Daily Province*, May 16, 1966, 23.
126. *Minute Books*, May 14, 1966, 310.
127. Interview with John Kapalka, December 24, 1982.
128. This and other remarks made during this meeting are from the *Minute Books*, May 14, 1966, 310–13.
129. *Minute Books*, May 15, 1966, 313. The chaos that erupted at this meeting is strangely reminiscent of the fracas that occurred in January 1955, after International Office representatives Alfred Terry and Andrew Johnson showed up at a meeting of the union, at the time that George Gee and other known or suspected Communists were suspended and Local 213 was placed in trusteeship. See the detailed account of this episode in chapter 4.
130. John Kapalka’s personal sensitivity and orientation toward safety on the job was well known. He had been involved in a horrific job incident in 1949 where he almost lost his life. For Kapalka’s account of the incident, see I. McDonald, “Class Conflict and Political Factionalism,” 175–76 (note 51).
131. “Labor Bosses Gain Electrical Truce,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1966, 3.
132. It was at about this time that a tragic event took place: the suicide of Jack McSorley, one of the original seven signatories of the charges against George Gee. With four other representatives from Local 213, McSorley had been a delegate to the 1954 Chicago convention of the IBEW and met personally with J. Scott Milne, at the time IBEW International president. It was at this convention that the decision was made to charge and suspend Gee. Jess Succamore recounts what happened during the Lenkurt strike: “I had a verbal go at Jack McSorley when we were outside the union hall on Dunsmuir

Street. I explained to him how I saw the situation, and he replied that the International would do this, the Courts would do that, so we had to get the Lenkurt girls back to work. I disagreed with him in a quite outspoken way and tried to show him the errors of his way. His response was a little surprising: 'I've been used.' He left immediately, went home, and, as I found out later, shot himself that evening." Interview with Jess Succamore, October 9, 2016. See also "Cards of Thanks" noting McSorley's passing in the *Daily Province*, May 30, 1966, 22.

133. Bill Bachop, "IWA Local Hits Federation 'Fear,'" *Vancouver Sun*, May 18, 1966, 20. On Syd Thompson's Communist sympathies, see Doug Collins, "Man Seeking Top IWA Job Once in LPP—but Not Now," *Vancouver Sun*, November 24, 1958, 21 and Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 109.
134. Quoted in Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 98.
135. "Labor Bosses Gain Electrical Truce," *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1966, 3.
136. Quoted in Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 98.
137. Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 5.
138. Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 5.
139. Jack Clarke, "Lenkurt Peace Bid Ends in Stalemate," *Daily Province*, May 18, 1966, 2.
140. "Court Tells O'Keeffe to Vacate," *Daily Province*, May 27, 1966, 35.
141. *Minute Books*, May 24, 1966, 267.
142. Quoted in Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 99.
143. Unit 5, *Minute Books*, May 28, 1966, 197–98.
144. "The Lenkurt Sellout: The Story of a Betrayal," leaflet issued by a group of blacklisted Lenkurt workers, 1, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-14.
145. Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 5, 4, and 6.
146. Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 6. See also "Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Co. of Canada Ltd. and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union No. 213, March 5, 1966, to March 4, 1969, 16," GR-1536, box 1-4, Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, BC Archives Royal BC Museum, Victoria. It is noteworthy that Angus MacDonald had appointed a "new" assistant business manager (ABM) to help carve out this collective agreement—none other than his old ally, Malcolm Morrison. Morrison's name appeared as "ABM" on the new collective agreement with Lenkurt Electric. Two months after Local 213's elections on July 30, he would disappear again from the political scene, this time for good.
147. "Lenkurt Strikers Go Back on Company's Own Terms," *Vancouver Sun*, May 30, 1966, 1.

148. Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 6. When it came out in September 1966, the official collective agreement revealed twenty different pay categories and a detailed periodization of wage increases over a three-year time period, so it is difficult to ascertain precisely what this means. "Agreement Between Lenkurt Electric Co. of Canada Ltd. and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers," 16.
149. See "Special Lenkurt Meeting," Unit 5, *Minute Books*, August 23, 1966, 207, which contains a much simpler and straightforward explanation of the new collective agreement.
150. "Special Lenkurt Meeting," Unit 5, *Minute Books*, August 23, 1966, 207.
151. "Lenkurt Dictates Work Terms," *Vancouver Sun*, May 30, 1966, 27.
152. "Lenkurt Strikers Go Back on Company's Own Terms," *Vancouver Sun*, May 30, 1966, 1.

Chapter 8: After Lenkurt

1. Number supplied in an anonymous letter to Doug Collins, CBC, June 14, 1966, RBSC-ARC-1490, CAIMAW files, Rare Books and Special Collections, UBC Library, Vancouver.
2. As Lenkurt had not budged from its original proposals, these consequences are inferred from management declarations in "Pickets Scuffle," *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 1966, 2; and more succinctly in "Lenkurt Dictates Work Terms," *Vancouver Sun*, May 30, 1966, 27.
3. Interview with Brian Bethel, 19 February 2017.
4. For the minutes of the Trial Board meetings, see the *Minute Books*, June 22, 1966–July 19, 1966.
5. Electrical Worker, "Electrical Workers Carry on Fight for Democracy," *Pacific Tribune*, July 22, 1966, 8.
6. See *Bulletin No. 1*, published by Members of IBEW Local 213 Who Want Union Democracy, July 7, 1966. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 4–16.
7. Quoted in Milner, "To All Members of Local 213," 1, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5–08. Most of the accused in the internal union trials were also on trial at the same time in BC Supreme Court. As the *Vancouver Sun* reported, "legal counsel for the men involved in the contempt of court hearings had advised Ladyman that proceeding with hearings on the union charges would tend to jeopardize their defence in court." "I'm Not Finished, Union Man Vows," *Vancouver Sun*, July 14, 1966, 11.
8. Electrical Worker, "Electrical Workers Carry on Fight for Democracy," *Pacific Tribune*, July 22, 1966, 8.

9. Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 107.
10. *Minute Books*, June 22, 1966–July 19, 1966, 292.
11. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940–2013, 001444.
12. Registered letter from J. P. Milner, IBEW Local 213 recording secretary, to Les McDonald, July 14, 1966, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–16. McDonald's second fifteen-year sentence was for violating Article 27, Section 2, Subsection 15 of the IBEW constitution.
13. See Les McDonald's brief set of notes for his Lenkurt Trial Board defence, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–16.
14. O'Keefe faced two fifteen-year sentences and two five-year sentences. "Deposed Union Boss Says He'll Appeal 15-Year Sentence," *Daily Province*, July 14, 1966, 3. His sentences in relation to his suspensions took four-and-a-half years to be lifted in their entirety after his appeal at the 1970 Seattle convention of the IBEW. "Suspension Lifted: O'Keefe Seeks Compensation," *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 1970, 41.
15. On the lifting of the sentences, see "Unionist Reinstated but Not Vindicated," *Vancouver Sun*, October 15, 1970, 27.
16. "Suspension Lifted: O'Keefe Seeks Compensation," *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 1970, 41.
17. "Suspension Lifted: O'Keefe Seeks Compensation," *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 1970, 41. In the same article, the *Sun* noted that O'Keefe "spent \$5,000 in personal expenses fighting the suspension, lost around \$25,000 in wages, and cost the BC Federation of Labour, which backed his fight, between \$75,000 and \$100,000."
18. "Unionist Reinstated but Not Vindicated," *Vancouver Sun*, October 15, 1970, 27.
19. Interview with Jess Succamore, October 9, 2016.
20. "Deposed Union Boss Says He'll Appeal 15-Year Sentence," *Daily Province*, July 14, 1966, 3.
21. The moniker "Terrible Troika" was originally used by Les McDonald to describe Bill Ladyman, Angus MacDonald, and Jack Ross. Electrical Worker, "Electrical Workers Carry on Fight for Democracy," *Pacific Tribune*, July 22, 1966, 8.
22. In a referendum on August 5, 1961, Local 28 members voted 991–2 in support of the local union's executive board "in their defiance of the IP's [International president's] order." *John E. Parks, Jr., and Robert M. Foote and Albert Mchugh and Paul Ziegler and Silvio Stammero, Individually and as Representatives of the Members of Local 28, IBEW, in a Class Action, and Local Union 28, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Appellees and Cross-appellants, v. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Appellant and Cross-appellee.*

- Local Union No. 24 (IBEW), Intervenor*, 314 F.2d 886 (4th Cir. 1963), <http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/314/886/263348/>, at para. 53.
23. "Union Man Urges Labor to Heed Law," *Vancouver Sun*, June 29, 1966, 10.
 24. "Labor Hits RCMP Violence at Lenkurt," *Pacific Tribune*, May 20, 1966, 1.
 25. "30 Cited for Contempt, 6 of Them Labor Chiefs," *Daily Province*, May 20, 1966, 5.
 26. Ian Street, "Ban All Overtime, Warns Premier," *The Province*, September 29, 1966, 1. Nothing came of this highly ironic pronouncement by the premier. There was talk and chatter in the local press for a day or two, then the subject proceeded to disappear from the political discourse of the day.
 27. In addition, the sentences of three women—Marion Bachewich, Joan Weddell, and Donna Pooghkay—were suspended and fines of \$100 made conditional. The remaining fifteen received fines, in varying amounts. William Wells and William "Boilermaker Bill" Stewart were fined \$500; Tom Constable and George Sharpe \$400; John Longworth and John Wood \$200; and Brian Johnstone, Jess Succamore, David Cramer, Brian Bethel, George Brown, Don Latter, Ted Poole, Frederick Keay, and Walter Pooghkay were fined \$100. "In the Matter of an Application by the Attorney General for the Province of British Columbia for Writs of Committal," file 1758/66, series GR-2012: Vancouver Supreme Court judgements, BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria.
 28. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
 29. See, in particular, "Four Jailed in Lenkurt Case," *Vancouver Sun*, September 30, 1966, 1. A subsequent appeal of the decision was dismissed. See "R v Neale, Clarke, O'Keeffe, and Power," November 22, 1966, *Dominion Law Reports*, 2nd ser., vol. 60, 619–29.
 30. Jack Clarke, "Labor Leaders Staged Prison Strike," *Daily Province*, December 23, 1966, 10.
 31. Quoted in Joyce Cameron Virginia Reimer, and Cathy Walker, "Lenkurt Strike 1966," 12, undergraduate paper, British Columbia Institute of Technology, 1971, 2, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3–02. Jeff Power, a member of the Communist Party at the time, also made public arguments concerning the Lenkurt strike. In November 1966, he published the appeal of his sentence in a pamphlet about the abuse of ex parte injunctions by employers in labour disputes. See Jeff Power, "Injunctions Have No Place in Labor Disputes: The Statement of Jeffrey James Power to the Appeal Court of British Columbia," Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Industrial Union, Local #1, Vancouver, November 3, 1966, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 4–12.
 32. On the enthusiasm and momentum created at this meeting, see also Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 105.

33. Doug Collins, "Electrical Union Official Fired," *Vancouver Sun*, October 6, 1959, 21; and "Electricians Ask Freedom from U.S.," *Daily Province*, October 7, 1959, 17. Jess Succamore repeated more than once the importance of McDonald's speech at the Pender Auditorium in terms of understanding subsequent events leading to the creation of independent Canadian unions in the late 1960s and 1970s, most recently during interview with Jess Succamore, August 25, 2017.
34. For a detailed recounting of the split between the IWA and the WIUC, see Lembcke and Tattam, *One Union in Wood*, chap. 5.
35. "800 Harmac Workers Bolt Union," *Vancouver Sun*, May 13, 1966, 6.
36. For the historical context surrounding the success of the PPWC, see Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 115–18. The *Pacific Tribune* appeared sympathetic in its columns to the sudden and dynamic appearance of the PPWC on the labour scene. For the Party newspaper's critical stance toward outsiders having been parachuted into the issue, see "The Lenkurt Affair," *Pacific Tribune*, May 20, 1966, 2.
37. In 1963, Bill Kashtan from the party's Central Committee had written that "a dramatic struggle is unfolding on the issue of the Canadian trade union movement, the right of unions in Canada to their autonomy and, yes, to their independence, if that is the will of the Canadian membership." William Kashtan, "Labor Front," *Pacific Tribune*, May 31, 1963, 2.
38. Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 117.
39. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
40. See Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 106.
41. After many shifts and turns in trade union policy over the decades during the twentieth century, the Communist Party in the 1960s was back to Lenin and its original position, first enunciated in the early 1920s, of a push "for a united front of the left wing." In relation to being able to affect trade union leadership, the tactic also became known more cynically as "boring from within." For events in the 1920s, see Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, 259–60.
42. Quoted from RCMP records in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 158. In its declaration on staying within working-class organizations like international unions, the Communist Party was also implicitly passing judgment on its earlier efforts between 1928 and 1935 to form separate Canadian unions under the umbrella of the Workers' Unity League (WUL). The WUL, and its 40,000-strong membership, was formed then disbanded because the Communist Party of Canada obediently followed Soviet directives from abroad. That these zigzags in policy provoked serious disagreements with Communist trade unionists in Canada is perhaps best exemplified by the highly respected Cape Breton coal miner's leader, J. B. McLachlan, who resigned from the Party rather than follow

- directives on the dissolution of the WUL in 1935. For more about McLachlan, see David Frank's informative entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
43. Interview with Jim MacFarlan, November 1, 2018.
 44. Telephone Interview with Jess Succamore, February 16, 2021.
 45. Interview with Jess Succamore, September 25, 2016.
 46. Canadian Autonomy Council and Pooghkay both quoted in Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 107.
 47. George Brown, "U.E., an American Union," *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, August 1967, 3, RBSC-ARC-1783, Barry Sharbo papers, file 4-16.
 48. See the description of Jack Scott's ejection from the Communist Party and his founding of the Progressive Workers' Movement (PWM) in 1964 in *A Communist Life*, chap. 14. As mentioned previously, there were other factional disputes on the left at the time. See Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 79–83.
 49. Quoted in Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 111.
 50. From having considered George Brown as a candidate on his projected "unity slate" prior to the Lenkurt Electric strike, Les McDonald would later on in life castigate both Trotskyists and Maoists as being disorganized splitters. As he used to say, probably in reference to the Lenkurt experience, "they couldn't organize a cock-up in a hen house."
 51. Interview with Jess Succamore, June 11, 2017. Practically the same thing happened in 1919 when Vancouver electrical workers voiced their sympathy for the OBU. See interview with Local 213 electrician Fred Hoppe, August 21, 1964, <https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/collection/fred-hoppe-interview-electrician-and-socialist/>.
 52. Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 113–14.
 53. This was not an isolated view, nor a new one. Harold Pritchett, a lifelong Communist, had commented on precisely this issue during the 1930s when he was helping to successfully organize the IWA in British Columbia's forest industry. See *The B.C. Lumber Worker*, June 27, 1938, cited in Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy," 30.
 54. "An Open Letter to the Members of 213," *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, April 1967, 2.
 55. Jess Succamore was emphatic on the importance of McDonald's speech in galvanizing the breakaway group. Notes from interview with Jess Succamore, June 11, 2017.
 56. Atherton, "CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union," 115.
 57. *Trade Union Program*, an undated pamphlet published by the Progressive Workers' Movement, 4, in the author's possession. See also Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 120, 159.
 58. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 179.

59. Voting results at Phillips Cables reported in the “Breakaway Union Wins Agent Vote,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 27, 1967, 15.
60. For the CEWU winning over the allegiance of workers in Sentinel, Alberta, see “Union Scores Victory,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 20, 1969, 26. For Jack Ross’s references to Trotskyites, see “Rival Electrical Union Denies Party Affiliation,” *Edmonton Journal*, March 23, 1968, 8.
61. Ray Webber (son-in-law of Jess Succamore), email message to author, September 3, 2017.
62. *Minute Books*, May 24, 1966, 279.
63. Angus MacDonald, “To All Members of Local Union 213 I.B.E.W.,” June 29, 1966, 1, RBSC-ARC-1783, Barry Sharbo papers, file 4-16.
64. “O’Keeffe Backers Top Polls,” *Daily Province*, August 25, 1966, 8. See also election results in composition of new executive board at their first general meeting. *Minute Books*, October 3, 1966, 411.
65. McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*.
66. Quoted in Dave Barrett, “Kinnaird’s Spirit, Dedication Will Live in Hearts and Memories,” *The Democrat*, March 1983, 7.
67. “Trial Board Minutes,” *Minute Books*, June 6, 1966, 297; and Local 213 “Trial Board Minutes (review panel), Lenkurt Dispute,” November 15, 1966–January 4, 1967, 15.
68. Jess Succamore, “An Open Letter to the Members of 213,” *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, April 1967, 1.
69. Quoted in Atherton, “CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union,” 116–17.
70. Interview with Ernie Fulton, November 24, 1984.
71. Jess Succamore, “An Open Letter to the Members of 213,” *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, April 1967, 3.
72. Jess Succamore, “Red Herring by the Red Jellyfish in 213,” *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, January 1967, 3.
73. James Kinnaird, “To Members Local 213 I.B.E.W. Employed in Manufacturing” *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, February 1967, 1–2.
74. Succamore, “An Open Letter to the Members of 213,” 3.
75. In contradiction to Jess Succamore’s memory of events, Jack Scott recalled that “we had a discussion with Brown and Succamore and decided that we should take them [Wood and Unger] off.” Scott, *A Communist Life*, 180. The point here, regardless of who remembered precisely what, is that Wood and Unger’s presence on the new CEWU executive board briefly became a political football.
76. See “Introductory Editorial,” *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, January 1967, 3.
77. “IBEW Officials’ Trade Union Integrity Questioned,” *Western Canadian Lumber Worker*, August 1967, 5, RBSC-ARC-1783, Barry Sharbo papers, file 4-15.

78. "IBEW Officials' Trade Union Integrity Questioned," 5.
79. Uncorrected proof of *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, September 1967, 2, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5-05.
80. On Scheer's appointment, see *Business Manager's News Letter*, September 1967, 2, RBSC-ARC-1783, file 2-14.
81. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 113, 116.
82. A significant nationalist movement for Canadian autonomy also broke out in violent fashion during a wildcat strike in Local 1005 of the Hamilton steelworkers in August 1966. It had long-term effects afterwards on the life of the industrial union local in Ontario. See Freeman, *1005: Political Life in a Local Union*, chap. 4.
83. See "Kinnaird for I.V.P.," *213 LiveWire*, April 1970, 1.
84. See multiple articles and a major Local 213 resolution on this question in the April 1970 issue of *213 LiveWire*. Jack Scott (*A Communist Life*, 180) claims that much of the pressure from within Local 213 to fight for Canadian autonomy within the IBEW came from John Wood and Dave Unger, two wiremen who were members of the PWM. (Thus far, I have been unable to verify this claim as the collection of Local 213's *Minute Books* in Rare Books and Special Collections at the UBC Library, Vancouver, ends in early 1967.) On Ladyman—who had been a lineman—Edward Seymour writes that in 1967 at the AFL-CIO convention in Fort Worth, Texas, he spoke to critics of international unions in Canada as originating from what he termed "subversive left-wing elements." Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 114.
85. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 164.
86. Palladino, *Dreams of Dignity*, 245. Palladino is describing Rose's opinion of the Canadian sovereignty position issuing out of Local 213.
87. Quoted in Laxer, *Canada's Unions*, 147. Kinnaird presented his "Canadian autonomy" submission in 1973 to the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO just prior to its October meeting in Bal Harbour, Florida.
88. The machine-type politics of the IBEW had previously attracted the discerning and jocular attention of the *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*. In a prescient warning about futile attempts to bring genuine democracy to the IBEW, an editorial column had declared: "We can no more attach the label of Democracy on the I.B.E.W. that we can give to prostitution its former innocence. Not one worker believes the I.B.E.W. is representative of Electrical Workers in Canada." "Our Cause Is Just," *C.E.W.U. Live Wire*, August 1967, 1.
89. Cliff Rundgren beat Terry Simpson for the post of business manager by 68 votes. "Cody's Comments," *213 LiveWire*, July 1973, 1, 4.

90. Local 213 kept on trying to split electrical contractors away from the CLRA and to sign collective agreements apart from the new employers' organization. Cliff Rundgren and Jim Kinnaird appeared to be partially successful in 1972 with twelve independent electrical contractors, then Rundgren appeared to be close to success again in 1974 with the forty-eight non-aligned contractors mentioned in the text. See Dick Shuler, "Electricians Get Independent Pact," *Vancouver Sun*, May 3, 1972, 4; and "Electricians Sign Independent Pact," *Daily Province*, June 12, 1974, 33.
91. "\$2.90 Hourly Pay Hike Rejected by Plumbers," *Daily Province*, April 29, 1974, 1.
92. "Strike Hits Construction Industry," *Vancouver Sun*, May 1, 1974, 1, 6.
93. "Electrical Union OK's Pact," *Vancouver Sun*, July 8, 1974, 1-2.
94. On the lockouts, see the following articles, all in the *Vancouver Sun*: George Dobie, "B.C. Contractors Order Lockout," April 26, 1972, 1; Keith Bradbury, "Electricians Serve Notice of Strike," April 13, 1972, 3; and "Construction Lockout Stays," May 20, 1970, 1.
95. For more background on this issue, but from the contractor's perspective, see George Dobie, "Electricians Stick Out in Hiring Hall Dispute," *Vancouver Sun*, July 3, 1972, 25.
96. For the dynamic at the beginning of the "10-pact" strike, instigated by an antagonistic CLRA and IBEW Local 213, see "Strike Hits Construction Industry," *Vancouver Sun*, May 1, 1974, 1, 6. For conclusion of the strike, see "Electrical Union OK's Pact," *Vancouver Sun*, July 8, 1974, 1-2.
97. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 142.
98. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 142.
99. Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 152.
100. Paul Yorke, email message to author, September 3, 2017.
101. On the self-interest of labour bureaucrats, see Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 183. Alfie Huston saw the issue through a more specific, manipulative lens: "The major reason Rundgren kept getting re-elected was his support from the cable vision workers, gas workers, warehouse workers, etc., not the electricians. He made the popular members from each of those groups assistant agents . . . and used them to effectively ram unpopular decisions down the wiremen's throats." Alfie Huston, email message to author, April 18, 2021.
102. Alfie Huston, email message to author, April 10, 2021. This was fundamentally the same system subsequently adopted province-wide by all Ontario locals of the IBEW. That it might have been forced upon an unco-operative Warren Chapman and a wayward Toronto Local 353 at the beginning of this process was undoubtedly a lesson not lost on Cliff Rundgren.

103. Interview with John Neilson, May 16, 2021.
104. Alfie Huston, email message to author, May 4, 2021.
105. Interview with John Neilson, May 16, 2021.
106. Interview with Jagdish (Jack) Saran, May 13, 2021.
107. Audet, “La construction d’un syndicat québécois.”
108. Desmond Morton offers a useful overview of the split in *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement*, 290–93; for a more detailed history, see Audet, *Les artisans de la lumière*, in particular chap. 7. On the political climate surrounding the workers’ withdrawal from the IBEW, see Laxer, *Canada’s Unions*, chaps. 15 and 16.
109. See Brian Johnson, “Electrical Union Cutting U.S. Link Meets Resistance,” *Montreal Gazette*, October 28, 1972, 4.
110. On the previously Communist Gagnon, and some of his contributions to IBEW Local 568 in Montréal, see his own (very uneven) account of events in *Les P.M.E. (Les petites et moyennes entreprises) à l’agonie*. On IBEW’s reluctant approval of Local 568’s finances following Georges Petta’s investigation (as Bill Ladyman did not mention the issue), see the latter’s brief comment on having to suspend the Montréal local in *The Electrical Worker’s Journal*, September 1971, 7. On details of the pension fund dispute, including the financial clean sheet, see Audet, *Les artisans de la lumière*, 69–70.
111. See the story recounting Henri Gagnon’s initially harsh criticisms of FIPOE at the Cliche Commission investigation in Irwin Block, “QFL ‘workers’ underground’ denounces trusteeship move,” *Montreal Gazette*, December 3, 1974, 1–2. As FIPOE eventually reformed itself, Gagnon would change his mind and temper his criticism of the Québécois electrical workers’ union. See Monique Audet’s brief but important mention of Gagnon’s influence as president of IBEW Local 568 from 1968–71 in *Les artisans de la lumière*, 45, 68. On Henri Gagnon’s “pérégrination” as a Québécois communist during his lifetime, see the informative perspective on Gagnon’s political life in Comeau and Dionne, “Henri Gagnon, organisateur révolutionnaire: 1936–1956,” Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, October 11, 2024, http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/comeau_robert/henri_gagnon/henri_gagnon_texte.html. See also the few brief references in Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 228–29, 242, 250; and in Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada*, 256–57.
112. Quoted in Martin Patriquin, “No One Can Deny It Now: Quebec Is Facing a Corruption Crisis,” *Macleans*, November 24, 2015, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/quebecs-now-undeniable-corruption-crisis/>.

113. See “Henri Gagnon: un homme de convictions,” Action socialiste de libération nationale (ASLN), November 10, 2024, <https://www.pcq.qc.ca/Dossiers/Autres/Archives/Dossier.php?No=917>.
114. On the background and circumstances and the controlling regulatory environment that emerged out of the government-imposed trusteeship of FIPOE and three other construction unions in Québec, see Sexton, “Controlling Corruption in the Construction Industry,” 524–35. It is noteworthy that house construction and renovations remain largely non-union in Québec, as it is in the rest of Canada.
115. At the same time, the leadership of the CLC was beginning to witness a major push to support more autonomy for Canadian locals of international unions, including IBEW locals. See discussions of this issue at the 1974 CLC convention in Vancouver led off by Lorne Robson and Colin Snell of the BC carpenters union in George Dobie, “Autonomy Call Cheered by Union Delegates,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 15, 1974, 7. See also “Moderates Win Vote on Go-slow Union Autonomy Policy,” *Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1974, 52; and Allan Fotheringham’s biting commentary on much of the tone and direction of the convention in his *Vancouver Sun* column, May 17, 1974, 37. Four months prior to the convention, Homer Stevens, Communist leader of the UFAWU (which was now back in the national house of labour), announced that he would run for the position of president of the CLC. This created shockwaves everywhere as he had not consulted with either his own union or the Communist Party. He would shortly be forced to backtrack on his decision as he was chastised by the UFAWU executive and presumably also the Party. George Dobie, “What’s Going on ‘Way Out on That Left Wing?’” *Vancouver Sun*, January 26, 1974, 25.
116. See Ken Rose’s remarks on this issue in Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 137.
117. Most observers feel the increasing weight of the Canada-only public sector unions in the CLC largely explained the latter’s growing nationalist perspective throughout the 1970s. Moreover, it should be made clear that there are today five building trade construction councils in Québec: the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ–Construction), the Conseil provincial des ouvriers en construction (International), the Syndicat québécois de la construction (SQC), the Centrale des syndicats démocratique (CSD), and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN). Further clouding the picture is that teachers in Québec have their own labour “central,” the Centrale de l’enseignement du Québec (CEQ). While seemingly a dog’s breakfast in terms of being split into disparate groups, the advantage is that close to 100 percent of Québec’s construction workers are unionized and negotiate

- together by law with a centralized employers' group. Construction workers elsewhere in Canada might do well to take note.
118. Other reasons Ken Rose gave for setting up the CFL were that "work jurisdictions would be recognized and protected." He had previously hoped that "voting structure at Conventions would be amended to reflect fair representation for all; and that the C.L.C. would insist that federations and councils that were affiliated to the [Canadian Labour] Congress abide by the Constitution of the Congress." Quoted in Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 137. But he didn't get the changes he wanted from the CLC. Reading between the lines, it is clear that the breakaway union in Québec remained a primary concern.
 119. For a brief recounting of some of the background to the dispute between the CLC and the CFL in 1982, see Rose, "The Building Trades–Canadian Labour Congress Dispute." See also Peter Comparelli's concise summary in "CLC Rupture Revolves Around Who's in Control," *Vancouver Sun*, May 1, 1981, 27. The IBEW's version of events can be found in Barry, "Part IV: Recession, Recovery, and Renewal," 12–13, 28.
 120. Quoted in Seymour, *Illuminating the Past*, 139.
 121. Having previously met and discussed matters in both French and English with Louis Laberge on the sidelines at the 1974 CLC convention in Vancouver—he came away impressed by the French-Canadian labour leader—Les McDonald would subsequently argue that workers in Québec, being part of a nation within Canada, required complete autonomy if they so desired within the CLC while still belonging to the wider organization. Not having much choice out on the west coast, Les McDonald meanwhile stayed with the IBEW until his retirement as an electrician in 1993, then collected a small pension from the union (about \$483 per month) until his passing in 2017.
 122. Jim Kinnaird, "BM's Report: Locals 999–213 Amalgamation Backed," 213 *LiveWire*, November 1968, 1.
 123. Jim Kinnaird, "Minority Sections Demand Autonomy," 213 *LiveWire*, November 1972, 1.
 124. See discussion on the pros and cons of eliminating Local 213's general meetings in "An Interview with Cliff Rundgren," election pamphlet, n.d., RBSC-ARC-1783, file 5–02.
 125. Cliff Rundgren, "We Must Stay United," 213 *LiveWire*, September 1974, 1.
 126. See Jim Kinnaird's remarks on unruliness and the irregular nature of employment in the construction industry in Kinnaird, *BC Commission of Inquiry*, 40.
 127. Paul Yorke, email message to author, September 3, 2017.

128. Paul Yorke, email message to author, September 3, 2019. To Paul Yorke's ongoing chagrin, the TWU voted to rejoin an American-based international union, the United Steelworkers of America, in November 2014.
129. Interview with Terry Simpson, July 17, 1985.
130. On Ed Simpson, see McDonald, "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism," 162.
131. Regarding the NHL franchise, see, for example, "City Leaders Plot Mass NHL Protest," *Vancouver Sun*, February 19, 1966, 6; Dave Ablett, "Mass Protest Set on NHL Action," *Vancouver Sun*, February 21, 1966, 2; and "Drive for NHL Franchise Drawing Share of Big Guns," *Vancouver Sun*, February 23, 1966, 15.
132. Author's notes from conversations with Les McDonald, undated. Hume was to pass away shortly afterwards, on 17 February 1967.
133. Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior*, 106.
134. Norman Penner, a leading light of the party in Canada during the post-World War II era, delineates the slavish compliance of the Canadian leaders to the needs and dictates of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and their acquiescence in particular to its foreign policy requirements, in *Canadian Communism*. However, this did not mean that there weren't all kinds of tensions, arguments, and growing divisions in the BC wing of the Party to which McDonald would have been exposed in the first half of the 1960s. In this regard, see Scott, *A Communist Life*, chap. 14.
135. George Gee fonds, RBSC-ARC-1210, Surveillance files, 1940–2013, August 14, 1967, 001603–001604.
136. Swankey, quoted in Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 81.
137. I am referring, of course, to *The God That Failed: A Confession*, a collection of essays by Arthur Koestler and other prominent writers and journalists who had grown disenchanted with Communism and had ultimately abandoned it.
138. Les McDonald was accompanied by his good friends, Al Fisher and Rod Holloway. This visit to the GDR foreshadowed his prickly relationship in 1989–90 with Igor Novikov, the Russian president of the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne. For details, see Phelps, "The Creation and Development of an International Sport Federation," 68–77; and Adelfinsky, "American Expansion, Russian Threat," 113–17.
139. Prior to leaving the Communist Party, Les wrote three articles on labour, sports, and politics: "Youth and Change in the Labor Movement"; "Stick It . . . [or How We'll Learn to Play Canadian and Keep Smiling]"; and "Paris: Two Months After May."
140. Les McDonald, "Towards an Independent Labor Movement," n.p. In author's possession.
141. Stevens, quoted in Stevens and Knight, *A Life in Fishing*, 253.

142. Doug Ward, "Reds," *Vancouver Sun*, December 14, 1985, A12.
143. The postcards that Les McDonald sent to the Stewart couple date from 1997 to 2007. See RBSC-ARC-1783, files 4-08, 4-09, and 4-10.
144. Alfred (Alfie) Huston, email message to author, April 11, 2021.
145. Rod Mickleburgh, "Electrical Union's Rebel Still Fighting 'Oppression,'" *Daily Province*, February 10, 1982, 20. Initially suspended for yet another fifteen years in 1975, Les McDonald's sentence was reduced to ten years on appeal. See letter from James F. Mulloney (secretary, International Executive Council of the IBEW) to Leslie McDonald, December 9, 1976. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-14. Also charged and suspended for their part in the brief downtown wobble were Terry Simpson, Keith Apps, Charlie Sawkill, Al McLachlin and Alfie Huston. What made matters even more ironic for the remainder of the "left" within Local 213 was that the hearings for the trials were held under the aegis of the newly elected president of the local union, Jim Gee, George Gee's son.
146. George Dobie, "Seven IBEW Members Suspended 2-to-15 Years," *Vancouver Sun*, June 20, 1975, 7. Electrical workers on permit ("travellers") were supposed to be the first that would be let go in a downsizing of the required crew, while the home local's workers were the last, the latter in reverse order of job seniority.
147. For details of the accusations, see "Six Trade Unionists Take Suspensions to Court," *Vancouver Sun*, February 3, 1977, 38.
148. "Electrician Wins 15-Year Suspension Appeal," *Vancouver Sun*, October 11, 1978, 5.
149. Information supplied in interview with Alfred (Alfie) Huston, April 12, 2021.
150. Peter Comparelli, "Nine Fired and Suspended by Electrical Workers' Union," *Vancouver Sun*, October 16, 1979, 9.
151. For the details on the appeals to the IBEW of the suspensions involving Fedewa, Duffy, and Halferty (all denied) see "Appeals of Robert J. Duffy, W. L. Fedewa and Gerald Halferty," *The Electrical Worker's Journal*, November 1980, 9. Note that Fedewa's suspension is listed in the *IBEW Journal* as being of six months' duration. But as his suspension had begun in October 1979, the six-month sentence beginning April 1, 1980, listed in *The Electrical Worker's Journal* was simply upholding the original one-year penalty imposed by International vice-president, Ken Rose.
152. Peter Comparelli, "International Ousts Head of Electricians' Local," *Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 1979, 56
153. Unlike dispatcher John Neilson, who felt that Rundgren "had no choice" (interview, May 16, 2021), Alfie Huston believed that the business manager did have room to manoeuvre during his long tenure. Email from Alfie Huston to

the author, May 4, 2021. It should also be noted that the IBEW did not seem at all reluctant to give support to former Communist Party members who “had seen the light” and come on board the business union train. Once they had renounced their Communist affiliations, the support of the International Office on the west coast to George Mulkey, Jack Ross, and Cliff Rundgren (were there others?) is both instructive and revealing. If they repented, former Communists evidently could become trusted and reliable regional representatives.

154. Peter Walls, “Union Dispute Goes to Court,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 6, 1982, 7.
155. Terry Simpson, quoted in Rod Mickleburgh, “Rebel Electrical Worker Wins His Battle with Union,” *Vancouver Sun*, October 28, 1982, 4.
156. Knight and Stevens, *A Life in Fishing*, 134.
157. During another Squamish construction job in 1970 with a live-in camp set-up for the workers, Les McDonald had decided to erect a make-shift flagpole at the top of one of the trailers and fly a red flag at the top of it. The company was naturally peeved and contacted the International Office of the IBEW, so Local 213 eventually had to deal with it. Kinnaird sent Ernie Fulton, at the time assistant business manager for the wiremen, to convince McDonald to take down the red flag. Fulton, former apprentice to the provocative red flag rebel himself, succeeded in doing just that, but it was the end of his relationship with Les. It did not help that Fulton later in life crossed another line, becoming a representative for the Line Contractors’ Association in negotiations with IBEW Local 258.
158. Alcoholism and drug use persist to the present day. In response, BC’s IBEW locals and employers have jointly recognized this long-standing and deeply concerning medical problem in their midst, commendably setting up a jointly funded provision in the current collective agreement (§23, Article 9, subsection 911) titled “Construction Industry Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Plan,” or CIRP. The gardening-associated term, “variegated left,” was initially suggested to the author by Toni Facchini, Italian-born electrical worker in Local 213 at the time. His illustrative point is that there was still a healthy growth of an oppositional tree, regardless of the type of leaves produced on its branches.
159. Alfie Huston, email message to author, April 11, 2021.
160. Letter from Les McDonald to Local 213 president, Alfred (Alfie) Huston, May 20, 1986. RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-12.
161. See minority “International Convention 1986 Report” authored by Alfie Huston. See also additional letters of protest to President Huston about Rundgren’s tactics regarding the “Credibility Counts” newsletter from Terry Simpson, John Leslie, Brett Haughian, Ernie Fulton, and Alan Pettigrew,

RBSC-ARC-1783, file 6-03. It should be noted that elections were now conducted by mail-in ballot as opposed to the process used during the 1960s (and before) wherein only those members present at union meetings actually voted for the local's delegate representatives.

162. Huston, "International Convention 1986 Report," RBSC-ARC-1783, file 6-03.
163. François Painchaud, president of Local 568, explained to a *Toronto Star* reporter at the IBEW convention that his local had continuously owed funds to the International Office over the past decade—which was used as the reason for IO intervention. But he alleged that the difference in 1985, as opposed to the previous years, was that "friends of the [Ken Rose] administration were about to lose office, and the latest trusteeship stopped us from holding an election." *Toronto Star*, September 16, 1986, A16.
164. Les McDonald did help prepare six resolutions, all contentious, to be approved beforehand by Local 213 in case he was elected for the IBEW convention in Toronto. The first one was familiar and now almost part of his persona as it had to do with "taking a strong militant stand for the shorter work week," while the last one was the resolution on having the Building Trades unions leave the CFL and rejoin the CLC. "Resolutions for the I.B.E.W.'s 1986 Convention," n.d., RBSC-ARC-1783, file 3-12.
165. For an account of Les McDonald's preparations for the Yukon expedition, see "High-Altitude Electrician Joins Unique Alpine Climb," *Vancouver Sun*, June 7, 1967, 13. See also Max Wyman, "Big Triumph Came Near to Tragedy," *Vancouver Sun*, July 6, 1967, 54, on the harrowing return from that expedition.
166. See Donald Morton, "The 1967 Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition"; and Paul Tukker, "That Time When Hundreds of Climbers Tackled Yukon's Remote St. Elias Range," *CBC News*, December 30, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-alpine-centennial-expedition-50-years-later-1.4460638>. See also Leslie McDonald, "Good Neighbour Peak"; Les McDonald, "The Biggest Mountain . . . Is in Ottawa"; and Alford, "South Summit of Mt. Vancouver ('Good Neighbour Peak') 15,720 Feet."
167. Lost Lake is now within a municipal park at Whistler and no longer Crown land but is still a cross-country ski destination in winter. On the detailed map of the cross-country ski trails, "Les' Leap" is named after Les McDonald, while "Helen's Corner" is named after the author's sister.
168. Information supplied by Loreen Barnett, secretary-general of ITU, April 30, 2017. Regarding Les McDonald's unyielding position on the important issues of gender equality and of guaranteeing equal prize money for women and men on the World Cup circuit, see double world triathlon champion Emma Carney's biography, *Hard Wired*, 70, 120.

169. Quoted in Susan Grant, “The Paradigm Shifter,” 26.
170. Bernard St-Jean, email message to Monique McDonald, January 30, 2018. The original reads:

Je pense souvent . . . à Les qui surgit à tout moment dans ma mémoire. Non seulement au contact du monde du triathlon au sein duquel j'évolue toujours, mais aussi par exemple lorsque je me trouve tout simplement dans la rue et j'aborde quelqu'un que je ne connais pas. Je crois qu'il m'aura marqué de cet enthousiasme communicatif débordant qui était le sien et de cette soif permanente de connaître, d'avancer et de convaincre. Nous avons le même degré d'exigence mais il avait une capacité de démonstration que je ne possède pas et une ambition de convaincre à toute épreuve. Jamais las—ou il ne le montrait pas—et toujours prêt à défier l'impossible.

Conclusion

1. The exception might be the two carpenters' local unions in the Vancouver area. It is worthwhile pointing out that Arthur “Slim” Evans, a noted Wobbly, then a famous Communist agitator and labour organizer in BC, was originally a carpenter by trade. See Shiels and Swankey, “*Work and Wages*”! 31–37. From 1925 through to 1932, Evans worked out of Local 452 in Vancouver. It was while he was living and working in Vancouver, in 1926, that he joined the Communist Party. Evans was to have a telling effect on three future electrical workers, Bill and George Gee, and Tom Forkin. Interviews with Bill Gee, December 14, 1982, and George Gee, November 6, 1982. For more on the Gee brothers, see Shiels and Swankey, “*Work and Wages*”! 46. Tom Forkin was part of the secondary command structure of the On-to-Ottawa trek in 1935 and then assisted Evans during the initial organizing drive at Cominco in Trail by Mine-Mill in 1938. There seem to be no serious, in-depth accounts of Communist leaders or activists in the other BC building trades, although unquestionably several did exist.
2. Commenting on similar scenarios in other unions in the province, Benjamin Isitt concluded with a view from below: “The enduring, albeit minority, communist presence in BC unions sustained a current of militancy throughout the 1950s, inhibiting conciliation between the classes and the pattern of compromise that developed in other Canadian provinces. Facing internal and external competition from communists, non-communist [trade union] leaders in BC were more inclined to embrace militant actions and a confrontational

stance with employers.” Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 56–57. Nonetheless, the vast majority of the strike and/or lockout episodes recounted in this book were begun by employer-initiated actions against IBEW Local 213. Whether influenced by Communists or not, from this point of view organized labour in British Columbia was forced into militancy and a non-conciliatory stance with employers in order to promote and protect any gains it might have previously made.

3. As we saw in chapter 5, Russell St. Eloi, Vancouver business manager of Local 170 of the Plumbers and Pipefitters union, nominated George Gee to represent Local 213 on the Goldenberg Commission of inquiry into the construction industry. It is highly doubtful that the audacious suggestion of Gee’s nomination originated with any of the previously appointed members of Local 213’s executive board, although it might have originated with the former’s good friend and newly elected business manager of Local 213, Jack Cody. In any case, Gee’s nomination—both an embarrassment to the IBEW and a red flag waved in the face of employers—appears to have been significant enough in that it appears to have helped break the logjam surrounding the record-breaking three-months-long lockout of construction workers.
4. In the Lenkurt case, the officers were Commissioner H. E. Reed and Superintendent L. R. Parent. The RCMP’s counterintelligence unit had four different names in the period after World War II. In 1966 the mole(s) within Local 213 would have reported to someone in the RCMP’s Directorate of Security and Intelligence, subsequently renamed the RCMP Security Service, which was replaced by a forerunner to the current Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (or CSIS) in 1984. For more information on RCMP surveillance, see Hewitt, *Spying 101*; and Sethna and Hewitt, *Just Watch Us*.
5. In October 2020, one of Canada’s major newspapers, the *National Post*, was concerned enough to report on a July ruling in the same year by Justice Patrick Gleeson that found the latest iteration of Canadian governmental internal surveillance and security, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), had “failed to disclose its reliance on information that was likely collected illegally.” Gleeson, a federal judge, ruled that it appeared the recent actions of CSIS was part of a historical and long-standing pattern of behaviour, pointing out in his ruling that “the circumstances raise fundamental questions relating to respect for the rule of law, the oversight of security intelligence activities and the actions of individual decision-makers.” Jim Bronskill, “Ottawa Appeals Ruling on CSIS Breach,” from the *National Post*, reprinted in the *Vancouver Sun*, October 21, 2020, NP4.
6. “Dangerous New Ideas” is from Ed Finn, a CLC staffer, then with the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers. The analysis in this

- section is reproduced from a larger *Maclean's* article by Finn, "Unions, Strikes and the Common Cold," that was reprinted in the *Vancouver Sun*, June 18, 1974, 5.
7. This same perspective on the long-term effects visited upon the trade union movement in Canada has been propounded by academics: "This arrangement offered organized labour conditions of limited institutional permanency while confining unionists to a particular model of behaviour premised upon productivity bargaining and material consumption that formed the basis for the post-war compromise in Canada." McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation*, 4.
 8. Finn, "Unions, Strikes and the Common Cold," 5. Note that Ed Finn mixes up his medieval metaphors somewhat in the last sentence of this colourful description. The Holy Office of the Inquisition was a Catholic institution; being "sent to Coventry" was the British penalty of ostracism, supposedly invented by a Protestant, Oliver Cromwell.
 9. "Injunctions Won't Build Bridges or Catch Fish," *The Fisherman*, June 26, 1959, 1.
 10. For descriptions and analyses of the 1967 Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op strike, see Montero, *We Stood Together*, chap. 8; and John Stanton, *Never Say Die!* chap. 11.
 11. See Stanton, *Never Say Die!* 145. The ILWU would be involved in injunction-related court cases just before the Lenkurt court cases took place. In the ILWU's case, ten of its local union presidents were jailed for contempt for twenty-two days each starting June 17, 1966. See Stanton, *Never Say Die!* chap. 12.
 12. Isitt, "Patterns of Protest," 97.
 13. Isitt, "Patterns of Protest," 76.
 14. "Ousted Union Official Calls for Labor Law Violations," *Vancouver Sun*, October 24, 1966, 46.
 15. Stanton, *Never Say Die!* 130. That it was mostly Communist-influenced unions, like the UFAWU and the Vancouver local of the ILWU, that spearheaded the *ex parte* injunction battles in BC speaks volumes about who was willing to go to jail to make a legal point. The Lenkurt strike, while clearly important, appeared to have begun almost by accident.
 16. See Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s."
 17. George Grant, *Lament for a Nation*, 9.
 18. Sangster, "'We No Longer Respect the Law,'" 48.
 19. In the introduction to one of his several books on Canadian labour history, Irving Abella points to a closely associated corollary, that "bloody labour battles" seemed to be "a hallmark of the labour history of British Columbia." Underlining the importance of the use of the state as "an ally of business,

able and willing to use its full powers to crush any labour organizations that proved too threatening to the interests of capital,” meant there was an unusual “prevalence of violence in industrial disputes” right across the country. He then goes on to highlight a comparative study by Stuart Jamieson that comes to an eyebrow-raising conclusion “that labour-management conflicts in Canada are far more likely to lead to violence than those in Europe.” Abella, *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919–1949*, xiii and xv.

20. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, chap. 2.
21. Though there was no connection with Succamore (by this time involved with CAIMAW), it is interesting to note that in 1973 three electrical workers employed at Edmonton Power (Dave Walker, George Tilroe, and Peter Bodnarchuk), tried to organize a breakaway union from IBEW Local 1007. According to newspaper reports, they tried to lead the five hundred employees of the electrical utility out of the IBEW and into what was termed the “Edmonton Power Association.” The three ringleaders were subsequently suspended from the IBEW for two, five, and five years, respectively, for their efforts in this unsuccessful attempt. See John Tompkins, “Canadian Unionists Lose IBEW Rights,” *Edmonton Journal*, May 24, 1973, 26. In Ontario, meanwhile, power workers at Ontario Hydro are represented by the Power Workers’ Union (PWU), a 1993 offshoot of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Their Canadian union representation began in 1944 with the founding of the Employees’ Association of Ontario Hydro.
22. For another instance of a 1966 wildcat strike—in Hamilton—and how “the industrial relations system shapes the political life of the local,” see the persuasive arguments on steelworkers’ Local 1005 presented by Bill Freeman in *1005: Political Life in a Local Union*, 112–16.
23. Interview with Jess Succamore, June 11, 2017.
24. Penner, *The Canadian Left*, 142.
25. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 84. See also Scott’s in-depth synopsis of Murphy on pp. 249–53.
26. The original reads:

Dans certains cas, notre travail se limitera à atteindre certains postes stratégiques pour ensuite régner par décrets dans certaines branches du mouvement ouvrier. Dans d’autres cas, la discussion des problèmes et la prise de décision se limiteront au bureau et à l’exécutif de l’union pour être ensuite transmis comme un décret dans les groupes industriels. En d’autres mots, ne pas combattre la tendance économiste, c’est glisser vers le bureaucratisme syndicale.

See “Henri Gagnon, organisateur révolutionnaire: 1936–1956” in Comeau and Dionne, *Le droit de se taire*, 315. For a concise BC-based and IWW focus on similar historical discussions, see Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, chap. 5. For an earlier (1938) and particularly thought-provoking American exposé on the “poisonous effect of officialdom,” see Russell, “On Boring from Within,” *The One Big Union Monthly* (February 1938), libcom.org, accessed October 27, 2024, <https://libcom.org/library/boring-within-bert-russell>. Several of his arguments could be considered applicable to much of the history of labour in British Columbia, and to that of IBEW Local 213 in particular.

27. “Labor: C.I.O. to Sea,” *Time*, July 19, 1937, 4. <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,882738-4,00.html>.
28. Quoted Isaac Deutscher, “Soviet Trade Unions: Their Place in Soviet Labour Policy,” marxists.org, accessed October 27, 2024, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/deutscher/1950/soviet-trade-unions/cho2.htm#n22>. McDonald had multiple volumes of the works of Karl Marx prominently displayed on his living room shelves, as well as several books relating to Vladimir Lenin.
29. Left unstated, of course, was the very real problem of whether or not the Communist Party’s program for Canada would have functioned as intended to eventually produce a socialist society.
30. The term “liberals in a hurry” was originally used to describe political representatives of the 1920s Progressive Party in Canada. With its collapse at the end of that decade, the term seems to have evolved into a description of social democrats in the NDP.
31. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, 52.
32. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, 162.
33. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, 104.
34. Ruffini, *Harry Van Arsdale*, 123.
35. Monique McDonald, in conversation with the author, undated.
36. Knight and Stevens, *A Life in Fishing*, 182–83. Although this is Stevens recounting his own political perspective, it very easily could have been Les McDonald.
37. John Stanton, a BC labour lawyer, has reproduced a fascinating table of union trends in Canada from 1921 to 1986 that shows the definitive trend away from international unions toward Canadian unions. Stanton, “*Never Say Die!*” Table E-1: Fundamental Trends in Union Membership and Affiliations (1921–1986). These trends toward stand-alone Canadian unions have become even more pronounced in the twenty-first century, especially with the move by Canadian auto workers out of the American-controlled United Auto Workers and into their own Canada-wide organization, first the CAW (Canadian Auto

Workers) and, after several additional mergers, the union known as Unifor. A large industrial union, Unifor now encompasses different industries and more than just auto workers.

38. Fearful of the accusations of fomenting “dual unionism,” it was not until 1973 that the Communist Party of Canada came out “unequivocally” in support, if necessary, of a sovereign and completely independent Canadian trade union movement. The Party was evidently reacting to events in Québec, in particular with the emergence of FIPOE among French-Canadian electrical workers, combined with the secession of other local unions of the construction sector away from their international organizations. See Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada*, 253. Needless to say, it was seven years too late for Les McDonald.
39. It could easily be argued that there had been at least three distinct generations of a “militant minority” up to that point within Local 213: the group that voted to secede from the IBEW and join the OBU in 1919; George Gee’s Communist leadership group in 1955; and then Bill Stewart and Les McDonald’s Communist-led “left faction” up to 1966.
40. Industrial unions have usually been the focus of academics who have analyzed the comprehensive role of the Communist Party within these organizations in a dispassionate, often sympathetic, light. See Gray, “Woodworkers and Legitimacy”; Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry*; and Neufeld and Parnaby, *The IWA in Canada*. For an earlier appraisal of the Communists in the IWA, see Lembcke and Tattam, *One Union in Wood*. With regard to fishing there is Homer Stevens and Rolf Knight’s semi-autobiographical account of Homer Stevens’s life, *A Life in Fishing*. On Mine-Mill in Trail, see Verzuh, “Divided Loyalties”; and in the shipbuilding industry, see Howard White, *A Hard Man to Beat* (though White was definitely not a consistent supporter of the Party throughout his career). See also Langford and Frazer, “The Cold War and Working-Class Politics”; and Bartlett and Ruebsaat, *Soviet Princeton*.
41. Having barely graduated from high school, if in fact they ever did, this non-academic group of largely union and/or vanguard-educated workers would successfully insert themselves into political office in the civic, provincial, national, or—as in the case with Les McDonald—the international landscape. Having been scapegoated by the IBEW during the 1960s, the potential of these multi-faceted working-class personalities as lead actors for inciting change in their chosen new arenas was obvious. In most cases, however, the bureaucratic machines they encountered swallowed them up.
42. Interview with Jack Ross, November 15, 1982.

43. Les McDonald's audacity never left him. While trying to get the International Triathlon Union (ITU) into the Olympic movement during the early 1990s, he crashed an IOC meeting in Stockholm. Requiring accreditation that he didn't have, he had been befriended several years before by Gunnar Ericsson, IOC member from Sweden. Puzzled and skeptical, Ericsson had nevertheless agreed to meet Les outside on the third-floor balcony of the hotel room adjacent to the small convention hall reserved for the assembled IOC delegates. Having previously scouted the perimeter of the hotel, McDonald easily free-climbed the outside of the building and, as agreed beforehand, had Ericsson hand over his prized accreditation on the balcony at the appointed hour. Official history records that the sport of Triathlon managed to get onto the Olympic program in time for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, but other than through an IOC vote, not precisely how. It comes as little surprise that one of McDonald's favourite mottoes throughout his lifetime was taken from French revolutionary Georges Danton: "De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace!" This was also the response of Tim Buck back in 1934 when he was asked what his personal political motto was. See Manley, "Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity!"¹⁷ That Buck, leader of the Communist Party of Canada, could proclaim his audacity was one thing; that a mere rank-and-file Party member was to actually act on such a slogan was probably quite another.
44. The 1962 official agenda of the Communist Party, "The Road to Socialism in Canada," called for what might be viewed by sympathizers as a generally laudable program, but it was hardly revolutionary. It included "a united, all-inclusive labor-farmer political party . . . to bring about the parliamentary defeat of monopoly capital and its parties, and to unite all democratic, freedom-loving forces among the Canadian people to achieve independence, peace and social progress." Quoted in Morris, *Look on Canada Now*, 155.
45. At the 1965 BCFL convention, Les McDonald spoke to a resolution calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, noting that when it was presented on the floor of a General Meeting of IBEW Local 213 the resolution "required no debate, it was carried unanimously with only one speaker." He went on to comment, "I can say that it truthfully reflects the feelings of the members of our union." British Columbia Federation of Labour, *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*, 173. This position of the Vancouver electrical workers was, of course, diametrically opposed to the position of the AFL-CIO and its long-time president, George Meany. As the *New York Times* pointed out some years later, "All through the years of the Vietnamese War, right up to the closing weeks . . . in the Executive Council, there was never

more than one vote in 33 cast against Mr. Meany's resolution for support of the war." *New York Times*, October 5, 1977, 27.

46. Interview with Chris Locke, May 23, 2021.
47. See Barrie Shepley's anecdotes about Les's outspokenness in Susan Grant, "The Paradigm Shifter," 22–23.
48. Jim MacFarlan's untitled written commentary on Les McDonald, November 20, 2018, 6. In the author's possession.
49. Scott, *A Communist Life*, 7.
50. Loreen Barnett, secretary-general of the ITU, recounted the following episode that occurred in a meeting in China prior to the Beijing Olympics: "Les McDonald went into his lecturing mode on at least one occasion in China prior to the Beijing Olympic Games. He was with two Chinese triathlon officials delegated to liaising with him on the logistics of the Olympic racecourse, one of whom it turned out was a Communist Party representative. Les started in on them, explaining the negative impact of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and how it was impossible to build a true socialist society if you didn't allow for disagreement or expressions of dissent. Neither one of them responded; there was no debate. Stony silence followed his harangue." Telephone interview with Loreen Barnett, January 8, 2021.
51. Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin have described this issue as "the intraclass struggle within the class struggle." *Left Out*, 20.
52. For further context and discussion, see Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*. See also Turk, "Surviving the Cold War," 18; and Craig Heron's commentary on the relatively short existence of the Communist-organized and led Canadian Seamen's Union in "Communists, Gangsters, and Canadian Sailors."
53. Letter from Bill Stewart to Les McDonald on the occasion of Stewart's seventy-fifth birthday, n.d. (but sometime in 1994), RBSC-ARC-1783, file 4–06. Stewart was to end his letter of thanks with a deeply felt comment about the long road to eventually building a socialist Canada: "A PLEASURE to march part of the path with you, Les."
54. Keen observers and activists in some trade unions—like the Teamsters—have continued to comment on the phenomenon of rank-and-file insurgencies, then supported explorations to channel them organizationally. See La Botz, "Rank and File Strategy Is Vindicated." See also recent developments in Vermont, where "Vermont AFL-CIO United!" made major inroads into the state labour federation. Led by David Van Deusen (currently president of the Vermont AFL-CIO), the new progressive grouping "has pursued a new agenda, which stresses internal democracy and transparency, social and environmental justice, and ending rubber-stamp endorsement of unreliable Democrats." Steve

Early, “Why Is AFL-CIO So Worried About Its Vermont Affiliate?” *Beyond the Chron: The Voice of the Rest*, April 20, 2021, <https://beyondchron.org/why-is-afl-cio-so-worried-about-its-vermont-affiliate/>.

55. An anonymous and thought-provoking review of Kim Moody’s *An Injury to All* has presciently warned about the need for a new analysis and the creation of new tactics: “The internationalization of capital in the past 20 years requires an equally radical internationalization of any strategy for the renewal of the movement of the working class. There is no ‘socialism in one country’ . . . there is still less any ‘social unionism’ in one country.” redtwister, “A Critique of Kim Moody’s *An Injury to All*,” *libcom.org*, December 16, 2005, <https://libcom.org/article/critique-kim-moodys-injury-all>.
56. See “United States Home Ownership Rate,” *Trading Economics*, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/home-ownership-rate>; and Chris Horymski, “Average US Mortgage Debt Increases to \$244,498 in 2023,” *Experian*, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-much-americans-owe-on-their-mortgages-in-every-state/>.
57. See Figure B in Heidi Schierholz, “Working People Have Been Thwarted in Their Efforts to Bargain for Better Wages by Attacks on Unions,” *Economic Policy Institute*, August 27, 2019, <https://www.epi.org/publication/labor-day-2019-collective-bargaining/>. The figure clearly shows the approximately sixty-year relationship between the decline in union membership in the United States and the rise in income inequality in that country.
58. In 1960 mortgage debt in Q3 in the United States was \$220.388 billion; in 2019 in Q3 that figure stood at \$15.841trillion (“Mortgage Debt Outstanding, All Holders,” *FRED*, accessed October 27, 2024, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MDOAH>). Even accounting for a 55 percent increase in the population in the same time interval (from 180.7 in 1960 to 328.2 million in 2019) and commensurate increases in wages, the 1,390 percent increase in American mortgage debt in the same time frame provides for a very loud exclamation mark indeed. Side by side with these telling statistics are massive increases in the rates of incarceration, drug addiction, alcoholism, divorce, employment insecurity, and attendant incidents relating to mental health issues. In addition, according to Bill Fay, that country now has the dubious distinction of scoring the third highest poverty rate among the world’s developed countries. “Poverty in the United States,” *Debt.org*, accessed October 27, 2024, <https://www.debt.org/faqs/americans-in-debt/poverty-united-states/>.
59. From *Statistics Canada*: “Just over 1.3 million new immigrants settled permanently in Canada from 2016 to 2021, the highest number of recent

immigrants recorded in a Canadian census.” “Immigrants Make Up the Largest Share of the Population in Over 150 Years and Continue to Shape Who We Are as Canadians,” *The Daily*, October 26, 2022, Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.pdf?st=p-S8ovza>. See also Carolyn Whitzman, “Workers Can’t Find Affordable Housing. Their Pension Funds Are Part of the Problem,” *Globe and Mail*, September 2, 2024, A11.

60. On the different attitudes toward the notion of “class” north and south of the border, see Eidlin, “The Class Idea.” For US rates of union penetration of the workforce, see “Union Members—2024,” news release, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, January 28, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>. On home ownership rates in Canada, see “To Buy or to Rent: The Housing Market Continues to Be Reshaped by Several Factors as Canadians Search for an Affordable Place to Call Home,” *The Daily*, September 21, 2022, Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921b-eng.pdf?st=x1uXzL1D>. For Canadian unionization rates, see René Morissette, “Unionization in Canada, 1981 to 2022,” November, 23, 2022, Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022011/article/00001-eng.htm>.
61. Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*. Luff, in this instance, is writing mostly on the American Federation of Labour (AFL), but anti-communism was obviously a noted phenomenon of Canadian trade union history as well. For a divergent view, see Rosemary Feurer’s review of Luff’s book.
62. Gannon, *Joseph D. Keenan, Labor’s Ambassador in War and Peace*, 176.
63. There are limits to how much structural leverage one can achieve in the labour market. Simply because an electrical worker’s skills and knowledge are difficult to replace, thereby giving them a comparative advantage in negotiating higher wages and better working conditions, does not automatically make them impervious to anti-union forces. Lessons can be learned from events in other sectors of the economy. To the point, even with all their ideological zigzags and compounding errors and weaknesses, when the galvanizing role of Communist militants and associated left faction activists was systematically marginalized, it became easier for employers to defeat unions. Moreover, the lack of willingness to engage with socially redemptive community groups in aiding and abetting wider collective bargaining objectives (such as racial and/or gender equality)—alliances of the sort termed “associative power”—further isolates and weakens collective bargaining efforts. In *The Southern Key*, Michael Goldfield analyzes some of these same issues, notably the resounding failure of the CIO’s “Operation Dixie,” a post-World War II effort to unionize

labour in the southern US. Though repeated very much on a smaller scale, there was arguably some echo of these same tactical errors during the Lenkurt Electric strike.

64. Succinct arguments for the labour movement moving “beyond capitalism and business unionism” are also marshalled in Selby, “Labour in Need of Revolutionary Vision.”
65. Verzuh, “Red Rebels and Red Baiters,” 25.
66. There was no television in the house for the longest time, so screen distractions were not available to the ingrained McDonald habit of incessant reading. Monique McDonald recalled that it was Robert Ducourau, a long-time family friend in France, who paid the subscription for *Le Monde*.
67. Eugene V. Debs, “The Issue,” marxists.org, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1908/issue.htm>.
68. Monique McDonald, in conversation with the author, undated.

Bibliography

Interviews

All interviews conducted by the author unless otherwise indicated.

- Allison, Fred December 19, 1982
Ayling, Henry April 26, 1983
Barnett, Loreen April 30, 2017, January 8, 2021
Bethel, Brian February 19 and 20, 2017
Blakey, Al December 7, 2018
Caron, Charlie January 18, 1983
Carson, John February 14, 1983
Clark, David September 19, 1984
Dean, Elsie August 27, 1983
Dorland, Fell October 5, 1985
Dougan, Jim November 3, 2018, July 26 and October 2, 2019
Fisher, Al December 13, 2017
Forkin, Tom December 15, 1982
Fulton, Ernie November 24, 1984
Gee, Bill December 14, 1982
Gee, George November 6 and 11, 1982, August 26, 1985
Gerard, Matt January 9, 1983
Greenwell, Dustin December 16, 1982
Hall, Jimmy December 20, 1982
Hambly, Percy December 10, 1982
Hoppe, Fred Interviewed by Paul Phillips and Bill Picket, August 21, 1964. British Columbia Federation of Labour Oral History Project. Interview no. FC 3803.U54 N.5: 10. <https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/collection/fred-hoppe-interview-electrician-and-socialist/>.
Hume, Mr. and Mrs. Howard May 14, 1983
Huston, Alfred (Alfie) April 12, 2021
Jack, Larry February 16, 1983
Kapalka, John December 24, 1982
Knight, Teddy December 6, 1982

Locke, Chris May 23, 2021
 MacDonald, Angus January 6, 1983
 Marcuse, Bert June 17, 1983
 McDonald, Monique September 18, 2016
 McFarlan, Jim November 1 and 20, 2018
 Morrison, Edmund, Jr. January 21, 1983
 Morrison, Malcolm January 14, 1983
 Nichole, Donne May 16, 1983
 O’Keeffe, Art December 4, 1982
 Rankin, Dennis December 29, 2020
 Ross, Jack November 15 and December 2, 1982, January 19, 1983
 Saran, Jagdish (Jack) May 13, 2021
 Simpson, Terry July 17, 1985, March 16, 2017
 Snell, Colin August 11, 2014
 Stewart, Dora October 19, 2016, July 15, 2019
 Succamore, Jess September 25, October 9, 29, and 30, 2016, January 31, March 26,
 June 11, and August 25, 2017; telephone conversation, February 16, 2021
 Towle, Bob December 4, 1982
 Verrier, Roland April 29, 2021
 Waddell, Bill May 2, 1983
 Werlin, Dave Interviewed by Winston Gereluk and Don Bouzek, February 13 and
 April 11, 2003, November 12, 2004. Alberta Labour History Institute, Edmonton.
<https://albertalabourhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Werlin.pdf>.
 Wilson, Don January 26, 1983
 Wooten, Wes January 26, 1983
 Zander, Bill June 10, 2018

Secondary Sources

Abella, Irving. *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935–1956*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.
 Abella, Irving, ed. *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919–1949*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975.
 Adelfinsky, Andrey S. “American Expansion, Russian Threat and Active Democracy: An Institutional Perspective on Triathlon History.” *Terra Economicus* 19, no. 3 (2021): 105–20. <https://te.sfedu.ru/evjur/data/2021/3/adeljfskiy.pdf>.
 Alford, Monty. “South Summit of Mt. Vancouver (‘Good Neighbour Peak’) 15,720 Feet.” *Canadian Alpine Journal* 51 (1968): 34–41.
 Atherton, Patricia. “CAIMAW: Portrait of a Canadian Union.” MSc thesis, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, 1981.

- Audet, Monique. "La construction d'un syndicat québécois." *La mémoire du travail* 5, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 1–4. https://archivesdutravail.quebec/wp-content/uploads/bulletin_ete_%202018.pdf.
- Audet, Monique. *Les artisans de la lumière: Histoire de la Fraternité interprovinciale des ouvriers en électricité*. Québec: Éditions du Septentrion, 2018.
- Avakumovic, Ivan. *The Communist Party in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975.
- Barry, J. J. "Part IV: Recession, Recovery, and Renewal." *IBEW Journal* (December 1999): 12–13, 28. <http://www.ibew.org/articles/99journal/9912/1299CanHist4.pdf>.
- Bartlett, John, and Rika Ruebsaat. *Soviet Princeton: Slim Evans and the 1932–33 Princeton Miners' Strike*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 2015.
- Bennett, Paul W. "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s: Reflections on the 'Radical Campus' in Recent Historical Writing." *Acadiensis* 42, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 147–56.
- Bernard, Elaine. *The Long Distance Feeling: A History of the Telecommunications Workers' Union*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982.
- Black, Errol. "Brandon's 'Revolutionary Forkins.'" In *A Square Deal for All and No Railroadng: Historical Essays on Labour in Brandon*, edited by Tom Mitchell and Errol Black, 114–41. St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2000.
- British Columbia Federation of Labour. *Annual Convention: Summary of Proceedings, 1965*. Vancouver: British Columbia Federation of Labour, 1966.
- Buck, Tim. "Reforms and the Socialist Revolution." *Marxist Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1965): 43–55.
- Campbell, J. Peter. "The Cult of Spontaneity: Finnish-Canadian Bushworkers and the Industrial Workers of the World in Northern Ontario, 1919–1934." *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998): 117–46.
- Campbell, Lara, Dominique Clement, and Gregory S. Kealey, eds. *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Carney, Emma, with Jane E. Hunt. *Hard Wired: Life, Death and Triathlon*. Melbourne: Ryan Publishing, 2020.
- Carpenter Pensioners' Association of British Columbia. *Building British Columbia: The Story of the Carpenters' Union and the Trade Union Movement Since 1881*. Vancouver: College Printers, 1979.
- Carrothers, A. W. R. "The 1959 British Columbia Trades Union Act, 1959." *University of Toronto Law Journal* 13, no. 2 (1960): 278–81.
- Cherny, Robert W., William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor. *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Clawson, H. J. "Union Security Clauses and the Right to Work." *Canadian Bar Review* 30 (1952): 137–63.
- Cochran, Bert. *Labour and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.

- Comeau, Robert, and Bernard Dionne. "Henri Gagnon, organisateur révolutionnaire: 1936–1956." In *Le droit de se taire: Histoire des communistes au Québec, de la Première Guerre mondiale à la Révolution tranquille*, edited by Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, 298–337. Montréal: VLB Éditeurs, 1990. https://classiques.uqam.ca/contemporains/comeau_robert/henri_gagnon/henri_gagnon_texte.html.
- Copp, Terry, ed. *Industrial Unionism in Kitchener, 1937–47*. Elora, ON: Cumnock Press, 1976.
- Copp, Terry. *The IUE in Canada*. Elora, ON: Cumnock Press, 1980.
- Ecroyd, Lawrence G. "Red Is for Danger! Part V." *Western Business and Industry* 27, no. 12 (September 1953): 14–16.
- Eidlin, Carl Bohringer. "The Class Idea: Politics, Ideology, and Class Formation in the United States and Canada in the Twentieth Century." PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012.
- Elections British Columbia. *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871–1986*. Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1988.
- Feurer, Rosemary. Review of Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties Between the World Wars*. *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 16, no. 2 (June 2013): 299–303.
- Feurer, Rosemary. *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900–1950*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Fillippelli, Ronald. "The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, 1933–1949: The Struggle for Control." PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1970.
- Fischer, Nick. "The Founders of American Anti-Communism." *American Communist History* 5, no. 1 (2006): 67–101.
- Fisher, E. G. "Strike Activity and Wildcat Strikes in British Columbia." *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations* 37, no. 2 (1982): 289–90. <https://www.erudit.org/revue/ri/1982/v37/n2/o29255ar.pdf>.
- Foster, Jason. *Defying Expectations: The Case of UFCW Local 401*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2018.
- Fox, Steve. *Toxic Work: Women Workers at GTE Lenkurt*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.
- Frank, David. "McLachlan, James Bryson." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16. Toronto and Québec City: University of Toronto / Université Laval, 2003–. https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mclachlan_james_bryson_16E.html.
- Freeman, Bill. *1005: Political Life in a Local Union*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1982.
- Friedlander, Peter. *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936–1939: A Study in Class and Culture*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975.
- Fudge, Judy and Eric Tucker. "Everybody Knows What a Picket Line Means: Picketing Before the British Columbia Court of Appeal." *BC Studies* 160 (Summer 2009): 53–79.
- Gagnon, Henri. *Les P.M.E. (petites et moyennes entreprises) à l'agonie*. Montréal: Éditions Héritage, 1982.

- Galenson, Walter. *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935–1941*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Gannon, Francis X. *Joseph D. Keenan, Labor's Ambassador in War and Peace: A Portrait of a Man and His Times*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
- Glberman, Martin. *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW During World War II*. Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1980.
- Goldfield, Michael. *The Southern Key: Class, Race, and Radicalism in the 1930s and 1940s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Gompers, Samuel. "A News Account of an Address in Louisville." In *The Samuel Gompers Papers: The Early Years of the American Federation of Labor*, vol. 2, 1887–1890, edited by Stuart B. Kaufman, 307–14. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Grant, George. *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1965.
- Grant, Nicole. "Seattle's Electrical Workers Minority Caucus: A History." Spring 2005. Seattle Civil Rights Labor History Project, University of Washington, Seattle. <https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/EWMC.htm>.
- Grant, Susan. "The Paradigm Shifter." *Inside Triathlon* 24, no. 5 (September 2009): 18–34.
- Gray, Stephen. "Woodworkers and Legitimacy: The IWA in Canada, 1937–1957." PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1989.
- Green, Gil. *What's Happening to Labor*. New York: International Publishers, 1976.
- Greenhouse, Steven. *Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019.
- Hak, Gordon. *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934–1974*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007.
- Hak, Gordon. "The Communists and the Unemployed in the Prince George District, 1930–1935." *BC Studies* 68 (Winter 1985–86): 45–61.
- Hak, Gordon. *The Left in British Columbia*. Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2013.
- Haynes, John Earl, and Harvey Klehr. *In Denial: Historians, Communism, and Espionage*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003.
- Heron, Craig. "Communists, Gangsters, and Canadian Sailors." *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Fall 1989): 231–37.
- Hewitt, Steve. *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917–1997*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. *History and Structure: Celebrating 125 Years of IBEW Excellence*. Washington, DC: International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 2016. [http://www.ibew.org/Portals/31/documents/Form %20169%20-%20History%20and%20Structure.pdf](http://www.ibew.org/Portals/31/documents/Form%20169%20-%20History%20and%20Structure.pdf).
- Isitt, Benjamin. "Patterns of Protest: Property, Social Movements, and the Law in British Columbia." PhD diss., Faculty of Law, University of Victoria, 2018.
- Isitt, Benjamin. "Tug-of-War: The Working Class and Political Change in British Columbia, 1948–1972." PhD diss., University of New Brunswick, 2008.

- Isitt, Benjamin. *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948–1972*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Jamieson, Stuart. *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900–66*. Ottawa: Privy Council, Task Force on Labour Relations, 1968.
- Johnson, Ross. “No Compromise—No Political Trading: the Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia.” PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1975.
- Kealey, Gregory S., and Reg Whitaker, eds. *RCMP Security Bulletins*. St. John’s, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1995.
- Keane, Roger, and David Humphreys. *Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett*. Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1977.
- Keenan, Roger. *The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Kinnaird, James. *BC Commission of Inquiry, British Columbia Construction Industry—First Report*. Victoria: Department of Labour, Labour Relations Branch, October 1975.
- Kluckner, Michael. *Vancouver: The Way It Was*. North Vancouver: White Cap Books, 1984.
- Koestler, Arthur, Ignazio Silone, Richard Wright, André Gide, Louis Fischer, and Stephen Spender. *The God That Failed: A Confession*. Edited by Richard Crossman. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- La Botz, Dan. “Rank and File Strategy Is Vindicated.” *Against the Current* 37 (March/April 1992). <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/atc/5270.html>.
- Langford, Tom, and Chris Frazer. “The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass, 1945–1958.” *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring 2002): 43–81.
- Laxer, James. *Red Diaper Baby: A Boyhood in the Age of McCarthyism*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004.
- Laxer, Robert. *Canada’s Unions*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1976.
- Leier, Mark. *Red Flags and Red Tape: The Making of a Labour Bureaucracy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.
- Leier, Mark. *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990.
- Lembcke, Jerry, and William M. Tattam. *One Union in Wood: A Political History of the International Woodworkers of America*. Canada: Harbour Publishing, 1984.
- Lembcke, Jerry. “The International Woodworkers of America in British Columbia, 1942–1952.” *Labour/Le Travail* 6 (Autumn 1980): 113–48.
- Levine, Karen. “The Labor-Progressive Party in Crisis, 1956–1957.” *Labour/Le Travail* 87 (Spring 2021): 161–84.
- Levinson, Marc. *An Extraordinary Time: The End of the Postwar Boom and the Return of the Ordinary Economy*. London: Random House Business Books, 2016.
- Luff, Jennifer. “Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, 1920–1949.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 1 (2016): 109–33.

- Luff, Jennifer. "Rethinking Interwar Conservatism, Communism, and State Repression." *Journal of the Historical Society* 13, no. 2 (2013): 101–14.
- Luff, Jennifer. *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties Between the World Wars*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- MacDowell, G. F. *The Brandon Packers' Strike: A Tragedy of Errors*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971.
- MacDowell, Laurel Sefton. "Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story." *Labour/Le Travail* 51 (Spring 2003): 177–221.
- MacDowell, Laurel Sefton. "The 1943 Steel Strike Against Wartime Wage Controls." *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (Autumn 1982): 65–86.
- Manley, John. "'Audacity, Audacity, Still More Audacity!' Tim Buck, the Party, and the People, 1932–1939." *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring, 2002): 9–41.
- Manley, John. "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism, and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921–1928." *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring, 1998): 147–80.
- Marcuse, Gary. "Labour's Cold War: The Story of a Union That Was Not Purged." *Labour/Le Travail* 22 (Fall 1988): 199–210.
- McCormack, A. Ross. *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.
- McDonald, Ian. "Class Conflict and Political Factionalism: A History of Local 213 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 1901–1961." Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1986.
- McDonald, Les. "The Biggest Mountain . . . Is in Ottawa." *Scan* 4, no. 2 (April–May 1968): 5–6.
- McDonald, Leslie. "Good Neighbour Peak." In *Expedition Yukon*, edited by Marnie Fisher, 41–51. Canada: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1968.
- McDonald, Leslie. "Paris: Two Months After May." *Scan* (August–September 1968): 26–28.
- McDonald, Leslie. "Stick It . . . [or How We'll Learn to Play Canadian and Keep Smiling]." *Scan* (April–May 1968): 20–21.
- McDonald, Les. "Towards an Independent Labor Movement." Discussion paper presented at a meeting of trade unionists who had left the Communist Party. April 1969. In author's possession.
- McDonald, Les. "Youth and Change in the Labor Movement." *Horizons* (Winter 1967): 66–74.
- McEwen, Tom. *He Wrote for Us: The Story of Bill Bennett, Pioneer Socialist Journalist*. Vancouver: Tribune Publishing, 1951.
- McInnis, Peter S. *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Post-War Settlement in Canada, 1943–1950*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Mickleburgh, Rod. *On the Line: A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement*. Vancouver: Harbour Publishing, 2018.
- Milligan, Ian. *Rebel Youth: 1960's Labour Unrest, Young Workers and New Leftists in English Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.

- Mills, Suzanne E. "Fractures and Alliances: Labour Relations and Worker Experiences in Construction." *Labour/Le Travail* 80 (Fall 2017): 13–26.
- Mitchell, David J. W. A. C. *Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983.
- Montero, Gloria. *We Stood Together: First-hand Accounts of Dramatic Events in Canada's Labour Past*. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1979.
- Moody, Kim. *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*. London: Verso, 1988.
- Morgan, Murray. *Skid Road: An Informal Portrait of Seattle*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982. First published in 1951 by Viking.
- Morris, Leslie. *Look on Canada Now: Selected Writings of Leslie Morris, 1923–1964*. Toronto: Progress Books, 1970.
- Morton, Desmond. *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement*. 5th ed. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.
- Morton, Donald. "The 1967 Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition." *The Gazette* (Summer 2017). Alpine Club of Canada. <https://alpineclubmontreal.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SummerGazette2017.pdf>.
- Muldoon, Donald. "Capitalism Unchallenged: A Sketch of Canadian Communism, 1939–1949." Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1977.
- Murphy, Harvey. *A Time to Remember*. Trail, BC: U.S. Steel Workers, 1976.
- Neufeld, Andrew, and Andrew Parnaby. *The IWA in Canada*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 2000.
- Palladino, Grace. *Dreams of Dignity, Workers of Vision: A History of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers*. New York: IBEW, 1991.
- Palmer, Bryan D. *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Palmer, Bryan D. "Canadian Communism at the Crossroads, 1956–1957: An Introduction." *Labour/Le Travail* 87 (Spring 2021): 149–60.
- Palmer, Bryan D. "How Can We Write Better Histories of Communism?" *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019): 199–232.
- Palmer, Bryan D. "Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism." *American Communist History* 2, no. 2 (2003): 139–73.
- Palmer, Bryan D. "A Tate Gallery for the New Left: Portraits, Landscapes, and the Revolutionary Activism of the 1950s and 1960s." *Labour/Le Travail* 75 (Spring 2015): 231–61.
- Panitch, Leo, and Donald Swartz. *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*. Toronto: Garamond, 2003.
- Parnaby, Andrew. "What's Law Got to Do with It? The IWA and the Politics of State Power in British Columbia, 1935–1939." *Labour/Le Travail* 44 (Fall 1999): 9–45.
- Penner, Norman. *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*. Toronto: Methuen, 1987.

- Penner, Norman. *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1977.
- Perlman, Selig. *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.
- Phelps, Sean. "The Creation and Development of an International Sport Federation: a Case Study of the International Triathlon Union from 1989–2000." PhD diss., Florida State University, 2006.
- Phillips, Paul. *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia*. Vancouver: BC Federation of Labour and the Boag Foundation, 1967.
- Plecas, Bob. *Bill Bennett: A Mandarin's View*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2006.
- Riddell, W. Craig. "Unionization in Canada and the United States: A Tale of Two Countries." In *Small Differences That Matter: Labor Markets and Income Maintenance in Canada and the United States*, edited by David Card and Richard B. Freeman, 109–48. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Robin, Martin. *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*. Kingston, ON: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968.
- Rolph, C. H. *All Those in Favour? The E.T.U. Trials*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1962.
- Rose, Joseph B. "The Building Trades–Canadian Labour Congress Dispute." September 1982. Working Paper Series No. 193. Faculty of Business, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. <https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/5492/1/fulltext.pdf>.
- Ross, Stephanie. "Varieties of Social Unionism: Towards a Framework for Comparison." *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 11 (2007): 16–34.
- Ruffini, Gene. *Harry Van Arsdale Jr.: Labor's Champion*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003.
- Russell, Jason. *Our Union: UAW/CAW Local 27 from 1950 to 1990*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011.
- Sangster, Joan. *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011.
- Sangster, Joan. "'We No Longer Respect The Law': The Tilco Strike, Labour Injunctions and the State." *Labour/Le Travail* 53 (Spring 2004): 47–87.
- Schatz, Ronald W. *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923–1960*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Scott, Jack. *A Communist Life: Jack Scott and the Canadian Workers Movement, 1927–1985*. Edited by Bryan D. Palmer. St. John's, NL: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988.
- Selby, Jim. "Labour in Need of Revolutionary Vision." *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019): 233–46.
- Sethna, Christabelle, and Steve Hewitt. *Just Watch Us: RCMP Surveillance of the Women's Liberation Movement in Cold War Canada*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018.

- Sexton, Jean. "Controlling Corruption in the Construction Industry: The Quebec Approach." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42, no. 4 (July 1989): 524–35.
- Seymour, Edward E. *Illuminating the Past, Brightening the Future: An Illustrated History, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 353, 1903–2003*. Toronto: IBEW 353, 2003.
- Shiels, Evan, and Ben Swankey. "Work and Wages!" *A Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. Slim Evans*. Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977.
- Smith, Doug. *Cold Warrior: C. S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers*. St. John's, NL: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1997.
- Stanton, John. *Never Say Die! The Life and Times of John Stanton, a Pioneer Labour Lawyer*. Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1987.
- Stepan-Norris, Judith, and Maurice Zeitlin. *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Stevens, Homer, and Rolf Knight. *A Life in Fishing*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1992.
- Summers, Clyde W. "Union Schism in Perspective: Flexible Doctrine, Double Standards, and Projected Answers." *Virginia Law Review* 45, no. 2 (March 1959): 261–80.
- Tate, Ernest. *Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s and 60s*. Vol. 1, *Canada, 1955–1965*. London: Resistance Books, 2014.
- Threndyle, Steven. "The Great Pro Triathlon Revolution: Comrade Les MacDonald and the Ideological Struggle for the Heart of Triathlon." *Coast: The Outdoor Recreation Magazine* (July/August 1995): 23–24.
- Tieleman, H. William. "The Political Economy of Nationalization: Social Credit and the Takeover of the British Columbia Electric Company." Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981.
- Troper, Harold. *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- Trudeau, Pierre Elliott. *The Asbestos Strike*. Translated by James Boake. Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1974.
- Tucker, Eric. "'That Indefinite Area of Toleration': Criminal Conspiracy and Trade Unions in Ontario, 1837–77." *Labour/Le Travail* 27 (Spring 1991): 15–54.
- Turk, James L. "Surviving the Cold War: A Study of the United Electrical Workers in Canada." *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 4, no. 2 (1980), 16–28. <https://www.oralhistoryforum.ca/index.php/ohf/article/view/355/index.html>.
- U.S. Congress. House. *Amendments to the National Labor Relations Act: Hearings Before the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives*. 80th Cong., 1st sess. Vol. 3: February 20–22 and 24–28, 1947. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947.
- U.S. Congress. House. *Jurisdictional Disputes in the Motion-Picture Industry: Hearings Before a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor*. 80th Cong., 2nd sess. Pursuant to H. Res. 111. Vol. 3: February 25–27 and

- March 1–5, 9–12, and 16–17, 1948. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948.
- U.S. Congress. Senate. *Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations*. 64th Cong., 1st sess. S. Doc. 415. Vol. 2. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916.
- Van Haaren, Thomas M. “Lessons from a Champion of Labor: Harry Van Arsdale Jr. and the ‘Great Recession.’” Preprint. Available via Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/3481143/Lessons_from_a_Champion_of_Labor_Harry_Van_Arsdale_Jr_and_the_Great_Recession_email_work_card=view-paper.
- Verzuh, Ron. “Divided Loyalties: A Study of a Communist-Led Trade Union’s Struggle for Survival in Trail, British Columbia, 1943–1955.” PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2017.
- Verzuh, Ron. “Mine-Mill’s Peace Arch Concerts: How a ‘Red’ Union and a Famous Singer-Activist Fought for Peace and Social Justice During the Cold War.” *BC Studies* 174 (Summer 2012): 61–99.
- Verzuh, Ron. “Red Rebels and Red Baiters: The Legacy of the Labour Purges in Cold War Canada’s Trade Unions.” Preprint, 2010. https://academia.edu/1166895/Red_Rebels_and_Red_Baiters_The_Legacy_of_the_Labour_Purges_in_Cold_War_Canadas_Trade_Unions
- Verzuh, Ron. “Remembering Salt: How a Blacklisted Hollywood Movie Brought the Spectre of McCarthyism to a Small Canadian Town.” *Labour/Le Travail* 76 (Fall 2015): 165–98.
- Verzuh, Ron. “The Raiding of Local 480: A Historic Cold War Struggle for Union Supremacy in a Small Canadian City.” *Labour/Le Travail* 82 (Fall 2018): 81–117.
- White, Howard. *A Hard Man to Beat: The Story of Bill White, Labour Leader, Historian, Shipyard Worker, Raconteur*. Vancouver: Pulp Press Book Publishers, 1983.

This page intentionally left blank

Index

Page numbers in italics refer to figures.

- Abella, Irving, 254n2, 320n19
- ACEW. *See* All-Canadian Electrical Workers
- Adair, Bert, 115, 117, 282n12
- AFL. *See* American Federation of Labor
- AFL-CIO. *See* American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
- African Americans, 46; enslaved, 238–39; membership for, 22
- alcoholism, 215, 316n158, 326n58
- All-Canadian Electrical Workers (ACEW), 115, 282n12
- Allison, Fred, 47–48, 149, 166–68, 170, 192, 289n98
- Alta Lake Sports Club, 219
- American Federation of Labor (AFL), 255n4, 256n5, 327n61
- American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), 206, 324n45; Canadian union autonomy and, 133, 199; Vermont rank-and-file insurgency, 325n54; working-class conservatism impacts, 248–49
- Angus, George, 176, 185, 188, 277n91, 280n113, 301n123; in BCFL convention 1965 delegation, 82, 83; O’Keeffe suspension and, 167–68
- anti-Communism, 282n17, 327n61; balloting and, 263n13; in Canadian postwar leadership, 33, 42; in Europe contrasted with US, 99–100; IBEW International Office, 23, 42–46, 224; IUE and, 24; Ladyman expressions of, 91, 309n84; legislation, 125; Lenkurt Electric strike and, 147; *Live Wire* and, 76, 275n67; as Local 213 obstacle, 134–35, 249; pressures in Local 213, 42–44, 84, 274n58; red-baiting of UE and, 23; of Ross, 48–50, 77; social unionism impacted by, 247; undercover police surveillance and, 277n92. *See also* McCarthyism; red-baiting anti-trust violations, 20; Sherman Antitrust Act on, 256n8, 258n18
- Apps, Keith, 213, 315n145
- autonomy, for Canadian unions. *See* Canadian union autonomy
- auto workers, 6, 192, 322n37
- Ayling, Henry, 43–44, 260n12
- Bachewich, Marion, 149, 194, 305n27
- balloting. *See* elections and balloting, union
- Barnett, Loreen, 219, 317n168, 325n50
- Barrett, Dave, 4, 212, 215–16
- Barrio, Henri (“Coucou”), 99, 282n15
- BC. *See* British Columbia; *specific locations and organizations*
- BC District Telegraph Company (BCDT), 85–87, 152, 153, 278n104
- BC Electric, 266n37–38; gas workers, 50, 51, 71, 73, 82, 184; George Gee targeted by, 50–51, 266n36; IBEW International Office relations with, 56–58; Jack time with, 50, 266n36; Malcolm Morrison and relations with, 62–63; strike in 1958, 64–68, 270n17; wage increase negotiations with, 64–65, 270n16, 271n25; work stoppages, 68, 270n17

- BC Federation of Labour (BCFL), 254n3, 300n109; Kinnaird rise in influence within, 193; Lenkurt strike and, 148–49, 153, 163, 164, 226, 297n76; Les McDonald resolutions approved by, 125–27; 1965 delegation and resolutions at convention of, 82, 83, 288n84, 289n90, 289n98, 324n45; oil workers strike and, 122, 123; social democratic left transition from, 39–40
- BC Hydro, 170, 178, 195, 276n80; Collins Radio dispute, 90–91, 280n122; compulsory arbitration and, 134, 271n27; Local 258 for, 194, 277n91, 316n158
- BC Power Corporation, 56–58, 62, 64–65, 266n36, 268n57
- BC Telephone Company, 30, 159, 254n3, 288n85
- Beijing Olympics, 325n50
- Bengough, Percy, 133
- Bennett, W. A. C., 37, 122, 124, 150, 181–82, 305n26
- Bethel, Brian, 139, 144–46, 157, 175, 243, 298n84, 298n87
- Bird, Henry, 29–30, 261n15
- Bjarnason, Emil, 109
- Black, Hugo, 20, 258n17
- Boilermakers' union. *See* Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Union
- Bonner, Robert, 119, 163, 226, 287n64
- boycott campaigns, 20, 256n8, 258n19
- Boylan, Charles, 3, 43, 53
- Bridges, Harry, 237
- Britain: Communist Party in, 3, 98–99, 100, 283n17; Labour Party in, 75, 93, 283n18; Les McDonald early years in, 3, 93–94, 98–99, 253n3, 281n1
- Britannia Beach Copper Mine strike (1964), 112
- British Columbia (BC): economic hardships in 1950s, 106–7; labour politics transition in, 39–40; left- and right-wing politics history in, 25–38; Liberal/Conservative coalition in, 26, 27, 29; Les McDonald moving to, 95, 223, 281n3; strikes in prewar, 40, 260n3; union movement relation to rest of Canada, 27; wobbles statistics comparison, 121; working-class militancy spread across, 121–23. *See also specific locations and organizations*
- British Columbia Labour Relations Act (1954), 143, 149
- Brown, George, 293n15, 294n37; CEWU leadership of, 13, 188; Constable relationship with, 140, 293n19; Lenkurt strike and suspension of, 176; Lenkurt strike beginnings and, 143–44, 242–43, 245, 294n36; as Lenkurt Strike Committee chair, 170–71; Lenkurt working conditions and, 138–39, 140; O'Keefe suspension opposition from, 167; Trotskyist background of, 139, 187; UE rejection by, 189
- Buck, Tim, 34, 324n43
- Bugniat, G. M. (“Gus”), 23
- Building Trades Councils, 82, 123, 135, 199, 201, 206
- Burns and Dutton Construction wobble (1965): Les McDonald photography at, 112–13, 113, 116, 118, 120, 287n62; Les McDonald role in, 112–20, 143, 223; RCMP at, 117–19
- Burns Detective Agency, 115, 118
- Burrard Dry Dock, 43, 115, 125; Communist Party activism and, 101; Les McDonald first job at, 97–98, 103
- bus drivers, 66–67
- Business Manager's News Letter*. *See* Live Wire
- business unionism, 67, 225, 248–49; defined, 15, 255n1; growth and importance of, 16, 23–24; of IBEW, 15–16; Local 3 hybrid approach to, 19–22; responses to, 7; under Rundgren, 214; UE approach to, 22
- CAIMAW. *See* Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers
- California, 284n34
- Canada: anti-Communism in postwar leadership in, 33, 42; Building Trades Councils, 82, 123, 135, 199, 201, 206; class relations historically in, 25–26; home ownership in, 247–48; immigrants from 2016 to 2021 in, 326n59; labour threats, 254n2; labour violence in, 320n19; left- and right-wing politics history

in, 25–38; McCarthyism impacts in, 33, 39, 42, 100, 184–85, 261n22; 1950s economics in, 99; 1960s social and cultural developments in, 11; Soviet Union politics impact in, 58–59; War Measures' Act impact for union membership in, 27. *See also specific locations and organizations*

Canadian Alpine Ski Association, 219

Canadian Association of Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW), 14, 192

Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), 6, 192, 322n37

Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), 39, 74–75, 133, 263n1, 274n61

Canadian Electrical Contractors Association, 257n12

Canadian Electrical Workers' Union (CEWU), 308n75; Angus as first president of, 277n91; Communist Party of Canada on, 196, 241; IBEW criticism from, 309n88; impacts for other nationalist unions, 199; manufacturing focus of, 191; members leaving IBEW for, 189–92; origins, 13–14, 188–89, 231, 232; paper, 265n28; Phillips Cables and, 191, 196, 280n117; political composition of, 189, 230; on Scheer suspension, 197–98

Canadian Federation of Labour (CFL), 206–7, 313n118

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), 30, 127, 227, 291n122; Canadian union autonomy and, 198, 312n115, 312n117; FIPOE and, 206; Jodoin pro-worker stand as president of, 135, 228; Ladyman as chair for committee of, 134–35; local unions leaving, 206–7; Les McDonald as delegate to, 130, 132–34; 1974 convention, 313n121

Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, 220

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), 319nn4–5

Canadian union autonomy, 132–33, 230–31, 290n113; CLC and, 198, 312n115, 312n117; Communist Party of Canada and, 186–87, 232, 291n117, 312n115, 323n38; Fedewa suspension and, 213–14; IBEW committees to address, 198–99; Kinnaird on, 199–200, 309n87; for Local 213, 73–75, 195, 199, 236, 273n52, 273n56, 309n84; Les McDonald fight for, 186–91, 192, 211, 232; Mine-Mill declaring, 56; Québec labour and, 204–6; struggles for, 257n12, 306n37; trend, 322n37; union splintering impact on, 207. *See also* Canadian Electrical Workers' Union

capitalism, 3, 18, 326n55; business unionism growth and, 16; democratic, 263n13; endurance of, 29; global working-class revolts and, 239; worker insecurities under, 37–38

card-called meetings, 110, 266n37

Caron, Charlie, 3, 106, 210

carpenters unions, 123, 150, 154, 291n122, 312n115, 318n1

Carrall Street gang, 82, 131, 170

Carson, John, 62–63, 67, 71, 78

Castlegar, 107–8, 127, 207–8, 223, 285n37

Catholicism, 19, 41, 78, 99, 239, 320n8

CAW. *See* Canadian Auto Workers

CCF. *See* Co-operative Commonwealth Federation

CCL. *See* Canadian Congress of Labour

CCU. *See* Council of Canadian Unions

Celgar construction site, 107

CEWU. *See* Canadian Electrical Workers' Union

CFL. *See* Canadian Federation of Labour

Chapman, Warren, 202, 310n102

China, 325n50

“Chinese Wall” (tactic), 20, 258n16

CIO. *See* Congress of Industrial Unions

CIR. *See* Council on Industrial Relations

Clark, Dave, 46

Clarke, Tom, 154, 157, 158, 182, 182–83

CLC. *See* Canadian Labour Congress

Clements, William, 158, 171, 295n40

climbing, of Les McDonald, 94–95, 217–18, 218, 281n2, 324n43

CLRA. *See* Construction Labour Relations Association

coal mining, 100, 306n42; in McDonald family background, 3, 4, 93; strikes in prewar BC, 40, 260n3; UMW and, 261n19, 263n13

- Cody, Jack (formerly John Wilson), 51, 275n67; Communist Party of Canada affiliations of, 82, 277n88; 1958 electoral success, 71–73; 1960 electoral defeat, 75–76; 1966 election of, 192; reputation and character, 74, 273n55, 319n3; resignation threat to IBEW International Office, 73–74; on Rundgren as business manager, 200; suspension in 1962, 76–77
- Cold War, 6, 32–33, 103, 234. *See also* Soviet Union
- collective agreements: BCDT case and, 86, 87; card-called meetings and, 110, 266n37; IBEW constitution on, 167; Lenkurt, 140–43, 171–72, 302n146, 303nn148–49; in lockout of 1958, 69–70, 272n42; master contracts and, 28–29; negotiating more than, 21; resolution to allow strikes during, 124–27, 289n90; strikes outlawed during, 28; union dues and, 34; on work week length, 110
- collective bargaining, 327n63; CIR establishment relation to, 17–18; compulsory dues and, 34; laws governing, 143; Lenkurt, 142–43; master contracts impact for, 27–28; postwar, 29–30, 257n12; strikes as sign of failure in, 21
- Collerton, Joe and Alec, 281n2
- Collins, Doug, 65, 71, 270n21, 300n119
- Collins Radio dispute, 90–91, 280n122
- Cominco, 36, 262n27, 318n1
- Communist Party, 224, 306n41, 314n137, 315n153, 323n40; in Britain, 3, 98–99, 100, 283n17; election rigging in Britain and, 100; in France, 59, 100, 283n19; “homegrown radicalism” and, 3, 253n1; IBEW stance on membership and, 17; in Italy, 59; Hugh McDonald in, 3, 98–99; Les McDonald and Van Arsdale views compared on, 238–40; Les McDonald roots in, 3, 98–99, 253n3; 1960s rivals of, 11; UE activism and, 23, 259n31; wage and employment insecurity approach of, 31. *See also* anti-Communism; red-baiting
- Communist Party of Canada, 324nn43–44; BCFL controlled by, 39–40; Burrard Dry Dock and, 101; Canadian union autonomy and, 186–87, 232, 291n117, 312n115, 323n38; challenges and factions, 123–24, 314n134; Cody affiliations with, 82, 277n88; dues requirements, 284n28; educational camp in 1964, 111–12; Gagnon and, 205; George Gee joining, 40; Lenkurt Electric strike and, 25, 138, 156; Local 213 role of, 47–48, 234–38, 241–47, 282n12, 289n100, 318n2; Les McDonald activities in, 105–6, 251; Les McDonald break with, 3–4, 209–12, 314n138; Les McDonald debates within, 132; Les McDonald identity relation to, 5, 244, 322n28; Les McDonald joining, 98–99; Les McDonald reputation within, 110–12, 126–27; Les McDonald toeing party line for, 187–88, 241; 1970s decline of, 208–12; post-Lenkurt and, 184–85; postwar denials of affiliation with, 42–43; RCMP mole and, 209–10; Ross joining, 48; Scott leaving, 191; socialism and, 139, 234, 236–37, 324n44; Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia impact on, 208, 241; Soviet politics and fragmentation of, 58–59, 306n42; Soviet Union loyalty in, 3, 8, 31–32, 234–35, 306nn41–42, 314n134; strikes during World War II organized by, 32, 261n19; trade unionists evolution and, 33–34; Trotskyists conflicts with, 139–40; unions retaining leadership allied with, 35–36; utilities nationalization position of, 124–25; World War II impact and shifts for, 31–33, 261n19. *See also* left faction
- compulsory arbitration, 30, 133–34, 271n27
- Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO), 22, 33, 127, 250; bargaining tactics of left-wing, 23; trade union democracy support, 244–45. *See also* American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
- “conservative,” as term, 25
- Constable, Tom, 167, 224; in BCFL convention 1965 delegation, 82, 83; Brown relationship with, 140, 293n19; as Burnaby mayor, 277n91; as business manager, 90, 140, 141; Lenkurt strike

- and suspension of, 176; Lenkurt strike beginnings and, 143–45, 295n42; at Lenkurt strike picket line, 154, 158–59; Lenkurt working conditions and, 141
- construction industry, 318n1; Celgar work stoppage and, 107; dam, 260n12; lockout of 1958 in, 68–71, 77, 272n42, 319n3; 1958 record-long work stoppages in, 68–70, 77; Québec unionization model for, 312n17; wobbles dynamics in, 127; work week length negotiations in, 109–10, 111, 200
- Construction Labour Relations Association (CLRA), 200–201, 204, 310n90
- Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), 260n2; NDP relationship with, 30–31, 127, 288n85; 1940s rise in popularity of, 25–26, 27
- Council of Canadian Unions (CCU), 14
- Council on Industrial Relations (CIR), 17–19
- Cox, Don, 115, 116
- Crabtree, Herb, 117, 117, 286n54
- craft-oriented business unions, 16
- craft unions, 15–16, 19–20, 51, 82, 138, 249, 263n1
- criminal conspiracies, unions viewed as, 17, 256n8
- cross-country skiing. *See* skiing
- CSIS. *See* Canadian Security Intelligence Service
- Czechoslovakia, 212; Les McDonald as Local 213 delegate in, 3–4, 210–11; Soviet invasion of, 208, 241
- Daley, Bill, 53
- Daley, Declan, 108
- Davidson, Margaret, 93–94
- death: of Les McDonald, 251; in Peterson Electric hydro lines accident, 79–81, 276n78
- Debs, Eugene, 250
- dispatching (spare-board) system, 77, 202–4, 233, 275n69
- Dorland, Alex, 3, 43, 53
- drug use, 316n158, 326n58
- dues, union: auto-withdrawal of, 34; increase in 1961, 76–77, 275n68; Rand formula of 1946 and, 34, 35
- Dunsmuir Street union hall, 49, 104; expenses management, 77; IBEW selling, 208; Lenkurt Strike Committee barred from, 170–71; Lenkurt strike occupation of, 165–66, 169–70, 301n122; Lenkurt strike special meeting at, 161–62; Lenkurt strike violence at, 160–61, 299nn99–100; monthly general meetings at, 82; opening of, 277n89
- economy/economics, 17; in 1950s, 99, 106–7, 108; postwar, 36–37, 64; in Trail, BC, 262n30; in US, 247–48, 326nn57–58
- Edmonton Power Association, 321n21
- Edwards, Lionel, 3, 4, 106
- elections and balloting, union, 275n64; anti-Communist affidavits and, 263n13; ETU trial in 1961 on rigging, 100; Gompers on, 274n60; misleading results of, 82; in 1958, 71–73; 1960, 74–76, 274n59; 1966, 192–93, 195, 290n108; 1979, 213; shift to mail-in, 316n161
- Electrical Club. *See* left faction; *specific members*
- Electrical Trade Union (ETU) trial (1961), 100
- Evans, Arthur “Slim,” 40, 318n1
- Evans, Doug, 154, 298n91
- ex parte* injunctions: applications historically for, 286n52; battles and opposition with, 135, 228, 231, 249, 292n126, 305n31, 320n11, 320n15; BC Supreme Court on, 12; employer reliance on, 165, 228, 229, 305n31; Lenkurt strike and, 145, 149, 151, 155, 156, 305n31; O’Keeffe trial for defying, 181; success of employer-initiated, 229; Trades Union Act on, 115, 143
- False Creek condominium development, 216
- Fedewa, W. Lloyd, 213–14, 315n151
- Ferarro, George, 77
- Finn, Ed, 227–28, 319n6, 320n8
- FIPOE. *See* Fraternité interprovinciale des ouvriers en électricité
- Fisher, Al, 107–8, 219, 314n138
- FMC chemical plant, Squamish. *See* Burns and Dutton Construction wobble
- forest industry, 32, 262n28

- Forkin, Tom, 43, 318n1; in BCFL convention 1965 delegation, 82, 83; on George Gee ousting, 55; as left faction representative, 82; Lenkurt strike and, 166; as *Live Wire* editor, 46–47, 277n91; as Local 258 president, 277n91; post-Lenkurt Trial Board led by, 194
- France: Communist Party in, 59, 100, 283n19; McDonald family stay in, 108–9
- Fraternité interprovinciale des ouvriers en électricité (FIPOE), 205–7, 231, 311n11, 312n14, 323n38
- Freeman, Gordon, 74, 87, 107, 188, 273n43, 288n78
- Fulton, Ernie, 316n157; at Burns and Dutton Construction wobble, 117, 117–18; on left faction, 185; Lenkurt picket line and, 157, 159; on O’Keeffe, 131–32; on splitting Local 213 into three entities, 195; on “Electrical Bill” Stewart, 103–4
- Gagnon, Henri, 205, 236, 311n110–11 gas workers, 50, 51, 71, 73, 82, 184
- Gee, George, 61, 138, 182, 209–10, 319n3; background, 40; Communist Party activism promotion by, 44–45, 48, 322n39; Communist Party of Canada pressures on, 44; Communist Party of Canada resignation from, 42–43; cultural events established by, 46, 47; Dunsmuir Street union hall project under, 277n89; gas workers unit added under, 50, 51; Goldenberg Commission and, 69–70, 319n3; leadership and influence of, 40–46, 48, 49–52, 125, 234, 266n38–39, 276n80; LPP resignation of, 42; Murphy relationship with, 46, 49, 265n27; ousting from IBEW, 50–57, 57, 63–64, 72, 148, 209, 235, 266n35, 269n11, 301n129, 301n132; Purdy criticism of, 50–51; red-baiting of, 49–50, 266n36–37; reinstatement fight, 58, 63–64; reputation for negotiation, 41–42, 51–52; on Wilson TLC convention speech, 44–45
- Gee, Jim, 213, 315n145
- General Telephone and Electronics Corporation (GTE), 137, 159
- Germany, 31–32, 314n138
- Gillett, Jack, 55, 98, 117
- Goldenberg Commission, 69–70, 319n3
- Gompers, Samuel, 255n4, 256n5, 257n9, 274n60
- Gouzenko, Igor, 33
- Gow, Ian, 77
- Goy, Art, 53, 55, 74, 192, 273n56, 274n59
- Grauer, A. E. (“Dal”), 56–58, 62, 65, 266n36, 268n57
- Gray, Stephen, 34–35
- Great Depression, 3, 21, 29, 88, 235, 238; George Gee experience in, 42, 49; postwar standard of living contrasted with, 36; Ross background and, 48–49; socialist ideals after, 25
- Gregory, G. F. (“George”), 86–87, 152
- Griffin, Betty and Harold (“Hal”), 3
- GTE. *See* General Telephone and Electronics Corporation
- Guy, Len, 153, 168, 184
- Hard Man to Beat*, A (White, H.), 43, 282n12
- Hardy, Bill, 202
- Harris, George, 22, 138
- helicopter accident, 79–80
- Hiebert, John, 160, 167, 168–69, 170, 192
- hiring policies, 77. *See also* dispatching (spare-board) system
- histories: instigators left out of, ix; provocative, 8
- Hobsbawm, Eric, 283n17
- hockey, 209
- Hodgson, Derek, 281n2
- Hogan, Frank, 159, 167, 169, 192
- Hohlachoff, Bill, 168
- “homegrown radicalism,” 3, 253n1
- home ownership, 247–48, 326n58
- Hooker Chemical, 62, 269n6
- Houston, Stuart, 192
- Hume, Fred, 209, 260n10, 271n29
- Hume and Rumble Electrical Contractors, 62, 81, 106, 260n10, 271n29, 276n80; hockey team, 209; lockouts by, 69
- Hunter, Charles, 142, 226; on fired Lenkurt employees, 150; Lenkurt strikers threat from, 145–46; Lenkurt walkout

- intentions of, 243; on picket line, 155; reputation of, 137
- Huston, Alfred ("Alfie"), 203–4, 212–13, 216–17, 310n101–2, 315n145, 315n153
- hybrid union model, 19–22, 41, 52, 82
- IBEW. *See* International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; *specific topics*
- IBEW International Office, 5; anti-Communism in, 23, 42–46, 224; anti-Communist postwar pressures from, 23, 42–46, 224; BC Electric relations with, 56–58; Cody threat of resignation, 73–74; interventions and interference by, 11, 12, 71, 79–80, 86, 232–33, 273n45, 279n106, 301n129, 317n163; on left faction changes, 56–58; Lenkurt Electric strike response from, 12–14, 230; Local 213 disharmony with, 12, 13, 87–88; Local 213 trusteeship from, 6; Marxism and, 17; Milne role in, 50, 52, 55, 57, 266n35, 301n132; 1967 splitting of Local 213 by, 194–96, 233; O'Keefe suspension order from, 160, 161; red-baiting by, 23, 44, 49–50, 66–67; representatives, 7, 41, 48–50, 53–54, 61, 77, 86–88, 91, 279n106, 301n129; representatives duties, 256n7; on unions and capital co-existing, 18
- ILWU. *See* International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration (ICA) Act, 26–30, 32, 143, 260n6, 261n15
- Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), 127, 282n7
- Ingles, Ernest, 267n50
- International Associations of Machinists, 34
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW): Canada members in 1964, 280n11; CEWU criticism of, 309n88; CIR establishment and, 17–18; Commission on Constitution and Structure, 198–99; constitution, 22–23, 49, 52, 54, 56, 63, 65, 89, 167, 176, 225, 278n94; dam construction contracts with, 260n12; downsizing protocol in, 315n146; ex-Communists treatment at, 315n153; George Gee expulsion from, 50–57, 57, 63–64, 72, 148, 209, 235, 266n35, 269n11, 301n129, 301n132; Local 213 autonomy from, 73–75, 195, 199, 236, 273n52, 273n56, 309n84; Local 568 leaving, 204–5; locals failed attempts at leaving, 321n21; McCuish blacklisted from, 284n29; Les McDonald 1980s reputation within, 216–17; nickname for, 270n24; Phillips Cables leaving, 191, 280n117; on political neutrality policy, 128, 274n61–62; power and innovative locals of, 19; profit sharing and, 257n9; push for independent union break from, 185–89; UE conflicts and rivalry with, 22–23, 259n24, 259n29; unskilled labourers treatment historically by, 22–23; Western Progress Meeting, 85, 129, 130. *See also* IBEW International Office; Local 213; *specific topics*
- International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), 52, 175, 237, 320n15; autonomy for, 291n17; *ex parte* injunctions and, 228, 320n11; Lenkurt strike support from, 154; longevity of, 245
- International Triathlon Union (ITU), 219–21, 317n168, 325n50
- International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE), 24
- International Union of Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine-Mill), 262n31, 266n33, 291n17, 318n1; Canadian members autonomy in, 56; constitution clauses, 16–17; Murphy leadership in, 35, 36, 49, 215, 234; strike in 1964, 35–36; United Steelworkers merger, 189
- International Woodworkers' of America (IWA), 134, 260n3, 260n5; Local 213 members from, 43; Morgan leadership in, 26; Harold Pritchett leadership in, 262n28, 307n53; strike during World War II, 32, 35; white bloc faction, 39, 133, 275n64; WIUC split from, 184, 186
- Isitt, Benjamin, 6, 29, 127, 228–29, 318n2
- Italy, 59
- ITU. *See* International Triathlon Union
- IUE. *See* International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers

- IWA. *See* International Woodworkers' of America
- IWW. *See* Industrial Workers of the World
- Jack, Larry, 50, 266n36
- Jackson, C. S. ("Jack"), 22, 43, 138, 264n16
- Jarrow, England, 93, 281n1
- JIB. *See* Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry
- Jodoin, Claude, 135, 228
- Johns, Bert, 159, 299n92
- Johnson, Andrew, 53–56, 57, 301n129
- Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry (JIB), 20, 21, 239, 258n16
- journeymen, 41
- jurisdiction, job, 82–84, 207–8, 278n94
- jurisdiction, labor dispute, 215–16
- Kapalka, John, 81, 274n59; background, 275n63; job safety and, 301n130; as left faction representative, 82; Lenkurt strike and, 146, 166–67, 176; as Local 213 board member, 72, 74; 1960 election contest and, 75; O'Keefe suspension and, 166–68
- Keenan, Joseph, 80–81, 248
- Kelowna electrical workers' strike (1967), 197–98
- Khrushchev, Nikita, 58–59, 99
- King, William Lyon Mackenzie, 28, 215–16, 261n22
- Kinnaird, Jim, 235–36, 290n100, 310n90; in BCFL convention 1965 delegation, 82, 83, 289n98; as BCFL president, 277n91; on Canadian union autonomy, 199–200, 309n87; CEWU criticisms of, 196; Les McDonald relationship with, 128–29; rise in influence, 193, 198
- Kitimat–Kemano project (early 1950s), 83, 277n92
- Laberge, Louis, 206, 231, 313n1221
- Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), 41, 42, 55, 59, 63, 322n30. *See also* Communist Party of Canada
- Labour Day parades, 46, 47
- labourism, as ideology, 34, 262n24
- Labour Party (Britain), 75, 93, 283n18
- Labour Relations Board, 29, 216
- Ladyman, Bill, 79, 299n92; anti-Communist expressions by, 91, 309n84; as CLC committee chair, 134–35; criticisms aimed at, 179, 199, 300n109, 304n21; IBEW Canadian vice-president appointment of, 84; job jurisdiction meeting led by, 84; Lenkurt strike response from, 162, 169; 1966 elections delay by, 192; O'Keefe public criticisms of, 179; O'Keefe suspension telegram from, 160, 161, 166–67; splitting of Local 213 by, 194–95; successor of, 199; on unsanctioned strikes, 288n78
- Laffling, Jack, 142, 143, 149, 294n30
- Landrum-Griffin Act (1959). *See* Trade Union Act
- Larkin, Gordon, 164, 300n117
- Larsen, Diane, 149
- League for Socialist Action (LSA), 139, 293n15
- Lebourdais, Jerry, 121–22, 143, 164, 300n117
- Lee, Toby, 79–80, 81, 276n78
- "left," as term, 25
- left faction (in Local 213): at BCFL Convention, 82, 83; Communist Party role in decline of, 241; demise of, 214–15; George Gee ousting and, 51–57, 57, 63; George Gee role in, 43–46, 48; IBEW International Office on, 56–58; impact of, 6–7, 242; influence increasing for, 132; initiatives, 124–25; key members of, 6, 71, 81–82, 115; leadership turmoil in 1950s, 61–66; Lenkurt employees and, 138; Lenkurt strike impacts for, 183–86, 193–95, 208, 241–44; Leslie contributions in, 128–29; MacDonald obstacle for, 74–75; MacDonald on infiltration of, 165; Les McDonald leadership in, 3, 103–5, 223–24, 323n39; mission of, 7, 236–38, 243–45; 1960 elections and, 75–76, 274n59; 1975 suspensions and, 212–13, 315n145; oil workers strike success noted by, 123–24; on O'Keefe, 131–32; Rundgren and isolation of, 208; "Electrical Bill" Stewart and, 103–5, 223, 245–46, 273n56, 323n39; union suspensions in 1962 for, 77–78; viewed as dangerous, 227, 249. *See also specific topics and individuals*

- left-wing politics: history of BC right- and, 25–38; 1967 conflicts within, 196–97; trade union institutionalization and, 34
- legislation: anti-Communism, 125; British Columbia Labour Relations Act, 143, 149; ICA Act, 26–30, 32, 143, 260n6, 261n15; National Emergency Transitional Powers Act, 27; PC 1003, 27–28; postwar, 29–30; Sherman Antitrust Act, 256n8, 258n18; Taft-Hartley Act, 20, 42, 125, 256n8, 258n19, 263n13; Trade Union Act, 115, 143, 171, 256n8; from US impacting Canada, 42; War Measures' Act, 27
- Leier, Mark, 34–35
- Lenin, Vladimir, 3, 23, 31, 186, 237, 306n41, 322n28
- Lenkurt Electric: collective agreements, 140–43, 171–72, 302n146, 303nn148–49; fired employees treatment by, 148–53, 168, 169, 175; overtime ban negotiations, 142–43; overtime demands at, 141–43, 294n30, 295n40; women workers at, 7, 12, 13, 138, 140, 141–42, 149, 230–31, 292n6; worker membership in Local 213, 137–38, 292n4, 295n44; workplace conditions, 138–42
- Lenkurt Electric strike (1966), 19, 327n63; anti-Communism and, 147; arrests in, 157–59, 158, 298n88; BCFL and, 148–49, 153, 163, 164, 226, 297n76; BC Supreme Court injunction on, 169–70, 181; BC Supreme Court trials and convictions, 181–83, 182; beginning of, 135, 143–46, 242–43, 245, 294n36, 295n40, 298n85, 320n15; circumstances leading up to, 12, 39, 91–92, 138–42; collective agreement after, 171–72, 302n146, 303nn148–49; fired employees and, 148–53, 168, 169; government response to, 163; Hunter threat to workers in, 145–46; labour movement leaders at, 154–55; labour organizations supporting, 11–12, 154, 162, 168–69; legality of, 149–50, 152–53, 162; Local 213 divisions in, 143–44, 153, 159, 172–73; Local 213 members at, 154, 157–58, 183–84, 295nn44–54; Local 213 Strike Committee banned in, 170–71; Local 213 supporters on IBEW trial after, 175–77; Local 213 suspensions due to, 1, 160–64, 166–68, 175–78, 178, 194, 304nn12–17, 305n27; MacDonald public request for cessation of, 163–64; Les McDonald strategies and tactics for, 155–57, 165–66, 223; negotiations, 151–53, 156, 159–61, 168–72, 297n76; occupation at Dunsmuir Street union hall during, 165–66, 169–70, 301n122; physical conflict at Dunsmuir Street union hall during, 160–61, 299nn99–100; picket line numbers, 300nn117–18; picket line suppression tactics, 155–57; picket line violence, 12, 153–54, 154, 157, 160, 177, 226, 298n91; PWM at, 164–65, 187, 300nn117–18; reflections on outcomes of, 226–27, 230–34; repercussions/aftermath of, 7, 8–9, 12–13, 171–73, 175–220, 232–34; scab labour and, 151, 153, 156–57, 159, 226; Scott on, 294nn36–37; steering committee for, 153, 170; strike pay issues with, 151; Trial Board review after, 194; trials and sentences of members involved in, 158, 182, 182–83, 303n7, 304nn12–17, 305n27; VDLC and, 148, 150, 153, 164; walkouts at start of, 12–13, 143–44, 152, 162, 227, 230, 243, 295n40; women in, 7, 12, 13, 149, 170, 305n27
- Leslie, John, 111, 128–29, 149, 192, 193, 197–98
- Lessing, Doris, ix
- Lewis, John L., 263n13
- Liberal/Conservative coalition, 26, 27, 29
- Liberal Party, 28, 30
- Live Wire (Business Manager's News Letter)*, 265n28; anti-communist editorial control of, 76, 275n67; first issue, 46; Forkin as editor of, 46–47, 277n91; names and iterations of, 73; Towle as editor of, 273n55
- Local 3 (New York City), 41, 109, 232, 238, 258nn15–16, 259n24; arrest and charges for leaders in, 257n14; boycott campaigns, 20, 256n8, 258n19; factors for success of, 21–22; hybrid union model, 19–22; Taft-Hartley Act impact for, 20
- Local 46 (Seattle), 107, 282n7

- Local 213 (Vancouver): anti-Communist pressures in, 42–44, 84, 274n58; autonomy for, 73–75, 195, 199, 236, 273n52, 273n56, 309n84; Carrall Street gang, 82, 131, 170; CCF-NDP oriented trade unionists resistance in, 31; charter revoked, 13; Communist Party of Canada role in, 47–48, 234–38, 241–47, 282n12; Communists caution within, 33; cultural and political events, 46, 47; dispatching system, 77, 202–4, 233, 275n69; dues increase in 1961, 76–77, 275n68; gas workers brought into, 50, 51, 71, 73; George Gee influence and leadership in, 40–46, 48, 49–52; George Gee ousting from, 50–57, 57, 63–64, 72, 148, 209, 235, 266n35, 269n11, 301n129, 301n132; George Gee ousting response from, 54–56; hybrid union model for, 20, 41, 52, 82; internal strife dynamic in, 225; Lenkurt strike suspensions for, 1, 160–64, 166–68, 175–78, 178, 194, 304n12–17, 305n27; Lenkurt workers membership in, 137–38, 292n4, 295n44; McCarthyism impact on, 52–53, 76, 125, 234; Les McDonald as delegate for, 3–4, 82, 83, 129–30, 132–34, 210–11, 216–17, 288n84, 289n98; membership increase in 1965/1966, 88; “militant minority” generations within, 323n39; 1919 altercation in, 267n50; 1919 president of, 277n90; 1958 elections, 71–73; 1960 elections, 74–75, 274n59; 1965 BCFL convention delegation and resolutions from, 82, 83, 88n84, 289n90, 289n98, 324n45; 1966 elections, 192–93, 195, 290n108; 1967 split into three distinct entities, 194–96, 233; 1969 jurisdiction reduction for, 207–8; 1975 suspensions in, 212–13; 1979 elections, 213; oil worker struggles supported by, 123, 288n77; rebuild in 1950s and 1960s, 61–92; red trade unionism and, 39–59; reputation of, 12; resolutions, 124–27, 132–34, 289n90, 292n124, 317n164; suspensions in 1955, 63–65, 268n51; telephone workers in, 30, 44, 264n21; trusteeship, 6; “21 Club” suspensions, 56, 117; units in early, 263n8; verbal contracts shift to written, 27–28; war chest of, 161–62; work day/work week length reduction victories for, 109–10, 111, 200, 223, 241; working in California, 284n34; work rotation measure in, 45, 265n23. *See also specific individuals and topics*
- Local 258 (Vancouver), 194, 277n91, 316n158
- Local 310 (Vancouver), 13, 254n3
- Local 344 (Prince Rupert), 49, 70, 83
- Local 353 (Toronto), 202, 274n61, 310n102
- Local 568 (Montréal), 204–5, 217, 311nn110–11, 317n163
- local unions, comparisons and contrasts, 6
- Locke, Chris, 243
- lockouts: CLRA instigated, 201–2; of 1958, 68–71, 77, 272n42, 319n3
- longshoremen. *See* International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- LPP. *See* Labor-Progressive Party
- LSA. *See* League for Socialist Action
- MacDonald, Angus, 7, 123, 277n88, 300n119, 304n21; Cody electoral success role of, 72–73; on George Gee leadership, 41; on George Gee ousting, 52–53; on left faction infiltration, 165; on Lenkurt strike, 179, 181; Lenkurt strike and, 147, 149, 160–61, 163–64; Lenkurt strike impacts role of, 172–73; Lenkurt strike negotiations and, 151–53, 156, 161, 168, 170, 297n76; Local 213 anger aimed at, 160–62, 178, 299n99; Local 213 roles of, 71, 75–76, 163–64, 302n146; 1966 election defeat of, 192; O’Keeffe strained relationship with, 79, 147, 152; suspension after Lenkurt strike, 176
- MacFarlan, Jim, 132, 133, 187, 211, 243–44
- MacGill, Gerard, 96, 97, 281n2
- Mackenzie-Papineau battalion, 3–4, 71, 73
- Manley, John, 34, 262n24
- manufacturing sector: IBEW treatment historically of, 22–23; IUE founding and, 24; master contracts and, 29; union-industry boycott for, 20
- Maoists, 11, 122, 164–65, 187, 189, 230, 307n50
- Marcuse, Bert, 52, 54, 266n39

- Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Union, 43, 101, 125, 182, 282n12
- Martin, Dan, 115, 117
- Marxism, 16–17, 23, 106, 211, 244, 255n1, 322n28
- master contracts, 28–29, 76
- McCarthyism, 224, 225, 283n17; impacts in Canada, 33, 39, 42, 100, 184–85, 261n22; Local 213 impacted by, 52–53, 76, 125, 234
- McClure, Tom, 43, 264n16
- McCuish, John, 43, 101, 105, 284n29
- McCullough, Ramsay, 65–66
- McDonald, Daniel, 95, 117
- McDonald, Helen, 95, 317n167
- McDonald, Hugh, 3, 93, 98–99, 281n1
- McDonald, Ian, birth of, 95
- McDonald, Les, 95, 201; Alta Lake Sports Club founding by, 219; with Alzheimer's disease, 1; in BCFL convention 1965 delegation, 82, 83, 288n84, 289n98; Brown relationship with, 139; Burns and Dutton Construction wobble in 1965 and, 112–20, 143, 223; Burns and Dutton Construction wobble photography of, 112–13, 113, 116, 118, 120, 287n62; Canadian union autonomy aims of, 185–92, 211, 232; character and reputation, 2, 4, 96–97, 110–12, 125–26, 132, 155–56, 186, 187–88, 210, 214, 216–17, 220–21, 250–51, 253n4, 299n98, 324n43; childhood, 3, 93–94, 98–99, 253n3, 281n1; children of, 95; climbing, 94–95, 217–18, 218, 281n2, 324n43; Communist Party in identity of, 5, 244, 322n28; Communist Party life for, 105–6, 251; Communist Party of Canada debates from, 132; Communist Party of Canada departure for, 3–4, 209–12, 314n138; Communist Party of Canada joined by, 98–99; Communist Party of Canada loyalty from, 187–88, 241; Communist Party roots for, 3, 98–99, 253n3; Czechoslovakia trip for, 3–4, 210–11; death of, 251; as delegate for Local 213, 3–4, 82, 83, 129–30, 132–34, 210–11, 216–17, 288n84, 289n98; early career contributions overview, 223–24; early electrician jobs for, 97–98, 103; economic downturn impact on, 107; education for, 3; on *ex parte* injunctions, 229; as father, 96, 121; as fierce and fearless, 96, 97, 281n2, 325n50; Fisher friendship with, 107–8, 219, 314n138; in France, 108–9; Fulton relationship with, 316n157; on gender equality in sports, 317n168; Hume and, 209; as IBEW 1986 convention delegate, 216–17; IBEW tenure of, 313n121; on internal splintering of unions, 207; Irish ethnicity, 113–14, 114; ITU leadership of, 219–21, 324n43; journeyman beginning, 109; Kinnaird relationship with, 128–29; large industrial jobs, 112; left faction leadership of, 3, 103–5, 223–24, 323n39; left faction mission and, 7, 236–38, 243–45; left-syndicalist approach and, 236–37; Lenin and, 3, 237, 322n28; Lenkurt strike beginning and, 298n85; Lenkurt strike eviction of, 170; Lenkurt strike occupation at Dunsmuir Street union hall led by, 165–66, 169–70; at Lenkurt strike picket line, 154, 159; Lenkurt strike role of, 5, 146–48, 154, 155–57, 159, 165–66, 223; Lenkurt strike suspension for, 1, 176–78, 178, 194, 304n12; move to BC, 95, 223, 281n3; news consumption of, 250, 328n66; 1975 suspension, 212, 315n145; 1980s support of picket lines, 216; 1981 reintegration into Local 213, 215; Novikov and, 314n138; OCAW strike support of, 288n84; on O'Keeffe leadership, 123–24; O'Keeffe relationship with, 147–48; Olympic sport administration, 2, 8, 219–20, 324n43, 325n50; Order of Canada investiture of, 220, 220; Pacific Centre construction site wobble and, 212–13; Pender Auditorium speech, 184, 190–91, 192, 306n33, 307n55; physical appearance, 95–96; post-Lenkurt forum speech by, 183–84; public speaking skills, 130–31; on Québec union autonomy, 313n121; RCMP mole on, 209–10, 226; “Red Baron” nickname for, 215; red flag incident, 316n157; resolutions presented by, 124–27, 132–34, 317n164; on rival unions, 189; Rundgren

- McDonald, Les (*continued*)
 relationship with, 200; in running competitions, 1, 2; skiing, 108–9, 120; skiing coaching and leadership of, 218–19; Soviet Union views shift for, 5, 210–11, 212; on spontaneity, 127, 155, 186; sport leadership accolades in 2000s, 220; sports as passion for, 1–2, 94, 108–9, 217–19, 240, 251; sports focus after suspension, 217–19; “Electrical Bill” Stewart relationship with, 100–104, 106, 129, 212, 245–46, 298n85, 325n53; “Terrible Troika” term origins with, 179, 304n21; in triathlon competitions, 1, 2, 4, 219; triathlon organization and leadership of, 1–2, 219–21; Trotskyists and, 139–40, 189, 293n16, 307n50; unemployment after Lenkurt, 208–9; Van Arsdale views compared with, 238–40; Vietnam War and, 324n45; wife, meeting and marriage to, 95; women influence in early life of, 93, 281n1; work week reductions role of, 109–10, 223, 241
- McDonald, Monique (*née* Richer), 95, 281n3; hometown in France, 108–9; on husband character, 96–97, 250–51; on husband Communist Party membership, 99, 240; Les McDonald meeting and marriage to, 95; 1980s support of picket lines, 216
- McDougall, Dan, 277n90
- McEwen, Cec, 54
- McEwen, Tom, 270n24
- McLachlan, J. B., 306n42
- McSorley, Jack, 53, 72, 301n132
- Meany, George, 324n45
- metal shop workers, 138–39, 142, 293n17
- Milne, J. Scott, 50, 52, 55, 57, 266n35, 301n132
- Milner, J. P., 132, 161, 166–67, 171, 192, 274n59
- Mine-Mill. *See* International Union of Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers mining. *See* coal mining; International Union of Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers
- Montréal, Local 568 in, 204–5, 217, 311nn110–11, 317n163
- Moody, Kim, 255n1, 326n55
- Moore, Jack, 164, 168–69
- Morgan, Nigel, 26, 132, 210
- Morris, Joe, 133
- Morrison, Frank, 34
- Morrison, John, 90–91, 140, 148, 168, 281n124
- Morrison, Malcolm, 61–64, 66, 269n9, 271n25, 302n146
- Morrison, Teddy, 48, 61, 263n8
- Mulkey, George A., 256n7, 316
- Murphy, Harvey, 53, 189; George Gee relationship with, 46, 49, 265n27; on ICA Act amendments, 29–30, 261n15; Peace Arch Park concerts and, 46, 234, 265n27; reputation, 36, 234; union leadership of, 35–36, 49, 215, 234, 262n27
- mystery pickets, 112, 115, 116, 120, 151
- narrow trade/craft outlook, 15
- National Emergency Transitional Powers Act, 27
- nationalization, 30, 236–37; of BC Electric, 124; of BC Telephone Company, 288n85; Bennett efforts towards, 37, 124; Communist Party of Canada view of utilities, 124–25; of infrastructure projects, 37–38
- National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), 42, 258n19
- National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), 42
- Neale, Paddy, 153–55, 168, 169, 182, 182
- Neilson, John, 203–4, 315n153
- New Democratic Party (NDP), 129, 139, 183, 322n30; CCF and, 30–31, 127, 288n85; Communist Party opposition from, 128; *ex parte* injunctions and, 229; founding of, 75, 127; labour dispute jurisdictions removed by, 215–16; Les McDonald as nominee for, 4; Les McDonald joining, 4, 211–12; nationalization efforts, 124–25; 1973, 200; O’Keeffe and alliance with, 128
- New York City: JIB in, 20, 21, 239, 258n16; union-industry boycott in, 20. *See also* Local 3
- NLRA. *See* National Labor Relations Act
- NLRB. *See* National Labor Relations Board
- North, George, 228, 229, 233
- Novikov, Igor, 314n138

- OBU. *See* One Big Union
- occupation (resistance tactic): during
 Lenkurt strike, 165–66, 169–70, 301n122;
 1935, 301n124
- Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union
 (OCAW), 121–22, 123, 288n78, 288n84
- oil workers, 121–24, 147, 150, 153, 227,
 288n77, 291n122
- O'Keefe, Art, 7, 180, 224, 229, 288n78,
 290n109; background, 78; BCDT
 case and, 85–87, 153, 278n104; on BC
 Electric wage increase negotiations,
 64–65; on BC Hydro negotiations,
 91; BC Supreme Court Lenkurt strike
 injunction refused by, 169–70, 181;
 business manager election win and
 tenure for, 75–76, 78–79; George
 Gee ousting role of, 53, 148; IBEW
 charges against, 176; leadership and
 activism style of, 123–24, 178–79,
 225–26, 235–36, 275n69; left faction
 on, 131–32; Lenkurt strike and, 146–47,
 149; Lenkurt strike and suspension of,
 160–64, 166–68, 178, 304n14, 304n17;
 Lenkurt strike negotiations and, 151–52,
 153, 159–60, 297n76; at Lenkurt strike
 picket line, 154, 155, 157–58, 162; on
 linemen working in California, 284n34;
 MacDonald strained relationship
 with, 79, 147, 152; Les McDonald on,
 123–24; Les McDonald relationship
 with, 147–48; NDP alliance supported
 by, 128; 1958 electoral defeat to Cody,
 71, 72–73; on 1966 elections, 192–93;
 Peterson Electric safety issues addressed
 by, 80, 81; on police presence at wobble
 settlement, 119; public diatribes
 after Lenkurt aftermath of, 179, 181;
 reputation and character, 78–79, 178–79,
 225–26; Succamore on leadership
 of, 178–79; Supreme Court trial and
 conviction of, 181–82, 182; work week
 length negotiations of, 110, 111
- Olympics: Beijing Olympics, 325n50;
 Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, 220;
 Les McDonald administration for, 2, 8,
 219–20, 324n43, 325n50; in Sydney, 2,
 219, 324n43
- O'Neal, Pat, 125, 147–48
- One Big Union (OBU), 13, 133, 166, 254n3,
 267n50, 307n51, 323n39
- Ontario, 138
- Operation Solidarity, 216, 233
- Order of Canada, 220, 220
- Ottawa, 27–28, 318n1
- overtime: ban under Bennett, 181–82,
 305n26; Lenkurt Electric and, 141–43,
 294n30, 295n40
- Pacific Centre construction site wobble
 (1975), 212–13
- Palmer, Bryan D., 12, 244, 253n1
- Parkin, Al, 43–44
- pattern bargaining, 28–29, 76
- PC 1003 (1944 order-in-council), 27–28
- Peace Arch Park concerts, 46, 234, 265n27
- Pearson, George, 26
- Pender Auditorium, 170, 181–83; Les
 McDonald speech at, 184, 190–91, 192,
 306n33, 307n55
- Penner, Norman, 234, 314n134
- pension plans, 138, 152, 243, 313n121;
 Lenkurt suspensions and, 1, 175; Local
 568 dispute on, 204–5; membership
 relation to level of, 259n26; Van Arsdale
 negotiations for, 259n20
- Perlman, Selig, 8, 248
- Peterson, Leslie, 151, 163
- Peterson Electric accident (1963), 79–81,
 276n78
- Phillips Cables, 89, 119–20, 191, 196,
 280n117
- picket lines, 216; Lenkurt strike, 12,
 149–51, 153–57, 154, 160, 164–65, 177, 187,
 226, 298n91, 300n117–18; police dog
 attack at, 117–18; RCMP as instigators
 of conflict at, 159, 199n92, 226;
 recriminalization trend, 228–29. *See*
also mystery pickets
- Plumbers and Pipefitters' union, 68–69,
 272n33, 272n42, 319n3
- Podovnikoff, Nick, 150
- police. *See* Royal Canadian Mounted
 Police
- Pooghkay, Donna, 166, 188, 293n20,
 295n43, 305n27
- Pooghkay, Walter, 293n20, 298n88
- poverty, 238, 326n58

- Power, Jeff, 182, 182, 298n88, 305n31
- Prince Rupert, Local 344 in, 49, 70, 83
- Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op strike (1967), 228
- Princeton, BC, 40
- Pritchett, Craig, 154
- Pritchett, Harold, 262n28, 307n53
- "progressive," as term, 25
- Progressive Workers' Movement (PWM), 191, 309n84; Lebourdais in, 121-22; Lenkurt strike role of, 164-65, 187, 300n117-18
- pulp and paper workers, 150, 185, 191, 212, 306n36
- Purdy, H. L. ("Henry"), 50-51
- Québec, 313n118; building trade construction councils in, 312n117; FIPOE in, 205-7, 231, 311n111, 312n114, 323n38; Les McDonald on union autonomy in, 313n121
- Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL), 205-6, 311n111
- Rand formula of 1946, 34, 35
- Rankin, Dennis, 115, 116
- Raymond, John, 44, 269n6; CLC delegation led by, 75, 274n61; George Gee ousting role of, 63-64; Peterson Electric accident in 1963 and, 79, 80-81; resignation, 81, 84, 88
- RCMP. *See* Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- red-baiting: George Gee and, 49-50, 266nn36-37; by IBEW International Office, 23, 44; by IWA, 84; in Local 213 1960 elections, 75-76; Murphy and, 36; by Ross, 191; of UE, 23; Verzuh on impacts of, 249-50
- red trade unionism, 235; denials of Communist Party of Canada affiliation and, 42-43; Local 213 and, 39-59; political shifts and pressures in, 39-47; Ross opposing, 48-50
- Reed, Stan, 166, 170
- Rhodes, W. A. ("Dusty"), 111, 213
- Richer, Monique. *See* McDonald, Monique
- right-wing politics, 30, 224; history of BC left- and, 25-38; Local 213 rebuild and, 67-68, 70-71
- Robeson, Paul, 46, 234, 265n27
- Robson, Lorne, 123, 154, 312n115
- rock climbing. *See* climbing, of Les McDonald
- Rose, Fred, 32, 197-98
- Rose, Ken, 181, 195, 213, 315n151, 317n163; CFL founding led by, 206-7, 313n118; as IBEW vice-president, 179, 199, 202, 206-7, 255n2; Kinnaird targeted by, 199-200; on Lenkurt dispute, 179
- Rosenberg, Julius and Ethel, 45, 257n14
- Rosenberg, Max, 257n14
- Ross, Jack, 7, 45, 175, 229, 315n153; anti-Communist support and pressures from, 48-50, 77; background, 48-49; BCDT dealings with, 85-86, 152; BC Hydro dispute and, 90; Burns and Dutton Construction wobble and, 112-13, 119; dislike for, 112-13, 304n21; as IBEW International Office representative, 48-50, 77, 86-88, 91, 279n106; on job jurisdiction, 82-83; Lenkurt strike negotiations and, 151-52, 156, 161, 168, 169, 170; as Local 213 business manager, 40-41, 48-49, 263n8; on Local 213 politics, 242; Local 213 violence aimed at, 160-61, 176, 178; John Morrison suspension and, 140, 148, 281n24; O'Keeffe suspension and, 162-63; red-baiting by, 191; removal attempts within Local 213, 87-88, 91, 162-63, 168, 280n113, 281n124; on Soviet politics influence, 58
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), 296n54; anti-Communism and, 277n92; Burns and Dutton Construction wobble and, 117-19; Kitimat-Kemano workers surveillance by, 83, 277n92; Lenkurt picket line and, 153-54, 154, 156-57, 177, 298n91; Lenkurt strike arrests by, 157-59, 158, 298n88; Lenkurt strike monitoring by, 147, 148, 151, 159, 164, 177, 319n4; mole in Communist Party of Canada, 209-10; moles within Local 213, 209-10, 226, 319n4; "Six-Pact" alliance raided by, 201; as strike violence instigators, 159, 199n92, 226, 298n91
- Rundgren, Cliff, 213, 235-36, 290n100, 309n89, 310n90, 310n102; dispatching

- system under, 203–4, 233; leadership style of, 201–3, 214, 310n101, 315n153; Lenkurt strike and, 166; on Local 213 jurisdiction reduction, 207–8; on Les McDonald as IBEW delegate, 217; work week reductions under, 200
- running (sport), 1, 2, 219. *See also* triathlons
- Russell, Jason, 6
- Russian Revolution (1917), 17, 25
- safety issues, 80–81, 301n130
- salaries, for union officials, 15, 131, 237, 255n2
- Salt of the Earth* (film), 234
- Saran, Jagdish (“Jack”), 204
- scab labour: Lenkurt strike and, 151, 153, 156–57, 159, 226; Scheer assault charge and, 197
- Scheer, Mike, 197–98
- Schmidt, Walter, 277n92
- Scott, Jack, 59, 121, 191, 294nn36–37, 308n75
- Seattle, WA, 107, 282n7
- Seymour, Edward, 199, 202, 274n61
- SFU. *See* Simon Fraser University
- Shannon, Sam, 82, 83, 84, 111, 176, 277n91
- Sharbo, Barry, 176, 188
- Sharpe, George, 77, 176, 298n88, 305n27
- Sheard, Edna, 298n88
- Sheard, Sid, 53, 115, 117, 118, 235
- Shellburn oil refinery wobble, 121–22
- Sherman Antitrust Act (1890), 256n8, 258n18
- Shirkie, Jack, 175
- Simon Fraser University (SFU), 1, 7, 112
- Simpson, Ed, 43, 58–59, 209
- Simpson, Terry, 58, 208; on Cody, 74; on Les McDonald public speaking skill, 130–31; on O’Keeffe, 78; on “Electrical Bill” Stewart, 101–2; suspensions for, 213, 214, 315n145
- “Six-Pact” alliance, 201
- skiing, 108–9, 120, 218–19
- Smith, Roy, 228
- soccer, 97, 103, 129
- Social Credit Party and government, 29, 37–38, 163, 216
- socialism, 3, 13, 31, 98, 192, 246, 326n55; CCF and, 25–26, 99, 127–28; Communist Party of Canada and, 139, 234, 236–37, 324n44; Gompers and, 255n4, 256n5, 257n9, 274n60; of Les McDonald, 212, 238, 240, 250, 253n3, 325n50; Harold Pritchett on, 262n28; UE founding and, 22; wariness of and opposition to, 33, 37, 56, 124. *See also* New Democratic Party
- Soviet Union, 4; Communist Party of Canada loyalty to, 3, 8, 31–32, 234–35, 306nn41–42, 314n134; Czechoslovakia invasion by, 208, 241; Khrushchev revelations about Stalin and, 58–59, 99; Les McDonald shift in view of, 5, 210–11, 212; politics influence in Canada, 58–59, 306n42; postwar sentiment against, 33
- spare-board. *See* dispatching (spare-board) system
- sports: Eastern-bloc athletes and, 105–6; gender equality in, 317n168; Les McDonald passion for, 1–2, 94, 108–9, 217–19, 240, 251; running, 1, 2, 219; skiing, 108–9, 120, 218–19; triathlons, 1–2, 2, 4, 219–21, 317n168, 325n50. *See also* Olympics
- Squamish, wobble in. *See* Burns and Dutton Construction wobble
- Stalinist regime, 5, 23, 58–59, 99, 209, 244
- Stanley Park, 2, 219
- Stanton, John, 262n31, 322n37
- steelworkers, 36, 43; United Steelworkers, 6, 189, 215, 264n16, 314n128; wildcat strike in 1966, 309n82; World War II strikes by, 28
- St. Eloi, R. J. (“Russ”), 68–70, 73, 224, 272n42, 319n3
- Stevens, Homer, 211, 228, 233–34, 240, 312n115, 323n40
- Stewart, Charles, 66–67, 150, 153, 168, 184
- Stewart, Dora, 3, 104, 212, 298n85
- Stewart, William Angus (“Boilermaker Bill”), 101, 125, 126, 154, 284n20
- Stewart, William Evans (“Electrical Bill”), 3, 284n20; background, 101; Communist reputation, 101–2, 102, 103; left faction leadership of, 103–5, 223, 245–46, 323n39; Local 213 autonomy and, 73, 273n56; Local 213 joined by, 101, 104; Les McDonald relationship with, 100–104, 106, 129, 212, 245–46, 298n85, 325n53

- St-Jean, Bernard, 220–21, 318n170
- Strachan, Robert, 124, 288n85
- strikes, 318n2; allowance during collective agreements, 124–27; BC Electric 1958, 64–68; bias in settling of, 67–68; Britannia Beach Copper Mine, 112; capitalism and global, 239; by City of Vancouver electrical workers, 68–70, 271n29; collective agreements and right to, 124–27, 289n90; Kelowna electrical workers, 197–98; Ladyman on unsanctioned, 288n78; legality of, 29; Les McDonald leading early, 97–98; Les McDonald photography of, 112–13, 113, 116, 118, 120, 287n62; 1960s wave of, 11; in Nova Scotia, 287n69; OCAW 1965, 121–22, 123, 288n78, 288n84; oil workers 1965, 121–24; petitioning for right to, 133–34; Phillips Cables 1958, 280n17; Phillips Cables 1962, 89, 119; in prewar BC, 40, 260n3; Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op, 228; Ten-Pact, 201; in US compared with Canada, 279n106; Van Arsdale on necessity of, 21; Winnipeg General Strike, 271n29; during World War II, 28, 32, 35, 261n19. *See also* Lenkurt Electric strike; walkouts; wobbles/wildcat strikes
- Succamore, Jess: background, 88–89; Canadian union autonomy efforts of, 192, 232; CEWU and, 13–14, 188, 189, 191, 192, 232; as Lenkurt picket captain, 160–61; Lenkurt strike and suspension of, 176; on Lenkurt strike beginning, 144, 146, 295n40; Lenkurt strike conflict at Dunsmuir union hall and, 160–61, 299n100; on Lenkurt strike impacts, 233–34; Lenkurt working conditions and, 138–39, 140, 141–42; on Local 213 leadership, 89–90; on Les McDonald leadership, 187–88, 192; on Les McDonald Pender Auditorium speech, 192, 306n33, 307n55; on McSorley, 301n132; on O'Keefe leadership, 178–79; Phillips Cables 1962 strike and, 89; post-Lenkurt opportunities for, 196
- Sumpton, Charles E., 45, 72
- Supreme Court, BC, 12, 214; BCDT case, 85–86, 152; George Gee reinstatement case in, 63–64, 66; Lenkurt strike and, 150–51, 169–70, 181–82, 303n7; pickets banned by, 115, 118
- Supreme Court, US, 20, 125, 256n8
- Sydney Olympics (2000), 2, 219, 324n43
- syndicalist approach, 126, 236–37
- Taft-Hartley Act (1947), 20, 42, 125, 256n8, 258n19, 263n13
- Tate, Ernie, 293nn15–16
- telephone workers, 30, 44, 159, 254n13, 264n21, 288n85, 299n92
- Ten-Pact strike (1974), 201
- “Terrible Troika” (in IBEW leadership), 179, 304n21
- Terry, Alfred, 53–56, 57, 301n129
- Thompson, Syd, 168–69
- Toronto, Local 353 in, 202, 274n61, 310n102
- Towle, Bob, 115, 117, 129, 188, 273n55
- Tracy, Daniel, 23, 41, 48
- Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), 41–42, 44–45, 133, 263n1
- Trade Union Act (1959), 115, 143, 171, 256n8
- trade union movement and politics, 27, 323n40; business unionism and locals in, 16; CIR establishment and, 17–18; local unions comparisons in, 6; long-term effects of, 320n7; McCarthyism impact on, 33, 39, 42, 100, 184–85, 261n22; Les McDonald turn from, 1; 1960s developments in, 11–12; rank-and-file insurgencies in, 325n54; US economic decline relation to, 247–48, 326n57; violence and, 320n19; working-class leaders and, 323n41. *See also specific topics*
- Trail, BC, 262nn30–31; Cominco in, 36, 262n27, 318n1; Mine-Mill strike in, 35–36; Murphy union leadership in, 30, 35–36, 262n27
- triathlons, 1–2, 4, 219–21, 317n168, 325n50
- Trotskyists, 11; Brown background and, 139, 187; CEWU and, 189, 230; LSA and, 139, 293n15; Les McDonald and, 139–40, 189, 293n16, 307n50
- Tulameen coal miners' strike (1932–33), 40, 260n3

- Turner, Bill, 55
 “21 Club” (suspended members in 1955), 56, 117
- UAW. *See* United Auto Workers
- UE. *See* United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America
- UFAWU. *See* United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union
- UMWA. *See* United Mine Workers of America
- Under My Skin* (Lessing), ix
- unemployment, 106, 112, 200; anti-labour actions creating, 216; after Lenkurt strike, 208–9
- Unger, Dave, 188, 189, 196, 308n75, 309n84
- Unifor, 322n37
- union-industry collaborations, 20
- Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne, 253n4, 314n138
- United Auto Workers (UAW), 6, 322n37
- United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE), 138, 188–89, 259n31, 291n117; IBEW rivalry and conflicts with, 22–23, 259n24, 259n29; origins, 22
- United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union (UFAWU), 45, 211, 233, 260n6, 312n115, 320n15; *ex parte* injunctions opposition from, 228; longevity of, 245
- United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 261n19, 263n13
- United States (US): anti-Communism in Europe compared with, 99–100; economy/economics in, 247–48, 326nn57–58; legislation impacting Canada, 42; strikes legality in Canada compared with, 279n106; Supreme Court, 20, 125, 256n8. *See also* Canadian union autonomy; *specific locations and organizations*
- United States v. Brown*, 125
- United Steelworkers, 6, 189, 215, 264n16, 314n128
- unskilled labourers, IBEW early treatment of, 22–23
- Van Arsdale, Harry, Jr.: accomplishments of, 20, 259n20; arrest and charges against, 257n14; background, 19; factors for success of, 21–22; hybrid union model of, 19–20; Les McDonald views compared with, 238–40
- Vancouver, BC. *See specific locations and organizations*
- Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC), 148, 150, 153, 164
- Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC), 34–35, 263n11
- Vermont, 325n54
- Verzuh, Ron, 249–50
- Vietnam War, 11, 324n45
- wages, 285n46, 293n17; BC Electric negotiations on, 64–65, 270n16, 271n25; Communist Party approach to, 31; for Lenkurt women workers, 230, 293n6
- Wagner Act (1935), 22, 127
- walkouts, 269n5, 272n33; employer-baited, 243; Lenkurt, 12–13, 143–44, 152, 162, 227, 230, 243, 295n40; mid-contract, 30, 34, 127, 224–25; Succamore on significance of, 233; wobble term relation to, 282n7
- Waplington, John (“Jack”), 61; BC Electric strike of 1958 and, 66–67, 271n25, 273n43; George Gee ousting role of, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63, 72, 269n11
- War Measures’ Act, 27
- Warmington, Harry, 94, 281n2
- Washington (state), 40, 178; Local 46 in, 107, 282n7
- welfare plans, 41, 243
- Werlin, Dave, 261n22
- West Coast Longshoremen. *See* International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- Western Progress Meeting, IBEW, 85, 129, 130
- Whistler Mountain, 218–19, 317n167
- White, Bill, 43, 282n12
- White, Howard, 43, 282n12
- white bloc (IWA faction), 39, 133, 275n64
- Whiting, Jack, 278n104
- wildcat strikes. *See* wobbles/wildcat strikes
- Wiley, Reg, 112–13, 113
- Wilkinson, Ellen, 93, 281n1
- Wilson, Don, 267n45; Communist Party affiliation of, 44, 52–54, 264n20, 266n31;

- Wilson, Don (*continued*)
 George Gee on orders to fire, 63–64; on left faction, 58; Local 213 suspension, 54; on Ross, 48–49; TLC convention speech of, 44–45
- Wilson, John. *See* Cody, Jack
- Winch, Ernie, 99
- Winch, Harold, 99, 128
- Winnipeg General Strike (1919), 271n29
- WIUC. *See* Woodworkers' Industrial Union of Canada
- wobbles/wildcat strikes, 11–12; in Castlegar, 107–8, 223, 285n37; internal dynamic of, 127; Les McDonald first, 97–98; Les McDonald role in Celgar, 107–8; mid-contract, 127; in Nova Scotia, 287n69; O'Keefe views on, 224; policy of sparking, 127; Shellburn oil refinery, 121–22; statistics in BC comparison, 121; of steelworkers in 1966, 309n82; tactics employed in, 113, 115; term origins, 282n7; volunteers at, 115, 116. *See also* Burns and Dutton Construction wobble; Lenkurt Electric strike; walkouts
- women athletes, 219, 317n168
- women workers: in Lenkurt Electric strike, 7, 12, 13, 149, 170, 305n27; Lenkurt Electric treatment of, 7, 12, 13, 138, 140, 141–42, 149, 230–31, 292n6; pay discrimination for, 22; union participation issues for, 149
- Wood, John, 188, 189, 298n88, 300n117, 305n27, 308n75, 309n84
- Woodward, Bob, 51, 54
- woodworkers. *See* International Woodworkers' of America
- Woodworkers' Industrial Union of Canada (WIUC), 184, 186
- work day/work week length: Local 213 wins for shortened, 109–10, 111, 200, 223, 241; O'Keefe negotiations for, 110, 111; Van Arsdale breakthrough on, 20
- Workers' Unity League (WUL), 306n42
- working-class militancy, spread of, 121–23
- working-class officialdom, 34–35
- work stoppages, 35–36, 121, 127, 143, 191; BC Electric late 1950s, 68, 270n17; Celgar construction site, 107; IWA, 150; in Kelowna in 1967, 197–98; record-long 1958 construction, 68–70, 77; as sign of collective bargaining failures, 21. *See also* Lenkurt Electric strike; lockouts; strikes; wobbles/wildcat strikes
- World War II, 235; Communist Party of Canada control of BCFL during, 39; Communist Party of Canada impacted by, 31–33, 261n19; government support for business after, 261n13; “long boom” for workers after, 21, 238; Ross and, 40; strikes during, 28, 32, 35, 261n19; trade union recognition and, 26
- WUL. *See* Workers' Unity League
- Yorke, Bruce, 3
- Yorke, Paul, 202–3, 208, 213
- Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition, 217–18, 218