

Patrick Lenihan:

From **Irish Rebel**
to **Founder of**
Canadian Public
Sector Unionism



Edited by Gilbert Levine
with an Introduction by Lorne Brown

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Canadian Committee on Labour History
St. John's

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List of Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFPE	Alberta Federation of Public Employees
BSEIU	Building Service Employees International Union
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CCL	Canadian Congress of Labour
CEF	Civic Employees Federation
CEU	Civic Employees Union
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CLDL	Canadian Labour Defense League
CLP	Canadian Labour Party
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CTLG	Calgary Trades and Labor Council
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
FCE	Federation of Civic Employees
FUL	Farmers Unity League
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LPP	Labour Progressive Party
MWUC	Mine Workers Union of Canada
NAC	National Archives of Canada
NDP	New Democratic Party
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUPSE	National Union of Public Service Employees
OBU	One Big Union
RCWU	Relief Camp Workers Union
TLC	Trades and Labour Congress
UFA	United Farmers of Alberta
UMWA	United Mine Workers of America
WCE	Winnipeg Civic Employees
WIR	Workers International Relief
WUL	Workers Unity League

Foreword

Between 1954 and 1956 I was employed as a welfare worker for the Municipality of Metro Toronto. It was a fairly routine job without much challenge. Employment with Metro made me a member of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) Local 79, but I was not active. My past university ambition of employment as an educator or researcher in the labour movement seemed lost forever. Then, in September 1956, a notice came around the office. It was a reprint of a job posting as researcher in the new Ottawa office of NUPE. I applied immediately and within a few weeks was asked to come for an interview at the King Edward Hotel.

The interviewing committee was composed of Bob Rintoul, the recently appointed full-time National Director of NUPE; Bill Buss, an employee of the township of East York and NUPE National Vice-president; and Pat Lenihan, then a full-time business agent of Local 37, the Calgary municipal outside workers, and National President of NUPE. That was my first meeting with Pat Lenihan.

At that time, I may well have been the only university graduate in the entire NUPE membership of some 20,000. That fact, plus my undergraduate thesis, a study of a local trade union, convinced the hiring committee to offer me the job.

Then I was confronted with a tough decision. I desperately wanted the job. I had been active in left politics, however, and this was the height of the Cold War. There were numerous attacks on communists in the labour movement. I did not want to move my young family to Ottawa only to be kicked out of a job because of my politics. I decided to come clean and inform the hiring committee that I had earlier been a member of the Communist Party.

This revelation posed a real problem for the hiring committee. Rintoul, a right winger in politics, had many reservations. Buss was impressed with my forthrightness and was a believer in "British fair play." Lenihan, who had been a leader of the Communist Party in Alberta in the 1930s and 1940s, was completely in support of my application. His stance was crucial in my obtaining the job I so much desired.

I liked Pat and his wife Anne from the start. We had something of a common history. On the surface Pat and Anne seemed an odd couple — Pat with his Irish accent and Anne with her Russian-Jewish accent. But they

were very supportive of one another through years of tough times. I loved to hear his stories of the political and labour struggles which he told with such drama. We became good friends over the years.

In 1977, many years later, Lenihan and I had our most intensive encounters. I was the Canadian Union of Public Employees' (CUPE) Research Director. Lenihan had become a CUPE staff representative. Later he retired as Western Canada Regional Director of the Union and was living in Calgary. That year my CUPE staff union negotiated the first provision of a sabbatical leave for full-time union staff. Since I was the senior staff person, I was the first to qualify.

For some time, I had been concerned that the leadership of the union and its component parts were aging. They all had interesting stories to tell about their own locals as well as the story of the early years of the national organization. I was afraid their stories would be untold before they passed on. I wanted to capture their stories before it was too late. Having done some oral histories with family members, I decided to use this knowledge and these techniques to record the stories of the early union leaders.

I hoped that in the future these tapings could form the basis of a history of CUPE. But my main concern was to preserve these stories before they were lost. The Sound Archives Section of the National Archives of Canada (NAC) was very supportive. They provided me with blank tape, excellent recording equipment, support, and advice.

Altogether I recorded approximately 70 hours of material. My first stop had to be Calgary, where both Lenihan and Rintoul were living in retirement. I thought I would be able to tape their stories within several days. I ended up staying ten days at the Lenihan home, taping two to three hours per day.

Lenihan had led such an interesting life in Ireland, the United States, and Canada. He turned out to be such a wonderful story teller — in the Irish tradition — that I decided to tape his whole life story and not restrict myself to his public sector union experiences.

Naturally, an oral story in print needs considerable editing and revisions, but this book is basically Lenihan's story as he told it. Additional materials from Lenihan's own writings and speeches which amplify and clarify his basic story have been added. There is a world of difference between the spoken word and the transcribed written word, particularly when Lenihan is the story teller. He tells his life story with a feeling and emotion that the printed page simply cannot capture. Accordingly, persons interested in Lenihan's story are encouraged to listen to his tapes which are available at the NAC.

The Lenihan tapes will also be of value to those interested in pursuing oral history on their own. When the Sound Archives of the NAC are asked

for examples or instructions on how to do oral labour history, they invariably refer to the Lenihan tapes as one of their best examples. Most of the credit for that goes to the interviewee, not the interviewer.

Lenihan was not only a great story teller, he also had a great memory for the words of the songs of the Irish rebellion, of the Wobblies, of the hoboes, and of the On-to-Ottawa Trek, all of which he sang beautifully on tape. Regretfully the words of most of the songs have been omitted from this text.

Lenihan took his greatest pride as a leader of the unemployed movement in Calgary in the 1930s. There are many similarities between Canada in the 1990s, and Canada in the 1930s. Both are periods of poverty and high unemployment, layoffs and cutbacks, and government restraint. The big difference is the extent of the fight back in the 1930s — in the fight for wage increases and welfare increases and for union organizing. In that respect Lenihan's stories of the 1930s can still teach us a great deal.

In tales told by revolutionary men — even by great yarn spinners as Pat Lenihan surely was — there are always important stories left untold. Dark stories, sometimes ugly stories and stories of brutal sacrifice at the altar of personal demons and political dreams.

It was over twenty years ago that I conducted the interviews upon which this book is based. Our conversations centred on Pat Lenihan's political life, thoughts and contributions: his passion for Irish freedom, his adventures with the Wobblies, his ideological commitment to socialism, then communism, his pioneering work in the Canadian trade union movement. The story is a compelling one ... full of grand sagas, instruction and laughter. There is much to admire about Pat Lenihan.

But Pat Lenihan was not always a nice man ... or a good man. He drank too much. When he did, he lost self control and became a different person. He inflicted his rage on the people closest to him — his wife and children — and at the same time demanded their loyalty to his cause.

Were I to have the chance to talk to Pat again, I would ask him about all this. I don't. But I feel strongly that that part of the truth needs to be on the record.

It is a difficult lesson for me that I have to learn over and over again: that people's public politics and private lives are often at war with each other, and that a man's sincere pronouncements about the good of the world may have little to do with what he is like to live with.

Only when we accept that can we truly understand even the people we most admire — in all their successes and failures, disasters and triumphs, and ultimately their true humanity.

In preparing Lenihan's story for publication, I realized that his story had to be placed in context. For this I turned to Lorne Brown, professor of political science at the University of Regina. Brown's 1987 book entitled

When Freedom was Lost puts Lenihan's experience of the 1930s in its proper historical context. In addition, Lorne made a major contribution in editing this volume, in developing the explanatory footnotes, and in gathering some of the photographs used in the text.

I am most grateful to my union, CUPE, for its support in seeing the Lenihan project through to completion. CUPE gave me the time off to conduct the original interviews with Lenihan. It also provided clerical support in preparing the first drafts. My special thanks go to Judy Darcy, National President of CUPE, and to Geraldine McGuire, National Secretary Treasurer, for mustering together some of the financial resources necessary to publish this manuscript.

The support from the Lenihan family was very important. Pat's wife Anne lodged and boarded me many times. Her insights and wisdom were always helpful. The Lenihan children, Dennis, Bill, and particularly June, always showed an interest in their father's story. As the years dragged on from the time the original interviews were conducted, they were, with some justification, skeptical that the project would ever see the light of day. My deepest regret is that this story was not published during Pat and Anne's lifetime. Pat died in 1981 and Anne died in 1994.

Thanks also go to the Sound Archives of the NAC, and particularly Earnie Dick and Richard Lohead for their support in the original oral history portion of this project.

A number of resource people and institutions were important, but I especially thank the staff at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, and particularly Doug Cass and Andrea Garnier, Fred Langdon and Ed Popoff at the Labour Canada Library, and the staff of the National Archives.

In the recounting and transcribing of events which occurred some forty years earlier, it is inevitable that errors in dates, names, sequences of events, etc., will occur. I am grateful to Ben Swankey and Allen Seager, both now of Vancouver, for reviewing and correcting some matters dealing with the 1930s, and Neil Reimer for identifying many names on old photos.

To my daughter, Karen Levine, goes a special thanks for undertaking the transcribing of the original interview tapes — a gruesome 100 hour task. The support of my wife, Helen Levine, was crucial throughout the long process.

I am particularly grateful to Greg Kealey of the Canadian Committee on Labour History. His interest in publishing an excerpt of this manuscript in 1988 in *Labour/Le Travail* was crucial in keeping my interest alive. But his support in arranging for publication has been absolutely crucial.

Various secretaries at CUPE, and in particular Hilary Wojciechowska and Josey Finley were vital in ensuring that this autobiography would be finished. Two secretaries at the University of Regina, Leanne Sywanyk and

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Cheryl Heinemann, typed and retyped final versions of the manuscript. The Glenbow Archives in Calgary and the Public Archives of Alberta were kind enough to allow the publication of pictures depicting some of the historical events in Alberta labour history.

Gilbert Levine

Introduction

Patrick (Pat) Lenihan's life spanned most of the first three quarters of the twentieth century. He was born in Ireland in 1903 when the British Empire was still intact. In fact parts of that empire had only been acquired during the previous thirty years. The years after 1870 had been an era of tremendous imperialist expansion when much of Africa and Asia was carved up by competing European powers. The consequent fierce imperialist rivalry would lead to World War I, which ushered in an era of great turmoil and struggle that has dominated the remainder of the century. When the Great War ended in 1918 four great empires had collapsed: Czarist Russia, Imperial Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. Many new countries were born, several colonies had changed hands, and the success of the Russian Revolution demonstrated that "the spectre of communism" was indeed haunting Europe.

The 1920s, when Lenihan was entering adult life, witnessed the rise of communist and social democratic parties throughout much of the world. These were also the years when national liberation and independence movements were organizing and developing in China, India and other parts of Asia and Africa. These varied struggles would escalate during the Great Depression of the 1930s and complex combinations of class and national conflicts would be important factors leading to the outbreak of World War II.

World War II would tear the world asunder on an even greater scale than the earlier conflagration. The post-War period would see the development of the Cold War and a bi-polar world in which the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies engaged in titanic struggles fought out on the economic, political, and military stages of history. There would be great upheavals like the Chinese Revolution of 1949 and the bloody wars in Korea and Vietnam. The old European empires would be torn to pieces by national liberation struggles and scores of former colonies would enter the international scene as independent countries. Overlapping and often closely related to these events were the struggles, still continuing unabated today, against the new form of "imperialism without colonies" which became the main *modus operandi* of the United States and the old imperial centres of Europe after they lost their formal empires.

The twentieth century has been one of struggle and massive changes unequalled since the great upheavals typified by the democratic revolutions

of the late eighteenth century. Patrick Lenihan was an active participant at the local, provincial, and national level in Canada and a leading force in many of these struggles and changes throughout his adult life. In fact Lenihan became a participant in what would be a lifelong struggle at the age of ten when he became a part of the fight for independence in his native Ireland.

Lenihan was in the youth wing of the Irish Volunteers, the military section of Sinn Féin and the forerunner of the Irish Republican Army. He would later make his first contact with socialists and trade unionists while working as a teenager in the railway shops in Dublin. Lenihan, like many of his compatriots, connected the Irish struggle for national liberation and the international working-class struggle for socialism.

This connection between liberation and socialism developed and grew in Lenihan after he emigrated to Canada in 1923. He worked throughout Canada and the United States where he joined the Wobblies, then an active force among itinerant workers. After examining various options, Lenihan joined the Communist Party in Calgary in 1930 and began 40 years of organized political and trade union work. Thereafter he participated in almost every major political struggle in Alberta and Canada.

Lenihan organized the unemployed in Calgary and the miners in the Crow's Nest Pass and did political and organizing work among farmers and workers throughout Alberta. He was one of the main leaders in some of the major struggles in Alberta during the first half of the Great Depression. It was because of people like Lenihan that Calgary had the highest relief rates in Canada. He was elected a Calgary alderman in 1938, but his municipal political career was cut short when he was interned along with other leading Communists in 1940.

Upon his release from internment Lenihan worked as a labourer for the City of Calgary. He became President of the Civic Employees Union (CEU) and later a founder of NUPE, which would be succeeded in 1963 by CUPE. He organized civic unions throughout the prairies. Lenihan retired in 1968 as Western Canadian Director of CUPE. In the intervening years he had been a vice-president of the Alberta Federation of Labour and a founder and vice-president of the Alberta New Democratic Party.

Lenihan's autobiography is a superbly told account of a stimulating, intellectually active, and extremely busy life. It is also a perceptive look, by an active participant, at the political, social, and cultural history of the international working-class movement which has played such a crucial role in influencing the events of the twentieth century.

While Lenihan's assessments of historical events on the national and international scene will be of interest to the reader, his concentration on what became his "home turf" in Alberta will probably be the most illumi-

nating. He deals in great detail with aspects of Alberta history which are virtually unknown to most Canadians and probably to a majority of Albertans. Until recent years most of the labour and socialist history of Alberta had been largely ignored by professional historians and other social scientists.¹ After 37 years (1935-1972) of Social Credit governments followed by 25 years of Conservative governments most people tend to have a stereotype of Alberta as perhaps the most conservative province in Canada. That stereotype is a gross oversimplification even today and especially if one attempts to apply it to the Alberta labour movement.² It is totally inaccurate, however, if applied to Alberta society between the two world wars and until at least the mid-1940s.

In order fully to appreciate Lenihan's political autobiography, it is necessary to consider the many events he describes in the political and economic contexts of Canada and Alberta in the period from the 1920s through to the mid-1940s, and then through the Cold War and the late 1960s and early 1970s, as two distinct political eras. The first period was one of great turmoil throughout Canada and most particularly in Alberta. Some historians have appropriately referred to the years between the wars as the "decades of discord."³

Alberta in the 1920s was at the centre of the agrarian political revolt which saw the rise and fall of the National Progressive Party and the election of the United Farmers' of Alberta (UFA) who would govern the province from 1921 to 1935.⁴ With their novel "group government" ideas, the UFA was at first friendly to organized labour and a few Labour MLA's and MP's were elected throughout the 1920s with UFA endorsement. The most notable were William Irvine who, along with J.S. Woodsworth from Win-

¹ Fortunately this is being rapidly rectified by a new generation of historians and social scientists. *Labour/Le Travail*, 16 (Fall 1985) is devoted to Labour in Alberta. It includes excellent articles by Allen Seager, Alvin Finkel, Larry Hannant, and David Monod. It also includes brief sections of this autobiography edited by Gil Levine. Books which deal mainly or partly with Alberta labour history include Warren Caragata, *Alberta Labour: A Heritage Untold* (Toronto 1979) and Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto 1989).

² A few years ago the Gainer's Strike and the nurses provided examples of labour militancy which inspired trade unionists in other provinces. More recently, the hospital laundry workers forced Ralph Klein into at least a temporary retreat in his war against the poor.

³ John Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1930: Decades of Discord* (Toronto 1985) is one of the most useful histories of Canada during the inter-War period.

⁴ A recent and valuable examination of the importance of the agrarian movement to Prairie politics is David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945* (Toronto 1990).

nipeg, were part of the “Ginger Group” in the House of Commons which laid the Parliamentary foundations of the CCF.⁵ But Irvine was more attached to labour than to the organized farmers and he co-operated mainly with the left wing of the agrarian movement. The UFA, like many other expressions of Prairie populism, was ideologically diverse, ranging from left to right and including followers of group government, monetary reform, and various other nostrums not easily categorized in ideological terms. By the 1930s the UFA government of Alberta had settled into a relatively conservative stance and tended to govern in much the same way as the two traditional parties in the other provinces.

The working class was the other sector of Canadian society which was more or less in open revolt from the end of World War I to about the mid-1920s in some localities. In many respects trade unionists in Alberta, like their counterparts in neighbouring British Columbia, were at the forefront of this revolt. The more moderate expression of the revolt was evidenced through reformist labour parties. Several such parties were grouped under the umbrella of the federated Canadian Labour Party (CLP), which had affiliates ranging from local trade unions led by people of a liberal or social democratic complexion all the way over to adherents of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).⁶ Many Labour Party adherents later comprised the labour wing of the CCF after its founding in 1932.

The more radical among Alberta working people expressed themselves immediately after World War I by rallying around the banner of the One Big Union (OBU), which was founded in 1919. The OBU was a militant industrial union influenced to some extent by revolutionary syndicalism but which also contained in its leadership more orthodox socialists.⁷ It appealed especially to coal miners who made up an important proportion of Alberta union members and helped to account for Alberta’s reputation as a centre of labour radicalism. The OBU grew rapidly but then declined almost as quickly due to a combination of severe government repression, mistakes in strategy, and internal disunity. It left a radical legacy, however, which was built upon later by both unions and working-class political formations.

⁵See Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto 1979) for an examination of the significance of Irvine and the communications between the agrarian and labour movements during the 1920s.

⁶There is a very considerable body of literature on the post-World War I labour revolt. The articles by Allen Seager and Alvin Finkel in the *Labour/Le Travail* special issue on Labour in Alberta (Fall 1985) are especially useful in discussing the specifics of this revolt in Alberta. Also see Carragata, *Alberta Labour*.

⁷See A. Ross McCormack, *Rebels, Reformers and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto 1977) for some of the background to the OBU.

The CPC was the other branch of working-class radicalism which grew in Alberta during the 1920s.⁸ The CPC put down moderate roots in the mining districts of the Crow's Nest Pass, Drumheller, and Canmore. The Communist-led Mine Workers Union of Canada (MWUC) led bitter strikes for better wages and working conditions. The Communists also had members and supporters in Calgary, Edmonton, and numerous other centres scattered throughout Alberta including some farming districts where there was a sizeable population of East European origin. Well before 1930 Calgary had established its reputation as the most important major centre of Prairie radicalism outside of Winnipeg.

Pat Lenihan arrived in Calgary just as the Depression was about to devastate the city and the province. He joined the Communist Party in 1930 just as it was embarking upon the most active period of its history. The next few years would see tremendous struggles involving the unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary where Lenihan was a moving force in leading strikes and organizing the Calgary Central Council of Unemployed Unions, one of the most effective organizations of its kind in the country.

These were also the years of the Great Hunger March on Edmonton in 1932 which mobilized tens of thousands, and perhaps the greatest strike in Alberta history, which pitted the miners against the coal companies in the Crow's Nest Pass for seven months during 1932-33. There were marches, demonstrations, strikes, and sometimes pitched battles in at least a dozen different districts in the province. Although Lenihan's main experience would be in Calgary and the Crow's Nest Pass, he was also involved from time to time in the struggles of farmers, workers, and the unemployed throughout Alberta.

Lenihan's autobiography contains invaluable insights into the politics and the social history of the milieu where he played such an active role in the cauldron which was Alberta during the 1930s. One striking characteristic of the working-class movement of which he was a part was its multi-cultural character and international consciousness. This was the case in the main cities like Calgary and Edmonton but even more so in mining districts like the Crow's Nest Pass and the Drumheller Valley. Lenihan was very much a part of this international consciousness in both his politics and his personal life. He met his future wife, Anne, a Russian Jewish immigrant, through their mutual involvement in the movement. This union of two

⁸There are several books on the history of the Communist Party. Two useful and very different interpretations are Ivan Avakmovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1975), and *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976* (Toronto 1982) which is the party's interpretation of its own history.

people from Irish Catholic and Russian Jewish background was rare outside the socialist movement in 1930s Canada.

Alberta workers were also characterized by their great diversity of political opinion and their constant search for solutions to the Depression. Alternatives ranged from communism through classical social democracy to Social Credit and the two traditional parties. Lenihan kept in touch with workers who espoused all these currents of thought. Some of his most interesting observations concern the appeal of Social Credit to thousands of working people who were desperately searching for a way out of unemployment and poverty. Lenihan confirms from his personal experience what professional historians have only recently begun to discover — that Alberta Social Credit initially had widespread working-class support from people who regarded it as anti-capitalist.⁹ It was later transformed into a right wing voice of the most reactionary elements of the regional business class. It was neither the first nor the last time that workers would be conned by a populist movement which they could not control.

The years 1930 to 1935 saw the most severe state and political repression over an extended period of time in the peacetime history of Canada. Patrick Lenihan fought that repression and was also one of its victims, as were scores of his friends and political comrades. He spent nearly a year in prison in 1932 on a trumped up charge of unlawful assembly. On frequent occasions over the next few years Lenihan evaded the police and occasionally spent the odd night in a police cell though he was neither engaged in nor advocating illegal or violent activities. And he spent much of his time organizing support for those arrested for their participation in such activities as Calgary unemployed protests, Crow's Nest Pass mining struggles, and the great "Hunger March" on Edmonton. When he was a Calgary alderman, Lenihan was imprisoned again in 1940 and spend nearly two years in internment camps for his opposition to World War II. It is typical of Lenihan that he was not embittered by these experiences. On the contrary, they were regarded as the occupational hazards of being a working-class radical and prison and internment camps to Lenihan were like a new type of university where one could gain new insights into the human condition. He made the best of a bad situation and Lenihan relates these events with the same humour and humanism displayed throughout this volume. Here, as elsewhere, Lenihan's autobiography makes an important contribution to our understanding of the social and political history of Alberta and Canada.

⁹The most important work of this nature is Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto 1989). A valuable article on the same topic is Larry Hannant, "The Calgary Working Class and the Social Credit Movement in Alberta, 1932-35," *Labour/Le Travail*, 16 (Fall 1985), 97-116.

It was after his release from internment that Lenihan, as mentioned above, began organizing civic employees while working as a labourer for the City of Calgary. This was the beginning of a new phase in Lenihan's career as a working-class activist. He pursued what had become his life's work under very different circumstances. Lenihan left the Communist Party after 1945 for a variety of reasons — one being that it had become isolated from people's struggles, partly from the objective circumstances of the day and partly from its own sectarianism. By the 1950s the Alberta political culture had changed drastically from the pre-war period. Oil wealth, the Cold War, and the decline of coal mining all combined to exercise a conservative influence over the province and the labour movement. Ernest Manning's Social Credit government dominated the political scene and turned Alberta into one of the coldest regions of the Canadian Cold War.¹⁰

Throughout the Cold War period, both the communist and social democratic left were on the decline in Canada and the trade union movement stagnated as a percentage of the work force and as an influence in the country.¹¹ Lenihan not only continued as a dedicated socialist but also as one of the few leading trade unionists actually making headway in an inhospitable climate. He played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for the great flowering of public sector unionism which would blossom after the mid-1960s. This would be the greatest expansion of the union movement since the great drive to organize industrial unions which began in the late 1930s and culminated in the aftermath of World War II.

Lenihan's role in this great upsurge was that of a pioneer who began when the going was roughest and saw the struggle through two decades to the period of the big breakthroughs. He became the leading force, the President and later the business agent of the CEU in Calgary. Working from his Calgary base Lenihan played his role, under very difficult circumstances, in establishing first the Alberta Federation of Public Employees (AFPE) and later NUPE. Lenihan was instrumental in organizing civic employees under the auspices of NUPE throughout the Prairie provinces. He continued in this role after the founding of CUPE in 1963. CUPE became the fastest growing

¹⁰Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* describes how anti-communism and anti-socialism became the stock in trade of Manning's Social Credit government. For the effects of the Cold War in Canada generally the following are among the useful writings: Reg Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto 1987); Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, The Spy Trials, and the Cold War* (Toronto 1983); June Callwood, *Emma* (Don Mills 1984); Reg Whitaker, "Left Wing Dissent and the State: Canada in the Cold War Era," in C.E.S. Franks, ed., *Dissent and the State* (Toronto 1989).

¹¹The works in the Cold War cited above are useful here as are almost any of the main histories of the Communist Party, the CCF, and the labour movement.

union in the country and among the most diverse in the variety of occupations represented. Lenihan oversaw and provided much of the leadership for this process throughout western Canada.

What is particularly instructive about Lenihan's discussion of the early years of NUPE is that it consisted mainly of civic employees, especially those in "blue collar" occupations. These people were quicker to develop a trade union consciousness and get organized into meaningful unions than their mainly "white collar" counterparts at the provincial and federal levels. The latter were generally slower to organize and, even when they did, often took many years to develop beyond the "association" stage into general unions.

While Lenihan was involved in building one of the great public sector unions, he never lost sight of the fact that trade unionism is about more than wages and working conditions and other "bread and butter" issues of immediate concern to working people. A perusal of Calgary civic union newsletters and later of the publications of NUPE and CUPE indicates that Lenihan and those who worked with him put considerable emphasis on the union being involved with social and political issues at the local, national, and international level. They were building the type of socially conscious unionism which would later be important in influencing the direction of CUPE and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Trade union activists and leaders who "learned the ropes" from these people would be involved in all the important struggles which spanned the period from the depths of the 1950s through the turmoil of the 1970s and the battles against the neo-conservative agenda in the 1980s.

What is the historical significance of people like Pat Lenihan? And what legacy do they leave to today's generation of working people? In many respects the two questions can be answered together. When Lenihan began as a virtually full-time political activist in 1930 less than 5 per cent of the Canadian work force was organized. Except for pockets here and there, especially among miners, trade unions hardly extended beyond the skilled crafts and even they were by no means fully organized. The manufacturing and resource industries, the public sector, and particularly women workers had barely been touched by trade union organization and had no real bargaining power. When Lenihan retired in 1968 about one-third of the Canadian work force was in unions and industrial and public sector unionism had long since eclipsed the old craft unions as the driving force of the labour movement. Large numbers of women had been brought into the labour movement and some had begun to assume leadership positions. The struggles which would Canadianize the labour movement over the next two decades were just beginning. Lenihan was among the architects of this new House of Labour and his own CUPE often led the way.

Within Canada, the contrasts between today's economic, social, and political environment and that of the 1930s extends beyond the obvious differences in the trade union movement. In 1930 the "welfare state" as we have come to know it did not exist. The unemployed organized by Lenihan and others in Calgary and elsewhere were among the advance guard of a forty-year battle led by organized labour. This struggle eventually compelled governments to legislate unemployment insurance, medicare, old age security, workers' compensation, collective bargaining rights, family allowances, pay equity, and a host of other rights that working people are now fighting to defend.

In absolute terms, there are more people unemployed in Canada today than there were in Canada during the deepest part of the Depression. But today, in spite of the potential support of almost four million unionized Canadians, this vast army of unemployed are unorganized, voiceless, and subsequently, powerless. This lack of power has made it possible for governments to slash unemployment and welfare benefits without much opposition. If Lenihan were here today, he could teach today's unemployed how to use the methods of the 1930s to fight and win new rights and benefits. He would not sit idly by while governments of all stripes cut workers' long-established achievements.

It was an active and productive forty years, and the labour movement Lenihan helped to build has continued and expanded that struggle in the three decades since he retired. It would come as no surprise to Lenihan that organized labour in recent years had led the struggle against Free Trade and Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and the defence of social, welfare, health, and education programs. Were Pat Lenihan alive today he would undoubtedly be throwing himself into these people's struggles and probably with his accustomed optimism about the long term results. And his advice to his fellow workers would probably be the same as he offered when he ended this autobiography. "So the struggle continues. It might take time. But it comes."

Lorne Brown

Chapter 1

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

I was born in Kanturk, in County Cork, Ireland, on 11 April 1903. My father was the son of an evicted peasant. My mother was the daughter of an evicted farmer. And my Dad became a shoemaker and harness maker.

The evictions were rampant throughout Ireland in those days for non-payment of taxes. The evictions resulted from the expanding size of the farms. The people who took over say, thirty or forty acres, which was a good farm in those days, generally added on to their own or got somebody else to run it for them. By the time I was born, my parents were already off the farm, but we got one back as a result of the Irish Republican Army's struggle.

I had two brothers and five sisters. I was the eldest son. I was known in Ireland as my Dad's first son. Nobody ever knew my name was Patrick. My name was Sonny. I wasn't christened Sonny, but my Dad, I guess, adopted it. Growing up as kids, we never wore shoes, except in the winter months even though my dad made shoes.

Kanturk had a population of about 2,000. The living standards were extremely poor. We'd take a lump of bread wrapped in a newspaper as our lunch to school. Roast beef was a big dinner for the great festival of the year, Christmas Day. In spite of the fact that the country was full of turkeys and geese and chickens and everything else, we couldn't afford to buy roast beef. The diet was mostly a lot of what they call fat pork and cabbage and turnip. Fat pork was the cheapest. We had it practically four days a week. And cabbage. And turnips. And a lot of nettles. Nettles are a plant that if you touch them will sting you but are good for your health. And lots and lots of potatoes.

My family was religious. My folks went to mass and confession every Sunday. When we went to school, we were under the domination of the Catholic priest and we had religious instruction classes on Saturday morning and Sundays. I can still say my prayers in Latin.

I had four older sisters. As soon as they were able to work, that would be sixteen or around there, they'd go out to the city Cork to work as housemaids or cooks. That was a necessity because Dad wasn't able to make enough money to feed everybody or keep them in school all the time.

My Dad expected me to be a scholar but life's contradictions foiled that idea of his. I got to grade seven in the old country — a standard a little higher than grade seven over here. I was fifteen when I left school. You had to be good middle class, doctors' children, etc., to go to secondary school.

My Dad was very interested in politics and he never missed the daily paper. Not too many working men at that time read even the daily paper. My Dad was a regular reader of it and involved in the local politics in that he always supported certain candidates and went to their election meetings.

My Dad had a little place of his own off the side of the house, like his workshop. All the farmers and other people, including some rich people, came to him to make shoes. He was known as the best shoemaker for miles and miles around. He could make a shoe for any kind of foot. He made the finest shoes that were made. And long lasting. When you got a pair of them, you knew that you had a pair of shoes that would take you through all weather. My Dad had the smallest foot any man his size ever had. And like most shoemakers, he wore the most dilapidated looking shoes.

In the early years of my going to school there were two parties in Ireland. One, called the National Party for Home Rule, was led by John Redmond. The opposition — they were all capitalist parties — was led by William O'Brien. My Dad supported O'Brien. All of Ireland at that time was under complete British rule. The Irish Members of Parliament, about 70 of them, had to meet in England with the regular British Parliament.

The British occupation of Ireland meant poverty and lack of social services. Social services were practically nil. If people got sick and were considered incurable or were old, they were put in the poor house where they all wore the same kind of uniforms. That was like a prison with a big wall around it.

There was a spirit of Irish nationalism among all sections of the people. A lot of it was handed down from father to son and father to daughter. It was the result of knowing of the atrocities that were performed by the British in their occupation. I'd hear my Dad and other men discussing the hanging of Robert Emmett and Wolf Tone and all those great leaders of the Irish struggle for independence. They were both Protestants but they were the greatest leaders Ireland almost ever produced. And they had what they call the Manchester martyrs, where three or four more Irishmen were hanged. This was known and it was kept in song and was passed down for hundreds of years. It was based on history. "The Croppy Boy" was one of them and there were many others.

My father would make me sing that all the time when he got a couple of pints of Guinness into him. He might be out taking measurements for shoes in the small localities, three miles from town. And he'd always take me with him, and when he'd got a couple of pints into him, there would be ten or

twelve or fourteen guys standing around and I'd have to sing for them "The Croppy Boy." That song or ballad sums up the kind of struggle that went on and the tactics adopted. There are thousands of songs and poetry with revolutionary content.

The main desire was to put the British out and have our own Irish Parliament. That is what the Irish people wanted.

Another song was "The Boys of Kilmichael," which was in the countryside about 35 miles from where I was born. There were seventeen English officers killed in that. They were stopped by trees in the road. When firing opened up they put up the white flag. Two of the leaders of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) unit went out. As soon as they got out on the road, the Tans shot them down. Well then the IRA really opened up on them and they killed every one of them except one. He was badly wounded and they let him live. We had no conception of the working-class movement. We became Irish nationalists. We were starving when we shouldn't have starved. We were hungry when we shouldn't have been hungry. The land was producing tremendous crops of everything, but it was all shipped to England.

We were exploited. You had an Irish-English bourgeoisie who had large, tremendous estates. There was a salmon river three miles from me, the Blackwater. And we couldn't fish the salmon in it, because it all belonged to the landlords. Most of the landlords were Englishmen. They'd bring their friends and guests over in the fishing season and fish all they wanted and enjoy it. But we were poaching; if we were caught, we were sent to jail. In many of the places we couldn't even chase rabbits with our dogs. This is how bad it was. From my own experience, I saw a system that produced lords, barons, dukes, and masters all living in luxury and riches. On the other hand, I could not understand why there were poor farmers, workers, and peasants living in poverty, ignorance, and ill health.

There are 32 counties in Ireland. Twenty-six of them belong to the Republic now. Six of them are supposed to be North Ireland — the Ulsterites. But it's only a corner of North Ireland. The British always wanted that corner of Ireland for its productive capabilities and for war. There were ships, big ships, too, for convoys coming around the north into England. It was a key spot.

The British used the contradictions in religion as a base for organizing and smashing the militant trade union movement in Belfast. To have a base among the people, they organized a religious war. The big factory owners, the churches, and all the exploiters saw to it that the children growing up were educated in that style. The Catholic children of Belfast were educated to hate the Protestants, and the Protestant children were educated to hate the Catholics and the Pope. So they fought each other to the enjoyment of

the big industrialists and the Church leaders. The Orange Order controlled the big industries — like shipbuilding and linen mills, and were sure of their big profits — while the workers killed each other. The Orangemen celebrated the 12th of July and King Billy's so-called victory over the Catholics.

When I was about ten or eleven, a revival in the spirit of the Irish people for freedom was already on all over the country. And Redmond and those politicians I mentioned were putting up a struggle in one way or the other for Home Rule for Ireland in the British Parliament. I'd say 80 per cent of the people resented the British occupation of Ireland. But they had different thoughts about what steps should be taken to solve it. Most of them at that time, including my father, backed the two old so-called Irish freedom parties. But they were opportunists of the worst kind. But, throughout Ireland there was a new spirit spreading of doing something positive on behalf of Ireland, no matter where it led. And, naturally, it hit our town. I was drawn right into it from the start. That would be 1912, when I was ten.

There was a Lord of the British House of Commons, Lord Carson, a big industrialist and landowner in Ireland. To me, he was the first great Hitler who appeared on the scene. He had all the characteristics of the modern Hitler. He was English, but living in Ireland, with huge estates and industry in Belfast. Lord Carson, with the aid of the British and all the industrialists in that corner of Ireland, organized the National Volunteers. And they finally had an army of 50,000 armed people. They had the Orange Lodge going strong then. Lord Carson, the Orange Order, and the English Government organized to "defend their homes" in Northern Ireland. They laid claim to all of the Province of Ulster which they never got. They did get six counties, which they now call Northern Ireland. And it was based on "For God and the Protestant Church." Of course, all wars are fought in the name of God.

The British supplied the guns to Carson's troops and volunteers. They were workers in the shipyards and elsewhere. They were equipped and had training camps. The guns were coming in openly to Belfast and everywhere else for them. When the people of the southern part of Ireland knew that this was going on, they figured well, by God, something must be done. And they started to think about organizing an army and getting guns. There was in Ireland an organization called Brotherhood — a very, very secretive and very select group of thinkers. The mass of the people were never recruited into it. But these people kept alive the ideas of Wolf Tone and Robert Emmett and planned to end English rule. They finally found men in the University in Dublin, Patrick Pearse, his brother, and many others throughout Ireland who were ready to lead the struggle for a Republic.

Pearse was teaching in the University of Dublin. He and others — such as Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins — got together and played a

tremendous role. They decided that it was time to organize some force that would counteract this force up in the North and at the same time to fight against the British. They organized the Irish Volunteers down through what we call the southern part of Ireland.

They came into our town in 1914, just about when the First War was starting. And they organized the Irish Boy Scouts, which were linked with the Irish Volunteers, which later became the IRA. We were not Republican at that point but about 25 of us were recruited into the Scouts. I was only about twelve or thirteen. We were the happiest kids in the world. We knew that it was going to be a struggle to put the British out. We had a teacher in our school, Bowman, who came from the west coast of Ireland. I should say in as diplomatic a way as possible that he taught us Irish history. He gave us history that was never in the books. He taught us some songs that were really not supposed to be given. I don't know to this day what he was but I'm sure he was a sympathizer.

And we all really knew where we were going. We'd be collecting money and we'd be drilling with the Irish Volunteers and out on road marches with them. And the police used to follow us wherever we went and watched us drill. We'd meet on the Market Square and form up and Dennis Loynes was our company captain. Jack Hammerson and Mick Courtney were also leaders. And the police, the Royal Irish Constabulary, would be waiting for us. Three or four policemen would be on the corner watching everything. And then we'd take off marching and take them through the fields. And here were kids trying to keep up. But the police had to do it too.

And then there would be meetings, and prominent speakers coming in to speak. Eamon De Valera paid us a visit to our home town. I guess about ten thousand turned out that day. Every car and everything had the Republican colours, the green, white and gold flag on it. The Boy Scouts were the honour guard for him in the parade through town and out to the platform where he spoke. And, oh man, we were in the height of our glory when we were close to De Valera.

De Valera gave a proper denunciation of British rule through the centuries. It was an educational form of speech, but he was also an orator. And he propounded a plan, telling the people what to do. He said that the time had come for no more of the English Parliament and no more of English rule. He was a nationalist revolutionary. And the masses loved it. Loved it. During these years, the political arm of the Volunteers was set up and was called Sinn Fein, which means "Ourselves." Sinn Fein was the political arm led by De Valera and Arthur Griffith and Cosgrave. The Sinn Fein movement started to grow like wildfire, like a blizzard through the countryside. Nothing stopped it. And, of course, we'd be holding more meetings and more meetings and the police were watching us.

Then the war broke out in 1914, and we still carried on. At this period quite a lot of soldiers, Irishmen, went and joined the British army. Well that was history. They always did that to get away from hunger. Even my Dad went, finally. To this day I don't know why he went. He became a sergeant-major in the Royal Garrison Artillery and he was stationed in Dover, defending Dover from the air raids during the war. When he'd come home on leave, he was always telling me that what we were thinking was all crazy. I imagine he knew that we were heading for trouble.

Then it was getting to be such a mass movement that the police started arresting certain people here and there for certain speeches. And the more they did this, the more they aroused greater masses of the people. The propaganda from our side, from the Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers, was to try to boycott the English courts, not to recognize British law. Later on, this had quite an effect. They couldn't rule. And the guns were starting to come in from America, from Germany, from England. The miners of Scotland and England used to send over tons of dynamite. And all the Independent Labour Party people, like Bob Somerville and his brother Bill, were helping us. They were involved in the shipping of dynamite from Scotland. And then the first thing we saw, one night we turned out in parade and here's about twelve of our guys up in front and they've all got rifles and bayonets.

They were arrested and sentenced to six months and a year in jail. The struggle continued and we were building up an apparatus in the Scouts. We were learning the Morse Code — A dot dash B dot two dashes C ... We didn't understand why but we had these little machines for tapping. We were also learning how to make land mines with sulphur, charcoal, and what we called potash. And then we'd steal pipes and make land mines. A steel plate here and a steel plate there and the bolt going through it to tighten it up. They were teaching us everything.

We knew that we were involved in the fight but we didn't know that there were plans being made for a rising or anything. And when in 1916 came the rising in Dublin, I was only thirteen. The rising took place on Easter Monday at twelve o'clock. We got orders the night before Easter Sunday to meet in such and such a place and we were to bring our lunch. We were going for a march. We thought it was just another exercise. We marched nine miles from my hometown and when we arrived, there was about nine hundred men and about twenty of us scouts. They had come from other places, other towns. It was the first time I saw the battalion, because we belonged to just a company of it. But this was the full battalion out. And here I met Dennis Galvin for the first time. He was the battalion commander. He got killed later on. And here we're going through all kinds of military manoeuvres.

Do you know how a soldier lies flat in the grass if he's going to shoot? I remember this Dennis Lyons, the captain. He's going around and inspecting to see if we're all lying right. My toes were on the ground and my heels were up. And he hollered "Get your heels down!" And we didn't know what it was, or what it was for. Finally about six o'clock in the evening we were told to form up and head for home. We didn't know what it was about. But the following week we were told what it was about. The Rebellion broke out in Dublin on Easter Monday morning and we were there to get guns from Casement, from Germany. But poor old Casement was captured by the British Navy.

Casement was an Irish Patriot, who believed in the struggle for an Irish Republic. He was a Lord, Sir Roger Casement. The Germans had captured lots of Irish soldiers in France and he got to Germany. Casement worked amongst them in the prison camps in Germany, of course, with the okay and co-operation of the Kaiser. The Germans were shipping guns, such as they could, into the south of Ireland.

Then they had a plan. Casement and some Irish soldiers who were supposed to come with him, would land with guns on the coast of County Kerry. That's right next to my part of the country. However, the British were watching, or they were tipped off or something, and they captured the boat and, of course, captured Casement. The British took the boat to a port in Ireland, where the German crew sunk it. They opened up the taps and they scuttled it.

Unfortunately, it was a good Irish woman who gave him away. But she didn't know it. Casement had come in off the boat to meet the contacts. He had got into County Kerry and into a fisherman's house. Then, I guess, they had some gun firing. When the police came down searching, this woman told the police "Oh, there was a stranger went over there." That's how they got him. She didn't know what she was doing.

In 1916 the Rebellion lasted about one week and then was crushed. But it was the struggle that awakened Ireland for a still greater struggle which brought about the Republic. Dublin, or the most of it, was blown to pieces. The terrorism, the hangings, the shootings, and everything else set in a kind of demoralization amongst the revolutionary forces.

When the war was over in 1918, I started learning my trade even though I had started learning from the time I was able to walk. I was a shoemaker too. I started working with Dad. But Dad wasn't satisfied, somehow, and he wanted me out of there. Finally, he went to this Mr. Leader, this great big English landowner. My Dad used to make shoes for him. He went to him and asked if it was possible for me to get a job on the railroad. Even to get a job wiping engines on the railroad, you had to have credentials from the top class. And he said, "Oh fine, I'll give him credentials. I'll give him a

letter." And a Judge Burke was another big shot. My Dad used to make shoes for him too and my Dad got a letter of recommendation from him, as well. So, lo and behold, I'm honoured. What an honour! To get a greasy job wiping engines! So, at the age of sixteen, I went to work in Dublin for the Great Southern Railway as a cleaner.

We used to work in threes. There was one on each side of the engine and tender. The third one was forward in the motion, in what we call the motion, inside — in the centre of it, under the boiler where all the connecting rods and everything else are. One night, after I had been on the job five or six months, I hear this fellow, my partner, singing up on top. And the song — I caught the words of it — the workers' blood and stuff like this, and it hit me. And I listened and I liked it. And the other fellow on the other side started singing the chorus with him. And, naturally, when we had lunch, I was asking them: "Well, what are you singing up there?"

"Don't you know it?"

"No."

"Well, that's 'The Red Flag.'"

Well, that was the first time I heard The Red Flag.

The workers' flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our glorious dead,
And ere their limbs grew still and cold,
Their hearts' blood dyed its every fold,
Then raise the scarlet banner high,
Beneath its folds we live or die,
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

And that's where I learned "The Red Flag."¹

Afterwards, when they found out that I was kind of interested, that I liked the song and everything, they'd start talking to me about the workers and the trade unions and that it should be a workers' country, that the Irish land should belong to the people. They had an understanding of the class struggle. They were socialists. They had both fought with Connolly in the rising of 1916. I worked with them, but with seniority, of course, they got promoted and we began to break up. But I learned plenty from them.

I joined the National Union of Railwaymen the first month I was there and got my first union card. I went to meetings. I was learning, but I didn't know the role of the working-class movement. That's where I got my first inkling of shop stewards. When grievances did arise, they were fought out

¹The Red Flag became the theme song of British labour. The words were written by James Connolly who was executed by the British following the 1916 uprising.

and mostly won. After about two years on the railway, I got my first attack of rheumatoid arthritis. And, boy, it crippled me. The doctors in Dublin didn't know what it was or how to treat it. The result was that I had to quit the railroad. I returned home to Kanturk. I wasn't able to work for another six months, but somehow I recovered my health. As long as I was able to limp around and go to the places where I knew I'd meet my friends, I was able to resume my contacts with the IRA people.

At that time the political expression of the struggle in Ireland was Sinn Fein. The Irish Volunteers were the military end of the Sinn Fein. In 1918, as soon as the Irish Parliament was elected, they changed the name to the Irish Republic Army. They became the IRA and we became the IRA Scouts.

After that dead period following the revolution, the revival again was taking place. That would be 1918. Then, by the time I got my health back, the struggle had developed to a high pitch. And the police were trying to round up all the leaders.

The forces of British imperialism were becoming more terroristic in raiding houses and arresting people. As a result, many of the leaders of my local company — Dennis Lyons, Jack Hammerston, Mick Courtney, all them — they had to go to the hills about nine miles from our place. And there they set up what we called 'flying columns.' Each column may have ten or twenty men. However, if there was going to be a fight, the other columns from other parts would march in and congregate. As members of the IRA Boy Scouts, we were the contacts between the flying columns out in the hills. We were carrying all the dispatches and messages out to the people in the hills. Ireland was full of troops, English troops.

The Great War ended in November 1918. Immediately after the war, the British made a mass importation of troops. The British moved 50,000 troops into Ireland at this time. They were increasing their forces all the time. They put garrisons in every little small village. In a town of 2,000, Kanturk, my town, we had 1,000 soldiers of one regiment, the 28th Gloucestershire Regiment. From Kanturk, they'd have a couple of trucks carrying provisions to their outposts. And we had a company of another battalion of machine-gunners in that small town that I came from.

We had curfew. You had to be in the house at six o'clock in the evening. And, on your front door you had to have a list of the members of your family, male and female, and their ages. They would knock at the door at night and would come in and ask for Pat or Mike. If Pat or Mike weren't there, well, the next day they would come and catch them because they were labelled right there. And believe me, the knocks were pretty often.

There was a British reign of terror with hanging and shooting. They burned down thousands of workers' homes. If a British soldier got killed in an ambush, they'd burn down half the town that night. They'd drive into a

village or town — Everybody out! and they would beat the men and women with the butt ends of rifles. The most vicious form of terror.

I remember the first ambush we had. An English airplane came down. It ran out of gas and was forced to land about four miles from town. The British soon had a soldiers' guard around it. But the word got out so quick. In a matter of hours, there were a hundred IRA men ready to move in on it. They surrounded the plane and captured the machine gun and other weapons. And we, the Boy Scouts, were the watch guards. We were the look-outs. It was the first experience of our company in the IRA in shooting or in doing anything like that.

It was a moonlight night but when one of our fellows was almost on top of the soldiers, he fired a bloody shot, accidentally. Well, the British had to shoot then and one soldier was killed. But they didn't get their airplane. And did that raise trouble!

A friend of mine, Ed Donaghue, lost his bloody hat, of all things, up at one of the ditches which surrounds all of the fields in Ireland and the British got it. They knew who it belonged to. And they were raiding, raiding, raiding, looking for Donaghue. But, he was gone already. He used to be the truck driver for the only sawmill that was in Kanturk. He had to haul the lumber about five miles to the sawmill and I'd be with him on the truck. I remember it well. I shake when I think of it. We were so nervous and scared.

I'm just describing Kanturk. But the raids grew all over Ireland and were taking place like the song, "The Boys of Kilmichael." They were attacking police barracks at night and capturing them. It was full scale guerrilla warfare.

We had another incident about two miles from Kanturk where the British were going to a smaller town to provision their garrison. And we cut the trees to block the road in front of them. This was where we kids, in the Boy Scouts, came in. We cut the telephone wires and we cut the pole and we tore the whole works down an hour ahead of the actual struggle. And there the Kanturk company did well. They killed two soldiers and they captured many rifles and ammunition. That part of it was unfortunate, but these things happen.

By this time the revolution had taken place in Russia in 1917. The information about it in the Irish press was crude and rotten, and wicked. "To be Party members, Communists would eat roast bishop and roast priest." Oh, it was crude! But in spite of it, the name of Lenin and Trotsky and the red flag became kind of popular with a section of the Irish Republicans.

It had an influence on me, personally. I was in trouble a little later on because my pals and I would be out on the street corner at nine o'clock at

night in the small town and we'd be cheering for Lenin and Trotsky. The leaders used to come after us and tell us to cut that out.

They set up a Soviet in a place called Bruee, about thirty miles from where I lived at that time in Ireland. And they did it in several other places. A direct influence of 1917. I'm sure most of them didn't know the meaning of the word, "Soviet." But it was the workers took power. And this appealed to a section. The trade union movement, in the main, supported the struggle. And Jim Connolly became the real leader of the rising in Dublin. He was a prominent leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers. He organized the Irish Citizen Army inside of the Union, composed of union men. And they were the backbone of the rising in Dublin. And, of course, he was executed.

We fought until 1921. There was pressure from the United States and from the young Socialist Republic and all over. And the British were forced to ask for peace. The result of it was the setting up of the Irish Free State in 1921.

I'm convinced today, that under the conditions which existed, it was the best possible settlement they could get at that time. They were in no military position to beat the British in open conflict. And this opened the door. It gave Ireland its own parliament and its own army and opened up the way for the Irish Republic which is what they have today. The Irish bourgeoisie rule today and they're no different from the English ones who were there before them. But that was the struggle at the time.

I guess I had an awakening too while the struggle was on because, when the war finished, we were able to get some farms back. We got my mother's father's farm back. We took over my grandfather's farm and gave it back to my uncle. But he had to pay my mother. The sisters all got a share of it. Well, my cousins, they've got it today. We took that away from the English.

The new Irish, the same Irish leaders who negotiated the truce soon put a ban on any more of this. But before they could stop it, we, the IRA, had already taken over so much. But my mother and uncle were lucky. They got theirs.

I was supposedly working with my Dad. When I had time I did. But in the main I was out. I was gone. I'd just say, "Dad, I got to go out." And this hurt him. My Dad had it figured out that I'd be better off in America, out of trouble. He was concerned on account of my radical views. I was singing "The Red Flag" all the time and teaching it to others. And we couldn't forget Lenin and Trotsky, although we never read a line about them, only what we read in the bourgeois papers. But they were workers' leaders. That's all we knew. And they were revolutionaries. That was enough for us. After the truce was signed in 1921 and the Irish Free State established, the whole movement split in two. Civil war broke out. I became disgusted that

Irishmen were killing Irishmen and I wanted to get out. So with the blessing and encouragement of my family and the hidden blessing of some of my old IRA friends, I planned to go off to America. I wasn't very happy about going. But, the family pressure and everything else. And I was dissatisfied. But I couldn't get into America. They had an immigration quota. If it wasn't for that, I would have gone to the United States. I think that Dad wrote to my aunt in Toronto and asked her if I could stay with them for a week or two in Toronto, then I'd be going on to the United States. So I came to Toronto in 1923 when I was twenty years old and I'll never forget it.

Chapter 2

MIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA

Oh, it was good. They greeted me in Toronto and started talking about getting me a job. But in the meantime, I had wired my older sister, Anne, who was married and living in Detroit, that I was in Toronto. So the next thing I got back a telegram saying come to Windsor and be at such a hotel at such a time, and Archie, her husband, and herself would meet me there. So that evening about seven o'clock I went on to Windsor.

The first thing they say to me in Windsor is, "You are coming with us." That was okay with me. And then Archie's brother, Russell, was in the back seat of the Ford. The first Ford touring cars, I guess. It was October and Russell had a regular American winter overcoat. I had an old trench coat, a raincoat like they used to wear with a belt. And a cap. And I got Russell's hat and coat and I sat in the back seat. And then Archie told me, "Now if the Immigration people stop us and they ask you where you were born, tell them Union City, Ohio."

Believe it or not, it worked. We were stopped and the guy looks in and he looks at me and he says:

"Where are you from?"

And I said, "Union City, Ohio."

"Okay."

In a week, I was working at the Brown-McLellan Automatic Screw Factory on West 4th Street off East Jefferson, in Detroit. And I worked there as a millwright's helper about a year and a half. In the meantime, I got friendly with some people, mostly Irish-American Catholics. Finally I met one guy who was always talking about the West. I guess I was a rebel of some kind and finally I quit. He quit. And in 1925 we hitch-hiked to Chicago. Then we went out hitch-hiking towards Minneapolis because we wanted to take in the harvest. It was here that we came across a street corner meeting held by the Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies.

One of the big drives of the Wobblies was against the farmers. The farmers were their main enemies. Oh, they used to set fire to the barns and wreck the machinery and throw rocks at the tractors. It was sectarian. But the Wobblies did an awful lot of good.

I joined the Wobblies in Benson, Minnesota. The Wobblies were anti-religious. I was opposed to the Wobblies on that. Yet, in spite of my attitude, my belief in the Pope and the Church, I joined. On the whole I was in complete agreement with all of their philosophies and their ideas. I really wanted to join. But there was another important factor to be considered. That was, if you wanted to keep riding freight trains in the Western United States, down to Kansas or Omaha, Nebraska or places like that you had to have the red card to get the co-operation of the railroad men. The red card was like a meal ticket. They'd ask you when they saw you on the train. If you said you had no card — you were off! They'd come along and say:

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, you're so and so."

"Got your card?"

Everybody knew the card. Thousands of railroad men were like that.

By the time I arrived in Canada the Wobblies had died down. They had little groups here and there in Toronto and Hamilton. There was a small group here in Calgary, but as an organization, it was out. But it played a powerful role in the logging camps in British Columbia.

The Railway Police were bad. They were concentrated all the time at the division points. You met some good ones who walked away or closed their eyes. But most of them were Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) police and most of them, of course, wanted a promotion and they just grabbed every Tom, Dick, and Harry they could. When the train stopped at a division point, they'd be there with the train and in lots of places they beat us up. I never got it but one night we could have. I think it was in Sudbury that we could have been killed. They came after us and there were lines of tracks with boxcars on them. And we had to run underneath them. And we were just fortunate that there wasn't a moving train somewhere. It was considered a criminal offense to be riding the boxcars. It was trespassing and cheating the railroad out of transportation fare. Thousands of them were arrested. I was lucky. I was never charged.

We went to Benson from Minneapolis in a boxcar. And we were dressed up in overalls, the big overalls, the regular farmer uniform, and the old straw hat, sitting in the park, because that's where the farmers would come if they wanted men. And we're sitting there and this farmer came over and looked us over and took us to work. I think it was six dollars a day then, plus room and board, which was real good. But it was long hours and hard work.

The Wobblies had a system. Today in a factory, maybe you'd call it the shop steward system. They had men on the road doing nothing else but going from farm to farm, signing up memberships in the Wobblies and collecting dues. You had to have a red card, even for farm labour. Then

they'd speak. Or, if there was a town close by, they'd speak there. That was their job and nothing else. You weren't long on the road when you were part of the Wobblies. They had a song, "The Wabash Cannon Ball." It was kind of a Wobbly anthem.

Joe Hill was a hero of mine and still is. I had the Wobbly Songbook. The Little Red Songbook. We had it all the time. My daughter has mine today.

In those early days, the twenties and the war, the only unions existing in the United States were American Federation of Labor (AFL) craft unions.¹ And there was no organization anywhere else among the workers. And the conditions of the working people, of course, were bad, very bad, with low wages and unemployment. And the Socialist Party was dying out. Unfortunately, one of the factors that made them pass away was they didn't believe in trade union activity.

While Eugene Debs was leader of the Socialist Party of America his position was based on the labour movement. But they changed it and wouldn't have anything to do with unions. Well, even the early Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) didn't have a very strong connection with the trade union movement when it was formed. And that was a legacy from the old Socialist Party, the belief that they could achieve working-class emancipation just through political action.

The conditions existing in the United States demanded some form of change. And there was no group there in existence at the time which could change things. There was no Communist Party, and the Wobblies were a syndicalist kind of organization, with no understanding of the real class nature of society. They lumped the farmers as one of their basic enemies. They were against the farmers, the big shots in the factories, the churches; everything was out, a dark mass of reaction. And that was their approach.

Whether it was official or not I can't say, but at least sections of the Wobblies and possibly the entire of them, did adopt tactics of violence and destruction. They'd set fire to a farmer's barns if he was a bad farmer, a mean farmer, or he wouldn't pay wages.

But, in the main, they brought a tremendous lot of good to the working class. They fought violently for the right of free speech which was an impossibility before then as far as the workers were concerned. And they'd have 50 men or 100 men lined up in place, and as soon as one of them was taken off the soapbox, up went another one. And up went another one, and this would keep on going. They fought in Seattle and Wala Wala, Washington and places like this. They really had class battles! They were where the mining camps were. That's where Joe Hill got framed. And they had terrific

¹This is an exaggeration in that there were a few industrial unions in the United States but it was generally true that very few American workers were organized outside of the skilled crafts before the late 1930s.

class battles. And this spread an awful lot of good, although it was sectarian, a lot of good educational material was out amongst the workers for the first time.

The Wobblies' basic argument, of course, was One Big Industrial Union and naturally in those days and at that time I was all for it because I didn't understand the nature of society.

The Wobblies considered themselves syndicalist — a group that believed in "direct action" all the time. Just mention the word "politics" or "politicians" and it was dynamite. They had the idea that if we could organize the Great Big Union, one industrial union from coast to coast and worldwide, that we could take over the factories and that by just taking over the factories, that we'd change the system. And, of course, this has proven false a hundred times since. The workers of Italy are one glaring example. They did just that! And they finished up with Mussolini on top of them, because the state machine was untouched.

We worked the harvest and then we came back to Chicago that winter (1927) and stayed. Well, one night a queer thing happened. We were coming back on West Madison from a show downtown. It was the night before Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in Boston.² We couldn't move. The streetcars were tied up everywhere. Up on top of one streetcar was a young woman speaking about the frame up of Sacco and Vanzetti. She must have been a Communist. Well, we had to listen and I sure enjoyed what she was speaking about. You couldn't get through the crowds. And this was all the way for miles. All kinds of streetcars held up everywhere. They called the soldiers out that night in Chicago. And that was another rich experience of mine, listening to that.

Then we decided to head for Detroit. We got into a place called Janesville, Wisconsin, hitch-hiking on our way to Detroit. We'd been drinking at the time and we were broke. And we had no place to sleep. And in the States at that time, if you were broke, it was better to go to the police station, where you were safe, and sleep where you could in the cells.

Janesville is a nice little city. It's the home of the Parker Pen. General Motors had a big plant there, Chevrolet. And we slept there. The next morning we were going to go out and head for Detroit and the Chief of Police comes in.

"Are you fellows looking for work?"

We said, "Yes, sure, fine."

He says, "Okay, come on, get in the car. Had breakfast?"

"No."

²Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian-American anarchists who were executed in 1927 supposedly for robbery and murder. It was almost certainly a frame up because they were known radicals.

"Okay."

He took us down to a restaurant and gave us bacon and eggs or something — a good breakfast. Then he wheeled us out to the General Motors plant, takes us into the office and says:

"Okay, here's two men for you."

"Okay, go past the doctor and everything."

We got jobs polishing and sanding automobiles. You learned it in a matter of three days and then you went on piece work. And, Lord God, it was terrific!

Janesville was unorganized. There must have been a thousand men in it. Because at that time we'd produce 800 or 900 cars in a day in eight hours. They had a sign up about how many cars in a day. And, boy, you'd better not miss a stroke. Guys were having nose bleeds and everything else all around. The pace! They'd push a button and speed up the line. You only had so much space to do your particular job. You'd catch the car here and you had to have it finished over there. And if you didn't have it finished? Well! It would come back again and there was hell to pay!

I must have been at GM for a year. But we wanted to get to Detroit. We had no sense of responsibility. We got tight and fell off the wagon. And we're jumping on the passenger train, "riding the blinds." We're right behind the engine. I had a pair of brand new tan shoes on. I hadn't worn them ten times. And I was dressed up in a slicker. My friend had a bottle and I had a bottle. And he went to the can to have a drink and by the time he came out, I'm already getting on. I thought he was going to miss it. And I'm getting up and making the jump to get up and I'm looking for him at the same time. My foot missed the step and fell down under the wheel. It burst the shoe and flattened it. The next thing I know, I'm in the hospital. My big toe is gone, and most of the others. It took the whole big toe and half of the other three. And the little one is alright. And I remember the doctor. I asked him:

"How bad is it?" because it was all bandaged up.

He says, "Oh well, there's only one thing you'll never do."

I says, "What's that?"

"Go dancing"

I wired my sister and she came down and she and Archie paid the hospital. And when I was released from the hospital I headed for Detroit. And I recuperated there for a while and I got a job with a contractor. He knew my sister. My sisters became waitresses in the Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit. It was one of the big ones at the time, before the Brook-Cadillac was built. And there, in the dining room, they met all kinds of people. That's where the second sister met her big rich husband.

And this contractor, he put me to work. Julius Poratt. He was a Pole. He had a contract at the River Rouge plant. It was there that I became a member of the International Labourers' Union. Well, I worked there until 1928. The elections were on in the United States. Al Smith, the Governor of New York, was running for President, the first Catholic to run. And I came home one morning. I wasn't feeling good. I had something. And I told Anne, "I'm going back to Canada." Out of the blue, like that. And she was astounded. "What's the matter with you. What's the matter?" I was in the States illegally so I said, "Look, Anne. It'll only mean trouble. One of these days I'll be caught anyway and they'll ship me back to Ireland." And they would have because I wasn't five years in Canada from Ireland. Anyway, they couldn't convince me to stay, so I left.

I just wanted to get this thing off my mind, because you're not settled. Every time you see a policeman you figure, well, he's coming for me. I wanted to see things too. Anyway, I got on. I had a new suit, oh, the best, everything. When I was working, I was always neat. And I got on the ferry with a suitcase. And lo and behold, when I got over to the Canadian side, it wasn't enough to tell them that I was just over in the States for a day or two. They were skeptical. They took me in and they held me for about an hour and a half, asking me all kinds of questions. This fellow must have been some kind of a patriot, because I started giving him a line how I loved the British and how I loved Canada and I was over there, I says, just for a couple of days with my sister. I says, "But I wouldn't stay and anchor." So they let me go. I got out of there just so goddam fast and I got to Leamington. And there I picked my first tomatoes. Twenty-five cents an hour.

But I was learning all the time and getting more interested in things around me and the conditions of my workmates. I was taking it all in and I met some fine people who had a lot more understanding than I did then in my travels. And especially on the harvest, in the jungles: Oh my God, I met some brilliant people!

I got into Toronto but I didn't go near my people. And I was about a week in Toronto living in a rooming house and eating in the small cafes and watching the unemployment offices. I saw a vacancy for night clerk in a hotel in Guelph — The King Edward Hotel. It was the biggest hotel in Guelph at the time. I got a ticket from the unemployment office and down I land in Guelph. The man who owned the hotel was an elderly man in his sixties. He was an Irish-Canadian named Clancy. And I was put to work as a night clerk.

Then, you get acquainted with the girls and fellows in the hotel. We were kind of natural at the time. We liked the bottle. We liked to go out and have fun — what we called excitement. And this Clancy had a big limousine and

he had a chauffeur, Jack. And Jack was like me and the other guys — full of life. So this night, he and one of the girls came along and said "Listen, Pat, we're going over to Kitchener tonight." I'd never been to Kitchener.

"And how about you getting this girl and follow us all down."

"Okay."

So, here he takes the boss's car. We go to Kitchener, get into a blind pig and I guess we started. I remember drinking wine and, Lord God, I was sick for a month after! And when we came out on the street — they had a habit of putting the garbage cans out on the streets in front at nighttime, Jack goes along and scatters garbage cans. Somebody got the license of the car. I'm in bed the next day and I get a call. It was one of the girls called from down in the kitchen, and she says:

"Do you know, Jack and I, we're fired."

I said, "What for?"

"Me. Clancy knows where we were last night with the car."

And I says, "Well, how about me?"

I get a call up to the boss's office, up on the second or third floor, and up I go. Old man Clancy starts reading the Riot Act, but he says, "I know," he says, "you're not here long enough. You didn't think of it and you had nothing to do with the car. So you stay. But let this be a warning to you."

And I said, "What about the others?"

"Oh, they're fired, they're going."

Well, I said, "Goodbye, Mr. Clancy. Thank you ever so much. I'm going with them."

So that was the end of my very short stay in Guelph. Just about one winter.

Then I came to Toronto. I had a few dollars. And I'm walking the streets one day and I get *The Worker*.³ And in the Toronto press I was reading about demonstrations. This was early 1929. But there were demonstrations and Communist leaflets. They had a big Research Library in Toronto in those days and you could go there and get all kinds of books. I imagine the government ran it. It was there I came across *The History of Canadian Wealth* by Myers.⁴ When I read it, I thought that it couldn't be true. But then I talked to people. I talked to one of the librarians and they said, "Look, it's well documented from archives." This book had an impact. When I saw how

³*The Worker* was the official organ of the Communist Party from 1922 until the late 1930s.

⁴*The History of Canadian Wealth*, by Gustavus Myers was first published in Chicago in 1914. It was republished with an Introduction by Stanley Ryerson, (James, Lewis and Samuel: Toronto 1972). It was an extremely influential book for a whole generation of leftists in the 1920s and 1930s. Ryerson describes it as "the one and only available interpretation of this country's history in terms of a radical social criticism" at the time.

Canada was robbed and how the Indian people and the early settlers were slaughtered! And once I was convinced that it was solid history, good history, I really studied it. Oh, I read it and reread it then. I was so interested. While I stayed in Toronto, I was able to do some good reading.

I stayed in Toronto working in the boats on the Lakes. They had boats sailing from Toronto to Port Dalhousie. The *Northumberland* was one and I think the *Port Dalhousie* was another. I was on the *Northumberland*. As deckhands, we got thirty dollars a month. They used to ship huge rolls of paper and all kinds of stuff from Toronto. And, boy, was it killing loading it.

I had one experience that was something. People in Toronto would go on to the boat to Port Dalhousie for picnics. They'd eat big breakfasts before they'd get on the boat. And there may be 800 of them on the boat. And we'd be up from six o'clock or five o'clock washing down the decks and polishing everything. Then we would sail out to what we used to call the Gap. I'm on the deck one day with all these people. We wouldn't be gone three miles from the shore when that ship's decks were a mass of vomit. And it was our job to clean it up with a squeegee. We had to do it all over again.

But this time they were going across and Orangemen or Masons had the boat that day. And this guy got talking to me somehow and asked me a lot of questions. He asked me:

"And how would you like a job in the rubber factory?"

And I said, "I'd like it very much."

And he said, "You come down and see us," and he gave me the address.

And I was clever enough at this time. I was already a little bit educated. When I went there to apply for the job, they asked me all kinds of questions about Ireland and finally my religion. I said Presbyterian. All I knew was the word Presbyterian. And they knew, I'm sure, that I was lying, because they had a consultation with themselves. And they came back and the guy that told me to come down, says, "Oh, that's fine, Mr. Lenihan. That's fine. We'll call you inside of a week." I never heard from them.

They figured I was Catholic. It was a case of "No Catholic Need Apply." Oh yes, brazen, open. They used to have signs in Toronto, lots of them, "No Catholic" and that meant Irish. I never saw such signs in the States. I came across it only once in the case of the Ku Klux Klan. The States was not hidebound by any particular section. There were "wops" and "bohunks" and "yids," all these fancy names for the different nationalities. That was there. And it was pretty bad too. And, of course, the "niggers." So I went back on my ship. I think I stuck it out until it tied up in the fall, when they quit sailing. And this would bring me into the fall of 1929.

We stayed in Toronto that winter. While I was in Toronto, I always on Saturday got *The Worker* and any other literature I was able to get my hands

on. I came across a book by Frank Ainsley, an Australian Member of Parliament. He went to the Soviet Union and when he came back he wrote a report, a book, about an inch thick *Red Europe*. I got that. And, oh, it was a real good book, based on Marxism. And that played a role in my thinking. I was very sympathetic with the Communists, because they were the people out on the streets in Toronto trying to do something.

I didn't know enough and I was poking around and, in a way, seeking, seeking. I was kind of dissatisfied alright. There was something missing. And that played a role in my thinking. And I made up my mind with an old-timer that worked with me as a cook on the boat. But he was quite active. He was kind of a Wobbly too. He got laid off in the same way when the boat got tied up. And he wanted to go to Vancouver. And he talked me into Vancouver. And I think we started out in March. Hopping the freights. Paying for a passenger ticket simply wasn't the way to travel for our type of proletarian passengers. And we damn near froze coming through Northern Ontario. It was beautiful weather when we left Toronto in the early spring. But we finally made it to Winnipeg where we stayed for a couple of weeks. There I visited the Labour Temple. I got hold of the OBU paper a couple of times. And I walked down to their headquarters and I asked if I could see Bob Russell.⁵ And, sure enough, I met him.

Bob Russell was great, tremendous, beautiful! Speaking my language 100 per cent! One big strong union. Well, this was right down my alley. And he encouraged me to stay around. But then I felt I didn't want to leave my partner and I wanted to go to Vancouver to see the West. And we took off. And we arrived in Calgary. We stayed over in Calgary, maybe a week or two. But the funds ran low so we caught a freight train and started for the Coast. We got as far as Revelstoke, which was a railway division point.

We stopped off there to look the place over. While walking around the town, we saw a sign in the King Edward Hotel: "Man Wanted." And I went in because I had the hotel experience in Guelph. I told them I was looking for work. And I wasn't dressed up. I was just like a working man. And Mrs. MacSorley and her husband were the owners of the hotel. And she talked to me and I told her my experience. She asked me if I'd stay for fifty dollars a month, room and board, and work around in the hotel. And she had a hog ranch down about a mile and a half out of town and she said "You can do some chores there, and my garden work, and stuff like this." And I felt like working and I told her "Yes, I'll take it." Then I told her about my

⁵Bob Russell was a socialist who had been one of the founders of the OBU in 1919. He was one of the leaders of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. He became and remained the main leader of the OBU after it went into decline in the early 1920s. By 1930 the OBU was very weak with only a few isolated locals. But Russell was still well known by trade union activists throughout western Canada.

partner. She brought my partner in and had lunch, but she couldn't hire him. And he wished me all the luck in the world and he took off for Vancouver and I stayed in Revelstoke, even though my final destination was supposed to be Vancouver. I guess I was kind of weary of the trip.

I got established there and finally I took over some kitchen work, helping the chef. Every once in a while, while I'd be working, I'd hum "The Red Flag." And then there would be guys coming in, delivering milk and meat and everything else. And we got acquainted with them and we'd be talking. Although I was still going to church every Sunday, I was breaking away from it gradually. And I became known, I don't know why, but I was "The Red." Talk and discussions I guess.

The MacSorleys were real Catholics. And they were very devout. And I missed church a couple of times, Sundays. We'd eat together off the kitchen. And Mrs. MacSorley said, "Why weren't you at Church, Pat?" "Oh," I said, "Mrs. MacSorley, I just didn't feel like it." And she started giving me a lecture. And finally we got into an argument about church and I wasn't satisfied with it. And, of course, she's telling me how foolish I am. And I brought up the question of the Church as being guilty of certain things in past history.

And I said, "Mrs. MacSorley, you're thinking of everybody going to heaven when they die."

And she said, "Oh, yes, yes, yes."

And I said, "Supposing Kay, here" — this was her daughter, a good-looking girl — "married a Negro. What would happen?"

She said, "How could you say such a thing!"

I said, "Aren't we all equal creatures of God. Surely there is not a heaven for negroes and another heaven for us."

Oh, boy, she almost exploded. And this is why I was typed "The Red" — instances like this!

And then I got acquainted with some local guys. There was Prohibition in the hotel at that time. There was no bar. And we had to go to the bootlegger for our liquor. Of all places! One of the fellows I met, says, "Listen, pal, I know a place downtown," he says, "railroad people. And they'll sell us some beer and wine and stuff. We've been there four or five times, and we're acquainted with them. They are selling beer on the side, and working on the railroad." And you get drinking beer, you get talking. There were two brothers bootlegging and one night, one of them says to me, "Did you ever read Karl Marx?" And I said, "No, I never did." Well, he said, "Will you read this book if I give it to you." And I said, "Sure, I've got lots of time."

And so he gave me the first volume of *Capital*. The thickness of it scared me right there. I took it back to the hotel anyway. In a couple of nights I

started reading it and I don't think I got beyond three pages. I couldn't understand it. I couldn't follow it and I finally put it away. And I went back down to the bootlegger and he asked me, "How are you going with Karl Marx?"

"Oh," I said, "I'm going fine. It's great. Wonderful stuff, wonderful stuff."

"Well, don't forget to bring it back."

Well, I finally took it back. I never got beyond page nine but I told them I'd read it. And, oh, they gave me all kinds of reading. Once in a while they had copies of *The Worker*, the paper which I liked very much. They gave me old socialist pamphlets like that that I could read. I think they had a little library of their own. They must have been old time socialists because they never said anything about the Communist Party. And through them I was able to get a better understanding of what was meant when they talked about socialism.

That was the first time I read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. And, oh man, I thought that was true. This was the first really solid reading of history that I had in my whole life. That book convinced me that we, in Canada, were somewhat in the same position, relatively speaking, as the slaves of old and that they, in their revolts, were involved in fighting for a better life and for what we call democracy today. And I was with them. And they were part of me and I was part of them. And that we, in Canada, were in a modern stage of doing exactly what they were doing 2,000 years ago.

That book opened my eyes to the class society where you had the ruling class, where you had the so-called freemen at the beginning of serfdom, and you had the slave mass, the joe-boys who did all the hard work for nothing. Well, it was easy for me to fit myself and my class into that picture. We were the men who were building the skyscrapers but we had to sleep in the jungles. We built the railroads but we couldn't ride on them.

While I was in the process of seeking knowledge and learning, the crash came in 1929. I didn't lose any sleep over it. When it happened I read about it, because I was always reading the newspapers. I read about it but I didn't understand its impact, its future impact, or what it meant to society. But inside of six or seven months I was getting an inkling of it because the hotel business in Revelstoke dropped 95 per cent.

Business at the hotel consisted entirely of commercial travellers coming to the hotel. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of travellers on the road in those days. And there was no business at all. Everybody in the town was affected. The railroads were affected. Layoffs on the railroads.

Revelstoke was a railroad division point but there was very little industry in those days. No mining. It was a poor, poor town when I left it. I was laid off work from the hotel. There was no work. And Mrs. MacSorley and her husband and family — and her sons were grown men then — they wanted

me to stay and they'd give me free room and board for helping around. But I was ready to move anyway because I wanted to get to Vancouver. I stayed on in Revelstoke through the winter, and then I went to Vancouver. I paid the conductor on the passenger train. I had enough, four or five dollars.

MacSorley, the owner of the hotel, was an ex-railroad engineer and he knew all the conductors on the runs from Revelstoke. The conductors would meet him at the train and he would say "Listen, Joe Smith is going on. Take him to the end of your run." Then at the next division this conductor would say, "Now, sit over here, and when I get off, I'll tell the next fellow." You were carried on the basis of five bucks, or something, which was one-eighth or one-fifth of the full fare anyway. So it was because of the help from MacSorley that I had a free ticket. In those days this was a common practice all along the railroad, of carrying a few passengers without a ticket. They'd give the conductor and the train crew so much. This was common but they caught up with it.

I never paid any fare, travelling across the country. If the weather was reasonable, it was not bad. Sometimes we rode in the boxcars, sometimes on top. Luggage was generally a pack on your shoulders or, if you had a suitcase, you shipped it ahead.

If you were inside of a boxcar you were pretty well alright from the dirt and soot of coal engines. But riding on top, it wasn't bad, as long as you weren't going through the tunnels. That's when you got covered with smoke and got black.

The freight trains would stop at every division. A division was about a hundred miles. If you wanted to make headway, you could go another division, two divisions. And then you had to stop for something to eat. The practice was that, if people had no money, they would go to the hotels, Catholic priests, convents, Salvation Army, and places like that for food. But when you went to the convent or to the priest or hotels, the smart ones would say, "Well, I'm willing to do some work." Then in the good weather, summertime or in the spring, they had stopping places. The hoboes had regular places, campgrounds, that were known throughout the whole system. Even before the depression hit, there were hobo jungles, massive ones, in the United States — all along the banks of the Mississippi and Iowa. In Canada they had them too because there was quite a migrant labour force travelling all the time through harvests, backwards and forwards. They didn't use passenger trains. It was too expensive.

Then you had another pretty numerically large group who were regular hoboes. That was their life. They wouldn't work for anybody. That's the last thing in the world they wanted. They had sayings that they'd hear the factory whistle blowing at twelve o'clock noontime and they would say; "Well, there is the master's voice, but I won't answer." The hoboes weren't

interested in work at all. They were just fed up with the system. All they wanted was just to live and be left alone. Many of them in their younger days had been preachers, teachers, men with good basic education and deeply read. They'd sit around the campfires in the jungles at night and I was there and I'm learning. If any young man could go on the road like that and live the life, taking in the harvest and all the rest of it, it was a rich experience for a year or two.

For food, clothing, etc., they'd beg off every source that was available to them. If they had no food of their own in the jungle to cook in the mornings, they'd go to town. Wherever they saw the smoke coming out of the chimney, they knew people were up getting breakfast. They'd knock at the door and ask for help. Because the old pioneer spirit prevailed among the people to a great degree, there were relatively few people who would turn you away. The masses of them would take you in the kitchen and have a talk with you. They'd want to know who you were, what you were, and give you the best breakfast possible that they had in the house. And a lunch for your day!

The hobo jungle was obviously close to the tracks. Sometimes they put up all kinds of crude shelters in places. In the summertime, they didn't need them. They had blankets in their packs. They'd go uptown and they'd hit the butcher shops and stores. They might tell them what they were and they'd like to get some meat — cheap. They'd bring their stuff back to the jungle and cook up stews. They would go to the hotels or restaurants. They'd get gallon cans and wire them, and make handles. That's how they cooked!

At every division point, there were hoboes getting off and hoboes getting on, like a regular station. The news was there, conveyed underground. Ahead of time you'd know what to expect at the next division — whether the police were tough, or not. The hoboes knew the good spots and the bad spots from the discussions in the jungle amongst each other. For example, we knew that the police weren't bad in Revelstoke and we had decided that we were going to stop there. I had no idea that I'd get a job. BC at that time had jungles all over the place, huge ones. There would be up to four or five hundred men in some.

Chapter 3

SOJOURN IN VANCOUVER AND ORGANIZING IN ALBERTA

Well, Vancouver! At last I thought I had arrived at my final destination. That was 1930. I liked the city very much, I mean the physical side of the city, the beauty of it. That was the first time I saw the Pacific Ocean and the mountains, of course, and the forests through BC. To me this was spectacular and out of this world.

I think I had a couple of hundred dollars on me. I had heard the hobo talk and I guess it was in my mind: Cordova Street. And there used to be hotels there for men, fifty cents a night or forty cents a night. They were clean. And I checked in there and then I started rambling around the city and I had no idea yet of looking for work. I wanted to look around.

And I wasn't there long, and I'm walking around the street again, and here I come across a fellow selling *The Worker*. The Communists were very active then. You'd be walking downtown and you'd get leaflets, "Demonstration in front of City Hall," or a meeting somewhere. I attended quite a few of the outside meetings. Alfie Campbell was a Scottish immigrant, but I'm sure he was in the Communist Party. He was leading the unemployed struggles. And, oh, they had wicked battles. And I stayed there and watched things and participated in them. Finally, there was one outstanding Cossack of a horse policeman there, Scanlon was his name. They used to ride horses. And man, they'd come on the sidewalks on the horses belting everybody all around them. Campbell was finally arrested and deported but the demonstrations went on.

And then there was a big Communist meeting with Tim Buck. I had seen his name in *The Worker* several times, but I had never heard him. They had a huge meeting in Cambie Street. And, Lord God, he was not my idea of a Communist when I saw him because he looked to me like Reverend Tim Buck. He didn't have the wrong collar on him. And his language was beautiful. His delivery was out of this world, but you could tell that he was honest and sincere. And right there I decided that Tim Buck was my man.

I was on the verge then and I was convinced in my own mind that the Communists had the proper organization. The CCF, in all its talks, denied

the existence of a socialist country, like the Soviet Union. It was their enemy. And they didn't believe in going out and organizing unions, organizing workers. It was strictly a political thing. And every five years you've got a chance for a bit of action but, in the meantime, everybody went hungry. And this was what the Communists grasped — that something had to be done about the working class during the five years between elections.

The Communists led demonstrations with demands of work for the people who were unemployed, work at trade union wages, and unemployment insurance. We were the first people in Canada to raise the question of unemployment insurance. And both were linked up. The economics were linked up with political slogans like "Against Fascism, Against War." And in all their propaganda, even in the early 1930s, they were pointing out and hammering away at the dangers of fascism in Europe and signs of it in the States and in Canada. Also that we were heading into a world war. And they linked up the immediate needs of the people who were unemployed and the poor farmers. They linked it up and they gave it also a political expression, linking them up and showing that one was part of the other.

The Communists were also active in organizing workers into unions in Vancouver. It became the responsibility of every Communist Party member to get the union going in the shop, in the mine, in the mill. Right then, they were at it. The communists were the people that organized the lumber camps in BC. You bet. And they played a role in organizing steel and everybody else out there.

Then I made up my mind to join the Party in Vancouver about the end of 1930. I wasn't working but I still had a few dollars when I decided to join the Party and I went down to the Party office one evening. Up until that time I had never met a Communist. I mean a Party member. And they weren't hiding it in those days. And I went in the office and there was a girl there and I told her what I wanted. And she says, "Just a minute. I'll introduce you to somebody." And she took me over to another room and here's the guy. He must have been going out, I guess. And he's got a leather jacket, old pants, no hat and a beard. That was my first impression of a Communist. But here was old Bill. And he was one of the greatest labour leaders produced in British Columbia. It was Bill Bennett.¹ He wrote a book on the history of labour in BC. He was a fine man.

"Come on in and sit down."

Of course he was interested in me and asked me questions and I told him my history.

¹"Ole Bill" Bennett would eventually be considered the "grand old man" of the radical left in British Columbia. His influence and popularity transcended the sectarianism which beset the left in BC as elsewhere.

"Well," he says, "our group will be meeting about two weeks from now." "You come back," he says, "and you'll get in."

It was in December when he told me to come back. And then I was into Christmas and New Year's and then January went by. February was a beautiful month in Vancouver. I didn't go back.

I was living on Cordova Street in one of the hotels at this time. It was cheap. I was living on the money I had saved in Revelstoke. There were hoboes who were staying around the hotels and cafes where we ate. They were talking about the thousands that were travelling on the trains, that there was no fear of police any more. The police would come here and just push them to one side.

I could never get any work. There was no work. And I wanted to work. I was always a worker and I wanted a job. And I figured it was no good. And then there were thousands going into Vancouver as fast as they were going out. There wasn't a train that was going out that wasn't loaded.

The spring of 1931 came and it was beautiful in Vancouver. And, my God, the unemployment was awful! And I decided anyway that I was going to go back to Toronto. So one night I packed my gear and I got this train. I thought I'd never get on it. And the police didn't bother us because there were so many. There must have been 600 or 700 men trying to climb on top of the boxes. The train was all loaded and you had to go on top of the boxcars or else sit on the side of an oilcar with your legs hanging over the side. And it was dangerous.

Anyway, we got through, finally. We had stopped in a couple of places. It would be the end of February 1931 and it was freezing going through the mountains. I had a nice hat but I even lost my hat. Oh, man, it was wicked! Oh, God, I'll never forget it! Some of us near froze to death. There was nothing to do about it. If you were on the train, you stuck it out. But it was a terrible experience. I got into Calgary where I had shipped my suitcase by freight on the CPR.

I checked into a men's hotel on 8th Avenue. And again it was 40 cents a night. It was right next to the Variety Theatre. It was a moving picture theatre. And, oh, it would hold about 1,000 people. And this was almost next door to where I was staying upstairs. And I'm walking around town and I'm taking the sights in, and looking things over. And here in front of the Variety Theatre I see a big sign board, at the entrance, "Communist Meeting — Sunday Night — Speaker, John O'Sullivan." I thought for sure he would be an Irishman. And that did it for me. I immediately made up my mind that that's where I was going.

I went to the meeting and the hall was full. And John O'Sullivan was a wonderful speaker. After John got through speaking there was a question period. They had girls as ushers, seating people as they came into the

theatre. And I came up the aisle to the first usher I happened to see, it was a girl, and who was it but Anne.² I asked her about John O'Sullivan, if he was an Irishman or not, because I was skeptical. Yes, she told me, he was an Irishman and a leader of the Communists in Calgary. I said I'd like to meet him, if it's possible. So she went behind the stage and got a hold of John. John said, sure he'd meet me. So when the crowd went out he came along and told me who he was.

I said, "Hello."

And he said, "Did you want to talk to me?"

And I said, "Yes."

"Well," he said, "I'm rather tired but come on. I'm going for some tea."

He was a great man for tea, a real Irishman, and an electrician by trade.

There was one cafe on Eighth Avenue, the Puritan, across from the St. Louis Hotel at that time and it was known as the revolutionary headquarters. All the radicals congregated there. And John took me there along with another fellow. And we sat in the booth in the cafe and John started asking me questions about Ireland, where I came from and all the rest of it. I told him. And he told me where he came from. And I knew the place well. It was only about 30 miles from where I was born. And he started asking me about what I knew about the Party. I told him very little. And I remember him asking me, "What do you think about the materialistic conception of history?" and he might as well have been talking Greek to me because I didn't know anything. I told him so and we cut it short. And he said, "Listen, would you like to meet me tomorrow morning," he says, "down at the unemployed headquarters." And he told me where it was. And I said, "Sure, I'll be there."

It was in Chinatown and I went down there and sure enough, he was waiting. And they were organizing some of the unemployed at the time, mostly single men. And after these talks, I told him I was going to stay in town and that I wanted to join up. "Well," he said, "we'll have you." Inside of a week, there'll be a meeting and you come along." And, sure enough, in a week I was told to come to a meeting.

The Communist Party had no office. I met him in the unemployed office. There was a little library there where I came across the pamphlets "Value, Price and Profit" and "Wage, Labour and Capital." And lo and behold, I could follow and understand the writings of Marx on economics. Right away I got it and, man oh man, I really became convinced that this was the place!

And then we were putting out leaflets all the time calling for the unemployed to organize and come to meetings and they were holding open-air meetings in different places around the city. I was only there a couple of months when a detective caught me putting up a poster on a

²Anne Belkin, Lenihan's future wife.

telephone pole. And I spent the night in the can. The next morning in court I just said, "Let me go! 'Cause, you see, I didn't do that much damage to the pole, using a thumbtack." And he dismissed it.

I stopped looking for employment. It was a lost cause. I had made up my mind that I was going to work with the unemployed. So I kept on working and working and they set up an organization.

I joined the Communist Party the week after I had made contact with John O'Sullivan. Then I became, well, you might say, full-time, working with the unemployed as part of the Party tasks that were allotted to me. It was mostly organizing the single unemployed, leaflets and printing, mimeographing material, and getting it out around the city. The Party had a building. And they had some bunks and a kitchen in it. We lived there.

I had become more ready to join the Party when I heard Tim Buck speak out at the Coast. Listening to him and the speech he made, I was definitely of the opinion that the Communists were correct, and that they were the people that were trying to do something about the economic crisis. And then when I came to Calgary, I had this opportunity again to go to a Communist meeting and hear another speaker and, again, the message given by O'Sullivan was something I could understand and make sense out of. And that along with my background made me want to join the Party.

I even overcame the question of my early religious training. I had lost that. I reasoned things out. How could the churches and the religions in those days bless the guns of all the exploiters, even in Ireland? We were excommunicated from the Catholic Church at one time because we belonged to the IRA. But the treaty for the setting up of the Free State wasn't three hours old when the Pope changed his mind and they were all called his heroes.

And then, when I delved into history, reading the *History of Canadian Wealth* by Myers, it brought out the role of the Catholic priests. The Royal Commission which investigated their land purchases in Quebec and Ontario — it's in the Archives in Ottawa — stated that the priests and bishops were more interested in beaver skins than they were in saving souls. Then, when I examined these statements and fitted them into my own life, I couldn't deny them. They were true.

So there was no religious hindrance in me joining the Party. Mind you, to be honest, while I dissociated myself completely from any form of modern religion as practised in the churches, I still had in my mind that there must be a great power somewhere that gave life to everything.

Then I really began to study. I had never read any of the classics. I had never heard of Aristotle, Plato, anybody. In fact, it was a sin in Ireland if you read the books of the great French writer, Victor Hugo. And, here, for the first time in my life, through the Communist movement, I was able to

have available to me all the finest books that could be brought to Canada. And the more I studied and the more I read, the more I became convinced that my ideas and the ideas of the Communists were ideologically correct.

Something good happened after a while. The night I joined, another man, George Poole, also joined. We became new members the same night. He was somewhat like myself, only he was far more deeply read. He had a better understanding of things than I had. He had experience as a speaker at some meetings. Not much, but he had some. And he and I became close friends. He was single, unemployed as well. He had been working in one of the country hotels as a bartender or something, and he had just quit. I don't know how he got the contact, but he found the unemployed headquarters and he came there and joined up. And we worked together.

We did become acquainted in the hall during the day because he was a reader too. He'd read everything he could get, whenever he had time. When we weren't out on the streets doing something, we'd spend our time reading and discussing. And that went on for some time. Oh, there were some demonstrations of the unemployed, not large, because we weren't well organized yet.

Right from the start anybody joining the Party and the Party leadership had continuous classes, maybe sometimes twice a week, on all educational topics pertaining to the social system. You were encouraged to read and get the books. If you were short of books, well, you could get them by asking for them. And this was a big thing, because without knowledge in people's heads, they can't do very much or think very much. And education is a key thing in the movement.

And then you had regular weekly meetings — business meetings of the Party group, where the question of organizing the unorganized would come up. If any of the men happened to be employed, they were asked what was going on in the plant, and if they could recruit some more people from the plant, and if there was the possibility of building a union in the plant. And the same about the unemployed.

At the time I joined there were about twenty Party members in Calgary. Half were Anglo-Saxons and half were foreign born from Europe. It started to grow immediately. About the third week I was there, about 30 — some of them married men, but most of them were single men — joined the Party. Everybody who showed true interest in the organization of the unemployed or in other fields, were immediately approached to join the Party and brought in.

Then the first big news I heard was Sam Carr was coming to town. He was the National Organizer of the Communist Party. And I had read articles of his in *The Worker* and I looked forward to meeting him. There was a special gathering of the Party called for him and I'll never forget it. He

spoke to us about the danger of war, the danger of fascism and of the growing crisis that was going to continue. And at the same meeting, he announced that Sam Scarlett had just joined the Party in Saskatoon.³

Sam Scarlett was one of the most powerful speakers that the labour movement ever produced. And a brilliant organizer! He got twenty years, I think it was in Chicago, as a leader of the Wobblies. He was a Canadian but he was down in the States for years. He had a terrific record! He died during the war. There was a warrant out for him. He was all around, orator, writer, everything. But Sam had fought the Party right from the start. From the 1917 revolution in the Soviet Union, he opposed the Communists violently, because he couldn't understand what they meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Section 98 of the Criminal Code was a law that was passed in 1919 to break the Winnipeg General Strike.⁴ It was a vicious piece of class legislation to take care of a situation which came about as the result of the radicalization of the workers following the war.

Section 98 was used in 1931 to declare the Communist Party illegal overnight. The Communist Party leadership were all rounded up and thrown into the Penitentiary. The government moved at that particular point to offset the Communist leadership and to keep them from arousing the masses on the basis of the crisis that was developing. It was severe. Communist strength was beginning to grow and manifest itself. That made it necessary for the government to do this.

Section 98 was invoked by R.B. Bennett who was the Prime Minister at that point. Later on I was thrown out of the Palliser Hotel once, leading a delegation to meet Bennett. He wouldn't give one nickel for the unemployed. We called him Iron Heel Bennett. He was an out and out spokesman for the big financial interests and just detested the idea of people organizing and demanding the solving of the crisis.

Section 98 of the Criminal Code outlawed the Communist Party but far from limiting our activities, it increased them. It didn't mean a thing. Well, of course, it didn't bother me anyway because I had been illegal almost all my life in Ireland. The Party doubled membership instead of losing people.

The Party was getting calls all over the place for speakers and organizers, and that's why a couple of amateurs like George Poole and myself were sent to Drumheller. The Party decided that we would go to Drumheller to organize the unemployed there and help the radical groups of miners.

³Sam Scarlett was one of the best known organizers of the MWUC. He was one of the leaders of the Estevan-Bienfait coal miners' strike in Saskatchewan in 1931 along with other struggles.

⁴Frank Scott, "The Trial of the Toronto Communists," *Queen's Quarterly*, 1932 is a good contemporary account of the assault on civil liberties during these years.

Miners were all in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) locals there. But there were groups of radicals inside all of the locals and wanting to break away and join the MWUC.⁵ The mines were not working very much. It was summertime and the mines were closed down. Our duty was to encourage the miners in Drumheller to switch from the UMWA to the MWUC.

For years, most of the UMWA leadership, the American leadership and the ones they had in Canada, were signing any kind of a sweetheart agreement with the boss and the miners were in revolt. Its original history was good, but it became a company union. It was the same in Nova Scotia and wherever there were coal mines.

We went to Drumheller by boxcar, the people's transportation. We came off the freight train. Inside of a couple of blocks we're coming up the main street. We come to one of the main corners of the town and here's posters a foot and a half long by a foot and a half wide: "Mass Meeting: Two Prominent Calgary Speakers Will Attend." Well, as soon as I saw the bill, I wanted to catch the next freight train.

Oh, I was mad, but Poole was courageous. "We'll handle it, we'll handle it!" And I had never seen a coal mine in my life. I hadn't ever seen a coal miner in my life. And miners are understanding people. They've an idea of what's going on.

Anyway we met with the Party people and got set up. The meeting was going to be a big one. But it was to be an open-air meeting. Stevie MacDonald, a young Scotsman with a couple of kids, was the leader of the Party and chairman for the meeting.

I had never addressed a public meeting of any size before. I'd said a couple of words in a couple of Communist Party group meetings, but not much. And that's all. I'd never even acted as a chairman or anything.

I was grouching all the time that I couldn't do it. I told all the local ones that I couldn't do it but Poole convinced them I could and that he'd write me out a speech. And sure enough he did. And I'm memorizing it. I'm memorizing it for a couple of days. And I'll never forget it. "Comrades and fellow workers, we are here on behalf of the revolutionary organization of the unemployed...." Sectarian as heck.

We had a kind of a little platform set up at the meeting place. And, my God, I bet there were about 600 miners out in front of us. And here I am up in this chair. Anyway, I'm called upon to speak. And I began "Comrade Chairman, comrades, we're glad to be here and we're down here on behalf of the revolutionary organization" and a couple of more phrases and bingo! It was just as if somebody had hit me on top of the head with a bottle. I

⁵The MWUC was the most important union in the Workers Unity League (WUL). It was active in the coal fields of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Cape Breton and in some hard rock mining areas, notably in Flin Flon, Manitoba.

couldn't think of another word and I just stood there, in front of 600 miners. Me! One of the big speakers from Calgary! I just stood there, frozen. I think Poole even had to pull me down onto the chair.

Well, I sat there through it. And, my God, out in front of us were some sharp right-wingers in the Miners' Union. Albert Allan was one and there were others. And they started. When Poole got through, they started firing questions. Anyway we finished our meeting. God, I'm still shivering when I think of it. I wanted to head for Europe or somewhere when I got through with that meeting. But they held me there. They convinced me to stay and that I'd learn.

Two weeks later Malcolm Bruce came to Drumheller to speak. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Party at one time. In fact, he was even interned in Kingston.⁶ He was known and the meeting was to be in Wayne, a big mining camp, about six miles out from Drumheller. And he wanted to know who the chairman was going to be. So they all said,

"Oh, Pat'll be it."

And I said, "Oh no, nothin' doin'. I ain't going near the platform."

Malcolm Bruce said, "Why, what's the matter?"

And I told him what happened. Bruce convinced me to try again.

I finished up as chairman and I guess I did a good job. And a couple of times after that I was chairman at different meetings. And then one day I got up as chairman and I take off for twenty minutes. That's how it comes.

We were very successful in organizing the unemployed miners. In fact, we broke into camps that didn't have any kind of organization before. In one, East Coulee, even working miners were unorganized. That was eighteen miles out.

The radical groups in each local of the United Mine Workers kept on functioning and gaining strength. They were trying to change the activities of the locals and get them involved in struggle with the coal company for better wages and conditions.

We organized a tremendous march from the surrounding villages into Drumheller. Altogether we had about 1,000 people by the time we started marching into Drumheller. But we didn't know that the mine operators that morning had the Legion Hall opened up and called all their supporters from Drumheller, Newcastle and from the other side of the Valley. The mine operators gave them free whiskey and free beer and they had pipes about a foot and a half or two feet long. And when we came marching, we were just going to turn up another 150 yards and we'd be at the meeting place. And when we came there, here we see all this crowd in front of us

⁶Bruce, one of the least known Communist leaders of the 1930s, was one of eight Communist Party leaders convicted under Section 98 in 1931.

and the Mounted Police across the street, right in front of the depot in Drumheller.

We didn't know what was wrong. I'm in the front rank and we kept on marching anyway and finally we got up to the police. Chief Baker steps up and says:

"Hold it. Hold it."

And I said, "Alright. What's wrong?"

"Well," he says, "things have changed. You can see for yourself you can't hold a meeting."

And here's two rows of Mounties, their tunics open at the neck, and behind them there's about two hundred of the howling, drunken mob.

There was a pole where they used to tie horses, like a thick base of a telephone pole that was right there. I says to the Chief, "Look, Chief, can I get up on that? I can't tell these people unless I get a chance to get up and tell them that the meeting is to be called off." So I got up on the pole and I says, "Comrades and friends, look, the police are here and they've said we can't go and hold a meeting. We've got to go home."

Well, boy, I no sooner had the words out of my mouth when there was a rush by our people towards the police. Right into them! Rocks started to fly, everything started to fly. Boom! Right on the main street of Drumheller. And it lasted maybe ten minutes. But in the scuffle the drunks on the other side got entangled with the crowd and they beat each other up. A businessman by the name of Gooderson got a broken arm from one of his own. And none of our side was badly hurt. So it broke up finally.

After a couple of hours those of us in the leadership of the Party met about a mile and a half from the centre of town, in Newcastle. It's part of Drumheller today. And we figured there would be more trouble. There was a beautiful hall in Drumheller where we used to hold meetings and concerts and beautiful plays and cultural activities. Someone had phoned the leaders of the Ukrainian Hall and told them that the Hall was to be burned down that night.

In those days, you just tell the Ukrainian miners that someone was going to come and burn their Hall down and you know what would happen. "We're going to defend the Hall." The decision was made that we're going to defend the Hall. We were all worrying about poor old John O'Sullivan because he was getting up in age. And we decided that John was to get a car and take off for Calgary. I was to stay. And that night, I bet you there were 150 armed men on guard around the hall.

That was Saturday night, the night of the fight downtown. And, oh man, the women were out, bringing us food, chicken and everything else and coffee all night. I was eating like a millionaire. And, lo and behold, nothing happened. We did the same thing on Sunday night and nothing happened.

On Monday, I'm with Louis Hamer. Poole had been back in Calgary by this time and I was the only outsider. Louis was of Czechoslovak descent. They had a lovely two story house right across from the Ukrainian Hall. Because they were Communists, I was staying with them. Afterwards we were sitting on the grass, along the railroad track across from Louis' house talking and waiting for a call to come over for lunch, when we saw two cars pull up in front of his house. We saw the police get out and go in. And, naturally, we kept hidden in the deep grass until they went away. When they went away, we went down to the house and they said that the police were there and they were looking for both of us. Then the news came up in about a half an hour that Stevie MacDonald was in jail and Angus MacNiel from East Coulie was picked up. There were about ten of them in jail. And they're looking for me and for Louis.

We mobilized a quick Party meeting right there. Four of the fellows that we figured would get picked up with me drove in a car to Calgary. We had a meeting in Calgary and discussed the situation. And the Party sent us back. They decided that all the Drumheller people were to go back home and act naturally and, if arrested, get out on bail and they would be defended. So I went back for a couple of nights and by the time I'm called back, they had the other four.

In my absence in Calgary a terrible thing happened in Drumheller. There was a police raid and most of the leadership of the left-wing were arrested. That Monday night, the Hall was mysteriously burned down. Besides being a real big cultural centre with all the equipment necessary, it was a tremendous loss to the movement in Drumheller. And it was rather odd that while the leaders were not arrested on the Saturday night and Sunday night, nobody came near the Hall to burn it down. But once the leadership was gone and they were in jail, the Hall was burned down. And there were definitely strong suspicions that it was burned down with the silent okay from the RCMP.

Our attempt to hold a public meeting and parade was used as the excuse to arrest the leadership. The charge was unlawful assembly. All of the fellows were bailed out on \$5,000 each, pending trial in Drumheller. Local people with property put up their property as bail. This was an amazing amount of money since the majority of the citizens were basically miners, connected with the mining industry, and were very, very, poor. The mines might work a day or a couple of days every two weeks with skeleton crews. If the mines were working at all, they worked more commencing in October and going until spring. But this was a year of crisis and there was practically nothing.

They also had a warrant for my arrest. I came back into Calgary and I was watching myself carefully. All of a sudden, I'm called to a meeting and I'm told by the Party, "Look, you'll be useless here to us for the time being,

but we have an assignment for you in Fernie, British Columbia, and your name will be Frank Lennon."

The contact in Fernie, where I was to stay, was the Party Leader in Fernie, George Arbuckle. He's in Vancouver now. He didn't even know who I was, because my story was that I'd come down from Vancouver to organize the unemployed and the miners into the MWUC. So nobody in Fernie knew me. The miners had an independent local in those days and naturally, we wanted to get them into the MWUC.

God, I had good success organizing the unemployed. I had 300 or 400 hundred organized in no time. They were mostly married residents of the town. I guess I was there about six or seven weeks and I'm going up the street one Monday morning to meet the Secretary of the Miner's Union. And I'm just outside the door of the Northern Hotel in Fernie and here's a policeman coming down the sidewalk. And he says,

"Say Frank, I'd like to talk to you."

And I says, "Yes, about what?"

"Oh, come on in," he said, "and have a beer."

So, you know, the beer parlour was open about ten o'clock in the morning, so I went in. And he called for two beers. And I said, "Yes, now what is it that you wanted to see me about?"

He says, "Listen, we have a warrant for your arrest over in the police station."

My knees started to shake under the table and I said, "Are — are you kidding? Not me. You've got the wrong guy."

"Look," he says, "your name is Lenihan and you're from Drumheller."

I said, "Look, I was never in Drumheller in my life! I've come here from Vancouver. Check with Vancouver. I spoke at Coleman, Alberta, one night at a meeting, but that's all."

So, to let on that I wasn't scared, I called for two more beers. And we're drinking that and then I said, "Now, look, I'm sorry, but you'll have to excuse me. I'm supposed to meet the Secretary of the local. Are you off duty tonight? We could meet here about seven o'clock. I've got nothing to do tonight and we'll have a few more beers."

And he said, "Ya, that's fine."

And I'm standing up to go away and he says, "Listen, you're okay, but don't tell any of your friends I told you."

And I says, "Ah, forget it." My knees were buckling.

Out the door I go and I went back down to Arbuckle's and I says, "Come on, George, get a car, quick."

And he's all excited.

"What for? What for?"

I say, "You'll find out later. I've got to get to Calgary. The police are looking for me."

Well, that was enough for him. He got his neighbour's car. He was a Party person. He was a mechanic in the garage. And he drove me to Calgary.

I'm back in Calgary a few days and, lo and behold, there's a strike that breaks out in a small mine in Medicine Hat. They wanted an organizer. So the Party decided to send me to Medicine Hat. The Party wasn't too smart about these things. They should have sent me to Nova Scotia or some place where the police did not have my photo or my fingerprints. And again I got a different name. This time I was Jim McVay. They had a warrant out for me in my own name, from Drumheller. The police were looking for me and I couldn't go with my own name, so I was in Medicine Hat under the name of Jim McVay. This is where I met Harley Horne's father. He was a CPR engineer. And he was also a Party member. And I stayed in his house, because I had never stopped off in Medicine Hat before.

My assignment in Medicine Hat was to organize the unemployed and to help the strike. There were about fifty men on strike at this little mine about four miles out from Medicine Hat. The strike was lost almost before I got there. And finally the company broke the strike.

But I kept on organizing the unemployed and having some big meetings. In Redcliffe, about six miles out of Medicine Hat, word came to us that the farmers wanted to hold a meeting. And I was asked if I'd speak and I agreed. By this time I considered myself a public speaker. I had full confidence in myself then. I was doing fine. And we got there that Sunday and they had a truck for a platform. And, oh, there must have been about 500 people, farmers and everybody else there. In many cases the farmers were more radical than the unemployed.

The meeting had been organized by some radical farmers who had heard of me and my meetings in Medicine Hat. And, oh man! They were alert and ready for anything in the early 1930s. And we had what I thought were rich farmers. They had beautiful homes but they had nothing else. And, man, they were radical! They would sing "The Red Flag" at the opening of their meetings. The Communists set up the Farmers' Unity League (FUL) and the Workers' Unity League (WUL) to organize people. And this is the first farmer's meeting I spoke to. Already I had a grasp of some of the problems of the farmers. Of course the big problem they were all facing was eviction.

Anyway, I'm half to three quarters through my speech, when I saw a couple of cars pull up at the fringe of the meeting. I saw three guys get out of one. Then I had a hunch right away what it was. And, sure enough, these three mounties in plain clothes come through the crowd and up to the truck, where I was speaking. And when the meeting adjourned, they just came up

and said, "You're under arrest and you're going to Medicine Hat." This was a Sunday afternoon. And they took me into Medicine Hat, into jail — a dungeon. It was an awful place. One of the old time jails.

I'm lying in the bunk in the cell there and one afternoon the door opens and this guy comes in. I could tell he was the Chief or something with his buttons of brass. And he says to me, "Are you hungry, Lenihan?"

And I said, "Well, yes, I am."

"What would you have? Do you want a steak or chicken?"

Well, boy, I felt like kicking him where he'd feel it, because I thought he was being sarcastic.

And he says again, "Do you want to eat? Do you want chicken or steak?"

"Whatever I get Chief, I'll eat it."

And he said, "Do you want some reading materials? You'll be here maybe for a couple of days. An escort has got to come from Drumheller for you."

And he goes away. And, my God, in about three quarters of an hour he comes back with a platter of chicken, one of the finest meals I'd had in twelve months. And he threw me in a paper and a couple of old magazines. And I was shocked!

Anyway, I think it was a day later, the Mounted Police came for me. And I'm going out the door and he turns around and he says,

"Lenihan, you're alright but don't ever come back, eh?"

And I said "Don't worry, Chief, I'll be back." He was a Colonel the next time I met him. But, my God, he was decent. Taylor was his name.

The RCMP took me back to Drumheller where I appeared before the magistrate. I was released on \$5,000 bail which was put up by some of the miners. That was August, 1931.

There were fourteen of us out on \$5,000 bail. A lot of bail money had to be raised. Local people, labour aldermen, would put up their homes as bail. Here, poor people were mortgaging everything they had on the basis of trust of strangers, many of them transients. It was amazing. All fourteen of us were accused of unlawful assembly. And as I said we had a permit to parade and hold our meeting from Chief Draper of Drumheller. The unlawful assembly consisted of the RCMP and the drunken goons behind them who tried to smash up our meeting.

After a couple of days in Drumheller I got instructions from the Party to return to Calgary. The Party organization which included John O'Sullivan, Fred Luck, Boyson McConnell and others, called me back. They had planned a whole series of public meetings throughout the Crow's Nest Pass up into Fernie, British Columbia, where I was to speak to the miners' union and to hold public meetings for all citizens. The main purpose was to raise money in defence of the fourteen arrested in Drumheller, to pay lawyers' fees, and all of that.

I had a very, very successful trip, both from the point of view of strengthening organizations up in that country, as well as raising a lot of money. A lot of money was raised. All the miners' locals gave large donations for the defence. They were locals of the MWUC. I spoke right from Pincher Creek, Bellevue, Hillcrest, Frank, Blairmore, Coleman, Michel and Fernie.⁷ I covered them all. It was interesting and a good time. And it gave me a wonderful chance to meet all the Party people amongst the miners.

I always stayed in miners' houses. Many of them were Party members and lots of them were not Party members, but they were radical miners, progressive miners. The employment situation in these coal mining towns was very poor. Three days work in two weeks, sometimes four. And in spite of this, they were able to contribute all the time.

Then the FUL was organized also at that time. And I'd be sent out to speak at meetings of the farmers up North, and other places out of Drumheller. We spoke at all kinds of meetings. And we were raising money for the defence of the Drumheller miners. At the same time we were doing organization work, helping to establish locals of the FUL or meeting with the existing leadership of locals.

I know I was getting across as a public speaker. I felt inside of my own mind that I was capable for the job because the response to my speeches was very good. And when the meeting was over, there were all kinds who wanted to come up and meet you. And I felt quite confident. My manner of speech at that point was very agitational. I had a terrific voice. I never needed loudspeakers no matter how big the crowd. I spoke many times to 4,000 or 5,000 thousand in the Pavillion in Calgary without any public address system. The others were all using the "mike." I never had to use the "mike." Day in, day out, you're at it. And I had full confidence in whatever ability I did have, that I'd be able to express myself.

There was singing at these meetings. We sang: "Hold the Fort," "Solidarity Forever," all the songs of Joe Hill. And in some places, they had songs from the Soviet Union, like the "Red Army March" and other songs of this nature. As a matter of fact there were Italian songs like "Avante Populo."

"Avante popula a la rescosa
A la rescosa, triumfera
Bandera rosa la triumfera
Bandera rosa la triumfera

⁷Pincher Creek, Alberta is at the east end of the Crow's Nest Pass and Fernie, British Columbia is just west of the Pass with half a dozen towns in between. As a centre of class struggle based around the coal industry, the Pass would be comparable to Cape Breton, though the conflict lasted only about half a century in the Crow's Nest Pass.

Bander rosa la triumfera
Viva la comunista."

No matter which camp we went into, whether it was in Drumheller or way up in the North country or up in the Crow's Nest Pass, the Italians would sing radical songs. When one of us would come around, they'd have a party.

I went from mining town to mining town for practically three weeks. I don't remember how much money was raised but it was quite a lot of money, even in those depression days. And then I had to return to Drumheller for trial about the end of September 1931.

Our trial came up and a Mr. Justice Ives was the judge at the trial and fourteen of us were on the dock. Our lawyer was a man by the name of Sinclair. I think he was some kind of liberal. And naturally he presented our case.

I remember one spectacular thing there and that was when the Crown called on the local Chief of Police from Drumheller — Baker — to give evidence. And he gave evidence that he had given me the permit for the meeting and the parade and that the riot developed. He swore that if it wasn't for the way we behaved ourselves, there would have been more bloodshed and trouble.

However, during the whole trial, the Judge had some book next to him. I think he was reading a novel or something, because as soon as the evidence was in, he summed it up, and he gave us the maximum sentence of one year in Fort Saskatchewan Jail, hard labour. He threw the book at us, in other words. And we were locked up again.

And then our lawyer and the movement decided to appeal the case to a higher court. And we were back out on bail again. And then I was back into Calgary. With Calgary being our headquarters, I was used as a speaker wherever people wanted one. Well, I was speaking. I was on the road a lot. I went to Lethbridge but we couldn't rent a hall there. They had organized the unemployed there. And, of course, there were a couple of mining camps there too and they were in the MWUC under the leadership of Jimmy Sloan.⁸ And we tried to get meeting halls but we were blacklisted. So we called a meeting at the park in the middle of town. And we had a soap box and I guess maybe we had about 150 people there because it was something new for that part of the province. And as soon as I got up to speak, the police came right in and they took me off the box and started taking me down to the can. But finally, the two of them had a huddle between themselves and they said:

⁸Sloan was an MWUC organizer active in various trouble spots around the country. His fame would rival that of Sam Scarlett.

"Look, you get out of town and there's no meetings. No more meetings."

And I gave it some consideration quick and I says, "Well, I haven't broken any law anyway, so what?"

And they said, "Alright, now you can get out of town and we'll let you go."

Well, I can guarantee that's the last thing I did was leave town. And soon as I was free of them, I was back on the job.

There was kind of a growing radicalization taking place in every town, even among the farmers. It was growing. It was becoming a mass thing, moving to the left. And I guess they didn't want any kind of a leftist speaker to come in there. And that was the start of Lethbridge anyway.⁹

As for the attitude of the daily press at the time, we were the worst in the world. We were all paid Moscow agents. Moscow gold, Moscow gold. In fact, it got so sick that I took it up and made a joke of it. Up on the platform I'd say, "I'm expecting the Russian submarine to come up the river one of these nights with my payroll. They're behind in payments!" But the power of the press was wicked in those days. Wicked! But as far as the mass of the people were concerned at that time, there was no real animosity except among the press and the radio. But outside of the typical rich, that is the bourgeoisie, the mass of the people, if they weren't sympathetic to the Communists or the left-wing struggle, kind of respected it. They didn't attack. That came later.

The only press we had, of course, was *The Worker*. That came out of Toronto every week. Well, what was going on in Ontario or Manitoba was a mirror, a picture, almost, of what was taking place in Alberta. It was the same struggle, the same human forces involved. The government and the Mounted Police must have been working overtime watching us.

Anyway, I stayed in Calgary from then on until the appeal came up. And the appeal court met and heard the case. I think it was in the latter part of the year. They confirmed the jail sentence. So we had to give up and surrender ourselves. I think it was February, 1932. And we were all taken to Fort Saskatchewan Jail. And that was my first experience as a guest of the King. And I'm telling you, his board and room wasn't any too good.

Well that was the biggest mistake they ever made as far as I was concerned. In Fort Saskatchewan I had lots of time to do some thinking. And I made up my mind from then on I was going to be in the working-class movement.

⁹Lethbridge was probably the only region in Canada where the WUL organized agricultural labourers — in this case workers in the sugar beet fields.

Chapter 4

THE FORT SASKATCHEWAN JAIL AND VICTORY IN CALGARY

We got just a chunk of bread, about two inches thick and about eight inches long. That was for breakfast and tea. And every noon there was supposed to be a stew, but all that was in it was vegetables, thickened with flour. And we'd get the same for supper. With one exception. One night a week, I think it was on Friday, to satisfy the Catholics, they gave us baked beans.

The whole fourteen of us were in Fort Saskatchewan but we were on different floors. They separated us. We could write one letter a month. There was no smoking and no talking. It was wicked in those days. But good organizers always improve things, no matter where they're at.

They had a huge agricultural development with vegetables, cattle, everything, all run by prisoners. And, man, if it wasn't for that, I think half of us would have died, because we used to pull the raw potatoes and raw carrots out of the fields and eat them. We ate a lot of vegetables raw. They were good for us, once you could digest them. It was really a starvation diet.

It was a miserable, miserable place! The cells were just like a little bowl, with a wash-bowl in the corner and a toilet bowl. Your bunk had a straw mattress. But it was like a canvas sack, half-filled with straw, resting on the iron bars. So you were really sleeping on the iron bars. And every ten days, they'd make a raid on our cells and dump the whole thing out on the floor, looking for something. Life wasn't very good. You can imagine what books they had. Nothing like most of the magazines today. The cheapest of pulp and that's all. And you didn't get too much of that either.

We were allowed one visitor every Saturday for half an hour. But then you were inside this iron gate and they were outside and there were two guards standing there. We'd be called out one at a time. Fort Saskatchewan is near Edmonton. But we had visitors because the movement was strong in Edmonton. And some people would come up from Calgary. They'd be up doing Party work or something else. We had lots of visitors. And they'd give us the news, as well as they could, without giving away secrets. And we stuck it out. Every Sunday, we had the Salvation Army come for a church meeting. Well, we were all allowed to go. And we had a heck of a time passing

word around whether we should go or not. And all the fellows says yes. I was in favour of it too, because it would give us a break for an hour out of the cells and give us a chance to wink at each other or some other thing. We learned more religious songs there — “Pull for the Shore, Sailor, Pull for the Shore,” and all the songs.

Pull for the shore, sailor,
 Pull for the shore
 Heed not the sinking wreck but lean on the oars.
 Think of self no more,

And then something about the Lord.

But we had one fellow, a miner, and he had a really deep baritone. And he'd refrain from singing the verse. But when it came to the chorus, he'd go off with a blast! And he'd do it all the time but he was safe because he was singing.

None of our fourteen prisoners took the Salvation Army seriously. They never asked people to come up and kneel down and be saved or anything like that. But they said, “Well, if any of you people want to have a talk with the Salvation Army officer, it'll be arranged for you.” And, undoubtedly, many of the other prisoners did.

Anyway, we put our time in. Ten months and eighteen days. For every month of good behaviour, three days was knocked off our sentence. That was the rule of the prison. There wasn't very much we could do. And you just have to live with it, that's all. But one good thing it did to me, was it gave me lots of time to think things over.

I knew we had been framed in Drumheller. And this was my first real contact with the law, the police, and the courts. And I learned an awful lot from that. I saw the naked power of the capitalist state in action for the first time. How innocent people can be framed and thrown into prison. And I had nearly eleven months time to think about it. And the more I thought about it, the more I was determined to start again when I came out.

And we did come out. That would have been November 1932. The night we came out of Fort Saskatchewan Jail they had a big “do,” a kind of banquet for us in Edmonton. And, oh my God, we were heroes with the people of Edmonton. And, of course, we had to speak. And they wanted to know what we were going to do. Everyone of the fourteen said, “We're going back and start again.”

The movement outside had organized a hunger march in Edmonton, on the Parliament Buildings.¹ Oh my God, the farmers came in! Thousands,

¹The Edmonton Hunger March of 20 December 1932 was probably the biggest single manifestation of class conflict in Alberta during the entire decade of the

from the Peace River and everywhere else. The people were fighting for relief, for jobs, and the farmers were fighting against evictions. And they needed relief too. Although the Communist Party had been banned the year before, it continued to work underground and was active in helping to organize the march.

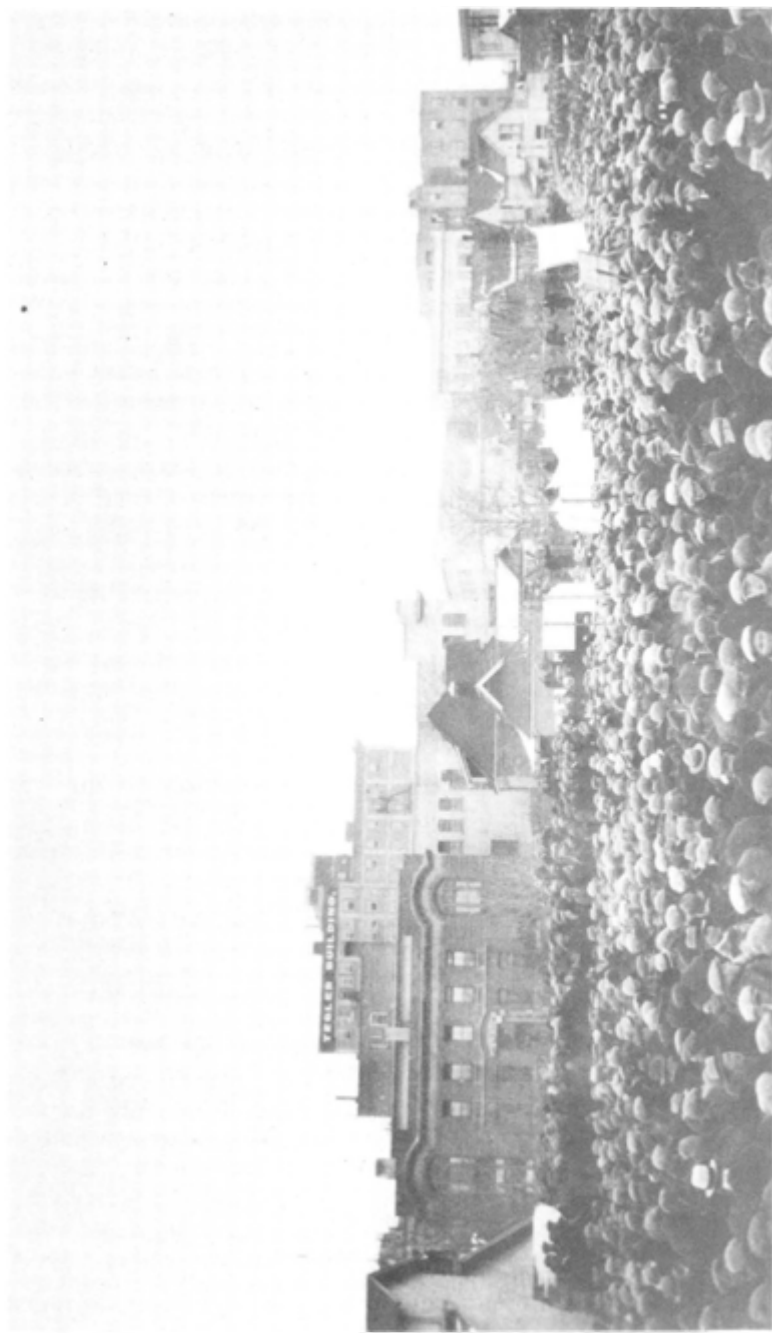
But in the meantime the Party leadership in the province had decided that the fourteen of us were not going to participate in the Hunger March. It was good thinking on their part because, I bet if we had shown up within three blocks of the thing, we'd have been thrown back in the can again. And the Party decided that we were to go home to Calgary and to Drumheller. The Party got the cars and we drove.

And, my God, we ran into a police barricade about 50 miles out of Edmonton. And here are the police on the highway and they're searching cars because there were all kinds of organizers out amongst the farmers. Young men and old men, all kinds of organizers out organizing and bringing people in for the March. They were trying to catch some of them. And who did they stop? They stopped us. We were a suspicious looking bunch. And we told them we'd just come out of prison and who we were. And they let us go.

And then we got back to Calgary and, of course, the Calgary organization had a big "do" for us again. It was organized by the Party. They'd bum some of the food and they'd buy some of it. And they had women's organizations and they'd cook it and set it up. In a couple of days, I was back on the platform in Calgary. Then, Christmas, of course, came up quick. And then we went into 1933.

At that time there were 6,000 married unemployed in the city. In Calgary, a married man with two children received \$6.90 per week for food and \$17.35 per month for rent, light and gas. Prime Minister R.B. Bennett's government wanted to cut the relief appropriations in half and to force labour schemes in all municipalities. Local authorities followed Bennett's lead.

1930s. The Hunger March was the provincial equivalent of the On-To-Ottawa Trek of 1935. The Trek had more breadth in terms of regional and national attention but the Hunger March probably had more depth in terms of local support. It brought together some 12,000 people in a city with a population of 80,000, or about one quarter of the adult population. The main demands raised by the Hunger March Committee in consultation with local organizations were non-contributory unemployment insurance (at this time there was no unemployment insurance of any kind), the closing of the twenty cents per day relief camps, cash relief instead of bags of groceries or script, relief for farmers, and an end to evictions and foreclosures in both city and country. The marchers were fiercely attacked by RCMP on horseback and city police with clubs. The next day 29 of the leaders were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly under Section 87 of the Criminal Code.



Edmonton Hunger March, Market Square, 1932 (*Provincial Archives of Alberta*).

Effective 2 April the married relief allowances of the city were to be cut by twenty per cent, the so-called summer rates. At the same time the City threatened to cut off the relief entirely for the single unemployed and thereby force them into the relief "slave" camps.

At this time Calgary had a population of about 80,000. But to show you the rapid growth of organization, there was the Married Men's Unemployed Association. They had about 3,500 members. They had a Women's Auxiliary with about 300 or 400 members. They had a big hall, offices, everything. The single unemployed association had about 2,000 or 3,000. The married ex-servicemen had a hall of their own, offices and about 1,000 members. And the single ex-servicemen had an organization of about 500. There was also a Single Girls Unemployed Association. So the whole thing put together was a force.

It was unfortunate that there were these divisions made between married, single, ex-servicemen amongst the unemployed organizations. The thing that we all had in common was that we were unemployed and going half hungry. The divisions were a result of a lack of trained leadership and a lack of understanding of the nature of the struggle, or the cause of the class struggle, on behalf of the majority of the people. It was a weakness, of course. But we were working on it. When they were organized as they were, the thing for us was to unify their actions in struggle. And, believe it or not, Calgary made history. Faced with a common danger, we were the first city in Canada to form the Central Council of Unemployed Unions from thirteen workers' organizations.

The City had adopted a very clever tactic to save money. They reduced the City payroll by \$600,000. They laid off all the labourers and a lot of mechanics from all branches of the City service. They cleaned out the street railway and the men working on the tracks. The layoffs in the City were deep. They had skeleton crews left, except the Fire Department and the Police, of course. But all the others were trimmed down to the bare necessity. And that's when the outside civic employees were cut from a 44-hour week to a 40-hour week. But they lost four hours of pay by getting the 40-hour week. And they laid some of them off and they went on relief. And then some more of us had to work for our relief on the basis of 50 cents an hour. So, instead of paying a proper wage, they were just paying relief. And they didn't pay that. The City made money on it because two thirds of the relief money spent came from the federal and provincial governments.

We were unemployed. But as a result of the relief system, we had to work it off. They were going to cut down on the total amount of relief we'd get for a month. Well, we'd work fewer hours maybe, but we'd get less to eat. And this affected the married ex-servicemen as well as it affected the other married men.

The unity came about because the City Fathers had decided to cut the relief paid to the married unemployed. There was no regular relief for the single. There were just soup kitchens. This partly explains the reasons for the different organizations because of the different forms of government assistance. Well, that was their thinking. But still it was wrong. But it couldn't be helped at the time because not enough leadership developed. There were lots of people but the problem was to develop a core of thinking leaders.

In response to the City's proposed cuts, the relief recipients demanded a 25 per cent increase in the allowances to compensate for the increase in prices.

Anyway, at that time there were some good men and there were one or two Communists, not too many in the organization. The two Communists had some influence, not a great deal, but they had some. And especially at a membership meeting, when the hall would be full, they could get up and express themselves. And they generally spoke sense, and they'd get support.

Well, the unemployed married men struck. And, of course, as soon as they did, all the organizations in the City in similar circumstances came out publicly and let it be known that they were supporting the strikers. Hundreds of school children started a school strike. We refused to work in return for food, clothing, and rent issues received. In response civic officials stated that any person in receipt of relief who refused to perform city work would have his relief cut by 25 per cent.

The City had two quarries going, where they got all their crushed gravel and crushed rock. They were doing a huge amount of work with our cheap labour. And we had a weapon in our hands, and we hit them. They felt it.

And the result was that a big meeting was called on Sunday 19 March in the Victoria Park Pavillion — the first meeting of that kind ever, I guess. The Pavillion was at the fairground and held about 3,000 people. And, of course, it was packed to the roof. In fact many people couldn't get in. And at that time I was authorized to organize the WUL. So was Harvey Murphy.² And so was John Weir, who had come from the East. And they were active here organizing for the WUL.³

²Harvey Murphy was a great agitational speaker. He was one of the most effective of all the Canadian Labour radicals of the 1930s. He became a legend among the labour left in his own lifetime.

³The WUL was formed by Communist trade unionists in 1930. It attempted to organize industrial unions especially in the resource industries and it was the only trade union federation to reach out to the unemployed in an effective way. The WUL was disbanded in 1935 when the Communist International adopted the "united front" strategy. Many former WUL activists would later play a major role in the great Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) organizational drive of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Murphy was a brilliant speaker and a brilliant organizer. After a rousing speech by Murphy, the meeting passed a resolution stating that if the City proceeded with the relief cuts, the relief recipients would refrain from registering at the provincial government labour bureau, refuse to perform work for relief for the City, and resist any attempts to be removed from their homes. Nevertheless, the City instituted the relief cuts effective Monday 3 April. The strike was enthusiastically endorsed by a mass meeting of five thousand on the Sunday before.

At the time of the Calgary relief strike, 60 men — scabs — continued working for the city, with heavy police protection. The Central Council of the Unemployed decided that we'd have to stop them from working.

We called a meeting for 25 April 1933 at nine o'clock in the morning in the Pavillion. Four thousand people came out. The place was packed to the roof. One speaker got up and said "We're going to the Mission Hill job site to stop the scabs." And the plan was made. The married ex-servicemen were to come in one way. The Married ex-servicemen — and my God, there must have been 1,000 of them there that morning — they came in, from the west, approaching the Hill, to the base of the place because it was quite a hill. So the married ex-servicemen were linked up there. Myself, and a man by the name of Van Horn, we had about 1,000 men and we came in a different way through the City, from the east. And there were single ex-servicemen over in the west, and a conglomeration of everything else on the south and the north. It was like a military operation.

The cops must have got a tip that something was going to happen because the whole city police force was guarding the Hill, going around in a circle, backwards and forwards and around. And we came up within four feet of the police line. And Inspector Burroughs who was in charge of the outfit was right in front of me. And he knew me. And he wanted to know who were the leaders of all this. And we said, "There's no leaders, we're all the same. We're all the same."

What we were waiting for was a war whoop. And this was to come at eleven o'clock. So we're just killing time and Burroughs and his men are in front of us. We're walking up and down, minding our own business and all of a sudden, we hear a war whoop. And, sure enough, it's eleven o'clock. I took my cap off and I said, "Okay!" And, boy, right through! and we got up nearly on the top of the Hill. I remember looking down, and here's the married ex-servicemen coming and they're roaring and charging for action. It reminded you of looking at a picture of Flanders.

Well, in three minutes it was all over. The whole city police force, they couldn't do anything. And we had the scabs. Some of the scabs were beat up. There were one or two of our fellows beaten too, but not too many. One

policeman got hit with a shovel and it went right through his helmet. He was lucky. We were all glad that he wasn't more seriously hurt.

Chief Ritchie was a good Chief. He wasn't bad. He had a job to do and he had to do it but he knew we were right. He told me that later when I met him. We had them surrounded. And this is all new to us. We're scattered in bunches and the first thing I hear is "Central Council delegates over here! Central Council delegates over here!" And here we go over and squat in the grass in front of the police and discuss. And a fellow says, "Well, what are we going to do?" The Central Council then decided, we're not going off the Hill until the scabs are gone.

Our spokesman was Eric Poole. He became the Social Credit Member of Parliament later on.⁴ Eric was a leader in the struggle. He goes to the Chief and he says, "Look, Chief, the Council is demanding that you call the City and tell them to send up some trucks here and get these scabs off the Hill and you people go with them." And the Chief agrees. The 60 scabs were removed.

We lined up along the road on two sides. And the trucks had to come up through us. And they came up and back down and we're all singing "Hold the Fort" and "Solidarity Forever." Then, with the Central Council leading in the front ranks, we folded arms and marched through the Town singing all our best songs. While we were marching victoriously through Calgary and had accomplished our purpose, I said to Murphy, "I can't help but think, there'll be a reckoning, Murph." And he says to me "Ah, you Irish bastards." Harvey Murphy was a very good speaker. He was logical and right to the point.

Mayor Andy Davison called upon the provincial government for armed reinforcements to control the strikers. Premier Brownlee responded by sending in 60 RCMP to "maintain order."

The Mission Hill episode was very successful from our point of view. After that we had a few days of relative quiet. Then the next thing some of us heard was that fourteen of the leaders had been arrested and they were looking for me. They couldn't arrest us on the site. But I guess they got warrants out and they rounded up two or three from the Married Men's Association. They got the outstanding leaders. They got Fred Nutt. He was

⁴For many years academics and the left regarded Social Credit as having always been a right wing populist movement. More recent research has demonstrated the earlier view to be incorrect. It had very considerable working-class support and there was often co-operation among the CCF, Social Credit and the Communist Party. By the early 1940s Social Credit was moving distinctly to the right and particularly after Ernest Manning (father of Reform Leader Preston Manning) assumed the leadership. He turned the party in a virulently anti-socialist direction. The definitive work in this area is Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto 1989).

one of the Married Ex-Servicemen. He was a leader, well-known in Calgary. He was a bricklayer by trade. And they got a few of the single men. And they were looking for me and Harvey Murphy. They were raiding the halls and other places looking for us but we were underground. We got tipped off.

The people of the Central Workers' United Front who were not arrested authorized Harvey Murphy to go to Edmonton to see if he could get the Edmonton unemployed to take sympathetic action up there. But Harvey was caught in a car leaving town and he was thrown in the police station.

I was still under cover. I was moving every couple of nights from one home to another. And the only time I'd come out was when I had to move. And this went on for about a week. Sometimes I was a little bit nervous. Sometimes I'd made an appearance in one of the halls and say a few words and the leave quickly.

Then the Central Council called another big meeting in the Pavilion, in the stampede grounds. A big protest meeting. And they wanted me to speak there. I'm not boasting, but nobody else could speak like Harvey and I, on the same topics, on the same subjects, and satisfy the people.

I was the only one of the leaders still not arrested. They got in touch with me and they wanted me to come and speak. The Party decided that I had better go and do my job. Those of us in the Party knew that this would be my last one for a while. But anyway, they picked me up in a car and they took me there. John Stokaluk was a leader of the MWUC. He was the provincial secretary and treasurer of the union. They had offices on Eighth Avenue. And he was the man that picked me up and took me to the meeting in his car. The Pavilion was packed. Packed! And the unemployed gave me a bodyguard and everything else when I was in the hall so nobody could touch me. And I spoke and everything went fine.

Well, later many of us were picked up and thrown in jail. This must have been the last week of April 1933. At that time, we had the support of the trade union movement. And we had the sympathy of the Ministerial Association that embraced all the Protestant religions. They were with us. And people wanted us to get out on bail. But they wouldn't give us bail. And for a couple of days we were wondering and then it hit us. May Day was coming up, the first of May. And there was to be a huge parade on May Day.

The May Day parade preparations were already going on. And this would be the first May Day in Calgary history where really large masses of people would participate: the ex-servicemen, the married men, everybody would participate. So they insisted on keeping us in jail.

Previous to this, May Day demonstrations in Calgary were basically for single transient unemployed people. But this was going to be a big one. We knew it and the other side knew it. And they decided that, all right, they've

got about 25 or 30 of us in there, and they'd keep us there. This May Day parade was a huge one. We could hear them outside the building, cheering and singing. Ten thousand workers marched through the streets of Calgary for a mile from Red Square behind the City Hall, where we used to hold protest rallies, to Meewatta Park in the largest May Day demonstration in the history of Calgary. Sixteen organizations participated in making preparations and all organizations carried their own banners. Oh, yes! They had a huge parade. They deliberately came by the police station to let us know that they were outside. And we heard them and, oh man, it was good!

Two of us were charged with common assault. Twelve others, including Harvey Murphy and I, were charged with unlawful assembly — the same charge as I had in Drumheller. Oh, we had a heck of a time, a good time in the can, because there were thousands trying to come over and see us. We had anchovies and pickled herring. There was one sergeant of the police and he called another fellow and said, "Look at them! They're crazy! They're all eating raw fish." I guess it was the first time in his life that he ever saw anything like it.

They just wouldn't let us out. But the day after May Day we were taken to court and the charge against us was read out. And, of course, we pleaded "Not Guilty" and we were held over for trial. Well, that meant we had to get bail. The court asked for five thousand apiece. And there must have been over a hundred thousand worth of bail raised. People put up their homes. The labour aldermen put up their homes, too, which was a good sign of strength for us. And we got out.

When we appeared in court, we were remanded and we all got out on bail. This raised the whole political struggle to a higher level, the question of defence, the funds for lawyers and everything else. Again, we all scattered out almost all over the province, speaking on the Calgary question and raising funds and really organizing. All these things seemed to backfire on the bourgeoisie. Finally, we appeared in court. The judge heard us and listened to all the evidence. The march into town and out of town was a minor part of it. But unlawful assembly, according to law, actually took place on the Hill, where we broke the police lines and stopped the work.

Anyway, the judge looked us over. He had us all standing up. There was a whole row of us across the courtroom. And he says "Lenihan, Murphy, Corey Campbell, stand up." We stood up. And he starts off by saying, "Well, I don't know what to do with you fellows. You've been in jail before." Actually, I was the only one who had been in jail before. Neither Murphy nor Corey Campbell had been in jail previously. "You've done things like this before. Didn't seem to do you any good." And he goes on like this for five minutes. I thought he was going to send us home. But then he throws

the book at the three of us. Guilty! Twelve months hard labour at Fort Saskatchewan.

Hard labour meant that you had to work. It may be out in the fields or in the cow barn. That was hard labour. You weren't breaking stones like in the old days.

Then the judge picked out the ex-servicemen and told them to stand up. He gave them a lecture and told them, "Well, you're ex-servicemen, and you did fight for your country. Let me give you a little advice. Don't concern yourself with other people's business and don't endeavour to regulate the world! Well, six months apiece!"

He gave Murphy, Campbell and me the limit according to the law. And then six months to all the rest. And Eric Poole, the fellow who later was a Social Credit Member of Parliament, got six months.

Our lawyers appealed the conviction and we were out on bail. Then we had the city aroused. There must have been five labour aldermen on the City Council. There was Fred White, Bob Parkyn, Billy Sutherland, Ross, and someone else. And they were behind us. And we had a labour man, Tom Reilly, one of the Commissioners, elected by Labour. That's one of the top jobs in the City. And, of course, they were all with us. On the Council they battled to drop the charges. They stated that it wasn't our fault, that we were led into it, that we were forced into it, and all this.

We put up a tremendous campaign throughout the province. And the Ministerial Association became very prominent. There were conferences called and all sympathetic organizations were invited to send delegates. And then — man, oh man — the public response was terrific! And this built up, gradually, from the time we got sentenced and out on bail and we got going on working amongst the people. This got built up. The pressure from the masses got so strong. There were mass demonstrations everywhere. There were 8,000, 9,000, 10,000 people there on parade in the City of Calgary. You betcha! We had huge parades. I remember one we led with 11,000 or 12,000. And I'm heading the delegation into the City Hall to meet the Mayor. And the Chief of Police, Ritchie, is standing at the door of the City Hall with a couple of other police and he turned around and I heard him say "Christ! They're still coming." You know, you could see them way down, blocks down the street. It was a great united front demonstration!

The mass support against the jailings was building up to the point where even the Calgary Trades and Labour Council had to demonstrate support for the unemployed. On the 24th of May holiday the Central Council of Workers Organizations and the Labour Council jointly organized a huge parade with bands and banners to St. George's Island. There were 6,000 there and we demanded immediate release of the 14 jailed. There was also

a resolution calling for a 24-hour general strike if there were any further cuts in relief allowances. Both resolutions passed unanimously.

Finally, the City Hall passed a motion asking the Attorney-General to drop the charges. And we got what they call a stay of proceedings. Well, you're still under charge. If they wanted, you could be picked up at any time and gone to court. But they never did.

It was the City in the first place that was pressing the charges. But by passing this motion, they were dropping them or trying to pull away from them. Well, anyway, we got settled again in peace. They didn't proceed against us. And we were back out on the job, Murphy and all of us. And we finally won the strike.

As a result of the successful six-week strike, the City was forced to withdraw its proposed 25 per cent wage cut. We maintained our level of social welfare, which was the highest in Canada. Premier Brownlee was particularly grieved that the Calgary unemployed received the highest relief scale in the country and yet most of the trouble came from here. We were pleased with the compliment. And then, of course, there were huge celebrations in all the halls and dances every week. Oh man! And thousands of them would be in the halls during the day. And they were really schools for socialist and communist discussion. There was another attempt by the Province and the City to roll back the relief allowances by 25 per cent a year later, in 1934. Again, mass demonstrations put a stop to that.

Up until then, in the main, my life was kind of uncertain. I was in jail, out of jail. I had this Mission Hill thing hanging over my head. And once that burden was off my mind, I came back to Calgary. I was here in Calgary pretty steadily and working with the Party people and the Young Communists here.

Chapter 5

UNION ORGANIZER, FAMILY MAN, AND LIFE IN THE CROW'S NEST PASS

The Party strategy was to see that members were in halls where the single, the married and the vets would congregate. And taking the Communist books, literature, the newspaper, *The Worker*.

In all this time, Section 98¹ was operating, but the Party was growing by leaps and bounds. Calgary had 250 members, maybe 300. And the same thing was taking place throughout the province and in the countryside, even in some villages way up in the Peace River country. I was up there, Grand Prairie. Section 98 did not keep people from their activity in a struggle for a better life. And the people, *en masse*, learned, through the work of the Communist Party and the printed materials they put out. The people of Canada, really, for the first time, learned about Section 98, what it was, and how it came into existence, and what a vicious, fascist piece of legislation it was. And it awakened hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country as to what a whip it was, always hanging over the people's heads. At this time, in 1933, the eight main Communist leaders were all in Kingston Penitentiary, but it did not stop the growth of the Party.

The year 1932 also saw the formation of the CCF here in Calgary. The CCF stated basically and openly that it was to be a parliamentary party and that's all. Every five years you'd vote and then forget it for another four. And in the meantime, the workers are out there on the street and there's no relief for them.

The CCF never did any organizational work among the various unemployed groups. They asked people to join the CCF, but they didn't try to give any leadership. But I will say that when people like myself and others

¹The arrested Communist leaders were charged under Section 98 of the Criminal Code with being members of an unlawful party. This was the first time in Canadian history that any political party had been so charged. Section 98 was the legislation that had been rushed through the Commons and Senate in less than an hour in 1919 to break the Winnipeg General Strike.

got into the hands of the law, their organization came and helped us with bail. And the Labour aldermen took our stand when they were on the City Council.

People today are surprised when you tell them that the CCF was born in Calgary.² Well, the fact was that the UFA had a government here. Labour had about five or six MLAs at least in the House. And then we had five Labour aldermen at that time. Well, naturally, that meant they had some support from people. And since 1902 Calgary was known as kind of a radical centre. The OBU had its birth in Calgary, in the Labour Temple. The CCF had its birth in the Labour Temple too. And Social Credit started from there, in Calgary. Now, you figure it out.

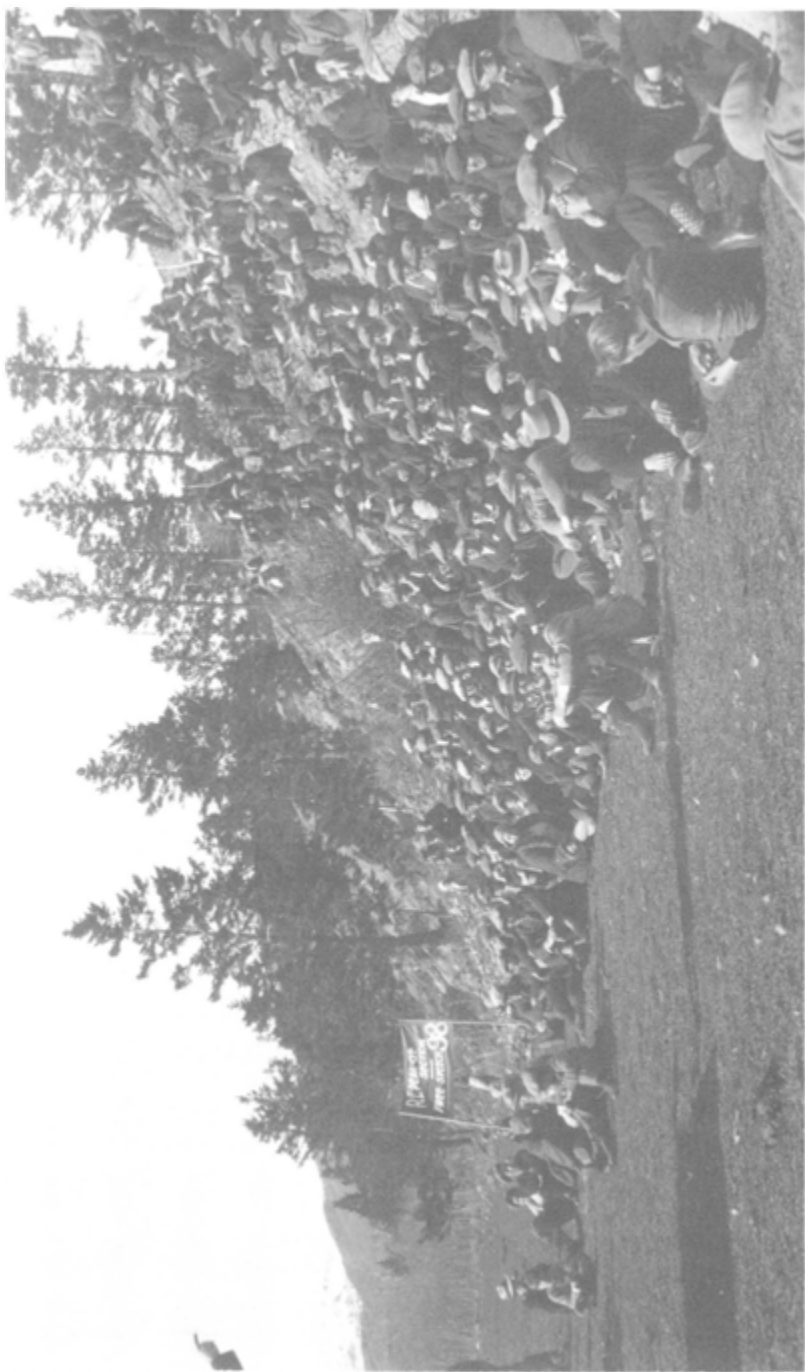
I knew quite a few of the leading Labour people in the UFA pretty well. A lot of good people were in it. I knew the government wasn't a socialist government. It tried to be a good capitalist government. They were elected on a kind of radical program, but no attempts were ever made to put it into life. After they came in, they swung more to the right, more to the right all the time.

To me there was only one party that was really trying to get the masses organized. However, in my opinion now, we were very, very sectarian. Unless people came out and said, "I'm really 100 per cent with the Soviet Union and I agree with this and this and this," they were anti-working class. That is if they were leaders, not the rank and file. We classed them as "social reformists," "social fascists" and fought bitterly on radio and everywhere else.

With us Communists, the feeling towards the Soviet Union was pivotal. We were pledged in our own minds that this was right. We knew that the Soviet Union was a workers' state and a workers' republic. The word "soviet" means council. To a lot of people it's some kind of a savage word that shouldn't be spoken. But in the Russian language all it means is council. The Russian "soviet" means the Russian council. As far as we were concerned, Soviet Russia was the home of the socialist revolution in this world for the first time! That's as true now as it was in 1917.

In most of our agitational speaking we stressed the need for the people of Canada to wake up and defend the interests of the Soviet Union and to get the Canadian government to recognize the Soviet Union. We spoke of the right of the people of the Soviet Union to build the system that they wanted and that it was none of our business to go over there and ostracize them and maybe slaughter them, which we tried to do after World War I. Canadian troops were over there. In early 1919 at the OBU convention here

²For more information on the Calgary Conference, See Walter D. Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961* (Toronto 1969).



Union Rally, Crow's Nest Pass, c. 1932 (Glenbow Archives, Calgary).

in Calgary, at the western labour conference, they went on record calling on the government to bring the Canadian soldiers out of the Soviet Union.

From the time I attended my first Communist meeting in the Variety Theatre and I had met the usher, who happened to be Anne Belkin at the time, somehow I was attracted to her. We had some terrific arguments in the first month or two after we'd met. When I was in town or I had a free night, we'd go to shows together or we'd go in the parks and sit down and we'd talk. Well, I guess it was something like a regular boy and girl performance. And she was always telling me about Russia. I was just getting rooted in the movement. And as soon as she'd say, "Well, back home in Russia now," I'd say, "I know, I know. The snowballs in Russia are bigger than the ones we got in Canada."

But somehow, through our meetings, we got closer and closer. Finally, I made up my mind that I'd ask Anne to marry me. She was working full-time with her sisters in the creamery, wrapping butter. The sisters had helped many of us with meals. The three sisters were all involved in the movement. And I mean involved. Outside of their working hours and their sleeping hours, the rest of the time they were doing something in some section of the movement. They were that active. If there were any parades, they were there. Or on picket lines, they were there.

Finally, Anne and I talked it over and I proposed to her. She came to visit me in jail and I told her through the bars, I said, "I'm going to marry you when I get out." And, sure enough, I got out of jail just after May Day and we got married on 12 May 1933.

I'd met Anne first in 1931. And here we were already in May 1933 when we decided to get married. And we did. And I want to say that it was one of the great things in my life that I was fortunate and lucky enough to meet a woman like her, a woman who was by my side everywhere, no matter where I was. Even if I was 300 miles away from her I knew she was there in her ideals. And all the thousands of people that know Anne, in every nook and corner of the province even today, they think the world of her. They thought the world of her because she just happened to be the real rebel girl.

After marrying me, she suffered. And possibly she suffered as much as I did, maybe, in her own way, mentally, she suffered more. But she knew what she was fighting for, the same as I did, and that solidified our marriage. It was a uniting of two complete persons. I mean, we were physically, mentally, ideologically united. Mind you, we had our little spats, too. Everyone does. But I'm happy that we had.

Right now, I'm seventy-five and Anne is seven years younger than me. We got married when I was 30. And she was 23. It was getting late in life for me. All my life, I'd been on the left, you might say, a rebel. I mean since I was fourteen years of age. And here I am doing all the travelling in the



Anne (Belkin) Lenihan, 1943.

United States and Vancouver and everywhere else. I'm heading for Toronto and what made me stop in Calgary?

I was determined about joining the Party. Everywhere people were suffering. There was no work and the trains were full of people going backwards and forwards. The highways were full of people. And when I got something that I could hang on to and a political conviction and an opportunity to do something about it, that nailed me down. I needed something to give me a hold, to give me a foundation. And, in the process of doing that, I found my partner, because she was doing the same. We were bound to meet. And I'm glad we did.

I was a full time Party member, recognized as one of the main leaders of the Party in Calgary. At that time, there wasn't any remuneration from the Party. Everybody was on his own. I got some help from the Workers International Relief (WIR). It was throughout Canada. And if they had an unemployed hall, like the single men, where there was strong Communist support, they'd open a hall and they'd have a kitchen. The funds for the WIR came from meetings and collections. They'd buy the food and cook it there. But up until the time Anne and I got married, in the main, I was living with Party people who could afford it.

Whatever money was collected was turned in to the local Party people. You were the speaker. You didn't touch any money. No matter if it was \$1,500. The local people got that. But then your expenses, transportation, would be paid. With the growth of membership and activity, the movement was getting financially strong. Collections were made once a month from sympathizers. Some of them were pretty well-off business people. They'd give ten, fifteen, twenty dollars a month to our collector. They had trust in the collector. They had to know the collector pretty well before. But the money was never a big problem. We didn't have any trouble financing our Party work.

At that time, we had a majority of the miners in this province in the MWUC, which was affiliated with the WUL. The WUL was basically formed on account of this wage-slashing and giving in to the bosses. And nobody was giving any leadership to the workers. In fact, the old leaders who existed in the trade unions went along with the wage cutting policy. The general theme of the so-called labour leaders at that time was that you can't strike now because the bosses, everybody is suffering, and telling the workers to accept this and accept that.

It was the Communist Party who really started the WUL. And the WUL, from the start, followed a policy of militant organization of all workers and a militant policy of fighting for better pay and better wages and better conditions. So while the established unions were accepting the cutbacks, the WUL was fighting for actual improvement in the face of the Depression.

A call came from the lumber workers for an organizer. What an experience! The call came from Winfield and Hoadley. It's up north of here. They had a lot of sawmills up there at the time and the lumberjacks wanted a union. And who's picked to go up? I am. And it was wintertime. I had low cut shoes. The suit of clothes was alright, a white shirt, pair of gloves and a black overcoat with a little thin fur collar. They were nice coats. We were dressed up alright. But we were dressed up for the city and not for organizing lumberjacks.

I get up to Hoadley, and I get off the train. I guess these guys were mesmerized when they saw me as the organizer. And here I meet a man who was to play, afterwards, a big role in the labour movement here in Alberta — Dave Graham. He finally became the President of the Alberta Federation of Labour. But Dave was a lumberjack. And the place where I was put to live was Boak's. He was an American, who had come up to homestead. And he was a lumberjack. And he was a Party member. And I'm to stay with him. It was close to Dave's place.

Well, my God Almighty, I was better off in jail. I mean, the family had nothing. It was a small family. It was freezing in the house. And when one of his young sons, I guess he'd be about twelve or thirteen, had to go out to the toilet he had to put on his father's mackinaw. I've never seen such poverty in all my life. And I stayed there. I guess I stuck it out there for a week.

We visited some logging camps. And then, the first thing we know, trespassing signs started to be put up. They knew we were organizing the union. We had one camp about half organized. And there were about 100 men in it.

Graham and these guys knew that I couldn't go through the snowfields in the way I was dressed. So they gave me two or three pair of woollen lumberjack socks and rubbers to go over them. And that's what I had to

wear. At night we'd get into the bunkhouses or any other way we had to get to the workers. Or we'd call groups into a farmhouse. We'd give them notes and hold meetings. But the bosses got wise to the union and they fired eight or nine. The rest struck. And I didn't know what to do. I was new at it. It was my first real attempt at organizing workers into a union.

When they struck, I was all with them, but I knew that we weren't going to win. There wasn't a chance in the world that we'd win. The bosses went to work. And in four days or so we had to call it off. Graham and some more were blacklisted. In fact, I think he finally had to move away from there. So we lost it. We didn't have a majority. There were quite a few of them we never had a chance of contacting. But it was an experience and all of us learned something.

Then I came back to Calgary and I got one of my big assignments. At this point we were winning one of the greatest fights we ever had in our history. That was to get the eight Communist leaders released from Kingston Penitentiary. They tried to kill Tim Buck. And this is in the Archives. They shot at him in his cell in Kingston. When the news came out, the people of Canada were shocked that such things would take place. And the fight was really going on for the repeal of Section 98 and the release of the Communists from Kingston Penitentiary. Their incarceration was coming to an end. They did get out between July and November in 1934.³ They had their sentences reduced for good behaviour. But what really got them out was the mass pressure. Hundreds of thousands of resolutions were sent in to the government.

That issue was raised every time we spoke, no matter where we spoke. Ministers of the church came out in support. The CCF at that time also had changed its position, and the mass pressure from below was terrific.⁴ That activity was going on, as well as big anti-war demonstrations.

After returning from Winfield and Hoadley and my experiences with the lumberjacks, I returned to Calgary for a little while. We were paying a lot of attention to the miners in Canmore, 85 miles west up the road, as you're going to Banff. We had a strong Party club, in Canmore, in the main all Anglo-Saxons. We also had a club in Banff.

³See Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928-1932* (Ottawa 1983).

⁴A "Ginger Group" of independent farmer-labour MP's constituted the CCF Parliamentary Caucus from the time the Party was founded in 1932. They first ran under the CCF banner in the federal election of 1935. Lenihan's recollection that the CCF had "changed its position" refers to the slight thaw that occurred in relations between communists and social democrats in 1935-36. The Alberta CCF Convention passed a resolution calling for either the affiliation of the Communist Party to the CCF or at least united action between the two parties.



Welcoming Communist leader Tim Buck to Nordegg, Alberta, after his release from the Kingston Penitentiary in 1935
(*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).

Canmore had a big coal mine. It's a big one today.⁵ The miners were the basic population. To give you an idea of how strong we were there and how the miners felt — the red flag was always flying over the Miners' Hall in Canmore. Night and day. For years. We had people elected on the School Board there. It's no wonder that the high school principal, Leslie Robin, was the leader of the Party there. And Bill Sherwood was financial secretary of the union and he was also a leading Communist. The president was Blake — a big, big stout man. Oh, there were all kinds of them. Bill Foster and Gilles — I remember them because I was so well acquainted with them. Oh, we had a real stronghold.

By this time I was already supposed to be able to give some form of educational at the Party group meetings. I engaged in public speaking at meetings and classes — educational work. Oh, I was working full time, I guarantee you. From associating with the miners there and also from doing my time in Drumheller, I was able to get a good knowledge of all of the different activities of the miners and the structure of the mines.

When I completed my tour there, I again went back to Calgary, and the Party then decided that they needed a man up in the Crow's Nest Pass. Harvey Murphy was there already. Harvey Murphy was the main organizer of the WUL. He already had all the locals in the Crow with the exception of Michel and Fernie and Hillcrest in the MWUC.

In 1932, when I was in jail, one of the basic demands of the Union, aside from money, was for official recognition of the Union in signed contracts. And, oh, this the Company fought. The bosses decided they were going to nail the MWUC. They started a policy of discrimination in the mine in order to feel out the strength of the Union before putting across a wage cut. And I guess the greatest strike in the history of Alberta took place at Bellevue, Blairmore, Coleman and Frank, where the miners all went out on strike. It became a vicious battle. It lasted for seven months, from February to September 1932. There were hundreds of RCMP in there. And, of course, the Company and the right wing elements in the camps were extremely vicious and active in trying to terrorize people. The radio, the press, and the United Farmers government tried to break the strike. Many were arrested. One woman, Mary Petera, got twelve months. She grabbed a Mountie by the belt and pulled him right off a horse. Later on she married Corey Campbell. She's alive out at the Coast today.

The Italians, Slovaks, Czechs and Yugoslavs were in this. They were really the backbone of it, with the Anglo-Saxon leadership. Bill Knight was the president of the Union. He later became the first radical mayor of the town of Blairmore.

⁵Canmore Colliery, which survived the shutdowns of the 1950s finally closed in 1979.

We had a very strong local of the miners in Coleman. And quite a number — I'd say at least 25 or 30 — were already in the Party.

West Canadian Collieries Limited mine in Blairmore was supposed to be one of the finest mines in the country. It was controlled by French capital. There were two big mines in Coleman. I think one was controlled by the CPR. The various companies were working together. And they had the blessing of all the bourgeoisie. All the big businessmen and a lot of small businessmen were in a united front to crush the Reds. That was their slogan — to beat the Reds.

In the latter stages of the strike, after seven months, the companies adopted a new tactic. The companies blacklisted about 70 of the top ranking miners. And for the ones they were sure would scab, if they got a chance to go through picket lines, they established company unions — they had one in Coleman, one in Bellevue, and, for a short time, they had one in Blairmore. And this kind of weakened the front.

Finally, a compromise was made. The strike was a long, bitter one. The strike ended in a partial victory. The demand for union recognition had to be dropped. They got some wage increases, but not a signed contract. The Blairmore operator promised non-discrimination against the MWU pit committee.

As a result of the loss in Coleman, about seventy real militant workers were blacklisted from that day until the war broke out in 1939. They were blacklisted in any mine in the Province of Alberta. And they had to leave their homes.

The role of the Mounted Police during all this was terror, terror, terror, smashing picket lines and arresting people. The same old tactics down through history. The same as they do today.

With the aid of the UMWA these home locals, as we called them, the company unions, were functioning and recognized by management. At this point they were independent, but they were getting funds through the back door from the UMWA to keep them alive. The UMWA attitude was that it was better to have a home local, than to have the MWUC, because they'd weaken the MWUC. That was the tactic.

The two basic leaders of District 18 of the UMWA were Bob Levitt and Angus Morrison. Then they'd come to a meeting, they would be told to leave town. They always had a 45 gun in their pockets when they went out into a mining camp. And they pulled the gun. They pulled the gun in Bellevue, and they had it in Drumheller. And it was their own local meeting. But the coal companies recognized the UMWA. The leaders of the union had to protect themselves from their own membership with 45s.

I wasn't in the Crow during the period of this strike, but I got there just when the strike was over. I was endorsed by both the Party and the WUL.

Basically I was always under the direction of the Party because I was becoming kind of a Party leader then in the province. The Party would send me as a Party official to organize the unemployed and workers into the WUL. There wasn't any kind of clear separation between the two organizations. All the people we would speak to on behalf of the WUL, the trade union movement, we told them who we were, what we were. We never hid. We worked openly as Communists in a trade union. I was a member of the WUL as well as the Canadian Labour Defense League (CLDL).⁶

When I got in there, all the hostility between groups and different sections of the people was still there and, believe me, it was at a high pitch. Our big job then was to get people to infiltrate these home locals and get them to at least begin talking with us and forming a united action as far as the conditions in the mines were concerned.

In the winter of 1932-33 the elections came up for mayor and council in Blairmore. That was the biggest mining camp and the main town in the Crow's Nest Pass. Most of the executive of the union were not Communists, but the Party would meet with the executive and discuss what should be done, in as broad and democratic discussions as possible. They would call in the women who were organized in auxiliaries. Their leadership would all be brought to a conference and discussion, and they decided to contest the town elections, to run a candidate for mayor and to run a slate for the Council and a complete slate for the School Board. And we had a real campaign. And the result of it was, on election night, we had elected Bill Knight as Mayor and the entire Town Council of twelve, all of whom were miners. We won six of the seven positions on the School Board, losing the last position by only four votes. Bill Knight was an Englishman, a carpenter in the mine. He was not a Communist. Nevertheless, he was a leader in the strike. He played a good role in the strike.

The election victory was the direct result of the work of the MWUC in raising the political consciousness of the miners, particularly during the strike. From then on, May Day became an official holiday in Blairmore for all workers and students and it became the occasion for big parades.

Blairmore had a home local led by a fellow called Danko.⁷ He was a powerful, physical man. But he was a real scab herder. However, in spite of the fact that there was a home local, we took the works. They ran a

⁶The CLDL was Communist-led but fairly broadly based and was quite effective in defending political and labour radicals from the state repression of the 1930s. See J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origin and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925-1940," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 10 (Autumn 1982).

⁷John Danko, a leader of the Slovak community in Blairmore, supported the right wing during the 1932 strike but later shifted his allegiance to the local left.



Blairmore Town Council and Police Chief, with local union leaders and other officials, c. 1934 (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).

progressive slate, a miners' slate. But most were all well known activists in the Communist movement. And, oh man, was there celebration! Was there celebration! Phew! Man oh man! And as soon as the first Council meeting took place, the social upheaval was on. And the first thing, of course, they called the old Chief of Police. He was fired and a new Chief of Police was appointed, Joe Fitzpatrick, an Irishman. And he'd been a miner all his life, but he was well educated. And some of the miners had real depth in their education. And Joe would be coming down the street and somebody would be under the influence. "Now, comrade, you'd better go home." And here, he's always decked out in a beautiful uniform, you know. And, oh, he looked the typical part of a real police chief. And he took a delight in his job. But he was good. He had to work with the Mounties, but he did all right.

There were municipal police in the town itself, with the Mounties on the outskirts. The Mounties had a barracks right in town from which they'd cover the whole Crow, from Coleman down to Pincher Creek. Sergeant Casey was in charge of it.

There must have been 60 or 70 Communist Party members in Blairmore at that time, in a town of around 3,000. But we could have doubled the membership. And a peculiar thing about it was we had a very strong Italian section and most of them used to go to Mass. They were Catholics. The priest wasn't bad. He never made any talks or sermons against the Communists. He did his duty as a priest I guess in as fair a way as he could on the basis of his beliefs; he didn't interfere with politics.

Then the Council had time to do some work. In about a month they about trebled the taxation on the coal companies. And Blairmore can get an awful lot of snow — some winters three or four feet of it, or more. So they bought a big tractor for cleaning the streets. This was all deliberate, all planned. And the orders were that, in case of a snow storm, the first places to be cleaned would be where the miners lived. And the entrance to the coal mine and the coal company houses — that was to be last.

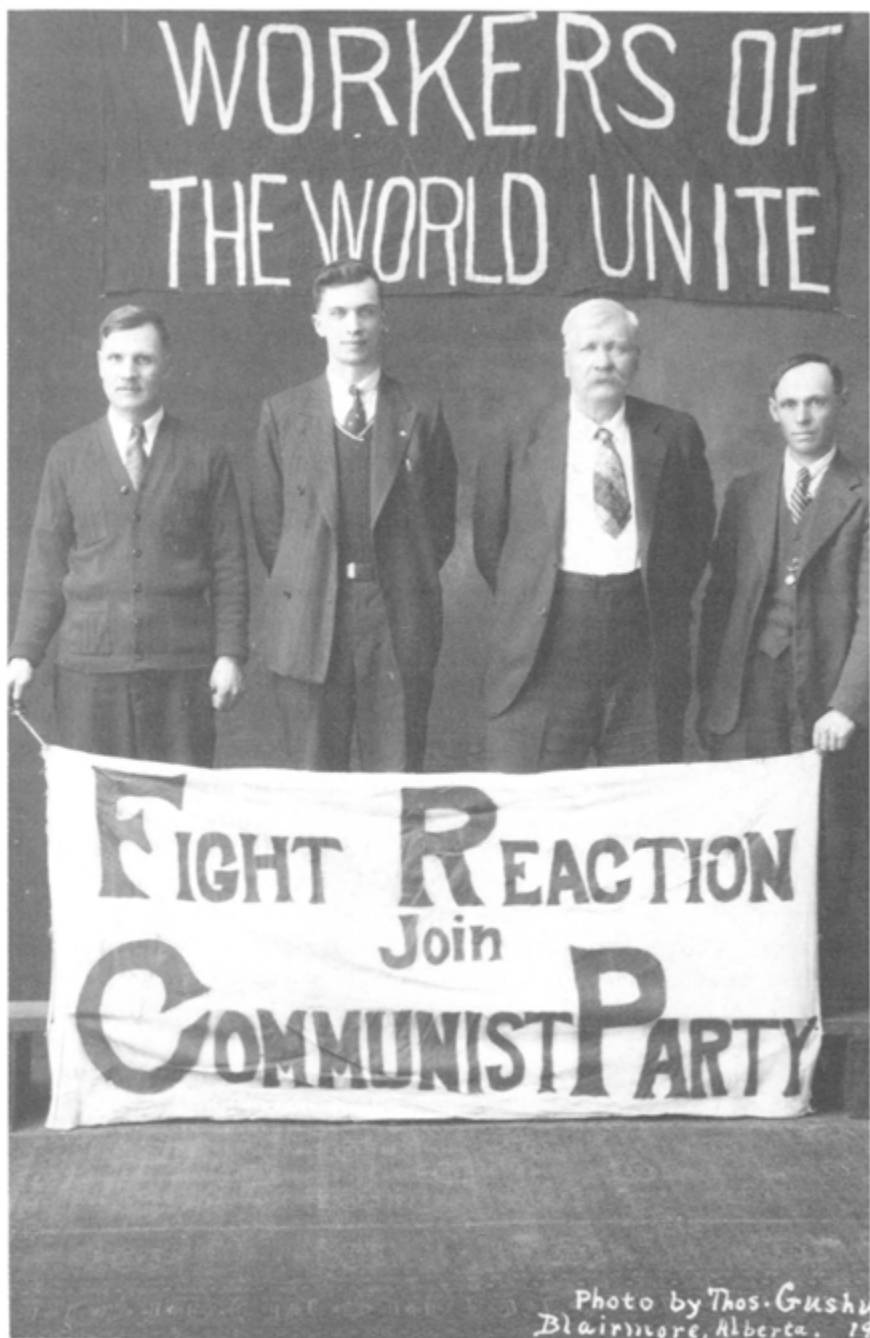
They improved and paved the streets where rows of miners lived. Well, they were mud. But the Town went in and graded them all, gravelled them all, built sidewalks. Oh, they worked!

There was conflict with Provincial authorities when the Town decided to pay the unemployed going wages and to serve rum tots in cold weather.

And there was a big parcel of land right along the main street, Victoria Avenue. You've seen towns like it, where the railroad tracks run right along the main street. Well, in between there was quite a strip of land inside the city limits. I think it belonged to the CPR. It must have, because it was right next to the track on one side. And the town goes after it, takes it over and makes a park of it with special spruce trees planted all around. And they put a bandstand right in the middle of it across from the Cosmopolitan



May Day Demonstration, Blairmore, 1932 (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).



Local union leaders, Blairmore, c. 1932 (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).

Hotel where they'd do band concerts. And, generally speaking, they lived up the whole town. They showed in a positive way what a workers' administration could do. And this even affected lots of the small business people and fellows in the home locals, when they saw what was taking place. The taxes went up on the coal company. It was the main taxpayer. And they doubled the taxes there for the schools for the children. Oh, the coal company was howling.

Of course, they made small mistakes. They were trying to do certain things. They fired all the old administration who were against us in the strike. But, in the main, they accomplished wonders.

Then one of them at a Council meeting decided it was time to change the name of the main street. They decided to call it Tim Buck Boulevard because they had already built the park along the other side, so it became a boulevard. And they named it officially Tim Buck Boulevard. Then, just as you're coming into town from the East, when you're driving into Blairmore to go to B.C., they erected a big neon sign "Tim Buck Boulevard." Here it is, flashing at you, "Tim Buck Boulevard." And then they had another one at the other end of town, "Tim Buck Boulevard." Oh, this got the headlines throughout Canada. The people of Blairmore knew Tim Buck well, because Tim had been going in there for years. They adored Tim. The "Workers" Council was never defeated, but the name was changed after the Social Credit government was elected. A new political situation was created as a result of the 25-dollar promise and the fact that Premier William Aberhart had clamped down on the evictions and he attacked the banks, and passed all kinds of legislation on the banks. Of course, it was all thrown out by the Supreme Court of Canada. But the pressure from the people for change was there and it was pushing these right-wingers to take drastic action.

Mayor Bill Knight was, as I have said, not an ideological communist. He was more of a class rebel. After about a year, he started to try and get things through Council that had nothing to do with the progressive movement. And the people were kind of losing faith in him. And this was going on for quite a while. Then he dropped out of the Workers' Unity League/Popular Front circle in Blairmore, because he wanted to continue the way he was. He thought that he was emancipated because he was Mayor. Well, the Party organization immediately had to start looking over the ranks to see who would fill his place in the next election.

We had a president then of the miners' union in Blairmore from Nova Scotia, Enoch Williams, who was a Party member, very active, well educated and deeply read. Enoch had a car at the time, and he'd be driving me to meetings all over. He was highly respected. He was a bachelor. He was about my age at the time. But he was highly respected by all the small business

people because he was a very clean living man. He didn't spend much time in beer parlours or anything else like that. He was the man.

Then we started a campaign to see that he got elected. And, of course, our good old friend Bill Knight didn't like us very much and he turned against us altogether. He had become a businessman when his term was up. We contested the election and Enoch Williams was elected Mayor for a two-year term in 1937.⁸

Then there was an election in Coleman, three miles up the road at the same time as the election in Blairmore and we had candidates running for school board and alderman. We didn't win any seats there. Mike Daniels, a Young Communist League organizer, and I were in one of the polling places in Coleman where the working class were voting. And two Mounties came in and asked us what we were doing. We told them what we were doing and we were entitled to do it under the law. "Come on." And, oh man, it was below zero and it was snowing. That snow followed me everywhere. It was snowing like hell and they put us in their car and what do they do? They drove us down the main highway and put us out of the car between Pincher Creek and McLeod, the most miserable open spot in Alberta in the wintertime. We'd have frozen to death if we'd been out there long enough. Fortunately a truck came by and picked us up and took us into Blairmore. This was the kind of tactics that were being used.

I settled in Blairmore in the Crow's Nest Pass. Our territory was from Pincher Creek up to Fernie. And the clubs were growing, growing and the unemployed organizations were getting bigger and bigger and it was really more than a full time job. You were going night and day.

Anne was still in Calgary. She was fired because she was married. It leaked out, like everything else does, that she was married to a leading Communist in Calgary. That did it. And, of course, Anne, as a result of her pregnancy, was missing days. And finally the superintendent told her she was fired. And the excuse given was that she was married and that she was sick. She was supposed to get two weeks notice when fired, and she got none. And Anne wanted her back pay. And he wouldn't give it. So we went and saw a lawyer, the same lawyer who defended us in Calgary and in Drumheller. He told the manager that he'd better pay the wages. And he was refusing. And then the lawyer asked him why. He left the lawyer with the impression that Anne was a loose woman and that she was sick all the time, certain implications. And the lawyer really went after him and told him he'd be sued for plenty. The lawyer wanted us to sue him and Anne wouldn't. She said, "Look, all I

⁸Williams served continuously as Mayor of Blairmore until 1952. In 1939 he broke with the Party over the war issue but was sufficiently re-aligned by 1944 to run as a Party-backed candidate in the provincial elections, losing narrowly to Social Creditor William Kovach, another coal miner by trade.

want is my wages." "Well," he says, "you go back down there tomorrow and you'll get it." And this happened. And then in February 1934, our eldest son, Dennis, was born. So Anne was in Calgary with our son. I was at the birth, of course.

I was spending all of my time at this point in the Crow's Nest Pass, out on the road. As well, Anne was working in the movement somewhere, when she was able to get around. I stayed there, in Blairmore, in the Crow's Nest, about three or four months. And then I came back to Calgary for a while. I was working and participating in strikes in Calgary with the unemployed workers. Then the people in the Crow's Nest Pass, the Party people, the miners, all of them wanted me back. Harvey Murphy was still in there. But they wanted me back. They had to have one man at least looking after the Party because we had over three hundred members by this time throughout what we called the sub-district of the Crow's Nest Pass. We had organized clubs in Pincher Creek, Beaver Mines, the Foothills, Blairmore, Frank, Bellevue, Michel, and Fernie — all farmers and miners.

So the Party made a decision. I was sent back to Blairmore to stay. And the miners rented a little house they had all ready for us when we got there. And we were only three doors away from the secretary of the Miners Union, Joe Krkosky, who was killed in a mine explosion. Oh, he was a loss to the working class. He had a brain, courage, everything! And he and his brother, Martin, were working together at the face of the coal and there was a cave-in. About a ton-weight fell on Joe and smashed him. They buried him. I spoke at his funeral.⁹

So we were only a few doors away from them and right in the centre of the miners' homes. The miners fixed up the house and stocked it. You should have seen the stock of groceries that was in it. And Anne came with our boy. Oh, we had a happy life there.

At the time, I was doing my regular Party work. The MWUC still had the mines in Bellevue, Blairmore, Corbin and one local in Fernie. One local in Michel was still independent but they were very sympathetic with us. We had a park in Michel, Karl Marx Park. Michel turned out to be a real radical town. You bet! We never elected a council there or anything like that but we had the strong support of all the miners and the union.

We had one mining camp up in the mountains, a place called Corbin, just across the border in BC. It was a complete company mining town, controlled by the Americans. And we had a real strong union there. There must have been about 350 members in the union and they were forced to

⁹Joseph Krkosky Jr., a Canadian of Slovak descent, was killed in the Blairmore Colliery in October 1944, ending a twelve-year career in union/municipal politics. He was only 35 years old at the time of the tragedy. The funeral occasioned a massive display of solidarity in the Crows' Nest Pass.

go on strike. I mean on a real strike. But in those days, in the days of Canmore and everywhere else, we had a tactic. We were going through them continuously, what we called "pithead strikes." That meant maybe you'd have a general agreement on conditions with the company, but they were always trying to violate it and promote who they wanted, giving the best places in the mines to their friends. When they'd become acquainted with what was going on, the grievance committee of the union would meet in the morning. And they'd try and see management. Management would say no. Well then, "Everybody out!" Quick strikes. Might last a day, maybe two or three days. And this was a very common tactic all over. All out! No work! And this was very generally practised in those days. If they had a grievance, and they didn't settle it, then there was no work. There was very little in the collective agreements, where they existed. Practically no fringe benefits.

Anyway, the strike broke out in Corbin and the American company had decided to smash the union. And, of course, they had the class collaboration of the leaders of the UMWA — the same forces that were used against us in the strike in Blairmore. They were united against the Corbin miners.

The strike went on for about two or three weeks. And we were going in there to speak to the miners — we'd go up on the train, Harvey Murphy, or the Mayor of Blairmore, or myself and John Stokaluk, the leader of the MWUC or Jimmy Sloan, the president of the MWUC. Corbin was not easy to get to. You had to go up there on the train to Michel. And then there was a train twice a week from Michel up into Corbin. And I think it was about twelve or fifteen miles up, way up, climbing the mountain.

The BC Government, of course, with the RCMP, saw to it that Harvey Murphy, the mayor of Blairmore, Jimmy Sloan, the president of the Union, Stokaluk, and myself, couldn't go into BC. They would search all the buses and trains and have barricades on the roads to search cars. So, to get in, we had to sneak in. And on this occasion, there was a very important meeting of the miners and I got the assignment that I had to go in. We had a big meeting on the next Sunday. Somebody had to be there.

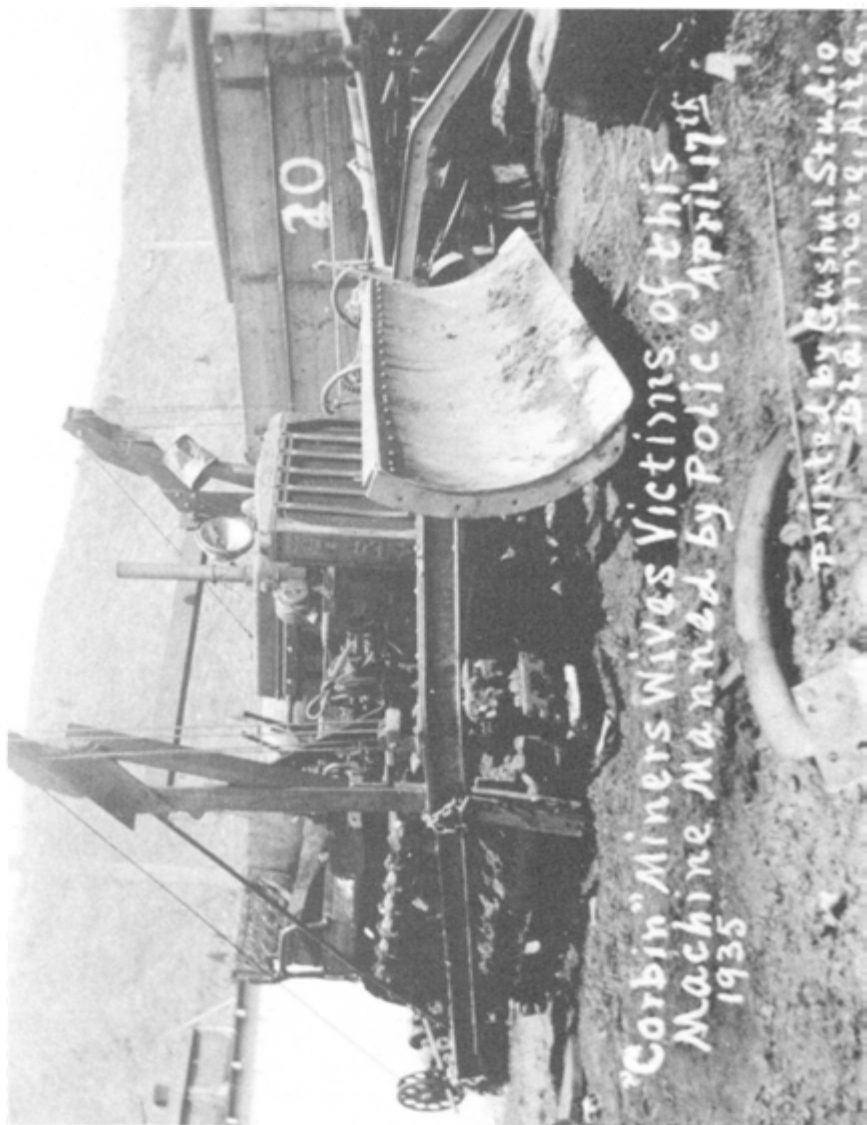
Every Saturday we'd have a big dance down at Frank, east of Blairmore. It had a hotel and a huge hall behind it. And, my God, we'd have five hundred people there, at a dance. This wasn't on a Saturday night. This must have been a special dance. And George Arbuckle, the leader of the Party in Fernie, had come down from Fernie to the party, to the dance, to the social. And, oh, there was a blizzard on. Oh, the snow was terrible! And there, at Frank, that night, we had a discussion about how to get into Corbin. And I said, "Well, look, I can't ride trains and you can't go by car." You know, we're all leading Party people.

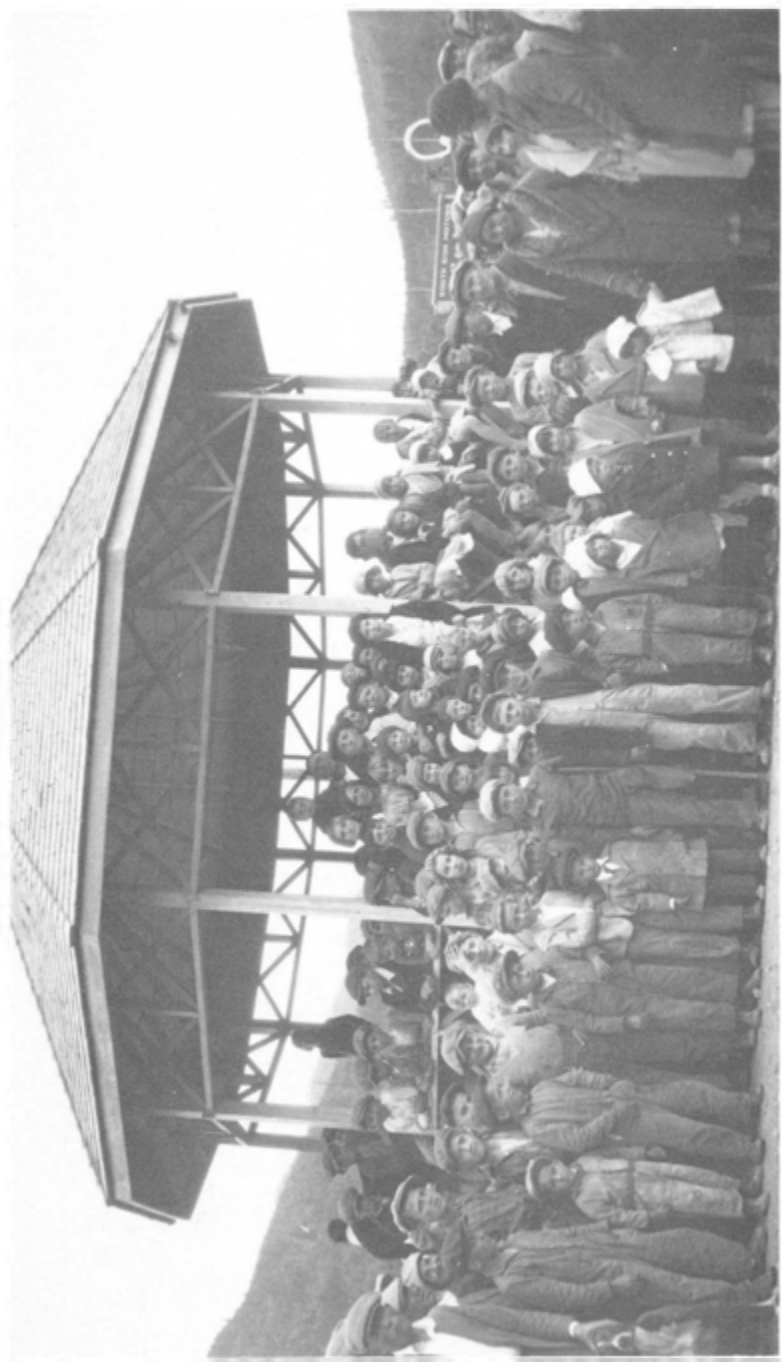
I says, "How can you get in there?"

"Oh," Arbuckle says, "That's all right, Pat. I'll get you in. I'll get you in."



Wives of striking Corbin miners, and the machine (below) with which they were injured, April, 1935 (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).





Wives and children of miners gathered in Karl Marx Park, c. 1934 (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).

So I said and the other fellas said too, "Well, how will you get in?"

He says, "We'll walk." Well, my God!

It must have been 30 miles, and it was all mountain! From the time you leave Coleman, you're heading right into the Rockies. And I thought he was crazy. But they said, "Well, we got to go. We got to do it." So, of course, being a good Communist, I was willing to try anything once. And I'll never forget it as long as I live.

It was a good thing we did it on Saturday morning. The beer parlour was open. We all met in the beer parlour in Coleman and it was snowing like heck. George and I and Harvey Murphy and the bunch that was with us, I guess maybe we had six or seven beers apiece. And finally Murphy says, "Well, if you fellas are going, you'd better get going." Ha! I didn't feel too happy about it.

We started walking from Coleman. And, Lord God ... I just had on an overcoat and scarf and cap and overshoes. We went along the highway. But there was deep snow in places from the wind drifts. When we got into Michel, about ten o'clock at night, I was at the end of my strength. And we were lucky. Because, again, the beer parlour ... there were two beer parlours ... open. George was able to take his beer better than I was. They closed at eleven o'clock at night. So we drank all the beer that we could possibly consume in an hour.

And then we started out again towards McGilvary. It was seven or eight miles up past Michel on the way to Corbin. And, oh, it must have been one or two o'clock in the morning when we got to McGilvary. And I could go no farther. And we were fortunate in that there were two or three little shacks. And we knocked at the door of one of them and we introduced ourselves and told the fellow who we were and what we were doing and why and where we were going. "Come in, come in, come in." The snow was blowing all over the place. Well, I say it was the will of God! He happened to be a sympathizer of the Corbin strike. He was foreign born. He was working on the tracks for the railroad. They had two room shacks. Nothing fancy in that part of the world. And he took us in. He only had one bed. He fed us, gave us a couple of pints of whisky and he gave us his bed. And he said, "Go ahead, I'll get you up at six o'clock in the morning." And, boy, when he woke us up Sunday morning, he had breakfast for us and everything. He gave us a good drink of whisky and shook our hands. He said he wanted to see us again sometime in the future and wished us all the luck in the world.

And we started out again. We had walked the railroad track from Michel up to McGilvary. We got on the railroad track again and it was all covered with snow. But we were able to walk the track. The poles and the wires directed us. We were about half way and my feet were in terrible condition.

But Arbuckle was strong as an ox and physically much stronger than I was. And every once in a while I'd have to sit down and just sit there for a couple of minutes, and then we'd get up and go again. And as we were walking, I was really beat and kind of fed up. And I'm yelling and kicking all the time, "Why the hell did we ever do it," and "We're crazy," because I honestly never thought we'd get there. And George would look at me and grin and finally he said, "Ah, quit, Pat. Remember Lenin going through Siberia?" Well, the mood I was in, I didn't care about anybody going through Siberia. But that was the kind of man he was. He was a staunch miners' leader in Fernie, BC. And, finally, one way or another, we got there. I don't know how in the name of God we ever made it. But we did. And George is still alive somewhere out in Vancouver today. And we got in touch with the union president. Well, they were mesmerized. They couldn't really believe that it was possible. Oh, it was a miracle!

The meeting was at one o'clock in the afternoon. It was a mass meeting and, of course, the hall was full, women and everybody, because it was kind of a citizens' meeting. And when he introduced us up on the platform and told them what we had done, boy, they just went wild, standing up cheering! George made a few remarks. He wasn't a great speaker but he was active in his own miners' local in Fernie. Then I took over and I delivered my message and we got a wonderful, wonderful reception. If everything had been normal, they wanted us to stay forever.

We stayed that night in a miner's house. We wouldn't go near the hotel. Monday, we're faced with getting back. And it was a choice of walking back or taking a chance on the train. Taking the chance on the train, we could have been picked up. And I won my point. I didn't care if I went to jail for two years. I wasn't going to walk back. And we got the boys to take us over to the station and we got the train. And, by God, about two-thirty in the afternoon, we arrived in Blairmore.

Well, at that time, Bill Knight was the Mayor. And he had opened and operated a pool hall, quite a large one. He had a Party member hired to look after the tables. And all of the miners were only working a couple or three or four shifts in two weeks. In the days when they weren't working they'd congregate in this pool hall or immediately around it. And that's where we headed for. It was like the Puritan Cafe in Calgary, the headquarters of the movement. And when we went in, Harvey Murphy and a lot of Party members were there. They knew we had tried to get to Michel. They all gathered around us. And Murphy was the main one. He was always teasing me. And he walks up and he says, "Well, you fellas look fine. You had a good trip, eh? You got as far as Michel. Had a good time?" And I said, "What are you talking about? We were in Corbin. We attended the

meeting." Murphy wouldn't believe us. And finally, I pulled \$150 out of my pocket and I showed it to him.

He said, "Where did you get that?"

I says, "In Corbin."

Well, then his eyes opened up and he says, "What's that for?"

I said, "The Party insisted that I take it as a special donation to the Tim Buck Fund."

You know, you couldn't raise money in the name of the Communist Party publicly in those days. One hundred and fifty dollars was, in those days, a lot of money. I think at the moment when I had one hundred and fifty, maybe I had two or three dollars of my own in my pocket. And, oh, then they believed us and then they wanted to hear the story.

In the end, the companies couldn't smash the strike in Corbin and the American company finally decided to close it down completely. And it's never opened since. And all that coal is still up there.

Following the Corbin strike, the attention of the MWUC turned on the camps in Michel and Fernie. Fernie is 25 miles farther west. Through our contacts in Michel, I got an invitation from the local union — Sam Weaver, I think, was president of it at the time — to come to speak to the miners about the WUL and the MWUC. It was open travel then because the strike was over. However, it was still risky for all of us who were known. We were marked men. They didn't want us in Fernie and they didn't want us in places like Michel.

I got to Michel by train on Saturday and I checked into the main hotel. We had planned all this, to offset any frame-up. I stayed there Saturday night and had my meals downstairs in the restaurant.

The meeting was somewhere around two o'clock or two-thirty on a Sunday afternoon. I went to the meeting. The miners' hall was full. And I made my speech. And when I had most of it made — in come the police. They were the BC Provincial Police then. There were no Mounties. They had their own provincial police. Alberta had too. And they came up to the platform and told me I was under arrest. And I asked them for what. Vagrancy. I was taken down to the police station and locked up in the cell. Right from the meeting. Right from the platform. The miners let it happen. It was all right, because it would have been a frame-up on all the miners' leaders if somebody had got up and clouted one of them. But the miners played it all right. They took me over to the local dungeon and locked me up. But I found out afterwards that as soon as I was arrested and just about given enough time to be in jail, the leadership of the miners' union was over trying to get me out on bail. But they wouldn't let me go. And it was then that the sergeant of the outfit came in and asked me:

"Look, Lenihan," he says, "were you ever in Fernie?"

And I thought quick. I had been.

And I said, "No, I've never been there."

Then I heard him giving the order, "Okay, take him to Fernie."

See, they wanted to get me away from the miners of Michel.

So they put me in the car and dragged me right up to Fernie. They were checking me in at the desk, and searching me. They were going to put me in the cell, when I turned around to the guy behind the desk and I said, "I want to see Tom Uphill, the MLA. He's a personal friend of mine. I want to phone him."

"What do you want to phone him for?", they asked angrily.

"Well," I says, "I want to see him."

Well, they couldn't refuse Tom Uphill, the MLA, because Tom was loved in that country. Tom had been elected years before that as a Labour MLA.¹⁰ Nobody could beat him! Nobody could! No matter who they ran against him, they couldn't beat him. He was that well liked and well known. I knew Tom. I had been in Tom's house and met his wife, his family. His son later became Mayor of Fernie. Vern was his name, Vern Uphill. He was an electrician by trade.

And, sure enough, Tom Uphill put down \$5,000 bail. Vagrancy! And I had \$40 cash in my pocket. Even Uphill couldn't talk them out of dropping the charges because this was part of their tactics, to disrupt our activities and to make us spend money on lawyers and court cases. And, of course, I got out on bail. When I came up in court, I got thirty days hard labour. Well, we had the CLDL who were doing a terrific job in raising bail money and money for lawyers. And we appealed my case to the Appeal Court and then the charges were dismissed. But look at the time lost and the money lost! It shows you the tactics at the time.

¹⁰Tom Uphill was the Independent Labour MLA from Fernie in the B.C. Legislature from 1920 to 1956. He was well respected by all factions of the left and was generally unopposed at election time by both the CCF and the Communist Party. He was a major target of right wing suspicion at the height of the Cold War when he backed the Mine Mill group in Trail and Kimberley against the Steelworkers Union raids.

Chapter 6

LIVING ON RELIEF AND THE APPEAL OF SOCIAL CREDIT

We had tremendous growth in Communist Party membership throughout Alberta, but at the same time Social Credit was also growing. That is because there was a school principal here in Calgary, William Aberhart by name. He was also a religious preacher. And they had quite a church on Eighth Avenue in Calgary. And every Sunday he'd hold services there. And he'd make sermons based on part religion and part economics. He would mix it up and say Major Douglas had the answer to all of these problems. This great man in England had the answer to it in Social Credit. And a lot of people started to pay attention. The mass of the people at that time, in the main, middle class, farmers, workers, were seeking a way out of the economic crisis. Everybody, even many small capitalists, were worried and wondering where it was going to end and when it was going to ease off. And there was a situation ripe for such a movement to grow.

Well, at the time its growth and development was a shock to us. We were surprised that it could take place so rapidly. It started in small ways. Aberhart and some others were maybe thinking about it by early 1933. During 1934 it became more public — more of a people's movement. As a result of all the radio broadcasting and press coverage, they started, like the Communists, to send people out full time, going from town to town and contacting people through church circles and convincing them that they should participate. They had a lot of success. And this began to spread.

I can't guarantee or prove the truth of what I'm going to say, but I do believe in my own mind that it's fact. I understand that Aberhart and one or two of his top people did approach the labour movement and the CCF to take up Major Douglas's social theories and advocate them. And they, naturally, wouldn't have anything to do with it.

Aberhart, and a short time later, Manning, who became the Premier after Aberhart, were radical speakers. You should read the speeches about the big shots they made and how they slaughtered millions and how they gave millions for war to kill millions. And this appealed to the masses. And then link that up with religion. Once they would become the government, they

said, everyone over the age of 21 was to receive a 25-dollar a month dividend.

Well, a couple of old age pensioners, hungry, started looking at each other and said, "Well, \$50 a month for us?" The poor farmers out in the countryside, they looked at it, and they had a son maybe 21 or a daughter maybe 22. There was 100 bucks a month he was telling them they'd get. Don't you ever think that it didn't have an appeal. Because my good friends would come right to me at meetings and on the street and say, "Pat, how can you knock the movement of Social Credit? This is what they're going to do for us. Don't you want that?"

The mass of the people were honest and sincere. The feeling amongst them reminds me of my time in concentration camp with the German Nazis who were arrested in Canada. We'd get into arguments with some of them and the Germans would say, "Roosevelt is a Jew." And we'd say, "Nuts. Crazy." And we'd show them how Roosevelt wasn't Jewish.

"Well, he's a Jew!"

"Why is he? How is he?"

"The Fuehrer said so."

That was all. That was it. Well, it was somewhat similar with the mass following of Aberhart. He was preaching religion. So if the religion was true the economics must also be true. And that's the way it was handed down to them, very nicely, that this was God's movement.

He wasn't able to attract any Communists into Social Credit. Oh, possibly, there might be some cases throughout the province where some rank and filers went, but nobody who was ever in the leadership of the Communist movement went over. And the same applies to the labour movement and the CCF. But thousands of trade unionists, rank and filers, did.

We attended some of the meetings of Aberhart. He used to hold meetings in the Pavillion. And if we had time, we went there just to listen and take a few notes on what he was saying.

George Palmer was a reporter for the *Calgary Herald* at one time. Then he started to become progressive. And I guess he had a little money. I didn't know him at this time, but he quit the *Herald* and he went to the Soviet Union to see it. And he came back to Calgary and had joined the Party. He was capable. He had done some reading prior to that or I doubt he would have gone to the Soviet Union. I guess he must have read some Communist books or socialist literature. The first thing, he was out on the road amongst the farmers in the main, up north. He was going to one meeting and they caught him, tarred and feathered him. It was supposed to be the Social Credit supporters.

I had an experience with John Boychuk. He was from Winnipeg and was the leader of the Ukrainian national movement. John Boychuk and I, we

were speaking up north in Radway, north of Edmonton, for the candidate, who was Bill Halina. Later on Bill quit the Party and he became the mayor of Vernon, B.C. It was quite a big hall, but it was all made of wood, even the roof. And Bill Tuomi was chairman that night at the meeting. Later, he was the leader of the Party in Alberta. Bill Tuomi was only a very young man at the time and he was a member of the Young Communist League (YCL) and a youth organizer out amongst the farmers. Oh, there must have been fifty of them, all farmers' sons, active out in the field, organizing.

The hall was full. The meeting just opened up and we're speaking, and, Lord God, the next thing is bang, bang, go the windows. Rocks! They started shelling the hall with rocks. They broke the windows. Well, we adjourned the meeting and the people started to go out. But somebody had come back in and said that they were waiting for us. Some of the local men said "No, we're staying with you." And we barricaded the door of the hall and we started looking around the place for any weapons we could find. They used to have coal stoves in the halls and there were two steel poker for poking the fire and a shovel. There was an old pick there and we got the handle out of that. We all had some kind of a weapon.

We were waiting for them to break in the door. And we were going to put up as much resistance as we could. Somebody came to the window or the door and told us to come out, that they had a truck to take us home to Bill Tuomi's house. Bill said, "Well, let's make a run to our house with it." And, sure enough, we jumped on the back of the truck. I don't know who was driving it, but he took off anyway. And there was a shower of rocks. We got to Tuomi's house and then we were safe because in all farmers' houses there was a shotgun or a couple of shotguns. I'm telling you, the shotguns were oiled up that night!

Well, I honestly suspect that they were Social Crediters. I honestly believe that they were good people. They were trying to guarantee that their ideas, which they got from Aberhart, would come true. And I guess a lot of them thought that we were pure crazy. Oh, there were many of our people had rough incidents like that.

The FUL was an organization established by farmers who were Communists. Some of the older ones had played a very progressive role in all the progressive farm movements during their lives.¹

One of the outstanding farmers in Western Canada was the leader of it here in Alberta, Carl Axelson. He was a farmer from around Medicine Hat. He had visited the Soviet Union and when he came back he joined the Party.

¹The FUL fought against foreclosures, evictions, and tax sales. It demanded \$1,000 a year guaranteed income for farmers, free medical and hospital care, free education for their children, and old age pensions.

When they set up the Alberta branch of the FUL, he became the president of it. And in those days the farmers were very radical.

During the Corbin miners' strike, there was no money for the relief of the strikers. No big funds in the union. But all the union had to do was buy a truck and go out among all the sympathetic farmers. They'd be gone for two days and they'd come back. They might have three dead cattle on the truck, all loaded with vegetables and eggs and everything else to feed the strikers. And this kept up, not just once or twice, but as often as the truck could go out and get them there. Really, the farmers maintained that mining camp for three or four months. The farmers in the main were faced with the same conditions. Not the big rich farmers, but all the rest were seeking a way out of the crisis and suffering from it.

I hadn't done much up north with the farmers. And, my God, I'm called to one farmers' meeting. We're in the hall, and I'm up on the platform, and I was ready to hear the chairman get up and announce that I'm here to speak, and he gets up and he says, "Well, we'll open the meeting with the Red Flag." I tell you, I was shocked! I was honestly shocked. And here they sang the Red Flag as good as I ever heard it sung by the miners or anybody else. And this was a shock to me.

I stayed there at night with farmers. And the home I stayed in was a beautiful home, beautiful furniture. And the wife was a highly educated woman. And she was an inspiring woman. Oh, I almost fell in love with her. I met all kinds of them like that — up beyond Vegreville, Mondare, Smokey Lake and up in that country. There were thousands of them.

They had far, far more organizers for the FUL than the WUL. There must have been 40 or 50 of them at least, all young farmers' sons. And they joined the Young Communist movement. They were all in their twenties. Bill Repka was one of them. He's with the United Electrical Workers. He's still in the movement.

Bill Tuomi came off the farm too. Oh, my God, they were thicker than flies. They had a pretty good basic education, and they could read pamphlets quickly and grasp what was in them. And I'm telling you, some of them were beautiful speakers. And they'd go night and day.

At that particular time they were hit by a combination of drought and low prices for their crops. The prices killed them really. In the main, the Province didn't suffer from drought to the same degree as Saskatchewan, except the area down along the Saskatchewan border, south of Medicine Hat, east of Medicine Hat and nearby districts. They got it bad there. But the prices killed them. They stopped shipping stuff to the stockyards in Calgary because, after paying for the train transportation out of the sale of the cattle, they'd owe freight on them when they got there. They would be

in debt. The freight charges were more than they would get for the cattle and hogs. It sounds almost impossible to believe, but it's true.

This then brought about mass evictions. And we in the movement, the FUL, we were always wondering what to do. And out of the discussions would come the answers. And it was set down as basic policy that, from then on, all evictions had to be fought. Anything the farmers had was seized. It would all go up for auction. Everything. The banks, or whoever owned the mortgage, would seize the property and put it all up for sale. And the way to fight it was to put out leaflets ahead of the day for the auction. And we'd be there. We'd mobilize maybe 200 — it all depended on the population of the district. But we'd put out leaflets and use every way, private contacts and everything else, to get them down to the auction. And they were all given to understand, "Nobody bids a cent for anything!" And if anybody does, well then, somebody will have a talk with him. And it was understood what was meant by "having a talk with him." It was understood because after one or two of these instances, there was no more bidding. The crowd would be there, two hundred or three hundred. But nobody would open their mouth.

They were closing down on lots of them. This continued up until Aberhart's government took over and, in a matter of months, Aberhart stopped these seizures. That was one good thing he did. He stopped all those evictions and auctions.

I was Party organizer in Calgary at that time. My area of responsibility was the City of Calgary and surrounding territory. I was in and out of town for meetings, for a night or weekend.

We got word that Tim Buck was coming into Alberta and that he'd come first to Calgary. He was coming in by train in the morning. I guess about 1,500 people, at seven-thirty in the morning, met him at the train depot.

One of the people here in town was Kid Burns. He was an ex-fighter and was very well known. He was a champion fighter from Alberta. I think he did two years in jail at one time for the strike in Drumheller. Cecil Boone was another one. He put in a year there. Kid Burns was blacklisted all over, but he had some kind of small business and he had quite a nice limousine. And they put some kind of a platform on it. And when Tim came off the train, and got through with the handshakes, we had a parade through the town. We put him up in front of the parade, standing on the platform. And here's about 1,500 men and women singing at seven-thirty in the morning behind him right through town. All the people going to work at that time in the morning were shocked to see it.

We had the Pavillion booked for that night and we had an overflow. Half the crowd couldn't get in. And not only unemployed people, but from all walks of life, because the two or three year campaign to release Tim and his

comrades from Kingston had built him up. It is probable that thousands came out to hear him and see him for the first time.

That was my first meeting with Tim. He was a brilliant orator, and a real gentleman. He was very impressive to look at. He had a beautiful voice and beautiful pronunciation of English. If Tim had run for mayor in those days in Calgary, he'd have been elected. Yes sir! Believe what I'm telling you. Oh, it was terrific! I chaired the meeting in Calgary for Tim. And all the labour aldermen were in the meeting and all the CCF leaders. Everybody came.

There was a hotel owner on 9th Avenue — the Lethbridge Hotel it was called. The owner at one time had something to do with the miners and he was progressive. And he gave Tim the best suite in the hotel. And it was a pretty respectable hotel at that time too. When I went up to visit with Tim during the day it was the first time I had ever seen such comfort in my life. I'll never forget it. I thought I was in a palace or something.

You'd be surprised at the number of people who were coming wanting to interview and talk to Tim. Tim didn't tell me how much or anything — but he got several hundred dollars. They'd give him large donations whereas maybe they wouldn't give them to me or to somebody else. But Tim they trusted and they'd give them to him. Tim told me the trip was paid for with the donations he had got like that. And we collected thousands at the collection. It was terrific for those days.

And then I went with Tim to the Crow and, again, I was his chairman at all the meetings in the Crow. No hall was big enough. We didn't go to the miners' halls. We went to the biggest schools we could get. There was an overflow everywhere! When we were in Blairmore, that is when the main street was changed to Tim Buck Boulevard. Tim was the happiest man in the world in those days going through Blairmore. And then I came back with him and he went on to Edmonton.

During this period, after I was married, between 1933 and 1935, I was away from home a lot. When I was out on the road, I lived with the people and my wife lived at home with her parents. They took care of Anne and my boy. Well, we were living from hand to mouth, you might say, on the generosity of the people. The Party said that it was okay to apply for relief. The leaders of the Married Men's Association, the unemployed, they were the first to bring it up — that I should be getting relief, because they knew that I was broke all the time. And I went to City Hall and applied.

The Relief Department was the biggest business in Calgary in those days. It was the biggest operation in the City. They had around three thousand on their list receiving relief. That's besides single men.

It must have been early in 1934 when I applied for relief — about a year after I was married. And you're investigated. And I think you got about

thirty-one dollars a month, including ten dollars for rent for a man, wife and one child.

And you got two vouchers, and that was it. And you were supposed to deal in someone's store of your choice and get your groceries that way. But it soon developed that the grocery man was possibly a radical sympathizer, because thousands of the small storekeepers were. And if you went down with your monthly bill for groceries... we'll say you bought twenty dollars worth... they'd take the voucher and give you ten dollars cash. They'd give you the rest in cash. You weren't supposed to get any cash. I guess it was good business for them too. They could get reimbursed from the government, and they were guaranteed their money. But that gave us a little pocket money. A dollar for a show or something.

So I went and applied. Of course, I had to go through all the regular channels. Finally, I was told that I had to see the Commissioner and the Mayor, Andy Davison, because in the opinion of the Relief Department, I wasn't entitled to it. I hadn't been long enough in Canada and all kinds of excuses. And I met with the Mayor and Commissioner, Tom Riley. There was only one Commissioner in Calgary then. And he really had power.

And the Mayor told us, "Well, there's talk of you being deported. You're not a citizen. You're not long enough in Canada."

Oh, I took right off and I said, "Nuts!" and I told him when I landed in Canada. Of course, I'd been out of Calgary, I'd been in jail in Fort Saskatchewan in 1932. There was no proof that I wasn't a qualified citizen.

Well, I told him, "Is it my fault I was in jail?" I said, "That doesn't take away my citizen's rights in Calgary, because I had to go to jail for a year."

The city lawyer was Leonard Brockington. He became a big shot in some kind of specialist job in Ottawa. He knew me well. During World War II Leonard Brockington was connected with the Canada-Soviet Friendship Society. And he's sitting there with the Commissioner. And he listened to all the pros and cons. He was an invalid of some kind. But he had a brain. And he says, "Well, Your Worship, listening to all the facts here and what Mr. Lenihan has told us, I am of the opinion that he is a citizen and I'd certainly say he's entitled to all the rights."

They were saying you were this and you were that, that you were in jail. But he brought all this up and he built a case for me. I knew Riley, the Commissioner, was in favour of me even before I walked in the door, because Labour helped to elect him. And Mayor Andy Davison was kind of a liberal in those days. I don't think he really wanted to refuse me. Besides that, they knew that my wife was Jewish. I think this had a influence on Andy Davison. We had a pretty active Jewish community in those days and a lot of votes were involved. And Andy was a really slick politician. I may be wrong, but these are my thoughts on the thing. And we got it anyway.

Once you qualified for relief assistance, you were expected to work off 40 hours a month. When you got your relief vouchers, you also got a card. All your information was on it. "Report to such and such a place Monday morning at eight o'clock." Or, "report to the rock quarry," or some other gang in the parks. It's no wonder that we've got the most beautiful parks in the world, because the unemployed people built them. There used to be hundreds of them down there. There were gangs digging holes to plant trees in the park. It got so bad that they'd run out of regular work. We'd dig the holes today. And the next week, or in the middle of the week when our cards were done, another gang with wheelbarrows were covering in the holes. Some of the holes are still there in places. There were too many people to do the actual amount of work to be done. I worked in the quarry; I worked in the rock crushing; I worked in the street car barns quite a bit. And my God Almighty, where one man could do the job, cleaning an old streetcar in two and a half hours, polishing windows, everything, we'd have four men for three or four hours doing the same thing. It was really a makework operation and the City was saving money on it.

I got my first voucher for relief and I also got a card to report for work at the rock quarry, the rock crusher out in southwest Manchester. When they said rock quarry to me, I thought of a penitentiary somewhere. Well, I didn't go to work. And then when I went for my relief the next month, I was in trouble.

"You didn't go to work."

And I was prepared for it. I said, "How could I go to work? I had no clothes. Did you think I was going to go out and work in the rock quarry with my suit of clothes with a white shirt?" Because, you know, that's the way I was dressed at the time. "How could I go?"

"Well, you get no relief. The law is...."

Well, then, of course, I had to process the thing, like a grievance. Finally, I had to go see the Mayor and Commissioner.

"What's the matter? You've got to go to work."

I said, "I don't mind working, Your Worship, Commissioner. But can I go to work crushing rocks, with a rock crusher, with this on? These are all the clothes I've got!"

Well, after discussion, Riley takes me up to his office. "Pat, we'll fix you up." And he writes me out a voucher — one heavy mackinaw, gloves, boots, socks, underwear — everything! Well, you got those vouchers and then you had to go down to the Red Cross and they took the vouchers and they gave you whatever was itemized on there. Well, I came back and I had two large parcels of clothes and shoes, and everything was in it.

I had to catch another bus right in front of the Married Men's Hall. And instead of going back home to Anne, I just on the spur of the moment,

thought, I'm going to go up and show these fellows what's possible. And up I go and there must be a hundred of them up there playing bridge and checkers. And here I walk in with two big brown parcels tied up under my arms and I says, "Hey fellows, see what the City is doing." And I opened up the parcels and showed them. Well, brother! The word spread like wildfire amongst the unemployed. And for the next week they had hundreds over there. Tom Riley, the Commissioner, got hold of me afterwards, and he says, "Why in the name of God didn't you keep your mouth shut?"

I said, "Tom, how could I? If I'm entitled to it, what's wrong with them?"

You talk about pithead strikes. We had one foreman out there. He was a full-time civic employee who had been with them for maybe twenty years. But, boy, he was a slavedriver! And they had this big, modern crushing plant run by electricity. And you had to dig the rocks and the gravel out of a big huge bank, load it up on the wheelbarrows and wheel it down about two hundred feet and up this plank and dump it into the crusher. Believe me, it was hard work. And it was hard work especially in the bad weather. There were huge piles of gravel everywhere.

There must have been three hundred of us there with wheelbarrows and crowbars and picks, and it was like slavery. The City was saving money because all the gravel for the streets was coming out in relief labour. Sometimes the crusher would be shut down for a day and a half because somebody would go up with a wheelbarrow covered — it looked like gravel up on top — with the biggest rocks they could find in the middle of the wheelbarrow. And, by God, you would hear that thing grinding.

We had one guy in our gang, Paddy McKinley. He later worked the rest of his time as a caretaker. He was in the union. And Paddy was a wild one. He was a real devout Roman Catholic. And I mean real devout. He kind of liked us. He told us his wife wanted to meet us and we had to go over there for supper one night. And we went to the house. It was a nice house he had rented. And the queerest thing you ever saw in your life was a picture in the dining room a foot and a half long and about a foot and a quarter wide of Tim Buck up on the wall. And right next to it, and this is no lie, he had the same size picture of Jesus Christ on the wall. All the time I was there that night at supper I was looking at this and I was trying to figure out how his mind worked. That'll give you an idea of the thinking of different people who were involved in the movement.

Every once in a while the foreman would fire somebody or bawl somebody out or do something to show that he was boss. I was always on the job when the excitement started. I was getting the blame for it. Half the time I wasn't even guilty. And the foreman fired somebody. And it was an injustice. I knew the fellow and he was sick that morning on the job. He wasn't able

to work. And he was watching him and told him to go home. That meant a cut in relief for him.

When the guy got fired, Paddy ran around the gang and said, "Oh boys, we've got to do something, we've got to do something." I said "Ya, Ya." And Paddy's up on top of a big pile of gravel, "All right fellas, all right. Come on."

We held a meeting right there. The foreman was standing there mesmerized. Some other fellow said, "Let's go see the City Commissioner. Lenihan, you be the spokesman." And so we march six miles from the rock quarry to the City Hall. In the City Hall we went up to the Commissioner's door. They were caught off balance, so they had to meet us. If they knew that we were coming, they would have had the police there. But we got in and told him our case. We wanted Tom Riley, the Commissioner, because he was in charge of all the works. Riley was a pretty decent man. And we put our case. After about half an hour, he ducked into the Mayor's office and back out again. "Okay, you go back to work, he'll be all right. He'll be back." And you should hear our guys marching through the City and out to Manchester again. "Hold the Fort for we are coming," and "Solidarity," and they had the words, "When the revolution...."

A lot of the work, so-called work, that was being performed was of the silliest character. It was just a case of keeping people working. And a lot of the people, myself, at times, got disgusted doing something that I knew was absolutely useless. And lots of the fellows, they'd get mad. When they'd be leaving the job at night, if they had been working by the banks of the river, there'd be more picks and shovels in the river than in some of the hardware stores downtown. They took it out in anarchistic ways. They satisfied their passion about how stupid the situation was. A lot of that was going on.

The least bad sneeze out of a foreman, or anybody like that, was the cause of some kind of a strike or trouble, right on the job. There was a spirit of revolt all over. The majority were rebellious in one way or the other. But you did have that core of people who would get on their knees every time the boss coughed at them. There was fear and, of course, lack of education. Fear is a result of lack of knowledge and education. You always have that element. We have that today. In those days, too, the propaganda of Mr. Aberhart was starting to have some effect. And, boy, we would have some bitter arguments out on the jobs on different ideologies. But the militancy was there. The people who were supporting Social Credit in the city, in the main, were people who had been in unions before the crash.

A lot of the meetings took place in the Variety Theatre on 8th Avenue and 1st Street East. And also in the Grand Theatre, which was a flashy theatre in those days; it was a top notch theatre. Street meetings were very common in Calgary. We had one place directly across from the City Hall.

There's a big office building there now. And it was commonly known all over as the Red Square. It had been known as the meeting place for public meetings of the radicals in the 1920s and the tradition continued. And the police and everybody else took it for granted that when a meeting was called in Red Square, that was the logical place for it.

We had many a battle there just the same. And I lost two teeth there the first time I ever had a mixup. I think it was May Day 1931. I wasn't very long in the movement then. I wasn't speaking. I was just one of the audience. We had quite a crowd and the police were there in force. I don't know what started the row. I think the police started butting in and then the row began. And everybody around me was jostling and fighting and punching. And I guess I punched too. And I was twisting my head when I got hit in the mouth in the lower jaw. And you can still see a scar on my lip. And I lost two teeth. There were lots of skirmishes like that.

Another location in Calgary for street corner meetings was near 8th Avenue and 3rd Street East. And sometimes we'd have about a thousand people there. Then we'd hold them in the empty lots down by the Pavillion because every morning in the 1930s, thousands of single men had to go down to the soup kitchen. They had a big soup kitchen there. And they'd get porridge for breakfast. For the single unemployed the provincial government supplied two meals a day — breakfast and five o'clock supper. Well, we'd hold meetings when they were coming back from supper. And, naturally, we'd get a crowd. And then citizens would stop too to see what the heck was going on. These meetings were taking place all over.

Chapter 7

1935: TWO ELECTIONS AND A TREK

We were involved a long time before the actual Trek came to Calgary, because the powers that be, the provincial government and the federal government, had established a work system for the single unemployed. And they also established at the same time a farm labour program. They would ship people out to the farms and it was that or else. You went or else. And they got five dollars a month working on the farms. And they set up camps. For example between Calgary and Banff there would be possibly six or seven camps with two hundred single men in each. All were on pick and shovel work, straightening out the highway. In a sense the work could have been done far cheaper if they had used modern machinery. But they wanted to get the single men out of the cities, where they were on the march all the time, protesting. They built these makeshift camps and these men had to go out. They got no relief. They'd work on the highway, widening the road to Banff, and straightening out parts of it. It was something that was finally useful, because the highway was better when they were finished.

They were paid twenty cents a day, plus tobacco, board, and room, and clothing. So, it's natural that wherever you congregate workers like that, they're bound to turn to progressive ideas. They're bound to start thinking about it. Because these men were working eight hours a day at scab wages. You couldn't even call twenty cents scab wages. So the WUL set up an organization called the Relief Camp Workers' Union (RCWU). And the men in the camps were organized on the basis of unions. They had thousands of them, far more in B.C. than we had in Alberta.

There were strikes galore against the food and against everything. And sometimes they'd march out of the camp and march into town. A number of them would be blacklisted and others would drift away, but they couldn't stop the struggle. And this organization was sweeping the camps everywhere. But individual strikes here and there could not bring any real results. And the people in the WUL offered help and appointed Arthur Evans an organizer.

Arthur (Slim) Evans got five or six machine gun bullets in him in a huge strike in the mines in the United States. This was the huge Ludlow Strike. A lot of strikers were killed, but he had bullet wounds all over his legs. He was a brilliant organizer and a beautiful speaker too. He was the man in charge; he was the leader of it at the Coast. He was a Communist. And he and others came up with the idea that there was only one way to do it, and that was to take our case to Ottawa.

So they organized the relief camp workers to leave the camps and come into Vancouver from all over B.C. on a certain day. And they congregated in Vancouver. And there, under the leadership of Slim Evans and other Communists and militant workers who were not Communists, they had decided they were going to take the freight trains to Ottawa. This was the "On to Ottawa Trek" where they were going to relief camps and for a program of "work and wages."¹ The overwhelming majority of them had nothing to do with the Party. But they were fighters for better conditions for the people. And they set themselves up somewhat like an army. Each section had a section commander and he was in charge of the discipline of so many men. If anybody went out and got drunk — any kind of misbehaviour at all, whether it was with women or anything else — they were put out and not allowed in the march.

The plan was to take the train and ride on the top of the boxcars, and inside if they were empty. From the Coast they're generally all loaded. And some of them would be carrying coal or carrying machinery. Well, you were right in amongst that. Well, it was dangerous.

We got the tipoff that they were coming and their next stop was Calgary. And they wired us and told us the time. But as soon as it came out in the press, there was panic amongst the bourgeoisie. Mayor Davison asked the RCMP Commissioner to stop them at the British Columbia-Alberta border. The City Council here already was in action. And there were to be no parades or anything.

But the people, even the middle class of Calgary, played a role in it. They were all in favour of these young men looking for a better life. And the pressure mounted through the Labour aldermen. Well, they got to the Council and to the Mayor and the Commissioner and everyone else and said, "Look, these men are coming. Nobody can stop them. And where are they going to sleep? Do you want them running around the town all night and for the next couple of days?" So finally the Council came up with a decision that they'd put loads of straw into the Pavillion in the Exhibition grounds. They used to play hockey there, so there was a huge floor, and

¹For a detailed account of the On-to-Ottawa Trek, see Lorne Brown, *When Freedom was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State* (Montréal 1987).

they could make beds out of the straw and lay in the straw and sleep there. Of course, the fellas coming in on the train didn't know this. And, unfortunately, none of the labour aldermen would come on the delegation to meet them and to welcome them into town. We tried unsuccessfully to get the Labour aldermen to come. But we did get Albert Johnson, a vice-president of the Labour Party, to come. He was there when we were marching through Calgary. He represented the CCF and the other labour party. There was myself, Albert Johnson, Charlie Kilcock, and Cliff Wahl. Charlie looked like a huge detective. He was a militant from the mines of Nova Scotia. And he was in the Party. Three of us were in the Party and Albert Johnson was from the CCF and the Labour Party.

We knew where the train would stop, down at 9th Avenue. And when Slim Evans and a bunch of them jumped off — I knew Arthur Evans, because I had met him previously here in Alberta at meetings — we shook hands and we told him who we were, that we were representing the people's movement in Calgary and that some were from the Communist Party and this man was from the CCF and we introduced them all. And then we told them what was what, that the best we were able to do was to get their accommodation for them. We had no further business with them, because they were like an army and they had their own plans made for whatever they were going to do. And they said, "Fine, fine. Will you show us where?"

"Oh, sure, sure."

"Will we march with you?"

"Sure, up in front."

And here we are in front and they're behind us. And Sid Thompson, who later became the president of the Vancouver Labour Council for years, was in the first rank behind us with Arthur Evans and some more. And we marched them right down 9th Avenue, down to 2nd Street East, and from there down to the Pavillion where they had a breakfast. And we got them all in and settled.

We had applied for a tag day to raise money for them, but they wouldn't give us a permit for any tag day. Mayor Davison refused the marchers any meal tickets or the right to a tag day in the hope that they would make their stay in Calgary as brief as possible. So our unemployed organizations went out to the stores and got empty tomato cans. They mimeographed labels: "Support the Ottawa Trek," and stuck them on the sides of the cans and sealed the bottoms. Then they had a place on top where you could drop in money.

It was on a Friday evening they came in to Calgary. On Saturday all the women from the unemployed organizations and the Party were out. Well, you couldn't go a block and you'd run into two or three of them. They were all out on the streets. And at night, when it was checked up we got \$1,300

in the tag day plus \$82 received from private donations from citizens, and that was immediately turned over to the committee of the Trek.

When they left the Pavillion, all our people were out on the streets tagging for money. They came up from the Stampede grounds and linked arms about seven or eight abreast. They had the whole street plugged. They snake-marched through the streets. They went down to 7th Avenue, somewhere around 1st Street West, because the provincial government relief offices were in that building. And they went and put down demands that they wanted meals. And they wouldn't leave the building and no policeman could get into the building. And this was the same Saturday that the tag day was on. And the outcome of it was — I guess it took a couple of hours, with all the phoning to Edmonton backwards and forwards — but finally the provincial government came up with six hundred dollars to feed them a couple of times. I guess they finally got it in meal tickets to feed them in the restaurants. Special rates were given to the strikers by East End restaurants, the men being fed for 15 cent meals. Food donations were also sent by Calgary housewives to the Exhibition grounds where the men were quartered.

There were 1,500 trekkers — 1,000 from BC plus 500 who joined on in Alberta. The local people took care of them everywhere. They stayed in town for three days and then they marched from their quarters in the Exhibition grounds to the railway yards. The train left for Regina at eight o'clock on a summer's night. And this was broadcast, that the Trek was to resume Monday night. The CPR couldn't do anything about it. Five thousand citizens were out there sending them off. To provide a lunch for the travellers during the night, a number of Calgary women prepared 2,400 sandwiches in the Labour Temple from supplies donated by merchants. Ninety-five per cent of them were all young husky men. They were a real army. And most Alberta camps had men who were in the RCWU. Some of them came too. If they couldn't all get on one train they'd go on two trains.

They felt wonderful going away from Calgary because, in the main, they had got a real citizen's reception. The federal authorities were determined to disband the Trek in Regina, with the use of armed force, if necessary. A force of 500 police staged a police riot on a citizens' meeting which resulted in one death and many wounded. It effectively stopped the On-to-Ottawa Trek. We were sure jolted when we heard of the frame-up in Regina. Immediately we got the word, we called a special public meeting in the Pavillion. The meeting was called by the WUL and the Council of the Unemployed. We had a huge one! The Pavillion was full. The three Labour aldermen were on the platform with us. There were some ministers at the meeting and other prominent citizens because the people were really shocked and aroused that such a thing could happen.

I recall the provincial election of 1935. I was a candidate for the Communist Party. Since the Communist Party was still illegal under Section 98, we just put Communist on it, no party, just Communist.² That was part of our tactics in the fight for the legalization of the Party. We were getting bolder and bolder.

I ran in Calgary. Six were to be elected from Calgary. It was an overall city vote. We had the preferential system of voting, where you vote one, two, three, four, five, six, in the order of your choice. There may be twenty candidates, but you can vote for the number to be elected — six.

We put on our campaign and, I'm glad to say, we were able to bring a form of unity between ourselves and the CCF people. Most of them were old time Labour Party people, Bob Parkyn, Fred White and, I think, Mr. Lismer. He was a high school teacher. They ran as Labour-CCF. And the Communists ran separately. We had our own headquarters.

As a result of the campaign, I was able for the first time in history to get in to speak to the workers in the Ogden shops. They were the big CPR shops. And the only reason I was able to get in was because of the unity of the candidates. If I had been on my own ticket, myself, I'd never have got permission to go in there. So with Fred White and the other CCF candidates, I went in with them and we all spoke. The workers would be all brought together and we'd all speak to them at one time. There were election meetings to hear the voice of labour. The CPR allowed this because they had about the strongest union structure of any organization in Calgary.

We conducted a good independent campaign of our own, using the radio, press advertisements, leaflets, posters. And on election night, I finished up with slightly over a thousand votes for the whole city of Calgary. Labour got annihilated. We used to have six or seven labour people in the government before that.

The government up to that point was the UFA. But it had become a right-wing party by that time. It had politically degenerated. And these same people, under Premier Brownlee, UFA, were running again against the Social Credit. Then, just prior to the election, it was exposed in the press that Premier Brownlee had a secretary and that he loved her very much and used to take her to Banff for sports and enjoyment. And this hit the headlines: "Premier Involved...." The way they built it up! But, my God, it was a mess. It had an influence. In fact, they had a joke during those days that the government had put barbed wire around the Three Sisters in Banff, the mountain with the three high peaks, because Brownlee was a regular

²On illegality of the CPC, see John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto 1985).

visitor up there. You'd be surprised at how this could affect and be spread amongst the masses.³

Well, they didn't need these kinds of tactics because Aberhart had the mass of the people with him solidly. But it was used. The Liberals and the Conservatives participated in it. Everybody underestimated the strength of Aberhart. And the UFA got wiped out. And Labour got two. We elected Lismer from Calgary and we elected Elmer Roper in Edmonton. The CCF did better than the Communists in Calgary. They had five candidates in the field. I was the sixth. They elected one.

From the minute the Social Credit movement started to grow, masses of people who had been supporting us in the past went to Social Credit. Some of the officers of the unions held firm. Some of them didn't. But the rank and file in the main voted Social Credit because they were all expecting this dividend.

Aberhart was preaching all the time that there was no place in society for what he called the Communist class struggle. Everything could be solved by just electing Social Credit. In fact they wouldn't need unions any more because the government would look after them. This was the line. This was the tactic. And this affected thousands of people who were extremely active even in the leadership of the unemployed movement. Eric Poole became a Social Creditor. They ran him for a Member of Parliament up in Red Deer. He was elected by a huge majority and he had never lived there. And Fred Knutt, and all kinds of them, all the fellows who got six months in jail at the time of Mission Hill. They all became ardent Social Crediters.

At every polling booth on election day there would be two or three hundred people, all my old friends, and they'd have ribbons around their hat and bandoliers — Social Credit sashes. In a minor embryonic form, it would almost remind you of what happened in Germany. They didn't give them complete uniforms but with the band around the hat and the cap and the sashes! If you told them you weren't going to vote Social Credit at the polls, you were looking for trouble. Because the mass of the people were confused and falling for Aberhart.

Shortly after Aberhart was elected, the relief conditions got worse. They were going to cut the relief, and the same organizations struck, but the strike was over in less than three weeks because the workers were waiting for the \$25 dividend. Emancipation would come from Edmonton and the militancy was gone except for the vanguard, the class conscious workers who understood.

There was also a federal election in 1935, when Bennett was running for re-election for the Conservatives and Mackenzie King was running for the

³Brownlee's trial took place in June 1934, and he resigned as Premier. R.G. Ried took his place until 1935 when Aberhart's SoCredits won.

Liberals. One of the planks in King's platform was to do away with Section 98. It really meant something to us that Mackenzie King would legalize all the democratic groups that Iron Heel Bennett had outlawed. I didn't run myself because I played a role up North and the other districts wherever we had Party candidates. We had a candidate in Vegreville. He almost got elected. It was Bill Halina. He got about 4,000 votes. And that was a big vote from the farm country. That was basically a Ukrainian area. But there were little settlements of some French and some Belgians there. They didn't have any Italians up there except in the mining camps. But we put on a big campaign. We were denied halls in the town of Vermillion. There was lots of that going on, especially in the small backward towns.

Chapter 8

THE STRUGGLE: CANADA, CALGARY AND THE WORLD

I continued on relief until I went to Blairmore. When I returned from Blairmore I took up steady residence in Calgary. I got forty dollars a month as a Party organizer, which was just a little better than relief. The Party had grown so much, and had such influence. There were all kinds of business people here in town who were donating so much a month to the Party. They'd give it to certain collectors whom they knew were staunch members of the Communist Party. They were sympathizers privately but they never openly connected themselves with the radical movement. Relatively speaking, the Party was well able to take care of its financial responsibilities here in Alberta. We had offices in Edmonton and Calgary. And we had full time secretaries and all kinds of volunteer labour working in the office. The headquarters were in the McLean Block on 8th Avenue. The Party people were selling about five hundred copies of the Communist Party newspaper, *The Worker*, every week.

When I returned from Blairmore and became full time, what were my daily functions? Well, there was some office work, because we had the city organized on the basis of sections, with section organizers in charge of each section. Then we had so many Party clubs in that section. And we had weekly meetings of the section organizers with the City Committee. And we had our own business meetings. And then there were club meetings practically every night of the week in some corner of the city and they always wanted somebody to come down and talk on current events.

Then I was a member of the Married Men's Association and had been since the time I got married. And people would come to our office for help when they couldn't get on relief. And, of course, I'd take their cases to the City Hall. I was really in the City Hall a lot. I really became acquainted with the people in the City Hall. I made a lot of friends. There must have been at least fifty people involved in the Relief Department. Wherever you meet workers, whether they're clerical or blue collar, you will always find in every group some good humanistic thinkers, even amongst the relief staff. They'd tip me off to things. And I was able to win a lot of cases. Very seldom I lost.

Many were denied relief on the residence requirement, or some other thing, or they looked too well off. Because when you apply for relief the first thing they say is, "Well, you've filled out your forms and everything else. Come back in two days." But in the meantime you have a knock at your front door and this stooge came in and inspected and he examined everything you had in the house, even counted four or five cans of tomato juice. No matter what you had! He'd report whether you had a quarter pound of salt in a bag or a pound of it. He really went through everything.

And the basic law was that once you got on relief you were not to better yourself. You had to live on that and really need what you were getting. And if you went to work for a day or for an hour or ten hours or two days you had to report that and then it was deducted off your next relief cheque.

There was this incident with the unemployed Chinese that took place in 1937. The Chinese community here was not very large. But, in a relative sense, they had quite a number of Chinese here. The Chinatown was exactly where it is now, on Centre Street and 1st Avenue. The unemployed headquarters was across from the Chinese Masonic Hall on 1st Avenue. I guess the hunger made some of the Chinese do a lot of thinking, too. And they were refused relief of any kind. Nobody came out openly and said you're Chinese and you won't get it. But whatever the reason was by the powers that be, they got nothing. And, finally, a group of them formed an unemployed unit.¹ Appeals to the City failed. We couldn't do anything. And then they were desperate.

The average citizen looked upon them as decent citizens who were mistreated. But nobody wanted to do anything about them. I'm sure that's why they came to us. And we finally decided we had to adopt some tactics that would get attention. And it was planned that they would be taken to the centre of town, down to the corner of 8th Avenue and 1st Street West on a Saturday afternoon when everything was so busy. All the streetcars used to stop there at that time and there was a lot of traffic in street cars north, south, east, west. And when the first streetcar came along, four of the men were to pile in front of the front wheels across the tracks.

And they did this. Everything was stopped by the tie-up. Nothing could move and crowds gathered and were cheering in support of the Chinese. The police couldn't do a darn thing, only stand there and look. And then more police came and started dragging them off. And as soon as they'd drag a guy off, or two of them, there would be two or three more down. The Chinese did it by themselves, with the backing, the support of the demonstration. But they were heroic. And I'll never forget it. There is a picture that appeared in the *Calgary Herald* when they were lying down with the

¹The *Calgary Herald* of 8 February 1937 reported that their relief allowance was \$1.12 per week.

police there. And that went on for about an hour. The case was so glaring. It got headlines in the press. Inside of three or four days, they were all on full-scale relief. They eliminated the discrimination.

In April 1938 we had more protests and relief strikes. We organized strikes with those who were working on city relief projects. But some relief workers kept on working on city projects such as St. George's Island park. On 27 April we organized a parade of 125 men to march from the Labour Temple to St. George's Island. John Johansen led the picket. Behind him were 50 women, two of them trundled baby buggies containing infant children.

When the picket parade came within a half a block of St. George's Island, twenty police officers, with Inspector Burrough in command, ordered them to disperse. He addressed the women with the baby buggies and told them that they should be ashamed of themselves for bringing infant children on such an expedition.

There was a loud chorus of protest from the women.

"All right," said the inspector, "I'm giving you fair warning to disperse. If you don't, you'll all go into the patrol wagon, baby buggies and all."

Four strikers were arrested and so was Anne when she remonstrated with Inspector Burroughs after the picket had been ordered to disperse.

Bill Ainscough, secretary of the central council of the Calgary Unemployed Union, posted bail of \$25 for Anne and she was let out.

It shows you how people in organizations can develop tactics which have never been used before and yet make a terrific contribution to the struggle.

During the second strike of the married men and the unemployed, the scab question wasn't too bad. I mean it didn't bother us because there wasn't enough of them. We had to bring pressure on the City Council, because the city was holding out. We had to evolve some kind of tactics. Somebody had the idea — it wasn't me — but as soon as I heard it, I endorsed it in our discussion in the leadership of the unemployed and the Central Council. Somebody thought, "Why don't we call meetings in the Pavillion like we did for Mission Hill but instead of doing things like that, let a thousand or so head for the Hudson Bay store and another thousand head for Eaton's, the two major shopping centres in the city?" And man, my eyes opened up. Beautiful! Beautiful!

So we called a big meeting in the Pavillion. We had about three or four thousand. We put so many men in charge of them. "Okay, fellas, we're going for a little march." And before the police knew what the heck was happening, we had 1,500 men jammed all around the elevators on the main floor in the Hudson Bay store. Nobody could go up the elevators. Nobody could come down. There were hundreds of unemployed up against the doors. The police came down on 8th Avenue but they couldn't get in. If the Chief

or somebody else had come in that store, it would have been wrecked, with all the glass cases and everything else all around.

After we did that a couple of times, there were squawks to the City Council by business, because we hit other stores. And then we started to do it on the spur of the moment. And when there's action like that, there's the danger of shoplifting. And all of our leading people were told before we went out to keep your hands in your pockets. We wouldn't steal anything. Maybe some provocateur in the crowd would come over and slip something into our pockets.

We were in the process of going through the second major unemployed strike we had here because the Council again had decided that we were getting too much relief. Undoubtedly, in their view, they had a point, because we were getting the highest standard of relief in Canada. And we didn't have many scabs on the job. We decided that some other tactics were necessary. So the purpose of these demonstrations in the stores was to put pressure on the business people to support us and to get after the City Council to settle the strike.

The result was that we maintained our standard of living. We won the strike. Chamber of Commerce and the businessmen went after the City Council behind the scenes and put the pressure on to settle. That would have been in 1936 or 1937. That was one of the victories. That was the second one we had in Calgary. We won the first one in 1933 — the Mission Hill.

In 1937 the Spanish War, the fascist invasion of Spain, was on and, naturally, all the progressive people of Canada, not only Communists, but all progressive people, were in sympathy with Spain and raising hundreds and thousands of dollars for medicine for the people of Spain. And then the Communist Party called for volunteers in Canada to join a battalion to go to Spain. The battalion was called the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion after the two revolutionary fighters of 1837.²

There was a Canadian law which forbade Canadian citizens to fight for a foreign power. And this was used to stop the recruitment of men for the battalion. But we got the word in Calgary and a committee of the Party was set up to carry through the work and contact the people. And they were coming to our offices, volunteering. Many young men wanted to go. The issue was whether a democratic Spain would exist or whether a fascist state would be set up. And the Italians and the Germans were the main fighting forces in Spain against the democratic government, a republican government that was elected in Spain by the people. Ever since I joined the movement in 1931, part of our propaganda was that an imperialist war was

²See Victor Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: Canadian Participation in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto 1969).

going to come and break out and that fascism would arise and destroy our democracy as we knew it. This reached its point in Spain. And that is why Communists and everybody else wanted to get to Spain.

We here in Calgary were able to send about 50. All they got here in Calgary was a ticket to Toronto, five dollars cash and maybe a can of tobacco for the train and a lunch. That was what they had and nothing else.

They'd have been arrested if they had gone as a group. But they went in twos and threes, single men. I don't know how, but they all got to Spain. I think the big majority of them were landing in France and then crossing the Pyrenees mountains into Spain. Well, the history of the Brigade is in books now. A terrific history.

To give you a picture of the punishment that the International Brigades took, out of fifty who went to Spain, only about ten arrived back in Calgary. Hundreds of us met them at the depot. Bill Kardash of Winnipeg, who was later a Communist MLA in Manitoba, was one of them. He was on crutches. He had lost his leg in a tank battle. Some of the men who returned were partly crippled too. But they were getting over their wounds.

Anne and I first met Dr. Norman Bethune in Toronto at a Party convention. He came back from Spain and he spoke to us about the necessity for arousing the Canadian people in defense of the Spanish people and to go back to our territories and raise all the funds and medicines and medical aid for the Spanish people. It was a thrill for us to meet such a man and to know also that he was recognized as a leading Communist then.

He toured the country. We had tremendous, tremendous meetings. At that time, there was what we called the League Against War and Fascism throughout all Canada. The League, in the main, was led by what we call intellectuals — and some top middle-class businessmen and many ministers of the church.³ That was one of the organizations that sponsored Bethune, because that was the character of their organization, to arouse the people against the imperialist war and the dangers of fascism. These organizations were destroyed when World War II broke out.

A few years before this, I had my home then in Blairmore, and I got instructions that I was to go to the first Communist Party National School in Toronto for six months. The Party in the Crow's Nest Pass heard that I was going away. I couldn't tell them that I was going to that kind of school. I told them that I was going on a special assignment. They all thought I was going to Spain. They had a big party for me. My wife and son stayed behind in Blairmore.

I got to Toronto and participated in the school and I think we had about 50 students, from all over Canada, men and women. And it was a very

³At one time T.C. (Tommy) Douglas and Paul Martin Sr. (Cabinet Minister under three different Liberal Prime Ministers) were vice-presidents of this organization.

disciplined school. It was in a three-story beautiful brick house. At one time I think it was middle-class. We had the whole building. One Party person was in charge of the whole thing. That's where I met Mary Flannigan. Oh, did we ever click, because of the Irish. She was the head cook. And what a glorious woman! Oh my God, she was a real fighter and understood the Marxist ideology. Oh yes! But she was a great big woman. Well, we got three meals a day there and good meals. So it was a school and a residence all in one.

It was a great experience because we not only studied Marx and Lenin but we had time to get hold of classics that we couldn't ever get before. And all our time, in the main, was spent on study, from eight-thirty in the morning until twelve and from one-thirty until four in the afternoon. Twice a week we went to a gym for an hour's physical. It was organized for us to go to socials and meet with certain groups in Toronto.

The organization of the automobile workers was taking place in Oshawa at that time.⁴ Charlie Millard came out of that. He was the recognized leader. But the Communist Party played a terrific role and started the organization through their members in the plant. And Joe Salsberg at that time was in charge of the Party's trade union work. On weekends, we'd be taken down to Oshawa and we'd give out leaflets. So I had a little finger in that great struggle.

The instructors at this school were Sam Carr and Bill Sidney. I think Tim Buck came for three or four hours as did Leslie Morris. And we had a couple come from the United States Party.

At that time the Party could have taken away three hundred people across Canada and the movement would continue. There were so many new people developed. We could have had a mass arrest and the movement would have continued.

The idea of the Party, of course, was that those of us they thought capable of absorbing new knowledge and who had proven ourselves as lovers of the working class, would be given a better understanding of the role of that class. It was surprising — the homes of hundreds and hundreds of unemployed people you'd go into, and they'd all have what they called the Little Lenin Library. These were all basic pamphlets of Lenin and they sold for about fifteen cents at the time. There was almost a mass circulation. There were Marxist bookstores in every city. We had a big one here in Calgary open full time. And it was selling nothing else, in the main, but Marxist literature. And it was doing good business.

Around this time we in the Communist movement understood that a big imperialist war was facing us any month of the year. With the rise of fascism

⁴This would be the beginning of the rise of the great CIO industrial union which would change the face of Canadian labour.

in Germany and Italy and their invasion of Spain, we knew that it wouldn't be long before it would break into a world conflict of one kind or another. And our immediate objective was, before the war would come, to make every effort to organize unity in the ranks of the working class.

When that became adopted as policy, our big job in Alberta was to unite the MWUC with the UMWA. John L. Lewis was in charge of UMWA then. John L. Lewis, in those days, was a militant leader, not only to the miners, but finally to the CIO.⁵ So the policies of the UMWA had radically changed and brought about a situation where we could approach and speak unity to them about setting up one union. Bob Levitt and Angus Morrison were in charge of the UMWA District 18, headquartered in Calgary. Jimmy Sloan was President of the MWUC and John Stokaluk was the General Secretary. Harvey Murphy was an organizer. And I was in the WUL. So we held meetings and discussions to bring about an amalgamation.

The MWUC also had some locals in Nova Scotia, under Jim McLachlan. J.B. McLachlan was a great man. He had locals out there and they were split on joining with the UMWA. Jim McLachlan opposed the amalgamation. But anyway, we were very successful here in Alberta. On the basis of the leadership of John L. Lewis and on the basis of a militant policy in the mining camps, it made it possible to merge.

John Stokaluk, very well known throughout the mining industry of Canada as a leading Communist, became District 18 Secretary. Bob Levitt was President and Angus Morrison was the Vice-President. Not long after that, Angus Morrison ran for MLA up in the Luscar constituency where it was all basically miners and he got elected into the Provincial House. He ran as independent Labour but he was really CCF. That was one of our big achievements in the latter part of the 1930s. And the miners are doing very well today.

As a result of the radicalization of the people throughout the country, we had many professors of the University in Edmonton, doctors, ministers of the church in the ranks of the Party. In fact, one in particular was here in Calgary, Rev. Dr. Reid. He still belonged to his church out in East Calgary, on 9th Avenue, a working-class area. He'd have church services regularly, and it would be quite possible that at eight or nine o'clock on a Sunday night we'd have a Party meeting in the basement in one of the snug corners. But he was known. It was no secret that he was a member of the Communist Party and, in fact, on the City Committee. I had met many people like him, but he was one of the first people believing in a religious faith who really tried to practise the real faith of Jesus Christ. No mistake about it. I admired people such as him.

⁵It was the UMWA under Lewis which led the split from the AFL and founded the CIO.

We had a man, Joe Wallace, a leading Communist and a poet. His poetry books are published all over. And Joe still believed in an Almighty God. In fact, he still held on to his Catholic religion. This was a tremendous issue in France and in Italy and in such countries where millions of practising Catholics were also members of the Communist Party.

The CLDL was organized by a Communist, Rev. A.E. Smith. Its purpose was to set up an organization that would fight the terrorism being imposed upon the leadership of the working-class movement and to stop the wave of deportations that was taking place. It was to see that the workers who were arrested got the proper defense in the courts, and that their wives and children wouldn't starve to death while they were in jail. And this became a real broad mass movement throughout the country because A.E. Smith and other ministers and other people with reputations in one thing or another were all on the road night and day. A.E. Smith had come out of the same militant upsurge of 1919, the Winnipeg General Strike, with J.S. Woodsworth. He was well acquainted with all the ministry from one coast to the other.

He first joined the Party in the early 1920s. He wrote a book before he died, called *All My Life*. And this was really true about him — he did put all his life into the movement. I still think that he was the man who, in the main, held on to the Christian principles of the early Apostles and Jesus Christ.⁶

There arose strong branches of the CLDL everywhere, all throughout the Crow's Nest Pass, Drumheller, Edmonton, way up in the north country, wherever there were FUL branches. And when people got arrested for labour activity, they swung into action immediately and got the lawyers and got the bail and had it all arranged.

⁶A.E. Smith, *All My Life* (Toronto 1949).

Chapter 9

CALGARY CITY COUNCIL BECOMES AN ARENA OF CLASS STRUGGLE

The Communist Party had an office in the Maclean Block on 8th Avenue. My daily jobs were answering correspondence, general organizing, arranging for speakers, and conducting classes in economics, history, and current affairs. At City Hall I was the spokesman for relief recipients who had legitimate complaints.

By 1938 we had considerable experience in running for municipal office. I was the best known Party person in the City of Calgary. The Communist Party had run candidates in municipal elections as far back as 1931, but nobody had ever been elected before. People from the Labour Party were elected, but no Communists. But you must consider that I was basically active in Calgary from 1931 right along. There were times that I was out of Calgary, but yet I was established and rooted as a Calgarian. I used to speak regularly on radio station CKXL as well as at the Variety Theatre on Sunday nights. The Party decided that I should run in the election for an alderman's seat.

A committee was set up embracing unemployed organizations and the Party itself and all the progressive forces we could gather. We discussed the question of under what ticket I would run. There was quite a debate. Some wanted me to come out openly as a Communist Party candidate. The majority finally decided that I should run as a peoples' candidate. Of course, I was not to deny membership in the Party. I was still a full-time Communist Party official. Everybody in the City knew who I was and what I was. This I openly broadcast. We set up our election headquarters on 8th Avenue, we established our election machine and started holding meetings. We'd get invitations to come and meet people in private houses where I would speak to them on civic issues. I'd be on the radio at least once or twice a week. There were Labour-CCF candidates like Fred White, Bob Parkyn and Bill Southern. They, of course, had their headquarters in the Labour Temple. There was a preferential ballot on a city-wide basis. But, through private

talks with the Labour-CCF candidates, we got it arranged that if I was counted out, all my number twos, threes, fours, would go to the CCF-Labour people. We told our people to vote for me number one and to vote for Labour number two. That's also what the Labour people put across privately to their supporters.

Right from the start we felt good because donations and money started coming in. We were able to place ads in the papers. We had a well organized campaign. Through my connections with the Labour people, we were able to get into the CPR Ogden shops. They had three or four hundred men working there. We had a noontime meeting there and I was able to speak to them.

When election day came around, 23 November 1938, we had all the polls manned and we had a good machine. And that night around nine o'clock we knew that I was to be elected. I had 2,800 first choice ballots. There were six to be elected. I knocked off one of the most reactionary people on the old City Council who was running for election. Unfortunately, it happened to be a woman, a leader of the Conservative Party, Miss Pansy Pue. There were now three Labour seats, two Social Crediters and myself. That made the six.

The Social Crediters were lumped with the progressives. At that time they were quite progressive. Not the top leadership like Aberhart and Manning. But the local people here, in the main, were people who went through all the struggles of the 1930s and knew what the struggles were. They served a good purpose on the City Council. Two or three years prior to this, this Social Credit woman, Rose Wilkinson, had become very prominent and got elected. She also became an MLA. She'd go with me out to the suburbs of Calgary, organizing the unemployed. And George Brown, the other Social Crediter, was a machinist by trade in the Ogden shops.

Even though the mass of the people had swung to Social Credit in 1935 they had a very, very difficult time trying to manage the affairs of the province up until about 1940. When the war broke out in 1939, that's what saved the Social Credit as a movement, as a government. Yet, in the City of Calgary, from 1931 to 1938, the mass of the people knew my history and at least that they could trust me and that I'd be a strong voice for the needs of the unemployed on the City Council. This is why they elected me.

Naturally we were jubilant that we made the breakthrough. A month later, in 1938, we took offices in the new Council. My main role was to use the Council chambers as a tribune from where I could express the views and the needs and desires of the working people, in particular of Calgary. Of course, this meant whatever measures we could adopt to help change the tax structure. I was the first alderman in Calgary to raise the question of making the Palliser Hotel pay full taxes. This was a CPR railway hotel, so

they were getting our police protection and the service of our fire department — all the City departments — but they were paying nothing.¹ In our investigation and research work we found many places like that who were just paying a minimum portion of what they should pay. And this threw an extra burden of taxation on to the backs of the small business people and homeowners. Our fight was not entirely successful in achieving its purposes at that time, but it's an accomplished fact today.

There was no change in the number of persons on relief in 1938. There was no basic change until the war began. At Council meetings there were always hours spent debating the question of proper relief and attempts by aldermen to cut it. At one time, a motion was before the Council that anybody caught in a beer parlour would be cut off relief. These were the kinds of motions that were coming from the right wing of the Council. And we were continuously battling this. In the main, the Labour people, the two Social Crediters and myself, we'd work together as far as was humanly possible on the Council. And many, many a time it took a casting vote from the Mayor to break a tie on the Council. There were six on the other side.

There was a machine called the Civic Government Association. It was composed of Liberals and Conservatives. They raised in Council that all the poor working men were being robbed through two or three gambling places that were supposed to exist in the city. It was in the press how these noble gentlemen were going to do something about it. They brought it up on the Council that these places should be raided. They made an awful play about the poor workers losing all their wages, which is ridiculous. A few workers might have gambled, but the big majority didn't.

When I got up to speak, I brought this out, that this was a false issue, that it was just a political manoeuvre. I said, "Gentlemen, if you are so morally convinced that this gambling is bad for us, how about the red light district which is wide open?" I said, "How about you, Alderman Weir? You own property there. Of course, the rents are higher there for those kinds of houses than you'll get from a" And, boy, we really had it. The Council chambers used to be packed to the roof from the time that I got on the Council. I don't know why! At every meeting the opposition on the City Council were harping on the over-payment of the relief people. One would think they were the biggest spenders in the world. These wild payments to relief recipients! They had the power of the press; they had everything.

Oh, I had some hot battles on Council. There was a lieutenant colonel on the Council, Cunningham, and he was in charge of all the militia here. He had quite a war record from 1914 to 1918. I guess he just disliked my politics so strongly that every time he got a chance in public, he was rapping

¹Under the federal charter, the CPR was exempt from taxation on much of their property throughout Canada.

me. He had a habit, in Council, that when the Mayor would give me the floor, he'd keep butting in all the time while I was speaking. This night he was really bad. I think maybe he'd come from a military meeting because he had his uniform and sword on, hanging to the floor. Every time I'd get up, no matter what I'd say, he'd be butting in. I appealed to the Mayor a couple of times and I said, "Your Worship, will you control this person? Haven't I got the right to speak?" "Yes, certainly. Now Alderman Cunningham, stop interrupting, please." And I'd start again and then he'd start at me. So finally, I guess, I lost my temper and the next time he did it I just turned around to him and I says, "Look, I'm going to speak again. And if you open your mouth, I'll come over and shove that goddamned sword right down your spout!" Well, boy, there were cheers in the gallery. That will give you an idea of the kind of stuff that went on.

At that time I wasn't paid anything as an official of the Party. The pay for being an alderman was forty dollars a month. That was five dollars more than relief. I had no other source of income. Although they belonged to the other side, all the leading councillors were such patriots that they worked cheap. Since then it's become expensive to sit on the City Council.

Later on the King and Queen were here. The leaders of those who elected me decided that I, as an alderman, should participate, along with my wife. Anne had been arrested and sent to jail a short time before that for leading a picket line during a strike. And here there were several big parties for the King and Queen. Alderman McCullough, who held the Ford agency in town, had a party. The Commissioner at that time, Tweddle, had kind of a ranch out near Cochrane, with a big mansion of a home on it. That was the first party that we were taken to. I had no car at the time. And the Mayor said, "Well, we'll get you a car." He sent a car to where we lived to take us to this place near Cochrane. There was a policeman driving it. He opened the door and bowed us into the car. As we were driving up there, we get talking. And he says, "You know, Mrs. Lenihan, the last time I drove you, it's rather funny, but it was a different kind of wagon." He was the same policeman who drove her in the police wagon to jail and here he was taking her to meet the King and the Queen!

We got there and, oh, man, there was a big band out in front on the lawn. There wasn't a soul within 500 yards of the band. They were just playing for the birds. They had the band out in front and there was no audience, no people there. They were all inside. But inside there was lots of activity. They were all inside dancing and guzzling. The bar was wide open and the bartenders in white uniforms! It was good in a way that I had the experience. We saw all the leading lights of the city in action. They had a dress rehearsal for this, because these rich people, the wives of the rich aldermen — they were so excited, you'd think they were going to heaven to meet the all

powerful God. They could hardly talk sense to you, they were so excited; you'd think the world was going to burst right there in front of us. I just wore an ordinary suit of clothing and a white shirt, that's all. And Anne had a nice dress. The movement bought her a dress because we didn't have the money.

All the leading lights of the city were at this party from the churches, the police, the fire department, they were all there. And I'm walking around looking at things and I had one or two drinks, I guess. I went up to the bar, and who is standing there but the Chief of Police, Draper, and the Chief of the Fire Department, Sandy Carr. And as soon as I come up both of them says, "Well, hello Pat, how are you?" You know, as if we were long lost friends. And we got talking. And finally — this is true — the Chief says to me, "You know, Pat, if I had caught you coming up 8th Avenue with a red flag, I'd put you in jail." He says, "I have a job to do, but I sympathize with you and your people." And old Sandy Carr, he came out with the same. Well, I wasn't surprised at Sandy Carr, but with the Chief of Police! When we're coming away from the Party, who's trying to get into a car but this colonel that I used to fight with on the Council. And, so help me God, he was so loaded that he didn't know he was getting into a car. I had to help him.

At the same parties or receptions in honour of the King and Queen, the top church people were all there. I had the opportunity of meeting with the Roman Catholic Archbishop and had a conversation with him. Of course, I guess he wanted to ask me where I was born and if I really happened to be an Irishman. And when he was leaving, he came to me and said, "Patrick, you're all right. You have wandered. But you'll come back." Well, he had hopes, I guess. And I met a lot of people like that. And I don't know what their impressions were, but, I can assure you, there was no chance to see anything wrong with me. I told them what my views were and why I had them and how I got them. And there was no hostility there, at least not openly to me. But I knew who I was dealing with.

Chapter 10

WORLD WAR II: STRUGGLE ON THE HOME FRONT

We were working on a farm near Calgary when the war broke out in 1939. Poland was attacked. And the first messages from the Communist movement in our paper was that it was our war. I said to Anne, "Anne, we're quitting the harvesting and we're going to Calgary and I'm going to join up." But by the time I got to Calgary and got in touch with the Party, the line of the Party had changed. It was an imperialist war. And that was our stand when they started arresting people all over the country for making speeches. As a result of that campaign, I got arrested for sedition in the latter part of 1939.

So, shortly after the Royal Visit, one of the next events in my life was my appearance in the King's Court in Calgary on a charge of sedition and causing disaffection to His Majesty's forces. After a thorough discussion in the movement throughout Canada amongst all the leaders, we opposed the war as an imperialist war.¹ It was the war we were predicting and the war we were telling people was going to take place. I was doing it since 1931 in all my speeches —fighting off the two main dangers facing the world: the danger of the rise of fascism and another imperialist war. We knew correctly that the objective of that imperialist war would be to wipe out the Soviet Union. All through the 1930s, that was the objective in all the war plans of the capitalist leading nations. That is why they encouraged and financed Hitler and Mussolini to build a powerful war machine, hoping that imperialist fascist Germany would be spearheaded against the Soviet Union in a

¹This sudden change in the Party line resulted from Comintern instructions to their member parties after the conclusion of the Soviet-German pact. The abrupt change in line is generally believed to have cost the CPC considerable credibility among many sympathizers. For two very different historical interpretations of this see Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada* (Toronto 1975) and *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976* (Toronto 1982) which is the Party's own interpretation of its history.

war.² At the last moment, the German imperialists changed their ideas. They undoubtedly figured that, if they attacked the Soviet Union by themselves, they'd pay an awful price for it and then they'd leave a strong capitalist world, England, France and all the others behind their backs. And Hitler, instead of marching against the Soviet Union, was playing politics. He declared war on Poland.

The German attack on Poland which was 1 September 1939, was preceded by two weeks by the German-Soviet non-aggression pact. It was a pact in the interests of the Soviet Union, basically, because it smashed the united front of Germany, Italy, England, France and all the capitalist countries. It was their objective to strike against the Soviet Union with Germany as the spearhead of it. The Soviet Union had no aims at territorial expansion from Germany. The Soviet Union had no reason to attack anybody. They had never attacked anybody except when they were provoked. And there was nothing wrong with signing a non-aggression pact, where Germany promised we won't attack you and the Soviet Union promised we won't attack Germany. On the basis of this fact, the Soviet Union was neutral towards Germany for that period. Hitler was eyeing the other parts of Europe including France and all the Scandinavian countries.

The Soviet Union had to go into Finland. Great fortifications were built along the border of Finland facing the Soviet Union. The Mannerheim Line, it was called. And Mannerheim himself was the president of fascist Finland. He was of German descent and an out-and-out fascist. The Finnish Mannerheim Line was only about 25 miles or so from Leningrad. The Soviet Union, knowing, and expecting the war, decided that the time had come when they had to break the Mannerheim Line through peace negotiations with Finland or through military action. The Finnish government, backed by the capitalist governments of the world, decided to defend it. The Soviet Union attacked it because it wanted to break that line. Mussolini had ships loaded with troops to send to attack the Soviet Union. This is public knowledge! Going to the aid of little Finland — this was the cloak, the cover-up for their crimes. Well, we who had studied history and had kept up to date on social developments all through the 1930s were convinced, and I'm still more confident today, that we were correct, because life itself has proven it. I was confident then that a government of the people, especially the working class in the Soviet Union, and led by the Communist Party would under no circumstances ever become real friends of Nazis and

²The ruling circles of Britain, France and other capitalist countries were never totally united on this though a significant faction co-operated with Hitler and Mussolini against the Soviet Union. For this historical interpretation see Clement Leibovitz, *The Chamberlain-Hitler Deal* (Edmonton 1993) with a forward by Tony Benn.

fascists. We Communists were almost alone in pointing this out. And I said it on the steps of the City Hall in Calgary to Alderman Douglas Cunningham, that he would live to see the day when the Red Army would show him how to fight fascism. And I'm a happy man today that I'm alive because I know they did it.

I was elected alderman in the fall of 1938 for a two-year term. So I was an alderman when the war broke out. You can realize in those days the pressure that was on me. I was a Communist alderman speaking against the war, and supporting the Soviet Union all the way.

I think the mass of the people at that particular time were confused. Even the left wing and the CCF leaders — everybody else — was confused. I was standing alone. Later on, when England and Canada were drawn into the war, Woodsworth of the CCF began speaking out against the war. But at this point the question facing the people of Canada was the treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany and the Russian attack on Finland. This was it. Then when Hitler attacked Poland, this was very important.

Shortly after that non-aggression pact was signed, Hitler decided to attack and go after all of Poland. But two big provinces that had belonged to the Ukraine were taken over by Poland following the war of 1918. So these two provinces, under a Polish fascist government, were actually occupied territory. Now when the Germans struck and started to advance and annihilate the Polish Army and the government of Poland failed — they ran away — the Red Army came and took back the two provinces. And this is the first real military blow that was given to Hitler. That is why the Soviet Union came in and took part of Poland.

And then, of course, in the fall of 1939, with the invasion of Poland, England declared war on Germany and, naturally, France and Belgium followed. They shipped their troops to France. And then nothing happened. There was no war! This has been described as the "phoney war" because negotiations were still going on with Germany and Italy and France and England — all of them. I imagine the Americans were in on it, trying still to turn the war against the Soviet Union. But it just didn't work. Hitler had other plans by then.

But I want to state how I felt and how the Party felt at that time. On the basis of the knowledge I had within me, I see today how the ideas I held were tested by life itself. And now, years after, the truth of all the facts is coming out and proves that we were correct. In the 1950s and following the completion of the war, all the propaganda on the American continent and in Canada was based on the fact that the Communists didn't change their thinking until the Soviet Union was attacked. This is false. This is a lie.

It's admitted now that Hitler's armies came into Paris over paved concrete highways, because the French bourgeoisie, the French capitalists,

deserted France and turned her over to Germany, to Hitler. Once the French government deserted, it became the task of the Communist Party of France and the working class of France to build their underground movement and fight for the liberation of France. And that was the first beginning in the change of the character of the war. The nature of the war began to change when France fell and the underground began fighting the Germans.³

When Canada entered the war, we opposed it. Wherever our spokesmen came and made speeches, many of them were arrested. They were going to jail already. The CLDL was reorganized and it called a meeting in the Labour Temple in Calgary on Sunday 3 December, to explain to the people the Fascist measures being adopted by the Canadian government again. I was asked to speak there, which I did. And we had an overflow crowd, as usual. In spite of the propaganda, a lot of people, undoubtedly, just came to hear what I had to say. And I denounced the war, saying it wasn't our war, it wasn't a people's war, and we should have no part in it. I denounced the tactics of a government that would start arresting people under the War Measures Act because they expressed their opinions about the war. Unfortunately, there was a *Calgary Herald* reporter at the meeting. And he took notes of what I was saying. The next day, there was an article in the *Herald* and it was a muddle of everything I said and it was slanted deliberately, I'm sure.

In a couple of days, the RCMP came to my home and told me that I was under arrest. And I knew these fellows by then because they had arrested me before. And when they came in I said, "Well, what is it now?" They said, "Well, we don't know but you've got to go." So I went. That would have been close to Christmas, 1939. I was got out on bail by one of the Labour aldermen, Fred White. He went my bail for five thousand dollars.

I was brought before a magistrate with the charge of causing disaffection to His Majesty's forces, and sedition. The CLDL had a lawyer, Barney Collison, who gave his legal services free. He advised me to ask for a jury trial. The trial date was set and I was released on bail. Finally, I appeared before the court. I had witnesses on my side. There was a woman teacher in the audience that night, a Mrs. Butler, and she had two sons in the Air Force. I introduced her to our lawyer. She thought she should give evidence on my behalf. Barney Collison, the lawyer, talked to her. I didn't do it. She appeared and took the stand. And she brought out that she was at the meeting, that she had two sons in the Air Force, and that she didn't hear Alderman Lenihan say anything seditious. She gave really good evidence.

³The Comintern line on the nature of the war did not change until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Finally, the reporter from the *Herald* got on the witness box. Barney Collison went after him. One of the big things was Barney asking the fellow was, "How did you take down the remarks of his speech? He spoke for an hour and a half," he said. "Did you use shorthand or what?" "No, just rough notes." Well, Barney Collison sure made a point of this in front of the jury.

Yes, I was against the war. That wasn't the charge. The charge was that I had, "By word of mouth made statements likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty, contrary to the Defence of Canada regulations." And that was the last thing on my mind, I can assure you. When I was speaking, I wasn't even thinking of His Majesty's troops.

When Barney finished, the jury retired for about three hours. They came out with a verdict of not guilty. Of course, I was released and back to my activities. I kept attending the City Council and doing all kinds of organizing work wherever we could organize. We kept at it. And then we were into 1940.

When the war broke out, there was immediate confusion amongst many Communists and all other sections of the population as to what the war was about. Through all the activities during the 1930s of exposing fascism, the tales coming out of Germany, the persecution of the Jewish people, the trade union movement in Germany was smashed — the Canadian people had a deep resentment for Hitler and for all the reactionary forces as they knew them. Also the unemployed were hungry, and were fed up with being on relief. So when the war broke out, masses of them headed right into the army. In fact, here in Calgary, the Barracks couldn't supply them with clothes, shoes or uniforms. You'd see one fellow coming up to town, he'd have a soldier's hat on him and overalls. It took them time. The influx into the army was terrific. And thousands of Canadian Communists joined up in that period. As a result of the fierce propaganda in the press and the radio, calling it a "just war," a "war against fascism," the tide was definite. Well, we lost the people. I was alone as a speaker. I was one voice of the movement that was publicly speaking against the war. This continued until the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany.

From the time the Canadian Parliament repealed Section 98 of the Criminal Code in 1936, the Communist Party was perfectly legal, and held mass conventions every year in Toronto. We were legal up until the War broke out and then the Canadian government resorted again to its fascist law, the War Measures Act. That's the same Act that was used against the Québec separatists in 1970. It was first used in Canada in WWI. The Party was illegal and again had to go underground. I didn't go underground because I was a public figure. I had to attend my Council meetings and I had to function as a Communist. But I knew that my time was short. With the number of arrests that were taking place around the country, I knew

that I wouldn't last long. In fact, when the War Measures Act was declared, I was the first one in western Canada to be arrested.

A few days after the fall of Paris and Mussolini declaring war, I was arrested. I was up in the Mounted Police barracks on top of the old Post Office. Our second child was due any day and I was in jail. And my wife, Anne, insisted on seeing me. She went to the Mounted Police barracks and she told them that she wanted to talk with me. They said no. So then she went back again and told them that she was going to stay in the building and have her baby right there in their office if she wasn't allowed to see me. I guess they finally talked it over and they allowed Anne to come and see me. She had a short visit with me that day. She came back the next day and got another visit. There was a wire screen in front of us where we talked, so I couldn't kiss her and I couldn't shake hands with her.

She asked me, "Pat, do you know who's in here?"

And I says, "No. Who?" I was expecting her to mention some other Communist leaders.

And she says, "Our friend from Edmonton, Koyich."

I says, "What? They got him too?"

Koyich was one of the best known recruiters for the Communist Party in Edmonton for years. He raised more money for the Communists. I don't know where, but he sold more papers and recruited more members. He was quite prominent and he had a little rooming house. Every time I was in Edmonton on Party business, he was always at the bus station or the train to meet Anne and me and he would say, "Oh, you have to stay with us tonight." And he was a real close Party comrade as far as we were concerned.

When Anne saw him in the Mounted barracks, he was in RCMP uniform! Later on, some more Communists were brought in, such as Ben Swankey from Edmonton. Ben told me what happened.⁴ He was a Mounted Policeman in the ranks of the Communist Party!

We've got to be careful in the working class movement because we've got to be aware that these things go on.⁵ When I heard and read about the exposure of the RCMP activities today when I'm 74 years of age, it's no news

⁴Swankey became the Alberta leader of the Party in 1945. Later he became one of the prominent leaders of the Communist Party in British Columbia. He is the editor with Jean Evans Sheils of *Work and Wages: A Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans, 1890-1944* (Vancouver 1977) which is a useful source of material on unemployed struggles in the 1930s. Today he is one of the major leaders of the seniors' movement in BC.

⁵In the 1970s while Lenihan was telling this story there were tremendous scandals around RCMP, "dirty tricks" which led to investigations of the Force by one federal and four provincial royal commissions.

to me. This has been going on for 100 years! Only in a greater degree today than ever before.

I don't know who arranged it or how, but my wife was taken to hospital and gave birth to our daughter. When my daughter June was born in the hospital on 21 June, I was already about a week awaiting internment up on top of the Post Office.

I'm called out, and here's soldiers with guns, and I was told I was going over to see my wife and that I was going to be interned in Kananaskis, about sixty miles west of Calgary, right up in the Rocky Mountains. They had a big camp there.⁶ There must have been five hundred German sympathizers and German fascists who were here in this country and a handful of Italians in the camp up there. It wasn't a soldiers' camp where they put German soldiers. They had another big one for them. But this was a civilian camp.

The RCMP office told me, "You're going to be interned in Kananaskis." So this military escort took me in the car over to the General Hospital and up to my wife's room and I was allowed about fifteen minutes with Anne. And I didn't tell her that I was going to Kananaskis. She knew I was under arrest but I didn't want to tell her there that I'm going to Kananaskis, because I figured it might upset her, with the baby. I told her that one of these days I'd be out again and tried to cheer her up. I said good-bye and the next thing, I'm wheeled up to Kananaskis and I'm put into this camp.

I was known as an anti-fascist, a Communist — the Communist alderman in Calgary. So you should see the greeting I got in that camp! I didn't think I'd last twenty-four hours. Man, oh man! They'd shout, "Communist scum" and, "Pass me. Walk past me." I was the most lonely man in this world.

I was interned under the War Measures Act. I was never charged in the normal way. I had two kangaroo hearings. I had one up in Kananaskis before three appointees. I think one was a Taschereau, a judge from Québec. There was one from Edmonton and one from somewhere else. One day I'm called in before this body — no lawyer, no nothing, no charge. They started questioning me over my record: when I came to Canada, how I came, all of this. And telling me that I was a Communist and I was this and that and everything else. And there was no plea nor anything. It was just a matter of answering some questions. They had documents stating, "You said this in such a place and you said this in 1932 and you said this in 1935." It was ridiculous. It was obvious that the Mounted Police had been keeping records on me.

I spent about a year in Kananaskis. In the year, possibly fifty or more leftists were brought in from Winnipeg, Vancouver and the West. Well, right

⁶Kananaskis was originally begun as a relief camp for the single unemployed in the early 1930s and was later converted into an internment camp. Today Kananaskis is a famous ski resort.

from the start, we wanted nothing to do with the Nazis. As soon as we had a group of twenty, we demanded the right to have our own spokesman. And I was our first spokesman for our people in the camp. And one of our main demands, if I can use that word, was that we wanted a camp of our own.

The only thing we had in our hearts for the Nazis was hatred. They were ideologically convinced fascists and Nazis. No matter what argument they'd bring up, we'd tie them up in knots completely. It would be broad daylight, twelve noon, but if the Fuehrer told them it was dark outside, well, then it was dark. To me, they were kind of lunatics.

The Canadian warship, the *Prince George*, I think, captured a German merchant marine ship and brought it into Canada. Well, there must have been a crew of about 50 on it. They were brought into the civilian camp where we and the civilian Nazis were. And I'd say, out of the 50, 10 of the seamen were anti-Hitler; they were anti-fascist. When they'd walk by us they'd clench their fist, the Communist salute in Germany. One of them carved two Indian heads out of wood for me as a souvenir.

While we were in Kananaskis, we got jobs working in the soldiers' and sergeants' messes, washing dishes and cleaning up. We cherished it because it gave us a chance to come out of our quarters. We got to know lots of the guards. They were all veterans. Lots of them knew me from Calgary and elsewhere. In fact, some of them had participated in the strikes of the unemployed servicemen's organization. They had no hatred against us. With military law and discipline, they were soldiers, but they treated us in the most humane basis possible. And I must say the same for the officers. They gave us everything that could be given to us on the basis of their instructions. They treated us as humanely as possible. But we weren't allowed newspapers or radios. But in Kananaskis it didn't take us long before we had ways and means of having the *Morning Albertan* every morning.⁷

In the camp we had Alderman Jake Penner from Winnipeg. We had Johnny Weir, a leading Marxist and Communist. And we had top men from the Communist movement. And we had leaders of the Ukrainian progressive organization. So we'd congregate and they'd lecture us on different topics and we'd have discussions on the war. I mean, we really tried to make it a little university.

Finally, after about a year in Kananaskis, we were told to get mobilized one day — we were moving. We had to pack up everything we had in our kit bags and we're all handcuffed and we're taken in trucks and brought into Calgary and put on a train. In a couple of nights and a couple of days,

⁷The Calgary *Morning Albertan* was perhaps the most progressive of Alberta's daily newspapers and was quite supportive of protests like the On-To-Ottawa Trek of 1935.

we landed in Petawawa, Ontario. There was a huge camp of civilian fascists, or pro-fascists, many of them Italian. And Mayor Houde of Montréal was one of them.

We really put up a fight in Petawawa for a camp of our own. The Soviet Union would be in the war around this time. So the views of people were changing from the hostility that was there when the war first broke out. They were changing towards the Soviet Union. Churchill had made a big speech which was welcome news to us. He was declaring friendship with the Soviet Union and pledged to give them help to win the war.

We finally won our way out of Petawawa and the government moved us over to Hull, Québec. There was a new jail built there by Québec Premier Duplessis which had never been used. I guess it was going to be some kind of a penitentiary. It was a big, big building, very modern.

There were about 150 of us from all over Canada. When we were marched up in front of this building and told to go in, our spokesman was Norman Freed, who was later on the Toronto City Council. He said, "No man move. We're not going in there." We thought we were going to a camp, but when we saw the walls around this building, we refused to go in. And when this officer told us to get marching, we just wouldn't go. And then we told him what was wrong. We were not going into any jail or prison. We didn't mind going to a camp but we weren't going there. Oh boy, there was lots of excitement, for about an hour. He went in to consult with his superiors and I guess they phoned across the river to Ottawa. Finally, they came back and said, "Well, okay. Look, this is going to be no prison. You yourselves are going to run it." And they took our committee in and showed them the whole thing, before we'd go in. And then Norman Freed and the committee came out and said, "Okay, fellows, it's going to be all right."

When we went in it was fine, a beautiful kitchen, everything shining. And we had the cells. Two of us would go in a cell, two bunks in each cell. No locks. There was only one lock in the whole building. And that didn't stop us. We had complete freedom and we could even go outside. There was a big compound. I guess it was meant for jail purposes, where the prisoners would get recreation. But outside of that, that door would be open and we could go out to a wooded section and sit around under the trees.

The first day we had to organize the kitchen and the kitchen staff and get the meals going. As a result of our almost two years of fighting and agitating, we were allowed to be completely by ourselves. The prison authorities turned over the complete administration of the camp, as far as our lives were concerned. No soldiers in sight or around us at all. Any soldiers that were on guard were way on the outside. Fred Collins of Toronto was in the kitchen with ten of us. We did a shift in the kitchen. Other crews were appointed for the cleanup, inside the building. And there was a crew

for looking after the exercise area. It was all organized. We even had a place outside the big walls that go around the prison. They had a door in this wall and it was opened every day. It opened up into maybe five acres of land. It wasn't exactly a field, because the trees were rather close. It looked like an unkempt park. And, oh, it was a beautiful spot for reading and studying.

The guards were our friends, and we were their friends. Sometimes, when we were out in this kind of a park, there would be a soldier sitting at the corner of the fence, maybe three feet outside it. And, on a hot day, he'd sit down. And he'd be there snoozing with the rifle between his legs. Sometimes our fellows would sit about ten or twenty feet away from him. If our fellows saw a sergeant or an officer coming, they'd holler at him.

We could have escaped from there a thousand times, but the Party said, "No escapes." The character of the war was changing. The Soviet Union was in the war. We didn't want to do anything to distract from the war effort.

We used to have an odd social at night-time, maybe once a week. And whoever could sing, would sing, some of the guys had musical instruments and they'd compose songs. Ben Swankey was a good man for composing songs and music. And Johnny Weir was great at poetry.

All the people interned were prominent Communists in one degree or another. We had 150 when we got there. The Party committee, of course, immediately started to get contact with the outside. And they set up an educational committee to direct educational activities. We had Dr. Lawrie from Toronto. We had Samuel Levine, a mathematician, a professor from Toronto. We had all kinds of leading Party people who had trained, ideologically, for leadership. And right away they would give lectures, then discussions. And at the start it might last five hours a day.

The prison authorities didn't allow any literature of any kind. No newspapers and no radio. We were able to smuggle in Marxist books and some of the progressive writers of old times, the classics. Through various means — basically through members of the Veteran's Guard, soldiers — we had the papers coming in every day.

We got organized quickly. Classes were set up immediately. It became somewhat like a university. We'd have lectures or discussions from nine o'clock in the morning until twelve and from two to five. We had discipline. Some of the soldiers would bring us papers and we got all the finest books and classics that you could wish for. We had the necessary books and the qualified people for teaching and giving lectures. And we were able to get a lot of the writings of the early philosophers and economists of England and Germany and all over the world. And we were able to study them all. We got the books in. Don't ask me how, because I don't know. It was none of my business. We came out of there in knowledge much richer than we were when we went in.

That wasn't the intention of the government. But when you know the history of the Czarist regime in Russia in concentrating all the progressive thinkers in Russia in camps in Siberia — it was one of the biggest mistakes the Czar ever made. Practically all the leadership of the Bolshevik Party came from that. Now this was similar, on a smaller scale. When men who are ideologically in agreement get together, they want to study that ideology more and where it came from and how it affects people and the world. And this is bound to happen. People with an education and a desire for education will not sit around and just vegetate in a place like that.

We used to get a lot of parcels from all over the country from people who knew us. There was food coming to us from the miners and others, from everywhere — big parcels. We weren't long there when somebody sent in a big roll of cheese. But inside the roll was a box and in the box was one of those radios that you put in your ear — a crystal set.

Muni Taub from Winnipeg was in the same cell as I was. I was on the bottom bunk and he was up on top. But there were never any locks on the doors. Because we were right in the middle of a block, the Party committee decided that the radio would be put in our cell, under my pillow. The cells were inspected once a day. It would all depend on the kind of officer, what we called the orderly officer. He came around every day with a sergeant or sergeant-major and inspected the kitchen. He would walk around and look at this and look at that. But we were careful.

We couldn't get a clear voice on the crystal set. One of our fellows who had an understanding of electronics, put forward the idea that we had to have an aerial, and a link between the aerial and this crystal set. So Norman Freed, our spokesman, went to the Colonel in charge of the camp, and got permission to build a clothesline so that we could air our blankets. That was the excuse given, that our blankets were getting musty and we'd like to air them out once in a while in shifts, you know. And, sure enough, we got permission. And the soldiers brought us in the wooden poles for the clothesline, a double clothesline, and we set it up right under our window, right under where Muni Taub and I were sleeping. I don't know where we got the wire — one of the soldiers must have brought it. It was a little thin copper wire like a black thread. You could barely see it. And at night time we'd attach it to the crystal set and then out the window and down to the clothesline.

The door out to where the clothesline was — it was always open. The job of the first one up in the morning was to go out and disconnect it. And we'd pull the wire in. But in the afternoons, when things died down, we'd connect it again. Either Muni Taub, or Fred Collins, or Misha Cohen, or myself would take turns. We were the guys that rotated, listening to all the news.

So every night we had a full report on the day's news as it came over the radio.

I'll never forget it — I'm laying in the bunk this night listening to the crystal set and the news broke about Pearl Harbour. I almost sailed out of my bunk. I don't think my feet hit the ground until I got down to the end of the hallway where Norman Freed was sleeping or resting and reading. I says, "Norman! Get up! I just got it. Pearl Harbour is wiped out!" Well, he thought I had gone crazy. They all did for a couple of seconds. I says, "Come on up and listen to it. Come on up and listen." Sure enough, it was true.

I imagine that set is somewhere around that building yet, because they had it right until the last man was released. And you couldn't take it out with you because you were searched going out too.

They tried on two occasions that we know of to plant stool pigeons of the RCMP in amongst us. These fellows would come through the ordinary channels. The first thing we knew the door would open and some fellow would walk in with a parcel, dressed as we were — in a uniform. We'd all rush around, wondering if we knew him or where he came from. Both times the guy was French Canadian. The first fellow that came — we got worried, just watching him. By the way he carried himself, you could tell that he had training. He was only in a couple of days when the French Canadian comrades knew that he was a plant, that he was never in the Communist movement.

We had a committee recognized inside. Our committee went immediately to the commandant of the camp and asked for an interview. The Committee told him, "Look, we want that guy out of here because he'll get killed. He's a stool pigeon. We don't want him around. He's going to upset the morale of the whole place." And, of course, the commandant had an alibi: "Well, I don't know who he is. He's interned here and I've got to keep him here." You know, that was their alibi.

I felt sorry for the guy in a way. He had to eat with us and live with us. Nobody would look at him. They almost spit at him every time he came around. For all the rest of us, say, twelve men at a table, there would be a big platter of meat and dishes of vegetables and potatoes. For him, he was never allowed to touch any of the platters. His food would be delivered to him on a plate. All he got was so much on a plate. Then that was doused with pepper and salt so nobody in the world could eat it.

We wanted him to get up and go to the colonel. So a couple of times we took his kit and mattress and everything he had and threw it outside, right next to the door that divided us from the soldiers' headquarters. So when they opened the door — here's his mattress and his kit and everything else and he'd be standing there looking. Finally, after about a week they let him

out. About three months later they repeated the process. But that finished them.

All through out internment, in Kananaskis, in Petawawa, and finally in the Hull jail, we were treated with respect by 98 per cent of the military staff, and that included an awful lot of the officers, too. That's in spite of the powerful anti-communist literature and all of the news that came out for years. Of course, one factor was that the Veterans' Guard were all ex-servicemen who, in the main, went through the Hungry Thirties. Many of them had participated in unemployment strikes. We had a lot of cooperation beyond the call of duty from them. They would bring us books. In fact, many a time they brought in the odd bottle of whisky.

I'll give you one instance. When we were in the Hull Jail, we were doing all the cooking ourselves and we had all the regular cooking equipment of the regular army, like big, big, seven or eight gallon cans for making soup or anything like that. We were getting in a lot of fruit, raisins and all this. More than we could eat. So, naturally, some of our Ukrainian comrades approached the Party committee and said that, if they got permission, they could make some good whisky. We got the stuff needed — raisins and every other thing. We had to cook the stuff in one of those kitchen pots. They had a tin pan held on by bent nails on top of it. They poured the juice from the mash into this big pot. Then they'd cover it with this pan that would sink into the soup at about six inches and then they'd fill that with ice. The steam from the wine juice would start to boil or percolate. It would hit the bottom of the ice pan. They had another pan to catch the alcohol. It was clear. Man, we had a big party there out of the first batch!

Fred Collins, Misha Cohen and myself were in the kitchen and in came Captain Shaw, the orderly officer this day. We had made maybe ten gallons of it and we had it in vinegar gallons behind sacks of flour. We had a supply, but we were making another batch. And when you came into the kitchen you could certainly get an odour.

So he comes up, smart looking, and we're busy, of course, chopping meat or some other thing. He's looking at all the pots because we're getting ready for lunch. And he looks at this one and says, "What's this?" Fred Collins says, "Oh, that's a new kind of French soup we're making." I could have died laughing. He turns around to the sergeant and he says, "Isn't that interesting?" And away he goes. So we didn't hear a word. Everything went fine.

About three days later I'm walking out towards the door where the soldiers were, and who comes out the door but the colonel in charge. He stops me and says, "You're working in the kitchen?"

I say, "Yes, sir."

He says, "What's that stuff you've got behind the flour sacks in the kitchen?"

They had checked the kitchen at night time when we were asleep and they had found it.

I says, "Oh, sir, that's vinegar."

He looked at me and says, "Well, take it easy in drinking it."

And he's the commander of the camp! It shows how we got respect from the soldiers.

Only on one occasion when we were in the Hull Jail were we allowed visitors. I had two fifteen-minute visits from my wife. Bob Levitt of the UMWA helped. We used to fight when we had the two different unions. But our old enemy became our friend after the unity of the miners took place. There was a district convention of the miners in Calgary. They heard that Anne had got permission to come up to Hull to visit me. And Bob Levitt announced this and said they'd take up a collection to pay Anne's train fare. And that's how she got there. She went all that distance from Calgary to Ottawa-Hull and she was only allowed to see me twice for fifteen minutes. It cost a lot of money, but to Anne and me it was worth it.

When I was up in Kananaskis for a year and a half I had no visitors. They wouldn't let my wife come near me and she was only 65 miles away. So the fifteen minute interviews twice inside of a week was a little sign of a changing attitude towards us by the government in Ottawa.

Nearly everybody else had visitors too, because the Labour movement was becoming very active. There was a revival taking place outside in the thinking of the people and even in the role of the Labour movement. They got the money to send the people to visit their friends and relatives.

During our stay in camps there was a very strong sentiment against my internment. I think I was liked as a leader so they didn't think I should be interned. During this period, there was some kind of a hearing, to see whether I should be released. There was some kind of a review board held in Calgary. Anne went to get all the character witnesses. All the Labour aldermen and the two Social Credit aldermen, were all absolutely opposed to my internment. There was Alderman Brown and Alderman Wilkinson who were Social Credit. There was Fred White, a Labour alderman, who was a leader of the CCF and Labour Party. At one time he was an MLA. And there was Bob Parkyn, a Labour alderman and Bill Southern, a Labour alderman. Five of them from the Council. In spite of the fact that I clashed with them on the Council, they were my friends. They knew that I was honest and sincere in what I was trying to do. They didn't agree ideologically with all the principles of the Communist movement, but outside of that, they made a big contribution to the history of Calgary.

Internment was difficult on the families. Anne had to apply for relief. There was no discrimination against Anne because of my internment. In fact, Mayor Davison told her, "If they discriminate against you, just come and see me." The relief allowance at that point was sixteen dollars a month for rent, and fifteen dollars for food. They gave medication, shoe repair. That's all.

Anne and the children had to go and stay with her parents so the family wouldn't get too hungry. She could only stay for a week or so. They used to send out inspectors and examine the place you live, to see if you have any luxuries, or if you're living within the thirty-one dollars. Somebody told them that Anne used to go away and stay with her parents for a week or so. So the inspector asked her about this and Anne said, "Well, if you sit down here and show me how to live on thirty-one dollars, then I'll stay away." He didn't say another word. He said, "Don't pay attention. Do whatever you want."

In June 1940, Paris fell, when, in the main the capitalist class of France turned the country over to the Germans. Then when Hitler drove his tanks over paved highways into Paris, it became the job of the French Socialists and Communists and patriotic French people, no matter what walk of life they came from, to fight Hitler and win back the independence of their country.

This was also taking place throughout the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, and all the countries invaded by Hitler. The people were deserted by the old time leadership of these countries. The only ones to build an opposition to the Hitlerites were the resistance movement — Communists, socialists, trade unionists, some middle class people, intellectuals — they were the ones that went underground and fought Hitler. It was a people's war then.

On 22 June 1941, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the world knew that was the signal that he wanted control over the world. And it became a people's war throughout the world, to destroy fascism.

The Communists outside and the Party members in the trade unions were preaching this and publishing this to their people and telling them, "Look, forget strikes. Let's produce for the winning of the war and the smashing of Hitler." When the Soviet Union was in the war, the people started to look to the Soviet Union because England was almost on its last legs at that time, in very bad shape. And the Yanks were not ready to go in. Russia was drawn into the war despite its peace policy. People thought that was a great thing. Even Churchill judged it properly and correctly. This, of course, speeded up our release. The Germans were only seven miles from Moscow when I was released in September 1942.

They had released maybe 25 or 30 gradually from Hull before that. They wouldn't let us all out at one time. One morning I'm called into the front office which was the commandant's office. Ben Swankey, who was also from Alberta, and I were told to go back into our place and get our stuff, that we were being released. Then we were told we had to sign a paper that we wouldn't take part in any activities when we got out. And we had already agreed that this was rigmarole and that we'd sign it. We got a railway ticket from Hull to Calgary. Transportation and no more. A CPR ticket.

My feelings travelling back from Hull to Calgary were excellent in knowing our innocence as far as any charges were concerned, which were never levied against us. Our whole arrest was a frame-up and false. And, naturally, I was delighted to get back to my family, knowing, too, that I was coming back to take part in building a strong labour movement.

I arrived in Calgary around six-thirty or seven o'clock in the morning. About two hundred people, workers, many of them my friends, met me at the depot. They gave me a welcome. There was a party that night, a small social. And then the following Sunday the Labour Progressive Party asked me if I'd speak and I said sure.⁸ It was billed as a welcome back meeting for Pat Lenihan. The Masonic Hall was a big hall. It would hold 500 people, I guess. It was jammed to the rooftops. I spoke and I pointed out how we should never have been put in jail, because we were anti-fascists all the way. If there was one thing that we hated all our lives, it was fascism and that the ruling class of Canada used the war as a weapon to throw us in the internment camps for nothing. I brought out all the facts: I had no trial, I had no charges placed against me in the 27 months. I showed how the war started out as an imperialist war and that it was a phoney war for a long period. And then when different events happened, when Hitler hit France, and hit Poland and hit Scandinavia, the character of the war was gradually changing. It changed even more when Hitler hit the Soviet Union. Then it was a mass people's war throughout the world to destroy fascism.

And, oh man, it was great. Up until then the story outside was the Communists are changing their line about the war now because the Soviet Union was attacked. This is a lie, a deliberate lie. We were in favour of the war a long time. That's why when our people came out of jail, most of them volunteered for active service. I don't know how many of them got killed in France. Ben Swankey became a sergeant. Corey Campbell became a sergeant.

⁸When the government refused to lift the ban on the Communist Party, the organization was reconstituted as the Labour Progressive Party (LPP). Many Communists preferred the new name on the grounds that it had broader appeal and they did not revert to the name Communist Party until 1959.

After I got home I got another letter from the government sending me a bill for a hundred and some dollars from the Custodian of Enemy Property. If you had property when you were interned, he took the works over and sold it. For his so-called services, I get a bill for a hundred and some dollars from the government. I never had any property. I never saw the guy or anything else! I was so mad. I sat down and wrote them a letter and I told them, "Look, I've received your letter, but before I'll pay it, I'll spend the rest of my life in jail. So do the best you can about it." And I sent it to them and I've never heard from them since.

Chapter 11

CIVIC EMPLOYEE, UNION ACTIVIST, AND A PARTING OF THE WAYS

I was 39 when I was released from internment. I was convinced in my mind that I was going to join the army. I was home for two weeks when I had to seek a job. As a result of my years of activity with the Communist Party and organizing the miners throughout the Province, I was blacklisted everywhere in Calgary — in fact you could say Alberta. Even my wife was blacklisted. I couldn't get a job, so I was forced to go to the City.

I had an interview with Mayor Andy Davison, whom I knew because I had been an alderman for eighteen months before I was thrown in the internment camp. He also happened to be an Irishman. That might have helped. I told him my situation. I said it's either you put my family and me on relief permanently or get me a job. He agreed with me that I'd have a long struggle getting a job outside. So he agreed that he'd give me a job. He told me to be in his office the next morning, and he'd have with him Charlie Comba, who was the Superintendent of the Street Railway.

I was there the next morning and right away I'm introduced to the Superintendent. The Mayor told me that he had discussed it with the Superintendent and they had decided to give me a job as a motor man, a driver of the streetcars.

Originally Andy Davison was a staunch labour man. He was a printer by trade. He had first been elected to political office as a labour alderman. Then, of course, he swung over to the other side. But he was not a rabid reactionary or conservative. I'd call him a liberal.

Anyway, they offered me this job and they asked me what I thought about it. Well, I thanked him for getting me a job, but while I was thinking I saw a picture of myself in a uniform. The drivers of the streetcars in those days wore uniforms like a policeman. I said, "Look, Your Worship, if it's all the same with you, I'd like a job in the shops." I was wrong but I connected the uniform somehow with the police. They thought it over. He asked, "Is there a place for Pat down in the shop?" And Comba says, "Oh ya, we could use

a man." So, naturally, I got the best job in the place, which was sweeping streetcars, washing the windows and cleaning the streetcars. But this was not discrimination. This was the logical starting point for all newcomers. I didn't know one end of the streetcar from the other. Then you worked your way up on the basis of seniority.

The rate of pay at that time was 45¢ an hour. As a motor man the pay would have been about 65¢ or 70¢ an hour. But I turned it down for something that I liked, that appealed to me better. I had worked in some factories in the United States. I knew if I got into the shop, that I would meet a lot of people and I'd be working with people on the job and I'd get to know them. Whereas if I were a motorman on the streetcar, the only people I'd see during the day would be passengers. I kept at it for about a year and a half. It was there I met Bob Rintoul, who was the shop steward at the time.

After about nine months there, a position became vacant and I found myself being promoted. The senior man happened to be the son of Doukhobor parents. He was entitled to the job. He had the skill and ability for the job. More so than I did. And yet they wanted me to take the job. I refused. And that put me in kind of dutch with them. I wanted to get active in the unions and in the labour movement, but they put me on a permanent afternoon shift which ex-communicated me practically from everything.

The effectiveness of the Street Railway Union was nil, as far as the labour movement of Calgary was concerned. The President of the Union, Sam Sligo, was an arch-reactionary, of Italian descent — although that had nothing to do with it. He was an anti-communist, left-wing hater. He was also at that time president of the Calgary Labour Council,¹ and later President of the Alberta Federation of Labour. And that shows you the general weakness of the union movement in Calgary and also throughout the province of Alberta.² His politics were cooperation 100 per cent with management and accept anything. There was no struggle really for improvement in the lives of the people. The union meeting was a matter of reading the minutes, new business and good and welfare and that was it.

In spite of my having come from internment, I was not ostracized by the workers. I had their support. Right from the start, I fitted in with them and they fitted in with me and we became friends. Lots of them came to my

¹To avoid confusing it with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Calgary Labour Council is hereafter referred to simply as the "Labour Council."

²The Alberta labour movement would become more conservative especially in the post-World War II period. This would reflect the influence of Social Credit after Ernest Manning became Premier, the prosperity resulting from the oil boom, and the decline of the coal mining industry.

house. In fact, the other day I had a call from one of them after all these years, checking up on me.

But the union rule was that nobody could get into the union unless they were there twelve months, and then you had to be voted on. My application had come up several times. I couldn't join the union. It was always voted down. Mr. Sligo saw to that. It was the first time in my life that I ever came up against a situation like that. But that shows you the lack of real working class content of that organization.

There was a history of passivity in the Transit Union during the 1930s. It was run by a skeleton crew. There was no real working class content in the minds of the union leaders of the Transit local. Bob Rintoul became disgruntled with this. And Bob was trying his best to bring about changes in the Transit union. In order to do this, he clashed with Sligo. They became arch-enemies.

Sligo wanted a company union. That was the way it was down through the 1930s. There was almost no rank and file and only a union in name. During the 1930s most of the unions existing in Calgary were building trade unions and City unions. There were hardly any industrial unions. It was a case of just unionism in name. There was no strength whatsoever. I'd say 80 per cent of the unions we have today were not in existence then. Sligo, and people like him, had built themselves up with skeleton memberships. Over the years he was still recognized. When the war came and things started to pick up, he was still there and supported by elements like himself throughout the province.

Bob Rintoul started to challenge this. Rintoul started fighting in his own local and winning friends for himself on the basis of a more militant policy. We in the LPP at that time were supporting Rintoul. We were advising our friends to go and support him in the union meetings. And finally Bob and I, we got kind of close together because I wanted to develop his friendship. He and I had a friend, Alf Brunton, who was president of Local 8 at the Calgary General Hospital. Brunton, at that time, was a believer in the Communist philosophy, although he was never a member of the Party. He stood for the advancement of trade unions and he was putting his life into it, aside from his eight hours on the job in the hospital.

Brunton was a delegate to the Labour Council and Rintoul became a delegate from his union to the Council. Sligo was there up on the throne. And Brunton and Rintoul formed a good team in trying to get militant policies put over in the Labour Council.

Bob wasn't that militant. In no sense was he ever a militant left-winger. But I think a lot of personality came into it. In a way that was good, because he hated the sight of Sligo. He hated the name Sligo. No matter what Sligo would advocate in the Labour Council, he'd oppose it. Bob was always

speaking about workers and better pay. At the time, there was a trend to the left; compared to what it was before. Rintoul became acquainted with Brunton. And, of course, I knew Brunton well. We worked together, not openly, but we would have consultations and we'd meet in cafes or in the beer parlour and we'd express our views. Finally, they brought about the defeat of Sligo and Bob became president of the Labour Council.

The first meeting after my twelve months, I made it into the union unanimously. All my friends were there to see that the vote went through.

When I came out of the camp, I had to sign documents stating that I wouldn't take part in left-wing political life. Nevertheless, I was an active member of the LPP. The Communist Party was illegal. And the LPP was the left-wing political expression. I was put in charge of trade union activity in the City of Calgary.

That was 1943. We were in the middle of the war. We were advocating a no-strike policy completely³ and, of course, for all-out production for the war effort and the buying of bonds by workers. Believe me, this was a struggle. As a result of their experiences in the previous war between 1914 and 1918 and all the other things that had taken place historically from that time, thousands of workers thought that the war racket was none of their business. They didn't understand the character of this war, that it was different, to defeat fascism. We had a selling job to do amongst the workers. And, in the main, we were successful.

The LPP became a force in Calgary at that time because the hostilities that had previously existed, with the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia, almost disappeared. It honestly disappeared in the minds of the workers when they saw the contribution that the Russian people were making toward the defeat of Hitler. And the prestige of the left-wing movement went up.

I was only working there three weeks when one morning I'm working underneath a streetcar with a guy who was responsible for all the brakes of the streetcars, and I was called out by the shop superintendent, Jack Bomer. When I came up to him, he says,

"Pat, there's two men in the office want to see you."

"Oh," I said, "Who could it be?"

"Well," he says, "I don't think they're your friends."

Sure enough, who was in the office but the same two Mounties in plain clothes who had arrested me and put me in the internment camp. And I walked in and said, "Hello, good morning, what is it?"

³This policy is discussed in all of the standard works on the Communist Party. It was a controversial policy in labour circles in 1943. It was this labour unrest which influenced the Mackenzie King government towards passing PC 1003 which compelled employers to recognize trade unions.

They said, "Look, Pat, we want to talk to you. We have information that you are back in the Communist movement and that you are in charge of trade union work. You know you're not supposed to do this. You could be interned again."

I knew they wouldn't answer me, but I asked, "Where did you get your information? I'm working here like a workingman and that's all and I'm minding my own business."

"Well, we came down to let you know that we know what's going on. Goodbye."

"Well," I said, "if you feel that way about it, that's all right. Goodbye."

Their subtle intimidation always works to their disadvantage. As soon as noon time came, the workers all over the shop —electricians and everyone else — had all heard about it. My God, they came around the car I was in. Instead of two of us maybe eating lunch there at the same time, I'll bet there was twenty-five. They all wanted to know what was going on. I told them. You should have heard the names some of them called the Mounties. It was none of their business. The workers took a good stand.

After that they left me alone. They didn't come back because they knew that it was foolish to do so. They knew they weren't going to intimidate me. This increased my popularity amongst a lot of the shop workers and they'd come out of their way sometimes to discuss issues with me. During this particular period of the war there was an awakening, a definite awakening among the working people that things had to be changed. This was, in embryonic form, taking place in the minds of thousands of workers in Calgary and, I imagine, throughout the country.

I kept working for the street railway but, as a result of being put on this dead end shift, I could never go to a union meeting. I think this was purposely done. So I quit.

A couple of months after I got my job on the Transit, I went down to volunteer in the army as a recruit. I passed the examination and I was told to report to Currie Barracks next morning. That's the big military barracks here in Calgary. Which I did. As soon as I was rigged out in a uniform, they put me in the kitchen. Oh, it was a huge kitchen. They used to feed close to a thousand men at one sitting there. And I was doing fine until noontime when the army came in for their dinner. I'm dishing out vegetables to every soldier coming in. Well, at least a third of them knew me. They were all, "Hey, Pat, how are you?" The soldiers were all men who had been in the relief struggles with us. They knew me as a popular alderman. They gave me a standing ovation. Right there I knew I was nailed. I knew that I wouldn't be there very long.

Sure enough, at three o'clock that afternoon, I was told to report to the captain's office, the orderly officer. I was told that, unfortunately, I had to be back down at the recruitment station the next morning for a re-medical.

Sure enough, I was there. And here's the captain. I know he was a Mounted Policeman in military uniform. I had to have an interview with him before I went in to see the doctor. He's asking me all kinds of questions about the revolution and socialism. I said, "What's that got to do with it? I want to win the war! I want to defeat Hitler! The people will talk revolution when they want to when the war is over. I've one thing in my mind right now, and that's to defeat Hitler."

Well, I knew who I was talking to. I go in and take a medical and I'm put in the lowest category possible and sent home. So I had about six hours in the Canadian army and they decided to win the war without me. And they did a damn good job!

All of this shocked and surprised me because Ben Swankey, who came out of internment the same day I did, became a sergeant. Possibly they thought I might be a force. So they had to think of something.

Anne didn't want me to join the army. She thought it was so ridiculous at that time. I was there not more than a day when I came back, and when I told her she laughed her head off. It shows you the queer things that happen in life. I get a letter from Ottawa with a badge in it — that I was a volunteer for active service! And how they praised me!

After that I went back to work at the shops. I stayed there about a year and a half. Finally, the LPP started to grow quite rapidly. So in the spring of 1944 the Party decided they wanted me as provincial organizer. That was a full time job. I'd be out speaking all the time, in the mining camps and everywhere else.

There were two others working full time for the Party in Alberta at the time. There was Beatrice Ferneyhough. She cooperated with Charlie Lipton, who wrote the history of Canadian unions.⁴ Her name is in his book for cooperation. She was a university graduate and she was working then as a full time organizer. There was her, and myself, and Jim McPherson. Three of us. That's it. Aside from some woman in the office. But the Party was growing. They took me over. I did that for about a year and a half. I was paid forty dollars a month. We lived most of our life at forty dollars a month. That's all I got when I was an alderman.

I was Alberta provincial organizer. My job was to visit all the existing clubs of the Party throughout the province and conduct some education amongst them. I'd go there and give educational talks. Oh, in every nook

⁴Lenihan is referring here to Charles Lipton's *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959* (Montréal 1961). At that time there were very few histories of Canadian labour and Lipton's book was a standard reference for many years.

and corner of the province. Many of the places are now ghost towns. We had a big group at that time at the University of Alberta.

At that time we had four or five thousand members in Alberta. I remember a time just prior to the war when we had six hundred here in Calgary.⁵ Hundreds of them joined the army. We used to sell a thousand copies of *The Worker* in Calgary every week, besides all the subscribers. That'll give you an idea.

During my time on the *Transit*, I had a bunch of cronies — friends, workers. Al Brunton was one and so was Bob Rintoul. We'd meet in the pubs. Unfortunately it became a daily habit.

The drinking problem developed on the *Transit* after I came out of Hull camp. Prior to that I would have a drink once in a while. We'd have a party or social event, and I'd have an odd few beers in the beer parlour. There was a bunch there at the *Transit* and I was working with them all. They were good. They weren't Communists. But they were very interested in developing a trade union movement. They were my supporters in the *Transit* Union. And we'd meet. Well, as soon as we'd come out of the shop, we knew the table where we'd sit in the pub. In those days, if you were lucky enough, you only got served two beers at a time, or one, because they were loaded with soldiers and people. But we had pull there and we could get all the beer we wanted. We were good customers. That's where it hit me. We would get half soused all the time. Well, the Party was strictly against this. I got two or three warnings about it. Finally, I knew I had a problem with drinking and I knew I couldn't do the job properly. I finally decided to come back to Calgary. I was on the road practically all the time. I was away from home again. It was like being in the internment camp again as far as missing home life. And all this was in my mind I guess at the time. Finally, I made up my mind that I was going to get out of the Party.

I was advocating the type of action and statements that our people in Calgary should make on political events and that they should become more involved in community activity. This was fought by Lionel Edwards — he was the captain out of the army in Spain. He was the leader of the Party. I don't think he's in the Party now. I think he was expelled. Abe Smith, he was the financial man. He was also put out. A lot of them were expelled. Anyway, a lot of the old time Party people were against me being expelled.

The leadership of the Party was kind of passive. They were riding along on the general wave of friendship which had developed as a result of the

⁵Lenihan's estimate of the membership numbers in Alberta and Calgary may be exaggerated but perhaps not by very much. The CPC peaked at about 22,000 in 1945. Alberta was for a time the third largest provincial section with the membership concentrated mainly in the coal mining region and districts with large numbers of East Europeans.

victories of the Red Army. They were capitalizing on that alone and neglecting the actual organization work in the Party and education of members. I clashed openly with them. At this particular time, basically on account of the prestige of the Soviet Union and the efforts to win the war, mass recruiting into the Party was rapid. A lot of people who knew nothing about Marxism or the class struggle came into the Party on that basis. The popularity of the local leader, Edwards, was very high because he had won a captaincy in Spain. He had a group of friends but they were passive. They were riding on a wave of this popularity but no down to earth, day by day development of struggle or trade union building. Of course, my whole life was dedicated to that, the activation of people and the education of people. There were no efforts being made for educational classes or anything like that.

Whenever we'd meet in Party meetings, I became the leader of one side and Edwards and his friends were over on the other side. This was bound to come to a clash sooner or later. Then I made the mistake. This one occasion I got tight in a pub downtown. Just tight and feeling good, no disturbance, no trouble or anything like that. It leaked out that I had been drinking there and this was the charge that was put against me.

I gave them the opportunity by getting tight. On one or two occasions I got tight and I didn't attend meetings that I should have attended. They laid the charges and I was expelled, although some people in the Party were against it. I got the whole boot. I think that was January, 1945. I knew it was coming and I had made up my mind that I'd stay home and get involved in the trade union movement in Calgary.

My wife was also a member of the Party at that time. Two weeks later she got a letter from the Calgary City Committee of the Communist Party telling her that she, too, was expelled. She was expelled without a hearing. They had no charges against her, no trial or hearing. But out she went because she was my wife. It was taken advantage of by people in the Party who I disagreed with on policies and fought openly at meetings. Now, history has shown who was right and who was wrong.

The expulsion hurt very much. I guess in my own mind I was kind of lost for a period because all my life I had been in some form of progressive action and politics. Well, I was like a sheep without a home.

I did not appeal the decision, because actually I lost a little bit of faith at the time. I knew that these people were in supreme command and, in spite of my efforts, I couldn't change them. When Anne and I knew that there was going to be a final decision made, we did appeal to them to leave us our membership.

My supporters felt very upset. They all remained, and they are today, lots of them, my friends. My friends voted against it. It was a split vote. But

the majority went with the leadership which was, in a way, natural. They were the leaders, and that was it.

Because this expulsion came out in the press, that Lenihan was expelled from the Communist Party and was no longer a member — it might have been a good thing at the time. If I had remained known as a leading Communist in Calgary, I'd never have been able to play the role that I did in the general labour movement. The Party people knew that I was expelled. But as far as the general public was concerned and the powers that be, I was still the Communist and I was still the Red. In my whole history in Calgary, in the Labour Council and everywhere else, they never gave up on it.

Prior to my expulsion, a civic election came up in Calgary. I was known as the leader of the Party. A man by the name of Morrison, who was the leader of the CCF in Calgary, came to me stating that the CCF had decided to enter the election campaign and wanting to know what we could do. I had a discussion with him in the biggest cafe in Calgary, the Club Cafe. We were discussing a man for mayor and two or three aldermen. And I said, "Look, Sam Carr is going to be in town in a couple of days. Can I set up a meeting for us? I'd like him to meet with us and discuss it." And, sure enough, he agreed.

We met with Sam Carr and we talked. And then Morrison told us what was what: that he was going to run for alderman along with Don McIntosh and that Jimmy Watson, a member of the CCF and an old time socialist — he had belonged to the Socialist Party of the United States — was going to run for Mayor. Well, in our opinion, nobody knew Jim or wanted him much. But they did know Morrison on account of his leadership of the local CCF which was strong at the time. We wanted him to run for mayor and let Watson run as alderman. But, no, he wouldn't. And I know now why. Because Morrison didn't think we had any chance of electing a mayor and he wanted to get on the City Council.

Well, anyway, we said okay finally and I became the campaign manager for Jim Watson. And, by God, to show the spirit of the people at that particular time, they expressed it in the election in that we won a sweeping victory. Watson was elected mayor.

Watson definitely ran on a progressive labour platform. Not as CCF, but as Labour. We won a spectacular victory. Three labour aldermen were elected out of six and we got the majority. Well, of course, we had huge celebrations that night, Morrison and everybody kissing me and each other. We were all brothers that night and everything went fine. But the only man in the place who meant his expressions of friendship was Jim Watson.

Chapter 12

ORGANIZING CIVIC EMPLOYEES

Then, when I was out of the Party, again, I had to go find work elsewhere. I think I was more blacklisted than ever. So I went to Jim Watson. He got me a job labouring in the parks. I think it was about forty-five cents an hour at the time. There wasn't much change in wages. After a month with the City, I went down to a union meeting. Of course, lots of the workers knew me in the Parks Department — labourers and mechanics. And I was greeted the night I took membership in Local 37.

During the Depression the membership in Local 37 sunk to 35 or 40, the point at which I joined. The Local had 75 members altogether and about 50 bucks in the bank. The workforce was not very big at the time. There was no check-off of union dues. We had maybe less than a third of the actual workforce as members. The dues had to be collected personally, by one of the officers going around a job. There was no such thing as shop stewards. There was a collective agreement. But, of course, a very very weak one. I became active immediately in the union. On the job I was recruiting members and getting them to join the union. And I guess my prestige and support grew in the union.

Elections came up in the fall of my first year in the local. In fact, I wasn't a year in the union when I became a vice-president. Jock Grey was President. The first election that I attended of Local 37 I also became a delegate to the Calgary Trades and Labour Council (CTLC). I was active as a member of the CTLC. I guess I was elected as a result of the policies I was advocating which recommended more militancy. The people I was able to recruit into the union would come out. Because we weren't confined to one job at the time, I came into contact with all kinds of workers and talked to them at night. Oh, I was agitating all the time.

There was a president and one vice-president. My election as vice-president of Local 37 put me in a very key position in the Union, because every week the two top officers of the union handled the week's grievances at the City Hall. While I worked in the parks, Grey was working in the water plant. We got time off once a week to go and take up the grievances. With the development of a militancy in the Union and lots of them knowing that I'd take their cases, the grievances started to pile up.

At that time there was a vicious system of favouritism, paying off to the foremen with bottles of whiskey, kickbacks on overtime to the foreman, etc. In order to get a promotion, you had to bring the foreman a bottle. This was the system handed down in the civic service. And many of them would come and report it to us and say, "I don't want to do it, and I didn't get promoted, and I didn't get overtime." So we'd have at least three quarters of a day at the City Hall every week.

We had logical arguments. And we had a friendly mayor, Jim Watson for a start. We were able to rectify a lot of grievances, and this, of course, gave us more prestige in the Union and increased membership attendance at meetings. After ten months with the City, the top commissioners tried to get rid of me. One commissioner had told Rob Rintoul that I was spending more time out gathering grievances and I was supposed to be on the payroll. He was nuts. But this was their position. I was the guy who was causing all the trouble. There was no trouble before my time. And they were quite plain about it. Later on they were going to fire me.

I became more popular in the Union. After my second term as vice-president, Jock Grey took sick and died. I became acting president from the time of his death. By the way, our union paid for his funeral expenses. We got him the lot in the cemetery. We took care. We paid for everything. We set a precedent at the time. He was a good, honest man.

By early 1947, there was a huge expansion with the City workforce. The great thing about it that I noticed and loved was that we had a lot of Italian immigrants come in. The cream of the crop, as far as Italy was concerned, became labourers with the City. And militants! Half of them couldn't even talk English, but no matter what I said, their hands were up.

Then we started a huge drive for membership, because the City was taking over all its own construction. Man, in no time at all, I guess we had a couple of thousand people on the payroll during the summer construction period.

At this point Local 37 was becoming militant, demanding fairly substantial wage increases, modernizing the terms of the agreement in the sense of insisting on proper fringe benefits and getting them for the first time into the written agreement. This was a result of the general militancy of the workers.

Then, in the fall of 1947, there was an election. The right wing decided I wasn't to be president. We had an overflowing meeting the night of the elections for the presidency. They couldn't all get in the hall. There must have been about five hundred. By God, I won the election by a couple of hundred votes. I had been working all this period in the Parks Department. When I took over the presidency, I convinced the executive that we weren't going to wait with our grievances until every Thursday or Friday when it

suiting the brass, but that as soon as we got four or five of them, we would go up to the City Hall. So we were up there two or three times a week! And this was getting on their nerves.

From the time I became president, my first role was the establishment of a shop steward system. Up to that point they hadn't had any. Never heard of it. Naturally, when you establish a shop steward system, this immediately calls for educational work. We'd go out to the jobs and we'd discuss what a shop steward was and his role. We'd get a green rank and file worker who would say, "All right, okay. I'll stand for it." And he'd be endorsed by the gang. We knew that he didn't have any knowledge of the trade union struggle. We insisted, and told him before he was ever elected, "Now you will have responsibilities and you'll have to come to classes." We put on the school two nights a week from seven o'clock until ten. And we supplied them with notebooks and pencils and we told them how to list the name of their foreman on top and the list of the men in the gang and their seniority with the City. We taught them as best we could to make good shop stewards out of them.

They started recruiting on the job. Every shop steward had to report once a month on the membership standing out on the job. In this way a militancy grew.

In 1950 the wives of the local members started a Local 37 Women's Auxiliary. While it may not be considered a progressive action today, it certainly was at that time. We appreciated the women's help in organizing the union's dances, picnics, and Christmas parties.

After I had been president for several years, the work of the local was becoming so big. I was still a civic employee but the work of handling grievances for the local and organizing all over the province became too much. So in March 1953 Local 37 voted unanimously to create the first full-time business agent position. I was elected business agent as well as president of the local. The job entailed handling grievances, signing up new members, developing the steward system, and improving the circulation of the "Civil Employee." My first salary for business agent for Local 37 was around three hundred dollars per month.

I got a leave of absence from the City at that time. Then, a couple of years later, I was endorsed to run as a Labour candidate for alderman so I had to give up my leave of absence and seniority with the City.

During this period I started to cut out the drinking. I never appeared under the influence of drink in Local 37. Never, under no conditions. I guess unconsciously the expulsion on that technicality sunk in. From there on in, I was in the process of becoming a teetotaler. I wouldn't go to the pubs during the day. It's queer, isn't it, how a person will unconsciously change. I am today respected by those who knew me then in Local 37.

During the time I was President of Local 37, there was a period of hospitalization. I had operations. I had ulcers and perforation. Shortly after that I had two thirds of my stomach removed. I had hernia, tonsils, everything. One right close after the other. Then I had a seven-month attack of arthritis. I never got out of a chair for seven months. My benefits from the city ran out. Local 37 put on a social evening. We didn't know anything about it, until the secretary-treasurer came up with three or four hundred dollars at the time. It's out of this world for a local to do that for a family. My job was there when I came back. I was re-elected again.

Local 37 became the largest union in the Federation of Civic Employees (FEC) and the fastest growing. And it was having an effect on all the other city locals. They found out what we were doing and what we were accomplishing and they started to come closer with us. As a result I was able to get in contact with the leaders, Jack Leam and Pete Lake, of Local 38, the City Hall local. And, by God, that was a company union!

Many of the war veterans came back radical. When they went to work in the factories and in the packing plants and everywhere else, they played quite a role in the development of the militancy in the trade union movement in that period in Calgary. They took their militancy in plus their experience during the Hungry Thirties. During the 1930s we had all the unemployed organized and they knew all the songs: "Solidarity Forever," "Hold the Fort," etc. They took this into the factories with them once they had a job.

And the growth of the trade unions! My God Almighty, we were going night and day. The Packinghouse Workers Union moved in and then the Retail Clerks Union come along, and the Butcher Workmen Union come along. And they were coming in so fast that, by God, we were running here to help these guys and running over here to help these. And Local 37, right from that time, took the leading role in helping the whole general labour movement to develop and expand. Local 37 was the first people they'd come to for help, financial or picket lines or anything else. Any form of progressive labour activity was supported by Local 37.

Local 37 came into being in 1917. Local 37 was the labourers' union. In fact there was no other labourers' union in existence at that time. Local 37 was always the stepchild of the other civic unions. All the settlements would generally be made on a higher basis for the more prominent unions. Local 37 always finished up with the crumbs. They got what was left. Unfortunately, the leadership at the time took what they got and that was it. They kept the little union together with 40 or 50 members. They rode along as a union until the awakening took place.

The members were mostly of Anglo-Saxon background with a very slight sprinkling of Europeans. Very, very few. It would be people from the British

Isles who would be in the leadership. And it stayed that way until after the Second World War. In the 1930s, when the crisis hit, the City got smart. They were getting federal aid and provincial aid for welfare. So what did they do? They laid off about 80 per cent of the civic employees and put them on relief. They had those of us who were unemployed go in and do their work. All the City had to pay was less than one third of the relief money they were putting out. And the City was saving millions of dollars by it. Clever. I really started on the Street Railway in the Hungry Thirties, working off relief. We had to work then several days a month at the rate of forty cents an hour. Our relief was based on that.

Local 37 was the only civic local in Calgary that lost ten per cent of earnings as a result of a cut in the work week during the Depression. We wanted money in our bargaining to make up for the ten per cent we lost. The other unions weren't hit with it. They came out on top. They were ten per cent at least above us. Later on we fought for that but we couldn't get it because we knew we couldn't strike. We didn't have the strength.

In 1952 we had 600 members in Local 37 and another 200 non-members paying under the Rand Formula. We wanted to expand out union activities and I pushed for a dues increase to \$1.50 per month, which was passed unanimously at a meeting attended by 300 members. To justify this increase I pointed out that Local 37 was affiliated to all labour bodies at a cost of forty cents per member per month in per capita taxes. We also had a very active social program including an annual picnic and an annual banquet and dance. We used to have two meetings a month and now we were having ten or twelve. We were also paying union committee members fifty cents per meeting. And in 1953 we launched our *Civic Employee* — a ten page mimeograph newsletter, edited by Bill Ainscough, which was mailed to every member's home. We didn't have any paid office staff. The writing, typing, printing, addressing, and mailing of the *Civic Employee* was all done by volunteering local union members.

Local 37, for the first time in its history, was able to affiliate with every known labour body that was in operation. And, for the first time in our history, we were able to send delegates to national conventions of the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC). That was somewhere early in the 1950s. I think it was in Victoria that we were able to send a full delegation. We had a big membership then. And we had a good block of votes. And from there on in, we never missed a convention anywhere.

The existence of the FCE, which was organized by the Calgary Labour Council back in 1917, made Calgary somewhat unique among Canadian cities. At the time of its inauguration it consisted of ten unions, including City electrical workers, street railwaymen, teamsters, plumbers and steamfitters, machinists, blacksmiths, operating engineers, firemen, City Hall

staff, and the civic employees association. The FCE, at that time, did all the negotiating. The FCE was in existence when the City cut back the working hours of locals from forty-four to forty hours. It meant a pay cut. They lost 10 per cent of their take home pay.

What circumstances in Calgary made the FCE possible? Well, Calgary was always a progressive, radical centre of labour activity. Calgary played a big role in the development of the OBU. And Calgary was surrounded by the militant miners' unions. Drumheller had five or six thousand. They were meeting in Calgary all the time and setting policy. Indirectly, they were giving leadership on the basis of united action by Labour. And this flowed into Winnipeg. It's quite significant that Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, all had civic employee federations and all the three cities were the backbone of the General Strike in 1919. And that ideology of unity flowed down from the Winnipeg General Strike.

But while the structure of the Federation was there, the militancy was missing, there was nothing inside of it, as far as working class activity was concerned. Well, it shows you, that when I went to work there for the City — 40¢ an hour! After all these years? We were away behind. Bob Rintoul was getting 70¢, and he was classed as a mechanic. And watermen got seventy. But the labourer, he always got what was left over, and he got 40¢.

About the same time that I was elected a delegate to the Labour Council, I also became a delegate to the FCE on behalf of Local 37. I took every position that would connect me with some section of the Labour movement.

The FCE was the bargaining agent for the unions in the Federation for the overall general agreement for civic employees, like the fringe benefits, the holidays, vacations, etc. Then each local in the FCE, like Local 37, bargained separately for its local conditions, like wage rates and classifications. The president, and maybe the secretary, of the Federation, were at all negotiating meetings of the locals, to give strength to the local. This was accepted by the City as the form of bargaining.

At our FCE meetings, before we listed our final demands for negotiations, we discussed them and each local reported at the meeting what we thought we wanted. Then we got the FCE executive to endorse these. When the FCE officers came to the bargaining table with us, they had to advance our ideas. That gave us strength.

In the early 1950s the FCE put forward a big demand — the Rand Formula or the compulsory dues checkoff. After many months of bargaining, by God, we got it. This meant that every worker on the job, after three months or so, had to pay dues to the Union. He didn't have to join the Union but he was required to pay an amount equivalent to the Union's dues. With the rapid growth in the number of employees — we ran up to 2,500

in the summer months — our membership and bankroll naturally increased.

Bob Rintoul was president of his own Transit union local and he was president of the Labour Council. And he was on the FCE composed of delegates of all civic unions. Rintoul was also the chief spokesman on these issues for the FCE. But I was the spokesman for my union.

While I was in the leadership of the FCE, there was a big to-do about a new pension scheme. The workers wanted more rights in the pension. Sligo was still President of the Labour Council at that time and we had a real battle on. I couldn't get into the pension plan because I didn't have a birth certificate and they wouldn't accept a baptismal one. This was more discrimination. I wrote home to Ireland to the canon of the church — he's in charge of maybe six or seven or ten priests. He's next to the bishop. And here I get my baptismal certificate from him, that I was baptized in his church on a certain date. Well, that's the first Sunday after birth. It's not delayed any longer in Ireland. And they said that wasn't genuine. Well, I wasn't interested in the pension plan anyway because I didn't know where I'd be or how long I'd be anywhere. I thought we'd have socialism.

The Calgary FCE was a great concept and it continued to function into the 1960s. However, during the winter of 1957-58 there was a recession and there were huge layoffs of City staff. Men with years of service were out on the street without jobs, pension or unemployment insurance. That recession and its resulting layoffs helped to unify the CUPE members in Calgary whose numbers had been growing rapidly up to that point. In 1958, CUPE decided to form its own district council. The idea of the district council was to combat management as one voice rather than have the weakness of divisions which management had no difficulty in defeating. As a result of this coordinated effort and a fight-back program we were able to obtain a rehire program for all employees laid off with more than 12 months service and we further saved their pension and other fringe benefits.

In time the CUPE District Council was carrying out the same kind of work that the FCE had been doing. Accordingly, the FCE lost its significance and then withered away.

The Labour Council was composed of delegates from all TLC locals in Calgary and would act as spokesman on labour issues. I was elected a delegate to the Labour Council. During the period 1946 to 1948, when I was the president of Local 37, we were trying to get involved in building a political movement at the time. We wanted to get involved in civic elections on behalf of Labour. For those of us who considered ourselves progressive trade unionists, our main struggle was for political action by labour bodies. We were openly expressing our views that we should have a political party. We didn't call it a name or brand it, but we knew we should have an opening

politically to participate in all elections. We tried to get the Labour Council to endorse candidates. We participated in civic elections. But there was a strong right wing that we were fighting. The Labour Council split over most things. The way it came out in the *Calgary Herald*, the left and the reds on one side, battling for progressive ideas, and the other side, of course, those trying to ride the *status quo*.

Our main attention, of course, was to the building of unions and giving help to unions and generally trying to give a progressive community lead in all problems. It was a very active Council from those days on. Under Bob Rintoul's leadership, he was the president, the rank and file were progressive. And, oh man, the hall used to be full, even though there were only so many delegates for every hundred members. And lots of them were new. And the militancy was high.

We elected Gordon Cushing as secretary of the Labour Council. And through our efforts, we elected him as a labour alderman. And we'd support others for the School Board. In the main, Labour Council played a good, progressive role from there on.

Later on I became a vice-president of the Labour Council. With all the new unions coming in, our work was general education, building unions all over Calgary, and carrying on the struggle. And I was one of the main spokesmen for the progressive ideas of getting the Council itself to endorse political action and to get up some form of new political movement to give expression to the workers' thoughts during all kinds of elections.

The Labour Council was somewhat unique for this particular period in that it had full time officers, which very few councils across the country had. It published a paper and had representation on public boards and commissions, on City bodies, such as libraries and hospitals. We were deeply rooted in the community activities. Bob Rintoul was put on the Board of Governors of the University as a labour representative. I think he was the first and Bob Scott took over when he left the Labour Council. It was a real voice of labour. It was recognized as a force. You bet. Every meeting was news. There was never a Labour Council meeting that didn't have a reporter.

If the Labour Council nominated or endorsed someone for public office, such as in the case of Gordon Cushing, it meant something as far as elections were concerned. That was, until the bourgeoisie changed the system of voting and set up wards. That knocked it out. Prior to that, such as when I was elected alderman, you got a city-wide vote. No matter where the working men were, no matter what end of the City they were in, they could vote for you as a labour man.

When the Labour Council endorses someone today, it is not significant to the same degree. That's because the working class are not concentrated in this City in one particular area. They're scattered. The voice of the

Labour Council doesn't have the same impact in the community as it did in the late 1940s. We lost all representation on hospital boards, library boards, civic bodies, etc. Yes, it was taken away by the rulers, when that upsurge of militancy started to go down.

Al Brunton and I from Local 8 at the Calgary General Hospital were dreaming. We had discussed the question of a provincial and a national organization to coordinate the work of civic employees. We wanted a union of our own. With the help of Gordon Wilkinson, the TLC representative, I was able to go out and get in touch with the different locals, like meeting with the Lethbridge boys. They were good. About fourteen of them were militants all the way, every one of them. Nap Milroy and Jim Murrie were leaders there. Jim Murrie was a grader operator and secretary-treasurer of Local 70. He was present at all the meetings. That would be in 1949.

Every Alberta municipal local grasped at it. Lethbridge was going through the same growth in membership and a growing militancy as we were in Calgary. They'd heard of me, and I got to know them. Then they heard of my activities in negotiations. They'd call me to help them negotiate. In Medicine Hat I'd help them negotiate. Mary Lawrence was a leader there. We were laying the basis for the calling together of a provincial body.

With the "outside" civic employees in Edmonton there was Malcolm Ainslie in Local 30. He had been a pharmacist working at the water treatment plant. But now he was a full time business agent. There was Hec McDonald in Local 52 of the Edmonton Municipal Office Workers. They were in favour of a provincial and national organization.

Our first informal meeting was in 1949. I'll never forget it. We met on a Saturday in Room 102 of the Labour Temple in Calgary. It was a small room about the size of the kitchen here. Right in the centre of the floor was about four dozen beer in a big tin tub. And there we are, all the prophets, all the wise guys, sitting around this tub and discussing the building of a provincial body. We had eight locals represented. From Calgary we had Locals 37, 38, and 8 and that was it. And then we had two from Local 70 in Lethbridge, one from Medicine Hat — Bennet was the leader of it. He supported me everywhere. And we had Local 52, the civic clerks from Edmonton, Local 30, the outside workers from Edmonton, and we had 41, the Edmonton Hospital. We had no school caretakers then. They passed a motion to set up a federation of civic employees in Alberta and to call a founding convention. That first convention was called in conjunction with the 1950 convention of the Alberta Federation of Labour. We met at the Local 30 building on 99th Street in Edmonton. That was the founding Convention of the Alberta Joint Council of Civic Employees. We had a per capita tax of three cents per member per month. An application for a charter was made to the TLC on 11 October 1950.

Al Brunton of Local 8 was the first president, but about a year after our founding, Al died. Malcolm Ainslie of Local 30 was the secretary. I was the first vice-president. Hec MacDonald of Local 52 and Jack Leam of Local 38 were executive members.

In conjunction with the 1951 Alberta Federation of Labour convention in Calgary, we had the second annual meeting of our Alberta Joint Council of Civic Employees. We elected a guy from Edmonton as president for a year. And he didn't turn out to be much. Hec MacDonald moved a motion, seconded by Alex Hamilton of Lethbridge, "that Brother Ainslie be instructed to pursue ways and means of bringing about a national union of civic employees." Then at the third convention, which was held in conjunction with the TLC Convention in Winnipeg in 1952, I was elected president of the Alberta Federation of Public Employees.¹ And I held that presidency right until I went on staff. It was from the beginnings of this Federation that we endorsed the idea of a national organization.

Our own people were always insisting that I run for elected office, like first Vice-President of the Alberta Federation of Labour. Year after year they wanted me there. Then I would be on the delegations going before the cabinet every year. Unofficially, I'd be the spokesman for the public employees.

In those days it was not unusual for civic employees to invite their political bosses to union events. For example, we held the fifth annual convention of our Federation at the Palliser Hotel in Calgary. We had 50 delegates and the Mayor of Calgary, Don MacKay, was the guest speaker at our banquet.

¹The name was changed in 1953.

Chapter 13

BUILDING A NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The TLC was a body that barely held its skeleton together during the 1930s. It came out of the 1930s in a very, very weakened position. However, it was the home of labour. It was the parliament of Labour, the national body that tried to unite everybody. Therefore, we had to go along. And we did it on the basis of our working class beliefs that our job is to strengthen and help it, which we did.

The TLC was made up primarily of international unions, especially craft unions in construction, rail workers and other skilled trades. Like the AFL in the US, it had not actively sought to organize the mass production industries, like steel, auto, rubber, etc. But also affiliated to the TLC were approximately sixty public employee local unions, made up of members employed by municipalities, school boards, and some hospitals and universities.

Civic employees in the larger cities, and in particular in western Canada, had been unionized into the TLC as far back as WWI days. Civic unions existed in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, and Winnipeg, for example, years before they came about in the East. Civic unions came into being in the east around the WWII period. But the civic employee unions within the TLC were always regarded by the industrial unions as second-class citizens.

All of these civic unions were independent of one another. There was no provincial or national body linking them in any way. They were directly chartered locals of the TLC. They paid a minimal per capita tax and received a minimal amount of service and assistance. Accordingly, a few of us saw the need of some coordination through a national structure. And we began to work for the establishment of a national organization.

From the time we set up our first national structure, the National Federation of Public Employees, in Winnipeg in 1952, we immediately were affiliated with the TLC. Our position right from the start was that at any future conventions of the TLC, no matter where in Canada, we would send a full delegation from all our unions. And we were very, very successful. The

locals were small in those days yet we'd have 40 or 50 delegates at these conventions. At that time we were a very important block of votes inside the Congress. This is illustrated by what we were able to do in the election of officers of the TLC.

The Congress had Carl Berg. He was a vice-president of the Congress for years but a man who had lost all the respect of the progressive people in the trade union movement. He was supposed to give leadership to the working class in the West, and the only time you ever saw him or heard of him was just during a convention. He went from the OBU (One Big Union) to the OBE (Order of the British Empire) with the help of the labour movement. He got up in Calgary in 1918 when they set up the OBU and he moved a motion for the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And it passed unanimously at the OBU convention and at the Alberta Federation of Labour convention. Here! They endorsed it! Another resolution calling for the recognition of the Soviets. Oh ya! Militancy expressed. And he finally graduated with an OBE. And one of our great achievements was that, at one of those congresses, our vote defeated Carl Berg. He was a cork in the wine bottle. You couldn't get at the wine until you pulled the cork out. And I'm glad to say that we were well able to pull the cork.

We had no organization in the Maritime provinces then. In all the rest of Canada we were working as a united force with political ideas that we wanted to expound and get endorsed. As the years went by, our numbers and influence grew and developed. At first, we were treated like step-children in the labour movement. We were not recognized as a force. But, through our strength, we soon saw that they were coming to us at conventions for our support. We were becoming a force.

Our per capita tax from Local 37 to the TLC was about five or seven cents a member per month. It was very cheap. We didn't get anything for it until they moved Gordon Wilkinson in here as a TLC representative. Gordon had got fired from his job at the International Association of Machinists. A month later he was hired by the TLC. He spent some time in Winnipeg and then they moved him here.

He was supposed to be servicing all the Congress locals in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Calgary, etc. Those were civic locals and building trades as well. They could call on him for negotiations. Gordon and I became friends and he worked very closely with me right from the start. Whenever he'd be going to any union meetings, particularly civic unions, in Medicine Hat, or somewhere like that, he'd ask me if I could go with him. This was while I was the president of Local 37. I was a stranger to these people and he'd take me in and introduce me to them and let them know who I was. Through our activities, we were able to convince these locals to get started on educational classes which Gordon or I would teach. Nobody

else in the trade union movement in Alberta — and I don't think anywhere else at that time — was doing it. In fact, he and I and Bob Rintoul, all of us, were the people who organized the first labour school at the Banff School of Fine Arts.

Prior to the formation of the National Union, there was no national structure of any kind for civic employees to meet or communicate. The very first coming together took place in Calgary in 1948 during the week that the TLC was in convention. Garnett Shier, Bill Black, and Al Brunton met informally to discuss the formation of a united organization of public employees. At that time there were provincial federations of public employees in Ontario and British Columbia. So it was decided to concentrate first on building up the provincial bodies. The following year there was another meeting in Montreal and by this time additional provincial public employee federations had been established in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

At the 1951 TLC convention in Halifax, a provisional organizing committee was set up of Bill Black of the BC Hospital Workers, Garnet Shier of the City Hall in Toronto, Al Brunton, Pete Lake and Jack Leam of Local 38, Calgary City Hall. Local 37 had no delegates in Halifax that year. But previous to going, Brunton had correspondence, with Garnet Shier. He knew our position, that we wanted a national organization. Shier and his committee sought a charter as a national union from the TLC but it was not granted. The TLC officers felt that the time was not appropriate. This committee met and decided that at the next years congress of the TLC, that we'd call a conference of all public employees during that week in Winnipeg.

All the civic locals were to be there for the first time in history, from Toronto, Hamilton and a few spots like that. I had been elected as a delegate from Local 37 to attend the TLC meeting in Winnipeg. That was my first TLC meeting.

On the day prior to the opening of the 1952 TLC Convention in Winnipeg, I was instrumental in setting up a meeting of civic delegates in the James Street Labour Temple. I think we had 53 public employee representatives from directly chartered locals of the TLC. It was like a little convention of our own. I don't think the TLC knew much about it. It was our own initiative.

We were all, in the main, strangers to each other. We had a lot of discussion about forming some kind of organization. It was pro and con for a while. Some thought that we couldn't handle it, that we were better off the way we were with the Congress. All kinds of backward thinking. Nobody was satisfied with the service or help they were getting from the Congress, but yet they didn't have enough confidence in themselves and their capabilities. Finally it carried that we would request the Congress to set up a federation of public employees.

We had a meeting with the TLC Officers — President Percy Bengough and Secretary Treasurer Gordon Cushing. They were so impressed with the sincerity and determination of our group that they agreed to support the granting of a charter as a National Federation of Public Employees. This was not a national union. However, since the TLC officers stated that they would assist us towards the eventual formation of a national union, we felt it was a step in the right direction. The Federation had the support of Gordon Cushing who was secretary of the TLC at the time. Because I was very close to him, he knew our sentiments. We worked closely with him in Calgary and helped him get elected alderman. He knew that we were determined to take action one way or the other. I imagine he softened Bengough, the President. We had his sympathy.

They told us if we could gain support from locals representing at least 17,000 TLC members, that we could have our own organization. Once we decided to set it up, we got a big cheer from delegates. There were only a couple of votes opposed.

Unfortunately, Billy Black said goodbye to us, once we made that decision. He said his BC hospital workers weren't prepared to participate. I know it was a lack of confidence. He just said, in discussing it with his delegates, they were not prepared to go along and they left. But Local 37 was one of the first to affiliate.

In due course, the charter for the National Federation of Public Employees was presented to President Shier. As a federation, it now had the right to hold conventions and to charge per capita tax. However, it did not have the right to issue charters. The local unions continued to be chartered directly by the TLC, to be serviced by it, and pay per capita tax to it.

We went into business and set a per capita tax of five cents per month from every member. By the time the 1953 TLC Convention in Ottawa rolled along, we had commitments of support from locals representing 22,000 members. From then on the TLC gave us the right to charter locals.

After that we had a huddle. The Toronto delegates asked to meet with Alberta — Locals 37 and 38 of Calgary and the Edmonton and Lethbridge delegates — to discuss the question of officers.

I already knew that Garnet Shier and Brunton had given it life, and brought the ideas forward. It was really Brunton and Shier, the two men in Canada, who discussed the question first at Halifax and had agreed that this was it. Shier did his best in the year following, corresponding with Brunton and Lake to keep things together and to see that things were moving in preparation for the next Congress convention. So he proved himself that he was an honest trade union leader. He was president of Local 79, Toronto. So I asked the Ontario delegates:

"This man, Garnet Shier. How is he? Is he okay in your eyes?"

"Yes, he's fine. He's a good man."

"Well," I says, "That's good enough for us."

We got him elected as the first president of the Canadian Federation of Public Employees. Aubrey Dixon from Regina was the secretary-treasurer, and I was the first vice-president. Shier was really respected by Jack Raysbrook from Local 167, Hamilton. Also by Wynn Hilts from London. He had the respect of all of them.

Although we were all working full time for our different cities, our aim was to try and coordinate and to get in touch with as many civic locals as possible throughout Canada, and encourage them. We also wanted to approach the TLC to give us help in getting groups who were in other locals to affiliate with us. From there on, the TLC did give us cooperation through their field representatives. We knew that this was only a minor step towards our major objective of a national union.

I was on the executive as an Alberta representative. We met a couple of times. The basic thing was getting the affiliations. That meant that those of us who were active had to go visit locals who had no delegates at the TLC convention. The overwhelming number of our locals in the country were too poor to send delegates. So when we got back into our own territories, we had to go and contact these locals and get them to affiliate. We worked almost night and day at it.

Also, for the first time in history, through our Federation, through Garnet and Aubrey Dixon, we tried, to the best of our ability, to exchange union agreements throughout Canada. That was the first time that we had an opportunity of comparing wages and working conditions and agreements in the different places where we had organized.

The total membership of the locals affiliated with the Federation would have been about 12,000 at that point. All we had actually within our membership at that time were the people working for the cities, and the hospitals. We had nothing to do with the school boards. That came later on as we branched out. We only had a few hospitals. We had one in Calgary, one in Edmonton, one in each of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. We only had a few of them throughout the country. Alex Cochrane from the Regina General Hospital was there from the start.

Our 1954 Convention was in Regina and we had 66 delegates. We passed a resolution giving full powers to the Executive Board to complete the formation of a National Union in the year 1955. Our executive presented a memorandum to the Executive Council of the congress setting out our decision to form a National Union with details on how we proposed to finance and operate it. Based on a membership of 16,800 paying 20¢ per month, less four cents per member payable to the Congress, the annual

revenue would be \$32,640. That would enable us to set up an office with a full-time staffer.

In November 1954, Secretary Cushing asked all federal locals of civic employees if they were in favour of transferring into NUPE or remaining directly chartered locals of the Congress. Seventy per cent voted in favour, which would give us a membership of about 17,000. As far as the TLC was concerned, that was a sufficient base to start the new union.

The first National Union executive included Garnet Shier as President and me as Vice President. Aubrey Dixon from the Regina City Hall workers was Secretary-Treasurer.

The first annual convention of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) was held in Windsor in May 1955 just prior to the TLC Convention. Congress President Claude Jodoin formally presented the charter to Brother Shier, who was elected as the first President of the National Union he had worked so hard to create.

We had our clear perspective. We knew where we were going. But at first we didn't have the finances to really start off. But we kept edging towards it. The very idea of hiring a full time person strengthened everything. It was there that I was offered the job by Jack Raysbrook and the others in Ontario. A whole bunch of them, like Garnet, wanted me to apply for it. I was his right hand man from the time we met. I wouldn't, because I didn't want to move down East. Garnet wouldn't take it, either. Then Garnet came to me between meetings. And he says, "Pat, there's nobody down here that I know can tackle the job." We wanted a civic employee. He says, "Have you anybody in mind?" At that time Bob Rintoul was after me. We were very close. He said, "Look, Pat, I want a better job. I want to be, like you, active in the labour movement." So when Garnet approached me, I said, "Look, I have a friend in Calgary in the labour movement. He's president of the Calgary Civic Federation and President of the Alberta Federation of Labour. He is a close friend of Al Brunton and he's helped us all along the line. He's a capable negotiator. He can speak."

I gave him a good picture. "Well," he says, "When you go back home, talk to him." This is how Bob got his job the next year.

I think Cushing was very surprised when he heard that Bob Rintoul got the job. Max Swerdlow, who was Educational Director of the Congress, came to me and said, "What in the name of God did you do that for?" They thought I should have taken it. Somehow they had no faith in Rintoul.

I had the opportunity of getting Bob to speak to our gathering. So Garnet met him there. So as vice-president I discussed it with Bob Rintoul and outlined to him what we wanted about moving to Ottawa and all this, and he agreed. Then I wrote to Garnet and let him know what was what. And Garnet wrote back to set up a meeting in Calgary to meet Bob Rintoul.

Garnet flew here from Toronto and we met in the Palliser Hotel, where we discussed everything. We drafted a contract for Bob and hired him. That was 1955. His starting salary was \$5,400 per annum, plus \$600 for out-of-pocket expenses and payment of incidental expenses.

In spite of my political differences with Bob, I was prepared to recommend him. In looking over the field, he just happened to be the best that there was. It reminds me of a little story told to us by Willy Gallagher about the Communist International. When Lenin was first setting it up, he wrote to the leader of the Party in Britain to get somebody from Ireland to go to Moscow. Well, there was only one man in Ireland, Jim Larkin. He was well known world-wide as an anarchist. So Willy Gallagher, who later became a Communist Member of Parliament from Scotland, got Larkin to go to the meeting in Moscow with him. Larkin opposed everything that Lenin advocated. So Lenin went to Willy Gallagher and said,

"Listen, what did you bring that son of a bitch from Ireland for?"

And Willy says, "Well, look, Lenin. You told me to get some son of a bitch from Ireland and he happened to be the best one there!"

So, more or less, it was similar to Bob. Bob in those days was really a hard Social Crediter. Outside of his narrow views on unionism, he had his own basic desire of getting up the ladder. He was very much rooted in Calgary and was a person of some stature in the City. He was always singing at banquets, doing impersonations of Harry Lauder. But there was quite an increase in salary and travelling expenses. There was a financial incentive. That was part of it, definitely. Besides, he wanted to get up in the leadership of the TLC. He wanted to be up there with the brass like Gordon Cushing.

Our big thing was to get Bob Rintoul hired, moved, and established in Ottawa with the proper offices and equipment and a secretary. The office was established on 1 April 1955, in the Congress headquarters located in a big old house at 172 MacLaren Street. He had to draft a constitution, design a charter, letterhead, lapel button, etc. He was then really able to contact and get the full cooperation of the TLC officers and executive. He had to get their cooperation to encourage all their directly chartered civic locals to transfer immediately to us. Well, that was a big job. And this demanded that Bob and I, out here, go to speak to these locals wherever we could and get them to come over and join with us.

We made application for affiliation with the Congress as the National Union of Public Employees. And, naturally, we got the charter from the TLC. This meant that we were able to charter our own locals in the name of NUPE. So many of the locals transferred from being chartered by the TLC and became chartered locals of NUPE.

There were a lot of locals that held back, some in BC and other places. They were rather skeptical. However, the membership started to rise in a

spectacular sense as a result of all these further locals affiliating with the blessing of the TLC.

While a National Union had been discussed for many years, going back to the 1940s, very little had been done to bring it into being. The thing that made the difference now was the provincial federations of public employees. In the 1940s only BC had a provincial Civic Federation. The BC Joint Council of Public Employees was formed in 1943. We started our Alberta Joint Council of Civic Employees in 1950 and that was soon followed by Saskatchewan and Ontario. These provincial bodies were assisted financially by grants from the TLC. These funds were used to provide service to affiliated locals and to assist in organizing and educational work within the province. The formation of these provincial organizations and the work done by each indicated to our members the great value of central bodies and the service that could be given to local unions. They paved the way for the setting up of the national body.

The real first convention of the new union was held in Windsor in May 1955. And Bob Rintoul was there. That was our largest gathering, with 111 delegates representing 53 local unions. That was a real break for us.

Claude Jodoin, the president of the TLC, spoke about the rapid growth of the National Federation of Public Employees and the formal change over to the status of NUPE. He said that the Congress was of the opinion that we were capable of handling the affairs of civic employees across Canada. He further stated that the Congress would do everything in its power to assist the new union and that it would encourage all those few remaining TLC locals who had not yet joined NUPE to do so now. He then gave Garnet Shier the certificate of affiliation of NUPE to the TLC, dated 1 March 1955.

Shier proudly announced that NUPE was now an autonomous body with 110 local unions and 23,000 members from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. He estimated that the organizing potential for civic employees in Canada was 80,000 persons.

Brother Shier was elected as the first President of the National Union that he had worked so hard to create. He was re-elected but held it for less than a year after we hired Bob. I was nominated for President but declined. The I was elected first Vice-President. Shier made an honest, sincere effort to establish a national union. He was a leader in Toronto. He was an honest man. He was recognized throughout Ontario by most of the civic employees as a leader. If it wasn't for him, for his cooperation with us in the West, we'd never had made it.

Bill Buss was elected as second vice-president at this first NUPE convention and he was a good trade unionist. Really broad-minded. It never bothered him whether a man was a Communist or an ex-Communist or

anything else. As long as the man was a good trade unionist, that was alright with Bill.

Then there was Dixon, the third vice-president. He was from the City Hall workers in Regina. He was interested, basically, in elevating the position of himself and the others. He was a capable clerical type of worker. He had a basic education.

The NUPE constitution then provided that each of the provincial districts with chartered locals, namely British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, elect Executive Officers.

So, also on the executive board was Tom Lewis was from Vancouver. He was a plumber from the City Hall local there. At one time he belonged to the old Socialist Party. He was a left-wing liberal.

There was also Max Pierotti, also from the Vancouver City Hall Local 15. I couldn't put it in English what I thought of him. He was the dregs of society as far as I was concerned. I think he came from Australia originally. He was capable. I think he trained for a lawyer, but I don't think he ever finished or got his degree. But he was capable. But, man what an opportunist and careerist! He hated my guts. In his mind I was stamped a Communist. The feeling was mutual there. I returned my love.

Then there was Bill Young from Edmonton. He was one of the highest paid men in City Hall in Edmonton. He had terrific brain power, capabilities — terrific. Later he had to drop out for personal reasons. But while he was there he was good. He supported me all the way. Pete Lake from the Calgary City Hall local also represented Alberta.

Then there was Alex Cochrane from the hospital local in Regina. Cochrane, at that time, was quite active in the CCF. He supported me. He was sincere in his efforts to build a national union. But in a few years, when Ross Thatcher came in as Liberal leader in Saskatchewan, he ran as a Liberal candidate for Thatcher. He was a member of the school board in Regina.

Then there was C.T. Fitzpatrick from the Saskatoon City Hall. Charlie we used to call him. Again, he was a heavy drinker. But he wanted advancement in the civic employee field. In spite of his name he was a Mason. In those days, he played a role.

Then Jack Raysbrook from the hospital local in Hamilton. Jack was one of the most advanced thinkers of the bunch. Jack played a good role. He was a good supporter of mine. He wanted me to take the national director's job. So did Wynn Hilts from London.

Hilts was also on the board. He was good. I mean they weren't real progressive thinkers but they were broadminded liberals. Although they had hunches, possibly, that I was a Communist, they didn't let it bother them. If what I was saying made sense, they supported me.

The last member of the board in 1955 was Mrs. Gertrude Goosney. She was from the hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and the only delegate from east of the Ontario/Quebec border. So she was chosen Executive Officer for the Maritimes. She didn't last very long. Just the one term.

At that point, the national organization didn't have any staff. There were grants made to the provincial groups for organizing and servicing. Through this I was able to leave my job in Calgary and go to Medicine Hat. By this time in Calgary we had two business agents. Doug Woods was my full time assistant. I was out quite a bit, negotiating, fighting grievances for locals around the province, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Red Deer, where they couldn't do anything themselves. I negotiated all the early agreements for the Red Deer local. And sometimes I'd be called up to Edmonton to help up there.

When it came to getting involved elsewhere in the labour movement, we had a struggle in Local 37, right from the word go. They were against sending delegates anywhere. It didn't mean anything. Of course, they were living in the past, thinking of the old TLC. We had to fight like heck.

I didn't draw wages from Local 37 when I went out of town to service other locals. But they were kicking about the time I was spending outside of Calgary. They raised hell because I was spending too much — between the national presidency and doing the provincial work. But my early training in the movement taught me certain things about not leaving any gates open around you. And when I'd go to Medicine Hat for the provincial body, my salary stopped at Local 37. Or when I went down East for a National Executive meeting — and the National Executive paid me — that was deducted off my salary which, to me, was fair. But I think I was about the only guy in Canada who did that. There were people in the local who raised these questions. "You're getting two salaries, and here's the constitution stating that the president and the executive officers get so much a day." I was able to knock them right down. You bet.

In a sense, the Provincial Federation was more the servicing end of the national office. There weren't too many others we could call on in Alberta to do some of this work. It was pretty well my own show, until we got some of them on as reps. That was much later. Later on, when I became a rep and when the merger took place and the national union was set up, we formed a district council in Calgary.

The TLC had a policy of allocating numbers in sequence to their directly chartered locals, which included all the locals which transferred into NUPE. The last number used at that time by the TLC was in the six hundreds. So we developed the practice of each NUPE local retaining the same local number it had in the TLC. Newly chartered locals would start being numbered

from seven hundred on. So in October 1955, President Shier travelled to Windsor Ontario to Present the first two charters issued by NUPE to the Sandwich West Municipal Employees Local 701 and the Tecumseh Public Employees Local 702.

We held a NUPE Table Officers meeting in Ottawa on 15 December 1955, at which time we were hit with a double blow. Aubrey Dixon, our Third Vice-President from Regina was taken out of the bargaining unit of his local and had to resign. Worse still, Garnet Shier, who had been elected President in May of that year, was also forced to resign on account of ill health. The loss we suffered in losing our President at such a moment was not easy to comprehend. Shier was one of the few men in Canada who dreamt of a national union of public employees. From the day in Halifax in 1951, when that first group of civic workers met to discuss the organizing of a national union, Shier was in the leadership. In his hands the destiny of our union was secure and safe. He at all times laboured tirelessly and diligently for our entire membership.

We called a meeting of the full executive right away. It was held at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa on 7 January 1956. We invited Garnet to the meeting. We wanted him to stay on. After a day, we couldn't convince him. We were faced with the decision of who was going to get the presidency. Honestly, I didn't have any idea that I'd have the confidence of the majority. But Bill Buss was my right-hand man. Bill insisted. I wanted Bill to take it but he says, "No. You take it. You're the man." So I ran for it. I got it by acclamation of the executive. I functioned as president from there on in.

I have the minutes of that meeting. It says, "First vice-president Lenihan called for the nomination for the office of president. Brother Lenihan's name was placed in nomination. There being no further nominations, Brother Lenihan was elected president to complete the present term of office. President Lenihan said he would do all in his power to foster the progress of our national union."

Then Bill Buss was elected first vice-president, and Tom Lewis of Vancouver was elected second vice-president, and Alex Cochrane of Regina elected third vice-president.

At that time I was working the presidency on a part-time basis. Bob Rintoul was the national director on a full-time basis. He was making the day-to-day decisions. But he always had to consult with me on the phone or by telegrams. If matters didn't call for immediate decisions, then by air mail. I had to okay all the cheques, for money and expenses. I had to know what they were for. He didn't mind me signing the cheques. If we had an argument, Bill Buss would back me up.

Bob began visiting the provincial federations of public employees, getting acquainted with the federation officers. He was continuously in touch

with our affiliates. Through him, they really started connecting links, through correspondence. This gave encouragement to our people because this was something they had never had before in their lives. At the same time, the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), the opposition Congress, were beginning to see what we were doing in the TLC. This kind of inspired them to try and do the same inside of their own ranks.

There was a lot of discussion about labour unity at that time. We were conducting a big campaign on the question of the unity of the two Congresses.¹ We were fighting for the merger of the two Congresses. All our efforts were directed there. We wanted one Labour Congress in Canada and we wanted unity. When we first raised it, some of us for a while were being accused of all kinds of things. When the two Congress merged, the TLC moved into the CCL building at 100 Argyle Ave. and NUPE moved in as well and remained there for several years before moving out on its own.

We had two provincial Federations of Labour. The CCL had one and the TLC had one. One of our immediate tasks was to unite them after the merger convention. I think Alberta was one of the last of the provincial federations to merge. We had a terrific struggle for a year because a lot of people, especially building trades people were opposed to us. In lots of places, it was labelled a left and right struggle, which it wasn't at all. I was elected vice-president of the new Alberta Federation of Labour in 1958, after I was on staff.

A little later on, Bill Buss and myself and a couple of others, who I considered the progressive element in our union, brought up the question of approaching the National Union of Public Sector Employees (NUPSE). We were talking of unity with the NUPSE, which was the public employee union from the former CCL.

We made good progress. A merger committee was established. Our first meeting between NUPSE and NUPE was held in the King Edward Hotel in Toronto, 17-19 July 1956. That was the first coming together of the two unions. The first meeting was a preliminary. To get to know each other. There was some discussion on what kind of a name we were going to have. We kind of hinted at who'd be what. What officers we'd need leading such a union. Three of us, Buss, Rintoul and myself attended the NUPSE annual convention in September 1956 in Toronto. Rintoul and I spoke at their convention. After that we had three or four more meetings while I was president.

At one time in our negotiations both sides had agreed unanimously that the first president of the new union would be a NUPE member. NUPE was more than twice the size of NUPSE at that point. We had over 28,000

¹The TLC and the CCL merged in 1956 to become the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to which the vast majority of trade unionists in Canada are affiliated today.

members and they had just over 10,000. I wasn't utilizing that point as a weapon but I was doing a lot of talking. Stan Little would be the major speaker on the NUPSE side. I put forward our ideas and, finally, after hours, they agreed that we'd get that position right away. It was more or less understood that Bob Rintoul would get some job. We didn't name it. When we said that NUPE would get the presidency, at that point we weren't thinking of a full-time president. Although it could have come up later. We never did finalize it. But we did finalize that whoever it would be, it would be one of our men.

The merger meetings were going well. We attended the NUPSE convention. There were NUPSE representatives attending the NUPE convention in 1957 in Calgary. And there seemed to be almost unanimity. But nothing happened in concrete terms. The merger didn't in fact take place until 1963, six year later. I believed all my life in unity of the labour movement. And I was pushing, pushing, pushing, and Bill Buss was helping me in pushing for merger of the Congresses and pushing for merger of the two unions in the public employee field. But I'm sure that Bob Rintoul was going against his own wishes. He was being forced. We had met with Stan Little once. And he spoke about inviting us to their convention. And I left it with Bob. "Now, Bob, you go ahead and make the necessary arrangements to get in touch with these people and get it officially in correspondence." Well, he wasn't doing it. He was dragging his feet. Finally, I had to say, "Now, listen. Get a hold of them and fix a date and a time!" I think Rintoul was building up his own power base first. He wanted to be the big man all the way through. He didn't want to be in a position where he had to take orders. I know when I'd say, "Bob, this isn't right," or "We should do it this way," I could see a certain resentment.

In the end we put it through, except, as I say, I think something queer happened after I quit as president. Once I resigned as president and became a rep, the meetings which followed, which I had nothing to do with, this decision to have a NUPE man as head was changed for some reason I don't know. The first thing I knew was that Stan Little was going to be president although his union, NUPSE, had 29,000 members and NUPE had 60,000 members.

Chapter 14

ORGANIZING CIVIC WORKERS ON THE PRAIRIES AND THE FORMATION OF CUPE

At NUPE's Second Annual Convention in Toronto in April 1956, I was elected President. During the period that I was president, the Union was growing rapidly. By the time the Second Annual Convention began in Toronto in April 1956, we had grown to 170 chartered locals with 27,500 members.

In my President's address to that Convention, I pointed out that these added numbers gave us new strength but that it was necessary to teach our locals and new members how to use this strength. I said that collective bargaining is not easy today. We are faced with a battery of lawyers, statisticians, technicians, and personnel directors who make things uneasy for many of our members when negotiating new agreements. If we are to win better wages for our members, better benefits, and shorter hours, I said we must find the means of raising the education level of our members. The National Officers must be in a position to place in the hands of all local leaders the necessary statistical material which will enable them to cope with any experts around the collective bargaining table. The limits of our income will determine if we are to meet our responsibilities.

I stated further that if we are to give greater service, we must have our representatives in the field instead of relying on TLC reps. To do that will require additional finances from the locals. If we are to take advantage of the new conditions for unions, which will arise when Labour is united in this country, if we are to fulfil our historic role as a National Union, we must adjust our financial structure.

As I stated, the per capita tax paid by the locals to the National was fixed at the 1955 Convention at 20¢ per member per month, with 4¢ of that going to the TLC. At the 1956 Convention, it was raised to 27¢ with 7¢ going to the Congress. The 1957 Convention set the per capita at 40¢ and also established the minimum local dues at \$1.50 per month. By 1958 it was up to 45¢ and this allowed us to have our own servicing staff.

During the period that I was president of NUPE there was a lot of pressure to hire some staff to service the locals. At that time there wasn't any field staff. There was just the national director and some secretarial staff in Ottawa. If any of the locals wanted servicing, they'd call on officers of the provincial division — I was the president of the division and I was also president of the national, so I was at their beck and call. This, of course, was a burden which couldn't go on. It was impossible to take care of the growth because most of the unions that we got to affiliate with us from the Congress were unions in name only. Lots of them didn't even have elected executives — nothing. And it called for immediate attention.

And we were organizing new members too. In 1956, while I was both National President and President of the Alberta Federation of Public Employees, we began to extend our organizing into small towns. The Federation would pay for people like Harley Horne to organize. It was not easy. Our main endeavour was trying to organize the Drumheller Municipal Hospital. Here we met the kind of employer resistance that we were not used to. Our local union president was fired. Petitions in opposition to the union, which were sponsored by the administration of the hospital, were circulated. Yet we were successful in gaining certification. This was the first hospital we had organized in Alberta in seven years. We appeared before a special meeting of the Board of Industrial Relations in Edmonton and were successful in getting the president of the local reinstated into her old job. Then management tried again by demanding that the Board withdraw the certification. Again, we fought back and won the right for hospital workers to join a union. It was a long, drawn-out case. But the Federation paid all the expenses.

There was an understanding that we could use the CLC field staff for servicing the new NUPE locals. We did that here in southern Alberta. One good thing was that we had Gordon Wilkinson, the CLC rep, in southern Alberta. And Gordon did his best for us. He helped organize in Red Deer. He helped organize in Drumheller. Wherever he was, he was always advancing our ideas and encouraging us. He didn't actually help in assisting the locals in bargaining or arbitration or grievances. That wasn't necessary once we had our provincial division set up, because I was at their disposal.

During the period of my presidency there was discussion of hiring staff. The first decision was to set up a research office. That was given first priority because we knew that through a proper research office, with somebody full time who would have the capability and the necessary skills and requirements for the job, to gather the necessary information for the locals throughout the country and coordinate their work and efforts in getting better wages, giving them facts and figures. By putting the person on research in charge, we were giving to our locals something they never had

before. The Congress never dreamed of any such thing. So we were giving them something that they really wanted.

Myself and Bill Buss, the vice-president, instructed Brother Rintoul to advertise for applicants. A notice went out to all locals in the fall of 1956. I don't know exactly how many applied — but some applied for the job. And out of the bunch, lo and behold, I'm happy to say Levine was the choice of myself and the vice-president wholeheartedly.¹ I just can't say the same thing about Robert. I'm not quite sure that he was happy at the time. Later I think he dropped it but it was a little bit against the grain because he'd come out openly and he told us that Levine was an ex-Communist. And I know that he never did like radicals. But I told him right there, I said, "Look, Bob, you're looking at one — me." And Bill Buss gave me a big smile and that was it. And that's how Levine got the job. Well, everybody's happy today.

By the time of our October 1956 National Executive Board meeting, our membership was approaching 30,000. So the last big thing, of course, while I was president, was that we decided to hire our first three full-time representatives. And we advertised it. We posted it throughout the civic service calling for applications. A bunch of applicants came in. Bob Rintoul, Bill Buss and myself looked them over. Out of the bunch that we got, there were only two that, in our opinion, were worth consideration. We didn't know much about Bill Acton who had applied for the Ontario position. We knew of him and had met him at conventions. But Bill Buss was able to enlighten us on his capabilities. The BC people were able to enlighten us about Jim Murray. Bill Black was the man who recommended him. Murray had worked for Black.

Then we were stuck with the Prairies. We'd nobody worthwhile. I didn't even know the guys that wrote in from a couple of locals in Alberta. Nobody in the world had ever heard of them but they had seen the posting. Well, I knew that the Prairies had to be covered because there were demands, demands, demands in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba — everywhere. Not so much in Alberta, because we had it pretty well consolidated through our provincial body. But the other two provinces were bankrupt. We had police locals at that time in Moose Jaw and Saskatoon. They're hollering for help. So finally I discussed it with Anne, that I was going to give up the presidency and take this job. So I met with Buss and later with Rintoul, and I said, "In a way I don't like doing it because I know what it will mean. It'll mean that all official positions I'm elected into, except maybe the New Democratic Party (NDP), I'll have to resign them all: the Calgary Labour Council, provincial federation president and all of this. I know what I'm doing, but

¹Lenihan is referring here, of course, to Gilbert Levine. Levine discusses the process in his Foreword to this manuscript.

I want to stay in the organizing field and that's where I belong. What do you fellas think about it?"

Well, Bill Buss says, "Look, I know how you feel, but we've got to have somebody. Do you want to be out in the field that way?"

Well, I said, "Look, Bill. Ever since I took the presidency, I didn't want it. I wanted you. Now, you're going to have it if this works out."

Then we met with Rintoul and I told him, "Look, under the circumstances, I will take the rep job, and take the three Prairie provinces." He was the happiest one in the country. He jumped at it. "Oh, a great idea, Pat, a great idea." And that ended my presidency. I think Rintoul preferred Bill Buss as the president over me. Although Bill was my friend and we had a close relationship, Bill was not as politically aware of things and as conscious of the political struggle, the class struggle, as I was. So Bob was glad. And that ended my presidency. Rintoul felt he could have an easier time with Buss. More of his own way, I imagine. And, in fact, he did, because whatever negotiating went on with Little to bring about the new structure, he gave away the presidency.

In January 1957, I was hired as a NUPE field representative. I had Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We hired Jim Murray for BC and Bill Acton got Ontario. We only had a couple of locals in Quebec so that was left blank. Lofty MacMillan out of the Saint John, NB police local became the servicing representative for the four Atlantic provinces that summer.

Once I became NUPE staffer, I had to resign the Presidency. Bill Buss, who was NUPE's First Vice-President stepped up to fill the remainder of my term. He was elected President in September 1957.

The salary was about four hundred dollars a month. And two dollars a day expenses. That two dollars a day almost wrecked us. I had a Zephyr, they were English Fords. They were good cars. They could take any hill and the Cadillacs were stuck all over the highway.

My territory was the three Prairie provinces. For anybody working as a CUPE representative today, they would just find that inconceivable. Today the CUPE reps work out of well-equipped offices with secretarial support staff. My home was my office and I was my own secretary, handling my own correspondence.

The Locals that NUPE took over from the TLC were in pretty bad shape. They were locals in name only. Poor organization, poor agreements, poor local leadership, no shop stewards, and no educational work to imbue the membership with some degree of militancy. As I visited these locals, I tried to the best of my ability to change things by getting locals to establish executive committees, shop stewards, and other union committees. In this way, we tried to do away with one-man leadership. We started drawing on

more people into union activity and as a result we had more collective leadership and better unions.

I've got to tell a story about this because it illustrates the state our locals were in. We got an urgent call from the ex-president of the NUPE Manitoba Division, Johnny Purdue, from Brandon. And I'd never been there in my life. Johnny was president of the Brandon municipal local. Well, I had to drop everything else and take off and get in there. And Johnny and another guy, the secretary of the local, met me at the train depot. We went for a coffee. While we were having coffee, I asked them a few questions about their negotiations in their local. And they said, "Look, we're the local." I said, "What?" "Well, we're the ... This is about it." Well, I was ready to take off out of town.

Then we went to a hotel. I said, "Well, what's the position?" And they started telling me that the Congress reps were supposed to service them out of Winnipeg and that they never got anything. Somers was a Congress rep in Winnipeg, very popular there with the Congress. And he was a dud. Poor guy, he wasn't interested. It was a job for him. I later became convinced that he was all management.

Then they called up another guy, and he was supposed to be the financial secretary of the local. Well, you should see the books of the local! All he knew was that there was three hundred dollars in the bank but he couldn't say why or where it came from. Nothing! So I said, "Give me the books." And I threw them in the garbage can. And I says, "Okay. Let's start all over. I'm here."

They were going through a period of persecution. Johnny wanted to quit and the secretary wanted to quit. They figured it was something wrong with them. But it was the way the City handled them, kicked them around and wouldn't listen to them on a grievance.

So we called a meeting. I got them going out to the shops. And we organized who was going to speak. And, God Almighty, we got about 50 or 60 to the meeting. I gave them a talk, as good as I ever could. By God, this worked.

The next week, we called another meeting. And, by God, we doubled the crowd! Got a good executive elected, drafted up our requests for negotiations, because it was time to go in. They were quite stiff too. They didn't want the Congress reps. All you had to say was TLC to them and that was it.

And this Somers, the TLC rep, in Winnipeg, hears about it, that the negotiating meeting was for a certain night. Of course, he thought that was his job. He drove in and says, "Oh, ya, I'm here, too, to help." Well, Johnny laid the law down and Johnny said, "Look, here's our rep," pointing at me. "He's going to present our case to the City Council. We're meeting with the Mayor and the whole City Council."

There were two women on the Council and I think it helped. I got up, as polished as I could, diplomatic as I could and everything nice and told them who we were, what we were and what we were trying to do. And they gave me fifteen minutes. And I'm watching my watch, and I said, "Well, Aldermen and Mayor, Your Worship, my time is up. And, unfortunately, maybe I talked too much." One alderman said, "I move a motion that he gets all the time he wants." Somers is sitting in the front row, and he's waving at me to sit down.

They listened to me for over an hour. In a couple of meetings following this, we negotiated the finest agreement they ever had in their history.

When we first asked for a wage increase the mayor and council hollered that they would let all the work out to contract. Then, the City's first offer was for a 10 per cent increase on a 44-hour week for 1958 and a further 5 per cent in 1959. That was rejected by the union and we held two more meetings and we finally agreed to a two year agreement with the 10 per cent for 1958. For 1959 we got the work week reduced from 44 to 40 with the same take home pay, plus a 5 per cent general increase. That's a total gain in the hourly rate of 25 per cent over two years, plus many adjustments.

No more work was going to be contracted out and the city was going to do more of its own work than ever in 1958 and 1959. We got practically everything we asked for.

As a result of our efforts, one hundred per cent of the works department, parks department, city hall, school board, old folks home signed union cards. Even the most backward and reactionary elements who fought our unions for years signed up as members.

The funny part about it was there were two elected representatives of the School Board at that Council meeting. And next day, Johnny and I get an invitation to lunch from these guys. They wanted to meet and discuss things with us. This opened our door for the school caretakers to organize. The hospital heard of us and the guy in charge of the hospital comes and takes us for lunch. The management people were doing all the buying. We weren't buying their lunches. When it finished up, the Mayor and Council wanted to hire me, to give me a job on their side! Ha!

I negotiated for the school employees and I negotiated for the hospital employees in Brandon. I got all their first agreements, and then I had to pull out as Jim Murrie had been hired as a rep to service Manitoba and north-western Ontario. Oh, the union wanted me to take money. They offered me money and everything and I said nix. I said, "I'm paid. That's my job." So they wrote a letter to Rintoul telling him the huge victory that I had brought about and asking him to publish it in that little paper NUPE had. He never did. He never told me that he got the letter. But they sent me a copy of it.

Johnny Purdue and I became good friends. Later on he moved to Calgary and our friendship has held strong over all these years.

It was hard to service such a large territory with so much to do. You did what you could and you just had to say no to the others. This used to break my heart because it was utterly impossible. The police were mad at me at the first meeting up in Saskatoon. The first greeting I get from them was, "Well, it's about time you showed up." It wasn't our fault. But once we got in amongst them and introduced ourselves and told them what we wanted to do, they were a hundred per cent behind us.

One of my major organizing efforts was in Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Civic Employees (WCE) were affiliated with the remnants of the OBU. I knew Bob Russell² and we had a mutual respect. Bob advised the Winnipeg people to come and talk to us and look us over. The result of that was that at our convention in Toronto, we had four of the leaders of the WCE come and sit as visitors. They were impressed by what they saw and heard. And the outcome of it was that they let us know that they were interested in us and that they'd appreciate further meetings and discussions with us.

When our convention was over we instructed Bob Rintoul that the first chance he got he should go to Winnipeg and meet with them. Unfortunately, Bob flew over Winnipeg, I don't know how many times, going to Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver, but he never contacted them.

Later on, when I was on staff and I was organizing in Brandon, the Congress organizer made me aware of the fact that the NUPSE people were already in Winnipeg working on them and, in fact, speaking to groups and getting them in. So I immediately hightailed it to Winnipeg and phoned Buss and phoned Rintoul and told them what was going on. They didn't even know what was going on. And the result was that I was able to go to work with Bob Sommerville and Dan Johnson, NUPE school board members in Winnipeg. However NUPSE was in a good month and a half ahead of us. We had stiff opposition because the civic employees had three full-time men: Les Butterworth, Pete Byers, and there was another one. And, of course, there was Leon Mitchell in the background. When I got there, they had a couple of key men who were working in the hydro plant. They had already got them on a local union vote. They had quite a bunch of activists. They were spending money and they were going.

I hadn't known Sommerville before. Sommerville was an old-timer. He belonged to the radical movement in England, the Independent Labour Party, in its radical days. He and his brother came here and landed in Winnipeg. Immediately they got involved in the OBU with Bob Russell. We got talking and he was telling me about the OBU. I said, "You'd know Bob Russell."

²See footnote 5, chapter 2.

"Well," he said, "My greatest friend."

"Well," I said, "How about meeting him tomorrow morning."

"Sure enough, Pat. I'll pick you up in the car."

I had met Russell in 1928 on my first trip in the boxcar from Toronto to Vancouver. I'd read about him. I went in to meet him and I told him who I was and that I was seeking knowledge. And, oh, he was delighted. He took us in and gave us coffee in his office. I told him I was organizing public employees. "Well," he says, "You're a month late."

I says, "Well, what's the situation?"

"Well," he says, "Rintoul or somebody else should have been in here long ago. The door was open for them. You're the first man, but you're a month late."

Well, we never got the civic employees, but the school caretakers were ours. And then Selkirk civic employees and the Winnipeg Children's Hospital employees joined us.

Through Bob Russell's contact, I had a meeting with the superintendent of the hospital. Bob phoned him up, because Bob used to service them. Bob told him who I was and that I wanted to meet him. And he said, "It's up to the employees. We won't stop you. Go ahead."

So we started our campaign and we even got into one of the locals that was already supposed to be with NUPSE. I'm invited there and I spoke to them at a big meeting. The outcome of it was that they came unanimously to us. We passed the cards out and got them signed up. After the meeting, I came back to my hotel. I phoned Rintoul and I made a report, telling him what I was doing, what we were accomplishing. "Well, I'm not so sure, Pat, that we should do that," and this kind of talk.

The next night I get a phone call from the president, from Buss: "This violates everything. Give them back their cards. Drop it." I was on the verge of quitting because, if we had gone back, we'd have got more. That was a death blow to us in Winnipeg. That was Bob Rintoul.

It seems to me there was an arrangement where the OBU agreed to come into the Congress as a provincial organization and that within a period of two years each of their groups would affiliate with an appropriate national or international union. None of us was supposed to, individually, separately, go and get members. It had to be discussed. This is where Rintoul was supposed to come in. But NUPSE broke that. They went right ahead and signed them up.

In Moose Jaw, I helped the civic employees build up their local. Most of the locals had no executives. They'd have a president and a secretary in the main. But they had no knowledge at all of an executive or how an executive functioned, how to meet ahead of the meetings and plan work. I spent quite a bit of time in Moose Jaw and I negotiated a good contract for them.

I organized in Drumheller. The mines and the miners' unions had disappeared. They had a most reactionary Mayor and Council. And we had one fierce struggle to get the hospital organized! I did not have a majority. We got certified because of the rotten, open, brutal tactics of firing that the hospital management had adopted. Several times I had a majority but then, goddamn it, four or five were laid off. I took Dick Clement, a government conciliator and a friend of mine down there. I used to buy him a steak once in a while. I showed him what was happening. One night he came to my room in the hotel, and Anne was with me, and he says, "Listen, Pat. There's a lot of stuff I can't stand. I like to play it fair, but in this case you're getting certification." Because of the intimidation, we were certified. But then we had to fight like hell to try and get an agreement. But it's there today.

The Crow's Nest Pass area was my old stomping ground, where I used to do political work. But no civic unions existed anywhere in the Crow's Nest Pass that covered an area of approximately a hundred miles. You had Pincher Creek, Blairmore, Coleman, Fernie in eastern B.C. That's all classified as the Crow's Nest Pass. I had been active there in the 1930s. Now I was coming back in the late 1950s as a trade union organizer.

There was a hospital in Blairmore and a hospital in Pincher Creek. Of course, they were all controlled by people in the rich class by this time. When I organized I had the help of all the old timers in telling me who worked in the different towns. And many of them were daughters and sons of people who had been in the left-wing movement in the early 1930s. They had knowledge that a trade union meant struggle for a better standard of living. However, my reputation of the 1930s was quite alive in the minds of the people who controlled the towns and the hospital and school boards. I was no stranger to a lot of them. They didn't cherish the idea at all that I was looked upon as one of the leaders of the union. I guess they were nervous. But I immediately met with success in Blairmore. I had a tougher time in Coleman.

I organized the town employees in Blairmore, and the hospital and the school caretakers — everything. And likewise in Pincher Creek. Pincher Creek was rough. It took a long time before we got an agreement. They tried to fire the fellows that were known as union men. And, of course, we had a battle with management and we'd have to call in the government. In several places we had to lay charges of unfair labour practices. Before we really had the union consolidated and an agreement covering the hospital and the town employees, we spent a lot of time there, over three months. Of course, I was in and out, not there every day.

In Blairmore we got good agreements. Not in comparison with today, of course. But we got the basic things established in our agreements, a real foundation. These people never got a paid holiday in their life up until

then. Even Christmas Day. If they didn't work on Christmas Day, they lost a day's pay.

I found some old miners working in public employment. I think two were in Blairmore. Johnny... He was of Italian descent. He was capable. In fact, a year after that, they made him the town superintendent. But he played a big role. He was the first president. And, of course, he was threatened. But he stuck to his guns.

Organizing in Pincher Creek was interesting. I heard that this man, Joe Malanchuk, was the Superintendent of the Town Works. I remembered that he was the son of Communist parents and he himself had been quite active in the Young Communist League in his younger days. So I immediately told Anne. My wife used to do quite a bit of travelling with me then because our children were grown up. They were all going to university. June was training as a nurse. And when I heard that Joe Malenchuk was the Town Superintendent, I told Anne. "Oh, my God, we'll have no trouble here. I'm going down to meet him."

I found out where he was living and I went to his house and knocked on the door. Who came out to the door but Joe himself. I told him who I was. I imagine he knew me. And I told him what I was doing and what I was in Pincher Creek for and he let go a blast. He told me that over his dead body would a union be brought in. I didn't lose my temper or anything else. I played it cool. And, oh, he blasted.

I guess his wife heard him blasting at me and finally she came down and said, "Joe, why don't you bring the man in?" Because he kept me standing at the door. So finally I got in and we sat down in the living room. I tried to tell him what the union was, that it wasn't a political party, that it wasn't affiliated with any political party and that we were trying to build a strong Canadian union. We had no connections outside of the country.

Then he told me the cause of his hatred. "You know me and you knew my father and my mother. My father was blacklisted for years and never got a job in the mine because he was an active unionist." I knew he knew better, that his father wasn't the only one in the world who had suffered on behalf of the working class.

I said, "We're here to stop that kind of thing."

"Well, you're not doing it and you might as well get out of town."

"Well," I said, "Joe, there were unions here before you were born and they'll be there a long time after you're dead. And we'll have it here too." And we continued to organize.

He had a hunch that I was approaching a majority. Then he adopted dirty tactics. He knew some of the fellas that were already in the union. He gave them all the tough jobs. A kind of intimidation to people he thought were active in building the union. So I went to the Mayor and everybody

else and I told them what happened. I said, "This is against the labour laws of Alberta and I'm going to get the Government people in here." And, of course, the Mayor, the politicians, would say, "We're not fighting the union. But we're not encouraging it either."

It took us quite a while to get the union established in Pincher Creek, but we did. I'm proud today that it's still there and doing a good job.

This incident teaches us a lesson in history: unfortunately, some of the greatest enemies of the working class and of trade unionists have been people who had grown up and been educated in the trade union movement. They become the bitterest enemies of the trade union movement because they get certain promotions. The boss goes out of his way to see to that. They promise or they give him a promotion. Then they're getting higher pay, their economic status changes, they're living a better life and they figure, well, I'm emancipated, to heck with the rest of them. They forget their basic principles.

Calgary had three independent towns out in the suburbs. They're all part of Calgary today but they were established towns. You had Forest Lawn, Bowness, and Montgomery. They all had their own town councils and police forces. Their wages and working conditions were lagging behind what we had established in Calgary. So we had to organize them into individual locals and get them agreements. This went on practically all over.

In Medicine Hat we had to get the hospital organized. In Drumheller we had to get the hospital, the school caretakers and town employees. There was no union in Red Deer when we first went into the town. We even organized the firemen there into our union because there was no International Firemens Union there at the time. Gordon Wilkinson and I used to sleep in the Fire Hall there. We'd be up there for a late night meeting and we'd knock off some sleep for four or five hours in the Fire Hall and then we'd drive back to Calgary and go to work in the morning.

Then we organized the hospital in Red Deer while I was rep. We got that after a struggle. And then they built a retirement home there, and we organized it and got an agreement.

Wherever we went to the small towns, it was the same story. Whether it was Ponoka or Innisfil, or Olds: low wages, a 44-hour work week, no premium pay for overtime, no security of employment, no such thing as seniority and certainly no future.

For the first time in the history of Canada, the CUPE, as it's known today, took the union movement into the small towns, villages, and places where they'd never before heard of a trade union. Up into the Peace River country, for example. There were situations where we went into some of these smaller towns where a CUPE local was organized — and it was the only union in the

town. That's why it was extremely difficult. Like Innisfail and Brooks, Alberta.

I was driving from Medicine Hat to Calgary and Brooks was a town *en route*. So I wheeled the car into Brooks and checked into the hotel there. I'd drive around and I'd watch to see if I could see any civic people working on the streets or picking up garbage. If I did, then I'd stop and I'd talk to them and I'd tell them who I was and right away one or two of them would say, "By God, that's a good idea." Then, I'd talk to them about setting up a meeting, if they could get a group together that night. This was a tactic we had everywhere we went where we knew nobody.

Estevan, Saskatchewan was one of the very first municipal locals that I organized. There were no locals there. A policeman helped me. We had no contacts. George Booty from Regina was the leader of the NUPE Saskatchewan Provincial Division. We got into Estevan and checked into the hotel. I said to George, "Well, let's go out and look around. We might find a civic employee somewhere around the town." So we come down the street. And here's a cop standing there. I walked up to the cop and I said, "My name is Lenihan and I'm an organizer for the National Union of Public Employees." And I said, "This is my partner here," and I introduced Booty. I said, "We're interested in doing some organizing work here." He looked at me. I thought he was going to hit me or something. He said, "Goddamned time somebody came here! Two blocks down the street, there's a gang of them working."

He led us right to them. Down we go and talked to the guys. "Fine and dandy," they said, "We'll get the guys out tonight." And I guess we had about 25 of them out. We got a majority signed up. But we had a hell of a time negotiating. Oh, that Mayor was wicked.

This is what we had to do in the small towns. But once we got established in the small towns, and if there were any other avenues open for the advancement of the trade union movement, for other unions to come, our people always helped them. NUPE, and later CUPE was the spearhead in setting up unions for the packinghouse workers, the retail clerks in Calgary, and for the oil workers in Medicine Hat. Every union that came into Calgary, CUPE was always their best ally to help them organize.

There was another union operating in the public employee field in Alberta — the Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU). Its Canadian leadership was very reactionary and they had a couple of locals here — mostly with Catholic institutions. Their staff had negotiated sweetheart contracts with their Catholic bosses. So, the membership wanted to leave BSEIU and come with us, but we had to be careful. We did not want to be accused of raiding. So we suggested to them that they should first decertify from BSEIU and form an independent union. This they did and

then, as an independent local, they were free to join NUPE. That's how the employees of the Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary and the employees of the Edmonton Separate School Board and others in time formed NUPE locals.

With the development and growth of our unions, we had difficulties in negotiating. I'd be doing all the negotiating for the unions. We'd have boards of arbitration. And then I'd be on the conciliation boards representing our union. And, believe me, we had a busy time of it.

Chapter 15

CUPE, ALBERTA LABOUR, A NEW PARTY AND NEW STRUGGLES

When I first became a full-time staff, I alone covered the three prairie provinces. As the membership grew and the finances improved for the Union, many additional staff were hired. In time the regions were split and I became Western Director, covering BC and Alberta. When I retired in 1969, the region had a staff of twenty.

In many unions, that often resulted in tensions between the role of staff and the role of elected officers. There are some unions where the staff run the show. NUPE was never like that. I remember in 1966 receiving a letter from Grace Hartman, who was the President of the CUPE Ontario Division, telling me how the senior staff in Ontario were trying to elevate their own role and undermine the role of the elected officers, many of whom were quite capable people. I wrote back and told her that in our union, staff reps cannot run for any elected office within the union. Reps must carry out the policies of the elected people. I said that in BC and Alberta all reps can and should attend all conventions and conferences. I said that no Director or union staffer who tries to control the elected bodies could last very long if the officers are doing their job.

I said to Grace that our job as employees of the Union is at all times to meet with the elected officers in the different areas, to discuss their problems with them, to help to find the answers and then do the daily work in solving these problems. The elected officers are supreme and we the staff are subordinate to them. Anyone trying to change this will sooner or later find himself on the outside.

As a NUPE rep, I had a real opportunity to get acquainted with all the leaders of the union movement and to work with them and to get their help. And vice versa — I'd help them to build and strengthen the labour movement.

Although new people coming into the unions knew the trade union was a good thing, they had no knowledge of the inner functioning of the union and didn't know how to negotiate agreements or handle grievances. We had masses of people coming into the union by the thousands but suffering

from a lack of trade union training and ideology. So, immediately, one of the great big tasks facing us was to provide education for our people.

Wherever we set up one or two locals or one good-sized local, we immediately made plans for weekend schools. We'd get lecturers on different phases of the history of Canada, the trade union movement. We'd get cooperation from other unions. We'd interchange. The Federations of Labour would give us help. We'd utilize the Congress reps for teaching the shop steward system, etc. We organized schools in Brandon, Winnipeg, Moose Jaw, Regina, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Vancouver, Drumheller. In this way we were developing rather quickly. We were developing people who, in the main, would be classed as left-wingers, progressive trade unionists. And this was our basic work.

Once I got what I'd call a good understanding of the structure of society and the role of the unions, I always wanted to see, during my activity, the unity of the working-class movement in Canada under a single leadership. So wherever we went in all our schools, this was number one. We also wanted the working class movement to have an avenue of political activity and we encouraged all our unions right from the start to participate in all elections — civic, school board, everything. We should be out there electing the people who we thought would serve our interests.

I was vice-president of the Calgary Labour Council. We had merged the two Councils. That is the former CCL Labour Council and the former TLC Labour Council. We had a rough fight in those days with what you'd call the right wing of the Council. They were against political action. But gradually the mass of the delegates saw it our way and voted for it. Finally, in 1957, the Labour Council nominated and endorsed myself and John Kushner as candidates of the labour movement for City Council.¹

The 1957 election was entirely different from the election that took place in 1938 when I was elected. In 1938 you had a lot of poverty, a lot of people going hungry, masses of single men who were really hungry and you had an upset small business class who were losing their stores. You had people in a protest mood. They were looking for somebody new on the City Council who might help to bring about some change. But in this election you had relative prosperity, everybody working, relatively speaking at the best wages and working conditions that ever existed in the history of labour in Calgary. You had a different economic situation altogether.

We appealed particularly to the civic employees for their vote. We stressed our opposition to contracting out work normally done by civic employees. We insisted that city tenders be given only to unionized contractors. We weren't elected but I got a very high vote.

¹John Kushner later became a Tory MP.

In 1960, Harley Horne and I both ran as labour candidates in the civic elections for the position of alderman. We came out strongly for tax reorganization that would help the little man. At that time railway properties were tax exempt. We stood for taxing all railway properties including the CPR's multi-million dollar Palliser Hotel and the Ogden shops. At that time there was no ward system in Calgary. Elections were held city-wide, which worked against labour candidates. I was not elected but I stood eleventh in a field of twenty-two.

There were great difficulties in merging these two federations of labour. There was a strong minority opposing us. But when action was finally decided upon, and accepted by this minority, then came the struggle for the name of the new body, its constitution, who would be the officers etc. It took many meetings between executive officers from both sides. There had been a long history of hostility. It was a bitter political fight because the overwhelming majority of the American international unions that were affiliated with the TLC were against any form of political action. This battle was raging for a number of years. The Calgary Labour Council was the spearhead of it in Alberta. It was here that we were always fighting for political action on behalf of the organized labour movement. Then the same political struggle would be taken into the annual conventions of the Alberta Federation of Labour. We had the same fight there. We were denounced as reds. Every name in the book! We wanted direct political action. In the process of the fight, the progressive forces achieved some of our objectives. This culminated finally in the establishment of the NDP. But it was a terrific political battle.

The officers of the former CCL unions were naturally a hundred per cent for political action. But where we were having the trouble was with our own people. Finally we brought about the merger of the two federations and the two labour councils in Calgary. We were successful in merging councils in Edmonton and in Lethbridge and all the places where we had councils.

Once the two federations were merged, we were urging our NUPE locals to send delegates to the annual conventions. By 1958, we had 46 NUPE delegates out of a total of 200 at the Alberta Federation Convention. We were now the second largest union in Alberta. I was asked to run as Vice-President for Calgary, which I did. I got 160 votes out of 200 and served as an Alberta Federation Vice-President from then until my retirement.

They were after me for years to join the CCF. About a year and a half before the CCF went out of business and the NDP was formed in 1961, I joined. I attended one convention. I became the first vice-president of the NDP at the Alberta founding convention. There was one president, Neil Reimer, and four vice-presidents. I was one of them. Norman Ritchies was

one from the Packinghouse Workers Union. We were the only labour men on the first executive.

I found the CCF was acceptable in that it was a left-wing movement advancing progressive ideas and based on the social reform of the system. I knew the CCF and I told lots of people that it was not a socialist party; it was a party of reform. This was my position all the way through, that it was not a socialist party or a party dedicated to the establishment of socialism. However, I got along well with them.

The former CCL people were very active in the CCF and, through my connections, I was able to establish contact with the Oil, Chemical and other unions in the CCL. And they became friends of ours and would help us strengthen our locals and they gave us help when we'd be organizing. So it paid dividends all around. But at that time the CCF was dying on its feet. And as far as being a factor in the political life of Alberta, it was nil.² I knew that the CCF was practically dead as an active political structure. In certain spots, they'd elect a Member of Parliament, where they had support. Every five years they'd go to the polls and then forget the struggle for the next four. And that was why the need for something else to take its place was there.

In the Calgary Labour Council and in the Alberta Federation, those of us, like Neil Reimer, who thought along those lines, kept more and more hammering for a new structure.³ We knew the CCF could never play the role. We played a big, big role in bringing the New Party to life in Alberta. Then it spread throughout the Country.

We established new Party clubs all over the province. Man, I don't know how many we had in Calgary. It was a mushroomed growth at the start. But there was no name tag. New Party clubs is what we called them. These were the first towards organizing the NDP before the first convention. Anne and I attended the founding convention of the NDP in Ottawa. I was a delegate from the Alberta Federation of Labour, of which I was a vice-president.

²The United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) which governed Alberta from 1921 to 1935 was one of the founding affiliates of the CCF in 1932. By that time they had become conservative, and like other governments, were discredited by their lack of effective response to the Depression. The UFA was wiped out by Social Credit in 1935 and in a sense the CCF never got off the ground in Alberta. It would never be a force of much significance, unlike its sister parties in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

³Neil Reimer was Canadian Director of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) and would be Alberta NDP Leader for a time. The OCAW was the forerunner of the Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union of Canada (CEP). An interesting history of the union and the role of Neil Reimer is Wayne Roberts, *Cracking the Canadian Formula* (Toronto 1990).

I have been asked what changed my political thinking that made it desirable for me to become a member of the CCF. My political thinking never really did change, because I'm a Marxist today and I believe in Marxism and Leninism. But I was no longer a member of the Communist Party. I was out of it for years. And I knew the role of the CCF and what we call the social democrats throughout the world. Nevertheless, I felt if we got inside of it, we could influence its policies and take the trade union policies into it. That's why we went on record to set up the NDP.

Obviously the CCF-NDP was not a Marxist party. But it was a party of social reform, and it still is. Some people called it the establishment of a new socialist party, but this is ridiculous. I always let my views be known, that it was a party of social reform and that was all. And this party was never set up to bring socialism to Canada. I felt that joining the CCF-NDP was a good move on my part because by this time there was a political awareness growing, especially inside of the trade union movement. But they wouldn't go for the CCF. And they weren't prepared in large numbers to go with the Communist movement.

I knew when I joined the CCF that it wouldn't be long in existence. However, I wanted to participate with these people because the majority of them were good people. They were trade union people, they were middle class people here in the city and everywhere else. They stood for peace and they were against reaction and, in the main, they held a lot of the ideas that I held. I was free as an individual. I had no party ties anywhere. And I didn't want to go back to the Communist Party. So I joined the CCF.

The Alberta Federation of Labour was really the group that started and fought for the establishment of the NDP here. The old top leaders of the CCF, people I knew well, like Bill Irvine, he was a Member of Parliament, Nellie Peterson up in Edmonton and people like this, they wanted a new kind of party, but they didn't want to change the name. They wanted the CCF with our affiliation. For a time they actually opposed the idea of setting up a new party.⁴ I was on the official delegation — Neil Reimer, Roy Jamha, Frank Bodie and myself were the four trade union leaders who met with the CCF leaders in Woodsworth House in Edmonton to see if we could negotiate the establishment of the NDP. This was after the first national convention of the NDP. They were opposing it here. We had to go to work

⁴ Many of the Alberta CCF supporters who stayed out of the NDP after the foundation of the federal NDP in 1961 would later be grouped around the Woodsworth-Irvine Foundation which was based mainly in Edmonton. Some were skeptical of the political potential of trade unions which was an ideological tendency going back to the early Socialist Party of Canada. Some old CCF advocates regarded the formation of the NDP as a move to the right.

and negotiate to bring about, finally, the first convention here. We were going to go the road ourselves alone if they didn't come and set up the NDP.

I held my views of the class struggle. I proved that in all the years that I was in the trade union movement — right up to the day I retired. I felt I was free. I had no connections. The best move I could make to maintain my contact with the trade union movement and the progressive elements which we were following was to go in there and for me to become active. I never denied my Communist past. It was a fact that was established.

I always let it be known that I was a Marxist. In fact, when I was on the job as a rep, I had Marxist pamphlets to give out to leaders of the trade union movement — *Value, Price and Profit*, *Wage, Labour and Capital*. I used to buy them in the progressive bookstores in Winnipeg or Vancouver, wherever I happened to be. If any worker in this country wants to be a capable negotiator on behalf of a union, if he studied those two little pamphlets, *Value, Price and Profit*, and *Wage, Labour and Capital* by Karl Marx, there's nobody in this country or in this world that can contradict it. They'll try to, but you can tie them up in knots in about ten minutes.

I was in place after place, where aldermen and lawyers and everybody else who were on conciliation boards and arbitration boards would come to me privately. "Do you mind if I ask you, where did you learn all about economics?" A lot of them thought I had some kind of a queer university training.

I won unanimous conciliation board awards where one lawyer, the chairman of the board, was the leader of the Liberal Party in Red Deer, and the other fellow was the leader of the Conservative Party. I proved to them that I was correct and I got a beautiful award. The only reason was I knew Marxist economics.

I'll tell you a story. I got this story from one of the top men in the *Calgary Herald*. He was a cub reporter in Trail, B.C. at the time. Harvey Murphy, year after year, was negotiating for the miners at Cominco in Trail. And year after year, Harvey was getting real agreements. A whole bunch of brass and some lawyers were having a party and one of them asked Blaylock, who was the head of the company, "Can't you get some lawyers down East that can handle this man Murphy?" And another lawyer stood up and said, "There's no man in Canada that can out-debate Harvey Murphy when it comes to economics." And why? Because Harvey Murphy had a deep knowledge of Marxist economics.

There were stiff arguments about getting the labour movement involved politically. Our argument basically was that we were like prize fighters in the ring and we were only using one arm, punching with one hand. Hundreds of issues facing the working people could not be solved through the picket line or through wage negotiations. There were things like



Executive of the Alberta Federation of Labour, c. 1960. Lenihan is in the back row, second from the left (*Glenbow Archives, Calgary*).

compensation laws. It was a political structure that was imposing upon us the bad conditions we were forced to live under. It was quite clear to us, as a result of studying history, that we had to get involved in that political structure and, if possible, change it. We knew that there was only one force in society capable of doing this and that was the organized working class with its allies — the farmers, the middle class people, intellectual people, thinkers in society. But we knew that we had to spearhead it and become the backbone of this drive. And that is why we fought for political action. We wanted our people everywhere, in every city, town, where we could do it, to get involved in all phases of political life.

In the early days of NUPE, the leadership was strongly opposed to any partisan political action. At our second convention in 1956 there was a motion carried which stated: "Be it resolved that NUPE go on record as having a non-partisan attitude on policies regarding politics and have no further relationship with any political parties." Fortunately, that changed in latter years.

Those who opposed political action brought forward the old line of Sam Gompers in the United States — a policy of voting for your friends and punishing your enemies. Labour should stay out of political action and go out at election time and vote for their friends. Well, we knew who most of the friends were. Any of the people that did get elected with labour support, in the main, joined the Liberals or the Conservatives later on. You had no control over their actions in that kind of a formula. We wanted people elected who would be responsible, in the main, to the labour movement and would accept the direction and advice of the organized labour movement.

The issue was finally resolved. Our great achievement was that we were able to bring about a new party. We were successful in bringing about the birth of the NDP in Alberta and throughout Canada.⁵

We were able to organize the national convention and set up the national party in Ottawa before we were able to achieve it on a provincial basis here in Alberta. It must have been a year and a half later. It shows you the struggle we had inside of the labour movement to take such action. But we were finally successful. We had a wonderful turnout in Edmonton where we founded the Alberta NDP.

There was a lot of input from the labour movement in that Alberta founding convention. The Alberta NDP would not have got off the ground without the help of the labour movement. The OCAW paid Neil Reimer's

⁵At the time Lenihan was talking the NDP was still growing in both Alberta and elsewhere in Canada. The Alberta and federal New Democrats would be much stronger in the years ahead though they were wiped out in Alberta in the 1992 election and elected only two members in the 1997 election. They have only elected one federal MP for one term from Alberta since the formation of the NDP in 1961.

wages as leader of the Alberta NDP. With the money saved, the Party was able to hire Grant Notley as Executive Secretary. It was very disappointing later to have an element inside the Party vociferously opposing trade union affiliation. The Oil Workers, the Packinghouse Workers, our union, played a tremendous role. We had delegates from nearly all our locals, men and women. A lot of women, for the first time, and that was outstanding, that women were drawn into the political life of the country. We had representatives from some of the international unions who were actually going against their own constitution because many of the international constitutions denied the right of political action.

What was the involvement of NUPE and subsequently CUPE in the Alberta Federation of Labour? It's a repeat of the same story. We were numerically weak. We had some good men and women who could express their views at conventions, but yet our strength in representation was weak. But right from the time we started to organize a union local in a community or a town or a city, we told them, "Now, look. You're coming into an organization. As soon as your local is established and you have a union agreement, we strongly advise that you affiliate with every section of the trade union movement." This way, when conventions came, we later had a big influence on the policies of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Of course, it wasn't all roses because I was still classed as a Red. Ernest Manning made a point of calling all NDP leaders Reds and Communists. Many of the people working with me were classified as Communists. We had to battle this even amongst many of the so-called friends in the leadership of the Federation. We had to be careful in the way we worked to get their support.

The greatest issue to win the Federation's support was the struggle over Vietnam. Right from the beginning, we took the stand that the war in Vietnam was a terror campaign conducted basically by the Americans, even though it was backed by all the capitalist nations of the world in one way or another, including Canada. We pointed out to them where Canada was cooperating with the United States in the shipment of arms and chemicals to Vietnam. Of course, we were ostracized. That was all Communist propaganda according to the Right Wing. We were Reds or Communist sympathizers. They had some name for us, but that didn't stop us — and it never did all our lives — that didn't stop us from doing what we knew was correct and right.

Whenever there was a demonstration on behalf of the people of Vietnam, our delegates were always there. It took them a long time. There were only two or three of us on the executive. We were a minority. The NDP leadership at the time wouldn't have anything to do with the Vietnam question. They didn't for a long time, in spite of all our work and demonstrations. But

finally — and I was a happy man — finally Tommy Douglas got up in the House of Commons and he made a beautiful speech and that was the first break on behalf of the national leadership of the NDP. But I imagine the war was on then for maybe two years.⁶

That was a big struggle inside of the Alberta Federation of Labour. But, finally, the Alberta Federation of Labour endorsed the fight to end the war in Vietnam. Some of its leaders, then, officially, were taking part in demonstrations. We'd call protest days, marches and parades in Edmonton and Calgary. The labour councils and the top leadership of the Alberta Federation of Labour would send officers to participate.

"So the struggle continues. It might take time. But it comes."

⁶Tommy Douglas would become a popular speaker at anti-Vietnam War demonstrations throughout the country.



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Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism

Edited by Gilbert Levine with an Introduction by Lorne Brown

Patrick Lenihan displayed rare courage and unwavering commitment to social justice, from his childhood in revolutionary Ireland through his leading role in the Communist Party of Canada to the formation of the first national union of public employees. *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism* chronicles a lifetime of rebellion, protest, and organizing, against the backdrop of the major economic, social, and political struggles of this century.

Lenihan was constantly watched, repeatedly arrested, and often imprisoned, but he emerged time and again as a leader in the cause of the downtrodden, the working poor, and the unemployed. The On-to-Ottawa Trek, the work camps of the 1930s, the radicalism of the western mine towns, the Cold War — Pat Lenihan was involved in it all, front and centre.

Drawn from interviews conducted by Gilbert Levine and written in an unadorned, engaging style, *Patrick Lenihan* is far more than the story of one of Canada's most influential and colourful figures. It makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of western radicalism, Canadian communism, state repression, union organizing, and the daily struggles which have shaped 20th-century Canada.

Gilbert Levine is the retired research director of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the author of articles on the Canadian labour movement, Alberta miners, and western radicalism. Lorne Brown teaches political science at the University of Regina. He is the author of *When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State* and many articles on Canadian labour history, western farmers, and state policy toward the unemployed.

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