The Story of Bill Walsh

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Life:

Cy Gonick

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A Very RED Life:

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Introduction

The story of Bill Walsh is not the story of an ordinary man - which is not to say that the everyday lives of so-called ordinary people are unworthy subject matter for biography. It comes down to this: some people have an appetite for living that makes them extraordinary. Bill Walsh is one such person. He has lived an extraordinary life that has placed him on location at several of the key (and not so key, but interesting) historical events of the 20th century: on Wall Street as a courier the day the stock market crashed in 1929; a factory worker in the Soviet Union in the days of the first Five Year Plan; in charge of a campaign to organize Kitchener's rubber workers unionization drive in southern Ontario in the 1930s; a jailbird and subsequently an inmate of an internment camp for membership in an illegal organization, the Communist Party of Canada; a foot soldier on the front lines in Europe as a member of the Canadian Army during World War II; and a strike leader in the midst of the 1946 strike wave that was to establish the ground rules for collective bargaining over the next half century. And this covers just one-third of a very long life!

I have read many accounts of these events, but written from the vantage point of journalists, academics, party leaders, union presidents, and army generals rather than from the grass roots or the foot soldier. Walsh was never the lead actor in any of these events. His is a unique angle of vision, not because it is so uncommon, but because it so rarely finds public expression.

To the small circle of friends and relatives familiar with the Bill Walsh story, his trip to the Soviet Union in 1931 is likely a highlight. Together with his best friend, Dick Steele, both barely past their teen-age years, he hitch-hiked across Europe. When their money ran out they headed towards Russia where they had heard they could find jobs. They ended up in the city of Minsk and for two years worked in a ball-bearing factory there. Enamoured with the Communist experiment, they joined the Young Communist League. In the fall of 1933, Bill was dragged home by his father, a leading member of Montréal's Jewish community. By then he was thoroughly committed to the cause and within a few years he was working in various cities in southern Ontario as a Communist Party organizer. In this capacity he was instrumental in organizing the rubber workers of Kitchener.

Intimates of Bill Walsh will also know of his double tragedy: the loss of his first wife Anne Weir in 1943, just after he had been released from internment camp; and the loss of Dick Steele, cut down by a German anti-tank gun in August 1944, six weeks after the historic landing at Normandy. When Walsh returned from the war — having participated in the liberation of France, Holland and Belgium — he married Dick Steele's widow, Esther, and became father to the Steele-twins, Michael and Johnny.

Because of his behind-the-scenes style of work, even labour historians are unaware of the important role Bill Walsh played in organizing Kitchener's rubber workers. Similarly, few are aware of his role in the famous 1946 steel strike at Hamilton's Stelco plant. Walsh's near 20 year career as Hamilton area staff representative for the United Electrical Workers ground to a halt in the mid-1960s when he was forced out of the union. Because of the bitterness that marked his exit, official UE histories barely mention his name, let alone recognize his contribution. His longstanding conflict with the national leader of this Communist-led union, C.S. Jackson, also led to his resignation from the Communist Party.

In the final 25 years of his career, spent as a union consultant, Walsh earned the reputation as one of Canada's leading labour arbitrators and was regularly engaged in this capacity by the Ontario Nurses Union and elsewhere in the health sector. For years he led the negotiations for the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers in Sudbury; he helped re-write the constitution of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and was involved in that union's first successful rotating strike. In the industrial relations field his advice was sought after across the industrial spectrum and he mentored more than one generation of union leaders and labour arbitrators. His reputation as a negotiator had spread so far that in the early 1980s he was asked by the Inuit to head up their land settlement negotiation team.

Bill Walsh has lived his life as one large adventure. He possesses great personal charm and a wonderful sense of humour. He is serious and yet has an infectious gaiety. He is lively and playful. He is a romantic. Joe Salsberg, an early mentor, thinks of Bill as a gentle soul. "He was a bit of the poet and dreamer," he told me, "features he tried to overcome to become a hardened revolutionary." Salsberg says he wondered at the time whether Walsh might be too soft to be a Communist organizer and a trade union leader in the United Electrical Workers which, as he said, had "lost so many promising young Party members because of the poisonous and embittered atmosphere produced by that union's top leadership." In fact Walsh was sensitive, not soft, and he survived the Communist wars well into the 1960s, long after most others, including Joe Salsberg, quit. For nearly twenty years he also survived the vicious wars inside the United Electrical Workers. Both however, took their toll on his health.

Walsh was nothing if not loyal, both to the cause and to its organizations. But he was also a rebel, and like all rebels, he was not always a good team player. He was always looking for innovative ways of doing things and he was often prepared to take more risks than his superiors. Being part of a highly centralized organization cramped his style. He was a strong individualist. He liked to put his personal stamp on things. It is not surprising, then, that he often found himself out of step in both the Party and the union. He was better as a lone operator. The union consulting work he eventually took on was more congenial to his personality.

Walsh was an incredibly hard worker and possessed enormous powers of concentration. He was a workaholic and a perfectionist, meticulous, deliberate. To those who worked under him, he could be a hard task master. UE staff members often felt cramped by him. He made all of the decisions and he supervised all of their work very closely. The work had to be just so. Delegating tasks to others was not easy for him. He preferred to do everything himself.

Clever with words, he was a shrewd and brilliant strategist. As a public speaker, he appealed to reason rather than to emotions, and he was persuasive rather than shrill or bombastic. He never came off as a fanatic or a crank, even in the most dogmatic moments in the history of the Communist Party.

His work was all consuming. Everything else, including family life, was secondary. In fact, to his wife Esther and the children, he seemed rarely at home and when at home his work still took precedence over all else. He and Esther never felt fully at home in their adopted city of Hamilton. They had little or no social life outside the union. They missed the camaraderie of their younger days. They were happier when, in 1981, they left Hamilton and moved to Toronto.

Bill Walsh was a man driven to prove himself, perhaps to his perennially disappointed father, Harry Wolofsky, who had thought that in Bill he finally had the son that could follow in his footsteps as the publisher of Montréal's largest Jewish newspaper. In fact, Walsh never applied himself in school and though he was possessed of remarkable intelligence and could have been an excellent writer, he never emerged as a man of letters. To say nothing of the fact that he never identified with the Jewish community or the Jewish people as such. To the contrary, he saw himself as a secular humanist and internationalist, with class ties far stronger than either religious or national ones.

10 Bill Walsh

Walsh is a phenomenal story teller. This is the first observation that anybody who has met him remarks upon. His remarkable memory never failed to impress me. One weekend I accompanied him and Esther to their summer cottage an hour or so from Toronto. As we made our way in his Thunderbird, he burst into song. I noted that the words were not English and I asked him what he was singing. It was a Russian ballad he had last heard in 1931! And he sung verse after verse of it in Russian, a language totally foreign to him until his trip there 45 years earlier.

I first met Bill Walsh in the mid-1970s. I had heard a little about him from mutual friends in the Waffle movement, a left-wing ginger group inside the New Democratic Party. When CBC producer Jim Littleton offered to introduce me to him, I readily agreed. I knew nothing of his story at the time, but just one question over coffee was enough to launch him into a series of stories about his life that I found so entertaining and intriguing I knew I needed to hear more — if he was willing. And he was willing.

I arranged to take a few weeks from my next few summer holidays to stay with Bill and Esther in their Hamilton home, cramming in whatever free time he had listening to his stories. When I heard enough of his story to know it deserved a wider audience, I offered to help him write it in autobiographical form. But he had strong feelings against this. I decided to write my own account, relying largely on his telling, but also interviewing family members and numerous individuals, including both friends and enemies whose lives intermeshed with his at one point or another. Apart from personal letters, some leaflets, lectures and union correspondence, the only recorded material is a lengthy statement he prepared at the time of his resignation from the Communist Party, some excerpts of which appear in this introduction.

Like most political activists I have known, Bill Walsh was never very introspective. He probably possessed little awareness of his inner life, which made it difficult for me to really come to know the man. He could talk endlessly and in remarkable detail about the smallest events in his life. But he struggled to relate what was going on inside of him. There is, of course, a theory that people who abandon all else for their work, whether it be for a corporation, a union, or a political party are desparately seeking to avoid looking too deeply into themselves. As a generalization, this theory is far too sweeping, and as a theory it's far too simple, but I think it has some application in the case of Bill Walsh. He usually found some way to divert himself from the moments of pain and desolation in his life, as well as from news items and internal political controversy he would prefer to ignore. There were endless meetings to attend, picket lines to organize, leaflets to draft, campaigns to plan, and labour boards to appear before. Like the rest of us, Walsh has his faults. Although he could sometimes admit to his failings, he had difficulty accepting criticism from others. "He was far too competitive," his brother Sammy told me, "even competing with Dick Steele over who could work faster in the Russian ball bearing factory, but that was the way he was everywhere. He had to be first." "You always have to be right," Ross Russell, a union colleague and friend, complained to him. "You make the rest of us look like schlemiels." There is no doubt that Walsh was vain. He could not resist an opportunity to shine. He loved to be the centre of attention, which is perhaps why he never needed to be persuaded to tell and retell stories of his life. "Bill never needed friends except as an audience," a close friend of the family told me. "He didn't seek them out; they sought him out. They loved to hear his stories as much as he loved to tell them. They adored him."

The question of his relationship to the Communist Party is a puzzle. Why would a person of his keen intelligence and practical sense remain a member of the Party so long after its own internal contradictions had rendered it feeble and ineffective? Walsh displayed the same stubbornness with the Waffle, remaining involved long after it had begun to crumble. I asked Paul Middleton, a Walsh protegé and fellow Waffler if he had an explanation. "Bill had sense of the long haul," Middleton offered. "He saw each moment in long term perspective. He was sustained by the belief in a workers' movement and in socialism. He never gave up the dream, but he knew that there would be hard years and that you had to take the bad with the good. Compromises would be necessary along the way and he had no problem with that. As long as there was a sense of working together in a comradely way, he was prepared to stick, no matter how difficult the times."

Walsh's letter of resignation submitted to the Hamilton branch of the Communist Party in 1965 confirms this insight.

When I joined the Young Communist League during the depression years more than 35 years ago, I believed that socialism was the only answer to depressions, race hatred, chauvinism, anti-semitism, fascism, and war — that socialism would open the door to a golden era for the people of the world, including me.

I believed it during the terrible defeats in Germany when the Nazis took over and crushed the Party, when the Popular Front in France was defeated, when the Spanish Republic was destroyed. I was shocked by all these events and many more, but I still believed it, and did so during the most confusing period of the Soviet-pact with Nazi Germany. We were for the war in the first few days ... then we were against it, calling for the withdrawal of Canadian troops and defeat of our own bourgeoisie. Then after Hitler crushed France and attacked the Soviet Union we were all-out for the war. I believed in it when old Bolsheviks were liquidated in the Soviet Union, many of them after making confessions of all kinds, others by simply disappearing. After all, the top leaders of the CPSU condemned these people as betrayers, as agents of the capitalists and even as allies of the Nazis. And the Party in Canada fully agreed with these purges — and we believed what our leaders told us. If I had doubts and reservations, I didn't express them. After all, the enemies of the Party were making capital out of these purges — and to express any doubt would be a mark of disloyalty. I did have doubts, but I didn't express them — not even to my closest comrades. When anybody else, outside the party, sought to engage me in discussions on these matters — I defended the party position, condemned those who had been condemned by the purges in the Soviet Union. And I did this in the post-war years too, when new purges took place, including so many people in the field, the writers, artists, the Jewish doctors, and so on.

It is not that there weren't differences and debates and sometimes very sharp arguments on some questions, like the best way to fight evictions of unemployed from their home, what kind of unemployed organizations to set up, how to work within the trade unions and how to build them, attitudes towards the CCF and so on.

We had differences of opinion on such questions and others. And we'd argue them out. Sometimes I was convinced by the arguments of other comrades. Sometimes I wasn't. But the things we all agreed on — the basic things — were far more important than what we didn't agree on. And there was a feeling of comradeship, of crusading, of friendship. The atmosphere was warm and friendly. And as long as that comradely atmosphere was there so you could discuss and argue out things with people you respected and loved — the other things didn't seem to matter so much.

Even in the internment camp with 60 or so Canadian communists locked up together for a long period of time. We would discuss all kinds of things, political, personal, the most intimate personal things and the most intimate thoughts — but nobody ever questioned the bigger things. Nobody ever expressed any doubts about the general position of the Canadian Party, and nobody expressed the least doubt about anything at all that was being done in the Soviet Union. Certainly I never participated in or heard of any such discussions. I felt that to do so would be treason. Mind you, I harboured in my mind some doubts about the purges, about all those who used to be regarded as wonderful people and who were later labeled as traitors and disgraced and executed. But you didn't express anything about it. I can't speak for others, of course, but I would be surprised if they didn't also feel the same way.

Even my best friend, Dick Steele, with whom I went to school in Montreal, with whom I studied and worked in the USA, with whom I hitchhiked through Europe and into the Soviet Union, we shared and shared alike for many years. We joined the Young Communist League and Party together. We became Party organizers at the same time. We could talk about everything, and he was the warmest, most dedicated man I ever knew as well as one of the most capable. No matter what problems there were, we could always discuss them. But even with Dick, we had no discussion on such things as the purges, except that we both took the very same position as others — that the purges were fully correct, fully justified, and absolutely necessary in the interests of keeping the party pure and strong and eliminating spies and enemies who had been uncovered through the vigilance of Stalin, the special Party and state organs for investigating and ferreting out such enemies. But we had differences on many other questions, some of them were not so important, but from the arguments you would think that arriving at a correct decision would make all the difference as to whether we were going to erect the barricades in the revolutionary struggle this year, or would have to wait a lot longer. And although there were some I was closer to than others, and one or two I never learned to like, by and large I felt a solidarity and friendship with all my comrades, and I had no doubt that they felt the same way toward the collective and toward me as part of the collective.

Mind you, two years in jail and internment camp, almost three years in the army, as a soldier during most of the second front — especially during this period as a front line infantry man — the death of several of my closest friends in the fighting — all these things combined to bring my doubts closer to the surface. But still I considered it necessary to defend every position and I smothered my doubts, so deep was the loyalty.

I knew these events were happening — the Jewish doctors plot, the exile of Jewish poets to Siberian labour camps, the Khrushchev revelations in 1956 — but I was always involved in some negotiation or another or in some grievance. I never seemed to have the time to really pay attention to them. As far as I was concerned, the working class needed its own Party and however imperfect, we were it. I didn't take it much further than that.

When Joe Salsberg urged Walsh to quit along with him and thousands of others in 1956, Walsh asked his former mentor, "what do you have to replace the Party with?"

Clearly Walsh's strong sense of loyalty, together with whatever personality traits led him to a life of unreflective activism, meshed with the Communist Party's authoritarian tendency to quash dissent, forbid any questioning of leaders, and discourage debate except about tactical matters. In the end, it was less a matter of principle and more one of malicious conduct towards him and a profound sense of personal betrayal by comrades he had regarded as close friends for twenty years that finally drove him from the Party. Only after his resignation was he willing to consider that the Party itself might be fundamentally flawed. In 1969 Walsh joined the NDP and continued to be very active in public affairs.

In the final analysis, the Communist Party, the Soviet Union, and the world-wide Communist movement was more than a political cause for Bill Walsh. In this, of course, he was hardly unique. It gave him a way of life and it gave meaning to his life. He had a need to belong. The Party gave him a community of friends that sometimes felt like an extended family. Given what was at stake for him, until the very end when he no longer felt that warmth and friendly atmosphere, he would find some way to minimize, deny, dismiss or tolerate the accumulation of political mistakes, betrayal, and crimes against humanity that were part and parcel of the history of the Communist movement.

Most of the material in this book was gathered during the mid-1970s and early 1980s. After an unsuccessful first effort, I returned to the project and re-explored some of the ground a decade later. I confess that at first I had difficulty finding the voice in which to tell the story and the right tone for a man inclined mainly towards a life of action. I decided to let Bill tell his story in his own words, and corrected for dates and details on the rare occasion where these proved to be in error. My contribution has been to explain the historical context and background against which the action takes place, and to provide my own interpretations. As well, I have interviewed dozens of Bill's colleagues, relatives and friends to bring other perspectives to bear and to help me sort out some personal and relational issues that are crucial to any life story. Where there are occasional gaps in the narrative, I have followed a strategy developed by Alex Haley of vicariously adding or creating dialogue. While my fidelity to the spoken word is not absolute, it is almost always so and in the few passages when it is not, it is always true to the spirit of the situation.

I have never before written biography, only political economy. I don't know if it is customary to do so, but I feel bound to say a few words about myself in relationship to Bill Walsh and his story. I have always been a person of the Left, having in 1963 founded a magazine of Left opinion, *Canadian Dimension*. But my political role has mainly been that of an observer, commentator, and analyst rather than an organizer or activist. In fact, except for the few years I was a member of the NDP and the Waffle movement, I have never been a member of any political organization. The Communist Party would have been a particularly difficult organization for me because of its blind loyalty, intolerance of internal dissent, its self-righteousness and smugness — features that have always triggered in me an attitude of rebellion and defiance. At the same time I've held romantic notions about the Communist Party of the 1930s — its intensity, activism, youthfulness, camaraderie, devotion to the cause — some of which I know is exaggerated and some of which comes with the very features that repulse me. I've also held romantic notions about the Bolshevik revolution and at the height of the Cold War I would often find myself on the Soviet side of a conflict with the United States. But I always had major reservations about the kind of socialism the USSR represented and I abhorred the vast crimes of Stalin. Until the end, though, I had hoped, á la Isaac Deutscher, that the internal evolution of Soviet society would release forces that would obtain a thorough-going democratic revolution and an independent justice system such as to propel the USSR towards a higher stage of socialism. For a moment I thought that with glasnost that day was coming. Alas for utopic delusions.

When I started this project, the mood of the Left in this country and elsewhere around the world was still upbeat. The American Empire had just been defeated in Vietnam and we had made a contribution to that defeat. We thought we were winning the war of ideas as well. By the time I had completed the first draft a few years later, our faith that "the times are a changin" had still not been dashed. The heady days were over, we knew, but we were still on the offensive and even winning a few rounds — Nicaragua and Mozambique come to mind. Even the Communist Party of Canada, as small and marginal as it was, was displaying the spirit of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. In France, Britain, and Sweden, social democratic parties were being pushed to the Left.

At that time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of biographies and memoirs of Left thinkers and leaders were being published. There was obviously a large audience for such work. By the time I took up this project again, a decade later, the political environment had dramatically changed. The Soviet Union had collapsed, along with its East European allies. Revolutionary governments in Nicaragua, Mozambique, and elsewhere were isolated and could not survive without the old support system. Social democratic governments were falling and when their parties managed to get elected, they embraced the policies, if not the ideology, of neo-conservatism. The Left in Canada shared in this deep descent. Interest in the lives of old Lefties waned, and it has not been easy finding a publisher willing to take a chance with this manuscript. But there are now some promising signs of Left renewal. I hope that the publication of this book is an indication that we are at the beginning of a new cycle of activism and hope.

Cy Gonick

Chapter One

Life as Moishe Wolofsky

Bill Walsh was born in Montréal on 18 August 1910. He was named Moishe Wolofsky, the ninth of eleven children born to Sarah and Hershel (Harry) Wolofsky. Herschel and Sarah had arrived in Montréal ten years earlier in the fall of 1900. The first Jews to arrive in Montréal were Sephardic, coming in a trickle from Spain and Portugal between 1760 and 1850. The next wave came from England and Germany, especially after the failed 1848 revolution in Germany. The surge of which the Wolofsky's were part came from Russia and Poland where Jews were swept by pogroms following the assassination of Alexander II and continuing through to the Russian Revolution.

The Wolofskys were lucky. Herschel had three advantages: a little money, some education, and lots of ambition. Booming Québec brought him a position as clerk. In a matter of years he founded *The Kanada Adler (The Jewish Daily Eagle)*, self-proclaimed voice of the wave of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. *The Adler* was the first Yiddish daily to be published in Canada, rival to the anglo weekly, *The Jewish Times* which represented the more integrated, longer settled Jewish population of Montréal.

Life on Esplanade

May 1st was moving day in Montréal — a busy day for the Wolofsky family. During the first nine years of Moishe's life, the family changed residences at least five times. Moishe was born in an apartment on Ontario Street. Berri Street was the next stop and from there to Mount Royal Avenue where Sam was born. A few years later the family moved to the Prince Albert Apartments on the corner of St. Lawrence Boulevard. It was here that Miriam, the youngest Wolofsky child, was born. The last stop was a real house, 91 Esplanade Avenue, when Moishe was nine years old. This was a pattern practised by a whole generation: as people improved their economic condition they — and the community — completed a journey that began from the south of St. Catherine Street before the turn of the century, then up St. Lawrence Boulevard to Doluth and Coloniale Avenues by 1911, and Mount Royale, St. Urbaine, and Esplanade by the 1920s. It was a dream they all seemed to share, as Irving Layton notes in a short story: "to grow rich and move to a better neighbourhood."

Esplanade Avenue was in the middle of Montréal's teeming Jewish ghetto. Houses stood shoulder to shoulder and all homes were crowded. Outside staircases were everywhere — steep ones, winding ones, wooden ones, rusty ones, staircases for walking on, and staircases for sitting on. A mixed neighbourhood, part working class, but mainly middle class and aspiring. Each street between St. Dominique and Park Avenue represented subtle shades of difference of income and status. Everyone knew which was which. On each corner stood a cigar store, a grocery, and a fruit stand. The neighbourhood pool hall was one regular fixture. More important for young Moishe Wolofsky was nearby Fletcher Field.

Jewish institutions dotted the neighborhood, not only the synagogues but the Hebrew Old People's Home on Esplanade, the Hebrew Orphans' Home, the YMHA, and a wide network of parochial schools. Montréal Jews used their new-found freedom to build the organizations needed to support and preserve their community. St. Lawrence Boulevard, "the Main" as it was called, was then the commercial centre of the community. Its butchers displayed the kosher meat symbol; delicatessens featured schmaltz herring, corn beef, rye bread, voorsht (salami), sauerkraut, and lox (smoked salmon); bakeries sold pumpernickel and challah (white egg bread), kamishbroit, and other Jewish delicacies; and sweat-shops, many of them Jewish-owned, manufactured clothes, furs, and hats. French Canadian farmers brought fresh produce to the "Rachel" garden, at the corner of Rachel and St. Lawrence Streets where Sarah Wolofsky joined other women haggling over the price of fruit and vegetables. Yiddish was the language of trade all along "the Main."

The Square located near Chenneville Street, commonly known as Peanut Square, drew dozens of men who spent entire days there, cracking peanuts and solving the problems of the world. On Saturdays it served as a labour market for the tailoring industry. St. Lawrence Boulevard sliced Montréal into two distinct halves: French, comprising two-thirds of the city's population, to the east, and English to the west. At the turn of the century the English made up the other third, but with immigrants flooding into the city, mainly Jewish and Italian, the old bi-cultural pattern would soon be upset.

Montréal's Jewish population was sharply divided. There were the Uptowners and the Downtowners. Uptowners came early, from England, Germany, and France. Though still excluded from various clubs and industries and from positions in many large firms, they rested securely in the upper classes, prominent in business and the professions, settled, comfortable, fat. They lived in Westmount mansions alongside Scottish fur barons, prayed in the exclusive Shaar Hashomayim synagogue, and socialized in the marbled and frescoed Montefiore Club. But these would-be aristocrats also believed in duty. However abhorrent to them were the hordes of uncouth Yiddish speaking Jews from Eastern Europe, they carried the burden of resettling them. And they did not hesitate to advise the newcomers, through *The Jewish Times*, on how to comport themselves.

They could handle the uncouth manners, foreign ways, and the burden of charity. What these wealthy Uptowners loathed were the left-wing ideologies. The "greeners" revealed themselves to be troublemakers, flaming red socialists, and conspiring anarchists. Soon these "foreign" ideologies screamed onto shop floors and disturbed fat, contented Profit from his slumbers.

Jewish workers came to labour for Jewish capitalists in dark, dirty, and non-ventilated shops. Only the cigarette and cigar factories, another trade dominated by Jewish ownership and labour, competed with the needle trades for title of the most crowded and vicious of workplaces. Jew confronted Jew along class lines in one battle front of a much larger war. No sooner had they arrived than these Jewish workers gathered and discussed forming unions. Anarchists congregated in Ellstein's bookstore on Ontario Street, socialists in Lazarus's book store a few streets away, or at the Workmen's Circle. Over wooden kitchen tables they drank tea, ate black bread and herring, and talked "issues." It must have been important, this talk, for there was much passion and urgency behind the hot river of words. They focused endlessly on working conditions in the garment and other industries, analyzed world affairs, and discussed socialism. Viewed from Uptown, they talked treason.

Class was not the sole divide. Downtowners desired a separate school system for the Jews, and preservation of the Yiddish language and culture. Uptowners were aghast. For fifty years they managed to live among the Protestants, spoke their language, learned their ways. "Do you wish to remain foreigners forever, herded into your own little ghettos?" they railed. "We have no wish to create a Jewish state in the province of Québec." "No!" retorted Herschel Wolofsky in *The Kanader Adler*. "The uptowners are assimilationists who stand on the threshold between Judaism and Christianity."

Herschel Wolofsky

In no time at all, Herschel Wolofsky had pushed himself to the centre stage of Montreal's burgeoning Jewish community. He was instrumental in mobilizing the city's substantial class of wealthy Jews behind various projects including a community kitchen for the poor, the Montreal Jewish General Hospital, the YMHA, the Talmud Torah religious school, the Jewish Old People's Home and many more.

Herschel Wolofsky was a very busy man. He helped establish Montreal's Jewish Community Council and took a leadership role in forging the Canadian Jewish Congress, a kind of parliament for the Jews of Canada. Shortly after *The Jewish Times* folded he established his own Anglo weekly, *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. But in his own estimation his greatest achievement was the publication in Hebrew of the *Babylonian Talmud* (commentaries on the Bible), "I didn't make a profit," Wolofsky made note in his memoirs, "but I made history." Sold around the world as the *Canadian Talmud*, it was the first time this sacred text had been published in North America.



Hershel Wolofsky

Little is known about Sarah's family of origin, but we have Wolofsky's own account of his life story, an autobiographical memoir titled Journey of My Life. Written in Yiddish, it was translated by Montreal poet A.M. Klein. Hershel Wolofsky started his life in the tiny Polish village of Shidlavatza. His mother was a rabbi's daughter, his father a Crown rabbi of the district, appointed by the state to register Jewish births, deaths, and marriages. When not studying Torah, sacred tome of ancient Jewish law and custom, Herschel Wolofsky assisted his father.

Wolofsky relates that as a very young man he was much taken with a town worthy, Reb Levi Moses Majewsky, owner of a weaving factory and leader of the local synagogue. It was not only his wealth and status that impressed the teenaged Herschel. While newspapers were rarely seen in the district, "one could always find in Reb Levi Moses' possession a copy of *Ha-Tzefrah*, full of revelations as to what was happening to Jews throughout the world. When I first saw that journal," Herschel Wolofsky recalled, "a great desire rose in me some day to be a contributor to it. I did not then imagine that I would end up a newspaper proprietor."

In his memoir Wolofsky offers a highly entertaining profile of life in the tiny village of his birth. There was, for example, Simcha the thief.

When I knew him, he must have been already over sixty. All day he would spend in the synagogue, praying, reading the psalms, going over a chapter of the Pentateuch. As the cantor sang out his antiphonies, he never failed to reply with an enthusiastic "Blessed is He, blessed is His Name!" On Sabbath he was dressed in all the silks of piety, a saint.

This was in the daytime. But when the sun set, he was a thief. No man could pick a lock like he. On several occasions, as a matter of fact, he spent time in jail, both days and nights; but as soon as he was liberated, he was always, back at the old routine — sunshine for Torah, moonlight for theft.

When he was reproached for his exploits, "Simcha, how can you permit yourself such things, a pious Jew like you an ordinary thief," he would always answer, "Tell me, who has a better way of earning his livelihood than I? The Lord in His infinite wisdom ordains every year, at its beginning, who shall earn a living and who shall lose it, and no doubt for me He has written down that I should earn it from those who lose it. Really, I only perform a heavenly mission."

Then there was Yankel Krayofsky, leader of an entire band of thieves, who held the whole district in fear.

One Saturday, the service in the synagogue was interrupted so that a meeting might be held to determine ways and means to cope with the crime wave. It was decided that a petition should be addressed to the Governor requesting him to free the city from its thieves and robbers.

Immediately after the meeting, however, when the burghers returned to their prayers, and the Chassidim to their congregations, the young men of the town sallied forth and mercilessly beat up every one of the band whom they encountered on the streets. The older folk were so enthusiastic over this display of spirit and its success, that a clamour arose among them: "Let us get Yankel Krayofsky! Let us teach him a lesson he'll not soon forget!"

"I followed the crowd as it surged towards Yankel's house. When Yankel's wife, however, heard the noise of the avenging mob, she barred the door, and with a stroke of genius, got rid of the encircling chassidim. She simply stood herself stark naked in her window. When the pious fold beheld this abomination, they fled in all directions, as if from a devastating fusillade Thus Yankel saved himself, as is the wont of thieves, by hiding behind a woman's skirt."

When his father died, fifteen-year-old Herschel left the village of Shidlavatza to try his luck as a wine presser. But his career did not last long, either in the metropolis of Warsaw which he tried first or in the smaller city of Lodz to which he soon retreated. It was in Lodz that he took a bride, Sarah, and started a family. Barely in their twenties, the young couple accepted an invitation to visit Herschel's brother Chaim in Birmingham, England. They stayed only six weeks, for another brother sent them ship's passage to join him in Montréal. The voyage from Liverpool to Québec took fifteen days with each fare costing \$30.00.

As publisher of the *Eagle* and a man of influence in the large Jewish community, Wolofsky was befriended by many of the political leaders of the day including Sir Wilfred Laurier and Sir Robert Borden, successive prime ministers of Canada for the Liberal and Conservative parties. By the 1920s the *Eagle* had become an unofficial organ of the Liberal Party, the party that brought most of the Jewish immigrants into Canada.

Nearly every Yiddish poet and writer coming to Montréal visited the Wolofsky household. Herschel's books lined its walls. The self-importance of the man filled the house. Trim, short of stature, always neatly dressed and with a carefully groomed goatee, Wolofsky was among the most learned men in the Jewish community. But he was also an entrepreneur, politician, and mediator, a rare combination. Like every other "great man" in history, Wolofsky could achieve so much because of the support system he was able to command: his son Dan ran the business end of the operation while Sarah ran the household.

Yiddish was the language spoken in the Wolofsky home, but few of the children were well steeped in the Jewish traditions or religion. Moishe's younger brother Sammy was sent off to New York to train for the rabbinate, but he lost interest. Bill put it this way: "We all had something of a Jewish upbringing, but with the rest of us it got the light treatment."

Agitation and tension permeated the household. "My mother was very protective of her children. My father, his mind was on a hundred other things, not on his children or his family. This was a source of friction between my mother and my father." Money was another source of continuous discord, even physical violence on occasion. Bill recalls himself crying, screaming, and trying to pull them apart. Sarah liked to buy small items for the house. Herschel accused her of being a spendthrift. All but the youngest of the Wolofsky children left home by the time they were seventeen or eighteen years old. The Wolofsky children I was able to contact remember their father as a singularly vain man and lacking in affection. The household was a place of austere comfort. Herschel Wolofsky was rarely at home. He possessed one luxury — a car, still an uncommon item. And he sent his family to the Laurentians for summer holidays. Severe, stern, and formal, "Your loving father, H. Wolofsky," was the way he signed letters to his children. They would heave sighs of relief when Herschel left on one of his frequent trips. On occasion he would be away for as long as three months at a time travelling to Europe and to his beloved Palestine.

Sarah Wolofsky sighed along with her children. A small, stout, goodnatured woman with a good sense of humour, but "not the world's greatest intellect," one of the Wolofsky children admitted, she had no easy marriage. Over a span of twenty years she delivered eleven children. Three were stillborn, a fourth, ten-year-old Dinah, accidentally drowned when a row boat she, Moishe, and some of the other children had taken out tipped over.

From their description, Sarah was like a shackled prisoner in her own home. Yet, she was no passive, long-sufferer. An independent woman, in middle age she would take off on her own to Florida or to Saratoga Springs in up-state New York and spend months at a time in New York City mindless of Herschel. The two youngest children, Miriam and Sammy, remember being raised as much by their brother Moishe as by their parents. He was also their protector. They tell the story of how he once shoved some



magazines in Sammy's pants to absorb the force of Herschel's blows as he pulled a three-yearold Sammy over his knees.

Moishe was his mother's favourite, "prince of the family" she called him. He took upon himself the role of keeper of the peace, a centre of calm in a stormy household sea. His siblings remember him as gentle and considerate towards their mother, helping her with household chores.

Years later when Moishe — or Bill as he was known by then tried to dig out the roots of his radicalism, he recollected that his mother's oppression made a profound and disturbing impression on him. No doubt the lonely

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Sarah Wolofsky

Sarah turned to her "prince" for support and intimacy, an unwise alliance that likely further alienated father from son. In awe of his father, Moishe's sympathy always lay with his harassed mother. Yet, it's from his father that he learned to fight for what he believed in and it's from his father that he inherited his determination, tenacity, cleverness, capacity for hard work, missionary zeal, and loyalty to the cause — as well as his vanity, pride and ego.

But if one issue could sum up Bill's issue with his father it would be acceptance, or more precisely, the lack of it. He was afflicted by his father's constant

disappointment in him. And though he was an obvious rebel, rejecting his Jewish heritage and eschewing books and a life of scholarship and learning, he spent all of his life trying to prove himself, to excel in his chosen occupation. No doubt this is one of the reasons why for Bill, just like for his father, work became all consuming, with everything else, including family life, secondary.

School Days

In due course, after regular school hours, young Moishe Wolofsky attended Cheder, Jewish parochial school. He met with few joyful experiences there. Memorizing the Hebrew liturgy was a bore, the teachers mostly a sadistic lot. Moishe ended up skipping as many classes as he attended. He recalls that when his father heard about it, he stormed into the bathroom and slapped him across the face.

"Why are you not attending cheder?" "Because the teacher hits the kids over the head with a ruler and makes them cry." "Does he hit you?" "No, but he scares me. He scares all of us. I don't want to go anymore."

And he didn't.

Public school was little better. The school day started with "God Save the King," the Lord's prayer, and saluting the Union Jack: "I promise to be

loyal and true to my flag and the country for which it stands." It ended with "O Canada" filled in between with stirring renditions of ditties from the *Empire Song Book*, "The British Grenadiers," and "Maple Leaf Forever," which were interspersed with moving accounts of "Under Drake's Flag," Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "The Revenge," and Sir Walter Scott's "Breathes There The Man." Somewhere in the middle of all this King Alfred burned his cakes.

The teachers ("Masters" they were ominously called at Baron Byng High School), were a tight-lipped lot — mostly Scotsmen or Englishmen whose monumental mission was to make anglophones out of the Lazarovitches, Greenbergs, Wolofskys, and other unprounouncables. "The challenge is simply this," a contemporary educator wrote, "take all the different nationalities, German, French, Italian, Russian, and all the others sending their surplus into Canada; mix them with the Anglo-Saxon stocks and produce a uniform race wherein the Anglo-Saxon peculiarities shall prevail." These civilizing efforts did not always reach an appreciative audience.

Walsh recalls an incident that typified the pervasive anti-semitism of the times. He was holding the door open for his home room teacher in junior high, a Mr. Caley. "Don't do me any favour," Caley snapped at him. "I know you and your kind." "I've never forgotten those words," Walsh remarked. "At first I was surprised; then I realized what lay behind them. And I began to notice other things."

World War I, at best an irrelevance for most French Canadians, became a great rallying point for the ruling classes. They hailed Canada's participation in this battle for the spoils of the Empire as a great step forward on the path to nationhood. The Anglo press overflowed with accounts of victories won or gallant resistance offered. School principals took pride in promotions gained, honours awarded, including the graduates of their schools killed in battle.

Ye Sons of Canada awake The Star of morn has left the sky Your father's flag of Liberty, That glorious banner floats on high. But see, the forman draweth nigh, To steal the rights your sires have won Awake! my sons, drive back the Hun ...

Passion swept young Moishe Wolofsky along on the side of the patriots. The Boy Scout movement flourished in English Montréal as elsewhere, and being a cub or scout became the next best thing to being "over there." Moishe joined up. He liked parading around in his uniform, liked his badges and medals. When he reached Baron Byng High School, Moishe proved to be an indifferent student. Truth be told, he never was a big reader — even then, more the man of action, his main interest at this time being in athletics — basketball, soccer, baseball, lacrosse. "When my pals and I formed the Antlers Athletics Club, my father called it the Antlers bum's club," he chortled. He can remember reading the Frank & Dick Merriwell sports serials and little else. In his second year, Herschel Wolofsky gave up on making his son a scholar and had him transferred to Commercial High, an old red brick building four stories high on Sherbrooke Avenue. Moishe's most valuable subject proved to be typing, a skill he would use all of his life.

During his first month at Commercial High, the teacher in charge of army cadets, Mr. MacKnight, announced he was short of the quota set for the school and began enlisting recruits. "I rushed to the front of the line," Bill said, remembering the incident. "Some of the other boys volunteered too but some elected not to. One guy in particular rose to his feet and made an impassioned speech against the principle of army cadets: 'The school is no place for militarism,' I recall him saying. I had never heard anything like it before and I was impressed. Who is this guy? I said to myself."

His name, it turns out was Moe Kosawatsky and Moishe was attracted to him immediately. "He was a very intense person, with very strong feelings. And that was something new to me. The guys I knew were easy going and happy-go-lucky types. He had read some philosophy. He read Spinoza and Thoreau. I didn't know what the hell he was talking about, but I was drawn to him." They soon become inseparable friends and in a few years time they would undertake a journey together that would change both of their lives forever.

In point of fact Moe Kosawatsky had for a time also been attracted to the cadets. "I liked the uniform," he informed his sister Gertrude a few years later. "All the girls like a soldier." In a letter he described this scene:

Mr. Macnight lines us up in the Yard and puts us through the rudimentary military manoeuvres. Then with drums at our head, we march through the city streets. After parade Mr. MacKnight announces that the event of the year, the Church parade, will be held next week. All the city militia, High School Cadets and Boy Scouts march in the Church parade. Chest out, head up, chin in — left, right, left, right. Our corps, including a number of Jews, march into the Portugese Synagogue. The Rabbi opens the service with a prayer for the Royal Family, the empire and Canada. In a very sad voice he calls upon us not to forget the brave soldiers who died for us. He concludes with a Hebrew prayer. We march out to join the other troops coming out of the churches. Thousands of people line the streets as the Regiments, with their bands playing and flags waving, march down the middle of the road. Grenadier Guards, their brass blaring forth their proud boast: "Of all the world's brave heroes there's none that can compare with the British Grenadier." We near the reviewing stand. British Royal Engineer and war veteran Lieutenant MacKnight snaps the command. "Commercial High School Cadets -EYES RIGHT!" And like a machine our heads swing to the right and we salute Sir Arthur Currie, Commander in Chief of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in the Great War. He raises his top-hat and we march on. But one day, I looked at myself in the mirror as I wore the khaki. Suddenly I was disgusted with what I saw. I realized what the uniform really represented — war, misery, death — and I resigned.

In some respects they were an unlikely duo. Boyhood friends describe Moe Kosawatsky as a boy-scout type, exuberant, robust, open-faced, curleyhaired, barrel-chested, intense, earnest, with a serious side to him. Moishe Wolofsky was scrawny by comparison, long face with a sharp chin and a prominent nose, straight black hair, more private, shy, with a worried kind of look — but energetic, already clever with words, and very competitive, especially with Moe.

When he recalled this time of his life Bill liked to tell of the times they played on the school basketball team — Moishe, Moe, and Buster Brown. "Buster was the tough guy, Moe played all-out, with every ounce of energy he had. What he lacked in skill, and he lacked a lot in skill, he made up for in zeal and drive. That was his way with everything. I was the pivot man, the play maker, the strategist."

Moe worked hard at school. He had to. Public school was not yet free in Québec and Moe was on scholarship. He worked hard after school too. The Kosawatsky family lived in the downtown area on Clark behind the Main. Moe's father kept an old horse behind their home. Every day Shiah Kosawatsky and his helper ambled up and down back lanes and alley ways picking up beer bottles and pop bottles, washing them in a laundry tub and sending them back to the bottlers. The Kosawatsky kids, all six of them, helped after school. Compared to his friend, Moishe felt highly privileged. "I did not have to and I didn't study to stay in school; I did not have to and didn't work after school. It amazed me that a family of eight could survive on the meager income derived from picking up bottles."

Moishe spent a lot of time at the Kosawatsky household. "I fell in love with the family," he said. "In contrast with my own father, Shiah Kosawatsky was a simple, generous and loving man, loving to his wife Fanny and affectionate to his children. Fanny wasn't so simple. I couldn't help comparing the warm, congenial, loving atmosphere of the Kosawatsky home with the tensions of my own." In 1928 Moishe Wolofsky and Moe Kosawatsky graduated from Commercial High. Moe was chosen as class valedictorian. But for him it proved to be a hollow valedictory. He had wanted to use the occasion to criticize the anti-semitic propensities of some of the teachers but the principal, upon reviewing the speech, asked him to omit any reference to the subject.

A Career On Wall Street

When University was the haven of the ultra-privileged, what did a Jewish boy from Montréal do? He went to New York. Universities there held night classes for the sons and daughters of the working class. Moishe's older brother Max had lived in New York for some time and Moe Kosawatsky was already there, having found a job in a chemical factory. When Moishe arrived, the pair moved into the YMHA. They both worked at full time jobs to build up some cash reserves. In a few months they enrolled at Columbia University and moved into a flat in Hartley Hall, a University dormitory. Moe took sociology. Moishe opted for medicine, starting with some courses in psychology and German.

Daytime Moishe worked at Macey's department store, drug division. A literal hell on wheels — Moishe would take an order, roller skate to the wall of drugs, find the item, ram it in the basket, rollerskate to the counter, take an order, one step, glide, another step, glide. Moishe skated himself up to \$8.00 a week. Not enough to pay for college. In grand American fashion and with help from brother Max, he took a second job. Hired by Western Union, he learned telegraphy and was quickly made night manager in Western Union's Harlem branch.

Harlem lay just down the hill from Morningside Heights where Columbia University and its dorms sat. Posh apartment buildings along Riverside Drive and mansions across the Hudson River contrasted with the dense, sweaty grinding poverty of Harlem. Except for the customers of race horse tipsters, most people didn't get telegrams those days. Certainly, except in an emergency, people in Harlem weren't getting or sending telegrams. Many of them couldn't write. "I helped them compose their telegrams and I got to know some of the perennials who were in and out of the telegraph office with one horror story or another," Walsh recounted: "kids on dope or in reform school, mothers deserted, welfare cut off, men in jail, mothers and sisters working the streets. I suppose I was particularly sensitive to their situation in view of my own experience with anti-semitism growing up in Montréal."

Moishe didn't not last long at Macey's. A complaint about the roller skates got him the pink slip. His next job was as a runner on Wall Street. Along with dozens of other college boys he ran up and down Wall Street delivering stocks and bonds to brokerage companies and the New York Stock Exchange. Moishe Wolofsky had reached the financial heart of the capitalist system.

Buying stocks at this time was like betting at a fantasy race track where all the horses win. At the height of its stock market mania, with a half million or so Americans buying on margin — putting up only a fraction of the price of the stock they buy — prices climbed and climbed, doubling between May 1927 and September 1929. Buying on margin was a perfect device for increasing a speculator's profits. You paid twenty or thirty per cent or less in cash for money borrowed from a broker and counted on rising prices to pay for what you've borrowed. It seemed like a sure thing.

But the businessmen of America had become obsessed with paper values which bore little relation to the production of goods, let alone their distribution. In the golden year of 1929, when fully sixty per cent of American families had incomes below the poverty line, there were disturbing signs of excess capacity and over-production. Moishe was on Wall Street on 24 October, the day the stock market crashed. For some days the price of stocks had been sliding faster and faster. 24 October produced a wild panic. Black Thursday ruined many paper millionaires and destroyed the lives of many ordinary people. When the exchange opened it was inundated with orders to sell. Over 12 million shares changed hands that day.

Some stocks soon became unsalable at any price. For many days the ticker tape trailed further and further behind the market. The lights in the brokers' offices and banks burned until dawn. Day after day, along with the bankers, brokers, and clerks, Moishe and the other messengers desperately tried to keep pace with the avalanche of sales and useless paper.

On Wall Street by day, Moishe watched brokers send out telegrams demanding more collateral from their customers to back up their loans. At the Williamsburg Western Union depot at night, he received some of these same telegrams when they arrived 12 hours later. As often as not the brokers didn't wait. When their customers failed to respond to margin calls, they sold the investments out from under them. Moishe, caught in the maelstrom, could not yet know that the collapse on Wall Street was mere prelude to the Great Depression. But it didn't take a genius to know that the whole credit structure of the American economy had been severely shaken. Moishe's real education had begun.

1 January 1930. With thirty billion dollars in paper values vanishing into thin air, unemployment beginning to mount and wages starting to drop, President Hoover blithely announced that "business can look forward to the new year with greater assurance." "I see nothing in the present situation that is either menacing or warrants pessimism," agreed Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon that same day. Professor Irving Fisher, dean of American economics wizards, backed them up. Among the many reasons he cited for confidence was the alleged tonic effect of prohibition on the productivity of the American worker!

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By early spring, Moishe was at the point of exhaustion: "For almost two years I had held down two jobs that kept me on Wall Street from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon and in Harlem or Williamsburg from twelve midnight to eight in the morning. And between jobs there was my courses at Columbia and studying, mostly in subways and on buses. For months I had no more than three or four hours of sleep because Moe lost his job and I had to work for both of us. Then two things happened that made us realize we couldn't keep this up."

"One Sunday as we left the Museum of Natural History after several hours of study, we were coming down this marble stairway of the museum and we were both exhausted. Moe wasn't working at the time but he was a very diligent student. I remember this scene just as if it happened a short time ago. We looked at each other, and unaccountably began to laugh. We couldn't stop laughing. We laughed so hard it became painful. Soon we were hysterical and started rolling on the lawn in front of the museum. At the bottom of the hill we finally got control of ourselves and looked hard at each other. We said nothing about it but both of us knew that something was very, very wrong."

"The second incident occurred only a few weeks later. We were up late at night studying for final exams in our sixth floor room at the Hartley Hall dorm. We sat opposite one another at our desks with our books open. Without warning Moe started talking, quietly at first, then louder and louder. He was talking about the spirit of departed Columbia alumni who would return to the university walking with silent feet through the corridors. As he was talking I could see his eyes getting bigger. 'Look,' he said, pointing outside the window, and I looked. I saw it too, or I think I saw it, the spirit of the departed alumni. His hair stood on end and mine probably did too. We just stared at each other, closed our books, lay down on our cots, and we trembled. We decided we couldn't go on."

They decided to get on a boat and go somewhere — anywhere, just get away. Next day they made a plan. Moe was to quit school and go down to the docks to look for a job on a boat while Moishe kept on working. It wasn't easy getting jobs on a boat. All kinds of people had the same idea, especially recent immigrants wanting to go back home. After a few weeks of fruitless searching and hanging around the docks, Moe learned the ropes. Jobs could be had, but you had to pay to get them. The going rate was \$25 a job. With help from his brother Max and his wife Frieda they scraped up the cash and got hired on as dish-washers. They purchased new knickers, boots, knapsacks, and a small camera with \$50 to spare. That's what they took with them when their boat, the *Friedrich VIII*, left the dock a few weeks later.

Once everything was set, Moe took off for Montréal to say farewell to family and friends. One of his best friends was Albert Marcus who at the time was finishing up his law degree at McGill. Albert, short, intense, and quiet-spoken had already become a committed socialist. Talking into the wee hours of the morning, he spoke to Moe about the theory of socialism, about Marxism, about class struggle, about the causes of the Great Depression, and about the inevitability of socialism.

Moe had heard some of these ideas before and he was very receptive. It made sense of his own experience. His family suffered from poverty and exploitation. This was not a theoretical discussion for the young Kosawatsky. In the weeks and months ahead he would recount again and again what he heard that night.

Chapter Two

The Promised Land

When the Danish vessel, the *Friedrich VIII* finally took off in the late spring of 1931, Moishe Wolofsky and his pal weren't even aware of its destination. How they ended up in Russia is a story in itself. How they became converted to communism over there is yet another.

The Adventurers

25 April, 11 am. The *Friedrich VIII* slowly steamed out of New York harbour. The ship's band played:

My native land, my country dear, Where men are equal free! To thee each morn, new hope is born, Sweet Land of Liberty!

The boat moved up the Hudson River to the Atlantic Ocean, stopping briefly in Halifax. Moishe was worried that his father might be there to intercept and bring him back to Montréal. He was still a minor then — 20 years old. Moe, 21, felt safer. They decided not to leave the boat. In a few hours the ship cut its way out of the harbour and headed across the North Atlantic to the Old World. They quickly discovered that washing dishes for third class passengers was not much fun. Neither was getting seasick, and seasick they were the first day out. Only when they finally crawled down to the bow of the boat to their sleeping quarters did they notice the other twenty or so work-their-ways on the boat. Mostly Danes and Germans under deportation orders for being public charges, they washed out toilets for the crew. Washing dishes seemed almost pleasant by comparison! First port was Oslo, then Copenhagen. That's where they signed off. When a Danish immigration officer asked where they were going, without thinking Moishe blurted out, "Berlin, Berlin; we're going to Berlin." Even then they had no particular destination.

Hitch-hiking across Funan island and ferrying from island to island, they arrived on the mainland and crossed over into Germany, sleeping in fields and barns all the way. When they got to Hamburg, they decided to indulge in the luxury of a regular bed. Thinking they were British sailors, a policeman steered them to a brothel. When, with difficulty, they explained that all they wanted was a room, they were ushered upstairs. Having heard of such places and being frightened of what might happen, they shoved furniture up against the door. Scared of intruders, they learned too late that some intruders were already inside the walls, for when they finally flopped into bed, they were attacked by fleas. "Don't worry about them, Moishe, just get them in your fingers and flick them off," his partner advised.

That's what they did, but it was a miserable night and the next morning they decided to get back on the road to Berlin. On the road they usually ate a little wild bulb plant that smelled like garlic — wild garlic they called it. In towns and villages along the way they found themselves treated as visitors by the local officials who offered them a place to sleep, usually a barn, and a meal of sausage and bread. With their khaki breaches, high boots, knapsacks, books, long hair, and tans they looked the part of student adventurers. "Believe it or not," Bill told me, "I read *The Descent of Man* and *The Origin of the Species* while hitch-hiking through Europe. It was the most reading I'd ever done. It was Moe's influence that got me to read those books."

By now the two travelers had formulated rough plans. They would work their way around the world. From Berlin they would head towards Paris, from Paris to Spain, on to North Africa, and from there to Palestine and maybe to India and even China. Fate had other things in store for them.

Berlin

A chance meeting at a railway station in Berlin where they had spent the night on benches was about to change the course of their lives. That morning they attracted the attention of two young men who invited them to breakfast. Actually, the two young men, apparently knowing no German, were having trouble ordering their meal. Moishe offered to help and they struck up a conversation. It turned out that they were American. Amazingly, one claimed to know of Wolofsky Sr. and *The Adler*, although Moishe thought he detected a note of contempt in his voice. Moe joined the two

Americans in a discussion of the relative merits of Norman Thomas, J.P. Morgan and Morris Hilquit, names that Moishe had never heard. They were exchanging anecdotes about their travels and where they were headed when one of them volunteered that if they were looking for jobs, there was only one place in Europe they would find them.

"Where's that?" Moe asked. "Russia, and that's where we're going," one of them answered. "They're short of workers there. I'm an engineer on contract. My companion here," pointing to the man who knew of *The Adler*, "he's a journalist with the *Yiddish Freiheit* from New York."

"I looked at Moe and Moe looked at me," Bill recalled. "Why don't we, I asked.' Russia was just a place for a job. I thought Marx was the dictator of Russia. That shows what I knew about Russia. I didn't know from nothing. The Americans said just go to the Soviet Embassy in Berlin and tell them you want a visa. After they left us and got on the train, we discussed the situation. Moe, he knew something, and he hesitated. I was more adventurous but he understood more. On the other hand, in many ways I was the leader. In any event, we decided to try the Soviet Embassy. The clerk at the Embassy asked us why we wanted to go to the USSR. 'To work and travel,' we answered. They told us our visa application would take several weeks to process so we arranged to have them sent to Warsaw."

When they left the Embassy they decided to take a trip to the southern part of Germany and ended up in Breslau. The German language course Moishe had taken at Columbia came in handy. So did the little Yiddish he knew. Moe, it turned out, did not pick up new languages well at all, so Moishe had to translate for him. Both wrote home regularly and Moe, or Dick Steele, as Moe would re-name himself, kept a journal. Remnants of Dick's letters and journal have survived to supplement Bill's memory of the trip.

"All along the highway," Dick wrote home, "we meet German youths on bicycles. Young lads, mostly unemployed, just vagabonding their way from one end of Germany to the other without a cent in their pockets. Some of them took the trouble to initiate us into the art of begging."

"It is fiercely hot. We expect to reach Breslau the next evening, a distance of 60 kilometres. But what is this? Huge police trucks, packed full with Germany's keepers of law and order, armed to the teeth with rifles and bayonets, truck after truck, all speeding to Breslau. In two days, Saturday night, 150,000 Storm Troopers are expected to gather in Breslau for a demonstration."

When they arrived the next day, they noticed a big crowd standing around a monument in the central square of the city listening to speeches. As they approached they heard something about "the Scotsboro boys" and the "injustice of the capitalist courts of America." In April nine young blacks had been arrested in a freight train near Scotsboro, Alabama, convicted of raping two white women, and were sentenced to the electric chair. Nothing had so dramatized the issue of civil rights since the American Civil War. The two Canadians had lived for over two years in New York, but they seemed to be the only ones in that crowd in Breslau who knew nothing about the Scotsboro boys. While they stood and listened to the speech, a young man slid up to them and asked who they were. "We're American students on Wanderschaft." They called themselves Americans all through their trip, because most of the people they met in their travels knew nothing of Canada and they got tired of explaining.

"Where are you going?"

"To Russia."

"To Russia, comrades," he shouted exuberantly to the others.

He ran up to the speaker and interrupted the proceedings to tell him that there were two American comrades in the crowd. A brief intermission while the chiefs conferred settled the matter. The chairman announced that the American comrades would tell the audience first-hand about the Scotsboro boys and capitalist injustice. The two "comrades" looked at each other in horror.

Just at that point the forces of Fascist reaction came to their aid when a squadron of mounted Storm Troopers charged the meeting and disbursed the crowd. In the ensuing confusion the man who had first spotted them grabbed them and shouted "come with me." They raced after him to what turned out to be his home. Despite his youth, Willy Scheer was one of the leading Communist officials of Breslau. That night, after a frugal dinner, he gave his guests their first lecture on the subject of the rise of Nazism.

"I don't know what you know, and what you don't know," Scheer began, in a relaxed but serious fashion, sucking his pipe, "but the German economy never really recovered after the war. You must know about the crazy inflation — our currency was completely worthless not so very long ago and the unrealistic reparation payments. And then the depression. It hit us hard. No wonder that the National Socialists, Hitler's party, polled over six million votes last September. We have heard they have 800,000 members. Hitler is their Napoleon. They support him all the way. Do not doubt that, my friends." He paused, sat back, re-lit his pipe, puffed some more, then leaned forward to pick up his narrative. A new hardness entered his voice.

"The crisis is coming. It will be here soon. And what are the social democrats doing about it? Nothing." A gesture of the hand. "They form the largest party of the working people and they do nothing. An inept and gutless bunch. Their vacillation paves the way for fascism. We can count on nothing from them." The words spat out. Eyes ablaze, face tight, he put

down his pipe and jabbed his finger at the guests. "This will be capitalism's last stand. Fascism is a psychic dunghill raised to shore up a decrepit economic system. But the working class will destroy their dunghill. We have traitors in our midst — as I mentioned — the social democrats. The main concern of these petty bourgeois is to do things according to the letter of the law. They refuse to join with us to mobilize the workers and so invite the fascist vermin and their brown shirts to rule over us. We will defeat these misleaders, and the Nazis, too."

Scheer stopped now, stood up and walked to the window. Looking back at the two entranced young men, he saw that he had totally captured his audience. It was in the course of this discussion that Moishe discovered that, "Moe understood things that I didn't know about. I barely knew about socialism, let alone national socialism. I knew they were against the Jews and that's about it. But Moe, he knew enough to ask 'what are the Communists going to do about the Nazi demonstration planned for Breslau in the next few days.' Now I hadn't picked up anything about a demonstration, let alone that Communists should do something about it."

"I'll tell you what we're going to do," Scheer answered Moe's question as he pulled out a handful of firecrackers. "When the horses come along we're going to throw the firecrackers under their bellies and make them dance. That's what we're going to do."

Moe wrote about the demonstration in his letter home. "Towards evening we followed the crowd to the Stadium. The streets were jammed with marching troops. There was an air of grimness to the black shrouded flags. We took our place among the spectators in the immense stadium. The skies clear — only one cloud, a square, queer looking thing, shaped like a sphinx — mighty and silent. Thoughts of the Apocalypse, of the rider upon the white horse smiling ironically to himself, the skeleton of death, looking down upon the multitude waving and shouting in the name of Mars and Misery. I too look and I see 70,000 spectators shouting encouragingly to a field peppered with Storm Troopers. As the flag brigade, in a continuous stream, goose-step their way past the spectators — black, white and red a thousand flags in formation, 70,000 voices shout out: 'Deutschland Erwacha,' and hands are raised in fascist salute. The band plays a hymn and in deep voice the thousands sing: 'Deutschland, Deutschland Uberalles, Uber Alles in der Welt'."

Speeches and fireworks follow until finally the tired patriots return home to rest for more celebrations the next day. "We turned away sick with the sight of this nationalistic ecstasy — fascism."

To Russia

The next day the duo started their journey to Warsaw where they had arranged to pick up their visas. "We were hungry as we entered the the little village of Jordansmuhl in Germany," Moe wrote in his journal. "After a moments inquiry we discovered the Catholic Pastor's house. BEGGARS and PEDDLERS, 2-4 p.m., it said on the door. We knocked and five minutes later were sitting at the beggars' table in the garden."

From village to village they slept in barns or hostels for unemployed workers. After a breakfast of black, sugarless coffee and a slice of bread, they volunteered three or four hours of work to pay for their room and board before moving on to the next village. Worried that they would use up too many of their few remaining dollars on train tickets, they purchased bicycles though Moe had never learned how to ride one and promptly smashed his into a ditch. Moishe carried him on the handlebars of his bicycle but before long they were forced to abandon it too when its tires burst. A military truck finally gave them a ride into the city. The date was 6 July.

When they picked up their visas at the Soviet Embassy they were handed a cable forwarded from the Soviet Embassy in Berlin. It was from Moishe's mother: "DO NOT GO TO RUSSIA STOP TROUBLE THERE STOP COME HOME STOP WILL PAY FOR TICKET STOP."

In their letters home they had conveyed their intention of going to Russia, giving the Soviet Embassy in Berlin as their last address before departure. By now they were fully committed to the Russian trip and they shrugged off the message. In Warsaw they used five of the remaining 25 dollars to purchase railway tickets. Soon they reached Stolpski, the last town in Poland before the Soviet border. As it was only 7:00 in the evening, they immediately set out for the border, a few miles to the east. Half an hour later, rifle shots shattered the evening's silence as they followed a path that led into the woods. Moishe felt something slam his knapsack and knock him over. They found themselves face to face with three uniformed, and very surly Polish soldiers.

"Passports, passports, show us your passports," one demanded in Polish, then in German when he got no response. Knees shaking, the adventurers turned their papers over to these hulking border guards. They found themselves being shoved forward, through the woods, across railway tracks. Guards stopped them, pointing the way to the border crossing a few hundred yards down the way. But before letting them go one of them shouted "You don't go to Russia. The Communists will kill you." "That soldier over there will kill me?" Moishe asked, pointing to a member of the Red Army straight ahead of them. "We'll take a chance." "As we walked ahead," Bill would remember, "we spotted a wooden structure. Later on I learned what it said: COMMUNISM SMASHES ALL BOR-DERS. When we approached the soldier with his long Russian greatcoat, he laid his rifle down on the track, opened his arms wide and put them around both of us, saying something we took as 'Welcome.' This was our first contact with a Soviet person and of course it was very encouraging."

For members of the Red Army Patrol, none of whom had ever been fifty kilometres beyond their village, the young foreigners were a very special attraction. As luck would have it, one of the men was Jewish and through him they were peppered with questions in Yiddish. "Who are they? Where do they come from? Why have they come? One of them fetched a world globe as Moe pointed out Canada to them. How did they get across the ocean? How did they make their way through the continent? How did they end up in this village of Negerolye?"

"It turned dark. Someone brought meat patties, potatoes and some bread. 'I'll never forget that evening,' Bill later said. We were there for three or four hours. They sang 'The Internationale' for us and asked us to sing our national song. We sang 'O Canada' and 'Allouette'. Then out of the clear blue a freight train which had just crossed the Polish border pulled up within a hundred yards of us and we were put aboard. We arrived in Minsk the next morning. That was 13 July 1931."

Revolutionary Russia

It was nearly fourteen years to the day since the Bolsheviks seized power. According to Marxist theory, the revolution was supposed to occur in the most highly developed of capitalist countries, ruptured by internal contradictions of a mighty productive machinery whose endless flow of material goods could not be absorbed by a narrow consumer base limited by classridden social structures. The industrial proletariat, the only oppressed class with the power to halt production, would be the agency of revolution and its political organization would finally seize state power. So much for theory. Russia of 1917 was capitalism's economic backwater, comprising mainly of peasants only recently freed from centuries of serfdom. Its industrial revolution had barely begun, and its industrial proletariat was miniscule and poorly organized.

Russia had a long history of social and political revolt. Conspiracies and murders were regular means of eliminating opponents from unpopular local officials to mad or ineffective Tsars. Opposition groups included revolutionary leaders speaking for an as yet unorganized peasantry, westernized intellectuals determined to transform Russia into a democratic and liberal state, and socialists voicing the demands of the new industrial proletariat.

Russian socialism initially found expression in the Social Democratic Workers' Party founded in 1898 at a secret meeting at Minsk. It quickly split into two competing camps. One camp, subsequently called the Mensheviks, or minority, and headed by Martov, advocated an open European-style party which any adherent to the party philosophy could join; the other camp, subsequently called the Bolsheviks, or majority, and headed by Lenin, advocated a disciplined and highly centralized organization clearly more suited to the illegal environment in which it was forced to work.

No one anticipated the extent of demoralization after Russia's humiliating military defeat at the hands of tiny Japan in 1905. Matters came to a head on 9 January of that year, subsequently known as "Bloody Sunday," when a petition of grievances was presented to Tsar Nicholas II by a large delegation in the city of St. Petersburg. The delegation pleaded for a democratic Parliament, universal suffrage, free speech, recognition of trade unions, and an end to the war with Japan. Instead, as they approached the Winter Palace in the thousands, flourishing holy icons and portraits of the Tsar and singing "Our Father," they were met by a company of galloping Cossacks who proceeded to massacre them. "Bloody Sunday" was immediately followed by a wave of sympathy strikes in several cities, leading finally to a general strike, a peasant revolt, and the final act of the 1905 Revolution, the December Uprising, when the workers of Moscow took up arms against the authorities. The rising was eventually crushed, although disorder continued through 1906 into 1907. For the Bolsheviks, who had led the December Uprising, it served as a rehearsal for the seizure of power in 1917.

At first, the Revolution that broke out in Russia in March 1917 looked like a re-enactment of the events of 1905-6. Once again a war had fatally weakened the government. Once again the uprising was spontaneous and both government and revolutionaries were taken by surprise. But there were important differences as well. Among them was the fact that Russia had experienced an industrial boom over the previous dozen years, giving rise to a much larger working class that was already flexing its muscles with two million on strike in 1914.

By the end of February 1917, nearly a million soldiers had deserted, and tens of thousands of striking workers, joined by students and army officers, were parading in the streets of Petrograd, carrying revolutionary banners and singing revolutionary songs. By 19 March, 200,000 industrial workers, half the labour force of Petrograd, were on strike, and tens of thousands of soldiers had flocked to the Revolution. The Tsar abdicated on 15 March.

At first, the Bolsheviks did not aspire to governmental power, partly because its leaders held to the commonly accepted view that Russia was not ripe for a socialist revolution, only a democratic one, and partly because they doubted their capacity to govern. In January of that year, a discouraged 46 year old exiled Lenin had told a Swiss audience he doubted whether he would live to see the coming Revolution. But on 3 April, after a ten-year absence, he speedily returned to Russia to take hold of his drifting party, shocking the assembled crowd of party faithful at the very moment of his arrival at the Finland station in Petrograd: "The Russian revolution has begun and opened a new epoch," he declared. "Hail the world-wide socialist revolution."

In October the decision was made to prepare for an armed insurrection: "The position is clear," Lenin declared. "Either a Kornilov dictatorship or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry." The insurrection proper began on 7 November and was successfully completed when the Petrograd Winter Palace fell to the Bolsheviks on 8 November. A week later they had triumphed in Moscow. Wherever the Bolsheviks already held a majority in the local Soviet, power passed to them with little difficulty. Not so in outlying regions where armed skirmishes frequently broke out over the next several months.

The whole of the Ukraine had fallen to Germany's invading forces and the Bolshevik leaders signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty yielding the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and the eastern half of Poland to Germany and her allies. In the spring of 1918 Russia was invaded by several of her former allies in the War. While Japan sought territorial gains, the British, Americans, and French more concerned that a Soviet victory might pave the way for workers' revolutions in their own countries. When the Germans surrendered to the Allies on 11 November 1918, Russia repudiated the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty and moved into the ceded territories. But it was the end of 1919 before Soviet victory was more or less secured in a civil war waged by so-called White troops representing the owners of large landed estates and supported by remnants of Allied forces.

Immediately upon seizing state power the Bolsheviks nationalized land, banks, and shipping, and soon thereafter all factories employing more than ten workers. Dispossessing landowners and capitalists was a popular move among the mass of people. But the total destruction caused by the World War, followed by the chaos of the civil war and further scarcities due to the Allied blockade of Soviet Russia, meant that production levels collapsed and money lost all value. Soviet authorities resorted to direct orders, requisitioning materials and food supplies, and draconian labour laws. Rationing and barter arrangements soon replaced market prices and money as a system of exchange. Strikes and growing protests, especially among the suspicious peasantry, were met by brutal force and all opposition was banned. This system, known as War Communism, could only be a short term solution to the terrible conditions following the Revolution. In 1921 it was replaced by the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was to last eight years.

NEP began as a series of measures to win back support of disenchanted peasants and increase agricultural production, which had fallen to disastrous levels. Private ownership (or leasing arrangements) was restored for all but the largest and most essential industries, excessive regulation and centralized controls were removed, unrestricted competition and what was called "commercial principles" were restored in all sectors of the economy. The NEP was successful in achieving what it set out to do, but it was viewed as a temporary retreat, and at the end of 1928 it was brusquely reversed when a full-scale campaign against the despised kulaks (rich peasants) was launched and the drive towards forced collectivization got underway.

In the interim, Lenin's death in 1924 was followed by bitter internal Party struggles for power. In the last few years of his life Lenin had become aware of Stalin's ruthless character. In a sick-bed testament he wrote that Stalin should be removed from his position as General Secretary of the Party. Stalin managed to keep this testament secret and it was only formally published in the 1960s.

As General Secretary, Stalin was responsible for the selection of Party personnel and was able to secure a majority for himself when it came down to a showdown with Leon Trotsky and other leading rivals. In 1927 Stalin succeeded in having Trotsky expelled from the Party and exiled to Kazakhstan. From there Trotsky was deported and hounded from country to country and except for his writings and the loyalty of small groups of devoted followers, fell into historical oblivion. In 1940 he was murdered by an agent of Stalin in Mexico. With Trotsky out of the way, Stalin managed to eliminate other rivals until he had total control.

The hoped-for revolution in the highly industrialized west never did occur and Stalin declared that the Soviets could establish "socialism in one country." This was an impossible task. The socialism of Marx always presumed a society where a high degree of abundance had already been achieved. In the Soviet context where the first priority was to complete the industrial revolution, the socialist revolution was bound to be distorted.

In the summer of 1931 when Moishe Wolofsky and Moe Kosawatsky stumbled into Russia, the First Five Year Plan was barely underway. In no time at all they were caught up in its drama.

Factory Workers

It was early morning when they arrived in Minsk, capital of Belorussia. People were already moving about. Banners spanned the streets and buildings were covered with posters celebrating the ninth anniversary of the liberation of the White Russian Republic when the last foreign troops were chased out of the Soviet Union in 1922. They followed the direction the peasants were moving in with their produce and ended up in a central market place. It didn't take long for them to be noticed. Knickers, books, knapsacks, and long hair made them obvious strangers. Walking to the different stalls they stopped when they heard Yiddish being spoken. As they would find out later, Minsk had a very large Jewish population. Finally one of the townspeople led them towards a newspaper office whose walls were decked out with red streamers. The slogans read: "Workers of all countries, Unite!" and "Workers, knowledge is power!"

Inside, their guide sought out a young woman who addressed them in German. They introduced themselves to Emma Bumberg, assistant editor of the regional newspaper, *Kolkhoznie Belaruss*, "The White Russian Collective Farmer." Emma Bumberg took charge. She brought them to her flat on Karl Marx Street, near Lenin Avenue, where she lived with her mother and child. That evening they enjoyed their first home-made meal in months. Emma, they learned, had just recently arrived from neighbouring Latvia. A dedicated Communist, she was amazed to hear that her new friends were not. She found them hopelessly uninformed.

The next day Emma picked them up at the hotel where she had arranged for them to stay and took them for a tour of the Zavod Vorishilov metal work factory, the biggest factory in the White Russian Republic. Mostly it built parts for machine tools, tractors, combines, and other agricultural implements. They met the factory director, the Secretary of the Communist Party, and the head of the trade union, the triumvirate that ran the factory in accordance with the targets set out in the Five Year Plan. Each had their function, they were told, though as Bill recalled many years later, "It wasn't until I went back to the Soviet Union forty years later when I could ask the proper questions that I really recognized the very distinct functions of the trade union in the Soviet Union and just how little they had in common with trade unions in our country."

While Moe had worked at the Union Carbide chemical plant in New York, for Moishe it was a new experience since he had never seen the inside of a factory. "I remember that we gathered around one worker's grinding machine and he was explaining this machine," Bill recalled. "Emma translated into German and I translated the German into English for Moe. While we were there somebody came and brought him a litre of milk and this guy, Alexie was his name, turned off his machine and sat down and drank it, and the other people who had gathered around applauded him. He got to drink the milk because metal grinding was considered to be unhealthy work. The workers asked us how this factory differed from factories in America. We couldn't tell them much, but we put on the best show we could without lying to them. We said it looks like a good place to work, the kind of place we'd like to work in. After Emma translated this for them, I asked, 'What did they say?' They said 'why don't you work here. You could start right away'." And that's what they did.

There were thousands of foreign engineers and skilled workmen in Russia, brought in to design and build new plants, install equipment, train and supervise illiterate peasants. A few were working at the Zavod Vorishilov metal works. Many Russian engineers and skilled mechanics were sent to the United States to study American assembly-line production firsthand. Moishe Wolofsky and his pal were among the few foreigners who had come to Russia to work as unskilled factory hands!

They worked as metal grinders starting off at the bottom of the pay scale. What they lacked in skill they made up for in enthusiasm and effort. In the summer of 1931, the first Five Year Plan was barely two years old. It was an ambitious plan, overly ambitious. Already many industries had fallen behind schedule. The new collective farms required at least a quarter of a million tractors and an enormous mass of other equipment to supplement what little was available. At stake was the collectivization program and the very future of the Revolution itself. At least that's the message the plant secretary repeatedly delivered to the workers. He implored, cajoled, and pressured them to produce. Poster charts recording production for the day and for the week, lined the plant walls.

The plant operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Bill recalled that when work stoppages occurred, which, due to fuel shortages, happened quite frequently, the workers sat around and sang songs. If not all of them were caught up in the spirit of production, the two Canadians soon were. Frequently they worked two shifts, on occasion even three, Bill claimed. They competed with each other to see who could work faster and better. In fact, Bill competed so strenuously that he was criticized by the Party secretary for "bourgeois individualism."

Bill recalled an incident in the factory that left a deep impression on him. "One day, as I was discussing something with my instructor, a White Russian, I happened to pull some money out of my pocket. 'You've got money like a Jew,' the man sneered. The remark must have been overheard because the union charged him with anti-semitism and put him on trial. He was found guilty and sent to rehabilitation school for a month." They were all caught up in the campaign launched by Stalin and carried through the press, film, theatre, and radio extolling the "heroes of the production front." The Revolution glamorized the industrial worker the way some countries glamorize their movie stars, soldiers, or athletes. The state flattered, nudged, pushed, and bullied to get workers to give their all. When propaganda failed to move them, other methods were used. Highly graduated wage scales and piecework systems mushroomed. Special rewards — a trip to Moscow, a rest house in the country, a sum of money were offered for extraordinary effort. The state encouraged "socialist competition" between plants. Strict discipline, almost military in style, became the order of the day. Authority was gathered into a few hands. Workers who talked back to the manager or to the party boss in the plant, or who misbehaved, received fines and suspension for days, weeks, even months.

The local press showered winners with public praise. Its images were the images of a nation at war. They spoke of industrial fronts, agricultural fronts, battles for grain, and for meat, struggles against shortages of coal, steel, cotton, tractors. They spoke of shock brigades, discipline, campaigns, and of duty, traitors, and heroes.

Nobody before had ever promised lowly Russian peasants and workers anything. Now, far off in the distance to be sure, a bright, glowing dream of a beautiful life was held up for them, a dream in which they could all share — if only they worked hard enough for it. In the meantime, though their life was harsh, food scarce, and clothing almost unobtainable, it was no worse than before — but now they had something to look forward to.

The evidence that something new was happening was unmistakable. Entire new cities were being built to mine and develop new minerals. Everywhere new factories were going up, miles and miles of steel rails were being laid, and thousands of miles of highways. There were massive new hydroelectric dams in northern Ukraine on the Dneiper River, new oil fields at Baku on the Caspian Sea, and cotton grown around Tashkent and Samarkand on the southern edge of the great Asian desert. Production statistics, all of them positive, and stories of the new construction filled the press.

Curiously, the Canadians were more dedicated to the Revolution, it seems, than many of their Russian co-workers. Regarded cynically by some, and as heroes by others, workers came to their work bench to cheer them on. The local newspaper carried interviews and pictures of them and soon reporters came from national newspapers. In October they were rewarded with the ultimate honour and glory, chosen "Heroes of Labour" and decorated with medals.

Stars At The Bolshoi

The Heroes of Labour were selected along with three others to appear as representatives of the White Russian Republic at the October Revolution celebrations held 7 November in Moscow. The official car that picked them up the evening before wound its way through the streets of Moscow, down Marx Prospekt, across Sverdlov Square. It turned onto Petrovka Street and parked behind a theatre. Entering through the back stage, to their amazement they found themselves led onto a stage and seated there along with about 50 others in a semi-circle.

Amid much noise and shuffling behind the curtains, they remained totally in the dark as to where they were, what they were doing there, and what was expected of them. Finally, a man in uniform approached them, introducing himself in German as their translator and asked which one of them would speak. "What do you mean?" Moishe asked. "You are one of our special guests. You are going to speak. I am your translator but I don't speak English so I must know what you will say." "Say, where are we?" Moe asks. "You are on stage in the Bolshoi theatre."

Moishe and Moe looked at each other, suddenly very nervous, and Moe pointed to Moishe. "But I don't know what I should say." "I will come back in a few minutes," the uniformed man replied. They decided that it would be inappropriate for them to make a political speech for although they had developed strong feelings, they had little understanding. Something short and sweet would be all they could manage in any event. "All we can say," they told the translator in German, "is that we are from Canada and that we are honoured to be here. We can't tell you how you should be doing things. We came here to learn."

The man nodded and left them. All of a sudden the curtains went up. The pair, by now in a state of panic, could only make out the outlines of the masses of people in the audience. As they looked over the sea of faces, the floodlights shone on the huge portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin that lined the walls. At the podium stood Vorishilov of the Central Committee. The crowd broke into a rhythmic applause. Vorishilov greeted the audience and the orchestra played a popular song. Again the audience applauded, now in time to the music. The chairman of the meeting introduced speakers from the Ukraine, Vladivostok, and the far eastern regions. Each spoke briefly to thunderous applause.

When Moishe heard the chairman's reference to "Americanskis," the sweat began to pour from his forehead. The crowd began to chant all over again, and the orchestra played "The Internationale." When silence descended over the expectant audience, the interpreter nudged him gently over to the podium. The few yards felt like a mile. Moishe felt his knees shaking. This was the Bolshoi theatre. Thousands of people were looking at him. What was a Jewish boy from the ghettos of Montréal doing here anyway? Besides, he reminded himself, he had never made a speech before in his life! What a place to start. At the podium, he told himself, "Take it easy. Speak slowly, in your deepest voice. In a few minutes, it will all be over."

The words, when they finally blurt out, sounded squeaky and highpitched. Years later he recalled the speech, word for word.

"My comrade and I," he began, "have come from America. There, as you know, there are millions of unemployed, and many problems. We can tell you nothing about solving your problems. But there is much that you can tell us. And that is why we are here. We want to find out all about the things you are doing here. Thank you very much."

Knees still shaking, Moishe retreated to his seat to the cheers of the crowd. Moe shook his head. The grand debut had lasted all of 30 seconds. Now the translator took over. He spoke for several minutes, and the crowd interrupted a dozen times with thunderous applause. "Great speech," Moe kidded his friend. Moishe never did find out what the translator said, but it must have been good, for now he had a reputation as an orator and from that day he found himself called upon to make speeches in Minsk and elsewhere.

The next day, hundreds of thousands of cheering Moscovites packed Red Square. Dominating the square was Lenin's tomb. Back home Lenin was regarded as a barbarous Asiatic dictator, a Genghis Khan ready to exterminate half of mankind to fulfil his futile dream. Here, he was loved and admired by Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik alike — akin to George Washington, revered father of the American Revolution.

Here was Stalin, his successor, on the platform. Busts of all sizes stood in the windows of the shops facing Red Square. Ruddy cheeks, stocky body, black moustached, he waved to the crowd as they roared: "STALIN IS THE LENIN OF TODAY! STALIN IS THE LENIN OF TODAY." He spoke:

We are marching full steam ahead on the road to industrialization, to socialism, leaving behind our age-old Russian backwardness. We are becoming a nation of metal, of motors, of tractors, and when we have placed the Soviet Union in an automobile and the peasant on a tractor, then let the esteemed capitalists of the world who so proudly proclaim their civilization attempt to catch up with us.

The crowd cheered, breaking out into chant: "Stalin Stalin Stalin." Then, "The Five Year Plan in Four, the Five Year Plan in Four." This slogan was projected from thousands of posters plastered on walls, stuck on street cars and floats, and waved from banners on buildings. Vorishilov, head of the Red Army, received the troops as they parade by the stand. First came the armed workers, then the Red Army. "I noticed that this display really disturbed Moe," Bill recalled. "'This is terrible,' he said. 'It's militarism. I don't care if its militarism in a red flag or militarism in a white flag — it's militarism.' That's not the way I saw it. 'Oh, go on,' I said, 'this is different.' But Moe persisted. 'When I see the workers marching, that moves me. But to see the men in uniform — it's — it's all the same — it's just militarism.' Here we go again, I thought. I was remembering Moe's speech in Commercial High. 'Well, it doesn't bother me, this is different,' I said, taking the last word."

Initiation

It was now barely four months since they had wandered into Minsk, but what a four months! They began as mere adventurers, Russia only a curiosity. Back home they had heard about the "menace" of socialism from family and school. The press shrieked hysterically about the bandits, cutthroats and madness in Moscow, about women being nationalized along with all other forms of private property, and about famine stalking the land ever since the October Revolution.

But now the Soviet Union had become their golden land, their Jerusalem, and they were all but ready to join the cause as Young Communists. This was not the trip they had planned. They had come to Russia on a whim. But here in the land of the Soviets they began to find their bearings and a new identity. They felt part of history, that they themselves were making history. The final aim of this stupendous campaign was to wipe from the face of the earth the poverty, discrimination and superstition of the ages. There would be no classes and no cause to create them. There would be no racial feuds, no religious faiths and no need for them. All men were to be socially equal with an equal chance to work and live in dignity. Planning would eliminate depressions and unemployment. Ultimately the state would disappear. It was a beautiful dream and they bought into it totally.

That first winter Moe wrote to his sister Gertrude to come to the USSR to see for herself.

I realize, my education having been similar to yours, that the words 'communism' and 'dictatorship' hold a connotation which is abhorrent to an individualist. But surely it makes a vast difference when I tell you that in place of the Communist Dictatorship which you so fear, is a Proletarian Dictatorship of which Stalin is the head, and behind him the unbounded enthusiasm of the Party who willingly subordinate their individualism to the will of the masses. It is a difficult lesson that you and other of your bourgeois friends have before you. The lesson is best learned here in the Soviet. Put away your texts on socialist theory. Stop indulging in dreams of Utopia. The Utopia which is a fond speculation of your class is being realized here in this state of active socialism, where the individual is learning to find his highest development and greatest happiness in the perfect identification of himself with society.

In the summer Moishe and Moe decided to join the Young Communist League, the Komsomal, and they so informed the Secretary of the League in their plant. Weeks passed and they heard nothing. "I wonder if it's because of the meeting I had with her a few days after we indicated our intention," Moe said to an impatient Moishe Wolofsky. He went on to say that at this meeting he had asked if joining meant he'd have to serve in the army. She had answered it didn't since he was a Canadian citizen but Moishe took this reluctance as the reason they hadn't been contacted.

"After some further discussions, I went to see her about our application," Bill related. 'I have no objection to joining the Red Army and I'm pretty sure my friend doesn't either. He's just got some concerns about militarism,' I told her. Eventually we got our invitation to a meeting at the YCL Bureau office. We each presented ourselves for an interview. I wanted so desperately to be accepted that I attempted to answer all the questions in Russian, which by now I could handle, even if with difficulty."

The office was filled with the busts of Stalin and Lenin and the walls covered with their portraits. The questions began. Here is Bill's account of the dialogue.

"Why did you come to the Soviet Union?"

"I came as a student to find out about socialism."

"What about your parents?"

"My father is a petit bourgeois."

"If in the interests of the revolution you were told to shoot your father or your mother, would you do it?"

The question startled Moishe. "Why would I be told to shoot my father or mother?"

"We're asking the questions. Would you shoot your father?"

He hesitated and began to sweat. Then, "Yes." "And your mother?"

"Why should I shoot my mother?"

"We're asking."

"Yes."

A few more questions and the interview ended. A few days later Moishe and Moe compared notes. The same line of questions had been put to each. Bill remembered the exchange.

"Do you think they meant it?"

"Probably."

"Would you do it?"

"I dunno. The whole thing makes me jittery."

"Well, its all hypothetical anyway. We'll never be asked to do that, so there's nothing to worry about."

Moishe was not so sure, and he doubts that Moe was either. A few weeks later they saw a film with a similar theme. It was about two boyhood friends, one of them the son of a teacher, an intellectual who became a professor, the other a worker who joined the Red Army. They met each other often. One evening the professor was seduced by a woman suspected of being a friend of the White Guards. In the next scene, the soldier accused his friend of being a traitor and handed him his pistol. But he wouldn't take it. The soldier told him to walk, and then picked up the revolver and killed him. When the picture ended the crowd burst into a prolonged applause.

Maybe it really could happen. Maybe they would be asked to kill their parents some day. Neither of them believed it. In any event they decided not to say anything more about the subject. Years later, Bill Walsh was still troubled by the questions and especially his response to them. "They asked me those questions and they meant it," he said. "It's hard to explain my response except that I didn't know how to avoid it. I couldn't conceive of any circumstances under which this could occur. On the other hand, I could have said 'no,' but I didn't. I said 'yes.' That's how insistent I was on joining the YCL."

In homage to Stalin, Moe Kosawatsky when he returned to Canada a few years later would give himself the name Dick Steele, after Joseph Stalin, "the man of steel." "Do you think an imminent revolution probable in the United States?" he asked his sister Gertrude in a letter home. He obviously did, even going so far as to name the year — 1934! "The imminence of revolution depends upon the rate at which the country's economic condition becomes worse. There is no sign of conditions becoming better," he wrote. "What are the masses waiting for? The election will do nothing. Whatever relief the new government supplies will be insufficient. Riots will break out. Hungry mobs will become militant. The masses will learn to move in concert. The police will not be able to cope with them. The army will be called upon. But will they murder their own countrymen? I hesitate to say. But whether or not they do, revolution must come at latest in 1934."

True Believers

They were present in the midst of the great Soviet famine, a legend of horror no less than the industrial depression of North America. Nature took a hand, but it too was mainly a man-made tragedy. Many peasants had only recently come into possession of some land. Few had volunteered to give it and their livestock to the new collectives spawned by the Five Year Plan so they were forced into them. They resisted, slaughtering their livestock in the process and withholding grain delivery. Cows, sheep, horses, pigs, goats were killed by the hundreds of thousands. Anyone with a tiny plot was labelled a kulak, a capitalist exploiter. "We must smash the kulaks," Stalin thundered from Moscow, "kill them as a class." Zealous party officials, ever conscious of party discipline, forcefully removed them from their property and pushed them onto some barren or swampy piece of land, or packed them into freight cars and exiled them to some northern region. Tens of thousands of peasants did not survive the move or died of starvation.

Moishe Wolofsky and Moe Kosawatsky saw the whole process as necessary and inevitable. "The kulaks are disrupting Soviet economic policy," Stalin announced, so of course they had to be squeezed out. "The way we got the story," Bill remembered, "was that the crops were failing because the kulaks had sabotaged the tractors by pouring sand into the oil which ruined the cylinders. At times our factory had to dispense with all other work to replace the cylinders and the pistons and the thumbs that drove the pistons up and down. The entire grain crop of the White Russian Republic and to some extent the Ukraine depended on their efforts. That's what we were told and we had no doubt it was true."

Everything was in short supply and everything rationed — from food to footwear, from safety pins to ink, from matches to toilet paper. But at least the poverty was equally shared, so they thought, and in any case temporary. They believed what they constantly heard: Russia would soon catch up with and outstrip capitalist countries in production and distribution — and the Five Year Plan was the first decisive step in that direction. Yes, there were sacrifices. But at least everybody was sacrificing and the sacrifices were all necessary for the greater good.

When Emma, by virtue of being assistant editor of the local farm newspaper, had occasion to invite some farm leaders to her home, Moishe suspected that these farmers could be the hated kulaks. Though she had become their close friend, he did not hesitate to inform on her. Did Stalin not say that farmers who fight collectivization are saboteurs and enemies of the people? And does he not teach that anyone who befriends them also betrays the revolution?

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Looking back on his betrayal of Emma many years later, Bill Walsh confessed "When I think back to those days I recognize I had become blind — let me use the word pure blind, by which I mean purposely blind — completely blind yourself to any other view except the official view which you will defend, regardless of how unreasonable it is, defend it and defend it without the slightest vacillation. As for any doubts you had, well you just set them aside, suspended them. Anyone who didn't tow the line one hundred per cent was regarded by me as being counter-revolutionary, contemptible, including this wonderful woman who had been so friendly to us and had helped us, comforted us and who had been in a very real way such a good friend to us."

Late in the fall of 1932 an incident occurred which so disturbed the new converts that they made up their mind to leave Minsk. Emma Bumberg had given them a pass which she said would allow them to go to a store where they could purchase food not available anywhere else. She had applied for and received special rations on their behalf. When they found the unmarked store and entered with their passes, they could not contain their shock. Shelves bulged with loaves of white bread, butter, apples, and other fruits, a variety of candies, and beautiful fresh sturgeon fish. Such food was not to be seen in the regular stores where they had done their shopping up until now. Here there were none of the long lines they had learned to hate. As industrial workers they were given extra rations, but these only allowed them an extra loaf of black bread, a few extra potatoes, a little more oil and vegetables, eggs and cheese, and tiny minnow fish, all the staple foods of the citizens of Minsk. Meat, eggs, butter, cheese remained scarce, and they hadn't eaten white bread since arriving in Russia.

And the prices seemed unusually low. The price for sturgeon no more than the price for minnows; the price for white bread the same as the price for the black bread which so devastated their digestive systems. "Never any problem of constipation there, I can tell you," Moishe later joked. "For the first six months finding toilets was one of our biggest feats — and in a hurry!"

When they returned to the apartment and questioned Emma she told them that this store served foreign experts. "You can't expect them to come here and put up with things they aren't accustomed to. They are among our most precious people. Naturally they deserve special treatment," she explained matter-of-factly. "But we aren't foreign experts," they responded, angrily. "We've learned our jobs here. We don't want special treatment and we won't abuse party principles to shop in those stores for you."

It didn't matter to them that her child was ill and that Emma herself was suffering a form of malnutrition, having come from Latvia where fruit was a big part of her diet. They decided that they had to break off relations with Emma and move on. But it was more than Emma. They were aware that in all of Minsk there couldn't have been more than a few dozen foreign specialists, if that many, and besides, just about all the people they had seen in the store were local citizens. It gradually came out of Emma that some top government and Communist Party officials also received passes to these special stores.

This was a great blow. One of the things that they had found so attractive about the Soviet system was that nobody, no matter how high his position in the party, could earn more than 215 rubles a month, about the average industrial wage. Explaining his dismay many years later, Bill Walsh recalled, "we had guys in our factory earning 300 rubles and I thought this was tremendous — tremendous that an ordinary worker could earn more than Joe Stalin. We're talking about God when we're talking Stalin." But now he had found the secret. Their 215 rubles could purchase a whole lot more than ordinary workers could buy for a 1,000 rubles and many things ordinary workers couldn't buy at any price. Emma had no answer for them, at least none that they would accept. In any event, things become so nasty between them and Emma they decided to move to Moscow.

Moscow

Winter 1933. The shift from Minsk to Moscow led from Emma Bumberg to Muriel Altman. The boys had met Muriel during one of their trips to Moscow and had fallen in love with the Jewish State Theatre actress — and she with them. When they explained their problems in Minsk she invited them to stay with her.

They had no trouble obtaining work in the new ball-bearing plant, Zavod Kalinin, but life in Moscow was a lot different for them. They were not celebrities there, received no special favours and no special ration books. They were treated like ordinary Soviet citizens, which is what they preferred. Moishe went so far as to shave his head, the style of the day for Russian men. With his credible command of the language, he was almost indistinguishable from other Russians. They worked their regular nine-hour shifts in the day, attended meetings of factory cells after work and Komsomol meetings in the evening, studied the Marxist classics, and in their spare time they read the US Party press.

Like all others they ate the slab of dark bread, sticks of sausage, and drank grape juice for lunch. On the weekends they enjoyed the company of Muriel Altman's theatre friends. Muriel was particularly taken with the gregarious and handsome Moe Kosawatsky, and he with her. Moishe felt in the way, but Muriel would not hear of him moving out of her apartment. In line with official policy, all artists and writers were directed to use their talents to advance the "Socialist offensive" by glorifying the nobility of the proletarian and expressing the grandeur of the cause. The kulak and the entrepreneur always appeared as the political foes who deserved to meet defeat, and were without any redeeming virtues. As with Hollywood productions, it was easy to pick out the heroes and the villains. Only the hero in Soviet Russia was always the proletarian.

So-called socialist realism posed no problem for Muriel Altman and most of her friends. Dedicated communists, they were convinced that there was no better purpose to which to put their talents. Moishe and Moe soon discovered that not all members of the Russian intelligentsia felt the same way. They met some of these skeptics at a party thrown in their honour by Muriel. As the guests filed into her sparsely furnished living room with its pictures of Lenin, Stalin, Gorky, and Tolstoy, several of them encircled these curious foreigners who work in a ball-bearing plant, and peppered them with questions about life in America. Is there an abundant supply of meat, sugar, butter and white bread, they asked. Are American women really taking to long hair and long skirts? How expensive were automobiles, Fords, for instance? What about the speed of elevators? The visitors answered as best as they could. The price of the automobile surprised the questioners.

"If they would be so cheap in Russia, we would buy automobiles for ourselves."

"Never mind," one of the guests remarked, "we shall catch up."

"And when will that be?" another put in.

"Which Five-Year Plan?" Laughter all around.

"Must we have everything immediately?" argued another. "Your grandfather never sat before an electric light as you do now."

Moe got impatient. "Don't be so impressed with America. Don't forget that there is a depression there. Eight million are out of work. The unemployed don't buy cars, many don't get the food we get here. Meanwhile American farmers burn food in the fields and the government dumps it into the ocean. The revolution is coming in America, don't you believe otherwise."

But some of the things they heard about last winter's crusade against private property gave even Moe some concern. They heard the story of a well-known merchant whose wife was on the verge of giving birth to a child. She pleaded with the chairman of the housing committee, a former janitor, to be allowed to remain in the apartment long enough for the baby to be born, whereupon, the former janitor replied, "Citizen, all these years you have been drinking our blood, now it is about time we drank a little of yours." Story after story emphasized the mercilessness of the revolutionaries.

A communist in the room commented, "Yes, there may have been abuse. The search brigade was not supposed to do these things. But it was not a policy. They went too far."

"All the things those brigades did," someone else exclaimed. "What a nightmare. People were put out into the street with no place to go. No pity, no feeling."

"But this is a revolution," Muriel interjected. "A revolution is no game."

"But is it not time to bring the fight to an end? How long will it go on?" someone asked.

"As long as we have enemies who wreck our plans."

"But what about our rights?" one woman shouted. "Our artists are told what they must paint, our writers are told what they must write. Where is our freedom? Our gypsy music has been banned. Our nightclubs have been closed. Where are our restaurants? They have closed them or made worker cooperatives out of them. And what do they serve?"

"Listen," another answered, "we have had a revolution. Now the workers are in control. They have no need of nightclubs or restaurants or gypsy music. Where is your freedom? Where was the freedom of the proletariat in the old days? Who cared about their rights? The exploiters rode their backs like they were camels. No more. You moaners and groaners make me ill."

The exchange was angry, yet at the same time strangely friendly. These were old friends arguing over tea and biscuits. The discussion went on long into the night. The new recruits of the Young Communist League were largely untroubled by the stories, their faith unshaken.

A Cable From Herschel

Early that summer Moishe received a cable from England: "COMING TO MINSK STOPWILL TAKE YOU HOME WITH MESTOP Your loving father, Herschel Wolofsky." The telegram, which had been sent to Minsk and forwarded to Moscow, came as a rude shock. It seemed like a voice from the very distant past. Remembering years later, Bill recalled that returning to Canada was the last thing on his mind. He had been in the USSR for almost two full years, the happiest years of his life. Back home, his life had been full of stress and without meaning. In Russia his life had purpose. In his mind nothing could be more fulfilling than staying and helping to build the new society. His father was scheduled to arrive in the week. Muriel suggested he seek guidance from the Communist International or Comintern. The Canadian representative at the Anglo-American branch of the Comintern listened to Moishe's story in silence, then asked what he wanted to do. When Moishe replied that he wanted to stay, the man responded sympathetically but asked that Moishe come back in ten days time, which would be a few days after Herschel's arrival.

Herschel Wolofsky had been sent on a trade mission to Poland. Jewish boycotts had been organized against German goods and though the Polish government was anything but friendly towards the Jews, the Polish Consulate in Montréal had approached him to see what he could do to expedite a stalled trade treaty between Canada and Poland to take advantage of the Jewish boycott. His agreement would improve relations between the government and Polish Jewry, he was assured.

The Consulate offered to pay his expenses if he would travel to Poland, "so that I might be able to press my arguments with personal knowledge," Wolofsky wrote in his memoirs. "I was somewhat dubious but the family encouraged me to go. Their interest was a family one; one of my sons who had made a trip to Europe two years earlier — had landed in Soviet Russia and found the country so much to his taste, that he had remained there. My family, therefore, wished me to undertake the trip to Poland, and thence to proceed to Russia and bring my son back with me."

Not being informed that Moishe had moved to Moscow, it took Herschel a few days to catch up with him. When they finally got together, the first thing he asked him about was his bald head. After exchanging a few pleasantries, he told his son, "in a week you're coming back with me. I promised your mother." He surely expected a struggle. Moishe had written to the family of the wonders of the Soviet Union, the rapid advancement of industry, the campaign to wipe out illiteracy and eliminate discrimination, of the medals and honours bestowed upon himself and his friend, of the poem written about them by the renowned Jewish poet, Itzik Pfeffer, and of the book he and Moe were writing, *From the Land of Despair to the Land of Hope*.

"I know about the pig iron, and the machinery and building socialism," Herschel intoned. "You've done your share. You've done your duty. It's time to go back home to your mother and to your sisters and brothers." "I'm staying here. My friends are here. Moe is here. I like it here. I'm staying."

Herschel would have none of this: "What is this foolishness? Why do you worry about mankind? Does mankind worry about you? Believe me, if you should be dying of hunger, the Bolsheviks would not lift a finger. Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. The opportunities are limitless." They argued on. It went nowhere. Moishe kept his appointment at the Comintern. This time he was led to an old, large, ugly square building across from the Kremlin wall on the Mokhovaya. There, Moishe found himself face to face with an obvious big wheel in the Comintern. He never did introduce himself but from photographs seen only years later, Moishe identified the man as Dimitri Manuilsky, a trusted Stalin functionary. Not realizing Moishe spoke the language, Manuilsky said in a low voice to the Canadian representative, "tell him he's going back. He should come back here to see us after his father has left for Warsaw. Then we will tell him what we expect of him." A word was said about Moishe taking over The *Canadian Adler* and converting it into the *Red Adler*, something Moishe knew he could never do.

Moishe was shaken. What life was there for him there? Deep inside he still felt the wounds of his life on Esplanade. There he felt homeless. Here he felt at home. But not for one minute did he consider disobeying the instructions. "Was he not part of a world movement now?" he thought to himself. "One in which the leaders know how best he can make a contribution?" Not for him to question their decision.

So as not to make the change of plan too obvious, Moishe put up an argument when he saw Herschel the next day. "Look at your friends," Herschel thundered. "Some of them were crazy too but they got over it and now they are lawyers and doctors. And you — you're wasting away your life. My son, a factory worker? It's a scandal. What do you get out of it?"

"It's a good job. Anyway I'm not looking to get anything out of it. Living here gives me much more than I give it. The capitalist way is not for me. In the end it means making wars and killing people for profit."

"And the bolsheviks are angels? They killed plenty of people too," Herschel replied.

"It's true, I know. It's too bad that men haven't got beyond force. But it's been that way for thousands of years. Anyway, it makes a difference who kills whom and for what. If the Whites and the imperialists had left Russia alone, the Bolsheviks would have been happy to avoid bloodshed. You can't blame them for defending the first workers' socialist republic."

"They hate the Jews. It is in their blood. No revolution will change it. In Canada we are making progress. Look at me, an official representative of the government of Canada!" His father continued, "Do you deny the internal squabbles? Look how they have exiled Trotsky, forced others to recant, and the rumours are flying about more people. The revolution devours its children. These men are as power hungry as any capitalist, Moishe."

"Of course there are quarrels, serious ones," Moishe rebutted. "There are part of the growing pains of revolution. What's the alternative? Unem-

ployment, poverty, war. Some Bolsheviks may be bad, some made mistakes — but they are building a better world."

The old man was furious. He felt he was getting nowhere. But two days later, according to plan, Moishe reversed himself. The old man was not so easily fooled. "Just a minute. You're not coming home to join with them there. You come back, you're going to behave. The Communists may be alright for Russia, as you say, but they're no good for Canada. You have nothing to do with the Communists there. You're going to work with me on the *Eagle*." That decided, they made arrangements to meet in Warsaw a week later.

Back at the Comintern building, he was taken to see Manuilsky again, where he reported his conversation. He got his instructions.

Thirty days after he arrived in Montréal he would get a message that a Mr. Cook wanted to see him. Cook was to meet with him and tell him what to do. In the meantime, he was to behave normally and make no attempt to contact the party. He must not tell anybody about these conversations. Just say you are going back, that's all.

"But I must tell my friend Moe and the other comrades."

"No, nobody."

"But I must explain to my friends why I am leaving. They'll think I am just deserting. I can't just leave and say nothing."

"You don't have to tell them anything."

"At least Moe, I've got to tell Moe. I've never kept anything secret from him. Besides he knows I'm here. We discussed it."

"Listen, comrade," Manuilsky said. "We have a saying: 'what you don't tell people they can't repeat.' If he is such a close friend, he will understand."

Within the week he was on a train heading for Warsaw.

And Moe did understand. As for him, he was staying on. His family was not pressing him to come back. He had no money to do so anyway and Hershel Wolofsky certainly made no offer to pay his fare. Predictably, the Wolofsky family blamed Moe, just as the Kosawatsky family blamed Moishe for having led their child astray. After all, this could never happen to their child without some evil outside influence. In any event, Moe had no intention of leaving at this stage. He was madly in love with Muriel Altman and she with him.

Relating the story of his departure from the Soviet Union, Bill remarked, "you have no idea of the sinking feeling in my heart as the train crossed over into Poland. It felt as if I was going from heaven into hell. When I passed through Minsk my heart went lower and lower and I thought, 'can I survive this?' Besides, I was leaving Dick with whom I had been so close for years. I worried that I might not ever see him again. All these things were going through my mind — going back into the capitalist system, how can I live under the capitalist system? I saw everything there as exploitation. That's the way I thought back then. I worried about how I was going to put on a pretence that I was happy to be going home when I was miserable about it."

Warsaw

Herschel Wolofsky and his son were guests at the home of a prominent Warsaw rabbi. Moishe was the main attraction, a Jewish boy who went from the land of the free to a despicable totalitarian state. They minced no words. Moishe held his ground. He had trouble with one question only: "Why don't they let people go out who want to go out?"

He never did find an adequate answer to this question. A young woman, about his age, the rabbi's daughter, came to his rescue. Up to now she had said nothing. "Would you like to go for a walk?" she asked. Moishe was delighted to get out of there. As soon as they got outside, she put her arm through his and gave him a warm, friendly glance. "Come on, I want you to meet some real friends."

They passed others on the street. Something was happening. Finally the girl said, "We're having a meeting. Did you notice that boy back there? He's a comrade. We're voting on some important questions. You see, I'm a communist too, but here the party is illegal. We pass signals between us in the street." When they arrived back at her home laughing and joking both parents were pleased. Maybe something would come of this meeting. A rabbi's daughter! A publisher's son! Herschel was most anxious for his twenty-three year old to get married. What better way of getting him to forget about this communist business?

The next day, his father asked him, "Nu, would you like to stay on for a while here?" "No," Moishe replied, "I want to go home." Years later he would meet the same woman in Montréal when she escaped to Canada along with her family after the Nazis occupied Poland. By then the Hitler-Stalin pact that carved up Poland had soured her on communism and they found they had little to say to each other.

Chapter Three

Back in Canada

The 1930s was truly a Golden Era for Canadian Communists. For people too young to remember and without relatives to remind them, it comes as quite a shock to learn that there was a time when the Communist Party of Canada really mattered to the working class of this country.

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Golden Era Of Canadian Communism

"How can workers build socialism if they aren't able to fight against oppressive conditions under capitalism?" the Communists asked. "How can an unorganized working class make a revolution?" So they went about organizing the working class and battled for immediate needs. This approach, developed in the 1920s, but with little effect until the devastating conditions of the 1930s, clearly distinguished the Communist Party of Canada from carlier Marxist parties. Rather than leading workers in day-to-day industrial and social struggles, all the earlier parties had been absorbed in "educating the masses" by introducing them to the ideas of the masters.

The Communists were much more a party of action. As part of the International Day Against Unemployment, they had distributed over a hundred thousand leaflets and brought over 75,000 Canadians onto the streets on 25 February 1931. A few months later they presented Prime Minister Bennett and his Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, with 100,000 signatures demanding the immediate enactment of non-contributory unemployment insurance, to which Bennett had answered: "No government with which I am associated will ever agree with this.... We will not put a premium on idleness."¹

On 11 August 1931, party headquarters, the offices of the Workers Unity League, the party newspaper, and the homes of every member of the party's Political Bureau were raided and ransacked, and the entire leadership of the Party arrested and charged with being members of an unlawful association under Section 98 of the Criminal Code.² The judge sentenced eight leaders to five years imprisonment and in November of that year, Ontario's attorney general announced on the radio that "Communism will never raise its head in Ontario again." Prime Minister R.B. Bennett asked "every true Canadian to put the iron heel of ruthlessness against a thing of that sort."³

The Communists were a target. But they were a tiny group. The real targets, they knew, were the much larger movement of the unemployed. In 1932, nearly half a million people signed the Canadian Labour Defence League's petition to free the Kingston Eight and by 1934 public pressure finally convinced the government to free Tim Buck and the others. No less than 17,000 people filled Maple Leaf Gardens to applaud Tim Buck's release from jail. That year there were few major centres in Canada where Tim Buck could not outdraw the Prime Minister.

By 1932 Party members had set up 45 Unemployment Councils across Canada — including in the Relief Camps where they held study session on "slave labour." Their trade union arm, the Workers' Unity League, had set up eleven industrial unions and thirty union locals by 1933. As noted by labour historian Irving Abella, the WUL was the only labour centre in Canada committed to organizing not only the unorganized but the unemployed as well, and it was the only one willing to use the strike as a weapon against both employers and governments.⁴ Of the 189 strikes in 1934, no less than 109 were fought under the leadership of the WUL. Years later, Communist leader Tim Buck could say without exaggeration that "the long established tradition ... that workers can't be organized in bad times was shown to be false." It was also the case that, as he said, "the only strikes won by the workers during the crisis years, were led by the WUL."

In 1935 the Communists organized the On-to-Ottawa Trek on behalf of the single unemployed. They elected members to the Ontario and Manitoba legislatures, to city hall, and to school boards in Toronto, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Vancouver, and elsewhere. When Communists won a majority of municipal council seats in the coal mining town of Blairmore, Alberta, one of their first acts was to change the name of the main street to Tim Buck Boulevard! They organized the League Against War and Fascism and the Canadian Youth Congress, established Friends of the Soviet Union, promoted the Progressive Arts Club and the Workers' Sports League, performed agit prop theatre in the streets, published the literary magazine, *New Frontiers*, and a children's magazine, *Always Ready*. They sent 1,280 volunteers to fight fascism in Spain, formed the Fifteenth International Brigade, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, and they raised funds for Dr. Norman Bethune's blood transfusion unit there. And much, much more.

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The CCF was their natural rival, competing as they did for the support of Canadians fed up with the way the capitalist system was treating them. The CCF was founded in 1932, an amalgam of farm groups, labour organizations, and intellectuals not too different from that of the Communist Party. From the beginning its membership was far larger than that of the Communist Party and its electoral success, while slow in coming, was immeasurably greater. Its program, laid out in the Regina Manifesto, was at least as radical-sounding and much more elegant than anything the Communists had turned out. It promised to "replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated, in which economic planning will supersede unregulated private enterprise and competition, and in which genuine democratic self-government, based on economic equality will be possible." All of this was to be achieved by way of the electoral process. As already noted, the Communists participated in elections too, but they believed that people became radicalized not by listening to speeches or reading articles or voting, but by organizing themselves and others and engaging in actions, small and large, that defended human rights and challenged the rights of capital.

It was rarely what they said that attracted people to the Party. They were dogmatic, sectarian, and arrogant. They slavishly followed every twist and turn of the Soviet party, revising, reversing, and contorting their own politics to conform to Stalin's latest dictum. It was what they did that convinced thousands to join the movement. They were everywhere, these 1930s Communists, everywhere people were being exploited or oppressed. No issue was out of bounds. Their energy seemed without limit. And their efforts sometimes succeeded. The five dollar voucher that paid the cost of food for a family going hungry, the bag of coal for one shivering in the mid-winter cold, medicines for the sick, better food in the work camps, or the removal of an insulting welfare official.

Small victories, perhaps, but not to these revolutionaries. As far as they were concerned, each time they walked on a picket line, handed out a leaflet, sold a newspaper, attended a meeting, marched in a demonstration, or recruited a new member, they were remaking the world.

What they lacked in numbers and popular support they offset by cohesiveness and a common outlook. Oblivious to the slings and arrows of the Philistines, they believed that very soon the class struggle would enlighten all the masses and bring them over to the cause. They believed they were the chosen people. Christians had God on their side, but Marxists had History. Their abiding faith in Communism, in the Soviet Union, in the international Communist movement, and in the principles of Marxism-Leninism, seemed to immunize them from all criticism. Every 24 hours seemed to send the pulse of the world racing towards the Marxist revolution. The worse things got, the closer the imminent socialist explosion!

Waiting For Cook

The Polish liner carrying the Wolofskys sliced its way into the estuary of the St. Lawrence in October 1933. Looking across the miles of cold water to the barren hills of northern Québec, Moishe wondered what it would be like seeing his mother, Sammy, Miriam, and the other Wolofsky children.

The river narrowed. The ship rounded the Isle d'Orleans, stopped to let off passengers at Québec, and an hour later set out for Montréal. As Moishe walked the deck after dinner, the parish lights on both sides of the river were clearly visible. As he looked at the moonlit feudal strips leading down to the river, it suddenly occurred to him how little he knew about this country, even though he lived in it for eighteen years. How would it be living in Montréal again? Would he stay here for long? What work would he do? How would Cook make contact with him?

On the way to 91 Esplanade, Moishe moved along busy St. Lawrence with its noises, its commerce, and sights of shuffling unemployed. Lean and hungry men around Montréal's ship docks scrounged food from the unloading boats. The Great Depression had reached its darkest depths. On any single day, one out of every four Canadians sat idle. In Montréal, one out of three received some form of relief.

"You felt the Depression in your bones and marrow," wrote the poet Irving Layton, who grew up in Montréal. Walking down The Main in those years, "you felt the hopelessness and the pain, the bewilderment and panic. The gilt put on during the boom years had rubbed off. From the storefronts and houses, from the sidewalks and asphalt streets, the shine was peeling away. Everywhere there was evidence of decay Soon the neighbourhood became dotted with soup kitchens and columns of people lining up to receive their daily meal."⁶

Unemployment insurance was non-existent and relief payments, mainly vouchers rather than cash, were administered by municipalities to unemployed married people. Single men and women had to fend for themselves. Petty bureaucrats meting out the dole seemed to share Prime Minister Bennett's view that people without work were "idlers" who must pay the penalty for their "idleness."

Panhandling transients cluttered city streets, standing in line at Salvation Army hostels and religious missions and gathering around fires under bridges to keep out of the cold and the rain. They rode the rails from city to city in search of jobs, but found company-employed bulls guarding the freight trains. Local police, under orders from tax-starved municipalities, ran them out of town, or stuck them in jail. For food, lodging, and twenty cents a day, single homeless men could enter specially constructed relief camps to construct roads, bridges, harbours, airfields, and historic sites. It was the government's answer to unemployment. Single women could become domestic servants for about the same pay.

Moishe was hardly thrilled to be back on the Esplanade. He had conquered new worlds, but nothing on Esplanade seemed changed. He was anxious to see Sarah, who was delighted to have her favourite son home again. Sammy and Miriam sat at his feet, absorbing his every word, thrilled to hear his stories. Sammy was already a convert to the cause and a voracious reader. Within weeks he consumed all the pamphlets Moishe brought back with him.

Not long after the arrival, visitors began converging on the Wolofsky home, including Moe's friends, Albert Marcus and George Ehrlich. Moishe regaled them with stories, they responded with questions, endless questions. How was Moe? What was it like to work in a Soviet factory? Who were his friends? What did he eat? Had he seen Joe Stalin? Are the Russian people really happy under socialism? What about the Jews? Intellectuals? Peasants?

Herschel Wolofsky wrote a series of articles for *The Eagle* about his trip to Poland and meeting his son in Russia. *The Eagle*'s star reporter prepared a series on Moishe's experiences in the USSR. Some were translated and appeared in Montréal's daily press. Within weeks Moishe became something of a local celebrity, inundated with invitations to speak at the YMCA, Junior Chamber of Commerce, the University, and to women's groups.

One of the first invitations came from the Young People's Socialist League, a youth wing of the CCF. Many of the leading lights of the CCF were in the audience that day. They included David Lewis, just returned from England where he had been sent as a Rhodes Scholar. Lewis had quickly earned for himself a reputation as a brilliant debater in England, comparable, so it was said, to the awesome Labour Member of Parliament Nye Bevan. Also present in the audience were Eugene Forsey and Frank Scott of McGill University, moving forces in the League for Social Reconstruction, an association of left-wing intellectuals that drafted the Regina Manifesto.

"I prepared myself well," Bill recalled. "I planned to appeal to the idealism of the Young Socialists without giving away my own commitment to Communism. I told them some of the stories and explained about conditions in Russia, playing light on the problems and conflicts and emphasizing the strides being taken to overcome the hardships and poverty. And I ended up my speech with the story about the time Moe and I had visited a Red Army battalion on our second May Day in Russia, concluding with the oath of the Red Army: 'I pledge my life unto death for socialism and the international brotherhood of all mankind'."

"The audience was impressed, but a few of them expressed doubts, saying that it couldn't have been all that positive. David Lewis was among the doubters and he asked whether I had joined the Communist Party while I was there? 'No,' I answered, which was barely the truth since I had in fact joined the Young Communist League. Lewis wasn't satisfied. He said, 'I for one can't believe after what I've heard you say, after spending two years over there, that you would come back a political virgin.' I could only shrug him off."

Lewis, a founding members of the Yipsels in Canada, was not at all fooled. He was entirely aware of what Moishe was up to. As he once noted about those days, the Yipsel "was resolutely anti-Communist in an area of Montreal where the Communist Party and the Young Communist League enjoyed their greatest popularity." At the conclusion of the meeting, Albert Marcus introduced Moishe to Forsey and Scott. They invited him to their rooms at McGill. But these socialist intellectuals held no interest for Moishe. They talked a different language. He dismissed them as quickly as they ended up dismissing him.

An anxious month passed in which Moishe waited impatiently to make contact with the Party in order to rejoin the movement. But he had made a pledge to both his father and to the Comintern so he sat tight and worked at *The Eagle*.

Thirty days passed with still no sign of Cook. On the 32nd day, however, a caretaker in *The Eagle* building told him that a Mr. Baker wanted to see him. "Oh, what about?" Moishe asked. "I don't know but its very important. He wants to make arrangements." "But I don't know anybody by that name. It must be a mistake," thought Moishe. Days later he thought, "Baker - Cook — there must be a mix-up in the translation. That's my man." But the caretaker informed him that Baker had left for Toronto. "You said you didn't want to see him."

The Montréal Artists' Group

Until now he had avoided all contact with Party members although some had tried to catch him. Among others, Lea Roback, a Montréal social worker, invited him to a social in her home. At first he declined, thinking that she might be a party person and pressure him to join. Then he decided that he had no choice. He had to get back to Baker. Moishe found a lively group at Lea Roback's home, mostly artists, writers, and actors, and he felt right at home. The same portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin lined the walls. And the crowd reminded him of Muriel Altman and her friends in Moscow.

Lea Roback's story was similar in some ways to Moishe's own. Born in Québec City, she went to study in Paris and Berlin. There she joined the Communist Party but returned to Canada in 1932, having barely escaped Hitler's roundup. She took a job at the Young Women's Hebrew Association, but Lea was a natural organizer and fluent in French, Yiddish, and German, so the party sent her to help organize garment workers and she became director of education of the WUL's Needle Workers' Industrial Union. Later, when the WUL disbanded, she was hired by the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union.

Besides Lea, he met Dorothy Livesay, the young Winnipeg-born poet employed in Montréal as a social worker; Bassia Zelman, director of the Montréal Repertory Theatre; the painter Louis Muhlstock; Cecil-Smith, editor of the newly-formed *Masses* magazine visiting from Toronto; Stanley Ryerson, that black sheep of the famous Ontario family, who would soon teach at Sir George Williams University and, under the pseudonym Etienne Roger, give courses at the anti-Catholic Université Ouvriérs.

The conversation resembled the talk at Muriel's apartment too: the economic crisis, collectivization, the renegade Trotsky, the Five-Year Plan, socialist realism, and so on. Most were involved in agit-prop theatre, performing in labour halls, on the backs of trucks, in pubs, anywhere they could find an audience — their themes always political: unemployment, anti-war, civil liberties. The talk centered on a new play written by Oscar Ryan called "Eight Men Speak." It was about the arrest and imprisonment of the eight leaders of the Party still sitting in Kingston Penitentiary.

Dorothy Livesay read her new poem, "An Immigrant (Nick Zynchuk)," about an unemployed worker, Nick Zynchuk, who a few months earlier had been helping a family about to be evicted when he was shot in the back by the police and killed. His funeral attracted 10,000 people, one of the biggest demonstrations in Montréal's history. The procession was blocked by a company of police on horseback. From the back, a phalanx of plain clothes police flailed away with wooden clubs, cursing the mourners, bashing them and knocking many down until the funeral ground to a halt.

"An Immigrant" Deep in St. Louis Ward soft winds caress The huddled houses, spring returns again. The winter's gone, and no one's paid the rent: The couple upstairs went to jail, and Nick Here's Nick again, his pockets empty still. We've appealed to the landlord, then to City Hall; We've appealed to our candidate for alderman. Tomorrow the day is set, we go, wife -Unless the neighbours help us fight it through. Click click click. "Attention men." The sargeant's at his words again. "All right, Zappa - take this whiskey, Use your billies if they're frisky, See? They're bastards, not fit to live, Give 'em all you've got to give." The crowd held firm. Then a single cry went up As the furniture came out. Now working-men Stood shoulder to shoulder; silent, tense -Until policemen charged, beat back, and struck. Then you returned again, newcomer here, Unknown and unobserved. What you had left, A few possessions — trouser and hat, they're still upstairs in an old travelling bag. You moved towards the door, towards the stair And scarcely noticed Zappa standing there. The crowd stirred restlessly. You passed There was a roar and pistol crack. Nothing had happened in the street -Only a worker was shot in the back.

"This is all very well," Moishe said to himself, "but I'm still no closer to Baker." He approached the chairman of the Party in Québec, pint-sized Fred Rose, just released from jail. "Say," he said in a friendly fashion, "I was supposed to be visited by a guy named Baker a few days back. Do you know anything about it?" "Baker? He was here. He went back to Toronto," Rose replied. "Baker," it turns out, was Stewart Smith. "Look, I've got to see him. When will he be here again?" "Not for a while, but don't worry. We'll get word to you."

Moishe was anxious to join the Party. He had already been invited to do so by several of the people he had met. But since he considered himself to be under Party discipline, he felt he could do nothing until he received new instructions. A few more weeks passed and there was still no word.

Friends Of The Soviet Union

Confused and at his wits end, Moishe finally approached Sydney Sarkin, a known Party man who also happened to be a neighbour of the Wolofskys. Sarkin, only a few years older than Moishe, was already a Party veteran and an organizer of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers. Moishe admired Syd Sarkin — a working-class intellectual, modest, scholarly, but without pretense.

"What do you advise me to do, Syd? You know the way the Party works here."

After a few minutes' reflection, Syd replied, "You know our party's illegal now. You can do more good working on the outside with Friends of the Soviet Union. The FSU is being set up all around the world. You could help establish a branch in Montréal. I can put you in touch with Louis Kon who is in charge of the FSU. You'll like Louis."

Moishe considered. "That's not what I had in mind, but if you advise it, I guess it's okay." He found Louis Kon to be a fascinating character. Kon, dressed in the tsar's uniform, had joined the wave of strikes during the 1905 Russian uprising. A few years later he emigrated to Canada and settled in Winnipeg as immigration and colonization officer for the Grand Trunk Railway. Transferred to Montréal, he acted as the unofficial representative of the USSR in Canada. Up to this point, Canada had still not given official recognition to the Socialist regime and the Friends of the Soviet Union wished to hasten that recognition. Moishe found Kon warm, interesting, and interested. He was well-read and cultured, a mentor to many who went on to become political activists including Dr. Norman Bethune, Dorothy Livesay, and the economist Eric Adams.

"I helped Kon set up offices, produce literature and arrange some meetings," Bill related. "And there I met my first real love. I'll call her Ruth. She was an artist. She was sent in by the Party to work with me and God, I fell in love with her. It was one of those terrible, heart-breaking things because she was married. That was one of the main reasons why I knew I couldn't stay in Montréal."

Most of the people attending the meetings sponsored by the Friends of the Soviet Union were party members or sympathizers, but curiosity about the Soviet experiment was spreading. The Depression sapped public confidence in the free enterprise system because capitalism clearly wasn't working and people began to think that socialism might be the answer.

"One evening," Bill related, "I remember receiving a telephone call from a man who identified himself as Russell Greenberg. He asked whether we could meet. He was about my age, slim and dark. He talked about the unemployment situation, 30 per cent at the time, and that it was being blamed on the Jews and the Communists. Said something about the Archbishop of Montréal calling the CCF agents of Soviet Communism and that the Jean Baptiste society was trying to get a Jewish intern thrown out of the hospital and that they were claiming the Jews were robbing the French Canadians of their place as shop keepers. 'I'm worried,' he said. 'Look, I'm a Jew too. I'm lucky, I'm managing a Woolworth department store here. The only Jew in such a position. But I know I could handle a much bigger operation. I could manage a whole chain of Woolworth stores. But they'll never give me that chance. Now you've been to Russia. What I want to know is do they have big department stores there and can Jews like myself get jobs managing them?"

"Now I had been asked that kind of question before, so I remember my answer. It was basically the same one given to me by the Comintern: 'I know what you are talking about,' I said, 'they don't discriminate against Jews in Russia, but they don't have chains of department stores there like we do here. In any case, if you want to build a better life for yourself, you have to work for it. We can't live off the revolution they made in Russia. Sure, it's better there and getting better each passing day, but our job is to make things better here'."

"I don't remember how he took it, but I don't believe he went to Russia then. In fact a few years later he went to fight on the side of the loyalists in the Spanish Civil War and years later I met this Russell Greenberg again, only this time his name was Ross Russell, and he was National Director of the organization of the United Electrical Workers' union."

How Moishe Wolofsky Became Bill Walsh

It was around that time Moishe changed his name to Bill Walsh. The Toronto FSU had asked him to write some articles for its magazine. He needed a pseudonym. For his father's sake he wanted to keep the name Wolofsky out of the public limelight. As it happened, an old school chum, Gus Sherman and another friend, Bill Siegel, team up with him to write the article. Moishe decided to collapse their names with his and comes up with William G. Walsh. It was the name he would take with him to Toronto a few months later.

The world swirled around him but, not being an active part of it, he felt unable to respond. In his very own neighbourhood there were at least five widely read Communist papers — in French, English, Yiddish, Russian, and Polish. Socialists, anarchists, and Communists of all persuasions met daily at Horn's Café and debated regularly at Prince Arthur Hall. The dressmakers were on strike, the first large strike of low-paid French-Canadian workers, with 125 shops in the garment district closed. Four thousand men and women lined the street, forming a column a mile long in a massive show of strength.

Bill also watched as massive world pressure won an acquittal for George Dimitrov, the Bulgarian Communist leader, charged with having started the fire that burned down the Reichstag building just twenty days after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. He fumed as the government banned the performance of "Eight Men Speak" in Toronto, upon the advice of Toronto's infamous Red Squad. Thirty-six hundred people jammed Toronto's Massey Hall to protest the arrest of A.E. Smith, head of the Canadian Labour Defence League.

Every 24 hours seemed to indicate an impending world revolution. Bill could feel it in his bones. He didn't want to miss a second of it. Besides, this double life had become increasingly uncomfortable and he was tired of coming up with lame excuses as to why he hadn't joined the Party when asked to do so by his new friends. Besides, Herschel was pushing him to take a more active role in *The Eagle*.

For Bill Walsh work on the "outside" was unimportant. Real life was in the Party. But working for the Party in Montréal would create an impossible situation for his father. Herschel already complained about his and Sammy's activities. He heard of Moishe's work for the FSU and suspected his son's continuing conviction for the cause. "So you haven't given up working for future glory?" Hershel asked. "You're like the pious Jew who gives up joys on this earth so he may enjoy the glories of the World to Come. You want the applause of posterity?"

"I've already told you," Bill responded, "for what I do I don't expect to be remembered. I look for the satisfaction of being right, of being on the side of progress."

"But why should you worry about it? I can understand a worker being radical. What has he got to lose? I can even understand a Lenin or a Stalin. They leap from obscurity to fame. But you and Sammy will never be a Lenin or a Stalin. What drives you to this silly agitation?"

"We have seen where history is leading. We know which is the right side. When you see the right thing, you must either fight for it or go to pieces. When you don't see what is right and true you can chase after money, women or glory, or whatever. But if you see it and do not support it, you become corrupt. Besides, I'm only following your example. I've seen how you stand up to the Uptowners. I'm only doing in my field what you've spent a life-time doing in yours."

Of course Herschel would never be persuaded. Now he had Sydney Sarkin to blame for leading his son astray. At least Moe Kosawatsky, still in the USSR, was off the hook. Soon after this conversation, when Sarkin brought in an advertisement to *The Eagle*, Herschel shouted at him: "You have stolen my sons. I shall never forgive you." Moishe was convinced he had to move. Besides, he knew he had to break things off with Ruth. Leaving town was the easiest way.

Charlie Sims And The WUL

In March he got a call from Fred Rose. The Workers' Unity League was holding its convention in Montréal. Could some delegates stay at his home? With Herschel and Sarah both away for the weekend, Moishe readily agreed. Five showed up at his door. Although they were only a few years older than himself, they were already veteran union organizers and party stalwarts. Among them was Joshua Gershman, organizer for the Industrial Union of Needle Trade Workers, Charlie Sims, chief organizer of the Workers' Unity League, and Izzy Minster of the Chesterfield and Furniture Workers.

Gershman was immediately suspicious. Was this not the son of Herschel Wolofsky, publisher of the Canadian *Jewish Eagle*, voice of the Liberals, friend of the Jewish garment manufacturers? Not for a few years would Gershman forgive Bill his father, but during that weekend he regaled the publisher's son and the others with stories about a strike he had led only a few months earlier at the Diana Dress Shop. "You see the strike was successful and the workers, most of them young women — we got them an increase of \$3.50. What happens? Monday, a week after the strike is settled, a bunch of them together with the shop committee, bring back their \$3.50. They say they were at church on Sunday and the priest told them that the money was obtained dishonestly. Did you ever hear of such a thing? They begged me to give it back to the boss. So what do I do? I go to their homes and tell their parents it is perfectly legal to join a union and that the money is theirs. They have earned it. I never heard from them about it again."

Izzy Minster had by now fully recovered from the seven week general strike at Stratford. Bill had heard about the strike. Who hadn't? But there stood the man who, along with young Fred Collins, actually led it. Barely five feet tall, Isadore Minster was slight, dark, and spoke with a heavy accent — hardly the prototype proletarian hero, Moishe thought to himself. But what courage and chutzpah going into that conservative Anglo-Saxon town and leading the furniture workers out on a general strike. The first one since Winnipeg 1919.

"You see, it was like this," Izzy began, "we just won a big victory in Toronto with eleven companies. We got wage increases, a 44-hour week and overtime pay after 48 hours, closed shops, even hiring through the union. Of course the Stratford workers were impressed. We said they could have the same if they stuck together."

"You should have heard what Fred Collins said at our first rally. 'A strike is war'," he said. "'In war you know what is done to a man who spies. A man who scabs on his fellow workers in a strike is a spy, a traitor to himself and his class. We have ways of dealing with scabs.' Fred got a rousing reception." "We organized a parade in the town. Two thousand marched. All the other unions were there in full support. Even the local newspaper backed us at first. The companies offered us hardly a thing. Our people fought back the scabs. The companies brought them in trucks to ship out finished furniture. Then the Attorney General sent in the tanks. You must have heard about it. Four tanks down the main streets of the town and two companies of troops. Outrageous. And the townspeople said so. We held a protest meeting. Five thousand came. Imagine. In conservative Stratford. The strikers held firm. Such militancy! When the factories opened their doors not a single striker went in. Then we combined forces with the meat packers. They were on strike too. Almost the whole city was out."

"Soon the red baiting started. The same old thing. The WUL is the Canadian branch of the Red International. All they're interested in is fomenting revolution. They even got Tom Moore [president of the Trades and Labour Congress] to repudiate us and Mosher [president of the All Canadian Congress of Labour] put in his two cents worth too. Here, look what the RCMP said about me and Fred." Izzy pulled out a newspaper clipping: "COLLINS AND MINSTER ARE A MENACE TO THE SAFETY OF LIFE AND PROPERTY IN THE CITY."

"Did the red-baiting worry our strikers? Not a bit. They said they got no interest in our politics. They said they wanted a union, protection, and better working conditions, and that's what we were for too. We organized support all over the country. Even the CCFers and Mayor David Croll of Windsor went along. We had tag days. Our Toronto members gave five per cent of their wages to a special fund. A thousand dollars a week we gave out for food, rent and things. But it was getting cold. Could we supply fuel too? We couldn't hold out much longer. The companies said they were shutting down and pulling out. So we settled. Sure we got some improvements, but no recognition for the union. Could we stay out forever? It was the best we could get. Anyway, we showed the workers and the capitalists too. We showed them a real class struggle union."

Bill was intrigued, fascinated, hungry for more. But it was neither Joshua Gershman nor Izzy Minster that impressed him the most that weekend. It was Charlie Sims, short, wiry, foul-mouthed, Charlie Sims, an English coal miner who had come from Liverpool. He told Bill his story.

Charlie had drifted into the Drumheller, Alberta region and taken up with the Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies. The Wobblies, he explained, opposed the conservative unionism of the American Federation of Labor. A wild bunch, they organized the miners and lumbermen from British Columbia to Alberta, not just the skilled craftsmen. Not by collective agreements did they force better wages and working conditions. In fact they signed no agreements, didn't believe in them. They downed their tools, Charlie explained. Joe Hill was their poet laureate; Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn their leaders. But Charlie said that he finally grew weary of the anarchistic methods of the Wobblies and saw the need for a revolutionary party. Then he joined the Communists.

A seasoned veteran of the Party, Charlie had already landed in jail several times. He also spent two years in Moscow's famed Lenin School. With his clear steel-blue eyes and his rambling speech, Sims had none of the sophisticated and intellectual airs of some of his comrades. Moishe took to him instantly and they talked excitedly into the early hours of the morning. "Charlie, I've got to get out of here," Bill said at last. "I want to join the Party. I want to do some organizing." Charlie agreed. "You're right. This is not the life for you. First chance, you come to Toronto. I'll take it up with our people."

Notes

¹Norman Penner, Canadian Communism (Toronto 1988), 107.

²When the King government finally repealed Article 98 in 1937, Québec premier Maurice Duplessis passed an Act to Protect the Province against Communist Propaganda — the Padlock Law. It was the most notorious piece of legislation in Canadian history, giving Duplessis the power to padlock any house, office, building or school and to imprison whoever he charged with conducting Communist propaganda — nowhere defined in the Act. Under the Act, the police raided labour and left-wing groups, disrupted meetings of the CCF, seized anti-fascist literature, banned films, padlocked book stores and raided the homes of leading political activists.

³Penner, Canadian Communism, 117.

⁴Irving Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour (Toronto 1973), 25. ⁵Tim Buck, Thirty Years (Toronto 1952), 96.

⁶Irving Layton, Waiting for the Messiah: A Memoir (Toronto 1985), 143-4.

Chapter Four

Party Organizer

Walsh moved to Toronto in the winter of 1934. The shabby offices of the National Employment Bureau were filled with men who sat on wooden benches, waiting. Men? Most were boys still in their teens, the rest old before their time.

I don't want your millions, mister, I don't want your diamond ring All I want is the right to live, mister, Give me back my job again. I don't want your Rolls-Royce, mister, I don't want your pleasure yacht, All I want is food for my babies; Give me my old job back. We worked to build this country mister, While you enjoyed a life of ease. You've stolen all that we built, mister; Now our children starve and freeze. (Words by Jim Garland put to the tune of "Greenback Dollars," 1932.)

The Great Depression may have just peaked but one out of every seven workers was still without work and there were still over a million on relief. Reliefers made their weekly visits to the House of Industry, an old grey stone building used as a food-distribution agency by the city's Welfare Department. In Toronto, where relief payments were relatively high, the weekly food allowance for a family of seven was \$6.93. The relief diet: beans, rolled oats, potatoes, cabbage, flour, a treat of peanut butter or apple butter. Some shoved the paper bag of provisions into an old army kitbag or suitcase to avoid the stigma of being on relief. Some were refused groceries until they completed a few hours of work, chopping logs or sluicing down the floors. Workfare, we call it today.

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Unemployed men were easily recognized. Home haircuts ragged around the edges, shirt collar and cuffs carefully turned to put the frayed edges inside, shoes seen happier days.

I'm spending my nights at the flophouse I 'm spending my days on the street I'm looking for work and I find none; I wish I had something to eat. Soup, soup They give me a bowl of soup. Soup, soup They give me a bowl of soup. (Words by Joe Glazer put to the tune of "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," 1945.)

But the Depression world of soup kitchens, dust storms, relief vouchers, and work camps had their opposite. Movies and magazines sold anyone a diversion for five or ten cents a trip. Radio pushed dreams too: Lux, "The only cure for dishpan hands," Canada Dry — "its gingervating." Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Rudee Vallee, Edgar Bergan, and Charlie McCarthy filled the airwaves and empty time, as did "The Happy Gang," "The Lone Ranger," "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Pepper Young's Family," and "Ma Perkins." King Clancy, Howie Morenz and Eddie Shore, superstars on ice, joined with Dizzy Dean, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig on the baseball diamond, and Joe Louis, Max Baer and Jim Braddock in the ring to amuse a jaded world.

Popular monthlies romanticized the great loves of make-believe heroes and heroines. The pulp magazines printed on cheap greyish paper made their appearance under titles like "Ranch Romance," "Love," and "Fantastic Adventure." Tattered copies of pulps with Tarzan, a Mountie, voluptuous half-nudes, or science fiction illustrations on the covers sat in the packs of thousands of itinerant workers who roamed the country seeking the better times and better places depicted in the stories. New fantasy comic strips appeared in the dailies: "Little Orphan Annie," "Tarzan," "Popeye," "L'l Abner." Blackstone the Magician hypnotized his audience on stages throughout Canada. Easy money schemes proliferated with cash prizes, all expense trips, radios and much else, promised something for nothing and enticed millions who could afford little more than the basics and often not even that.

The Yanks had their Hollywood, Shirley Temple, and Empire State Building; but Canadians had their Quints. The Dionne Quintuplets were everywhere, from decals on children's radios, to advertisements for syrup, to starring roles in the movies. They were the biggest tourist attraction Ontario had ever seen. Real estate values soared in the little northern town of Callendar where they were born. Money spent by tourists in the town

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amounted to \$50 million in 1934 alone. Pennants, post cards, story books, blotters, pens, and a host of other souvenir items were sold to thousands of eager parents who each day made the pilgrimage to the Dionne farm. Recognizing the commercial possibilities, Ontario's Hepburn government passed the Dionne Quintuplet Act, making the children the property of the state.¹

For the 24 year-old Bill Walsh all these were sideshows designed to distract those without a political consciousness from the real action. The real show was the organization of unions among the workers and the unemployed, the fight to repeal Section 98, and to win converts to the cause.

May Day 1934

May Day, 1934. Posters plastered walls, vacant storefronts, fences, and lamp posts. Posters announced "ALL OUT for May Day — Labour's Day of Protest and Celebration. ALL OUT. May 1, 2:30 Riverside Park. MARCH TO QUEENS' PARK 7:00 p.m. at the Colliseum."

Thousands of workers and their families marched west on Gerard:

Arise Ye Prisoners of Starvation' Arise ye wretched of the earth For justice thunders condemnation A better world's in birth." Seven thousand strong, banners high: "MASS UNITY FOR THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, UNITE AND ORGANIZE".

Across Yonge they moved and north on University, red flags waving:

No more tradition's chains shall bind us Arise ye slaves, no more enthrall The earth shall rise on new foundations, We have been naught, we shall be all 'Tis the final conflict Let each stand in his place The international Soviet Shall be the human race.

Nine thousand gathered at the Colliseum — Germans, Ukranians, Jews, Bulgarians. The occasional Anglo-Saxon. The Jewish People's Choir led the singing:

"We meet today in freedom's cause And raise our voices high, We join our hands in union strong To battle or to die. Hold the fort, for we are coming Union men be strong Side by side we battle onwards, Victory will come."

First speaker of the day was the Reverend A.E. Smith, secretary of the Canadian Labour Defense League. Tall, deep-voiced, eloquent: "If there is one thing more potent on this May the First, than any other year, it is that of fear. The ruling class is afraid. It is afraid of the working class." The crowd roared its approval. Now Smith intoned: "We must drive that fear deeper into the consciousness." More cheers. Students chanted: "One, two, three, Young Communists are we, Fighting for the working class against the Bourgeosie."

Dispersed throughout the coliseum were over a dozen detectives from the city of Toronto, plain clothes division. Their faces said, "We know this crowd well — we know how to handle them. Don't get too rowdy, comrade, or we'll have you off to jail or deport you. Damn foreigners." A uniformed man approached the platform. Many in the crowd recognized him — Sargeant of Detectives William Nursey of the infamous Red Squad, the same man who had arrested Reverend Smith some months before on charges of sedition. Sargeant Nursey leaned over to Smith: "Be careful what you say or you'll end up back in jail."

Boos and hisses filled the room as Smith relayed the message to the crowd. "No policeman will dictate what I can or cannot say," he shouted. There were more cheers, more speeches and revolutionary greetings, among others "to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its outstanding leader Comrade Stalin"; and another "to the Red Army, the greatest bulwark for peace in the world."

Right arm raised, Reverend Smith ended the rally, pointing to the large banner behind him on which was painted a red outline of the Canadian Dominion bearing in yellow paint "Soviet Canada" and the hammer and sickle. "A Soviet government will be built in this country. Forward to the Soviet Union of Canada."

The crowd chanted: "A Soviet Canada, a Soviet Canada." And again, with clenched right hands raised in allegiance, nine thousand voices rose to a crescendo in the chorus of "The Internationale":

Arise ye prisoners of starvation Arise ye wretched of the earth For justice thunders condemnation, 76 Bill Walsh

A better world's in birth. 'Tis the final conflict Let each stand in his place.

Bill Walsh, the newly appointed Educational Director of the Needle Trades Union stood with the rest, right hand extended, fist clenched.

Crisis At Fenelon Falls

The office of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades sat at Grange and Spadina, smack in the middle of Toronto's garment district. It was also the centre of Jewish life in Toronto, with kosher butcher shops, bakeries, delicatessens, haberdasheries, Yiddish theatre, synagogues, and parochial schools. Orators challenged the system on street corners up and down the avenue. A year or so earlier, 15,000 people, all the needle trades, over 50 Jewish organizations and some others gathered at Clarence Square and marched up the Avenue protesting the rise of anti-semitism in Germany.

Garment workers, when they could find employment, made only \$600 to \$700 a year. To bring up a family at what the Department of Labour called minimum health and decency cost \$1,300 in Toronto. Walsh helped with grievances and instructed shop stewards. Joshua Gershman and Charlie Sims told him what to do.

Late that summer a letter arrived at the union office from the little town of Fenelon Falls. At the time the union office stood near empty with the entire staff gone to Montréal to lead a general strike of dress-makers. Only Walsh and Esther Silver, the pert and popular union secretary were on duty. Written by an employee of a company called Shields Sporting Goods, the letter described how the workers at the company had been briefly organized by the Workers' Unity League in Toronto. To escape the union, Shields had made a deal with the town of Fenelon Falls for a free building and free hydro and had gone about hiring young women from the neighbouring farms for \$3.00 a week. "If anyone needs a union," the letter said, "it's these girls. They're really getting the treatment from Shields. He should be taught a lesson."

"What do we do?" Bill asked Esther. "Better wait till the others get back," she suggested. This was not the advice he was looking for, for he saw this as his chance to do some organizing. "I'm going," he announced. The next day he rode the train to Lindsay, switching to another that took him to Fenelon Falls. On the train he looked over a manual that Charlie Sims had given him a while back on how to conduct a strike.

No Dogs Or Jews Allowed

That's what the sign on the station wall said. Not a very friendly introduction, Bill mused, but he had not expected a red carpet. Just before lunch he approached the factory gate, sauntered up to a cluster of women sitting around eating lunch, and introduced himself. "I'm from the union. I want to help you improve your wages. Can we have a meeting to talk about it?" Bill asked.

Union was a foreign word in those parts but the workers were easily persuaded. Someone said she could arrange to get the dance hall that evening. "Don't worry, we'll all be there. We gotta do something about this place. It's not just the wages, ya know. There's no fresh water and the toilets aren't fit for human use."

"I didn't waste the afternoon," Bill remembers. "I dropped in on storekeepers to ask them about Shields, telling them I was from the union and asking what they thought. Union talk scared them, of course, but they admitted that the wages were terrible. Waiting for an opening, I recalled Point Eight from Charlie Sim's pamphlet, 'if they get higher wages they can spend more money in the town. That means more sales for you.' They were still suspicious but at least they weren't hostile."

"Point Ten on Charlie's list was 'get to a typewriter.' The only typewriter in the town belonged to the local newspaper, *The Fenelon Falls Times*. The proprietor was not particularly friendly, but he agreed. It was an ancient affair, operating on strings. 'Belongs to a museum,' I remember saying to myself, but I typed out a few demands for the meeting and got permission to use the typewriter again in the morning."

"At least seventy-five or eighty people showed up for the meeting, young men and women in their late teens, buzzing with excitement and anticipation. They had never been to a meeting like this before. Neither had I, but I had read Charlie's pamphlet. I explained the background: Shields used to operate in Toronto and underpaid his workers there. They formed a union and forced him to pay higher wages so he closed down the plant and set up in Fenelon Falls because nobody knows about unions here and the town offered him a rent-free building and free hydro. "Now what are we going to do about it?"

"String the bastard up."

"Run him out of town."

"No, no, that's not the way. That won't help you. What we have to do is to organize."

"Organize. What's that?"

"I recalled a fable from my boyhood that came in handy. It was about the man on his deathbed who calls in his seven sons and talks to them about their inheritance. He hands them each a twig and tells the boys to break them. Then he gathers the bunch of twigs and instructs them again to break them. They can't. Now he says, 'this is what I am bestowing on you as your inheritance: in unity there is strength which cannot be broken."

"Now I said, look you people, here's the point. If this was working hours now and you were all here instead of being in the factory, Mr. Shields, for all the money he has and all the free hydro and the free building, he couldn't operate, and if he can't operate, he can't make a cent. Now you'd be in a position to deal with him."

"You could see the lights go on. I could see and hear from the murmurs that they were with me. They wanted to know where to begin. What was the first step.

'We draw up demands,' I said. 'I have some of them here. I'm going to read them to you. wages — \$8.00 a week; a water cooler inside the plant; separate toilets for men and women'."

"Those are good,' one woman yelled out, 'but what about Mr. Shield's beard, the way he stands behind us and pushes against us." "And the way he pinches,' another chimed in." "Okay, okay, we'll put that in our demands too,' I said. These points were not in Charlie's pamphlets," Bill chortled, relating the story, but he agreed. They elected a committee, one person from each department in the shop. They went into action the next morning, just as soon as I got the demands on paper in contract form. Another visit to *The Fenelon Times* fixed that.

"At 10:00 a.m. the next day, the committee, along with myself, presented the contract to Shields. 'What's this?' he said. 'A contract? What's going on here? Get out, get out. You'll never get me to agree to that'."

"The committee walked out and brought out the entire plant. Shields was flabbergasted. The people were excited about what they had done. Once they were all out and assembled outside the plant I told them, 'You know what a picket fence does? It keeps people out. Well, we're going to set up a picket line around this plant to keep people out. We have a word for anyone who crosses the picket line. We call them scabs.'"

"They set up committees — a picket committee, a provisions committee, a public relations committee, a sports committee. I explained what each one does. And I taught them songs like 'Hold the Fort', and 'On the Line, On the Line, Come Picket on the Picket Line,'

"Late that afternoon a messenger came out of the plant and said that Mr. Shields wanted to see me. He would see the union organizer. 'What about the committee?' I said. 'Only the organizer.'"

"Tell him no. I won't see him without the committee.' That's according to Professor Sims, lesson number thirteen. Next day Shields sent out the word. He would see the committee."

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"But when we got inside he took me aside. 'I want to show you something. I want to show you what these people do to me,' he said, and he pointed to some folded up leather jackets. There were hundreds of them piled from the floor to the ceiling and he pulled some out. 'Look at this, look at this, look what they are doing to me. You understand. This is not cloth, when you sew cloth and you make mistakes, you take the stitches out and then you resew them, but not leather. They are ruined. I can't fix them. Absolutely ruined. Hundreds and hundreds of these. And I should pay these people? They are ruining my material and I'm teaching them how to work and you want me to pay them Toronto wages?' I said that we weren't asking for Toronto wages. Then he got awfully vague, something about it being worth a lot to him not to have all these troubles.

'What do you mean it's worth a lot to you?' I said. 'What's it worth?'

'Five hundred,' he said. So I said, 'Okay, give me a cheque.' He said 'no, not a cheque. I'll give you cash. You think I'm born yesterday? Cash \$500'."

That night Bill related the story about the bribe. The workers were ready to tear the plant apart. But Shields relented. The next day he signed the demands. Bill put a phone call through to Toronto. He had no cards to sign the workers into the union! That night, union president Max Dolgoy came out to Fenelon Falls. Bill introduced him to the crowd as the national president of their union. The cards were passed out and signed. The workers had a union and their first collective agreement. Dolgoy was delighted. Union victories were scarce these days. "Bill," he said on the way home, "you're a hero of labour; from now on you're a union organizer."

Not long after this he was sent out to Hamilton to organize 80 employees of a company called Victoria Leather Jacket. Jim Beattie was the Workers' Unity man in Hamilton. Beattie had been trying, with little success, to get something going with the steel workers in the city. Walsh went through the routine that was becoming quite familiar to him. Quick hit and run factory gate meetings at lunch time to plant the first seeds; followed up by home and talk to workers who seem friendly; frequenting local restaurants to pick up plant gossip; scouring Party memberships to find someone who worked in the plant or whose second cousin worked in the plant. He set up an office on King, the main street in town. Meetings were called, demands drawn up, committees elected. In the depth of the Depression, no company willingly negotiated with a union, let alone one just organized by the Communists.

"Out, get the hell out," they were told. And they got the hell out. It was another Workers' Unity League strike. Strike funds were unheard of back then. To feed the strikers, Walsh scrounged around for food and money from party members and friendly unions. Then in January, Muni Erlich, party organizer for southern Ontario, called him at the union office. "Bill," he said. "You were appointed party organizer of West Toronto last night." Walsh was in seventh heaven. Not just a member of the party, but a party organizer. What next?

"When do I report?"

"Right away. Tomorrow."

"What do you mean tomorrow? We're in the middle of a strike. I can't just leave."

"We'll put someone else in charge."

They agreed on Jim Beattie and Bill introduced him to the striking workers before taking off.

Bill recalls the events of the next day as they were related to him. "The next morning Jim was in charge down on the picket line and that's the morning the company decided to bring scabs in. They were led by a local thug called Gula and a few of his cronies who were hired to break up the strike. Now maybe they were expecting me, but what they got was Jim Beattie and he was a big guy, slim but very powerfully built and he loved a fight. He said to Gula, 'Where do you think you're going?' He said, 'I'm going into the plant. Outta my way.' 'You're not going into the plant,' says Jim, 'there's a strike going on here'."

"Gula pulled out a revolver and said, 'Get outta my way punk. Come on boys.' Jim, quick as a bunny, lunged in, slugged him on the chin and yanked the gun out of his hand. Soon there was a general melee. The police showed up and Jim was arrested along with Gula. He got two years less a day while the gangster was off scot-free."

"Damn it,' Beattie said when I visited him in Hamilton's city jail. 'You must have figured it. The first bloody day you leave, I take over and in come the goons and I get arrested.' I always felt bad about that and wondered if Jim Beattie held a grudge against me. Years later I was assured he didn't."

Section Organizer

Section organizer, heart of the party organization, meant Walsh like other section organizers were responsible for dozens of neighbourhood branches and, wherever the Party had a few members in plants, for industry units. And responsible for Party-affiliated mass organizations, or "fronts" as they were sometimes called, like the Unemployment Councils, the Tenant Councils and the League Against War and Fascism. Beyond this, the section organizer was responsible for carrying out party activity in non-affiliated organizations, like trade unions, but also PTAs and cultural, ethnic, and community organizations. Cells, comprised of party members, needed to be established in every organization Communists created or joined. Under the guidance of the section organizer, Party members would meet to plan

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their work, which meant ensuring that the Party line was carried into and hopefully adopted by the various organizations.

By this means small groups of Party members, coordinated from above, could gain influence far out of proportion to their numbers. It was a brilliant organizational structure. In the 1960s the New Left prescribed a process they called "the long march through the institutions." The Old Left was doing it with considerable effect 30 years earlier.

Even moderately active Party members belonged to three or four front organizations, attended endless meetings, leafletted, organized demonstrations and parades, gathered signatures on petitions, and sold the *Clarion*. Wherever a group of unemployed or striking workers gathered together to protest — on street corners, in pool halls, in work camps — a party organizer appeared to direct the conversation towards organizing against the boss and against the system. The Communists were on the march. There were still less than 8,000 members in all, but hundreds more were joining each month and at least another 100,000 were members of organizations in one way or another affiliated with the Communists. Besides Party members were thousands more sympathizers, ready to help out with money and other contributions.

Few had the time or the interest to read the classical writings of Communism. It was never doctrine that attracted most of them to the Party in the first place. They joined it because they believed it to be the most effective way to fight for the unemployed and organize the unorganized, and fight evictions, or because they believed it to be the most effective way to combat racism, anti-semitism or fascism. No less than 17,000 people filled Maple Leaf Gardens to applaud Tim Buck's release from jail. "They were not shooting at Tim Buck in Kingston," Buck said about the recent attempt on his life. "They were shooting at the working class." For Buck and the Communists the identification between the two was complete and irrefutable. "If they will do such a thing to try to stop the growth of a comparatively small party, what will the Canadian bourgeoises not do when they see their power slipping from them, when they see the workers growing stronger and stronger? Do you think they will say, 'Let us sit down and vote about it?' Not at all. They will try to follow the examples of Germany." Then, shaking his fist in the face of the government, Tim Buck defied the police to arrest the whole crowd under section 98. The crowd went wild.

Tim Buck, true folk hero, was certainly a hero to the still impressionable Bill Walsh. Within the Party, Buck was a subject of unrepressed adulation. Leslie Morris titled his 1939 tract on Party history *The Story of Tim Buck's Party*. A Party newspaper article written in 1945 gushed: "Comrade Buck, if he had pursued the arts he would have been one of the great ones; he had the qualities which could have made him a great surgeon; he could have become a very clever lawyer; in science he could have been one of those who travelled the starry road to the atom bomb."

Then there was Stewart Smith, child prodigy of the Party, son of the Reverend A.E. Smith, on the political bureau since the age of seventeen, decisive, intellectual, even brilliant — so it was widely said; Sam Carr, heavily accented, the party theoretician and a powerful orator; Joe Salsberg, suave, clever, already a major influence in the labour movement, only a decade earlier a youth leader of the Labour Zionists; Bill Kashton, quiet, hard-working, national secretary of the YCL; Charlie Sims, cursing, rambling, the Political Bureau's hard-rock miner; Peter Hunter, rambunctious, humorous, Toronto secretary of the YCL; Norman Freed, born bureaucrat, typical of the petty tyrants that were drawn like magnets to the Communist Party; and Muni Ehrlich, district organizer, outgoing, warm, dark-eyed, loved by all but especially by Party women.

Most gratifying of all for Bill was that Moe Kosowatsky was there too. Just back from Moscow, Dick Steele, as he now called himself, had been appointed section organizer of the other side of Toronto. Partners once again and once again inseparable. They roomed together, worked together, planned together, ran off pamphlets till three in the morning while analyzing the latest news from the USSR, and up again at six to help with the distribution.

In Canada as in Russia, few were more devoted to the cause than these two. They accepted each and every doctrine enunciated by the Party as an article of faith, taking for granted anything coming from the top leadership. The Purge Trials, as they came to be known, had begun in December 1934, reaching a crescendo over the next few years. On trumped-up charges of treason, terrorist plots, including plots to murder Stalin himself, Stalin accused and his courts convicted first one than another of the old Bolshevik leaders. Victims included an ex-premier, several vice-premiers, two exchiefs of the Comintern, the head of the trade unions, the Chief of the General Staff, and most Soviet ambassadors in Europe and Asia. The cream of Soviet revolutionary society was being liquidated. But, "apart from what our people said they said, we never sought to hear what our critics had to say," Bill Walsh later remarked about this orgy of violence.

For young men like Bill Walsh and Dick Steele every day was a marvelous adventure, their minds occupied from morning to night with one project or another. They were on an incredible high. They had their hands "on the throttle of history," as it used to be said. Their view of the world was positive and hopeful. There was no room in it for doubt. They lived and breathed the Party. The movement was their total world, their whole identity. They carried it with them in every conversation, no matter how trivial, and in everything they did whether it was shopping for food, going to a concert, going home for a short visit to Montréal, running off mimeographed leaflets, or running a meeting. Like all of their closest comrades, they trusted their leaders. As far as they were concerned, nothing in their experience would have caused them to do otherwise.

Life In The Party

"What do I do?" Bill asked Muni Ehrlich, first chance he got. "Well, a section organizer is responsible for membership, dues payments, neighbourhood events, industrial action, shop units, activity in the mass organization, and everything else," Muni replied, laughing uproariously. "Seriously," Ehrlich explained, "There are some problems you will face. Do you know Ukrainian? Finnish? Hungarian? Yiddish? Only Yiddish? That's too bad because these are the languages most of our comrades speak on the western side of the city. Now there is a real problem with them. You see, they have party factions in their language groups - which is fine. They have wonderful picnics, sports activities, concerts. But they bury themselves there. You understand? Our Finnish comrades, our Ukranian comrades, the Bulgarians — they refuse to draw the masses of workers, their own people, into our struggles. They keep them isolated. This is one problem. Another big problem is that we must organize units in the workshops. The factory must be our stronghold. I'm sure you know that. The best elements among the workers, the forward elements, those are the ones we must recruit to our cause." This was what Bill has been waiting for. Building communism among the workers. "Okay, how do we go about doing it?" he asked.

"We organize around immediate grievances. That is the starting point. From there it leads the workers to higher struggles, the struggle against the system. I can't spell it out for you in any more detail than that. Your job is to find ways of adapting the party's campaigns to the conditions in the plants. Easier said than done, but there are ways. Factory meetings, shop papers. You have to learn about all this. Very important. The shop papers have to represent the mind of the workers. Did you ever see Lenin's leaflets? Study them. Lenin was a master, a craftsman. Short articles, simple, in the language of the worker, about grievances in the shop and connecting from there to our program."

"O.K. Any more advice?" Walsh asked. "There's one more thing. You know about our Trade Union Commission? Any problem you have about union work you see Joe Salsberg. On other party matters you see me."

Not long after receiving Erlich's advice, Bill found himself in the middle of a squabble inside the Bulgarian faction. As was their practice, he and Dick Steele sat in their rented room on Bathurst Street near Huron, reviewing their day's activities and mapping out plans for the next day. As Bill nodded off to sleep, he heard some news that grabbed his attention.

"I did a very hard thing today, Bill. I had to expel Dimoff from the party."

"You mean Dimoff, the only comrade we have on the Toronto Labour Council?"

"The same. The Bulgarian faction laid charges against him. They don't amount to much, but what's behind it is that he's having an affair with the young wife of an older comrade. You know how handsome Dimoff is. Well she went for him. The old man is an influential member of the Bulgarian faction. You can understand the problem. There was nothing else I could do."

"Well, we have to do something," Bill said. "Without Dimoff we have no one on the Toronto Labour Council. The Bulgarian faction is your responsibility. The Labour Council is mine. You can't expel him. We had better get hold of Muni and J.B. and call a meeting."

The next evening the entire Bulgarian faction turned out at a packed meeting at the Bulgarian National Hall on Ontario Street. Muni Ehrlich took the chair with Bill Walsh and Dick Steele on either side. "Now let's get down to the bottom of this," he said. "What are the charges against Comrade Dimoff?"

"The charges are grave," the faction secretary replied. Murmurs of assent emerged from the audience. "We charge Dimoff with three violations: sabotaging the party press, escaping the class struggle, and adopting anti-Leninism in his approach to the woman question."

"Well, let's hear the evidence," Ehrlich instructed.

"You see, comrades, every year we have a campaign to raise funds for our newspaper, *Borba* you know, the Bulgarian Communist paper. Comrade Dimoff has been the champion money-raiser since two or three years ago. This year another comrade challenged him to a socialist competition. Comrade Dimoff accepted the challenge but he lost the competition."

"This is sabotaging the party press?" Bill asked. Ehrlich nudged him to stay calm.

"And escaping the class struggle? What lies behind this charge?" Ehrlich queried.

"Comrade Dimoff wants to visit the Soviet Union. We told him, 'comrade, they don't need you in the Soviet Union. We need you here. This is where the class struggle is.' He won't listen. So we charge him with trying to escape the class struggle." At this point, Dimoff, who had sat quietly, intervened. "But comrades, I was selected as a delegate to the USSR because I raised the most money for our organization."

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Bill was beside himself, Dick also ready to explode. The charges were mere camouflage. But Ehrlich persisted. "And what of the final charge, that comrade Dimoff has an anti-Leninist approach to women?"

"When comrade Lenin addressed this question speaking to the Young Communist League," the faction secretary began, "he said the popular expression among young communists is that having sex is like drinking a glass of water. It is a bodily need. You drink it down like you drink a glass of water. You know what comrade Lenin said about this. He said 'maybe sex is like a glass of water but how many glasses of water can you drink? Just as you wouldn't want your lips to be on a glass muddied by other peoples' lips, the same is true about a sexual relationship. He said 'sex is not really like a drink of water. There is much more to it than that. You don't drink from a dirty glass and you don't drink too much water.' Now comrades, that's what Lenin said and we have evidence that comrade Dimoff here hasn't learned that. His sexual appetite for another man's wife is disrupting our work."

Amidst the shouts of anger from the assembled, once again the accused rose to defend himself. "But this is not the Canadian way. She never saw this man before they were married. He brought her over as a bride. It was the only way they would let her into Canada. I have nothing against the comrade, but their marriage has never been real. She only lived with him for a few months. We are not having an affair, only holding hands. But we love each other and we want to be married."

The chairs began to fly. Dimoff was not without supporters among the younger men. The woman was a mere 20 years old to the elderly comrade's 61 years. The leaders withdrew to a corner of the hall. A compromise was reached. Dimoff's expulsion from the Bulgarian organization stood and he was not to see the girl for at least six months. Nor was he to set foot in Little Bulgaria. But his expulsion from the Party was withdrawn for, as Ehrlich explained it, party factions have no jurisdiction over disciplining party members. Only party branches can do that.

Bill was pleased with the outcome but not amused by the whole affair. Personal differences must never be allowed to get in the way of Party work. It was rare enough for a foreign language comrade to rise to a leading position in the trade union movement. To expel such a man on some petty conflict, no matter how it was dressed in abstract principles of Marxism-Leninism, was unthinkable to him. Yet, he would see this sort of thing again again, and experience it himself in his final days in the Party.

Fighting Evictions

Bill Walsh took pride in the fact that Toronto West, his section, had the most members and was the most active of any in the entire country. But neither Muni Ehrlich nor regional director Norman Freed were satisfied. Freed, in particular, was a constant irritant.

Walsh regarded him as a gas bag. Looking back at it many years later, he reflected, "It was usually the good talkers who seemed to get into positions in our organizations. The people who did the work and kept the organizations going rarely managed to get positions that carried recognition and prestige."

Evictions for non-payment of rent and mortgages were commonplace, especially in the Cabbagetown district of Dick Steele's section. Those days people held the bailiff even more unpopular than the tax man. Little wonder! When intimidation failed to remove delinquent tenants, bailiffs hurled them into the street along with their furniture. Dick and the other organizers developed a counter-attack against this. They organized squads of neighbours to block the bailiff's entry, return the furniture, and hook up the power where it had been cut off. The scene never ended there, of course. Soon the sheriff arrived with his deputy, a court order, and — if they expected trouble — a squad of police. Dick Steele would not be so easily defeated.

"So what if he's got a court order," he shouted, "we'll stop him from delivering it. We'll show the people what can be done." In an earlier encounter at one such location at 10 Midland Place the local Unemployment Association had confronted the bailiff's party. It didn't take long for the constabulary to show up armed with crow bars, smashing their way into the premises and clashing with the people for several minutes before beating a retreat when neighbours from the upstairs threatened to pour boiling water on them. Waving the court order in his hands, the sheriff said, "I've got my duty to perform. This family has got to remove itself from these premises. Here's the court order, signed by His Majesty's Government."

The crowd moved in — hissing, booing, and heil hitlering the sheriff. "Do you mean that you need this piece of paper to evict these people?" Dick asked. Before waiting for the response he dove in, grabbed the piece of paper and made a run for it, taking off with the papers up the street. The sheriff and his deputy stood frozen in their tracks, dumb-founded. "Here, you can't do that. That's theft." By the time they ran after him, Dick had disappeared. Back safely in his room he admitted to Bill, "I know they'll bring in another court order tomorrow or the next day or next week. We'll just have to find another way to stall them. I've even been able to get some of the sheriff's men to hold off. They're not all fascists. Sooner or later, though, these people will probably be evicted. But in the meantime we've shown them something about fighting back, about defending themselves."

"That was the whole point," Bill explained many years later. "If only we showed the people that they didn't have to take it, didn't have to be afraid of the cops or the man with that piece of paper in his hand, that sticking together they could get somewhere. We believed that if enough people took on the local authorities, someday soon they would be ready to take on the state."

Praise From Tim Buck

That summer they read in the papers that the traditional military tatoo was about to take place. They developed a plan. Copying the official program from the newspaper and mimeographing it onto $8-1/2 \times 14$ paper, folded over, they put out their message on the inside. Taking off from Rudyard Kipling's *Charge of the Light Brigade*:

Half a League, half a league, Half a league onward Onto the valley of death Rode the six hundred

Their message read, "Surely we in this day and age have learned the lesson of the six hundred. They never returned from the valley of death. We, united with the working class, march the other way. To the valley of life."

As the soldiers mingled in the fields before the parade began, the *agent-provocateurs* distributed copies of the programs with their own message on the inside. Had not Lenin himself said that before the revolution could be launched the soldiers must be on the side of the proletariat? Before they were discovered and chased away, they managed to hand out over a thousand copies.

Others besides Norman Freed had noticed the style of their work. That fall at a party convention, Tim Buck himself pulled out the military tatoo leaflet. "Here is an example of the daring I am talking about, comrades," he said, "Imaginative, effective, spectacular work, comrade Freed."

Without embarrassment Freed stood up and took a bow. Bill and Dick could only snicker. Only ten days earlier Freed had bawled them out for not having cleared their plans with them. "If you had, I would not have agreed to it. It is an embarrassment to the party. Sheer adventurism." 88 Bill Walsh

It was at this conference that the new course for a united front against fascism was first announced. Fascism was the last stage of capitalism, Tim Buck told party delegates, spelling out the new strategy:

Nothing must be done to scare those elements of the middle class and the bourgeoisie that might be willing to ally themselves with the Soviet Union to combat the German revenge-seekers and Japanese expansionists. Once Fascism is defeated and the defence of the USSR is secure we prepare the transition from the defensive to the offensive against capitalism, steering towards the organization of a mass political strike.

This strategy of building a popular front was adopted by Communist Parties across the world as part of a new turn emerging from the Comintern.

A One World Party

Since its founding in 1921, the Communist Party of Canada was intertwined with a world-wide organization centred in Moscow. Contrary to commonly held belief, it was never the case that Canadian and other Communists submitted as "foreign agents" to the Comintern and indirectly to Soviet control. They gave themselves freely because they saw themselves as part of a world movement. And they sincerely believed that solidarity with the Soviet Union, as they defined it, enhanced the position of "progressive forces" everywhere.

In March 1919, within six months of their revolution, the Bolsheviks established the Communist International, the Comintern. It was to be the "one world party" for revolutionaries all over the world. This world Communist Party would be directed by an Executive Committee headquartered in Moscow. All national parties who sought the Communist franchise were obliged to subordinate themselves to it. Its decisions were binding on all sections, as the national parties were called, and had to be promptly carried out. Indirectly, to be sure, it selected the leaders of each national party and purged them at will. It could expel members in any "section", or entire national sections, even against the will of the majority of its members and did.

"The victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is assured," Lenin had proclaimed, in closing the First Congress of the Comintern. But the Communist Party could fulfill its mission "only if its organization is as centralized as possible, if iron discipline prevails and if the party centre ... is equipped with the most comprehensive powers." The "comprehensive powers" were understood to be held in descending order, from the executive committee of the Comintern at the top, to the Central Committees of each of the national sections, to the provincial or state central committees, municipal committees right down to the neighbourhood and factory committees. Each committee was omnipotent in relation to those below it and impotent in relation to those above it.

All of this was spelled out in the Twenty-One Conditions of Admission to the Communist International that national parties had to agree to unconditionally. It was a world-wide structure, adopted from the one that had been so successful in the Bolshevik Party itself. The underlying principle was democratic centralism: All members were required to study, discuss, and vote on policy matters. The results were distilled and implemented by the Party centre. Once its decision was made, members were bound by it, whether or not they personally agreed with it. Thus the whole party organization was focused on implementing party policy, unimpaired by inner-party disputes.

In practice, almost from the beginning, political decisions were made at the centre and merely passed on to those below. Most policy discussion amounted to a contest to see who could best anticipate changes in the party line before they were actually declared. Once declared, the task at each level of the party structure was to discover the best way of putting it into effect. The democratic aspects of the process were also to soon disappear. Differences of opinion could lead to factions and factions to splits. With party unity the number one priority, divergent opinions were not tolerated. It was not enough for the minority to accept the will of the majority. There was no room for a minority. They either had to think like the majority or found themselves hounded out.

The model, adopted from the days of pre-revolutionary Russia, had at least some applicability in Canada. As in old Russia where the Bolshevik Party had been banned, the Canadian Party too was banned for most of its first 25 years of existence. Even when it was a legal party after World War II, it was under constant police surveillance, infiltrated by informers, and subject to a not too subtle witch-hunt.

From the outset the self-proclaimed task of the International was "to organize joint action by the proletariat of the different countries to pursue one goal: the overthrow of capitalism ... and the establishment of an international Soviet republic." While the USSR, being the first Soviet republic, was accorded an important role in the process, at the beginning it was not given the pivotal role. The leaders of the revolution were convinced that socialism could not succeed in backward Russia without the economic support of the industrially advanced countries of Europe.

After Lenin died and Stalin consolidated his power as the new head of the Soviet state, he reversed this long-held belief. He pronounced that socialism could indeed be achieved in one country, especially one as large and resource-rich as the USSR. With this declaration the single most important task of Communist parties everywhere became defending the USSR. Building socialism in the USSR would be a beacon for the working class of all lands, the principle factor of their emancipation. Everything done there, both its internal policies and its external ones, was seen to be identical with the interests of socialism worldwide. Hence, all Communist parties were to subordinate their interests to those of the USSR — whatever the costs in terms of their own immediate success.

In 1929 Party members around the world were informed that capitalism was about to collapse; Europe was "entering a new phase of revolutionary upsurge"; it was "class against class." With this pronouncement, Stalin launched an attack against the "right" opposition in his midst and, through the Comintern, hurled the international apparatus of the party against social democratic and labour parties in their various countries. These were seen as the most dangerous potential accomplices in any armed intervention against the USSR.

In Canada as elsewhere the tiny Communist Party, having spent the better part of the first decade of its existence bringing together most of the revolutionary Left under its leadership, proceeded to purge many of its founding leaders as representatives of the "right" opposition. It launched bitter attacks against the recently founded Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), calling the rival social democratic organization social fascists, and pulled out of mainstream trade unions to form their own trade union organization, the Workers' Unity League.

Popular Front Days

Hitler's victory in Germany caused a 180-degree turn in Soviet policy and therefore in the strategies of Communist Parties everywhere. Germany, it was by then clear, was preparing for a war against the Soviet Union and all efforts were turned towards building a common front with other groups against fascism. Yesterday the revolution was just around the corner. But for those misleaders, the social democrats, the working class was ready for it. Now the revolution was temporarily postponed and these misleaders were to be embraced as comrades and allies.

Lenin's Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder was dusted off and became the guide to action once again. Writing in 1920, Lenin had ridiculed those Communists who argued against participating in "bourgeois parliaments" and the trade unionists who tried to set up their own unions which, while ideologically correct, were small, ineffective, and isolated from the

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vast majority of workers. This classic was already back in favour when Wolofsky and Kosawatsky were in Moscow, and was among the works they studied there. Bill Walsh recollected that this was the text that made the single biggest impression on him.

The Workers' Unity League was dissolved by the same process it was created — a decision from Moscow. Though they were not consulted, Canadian Communists were quite happy to give up the WUL and merge their unions with the mainstream. They wished nothing more than to become part of the mass movement, begun in the US, but certain to sweep Canada too. As it happened, the Communists not only became part of the mass movement, they often led it. There is no doubt, for example, that it was the Communists that led the movement of the unemployed, so much so that Prime Minister Bennett, in the words of historian Norman Penner, "[made] the actions and grievances of the unemployed a contest between him, personally, and the Communist Party." When, in the fall of 1935, the Bennett government was defeated, Penner added, "the Communist Party took the credit ... and it was justified in doing so."²

In the spirit of the so-called Popular Front, the Communists called for mutual cooperation between themselves and the previously despised CCF. Not surprisingly, CCF leaders refused all offers to work together. Having been vilified as "class collaborators" and "social fascists" only a few years before, they were naturally suspicious of these appeals. In any event, whatever trust that was gained over the years would be undermined again and again by the twists and turns of Communist Party policy as it strained to keep step with the twists and turns emanating from Moscow.

From the very start the CCF was able to attract far broader support from the general public. By the end of the 1930s they were the official opposition in the legislatures of Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan. In Ontario they were winning a respectable fifteen per cent of the vote and they were able to elect several representatives to the federal House of Commons.

The Communist Party also enjoyed some success. After years of being illegal, working underground, and with little presence and less credibility, in the mid-1930s it was beginning to grow by leaps and bounds. Party membership doubled between 1935 and 1937, rising from 7,400 to 15,000. By 1937 the CPC was signing up 300 new members a month. Just as important, numerous others were involved in one or other of the Party's front groups, not yet willing or ready to become members.

Ever since R.B. Bennett, the reigning Conservative Prime Minister, began his series of radio broadcasts in January 1935, proclaiming his own New Deal, everyone knew a federal election was coming. Bennett had tried everything he knew to protect industry and property: raising tariffs by 50 per cent; throwing agitators in jail or deporting them; banning the Communist Party; and forcing single unemployed men into labour camps. But the economy failed to recover and the agitation only grew. Alarmingly. Concluding that Canadian capitalism had to be reformed or it would be overthrown, in his final hour he offered unemployment insurance, minimum wage legislation, marketing boards, standards for working conditions, and more. Few people believed in his political conversion. Many of his own followers did not share his new-found belief that capitalism needed major surgery.

The Liberal opposition offered little by way of a program. Why bother? The Depression had already defeated the Tories. It was "King or Chaos," they said. The CCF faced its first national election. "It is a fight between those who stand for capitalism and those who oppose it," they boldly proclaimed. Social Creditors, just elected in Alberta, offered a simple panacea: crank up the money-machine. Another new party, the Reconstructionists, was led by H.H. Stevens, who had recently left Bennett's cabinet. They put their faith in fair wages, fair taxes, fair competition, and fair profits. The Communists abandoned their demand for "a Soviet Canada and a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government." They made moderate economic proposals for immediate reforms like unemployment insurance, repeal of Section 98 of the Criminal Code, and demands to "fight for peace."

The slogan on the banner adorning the Spadina committee rooms of Joe Salsberg read: "VOTE SALSBERG." "FIGHT FOR THE UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS." "ELECT A MAJORITY OF CCF OR COMMUNIST CANDIDATES." The CCF candidate had been approached to withdraw in his favour. Meeting in a little coffee shop on Harboard off Spadina, Salsberg's campaign manager, Bill Walsh, offered CCF organizer, Ted Jolliffe, reciprocity in other ridings. But the CCF refused all cooperation in Spadina constituency or anywhere else. Their attitude was simple: "The Communists are the kiss of death." Interestingly enough, two years later during the 1937 Ontario elections, David Lewis, no doubt haunted by the fact that warfare between Communists and socialists had allowed Hitler to take power in Germany, was prepared to withdraw the CCF candidate from Toronto's St. Andrews riding so as to leave the field to Joe Salsberg. For this gesture Lewis was roundly rebuked by CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth.

The Agit-prop team produced a short play in which a magic potion was given to the politicians to make them tell the truth. The chorus was set to the tune of "The Man in the Flying Trapese:"

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Bennett, Bennett, Give me your answer true, If you're elected, What are you going to do? Once I'm elected I'll show you my scorn I'll tax every rag on the tattered and torn I'll make every man wish he'd never been born For the workers I love to betray. I'll put every Communist head in a sling I'll squash every union out flat And the socialism I promised to bring I'll just forget about that Oh I shout the hot air with the greatest of ease And once I'm elected with other MP's You'll find that I'm only a hunk of cheese For the workers I love to betray. These politicians are just as you say Rich men and grafters and men who betray Vote not for windbags who give you the gas Vote for the men of the working class Elect a man who fought Election time or not To help your struggles to exist So kick out Bennett and all his senate And mark your ballot Communist.

In the middle of the campaign, H.H. Stevens and the Reconstruction Party made their big play in Toronto, a public rally. To the Communists this was the party of insipid fascism. Walsh and Steele worked out a plan to sow confusion in the ranks — the old army tatoo routine.

On the back side of the official program, they delivered the Communist message, and beneath it a series of questions the audience could ask Stevens, the main speaker. Along with a handful of comrades they walked up and down the aisles handing out their programs. They had only a few copies left when a patron came out on the stage: "Ladies and Gentlemen, somebody here is putting out misleading literature. It appears to be the program of this meeting and it is not. It is full of communist propaganda." The rowdies threw up all that was left of the pamphlets, flying down the aisles as they were chased out of the building. The meeting turned out to be a shambles, with hecklers making good use of the questions listed on the back of the "program."

More importantly, the election was a disaster for the Conservatives and Bennett. They lost 687,000 votes. The Liberals gained only 162,000 but won a convincing majority. A large number of votes, a quarter of the four million votes cast, went to one or another of the anti-establishment parties, but the Communists picked up only 31,150 of them in the 15 ridings they contested. "We have nothing to apologize for," Tim Buck told the delegates at the November 1935 Plenum of the Party's Central Committee, "but we must recognize the terrific burden that we carried from our sectarian past."

Anne Weir

It was in the midst of the municipal elections only a few months later that Bill Walsh met his true love. At the time he was managing Salsberg's campaign for Alderman and John Weir's campaign for schoolboard in Ward Four. Walsh developed his own approach for the Salsberg campaign. Besides canvassing door-to-door, he arranged meetings with community organizations, paying special attention to the needle trade workers, many of whom lived in the riding, and he prepared radio scripts for the candidate. "Years later J.B. used to kid me about those radio broadcasts," he recounted. "The ward was very mixed, poor on the south side, rich on the north side which included the Casa Loma. I had him talk about the fingers, the rich sections are like fingers stretching into the homes of the poor. He kidded me about it for years."

"You Bill Walsh? I'm here to give you a hand with Johnny's campaign." The fair-haired young beauty threw off her words in absolute self-confidence.

"I'm Walsh." To himself, "God, is she for real?" Heart pounding.

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

He put her to work folding pamphlets.

An hour later she complained. "Is this all you have for me?"

"What do you want to do?"

"Well, electioneering, canvassing, speaking to people. You're the manager, not I!"

She got her way. Bill Walsh was smitten. But, as he described himself back then, "When it came to girls I was very shy. I had already traveled around the world but I was still very bashful and awkward. It was days later before I asked her if I could walk her home and I thought that was very bold of me."

Her name was Anne Weir. Unlike himself, she was of working-class background and of Ukrainian origin. The entire Weir family was wrapped up in the Party. One brother John was running for school board and sat on the central committee. Her other brother, Charlie, was also a Party organizer. Her parents were Party people and she was in the midst of getting a divorce from a Party official located in Cleveland, Ohio, from where she had only recently returned.

She was chatty and unpretentious and as forward as Bill was bashful. "She was fair-haired and quite tall for those days, about 5'4"," he says about her.

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"When I introduced her to my friends in Montréal, I said 'she's very bright, you know.' They listened to me and then they said 'yes, and she's very pretty.' It was almost as though I was avoiding saying that, but they just wanted it put on the record. She was socially more experienced than I. And Anne could drink a bit. I never drank in those days. And she smoked."

Five years after they met, in a letter written to her from jail, Bill Walsh described his feelings on that eventful day.

I don't know whether I'll ever be able to adequately understand just what happened to me when first I saw you and heard you speak to me. If it was 'love at first sight' then it definitely took a long time to manifest itself to me. What was it then? For I know my heart skipped a few beats and I was 'interested' in you and conscious (or unconscious perhaps) that on no account must I let you dash off as you seemed bent on doing. Did I 'fall' for your 'looks'? Certainly not in the ordinary sense. For I had met pretty girls before and not felt that urgent drive to get to know them better, to see them often, to be in their company. If anything, I had been reticent in their presence, and sort of mentally on my guard (against what, goodness knows!) and generally welcomed any opportunity that offered itself to part from their presence. Then what was it made me think up a fib faster than I possibly could at any other time just so you wouldn't fly out of my sight? I don't know exactly, but I've thought of it quite often since being jailed. Some day I'll perhaps know the answer.

It's doubtful that he ever did find the answer but in speaking of Anne, even 50 years later, he would become misty-eyed and a hushed, reverent tone would creep into his voice. A full two months passed before Bill got up the nerve to kiss Anne. Proud of what he thought was his great conquest, only later did he discover that on the very first day they met Anne had said to her brother John, "I just met your new brother-in-law." Bill laughed heartily when relating this story. "They used to kid me about this for years."

Soon they were living "free union" in a little room on Beverley Street off College, sharing bath and wash-stand with a student next door. Anne worked as a waitress in a nearby restaurant. Good thing too because you couldn't get by on eight dollars a week, which was the salary Bill got as Party organizer — when he got paid at all. With Anne marking the bills he got the occasional 65 cent meal for 15 cents. Sleeping late some mornings to avoid the luxury of breakfasts and walking rather than wasting a nickel on the street car also helped them survive.

Anne was wise to Party life and Bill recalled her cautioning him that some things were not as they seemed: She warned him against Stewart Smith in particular. "Tim is no god," she said of Tim Buck, "and neither are the others. Their personal lives aren't as pure as they like to make out." As a matter of fact, Lenin's instruction to "not drink out of a dirty glass" was heeded by most Party members. "Fooling around" was severely censored. Because the movement was a network of interlocking lives, anything but puritanical lifestyles would have been a threat to it. Tim Buck had a mistress and some other Party leaders had lovers, but these indiscretions were kept secret. Knowing how Bill idealized Buck and the others, Anne tried to cushion the shock by bringing him down gently.

Early in the new year Bill was called into the main Party office where Joe Salsberg and Stewart Smith told him they were transferring him to Kitchener. They said they needed someone who could work independently and away from the centre. "Kitchener! I was panic-stricken," he remembers. "It sounded a thousand miles away. What about Anne? There was no questioning the directives. The Party assigned me a new post. Of course I had to go. The night I broke the news to Anne I was practically in tears."

"Aren't you going to take me along?" Anne asked, as casual as ever.

"What do you mean, take you along? Can I?"

"You try not to, you big nincompoop."

"It hadn't occurred to me that Anne could come too. It wasn't part of my conversation with Salsberg. That's how naive I was!"

Notes

¹Pierre Berton, The Dionne Years: A Thirties Melodrama (Toronto 1977). ²Norman Penner, Canadian Communism (Toronto 1988), 111.

Chapter Five

Kitchener Days: Organizing the Rubber Workers

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

CIO Magic

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

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

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

In view of the chaos in world affairs, the ruling classes were panic-stricken at what they were hearing. They considered the One Big Union a fulcrum of revolutionary activity in Canada. Though the issue behind the six week-long Winnipeg General Strike (35,000 strikers, fully 20 per cent of that city's population) was collective bargaining rights, to the employers and affluent classes of Winnipeg it was the culmination of a revolutionary conspiracy intended to overthrow established institutions and install a Soviet system in Canada. There was much calculated deceit in this image. But it was widely believed that to defeat this challenge required not merely that it be defeated, but that it be defeated by violent suppression. With the help of federal troops, the arrest of the strike's leaders and the deportation of others, and with the collaboration of the leadership of the craft unions, the Winnipeg General Strike collapsed. Within a few years the OBU was dead.

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In the final analysis, as Craig Heron has written, these efforts to create all-embracing unions were defeated by three related forces: "capitalist employers, who had no intention of abandoning exclusive control of their enterprises; the Canadian state, which intensified its pre-war pattern of siding overtly and heavy-handedly with capital in maintaining the subordination of workers; and international craft unionism which, when push came to shove, was ultimately unwilling to loosen up its organizational exclusiveness and its ideological restraint, and which actively collaborated in the undermining of radical, industrial unionist elements in the labour movement."²

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

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

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

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

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

As noted by historian Irving Abella, Canadian workers "captivated by the glamour, the excitement and the monumental breakthroughs of the CIO campaigns in the United States, desperately pleaded with it [the CIO] to come into Canada. Joe Salsberg, head of the CP's trade union bureau, traveled to New York and Washington to convince CIO leaders to launch campaigns in Canada. But with the limited resources at their disposal and the mammoth job still to be done in the US, they could give very little attention to Canada On their own, without informing the CIO, scores of ex-WUL organizers began organizing CIO unions in Canada."³ They simply adopted the CIO label, hoping its magic would transcend the US border.

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Young Communist zealots under the direction of J.B. Salsberg took charge of the CIO organizing drives in Ontario. Dick Steele led the drive to organize steel workers, along with Harry Hunter and Harry Hamburgh; C.S. Jackson organized electrical workers; Harvey Murphy, miners; Arthur Laverty and Alex Welch, textile workers; and Bill Walsh, rubber workers. At the first CIO convention in Canada (1939), 82 of the 105 delegates represented six unions in which the Communist element was strong or in control. "Without their aid," Abella has written, "CIO efforts in Canada would have been vastly circumscribed and conceivably even aborted."⁴

Abella's statement that "all the organizing had been done by Canadians with no help —nor even encouragement — from the CIO " was by and large correct. But it was not quite the case, as Abella made it out to be that "not one CIO organizer nor one cent of CIO money had crossed the border." For, at Salsberg's request, Allan Haywood, the CIO's Director of Organization did come to Kitchener.⁵ And Haywood, in turn, sent up another CIO organizer from the rubber wars, C.D. Lesley.

Kitchener Has Bed-Bugs Too

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

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

The meeting over, Salsberg took his leave. It was late in the day and after shaking hands with each of the new comrades, it occurred to Walsh that he had only a few pennies in his pocket and nowhere to stay. Apparently, no arrangements had been made. What to do? The same question must have occurred to Lou Kenyan, for he returned and invited Walsh to stay the night with him.

They walked only a half block up the street to the side of a building and up the steps to the Kenyan household on top of a store. It was a tiny flat. Bill lost track of his count, but there were at least five or six Kenyan kids bouncing off the walls and barging through the doors. Most of the furniture looked to be of the home-made variety. Cots were set up in all the rooms. The family was obviously on relief. Walsh felt embarrassed at imposing an extra burden on them, but Lou and Alice Kenyan seemed to take no notice of their abject poverty. Alice served a meager meal, Bill worried that some of the children, already undernourished looking, were being deprived on his account.



Lou lit up a cheap cigar, the one luxury he allowed himself. The Ken- Lou and Alice Kenyan yans were in their late 30s, old-timers in

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

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

bedbugs streamed over him and he could hear cockroaches crawl along the floor. He remembered the night in Hamburg which seemed to have been so long ago. But what could he do? The bedbugs had a fine harvest that night.

Choosing A Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organizing The Rubber Workers

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

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

"You ask how come the Communist Party is interested in this? I'm going



Alf Mustin, 1935.

to tell vou. I'm interested in establishing socialism. I'm not asking that you be interested in that particularly, but from my point of view and from the point of view of people like myself, socialism can't be built until the working class learns how to defend itself. In Kitchener that means the rubber workers must be organized into a union. You're interested in the welfare of the rubber workers. That's why I've come to you. You know as well as I that the only way they're going to advance and you're going to advance is to organize yourselves into a union. If you stay isolated as individuals you'll take a drubbing for the rest of your lives. You have to advance together or not at all. As we see it, you don't have any other option. So we have this in common. I am also interested in improving the conditions of the rubber workers, and you may also have some interest in advancing the conditions of life of peoples around the world. I don't know. In any case, those things aren't required for you and I to work together."

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

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

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

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

Throughout this stage, Walsh had his own meetings with J.B. Salsberg and some of the others who were also organizing. Dick Steele had by now been elected the Canadian Secretary of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee. Clarence Jackson headed up the fledgling United Electrical Workers in Canada. Both Steele and Jackson were already in contact with

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their American counterparts and Jackson had been named the US representative in Canada. Walsh suggested that it was time to move out of the underground stage into the stage of open organization. Salsberg agreed and promised he would get an American representative of the CIO to come to Kitchener.

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



Dick Steele, speaking on the street (through a mike operated by Bill Walsh).

Allan Haywood And C.D. Lesley Come To Kitchener

Anne Weir accompanied Walsh to Haywood's rooms. After the usual preliminaries they got down to business. Walsh explained that the key people were signed up and that in his estimation they were ready to take on at least three of the four companies. He showed Haywood the list of proposals the committee had worked out in in preparation for this meeting.

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

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

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

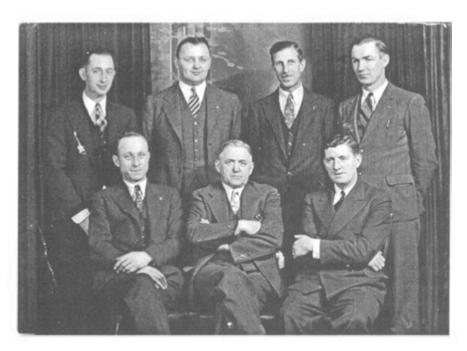
The union packed Kitchener's largest theatre that night in mid-February for its first public meeting. The tire builders from Goodrich and Dominion turned out in full force along with men and women from Merchants. C.D. Lesley took the chair and the Reverend John Spires addressed the audience. Frank Grillo,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

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

The Strike Strikes

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

Goodrich broke off negotiations on 2 April. They would not negotiate with Lesley, only with their own employees. Goodrich had learned from General Motors (GM). In Oshawa, GM had just refused to negotiate with



Back row from left: Lloyd Brown, 1st director of rubberworkers in Canada; C.D. Leslie, 1st CIO organizer in Kitchener rubberworkers; ?, Goodrich Tire Rubber Worker; Alf Mustin, 1st member of rubberworkers in Canada. Front row from left: ?, Kitchener rubberworker; Alan Haywood/John L. Lewis, 2nd in command, 1st CIO rep. to come to Canada; Dalrymple, 1st International president, URW.

the UAW's Detroit representative. Mustin and his United Rubber Workers would have none of this treatment. Hundreds of strikers stormed down to the Goodrich plant. The company got the message because the next day it settled. Lesley announced the result: improved wages of five to fourteen per cent and a commitment to consult the union prior to any layoffs — but no collective agreement.

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

On 8 April when workers there walked out of auto plants by the hundreds and thousands, Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn declared civil war. The entire resources of the Province of Ontario were to be used to keep the CIO

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at bay, he said, because Oshawa was "the first open attempt on the part of Lewis and his CIO henchmen to assume the position of dominating and dictating to Canadian industry This is a fight to the finish."⁶ He ordered the Provincial Police to enrol several hundred Special Officers to back up the regular police in case the situation got out of hand. Some called the specials Hepburn's Hussars. To others they were plain sons of Mitches.

On Saturday, 10 April Bill Walsh, Anne Weir, Alf Mustin, Lou Kenyan, Ma Becker and a dozen other Kitchener stalwarts went to Oshawa and joined in the largest demonstration in Oshawa's history. UAW president Homer Martin, flew in from Detroit for the occasion. "If General Motors of Canada doesn't make cars in Canada under union conditions," he vowed, "they won't make cars at all."⁷

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

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

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

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

A.R. (Ratus) Kaufinan was determined that he would halt the unionization momentum. "You can all belong to the union, any union," he told his workers, "but it is the company and the company alone that will run this plant and decide your wages and conditions of work." He insisted that before he would even sit down to negotiate, the union must post a bond against any future damage. And he injected the opinion that "perhaps your union would be more responsible if the executive would consist of exclusively married men over 35 years of age and at least one woman over 25 years."⁸

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

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

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

Defeat, Everywhere Defeat

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fighting The Cutbacks

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Nazis Of Kitchener

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

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

3 June 1937. Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito are the enemies of world democracy. They have their agents everywhere, here in Canada too, in Ontario, yes in Kitchener. They must be exposed, their lies dissected, and their connections with big business revealed. The main Nazi leader in Canada is, of course Adrian Arcand, Chief of the National Unity Party. Here is what Arcand has said about democracy: "Democracy is a terrible disorder. We are ready to make it disappear. We are capable of eliminating it in a few months, because we alone have the doctrine of order."

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10 June 1937: Toronto, Montréal, Kitchener, Winnipeg, and other cities have Nazi schools operating. Nearly every page of the primers used breathes the spirit of blind obedience to Hitler. Page 64 of the school book I have in front of me shows the type of subversive doctrine taught Canadian children. Under a picture of Hitler and Von Hindenburg, there is a question addressed to a German child: "Will you follow me, my German child?", asks Herr Hitler. And the child replies, "From father's arms and mother's lap, if you call me I shall tear myself away! Oh, how I wish I were grown up. For my Fatherland and all who die for us I want to live."

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

Meanwhile, the civil war in Spain went from bad to worse. With the active military support of the Nazi governments of Germany and Italy, General Franco was winning the war against the elected Republican government. Hitler and Mussolini saw this as an opportunity to test their new weapons and their aircraft, and to test the battle readiness of their officers and troops in what was in fact a dress rehearsal for the big war that was to come. The Soviet Union was the only country supporting the elected government. Britain, Canada, and a group of European states went so far as to sign a non-intervention agreement with Germany and Italy. In 1937 the Canadian government passed legislation making it illegal to join the International Brigades, but this did not deter the Communists. Over 1,200 Canadians, mostly Party members, made their way to the front lines of the civil war. Tens of thousands of Canadians attended public meetings to hear reports from Dr. Norman Bethune, who traveled back and forth raising money for the struggle. In some ways that struggle and the songs, poetry, and literature

that it produced stirred the soul like no other. "We all sang the songs," Bill told me. "They became part of our culture."

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

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

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

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

The Rubber Workers Strike Back

In the midst of this gloom from abroad there were some positive developments at home. In December 1938, workers at Goodrich staged a walkout in response to a three cent wage cut. The Union of Rubber Workers of America moved back into action. Union Local 73 sought a negotiated settlement, the first since the old agreement had been allowed to lapse. Negotiations were also underway at Dominion Rubber and at Merchants. On 8 February 1939, 500 workers walked out at Dominion Rubber. Five days later Alf Mustin led Local 67 at Merchants off the job. Altogether, more than 1,300 rubber workers were out. The issues were simple: a signed agreement guaranteeing seniority rights and restoration of wage cuts. The companies countered with their proposal: they would negotiate with the

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union if workers returned to work immediately. Alf Mustin and the other leaders rejected the offer out-of-hand, but some voices could be heard calling for its acceptance and non-union members demanded an open vote.

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

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

Walsh knew all that but he did not agree with Salsberg's assessment. The situation required greater concessions from the companies. They needed a victory decisive enough to firmly establish the union in the community, and in any case their strength was sufficient to extract more. He was confused, angered that his views were not solicited before the decision was taken, and concerned about how Mustin would react. The next day he dutifully reported what Salsberg had advised. As he expected, Mustin was furious and he insisted that Bill come clean on where he stood on the question. "A battle raged inside me," Walsh remembered. "I knew what I was required to do. There were already situations where I had obeyed Party policy without necessarily agreeing with it. On the other hand, this was a critical point in my relationship with Alf Mustin. Since we started on this road together he

had never really questioned my advice. Now my credibility was in jeopardy. I was torn."

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

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

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

Last Days In Kitchener

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

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

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

"Well, in practice, I don't see J.B. or any one else playing it that way," Bill tried. "After all, you're in a different position than I. I work for the Party. You are a leader of a mass organization, a trade union. Unless it was a matter of fundamental importance, you'd always get your way in the end." "But who wants to go through the hassle? I've got enough trouble as it is looking after the union and fighting the company," Mustin argued. "I guess

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

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

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

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

Walsh clearly had a huge impact on the life of one rubber worker. Alf Mustin, with whom he maintained sporadic contact until his passing in the 1970s, went on to have an illustrious career in the United Rubber Workers of America. He became a city alderman during World War II and later on was elected mayor of Kitchener.

Walsh left behind many other friends as well — the Trendles, Beckers, Klemmers and others — some of whom he kept in touch with. When Lou Kenyan died in the mid-1960s his daughter, Grace, asked Bill to preside over a meeting in Kitchener to celebrate his life. Though Lou and Grace Kenyan had retired to a resort area on Georgian Bay, Grace arranged for the funeral to be held back in Kitchener where she rented out the same hall in which they all had first met some 30 years earlier.

Unbeknownst to him at the time, Walsh had a particularly profound influence over one of the Kenyan children. Walter Kenvan was in his late teens when Walsh first arrived in Kitchener. A grade eight dropout, Walter had been drifting aimlessly from job to job. He credits Walsh with introducing him to the bigger world, directing him to read history and encouraging him to further his education. In the 1950s Walter Kenvan found his way back to school, went on to university to Anne & Bill in Kitchener

earn a PhD in anthropology, and became a well known archaeologist and for many years the chief archaeologist of the Royal Ontario Museum.

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

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

The Kitchener years also proved to be important ones for Walsh's relationship with Anne Weir. Except for the occasional foray into the outlying area of his district, they were together for the better part of three

years and had grown inseparable. These few years were to be the most normal in their life together.

Notes

¹Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour (Kingston 1968), 174.

²Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement (Toronto 1989), 62.

³Irving Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour (Toronto 1973), 4-5.

⁴Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 5

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

⁶Neil McKenty, Mitch Hepburn (Toronto 1962), 108.

⁷Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 15.

⁸Terry Copp, ed., Industrial Unionism in Kitchener (Elora 1976), 10.

Chapter 6

Underground, Imprisoned, And Interned

The international news went from bad to worse as Bill Walsh and Anne Weir took their leave in the spring of 1939. Madrid had fallen to Franco. Fascism had overtaken Spain. Hitler occupied all of Czechoslovakia and some observers predicted that his next move would be the Ukraine through Poland. As if on cue, the German minority in Poland and the predominantly German population of Danzig demanded annexation to Germany. It was the same deadly pattern. Where would it stop?

Windsor

Walsh spent his first few weeks in Windsor getting an overview of the local scene. "I'll never forget, Anne was with me from the start this time," he recalled. "After our first meeting a cousin of hers asked how long I had lasted in Kitchener. When I told him he laughed. 'Well, you won't last three years here. The last guy stayed for six months and the one before him eight.' That was my welcome to Windsor. Party organizer was a very tough job back then."

The UAW victory in Oshawa a few years back had sparked organizing drives in several Windsor feeder plants, but the main Ford and Chrysler plants had never been tried. Walsh learned that the auto worker local was just beginning to recover from a series of aborted strikes that had begun in August 1938. Those bungled efforts caused wholesale firings and blacklisting of organizers. He got the story from Jimmy Napier, a cocky little man who had been involved in union organizing as long as anyone in the Windsor area. "It was Charlie Millard, that's who bungled it; that phony Sunday school preacher and his bunch from the CCF and Catholic Action.

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He got me fired as staff rep and isolated all the other people that built the local. He's never organized anything. Neither has the CCF bunch. They've just about wrecked what we built up. As for Catholic Action, they'll do just about anything to get rid of the Left."

Charlie Millard had been a lay preacher with the United Church of Canada in the early 1930s. He came out of the social gospel tradition, much like J.S. Woodsworth, Tommy Douglas, and Stanley Knowles, and took his evangelical fervour into the trade union movement. Millard was on the national executive of the CCF. He had been elected president of the Oshawa local of the UAW and was a key leader in the 1937 strike. Millard was an inspiring orator and organizer — as capable in this regard as any of the Communists — and if anything even more determined to ally the unions to his party, the CCF, as they were to the CP. The Communists despised Millard and maligned him, just as he despised and maligned them, so much so that he devoted much of his energy over the following decade to the campaign to oust them from the labour movement.

Following the 1937 strike, Millard was elected Canadian Director of the UAW but his popularity was already dwindling. Union activists complained that he was spending too much time politicking in Detroit rather than organizing and strengthening the new locals. His close association with Homer Martin, a disaster as president of the UAW, did nothing for his credibility. In January 1939 Martin had expelled most of the key US organizers because of their political leanings. Communists in the UAW on both sides of the border were determined to turf him out, along with his supporters, including Charlie Millard. They did just that. At the March UAW convention held in Cleveland, Millard was replaced by George Burt, treasurer of the Oshawa local.

But within a matter of weeks, John L. Lewis created a new position for Millard, as secretary of Canada's CIO Committee. Early in 1940, he became president of the Ontario CCF and executive director of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. One of his first acts as SWOC director was to oust Dick Steele and other Communists who had done the pioneering work in organizing the steel industry. He replaced them with a group of bright and energetic young CCFers including Larry and Bill Sefton, Bill Mahoney, Murray Cotterill, and Eamon Park. They would soon form the new leadership of the Steelworker-CCF joint enterprise. In 1942 Millard was elected National Director of the Steelworkers in Canada. A year later he was elected a CCF member of the Ontario legislature.

The situation Walsh found himself in was radically different from the situation he inherited in Kitchener. Windsor was among the best organized cities in the country and with a sizable Party membership in the auto and auto parts industry. The spade work had already been done, strong links with Detroit set up, and activity in Chrysler already underway. When he proposed that he make contact with George Burt, who had just moved UAW's Canadian district headquarters to Windsor, he got no opposition.

"I walked in and I said, 'I'm Bill Walsh, organizer of the Communist Party. I want to help you organize autoworkers.' That's the way I used to do it." He seemed proud of it. "After the initial shock, Burt and I talked for a good hour. He was suspicious as you might imagine, but not hostile. After all, he was part of the compromise slate put up by the Left in the ouster of Martin and Millard. He wondered why I as a Communist Party organizer would be offering to help organize autoworkers. He thought I might be looking for a job with the union. I told him the same as I told Mustin and that no, I didn't want to be on his staff; he had plenty of auto workers he could get for his staff. I told him I wanted to bring the Communist Party into the campaign and I laid out some practical suggestions."

"He was interested in getting our help but he asked if that meant I would be bringing the Party into the fore. I said 'We won't bury our name but we won't embarrass you either.' I promised that we would clear everything with him. I did a lot of recruiting into the Party over the next few months and some of them became fairly well known — people like Jack Taylor, Cyril Prince, Vince Colson, Mike Kennedy, Alex Clarence (who became an MLA), and of course Jimmy Napier. As a group they played a big part in the organization of the UAW in Windsor."

Under Walsh's guidance they held quick hit-and-run factory gate meetings at lunch time and quitting time. He instructed them how to make a two or three minute pitch, how to pick out workers who appeared friendly or expressed thanks for leaflets, and to follow them home or get their address for future contact. Members of the organizing committee frequented nearby restaurants and pubs to pick up plant gossip and secure contacts. Jimmy Napier sought help from some of the militants from the feeder plant campaigns. For security reasons they avoided mass meetings. It was well known that both Ford and Chrysler had built up a formidable network of informants.

The Chrysler Spark soon made its first appearance. Walsh took the name "Spark" from ISKRA (Spark), the name chosen by Lenin for the first Bolshevik newspaper. It was a four page mimeographed job, typed in justified columns, which would become a Bill Walsh trademark. He composed the copy from information brought to him from Cyril Prince and other Party activists, stories about what was going on in the key plants, about what workers were complaining about and demanding — like repairs to the toilet, longer breaks, and improved lunch space. The campaign was moving into high gear with a strong unity group taking shape. But it was not to be. International events suddenly overtook the organizational drive.

Hitler-Stalin Pact

Early in September 1939, Party headquarters received the cablegram from the Comintern announcing the Hitler-Stalin pact. When Hitler invaded Poland the Communist Party of Canada, like the movement elsewhere, had proclaimed "This is our war," and urged Prime Minister Mackenzie King to immediately award all possible aid to beleaguered Poland. But within weeks this war against fascism was declared a war between imperialists in which Communists had no stake. The cablegram from the Comintern sent shockwaves through the Party. The Soviet and German governments had signed a non-aggression pact guaranteeing the neutrality of the USSR. Communist Parties were instructed to oppose the war. The Communist Party of Canada did so without hesitation, converting the war into a campaign against British imperialism.

Thoroughly angry and confused by this sudden change, dozens of members in Canada joined hundreds of thousands in other countries in exiting the Party. Molotov's reported statement to Ribbentrop, that after all "ideology is a matter of taste," was the final straw for many. Canadians by the thousands had joined the party in recent years because it represented the most effective voice against aggression and appeasement. Now they left in droves. But most accepted the rationale: Wasn't it true that for years the USSR had pleaded with western powers for a military alliance against fascism? Instead, the allies came to an agreement with Hitler - at Munich! And didn't the Pope swear he would do everything in his power to stop a western alliance with the Russians? Could the Soviets have come to any conclusion other than that the Allies were maneuvering to push Hitler into a war against them? The West had only itself to blame. Play for time by signing a non-aggression pact with Hitler or take on the Germans alone and face wholesale destruction and certain defeat. Those were the only alternatives.

However problematic all this may have been, the directive to oppose Canada's involvement in the war went unquestioned by most Party members. As far as they were concerned, they were participants in a common battle with the Soviet Union as the bulwark of the world socialist movement. If they had to take it on the chin because this particular battle front was unfavourable at the moment, it was nonetheless necessary in the interests of the overall struggle.

The immediate consequence for the Party was devastating, their credibility was destroyed. They were suddenly isolated, suspect, and without allies. New epithets were coined at their expense: "red fascists" and "communazis." Under the War Measures Act, the Party was once more declared illegal on 6 June 1940. Over a hundred top, middle, and rank-and-filemembers — Bill Walsh among them — were arrested and interned. With many Communist organizers interned, underground or in exile, CCFers, who until then had taken second place in most of the new industrial unions, moved in and replaced Communists in key union positions, and Communists were kept off the executive of the new Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL).¹

To outside observers this blind obedience to each and every twist and turn of Soviet policy irrespective of how it suited national and local conditions was pathetic at best and treacherous at worst. To most Canadian Communists, however, there was no question and no choice, defending the Soviet Union was the only true meaning of international solidarity, since defeat of the workers' government of the USSR would mean the defeat of the working class everywhere.

Underground

When he heard about the switch, Walsh was understandably confused. He had just spent the past three years organizing a campaign against fascism and now he must support it? The official explanation, that the pact "seriously weakens Hitler's hold on the German people," encouraged cynicism, if not downright derision. The sudden switch left Communists everywhere isolated from the mass of people, and deprived of allies.

But as often occurred in these situations, immediate events crowded in and allowed Bill Walsh to bury himself in trade union work rather than raise these or other questions fully, even to himself. "I had a sense that things were happening in Europe, but I really wasn't paying too much attention to it at first," he recalled. "That's interesting. Here I was, I suppose intelligent enough, alert enough, and interested in world news, yet my nose was so deeply dug into the local scene that the Pact didn't have the same impact on me. It had a delayed impact."

All-out effort was required to defeat the drive to force CIO unions out of the Trades and Labor Congress. As Party organizer in Windsor, Walsh rallied support in the region. The effort was doomed to failure. AFL President William Green ordered all affiliated unions in Canada to vote for the expulsion of CIO unions from the Trades and Labor Congress or have their charters revoked. After the expulsion, steps were taken to follow the American example of setting up a committee, the Canadian Congress of Labour, to coordinate the work of CIO Unions.

When, on 10 September, Canada declared war against Hitler, the Communist Party of Canada instantly demanded withdrawal from this "imperialist war." For Canadians, the Party insisted, "the principal danger of fascism comes not from Nazi Germany but from the war policies of the King government." Walsh could make little sense of the Party line. "Hitler was occupying much of Europe and all the Party was saying is that 'our task is to transform the war into a civil war against our bourgeoisie', and that 'Canadian capitalism, not German capitalism, is our main enemy.' But the slogan that really got to me," he remembered, "was BOMB THE CROPS IN ENGLAND, FREEA MILLION INDIANS. That wasn't neutrality. It was pro-Hitler. I couldn't go along with it."

He couldn't go along with the Party line, but to question the Pact itself was never an option. In the final analysis, he assured himself, "the Soviet Union is the bulwark of world socialism. Our battleground is only one in a world-wide struggle. If we have to take it on the chin, it's a necessary cost in the overall struggle. To question is to be disloyal."

In October he and Anne slipped down to Toledo to be married. "It was what we had always intended," he recalled. This was just a convenient moment and marriage certificates were easily and quickly obtainable in Ohio." This was undoubtedly so, but very likely both of them also viewed marriage as something permanent and secure in a menacing and rapidly changing world.

On Armistice Day, 11 November 1939, Bill Walsh organized a blitz of the Windsor region to distribute a four-page pamphlet sent down from Toronto calling for Canadian neutrality. Within hours the RCMP arrested dozens of Party workers, Party headquarters were raided, and *The Clarion* closed down. Through a courier Bill got the word: Bury yourself. Go underground. He headed for a farm owned by Serbian comrades in nearby Amhurstburg. There, in a barn atop a hay loft, he made his headquarters. Only now did it dawn on him. He was a hunted man, separated from his wife and cut off from his work. The Hitler-Stalin pact had taken its toll. *The Spark* still got produced but under primitive conditions. Production was slow and difficult and from that distance it was nigh impossible to keep tabs on what was happening on the shop floor. The organization campaign bogged down.

Trade union work everywhere began to collapse. Walsh got the news from Dick Steele who still managed to operate above ground. All along Steele had been a central figure in the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee and a main cog in the machinery to set up the Canadian Congress of Labour. He and Bill rendezvoused in London, where Anne had fled.

At first the Communists held their own. At a conference called to unite the CIO forces in Canada, Dick Steele concluded his conference report with a passionate plea to devote every effort on the front lines at home rather than focusing on events abroad. But soon after, Steele was replaced by Charlie Millard as head of the SWOC. According to Irving Abella's account, the move to fire Steele and the other Communists was begun at least nine months earlier under orders from Phillip Murray, international president of SWOC. When Steele authorized a series of ill-prepared strikes without notifying the international office, Murray sent in his personal representative to fire him.²

But Steele did not submit without a struggle. First, against the charge that his "political opinions were responsible for the slow growth of SWOC," he simply denied his Communist affiliation. Second, Steele composed a five-page mimeographed letter protesting his dismissal and the appointment of Millard. It had an immediate effect as four Ontario locals demanded an emergency convention to reverse Steele's dismissal. "Without Brother Steele's capable and first hand direction, it would be difficult to maintain our present membership," they warned.⁸

The conflict moved to a different arena that fall. The founding convention of the Congress of Canadian Labour was held in September 1940. Despite the fact that its constitution had been written by Joe Salsberg and Dick Steele with the help of Communist Party lawyer J.L. Cohen, the convention was a complete disaster for the Communists. The entire CCF slate was elected to office and the Communists shut out. By a vote of 111 to 81 a resolution was passed condemning both Communism and Fascism and urging all affiliates to refuse membership to members of "such subversive organizations."

This convention may well have sealed the relationship between organized labour and the CCF (and its successor, the NDP) for the next 60 years. An ecstatic David Lewis, who had been paid by the All-Canadian Congress of Labour leaders to spend the week at the convention to assist them, wrote to Ontario party president Ted Jollife that, this "establishes the relation between our office and their work on a much more direct basis ...and [shows] the need [of the new Congress] for working together with the CCF." Encouraged by these results, Millard completed his campaign of cleaning the Communists out of SWOC. By now Steele had also been forced underground. Walsh himself barely escaped arrest when the RCMP raided Jimmy Napier's place where he was staying while directing the strike at Chrysler. The strike had dragged on for a few months, but now it fizzled.

Without access to mail service, contact with the national centre was difficult. The Party developed its own courier service, but with officers and staff forced to move about, it had only limited effect. "We wore disguises," Walsh joked, "but we were pretty obvious. We all wore dark glasses, a moustache and a top coat so you can be sure anybody walking down the street looking like that was in the communist underground!" From his hay-loft headquarters with the primitive equipment available to him, Bill Walsh carried on his propaganda work against the war. He compiled a mailing list of Party members, supporters and trade union militants. To protect them on the chance that the list might one day fall into enemy hands, he padded the list, adding names and addresses of local notables like Windsor mayor David Croll, and people picked randomly from the City Directory.

Walsh claimed he revealed his reservations about the Party's slogans to Dick Steele and Charlie Weir when the three met clandestinely. Steele had been named Party organizer in the Hamilton area and Weir handled the Niagara area. They prepared their own material independent of Party headquarters which by then had also been forced underground. They agreed to meet regularly and exchange materials and lists in case any one of them was picked up. London was the spot chosen for a rendezvous in late December.

Just before that meeting, Walsh received a message by courier: "Make your way to Toronto for an urgent meeting." "About time," Bill told himself, "haven't had a chance to meet Toronto for over a year." A Czech comrade loaned him his Chevy coupe to get to Toronto, and a panel truck picked him up at a designated spot. Inside, Stewart Smith and Charlie Sims were engaged in animated discussion. Walsh got a formal hello and nothing else. They were hot under the collar, something about teaching someone a lesson. "Someone is going to get the business," he told himself. "Hope it's not me."

They reached Steele Avenue, then a forested area on the extreme north side of Toronto. At first glance it seemed uninhabited, but Bill spotted a store behind a clump of trees near to where they stopped. He heard a dog bark. "Must be Smith's underground headquarters," he thought to himself, stepping from the truck. Dick Steele and Charlie Weir were there too. "What gives?" Bill asked nobody in particular. He got only shrugs in response.

Stewart Smith began to speak. "I've called you here to deal with an important issue facing the Party. One of our Toronto clubs has adopted a resolution that claims our line on the war can't be put over. This defeatist attitude is bad enough but these comrades go further. They say that the non-aggression pact is a betrayal. I have to point out that Comrade Lon Lawson is the president of the Club and he himself is the writer of most of its pamphlets. This kind of action is unforgivable. It violates every tenet of democratic centralism. We cannot tolerate it, Comrade Lawson. We will not tolerate it." The words spit out of his mouth like bullets from a gun. Nobody stirred. All looked to the ground. Bill Walsh hung silent like the rest.

Only Lon Lawson dared to speak: "The USSR was put into a difficult position," he said. "We all know that. But there are things that must be answered. At first we were told that the pact would weaken fascism. Now we hear that the USSR is actually cooperating with the Nazis. We call for peace,

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yes. But peace on their terms, with Hitler occupying half of Europe. We could have defended the pact as an unavoidable defensive move but still continued our policy of unity against fascism. It is not only the reactionaries that denounce us. It is the entire democratic spectrum. Is fascism just a matter of taste as Molotov has said?"

"Enough, enough," Smith hissed, reddening, his veins protruding from the forehead of his balding head. "We know your views. That is why we have called you here. I am compelled to give you a final warning. If you persist in violating Party policy, we will have no alternative but to expel you."

Very uncomfortable, Bill Walsh fidgeted, cleared his throat, and prepared to speak. "Not now Bill," Charlie Weir leaned over to whisper. "Let it go." And he did.

But Norman Freed started up all over again. Bill couldn't take it anymore. "What are you trying to do, kill the guy? You've made your point. It's enough!" Smith looked piercingly at everyone present, then turned round and walked away from the circle they had formed. The drive back to Toronto was funereal. Bitterly disappointed in himself for not rising to defend Lon more directly, Walsh's shame registered as a dull ache in the pit of his stomach. It was only when they took leave of each other that anyone spoke.

"You know Bill", Charlie said, "there's been a fight in the leadership over this question. Tim, Joe Salsberg, and some others have complained that Stewart has been too mechanical in his thinking. Of course, no one goes as far as Lon. But with Tim underground in New York, Stewart has full control." "See you in London," Bill said, as he headed back to home base. "We'll talk then."

In The Pen

They met again on Christmas Eve, 1940. London seemed a good place to meet since none of them were known there. Besides, it gave Bill a chance to visit with Anne. They decided to distribute stickers and a leaflet early in the New Year. Al Bernard, local organizer of the party, recommended a printer. Dick Steele returned to Hamilton on Boxing Day, Charlie Weir to the Niagara Peninsula. The printer agreed to have the paper and stickers ready by New Year's Day. On New Year's Day Steele was held up by a snow storm and never did show up. After waiting all morning Bill and Charlie made their way to the print shop in the Chevy coupe. They circled the building. Everything seemed normal. When Walsh entered the shop, the owner was playing cards with a young boy, likely an apprentice or the owner's son, Bill thought to himself. "Okay, is the stuff ready?"

"Yeah."

"Where is it?"

"All wrapped up ready to go. Got it in the safe."

Bill looked out and motioned to Charlie to give him a hand. Each lifted up a bundle, Charlie first. When he opened the door of the shop several police and RCMP officers were swarming over the car. They seized the parcels and hustled the two of them into two separate police cars.

"Charlie, this is a set-up," Bill whispered before they had them separated. "You're just my brother-in-law visiting Anne. You know nothing."

All CP organizers had been told to carry two registration papers — one real, as required by law, and one fake, in case they were picked up. Bill chose the name Bill Potter, whose tombstone he had spotted in a cemetary not far from the Weir farm at St. David's, birthdate the same as his, only a hundred years earlier. Sitting in the back seat of the car, he managed to pull one of the papers out of his pocket and slip it under the seat.

It didn't work. At the police station they finger-printed him and removed the materials from his pockets. "So, you're Bill Walsh, the big Communist." "No, not a big Communist, just a Communist," Walsh replied. "Do you know Tim Buck?" asked one of the officers. "Sure, everybody knows Tim Buck." An officer opened a parcel and took out a sticker. It read, "STOP THE WAR. BRING THE BOYS HOME."

Walsh and Weir were charged with being officials of an illegal organization and attempting to distribute literature aiming to undermine the war effort. Years later Walsh still boiled at the way the RCMP twisted the truth at the trial: "One of them testified under oath that Bill Walsh boasted he was a personal friend of Tim Buck and a big Communist. That got me mad; it had been the other way around. I wanted to get on the witness stand and make it clear that they were telling a bunch of bloody lies but my lawyer [David Goldstick] wouldn't hear of it. He knew that if they asked us if we were members of the Party and Party organizers we wouldn't deny it."

Walsh was sentenced to nine months plus a \$300 fine or an extra three months and was moved to the Ontario Reformatory in Guelph. Charlie got off, when the printer was unable to identify him. The RCMP asked the presiding judge whether he would recommend that Charlie be sent to one of the internment camps set up for Communists and Nazis. "How can I do that? I've just found him not guilty of the charge."

"We know, judge, but whatever you recommend we're going to intern him anyway. Thought you knew that." Within days Charlie Weir was interned.

Walsh was something of a mystery to the inmates in the Guelph Reformatory. As he related it, "They'd say, 'what's your racket?' So I'd answer, 'I'm a Communist organizer'. And they'd say, 'what's a Communist organizer?' I'd say, 'It's about organizing workers. You know the rich against the poor?' 'Okay', they'd say, 'but what do you get out of it?' They never did get it, but when one guy asked, 'Are you against the cops?' and I answered, 'yes' he said, 'well that's okay then, you're one of us.' Another said, 'You know, he does the same as us, but he's organized, like the Mafia'."

They were bank robbers, bootleggers, and automobile thieves. One was a rapist. "What was your sentence?' they asked me. 'Nine months plus three more for not paying the fine and when I get out I might have to go for an indefinite term to another jail.' 'Jesus Christ,' one of them said, 'I'm sure glad I didn't do anything like you.' They just couldn't figure it out, especially when I told them I got picked up for printing a sticker that said 'Bring the boys home'."

At first he was assigned to a work gang that was closely guarded, but soon they had him making marmalade for provincial institutions, and then they transferred him to the garden gang where he could wander off on his own. Escaping would have been easy and he thought seriously about it, but when Anne put the question to the Party the word came back that they didn't want anyone breaking out. There was a campaign to get them all released.

Upon his release from the Reformatory, Walsh was sent to an internment camp as a Prisoner of War. Altogether he was a prisoner for two years, Anne followed him from town to town, finding work in restaurants and arranging weekly visits. She was unable to hold on to the jobs for long because the RCMP made it their business to inform the owners that her husband was in jail.

Over that time they carried out a correspondence which reveals much about their relationship. She wrote at least every other day, sometimes every day and even twice a day, while he wrote at least once a week. Anne's letters were chatty and loving. They spoke of her loneliness, her dependence on Bill, and a growing bitterness about their long separation. Bill's letters were more formal and, because they were restricted in length, more carefully crafted. They spoke of his concern for her health and bring to light a rarely revealed romantic side in his character. In fact, their letters displayed an intimacy that is quite exceptional among Communists of that generation.

4 February 1941

Dearest:

The hour is very late, three a.m. to be exact, you see I worked until one a.m. By the time I got home, washed stocking and undies, cleaned up, well it all takes so much time — I'll admit I'm tired, and my selfishness comes to the fore. How I wish you were here, to massage my back and legs as you used to do, remember? And then you could tuck

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me in, and kiss me goodnight. How much and how often I long for the luxury of such moments of love and tenderness. It seems that my mind keeps reverting back to those precious days gone by when you and I were together. Tonight I remember the night you carried me home from work because I was so tired - - you often washed my stockings, I remember one evening especially, when I sat in the bathroom watching and directing the process. And then one time in particular comes to mind, when I worked in the shirt factory and we lived away out on Wilmot Street. You insisted on doing the whole wash in the machine, with me sitting on the steps directing but you made one stipulation, that I kiss you every five minutes.

Do you know something Bill, besides my loving you and your always being kind and thoughtful, you were a very good husband. I've often thought about it, but I don't know whether I ever told you, perhaps I was afraid of spoiling you.

Good night sweetheart. Anne

Saturday, 15 February 1941 The Ontario Reformatory, Guelph

Anne Dear,

Both your letters of this week gave me gratification. You are right as usual when you point out that for me 'the immediate future' is decided and I have little or no control over it. Yet I imagine that an experience such as I have just 'embarked' upon (wouldn't 'shanghaid' be more appropriate?) is not entirely barren of possibilities for a substantial degree of learning — learning that my previous academic studies have failed to give me (although they have possibly enabled me more systematically to observe).

And now look — one side of a paper is all I'm permitted and it's already covered. Thank you for your delightful and thoughtful valentine message. Au revoir, Love,

Bill

P.S. At time of writing have not yet received Globe and Mail.

Friday, 15 March 1941. Bill Dear:

My new job is swell, really it is, everyone is so helpful, and two of the girls told me yesterday that they hope I stay, and the boss said it was the smartest thing he ever did, hiring me. It's nice to work with people like that.

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I told the boss that I was married, but living alone now, and oh how true it is. He was very sympathetic, and wanted to know why we couldn't get along, so I told him we just found we couldn't live together anymore. I don't like lying, and technically I'm not, but it hurts to leave these people with the impression that you must have been no good because they think I'm pretty nice so it couldn't be my fault. How I wanted to tell him how beautiful and fine I've found our marriage, because it was with you. But of course I couldn't. I could only think back, and review the last five years and more and see what a full life we lived, Bill, we lost traits and habits that were worth losing, and acquired and developed some of our better characteristics. You see dear, what I'm trying to say is — not only was our marriage happy, it was good.

I keep referring to our marriage in the past tense but honestly I don't mean it that way because in the present and the future we are living it together. And no matter what happens, we will live it together because we are too much a 'whole' to be really separated regardless of circumstances and conditions.

What I'm trying to say is Dearest I love you. I have since we first met. I always shall. Completely.

Anne

Saturday, 3 May 1941

Dearest girl. My fingers reached confidentially into the envelope of your letter of today for that which I hoped to find — and there you were. It is almost as though you yourself stepped out to greet me — for this picture is one in my small collection of frank likenesses of you that I treasure more than I can express. I can study it more intently than I can regard you in person in your one hour visits. Is it bashfulness (after 5-1/2 years) or my yearning to cram so much into one hour that invariably results in my seeing you as a composite whole at the expense of the dainty details for which your picture compensates — the graceful throat, the firm lines of the chin, the even curved irresistible lips, the petal proud tilted nose, the honest expressive eyes bordered by perfect lashes and eyebrows all set, as though by the master hand of the greatest sculptor, on a face more beautiful and intelligent than which there could be none.

But those are not the things I meant to write in this note, my sweetheart. You looked so worried and tired during your last visit and verified in this latest snapshot. That you have a right to be tired is unquestionable, for you have borne far more than your share, and you absolutely must rest. But as for worry, my darling, that is one enemy which you can well do without. The future is ours, just as that hymn tells us: "When the nightmare of the present fades away, we shall live in joy and laughter — and will not regret the price we've had to pay...." All my love. Fondest caresses, your Bill

Saturday evening, 28 June 1941.

My darling Anne. Received both your letters this evening, and along with the two previous ones of this week. They'll brighten the intervening days until I see you. I'm grateful for them — no that's not right, you're being kind, your being yourself – the dear Anne I fell in love with so completely. You sometimes chacterized me, quite rightly too, with being insufficiently thorough. In admitting it again, I submit one bright spot that shows at least a capacity for thoroughness — I am completely in love with you. And that, my sweetheart, follows from our love being a natural slow and steady growth, not an overnight affair. And (is it strange) that happy development is in complete harmony with my ardour expressed so vividly in the following lines by Byron:

Oh! might I kiss those eyes of fire, a million scarce would quench desire; Still would I steep my lips in bliss, and dwell an age on every kiss; Nor then my soul should sated be; Still would I kiss and cling to thee.

Shall I continue? No, you know as well as I. I've read it in your eyes and tasted it from your lips, and felt it from your hands -

Yours always XX XX Bill

20 July (A.A) or 1941 (A.D)

Happy birthday, Anne Dear.

I hope the weather was as ideal where you are, as it is here. And I hope (and I feel confident) this makes the only birthday anniversary of yours which I am prevented from greeting you in accordance with our traditional ceremonials.

You are quite right darling. I did dream of you last Wednesday night, and now (you asked for it!) I will attempt to record it. In your more compassionate moments you may call it (if it deserves a title) — "We'll Love Again"

Here in these steelbarred four-wall cells, As others sleep (what else to do?) As I lay awake, my fancy dwells On joyous times that we two knew.

Or joys not bought by fancy frills; (or other peoples' perplexed pain) Not artificial fleeting thrills That bloom in sun and wilt in rain. We'll share them again.

'O Henry' from us smiles induced; You laughed as I read 'Pinafore'. Poor Allen Poe our plaudits produced With 'Qo'te the raven nevermore' We'll read them again. Or when those friends were laid aside, And contemporary ones were not in view, Yet once again you'd be my bride, With caress grown sweeter and sweeter anew We'll love again.

All my love sweetheart, XX X XX Bill

Each x represents 7. The middle one for luck.

Friday, 11 August

Bill Dear:

I'm writing before going to the post, knowing there will be a letter from you.. I wonder if you know how much your letter per week mean to me.. It's wonderful to have something you've touched and written. I wish I could explain it.

We had last night without interruption. It was, as always, full of sweet love and loneliness. Sometimes I forget for a little while, and there is happiness, then my lips, arms, and heart grow hungry for you, the reality not the dream. At such moments the loneliness that tears at my insides is almost overpowering. I could kick and scream and swear at the ugly unnaturalness of our life. I cry and protest with all the viciousness of bitterness at that which has forced such a life upon us. Selfish, perhaps, but then remember Bill dear, it's only for moments at a time. There are many oh such happy moments also.

Darling, I love you.

Sunday, 7 September 1941

Anne dear. You will not be surprised to hear that I love you completely. It isn't a new discovery, is it? But there are times when the consciousness of just that wells up and surges through me like a great upheaval before which every diverting influence is swept aside. And this is such a time.

I cannot explain why other than to describe the feeling itself. It is connected, I know, with a re-devouring of the letters written by you during the long days and nights, the weeks and the months that we have been kept apart 'each in our separate cells'. Then too, although you haven't complained something has been known to me of the difficulties, the nasty situations, the disappointments that beset you. And the loneliness. Yet, throughout, your concern for me has been uppermost. Your letters, your weekly visits, many of them accomplished when neither your health nor purse could afford; and always the steadfast faith and love which inspires you. All these and more have to do with the overwhelming feeling for you.

Next Saturday I'm to leave this place; having paid in full the penalty for my 'career in crime' ... I look forward to that final sweet meeting with you in here and perhaps one or two precious letters. Then? ... Well, we are but one unit among hundreds of millions, and we live in extraordinary times. Even if we should strive, no matter how strenuously, we could not isolate ourselves in some selfish paradise retreat. But this I know — we shall never be entirely separated. Moments of joy and hours of sadness we'll share; and our joys will bring more elation to us and others. It's a steep hill, my darling, but we've learned how to climb together. All my love, dear wife, is for you always. Your Bill. XX XX

In June 1941, when Hitler attacked the USSR, the Communist Party of Canada reversed its opposition to Canada's involvement, urging Ottawa to increase its contribution to the very limit. Party members clamoured to enlist, preferably to fight in the front lines. Bill Walsh wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice, pleading that he be released from jail so that he could fight overseas:

11 July 1941 Ontario Reformatory Guelph, Ontario Hon. E. Lapointe, Minister of Justice, Ottawa.

Dear Sir:

Your consideration of my application for remission, herewith submitted, is earnestly solicited.

My record of Anti-Nazi Anti-Fascist activities during the past few years, will, I trust, not be overlooked. I humbly suggest that several hundreds of citizens in the Kitchener region still remember with gratification, the weekly radio broadcasts I addressed to them on the crimes and menace of Nazism. These broadcasts and public meetings at which I spoke, played a not insignificant part in exposing the activities of local Nazi agents, leading up to the successful public demand for the closing of Nazi halls and the appreciable curtailing of their activities among large German-speaking groups of citizens — and tending to make it less difficult to apprehend several Nazi agents when Canada declared war on Nazi Germany. There are other examples of my efforts in that sphere of public activity, some of which brought threats from Nazi agents to the physical well-being of my wife and myself.

It is my intention to enrol in the Canadian Army for overseas service after being released from prison. Perhaps in addition to my ability to fire a rifle (with a fair degree of accuracy) my familiarity with several languages may prove of some slight use to my officers.

Should I not be accepted as a private in the Canadian Army, or be unable to perform some equally essential service in Canada, I am prepared to make my way as well as I can to the USSR, there to volunteer

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in defence of that huge sector of the growing world resistance to Hitlerism and all it represents.

Very truly yours, William Walsh

Within a few months, he was in fact released, but as he described it in a letter to Anne, he would not be shipped overseas, but to an internment camp for an indefinite period. Whatever the justification for the original sentence, it had now clearly lapsed. Now that the war had, in the eyes of the Communist faithful, been suddenly transformed from an imperialistic conflict into a democratic struggle against fascism, it had no more enthusiastic supporters. But this indubitable fact, and innumerable protests from within the Party and without, had no noticeable impact in Ottawa. The ban of the Communist Party was retained throughout the duration of the war, making Canada the only western country to declare its Communist Party illegal while the Soviet Union was an ally against Germany.

11 July 1941. Middlesex C. Gaol London, Ont.

My dearest girl, I love you and can well imagine your feelings that now, after having expiated my "crime", we are still forcibly separated after almost nine months. My own feelings are a sure indication of yours. Hopes and yearnings, so long held in abeyance, are again suddenly straight-jacketed, and this time for an indefinite period. Cruel though it is, my darling, we won't let it beat us, will we dear?

The details are disgustingly simple. Shortly after you left me, I was in bed but didn't get to sleep till 1 a.m. At 4 a.m. I was awakened. Then had to wait around until 9:30 when two RCMP got around and escorted me without a word to their car. They informed me I would be advised in London of the reason I was being detained. The trip down was as pleasant as could be expected. In the gaol office one RCMP'er showed me 2 typed lines which said I was being detained because it is alleged "that you are a Communist". He read perfunctorily from a paper that I had 30 days to launch an appeal and volunteered to inform some member of my family of my predicament if so desired. I filled out the papers immediately and that's that. If the soul of justice is not dead in Canada, my appeal will be successful, and you and I, my sweetheart, can be free together again. Your Bill XX XX

His appeal before the Advisory Committee failed. He wrote to Anne that he was not at all satisfied with his presentation. "The very star chamber nature of the procedure had a stultifying effect upon me — and for all I know upon my counsel as well. Seeing the indifference written all over their

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faces at the moment that I am literally turning myself inside-out for them to see and understand — all the time gnawing consciousness that your happiness, my freedom, the very ideals for which the nation's sweat and tears and blood flows — all leans so heavily upon such a method of dispensing 'justice', it made me so angry that at times it was only with an effort that I could force myself to continue."

Interned

"Canada seems to have excelled at interning its own citizens and residents during the war," writes author Reg Whitaker.⁴ According to Whitaker, Britain, within a few miles of Nazi-occupied Europe and with a population four times that of Canada, interned only 1800 people. By war's end Canada had interned over 2400 citizens and forcibly relocated the entire Japanese population of British Columbia. Most were interned as pro-Nazis, pro-Italian or pro-Japanese. A hundred and thirty-three were interned as Communists, although by the time of Bill Walsh's internment some had already been released.

Communists were interned under section 21 of the Defence of Canada Regulations which allowed for the internment of any person who might act "in a manner prejudicial to the public safety of the state." The communists interned were an assortment of trade union officials (eight), elected municipal politicians (four), leaders of ethnic organizations (three), members of the national party executive (two), as well as a number of its paid staff, but mostly they were rank-and-file members of the party or its closely linked ethnic organizations. Most top party leaders escaped internment. Tim Buck, along with Charlie Sims and Sam Carr fled to New York where they hid out with the help of the American Party.

By September 1941 when Bill Walsh was interned, all arrested Communists and alleged Communists and a few other assorted trouble-makers had ended up in Hull jail, a structure recently completed but never used. The prison, a new three-storey structure of brick, stone and steel, was on the outskirts of Hull. The inhabitants included 30 internees arrested in western Canada who had been first sent to the Kananaskis Internment Camp in the mountains south of Canmore, Alberta, and the 60 or so arrested in central Canada and the Maritimes first stationed in Petawawa, about a hundred miles from Ottawa. In both camps anti-fascists were mixed in with other "enemy aliens" or "war prisoners", mostly Canadian fascists sympathetic to Hitler or Mussolini, and captured German seamen. Petitions from both inside the camps and outside finally caused the government to separate them out from other internees and they were sent to their own facility in Hull.

Walsh was given his own Prisoner of War number, POW H3, and the standard POW uniform - red striped pants and a denim jacket with a big red circle on the back. Easy target for sharp shooters should he try to escape. The first person he saw was Charlie Weir who, along with other members of the welcoming committee, greeted him with "Hold the Fort" and other welcoming songs. John Weir was there too, and many other comrades known to him, including Muni Ehrlich, Fred Collins, and Norman Freed. Altogether, nearly 90 POWs were interned in Hull jail, a few of them merely guilty of association with Communists. Another, C.S. Jackson, was reportedly hauled in at the request of a Canadian General Electric executive who convinced the Minister of Justice that Jackson's campaign to organize the workers of CGE was jeopardizing the war effort. C.D. Howe, Mackenzie King's Minister of Munitions and Supplies, fought to keep him there: "No group of saboteurs could possibly effect the damage that this man is causing."⁵ Jackson, a maverick Communist even then, vehemently denied his Party membership. He must have made a convincing case, for he was released after a short time in Hull.

The cells, lined up on both sides of each floor, were allowed to stay open. There were no locks on the doors and the prisoners were allowed to go out to a compound to exercise, or to a wooded area to sit under the trees. The internal administration was left entirely to the inmates, but aside from cooking, dish washing, cleaning, and a few other menial jobs, there was little to do. They set up history classes with textile union organizer Kent Rowley, German classes with Winnipeg alderman Jacob Penner, as well as math and French classes. Literature was quite abundant including a copy of *Capital*. They even had occasional access to the party newspaper, the Clarion, used to wrap up food sent in to them by comrades and wives. They played volleyball, arranged concerts and put on plays. Bill Walsh was the pinochle champion. Pat Sullivan of the Canadian Seamen's Union was the hooch maker. Food parcels were thrown together with Sullivan's whiskey to produce a sumptuous feast every few weeks. Besides parcels from Montréal, Bill got regular shipments from comrades in Kitchener and Windsor. At the first toast in the new year, with a banquet table groaning with steak, turkey, vegetables and potatoes, he remembers delivering a rendition of "Arise ye Prisoners of Starvation" to his inebriated friends.

Joe Wallace was the camp's resident poet. Mitch Sago and Ben Swankey set some of his poems to music. Wallace wrote his own words to a melody, "Men of Harlech", sung by Walsh at one of the regular socials where everybody was expected to tell a story or sing a song. Joe Wallace's version, "Night is Ended" was later published in a volume of his Collected Works. Wake, the Vision splendid Flames, for Night is Ended, Rise and March Thro' Freedom's arch To name the fame unended. March in mighty millions pouring, Forges flaring, cannon roaring, Life and Death in final warring Call you, Workingmen!

At your benches planning, speeding, In the trenches battling, bleeding. Yours the help the world is needing, Answer, Workingmen!

So shall pass the battle thunder, Poverty and pelf and plunder, So shall rise a world of wonder, World of Workingmen!

One of the biggest problems in the camp was lack of world news. Papers were censored before they were allowed in and, except what came to them from intermittent copies of the Clarion, news items on the war were cut out. A crystal set and earphones smuggled inside a cottage cheese pail fixed that. Within days, Dr. Howard Lowrie and Jim Murphy, a CBC radio technician, assembled the parts into a receiving set. For an antenna they extended a fine wire across the compound from a second floor window bar to one of the poles holding up the volleyball net outside. The tiny radio, hidden under the pillow on one of the beds, got turned on at newstime. For security reasons only a handful knew about it. They shared the news with the others, but never let on that it was coming hot off the airwaves. The jail commandant, a Major Greene, almost discovered the set one morning. While inspecting the courtyard, he happened to glance upward and saw some clothes hanging in mid-air. One of the internees had observed the wire and hung his clothes on it. Miraculously, the Major made nothing of it. Weeks later when the story leaked out and found its way to the local press, Lowrie and Murphy paid the price with a week in solitary confinement.⁶

Prison life was harder on some of the men than on others. Michael Sawiak, former editor of *Farmers' Life*, became so ill that he dropped 70 pounds. Mathew Shatulsky contracted tuberculosis, and Dr. Lowrie, colic. For others there was a different kind of sickness. Fred Collins confided to Walsh that his wife had taken up with someone else. Bill Walsh stayed healthy and though he had concerns about Anne's health, he had none

about her loyalty. Coming in from Hamilton, she visited as often as she could and upon moving to Ottawa in April made weekly visits.

A release campaign instigated by the wives of internees, led to the founding of the National Council for Democratic Rights. It launched petition campaigns, put out leaflets, raised funds and eventually paid lawyers to represent internees at hearings. After Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the government's rationale for interning Communists vanished and public response to the campaign became quite positive, including that of the Liberal premier of Ontario, Mitchell Hepburn. Noticeably absent among those calling for the release of Communist internees were trade union leaders who continued to take advantage of the absence of their Communist rivals.

Walsh himself kept up a steady stream of letters to the federal government, expressing the Party's new national unity line while pleading for his own freedom. It would be months before the campaign to release the prisoners brought results. In the meantime, Anne's letters, expressing an increasing sense of despair, loneliness and misery began to alarm Walsh and added to his own sense of loss and outrage. Prime Minister Mackenzie King attended Canada-Soviet friendship rallies and hymned praises to Russia while refusing to legalize the Communist Party of Canada and holding nearly a hundred of its leading members in an internment camp.

Whereas his earliest letters to Anne describing his first days in the camp were light hearted, and even cheerful, they ring a little false. A letter written on Christmas eve comes closer to expressing his true feelings: "Soon we'll be having our feast and concert We're preparing to have 'a good time' and I'll try to get into the spirit of the thing. But to be frank with you, I feel punk and I know others do too. To be forcibly separated from you today ... You dashing around in a restaurant dishing out grub to holiday makers, and I doing the same to a bunch of swell fellows trying to be more hilarious the more melancholy they feel."

Early in the new year, Walsh's letters display a growing alarm about Anne's health. Her denials did nothing to qualm his fears.

25 February 1942

My darling Anne,

There's 14 September 1941 no use of me trying to pretend otherwise to you, dear — I'm worried. At times, since Saturday night, I've been near frantic. Please my precious girl, for you, for me, for us together, be as considerate of your health as you would be of mine, were I ill. Helen told me yesterday that it's stomach ulcers. You must have had some awful suffering, sweetheart and I wasn't around to help. You will have pain before you're cured of them. They are curable if cared for, but if neglected, they can make you progressively more and more miserable. Isn't it the sensible thing to put up with the nastiness of dieting and abstinence (from smoking) for the freedom it will give you later? We will be together again before long. I know my beloved girl, and won't you try to get well soon?

It's obvious what's brought on this ailment. Anyone put through what you have been for 14 months — some ailment is to be expected. The government has said our internment is by no means meant to be punishment. I wonder if he knows the punishment you've had to take every hour of our separation — the emotional punishment, and the brutal physical afflictions as well. What can I do to help you, beloved mine? I'm giving up smoking. Maybe its silly. but will it help you just a little to know I'm on a sympathetic no-smoke diet too. It's so little. What can I do? Except keep right on loving you.

28 February 1942

My darling Bill:-

Received your letter today regarding my health. Please don't worry anymore. It's true that since you've been taken away from me I've had stomach trouble, but then that was to be expected. After all, I didn't start with a good stomach in the first place, did I? I've been to see a very good doctor and the results were all good except for the stomach which is possibly ulcerated. He gave me medicine and a rather rigid diet. Only one cup of coffee a day, no smoking on an empty stomach and at least four glasses of milk a day.

Thanks for the moral support in not smoking, but gosh you give me a guilty conscience when I think of all the cigarettes I've enjoyed while you were abstaining for me.

Bill you know I wouldn't lie to you so you know all I've said to you is true and this is true also that in the past week I've felt healthier than I have in years. In fact last night we took a long walk, miles literally thru the streets of Toronto and you sang to me and told me many stories about your trip and I loved you and every minute of it.

Good night Sweetheart

3 June 1942

Bill Darling.

Got your Saturday card yesterday, like the letter of a few weeks ago it was doubly censored. Got a letter yesterday, putting the proposition to me that if your dad was assured that we would have a marriage ceremony performed in his faith he would do all in his power to help you now. Forgive me for laughing dear, but what I want to know is how often do I have to marry you to make an honest man of you? Also since when is he so anxious to make sure I'm a member of his family? Of course I have no objections and shall inform our go between to that effect. 9 July 1942 Dear Bill:

In nine hours I shall be with you, hold your hand in mine, kiss you and feel the nearness of you. But now I should be asleep and I'm not. I went to bed, and tried to doze off, but couldn't so many questions kept running thru this weary brain of mine, so many questions unanswered, till it seemed to me I could never sleep again peacefully until I knew the answers — why must we live this unnatural unreal life of ours this way? And for how many more long days and weeks and months that stretch into years?

And will that gaiety and joy of living return that I once had, that sparkle in life that come of being loved and cared for by you. Because its gone Bill. Only rarely do I feel it now, after seeing you, or receiving one of your precious letters. And how could it help but go Bill, when all I have now are dreams and memory and hope. How can these things leave you any other way except cold and hungry and lonely. How can these things help but change your character and often as tonight I wonder have these things been written into myself, with pencil, or indelible ink. Bill, with all I am, from the bottom of my heart and with all my mind I love you, always and forever. Always and forever, and I know it is so with you as well, and if that is all we are to have in this life Bill, it is still so very much. But I cannot help worrying and wondering sometimes, if added to these years, that have been taken from us, something more precious and dear has not been stolen, those of your qualities I've always loved so much, light heartedness, patience, gaiety, Those same that I fear have been pilfered from me.

The sun is rising dearest, the milkman has come and gone with a great deal of noise and talk to his horse. At least he has a horse — whereas I have only a cold sheet of paper and pen.

And I should be asleep for tomorrow. I shall see you and I do not want to appear bleary eyed and tired for your already difficult life I shall add another worry about my health I'm sure.

Forgive the early morning mood my sweet, tomorrow is another day, a very important one to us, and with one kiss from you, my worries will take wing and fly away.

Good night sweetheart.

Freedom And Tragedy

When the German army attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the war between imperialists became a just war of freedom and liberation. With relief, the Canadian party, like Communist parties everywhere, resumed its place in the anti-fascist coalition and Communists volunteered for overseas duty. With Hitler's armies advancing towards Stalingrad, the Canadian

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party became the most zealous of all patriotic forces. Hunted down for treason only months before, Communists were now the most loyal of Canadians. Virtually all its able-bodied members volunteered to fight overseas and several of its most able young leaders did not return. On the home front, Communists insisted that workers go all out in cooperating with their bosses to maximize production. The same labour leaders they had attacked so bitterly for having supported the war effort, they now condemned for not supporting it strenuously enough. They championed incentive pay, sanctioned speed ups, and opposed strikes.

By early fall 1942, the campaign of Communists to gain legality was gathering support. The Communists, though still underground, had already demonstrated their support for the war in various ways. Through an organization called the "Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees," later named the "Communist-Labour Total War Committees", they launched a campaign to win support for a national plebiscite on conscription called for by Mackenzie King. Tim Buck's pledge of support to Mackenzie King in his pamphlet "A National Front For Victory," and his promise that Communists would be a moderating influence in the trade union movement, did not go unnoticed. Norman Robertson, an advisor to Mackenzie King, suggested that for tactical reasons the Communists had "become a restraining rather than a revolutionary influence in trade union organizations" and should now be encouraged rather than suppressed.⁷ No doubt he also calculated that a renewed Communist Party could steal away some of the alarming support being gathered by the surging CCF.

Mitchell Hepburn, seasoned union-basher and red-hunter, must have come to the same conclusion for, he now became a leading figure in the campaign to lift the ban on the CP. He was instrumental in getting Dick Steele a quick release from Toronto's Don Jail and even invited Esther and the newborn Steele twins out to his farm near St. Thomas.

On 25 September, through their lawyer J.L. Cohen, Party leaders that had escaped internment arranged to surrender to the RCMP to finally end the charade. Tim Buck, Stewart Smith, Fred Rose, Sam Carr, and a half dozen others were removed to Don Jail and after a brief, symbolic incarceration, were released with the signing of undertakings not to participate in the still illegal Communist Party or to engage in anti-war activity. This gesture opened the way for the release of all remaining internees.

The leaves were falling off the trees on 9 October as Bill Walsh stepped out of jail. It was chilly and overcast, but there was Anne. The nightmare was over; life could begin again. First to Montréal where Herschel received them graciously and they discussed arrangements for a Jewish wedding. Then it was off to Toronto to see Dick and Esther and the twins, and to visit



Steele family

his brother Sammy's family, and to a reunion with comrades Walsh had not seen for two years.

At Party headquarters, Tim Buck told Bill he was to take over again as Party regional director in Windsor. Back in Windsor, Walsh found the UAW locals still under Party influence and fully committed to the new policy of no strikes and full cooperation with company owners to increase production. He'd been two years behind bars for opposing this war and for condemning unions for working hand in hand with government and industry. And here he was heading up the district Communist-Labour Total War Committee and denouncing these same unions for not supporting the war effort more strenuously. None of it made any sense but Walsh was very relieved that the party had rejoined the mainstream. It was like being back in the popular front days with Tim Buck filling Massey Hall in Toronto, the Hebrew Sick Benefit Hall in Winnipeg, and everywhere else. With the party taking a leading role in advancing popular causes and with the heroic feats of the Red Army, party membership soared again.

Walsh's only regret those days is that he were not already overseas fighting the fascists in the front lines. But there was another reason for him to stay behind now — Anne's failing health. In addition to her ulcers and

her colds Anne was victim to painful migraine headaches. One February evening with Anne retired to their bedroom and Bill conversing quietly with the landlady in the living room, he heard a piercing scream, "BILL!" By the time the doctor arrived, Anne had died in his arms of a brain hemorrhage. He buried her in Windsor, choosing for her tombstone a passage from "Hymn to a Fallen Comrade":

"The dream is in sight for the toilers And you too are marching along".

Anne may have had a premonition that their reunion would be brief for, after describing a dream where "the walls recede, the doors dissolve and our feet are freed", she commented: "Wondering about that day, I'm almost afraid. Will it be too much for us?"

"I was in a state of shock. I blamed myself for not having realized how sick Anne was," Bill recalled. "I told myself I should have insisted that she see another doctor. Telegrams of condolences poured in but in my heart, my life had ended. Esther and Dick came to my side immediately and insisted on taking me away for a few days to the Laurentians. All I could think of doing was going overseas to fight the Nazis. What did I have to lose?"



Suddenly there was nothing to stop him from going overseas. Dick Steele, Muni Erhlich, and another friend, Johnny Miller, were already in uniform. By the summer Bill Walsh had joined up.

Notes

¹For more on the internment of Communists see Reg Whitaker, "Official Repression of Communism During WWII," Labour/Le Travail, 17 (Spring 1986), 135-68. ²Irving Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour (Toronto 1973), Chapter four.

³Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 58.

⁴Whitaker, "Official Repression," 145. Whitaker, "Official Repression," 155.

⁶This story was related to me by Bill Walsh, but it was evidently part of the lore of internal Party members since it and other stories turn up in the memoirs of internal Party members collected by Bill and Kathleen Repka, Dangerous Patriots (Vancouver 1982).

⁷Whitaker, "Official Repression," 150.

Chapter Seven

Overseas

By the time the Second Front was opened in June 1944 and Canadian troops had landed in Europe, the German Army was already over two-thirds destroyed. Through the early 1940s the Germans had occupied all the Baltic states and entire areas of Russia. The Battle of Leningrad, where the number of dead was ten times that of Hiroshima, was the first time since Hitler had begun his march across Europe that Nazi armies were defeated in open battle. But it was the Battle of Stalingrad, the most savage eight months of fighting in World War II, that was decisive. A Nazi victory there would have ended the war. The defeat of Hitler's armies on 1 February 1943 at Stalingrad changed the course of history.

Which is not to say that the Canadian contribution to the war effort and that of the other western Allies was not substantial and critical. Though the German Army lost two million soldiers in the grueling war on the Russian front, the Wehrmacht remained the best fighting force anywhere. Those in the SS divisions were frequently fanatical as well. Rarely did any surrender and even in the most desperate situations they would fight on until utterly overwhelmed. Hitler paid no heed to what had become clear as early as mid-July 1944: that the Allies could not be driven from Normandy. Throughout the following year he refused all advice to retreat. On the contrary, he gave the order that not an inch of territory was to be given up.

There were nearly 900,000 men in the German Army in France in late 1943. Stretching along the coasts were the Seventh Army, covering the Brittany and Normandy area; the Fifteenth Army, covering the area north from Normandy to the Netherlands; and additional forces in the Netherlands itself. German artillery, though seriously outweighed and outnumbered, was clearly superior. Well-dug in and camouflaged, the 88 mm anti-tank gun was an exceptionally deadly, efficient, and much feared weapon. Americanmade Sherman tanks were hopelessly out-matched and were easy prey for German guns. German Tiger tanks were 54-ton monsters, formidable in battle. These disadvantages for the invading army, however, were outweighed by Allied air superiority, which allowed Allied landing craft and shipping to cross the Channel and also enabled the Allies to deliver a constant hammering to German lines of communication behind the front.

Although he was at the Canadian Infantry Training base near Aldershot on 6 June 1944, Bill Walsh was not part of Canadian D-Day forces. It was early September by the time he was sent to the front lines, just at the close of the battle to close the Fallaise gap. It was here, he discovered, that Dick Steele had perished, only days earlier.

Walsh's regiment, the Essex Scottish, was one of nine infantry regiments in the Second Division of the First Canadian Army. At full strength, infantry regiments comprised over 800 men though most went into battle with less than half that strength. As part of the Second Front, its task was to drive the German enemy from France, Holland, and Belgium, and invade Germany from the west, hopefully beating the Red Army to Berlin.

After the brilliant successes of D-Day, the fighting in Normandy became a battle of attrition. The Allied infantry were required to attack, occupy, and hold small parcels of ground under circumstances that resembled the agonies of combat in World War I. The liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944 and the capture of Antwerp, Europe's second greatest seaport, eleven days later, sparked a new wave of hope for speedy victory. Yet victory was nine months and tens of thousands of casualties away. Altogether, 42,042 Canadians died in active service and another 54,414 suffered wounds or injuries.

Closing The Falaise Gap

The Anglo-Canadian-American landing on the Normandy beaches finally opened a second front and was by far the largest amphibious operation in the history of warfare. Between 6 June and 20 July one and a half million men and tremendous quantities of weaponry and supplies were brought onto the continent. After successfully overcoming the mines, heavy artillery, and machine-gun fire on the beaches where they landed, the invading forces had to face at least one German Panzer division. Stubborn German resistance pinned down the Allied infantry for much longer than foreseen, until a breakout was achieved.

Operation Totalize was drafted by the head of Canadian Second Division, Lieutenant General Guy Simonds. The goal was to capture the medieval town of Falaise, twenty miles south of Caen, where William the Conqueror was born. It was launched 7 August just after the Americans launched Operation Cobra on the west front.

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It took ten days for the Canadian forces to chase out the enemy, street by street, house by house, and to finally secure Falaise. The next assignment was to attack Trun, 15 miles southwest. Amidst choking dust, smoke, burning ruins, and booty, this was accomplished the next day, with over a thousand prisoners taken. It was clear by now that unless the Germans in Normandy withdrew to the Seine River — about 100 miles west of where they were concentrated, they would be caught in a pocket roughly 20 miles long and 10 miles wide, the so-called Fallaise Gap. Churchill was to describe the decision to encircle two German armies in the Falaise Gap as "one of the most audacious decisions of the war."

The drive from 8 August to 21 August cost Canadian divisions heavily: 1,470 dead, 4,023 wounded, 177 prisoners, out of 25,000 fighting men in all. Although the total losses suffered by the Germans from D-Day to the closing of the gap is estimated to have been 400,000 killed, wounded or captured, complete encirclement of the German forces never did occur. Those who escaped through the woods or battered their way through the Valley of the Dives were absorbed in the SS and Wehrmach divisions that the Allies would meet again in the Scheldt estuary and the bitter struggles for the Rhine crossings, and on the Ardennes offensive in December. One of those killed was Dick Steele. Steele was killed in mid-August in a battle in the Trun-Chambois area, through which most of the retreating Germans had to move. American, British, and Canadian divisions converged on this area, making it into "a cauldron of death and heroism," as one soldier described it. It took the Allies 60 days to reach the Seine, following which came the capture of Leige and Antwerp, and the battle for the Rhineland. Bill Walsh was one of the Canadian soldiers in these later campaigns.

Boot Camp, Aldershot, And The Browder Line

Boot camp was not easy for Walsh. He was out of shape and at age 33 much older than most of the other recruits. Like his friends Dick Steele and Muni Ehrlich he joined the armoured corps. Basic training consisted of general conditioning, map reading, platoon tactics, first aid, radio communications, protection against gas, and weapons training (rifle, pistol, tommy gun, anti-tank rifle, mortar and grenades). Advanced training was more of the same plus a degree of specialization. Each segment took eight weeks. Following the four months training, soldiers got a furlough and upon return were deemed ready for overseas service.

Muni Ehrlich, stationed in Dundurn, Saskatchewan, had advised Walsh to apply for officers training before going through boot camp. "Rank does not mean anything to us," he wrote. "We join to serve without conditions and qualifications. But many of us are officer material and I'm sure you are. Why not serve in a way that will enable us to give our outmost? I am mindful of the political difficulties in your road, but why not try, why not insist?" he wrote, adding "your father may be helpful, in this regard."

Walsh did not take this advice. It probably would not have mattered if he had. His experience in training camp was similar to that of several of the Communists. At some point they were recommended as commissioned officers because of their leadership potential. "In the army it doesn't matter about your politics," the basic training officer told Walsh. But of course it did matter. As in the case of the other Communists interned at the beginning of the war, Ottawa turned the recommendation down flat. The same experience was repeated in advance training. By early spring 1944 Walsh was shipped off to England and wound up in the Canadian Infantry Training Regiment near Aldershot. He got a steady stream of letters from home. Besides hearing regularly from various Party people about political matters, he maintained a steady correspondence with a few close friends.

22 March 1944

Esther, dear.

What a grand week-end Dick and I had together. We chatted, sang, drank, walked. Dick looks splendid and feels fine. He wanted me to tell him everything about you and the boys as I saw you last. I think the fellow is in love with his wife and boys. The home we stayed in is a sort of Anglo-Canadian institution. There I met Harry and Lou Binder, Lloyd Peel, Joe Levitt and some others. We had long political discussions on events in Canada. Thanks to material you sent me I was able to listen and understand and even participate in a small way.

Dick and I reserved the "mickey" I saved for ourselves. We drank our first toast to you, then the boys, then to Anne. The last one was to our reunion in Canada. By the way Dick and I are stationed only 9 miles apart. Tell Michael and Johnny I told their Daddy what good boys they are and that we are going to win the war together.

4 July 1944

Esther dear,

A few minutes ago the news came — Minsk has been liberated. Will you accuse me of having lost my sense of proportion if this fumigation of Minsk brings back other things to mind? I'm certain that Dick's response will parallel my own.

He too will think of Elkind, the "spitz" who taught us tool grinding and whose enthusiasm for Esperanto as a weapon of peace and brotherhood was so insistent that Dick and I attended his Esperanto class. How proud Elkind was when I addressed the large Minsk radio audience in Esperanto — "the language of hope". And Muriel the stage actress, so devoted to her art. I could never understand how she found the time and energy from her multitude of activities in cultural and communal work for us. But she did.

And old Dimitrovitch peering over his glasses with a twinkle in his eyes, and sharply reminding Dick and I that there were still a few tricks about fine metal grinding and life itself, the two "Kanadskies" could learn from an old Russian worker.

Mrs Dragunski and her husband who emigrated to the new born Soviet Union in 1918 so that "our child will be born in the new world." Now pretty Mrs Dragunski had three children. Her hands were calloused, but she said, "let American and English women have our fur coats and our nicest delicacies — we need their machines now. Some day we too will have nice things — all of us."

And Emma too who said to us "in the struggle for progress, you are with us or against us; there is no middle road." And in answer to the protest at her sharp division: "Yes, it is beautiful to live; but it is not hard to die, if one dies for life."

These and many other people of Minsk I recall vividly. How many of them were alive to welcome back the Red Army? Perhaps not one.

They used to josh me because I was a teetotaller. Three years ago I made a promise to get drunk the day Minsk is liberated. Tonight I'll do it.

The meetings in London with Party comrades were very important for Walsh. "It was the first time I had an opportunity to discuss some of the questions that were bothering me," he explained. "Why was the war a just war when Hitler invaded Austria and Czechoslovakia; then a war between imperialists when the pact was signed; then a just war again after the USSR was attacked. Of course I knew the Party position and for me to question it would be disloyal. But I wanted a chance to discuss this and other questions with the leaders. The others did too. We were all serious guys. There were other questions. Some of us didn't like what we were hearing about the Browder line and in January, when we were all on the front lines, we got this letter from Tim Buck telling us that the Party is supporting the Liberal candidate, McNaughton, in a federal by-election and why it's important for us to vote for him. We all hate this guy. Our comrades are dying all over the place, we're desperately short of men and this very same guy we're asked to vote for and just named minister of defence is still opposed to conscription!" Walsh complained "The last time we met was in July and we decided that some time after we were home we would look for an occasion to call for a meeting with Tim to discuss these matters. Of course it never happened."

Earl Browder, for many years General Secretary of the Communist Party of the United States, had argued that centralized planning required by the war effort had permanently changed the character of the American economy. He said that an "enlightened capitalism" led by "men of vision and intelligence" were leading the country into a postwar world of "planned economy, peaceful industrial expansion and resultant well-being for all the people."¹ Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin had just met face-to-face for the first time in November 1943, at Teheran, where they projected a postwar world of cooperation, friendship, and unity which would assure peaceful development for all countries. The Comintern had been dissolved a few months earlier. It was in the "spirit of Teheran" that Browder dissolved the Party into an educational organization and proclaimed that Communists now "loyally support the existing system of private enterprise."² This viewpoint was hotly contested among American Communists and would soon be reversed after Moscow unexpectedly changed the Party line and removed Browder as Secretary-General.

In Canada the Party leadership talked in much the same terms as Browder, calling it "creative Marxism for the post-war world." Only later and not very persuasively did it insist that it always viewed cooperation between the working class and some sections of the capitalist class as a tactical question in the fight against fascism. In the February 1945 federal by-election in Grey North, Ontario, called to provide a House of Commons seat for General Andrew McNaughton, newly appointed Minister of National Defence, the Communists supported McNaughton against the CCF nominee. In the June provincial and federal elections the Communists, still evidently under the spell of the "spirit of Teheran" advanced the slogan of a "Liberal-Labour Coalition", again working against CCF candidates and no doubt costing them seats.

19 August 1944

Esther dear, At the moment of writing things look bright on the fighting fronts. All about I hear lads making predictions on the "end of war." The most pessimistic has apologetically spoken of Xmas, the most sanguine — next week. It does appear that the last decisive battles will soon be joined on both fronts, and the odds are all in our favour. But there will be battles ahead, not simple parades or manoeuvres. The beast will fight most ferociously when he's at the approaches to his own lair. The Nazi beast has nothing to lose by continuing the fight long after there is no possibility of victory for him.

What do you hear from Dick? Haven't heard from him in a dog's age.

A few days after writing this letter, Walsh's regiment, the Lincoln and Welland, was shipped off, but he alone was told to fall out, no reason given. Next day he was asked to report for an interview. It turned out that he was being considered for intelligence work. "It reminded me of that time I was

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called in by the Comintern," he recalled. "The officer was a major, about my age, and he was very sharp. He questioned me in French, then German and Russian. And I answered back in kind. Then, out of the blue he asks, 'What do you think of the Browder line'? And I remember what I answered. I said 'it depends on what position you start from. If you start from the position that the main goal is to defend the USSR then it made a lot of sense. You throw yourself into the war effort and you forget about the class struggle.' He said 'You're a Stalinist!' I said 'you're a Trotskyite.' I don't know what he was, probably just a professional intelligence officer who knew the score. But he had me hopping mad."

Walsh didn't remember if he was told what the ultimate reccomendation was, but he shipped out with the next group which happened to be the Essex Scottish, by coincidence soldiers recruited from the Windsor area. And in short order he was placed with the intelligence section of the regiment.

Death Of Dick Steele

He heard the rumour within days of being on the front lines.

29 September 1944.

Esther dear,

Our world won't be the same. It's one thing to be surrounded by destruction and death every minute — it's another to try to reconcile myself to losing my best friend of twenty years.

The suspense has been hellish for you. And since you survived that and the even worse climax — you've given me strength that I need. For me there's been a period of acute suspense too. I had not heard from Dick for some time. About 3 to 4 weeks ago, somewhere in France, I tracked down a member of Dick's regiment in search of news. He hemmed and hawed but couldn't tell me anything definite. But his whole attitude was enough to get me extremely worried where previously there had only been anxiety. I tried to make enquiries from other sources, but day followed day without word, and in the meantime my own fighting began. A hundred times I wanted to write you. But throughout those long days and nights of not knowing, I understood that if the worst were true, you'd know about it and I'd hear from you or someone else. That's why I couldn't write anything but those few ambiguous notes. I hope you understand now why I've been silent when all my thoughts have been with you and for you. Along with your letter was one from Miriam. She also told me about Dick and about Muni. You know how I felt about Muni. In Hull, under awful conditions, I learned to love that man.

And so, Esther dear, I'm doing my best as a tiny fighting cog. If I'm to survive where better men have fallen, I'll come to you as quickly as possible.

Esther Steele received other letters about Dick's death. This, from a letter written by a 24 year-old Joe Levitt:

Dear Esther,

I like to think that there have been in each generation men so good and kind that their love and devotion to their fellow men led them to make any sacrifice for the public good. Dick was one of these. This feeling for people coloured his every thought, his every deed. Being a citizen of a community waging a just war, he took up arms. He helped to smash the once proud German Seventh Army and when Canadians knifed their way through to Falaise, to close the ring around the Nazis, he was there fighting with his magnificent courage. And since this is real life, his tank was hit by an enemy shell and he died instantly.

Battle Of The Scheldt

The Canadian forces which began to stretch out towards the Seine in pursuit of the retreating Germans were more experienced and better trained than the units that landed on D-Day. On 5 September Antwerp, the second largest port in Europe, was liberated with the help of the Belgian resistance. Securing the use of the port was essential because the Allied supply lines were stretched to the limit - all the way back to Normandy - and Allied bombing before D-Day had destroyed all French rail transport and most the roads were in disrepair. But, noted Admiral Sir Bertrand Ramsay, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Naval forces, "Antwerp is useless unless the Scheldt Estuary is cleared of the enemy."³ Antwerp was 65 miles from the sea, and the banks of the long, narrow Scheldt estuary were controlled by elements of the German Fifteenth Army which had not been involved in the battle for Normandy. They were joined by about a hundred thousand of those who managed to escape capture. Hitler was determined to hold Walcheren Island, the bridgehead around Antwerp and the Albert Canal positions as far as Maastricht. The big fear was that the Germans would mine the Scheldt River to block the Allies from using the port.

The task of making Antwerp usable as a port was given to the First Canadian Army under General Guy Simonds. The Second Division, which included the Scottish Essex, was ordered to Antwerp to defend the city and to clear the Scheldt. The Second Division was undermanned and undersupplied for this task and suffered huge losses in the muddy banks of the canals. Casualty rates ran as high as 75 per cent within some battalions. After the enemy was finally cleared out of the south bank of the Scheldt River, the Second Division was ordered to move north from Antwerp, securing the docks and the port facilities as well as the canals and the suburbs. In Antwerp the Essex Scottish Regiment overlooked the villages of Merxem and Eekeren, where the Germans were still strongly entrenched. See-saw skirmishes, often at extremely close distances, contrasted crazily with the night life in downtown Antwerp, only a street car away where soldiers on six-hour passes were permitted to visit. Antwerp sparkled with night clubs and the shops were well stocked with an assortment of goods, including beer, ice cream, and fruit. Bill Walsh spent some enjoyable time there along with his old friend, Johnny Miller, a member of a fellow Fourth Brigade battalion, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

On 2 October the Scottish Essex along with the rest of the Fourth Brigade and the entire Second Division was required to abandon "Shangri La" and begin the task of opening the ports. The first phase was to clear out the so-called Bresken Pocket. Bresken Pocket was a sodden, dike-laced corner of Holland. The casualties were high. Twelve hundred Germans were captured. Canadian casualties included 314 dead, 2,077 wounded, and 321 missing in action. Ground gains were measured in yards and even feet. The Germans were shoved back canal by canal until their backs were finally to the sea. The next task was to seal off the Beveland Peninsula that linked Walcheren Island with the German supply depot and military centres to the east. This was partially accomplished on 15 October, after four days of intense fighting.

By now, the Allied Command finally acknowledged the importance of gaining full use of Antwerp. On 9 October General Eisenhower signalled to Montgomery that "unless we have Antwerp producing by the middle of November, entire operations will come to a standstill. I emphasise that of all our operations on the entire front from Switzerland the the Channel, I consider Antwerp of first importance."⁴

Sixty German coastal guns were embedded in concrete along the shores of Walcheren. These gun batteries had to be destroyed. On October 28-30 over 3,000 tons of explosives were dropped on the German fortress on Walcheren Island. But the infantry advance towards Walcheren was very slow. The Germans had mined various points along the dikes which Canadians had to use since the Germans flooded the land. The Second Canadian Division slogged dike by dike, mainly on foot since armoured vehicles were easy targets for well-placed enemy guns. The men were unbearably dirty, cold and wet, having lived in water-filled holes in the ground. On 1 November, after six weeks of almost continuous fighting, the Essex Scottish, Rileys, and some other regiments were retired from the Battle of the Scheldt and the task of crossing the Walcheren Causeway was taken over by other units. Middleberg, the capital of the island, fell a week later. It took another three weeks to clear the Scheld of mines. The first convoy sailed into Antwerp 28 November. "Freeing the port of Antwerp," wrote one participant/historian, Arthur Bishop, "marked a turning point in ending the Second World War in Europe, which still had a little over five months to run. With the supply lines firmly established, the Allies could now advance to the Rhine, ford it, and drive into Germany."⁵

By mid-Ocober, men were stretched to the breaking point, with battle exhaustion becoming a major problem. Half-strength infantry companies were common. It was during these violent weeks of fighting, during the Battle of the Scheldt, that shortages of manpower reached a crisis point. The need for suitable replacements, already a critical problem in August, was now desperate, with totally untrained and unprepared volunteers being rushed in to relieve infantry deficits. Infantry losses comprised 75 per cent of total army casualties. But out of the nearly half million enlisted in the Canadian Army, only 85,000 men were in fighting formation. One problem was that few of the surplus were infantry trained. They were redundant in the services to which they had originally been assigned. The only solution, short of conscription, was to give artillery, service corps, armoured, and engineering troops short courses in infantry weapons and tactics. In most combat units about half of the men were thrown into the breach without adequate training. Many did not know how to fire or load their weapons. Put against some of Germany's finest soldiers, these volunteers were being ruthlessly exploited. Meanwhile, sitting in Canadian camps were 70,000 home-defence conscripts, many with extensive infantry training, waiting for invaders who would never come. They refused to serve overseas and the Prime Minister, fearful of losing his political base in Québec, would not force them to. Not surprisingly, this hesitation produced bitter feelings among troops placed in jeopardy and being sacrificed by their own government's political opportunism. These reluctant warriors were soon dubbed "zombies," men without souls. Back in Ottawa, on 19 October Defence Minister Ralston finally reported to the War Committee of the Cabinet that the conscripts must be used. King, believing this to be plot to dethrone him, forced Ralston to resign. It was then that he appointed General Andrew McNaughton, an anti-conscriptionist as minister of national defence. It was only when the 70,000 trained infantrymen shunned McNaughton's exhortations to volunteer for overseas duty that King reversed his stand. As it turned out, less than half of the first contingent even crossed the ocean, the rest having deserted, and by the time they arrived in Europe, in late February and March, most of the intensive fighting was over.

Still Holland, December 1944

Dear Esther,

Did I write you last night? Yep, I guess I did. Two letters in fact. Finished the second too late to send along with letters of thanks to some of those friends who have sent xcards and gifts —and starting too late tonight to write anyone else but you. Tell you a secret — I don't want to write to anyone but you. Sorry kid. Can't help it. Do you mind very much?

Guess you're up to your neck in preparations for xmas and New Years parties for the boys and for the movement. I know dear, your heart isn't in it, but as you say Dick would have wanted it so, and the boys, — life must go on. They say that "time heals everything", I wish I could tell you that's true. But it isn't. I know. It takes more than time, more than movement, more than everything I've seen and done. Maybe, Esther dear, we can solve this together. You've already been of such help to me — so that nothing I can do will repay you. But I'm trying, by what I'm doing here. And I'll try, if you let me, when I come home. That sounds so trite but how else can I tell you that you mean so much to me? I'm no poet, just a soldier who loves you.

Walsh was committed to fulfilling Dick's request that he take care of the boys should he perish. It is clear from their extensive correspondence, several letters each week from Walsh, that he and Esther were in each other's thoughts and that Esther was talking up "Uncle Bill" to the twins. At the same time, however, he was getting mail from other women displaying a keen interest in pursuing a life with him.

Rhineland And The "Unkillable Twenty"

The first major offensive in 1945 was the crossing of the Rhine. The First Canadian Army threw 340,000 men and 10,000 tons of supplies a day into the campaign. The human costs were greatly reduced as a result of a major Soviet offensive in January. By 2 February, Soviet spearheads were within 60 miles of Berlin and more than a million German soldiers had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. These Soviet victories eased the burden on the

Allied armies while greatly increasing the pressure on Churchill and Roosevelt to accept Soviet plans for reshaping Eastern and Central Europe.

Operation Veritable was launched 8 February, the goal to blast through the three-mile-wide wall known as the Siegfried Line, built by Hitler before the war. The shattered units of the Wehrmacht had tumbled behind it after their long retreat from Normandy. It took two weeks, from 8 February to 21 February to breach the Siegfried defences. The first task was to drive the enemy from Moyland Wood and secure an attack position on the Goch-Calcar Road. The opposition was fierce, since the Germans concentrated an unprecedented weight of artillery and mortars backed by some of the best troops in its army. The companies leading the attacks were from the Essex Scottish and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. Almost at once their Kangaroo armoured vehicles and the tanks that accompanied them were belly-deep in mud.

By 19 February both battalions succeeded in crossing the road, but German shelling increased in intensity, knocking out the Essex Scottish commanding officer's radio. The farmhouse containing battalion headquarters was levelled to the ground by German armour. All that remained was the floor which was now ceiling to the cellar. Bill Walsh huddled there along with nineteen other men led by Lieutenant Colonel John Pangman. Meanwhile, three German tanks, and forty troops took up positions around the levelled headquarters.

"A door, extending a little above the ground level, opened to stairs into the cellar," recalled Walsh, in his account of "the Unkillable Twenty," which was how one newspaper headlined this story carried on all the wire services. "Soon after we got in, a German soldier entered the cellar through that door. We shot him. I used a Sten gun, which many Canadians referred to as a 'plumber's nightmare'." The sten gun mentioned by Walsh was a primitive looking weapon with a stubby barrel crudely welded to a bulgy piece of pipe with slots cut in it. It was first manufactured in 1941 as a cheap, easy-to-produce weapon for the Resistance. But it wouldn't fire a burst of more than three rounds without jamming. In the words of one combatant, "to supply these totally unreliable weapons to regular troops, who must face the enemy in mortal combat for days, weeks and months on end, must surely rank among the foremost criminal acts perpetrated on Allied troops in World War II."⁶

According to Walsh, "We were in the cellar a short time, illuminated by our portable lamps, when two German tanks pulled up and started firing. Fortunately, they were so close to the cellar and their canon were so long that their shells seem to glance off the stone floor. Much to my astonishment and anger, the Colonel stood at one of the cellar windows, shouting 'kamarad!' I was shocked as were some of the others. I unceremoniously pulled him away from the window. I proposed to him that I would get out of the cellar and crawl in the general direction of where I considered our fellow battalions were situated — somewhere behind us. As the Intelligence Sergeant I kept track as near as possible of all such information. He agreed. Another officer, the signals Lieutenant, left with me."

"When we got outside, crawling on our bellies, I could hear German being spoken, but not clearly enough to make out what they were saying. As arranged, we split up. It was a dark night but there were lots of stars which helped keep my direction. After an hour or two, or maybe three, I heard English spoken. I revealed myself to the nearest sentry. He took me to the nearest group of soldiers, and miracle of miracles, one of them was my very good friend Johnny Miller. He took me to his Colonel who told me he would report the situation to brigade HQ. I was to stay with Johnny in this battalion, the Rileys. I was united with my battalion when the situation permitted two or three days later."

At 9:30 next morning the Royal Regiment made contact with Pangman and attacked the German position, and Typhoon dive-bombers blasted the Germans from the air. It was not until 2 p.m. that carriers could get forward to bring out the wounded. That battle cost the Canadian army 400 men, half from the Essex Scottish.⁷

By 10 March the Rhineland battles were over. They had lasted a month and cost 15,634 soldiers, including 5,655 Canadians. German soldiers taken prisoner amounted to 22,000, about the same number that were killed or seriously wounded. On 26 March General Eisenhower wrote to General Harry Crerar, Commander of the First Canadian Army "to express to you my admiration for the way you conducted the attack by your Army beginning on February 8 and ending when the enemy had evacuated his last bridgehead at Wesel. Possibly no assault in this war has been conducted under more appalling conditions of terrain than that one."⁸

VE-Day

In the final six weeks of the war, the Allies moved across the plains of northern Germany, chasing the enemy down. The First Canadian Army did not advance towards Berlin. Its task was to clear northern Holland and the adjacent coastal area of Germany, while liberating western Holland. For Bill Walsh's regiment there was to be just one more intense battle, securing the city of Groningen. The Essex Scottish used Kangaroos to rush a bridge and penetrate the city's south edge. Machine guns covered the streets and snipers infested upper-storeys of buildings. When the Rileys barged into apartment buildings, they found themselves engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. They soon discovered that most of the enemy that fought with such ferocity were Dutch SS units who must have decided that death in battle was a better fate than death at the hands of their countrymen. On 14 April, in the midst of this final battle, they heard that US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt was dead.

Once Groningen was secured, the Second Division was instructed to move onto Oldenberg, just into Northern Germany, 250 kilometres east. As they entered small towns, huge bands of men and women marched through the streets, arms linked, ten to fourteen abreast, singing their national anthem over and over. But for the soldiers these last days of the war were miserable; resistance was spotty and prisoners were taken in droves, but the enemy still had plenty of mortar rounds and the will to use them. It rained steadily and the men were soaked and tired but pushed to maintain the pressure to bring the war to an end. Casualties were not as heavy, but still more than 50 soldiers were killed on each of seven days through the month of April, and 114 between 5 May and 8 May, the last day of fighting in Europe.

Only six months earlier Hitler had been calculating that with the Soviet Union about to enter Eastern and Central Europe, the contradictions within the camp of the Allies would convince the Anglo-Americans to go for a separate peace. He told his generals in December 1944: "In all history there has never been a coalition composed of such heterogeneous partners as that of our enemies: ultra-capitalist states on the one side and ultra-Marxist on the other; on the one side a dying empire — Britain; on the other side a colony, the United States waiting to claim its inheritance. These are states which diverge daily... If we can deal a couple of heavy blows, this artificially constructed common front may collapse with a mighty thunderclap at any moment."⁹

This strategy may explain Hitler's frantic effort to recapture Antwerp and Leige and with them huge Allied supply depots, including oil. But while his forces were inflicting large losses on the Allies in a losing cause, Soviet forces not only occupied Hungary, Austria, and most of Czechoslovakia, they were at the German frontier and 35 miles from Berlin by early February 1945. The two main industrial supply centres, the Ruhr and Silesia, were soon occupied as the Allied forces crossed the Rhine and met the Red Army at the Elbe. Hitler killed himself on 30 April 1945. A few days later, the German High Command surrendered.

On 6 May, in barns and sheds for miles around, thousands of men in stained battle dress participated in memorial services. Everyone was exhausted and emotionally drained. Two days later they gathered again to hear a broadcast from King George declaring VE-Day. Still there was no celebration, but rather a profound thankfulness that they had survived. "We were near Oldenberg when the war ended," wrote one Canadian soldier, "It was a quiet affair. There were no cheers, just great relief."¹⁰ In early summer Bill Walsh's regiment was sent to Amersfoort in Holland to await repatriation. Since repatriation was organized on a point system that emphasized a first-in, first-out principle, giving priority to married men, Bill Walsh was among the last to be sent home.

Notes

¹Peggy Dennis, The Autobiography of An American Communist (Berkeley 1977), 160. ²Dennis, The Autobiography, 161.

³Jeffery Williams, *The Long Left Flank* (Toronto 1988), 82. ⁴George Blackburn, *The Guns of Victory* (Toronto 1996), 41.

⁵Arthur Bishop, Canada's Glory, Battles that Forged a Nation (Toronto 1966), 293. ⁶Bishop, Canada's Glory, 353.

⁷Bishop, Canada's Glory, 320. Another account of this episode in the farmhouse shown on the map as "Kranenburshof" may be found in Blackburn, The Great Guns of Victory, 281-8.

Jeffery Williams, The Guns of Victory, 251-2.

⁹Ernest Mandel, The Meaning of the Second World War (London 1986), 141-2. ¹⁰Williams, The Guns of Victory, 299.

Chapter Eight

1946 And The Beginning of The Cold War

As his brother Sam expressed it, "Bill was a different person when he returned home from the war." Living with death will do that. In the first days of his return the only thing on his mind was his pledge to Dick Steele to take responsibility for Esther and the Steele children. Beyond that, he had no firm idea of what he would do. Although his commitment to the cause, if not to all the players, was undiminished, he knew he did not wish to resume his position as a Communist Party functionary. When C.S. Jackson asked him to take on the job of staff representative of the United Electrical Workers (UE) for the Hamilton region, he was of two minds. Once hooked, it was a job he would stay with for nearly 20 years.

The UE was one of half a dozen or so Communist-led industrial unions. Within that group, the UE president, C.S. Jackson, was the leading figure and he was clearly regarded as Enemy Number One by the union mainstream attached to the CCF. In the words of his biographer, Doug Smith, Jackson was at once brilliant, tyrannical, and vindictive: "He had a tremendous taste for battle." "He fought with his parents, his bosses, his fellow unionists, his wives, his children, his comrades (especially with his comrades), the UE staff, the Canadian state and social democrats in the labour movement ... particularly David Lewis, Charlie Millard and Eugene Forsey."¹ Very soon Bill Walsh was one of Jackson's targets, and ultimately he would be one of his many victims. But the first decade of his employment with UE was mainly occupied with survival of the union. With the union under constant attack, internal solidarity and tolerance was the order of the day.

For unions and companies alike, 1946 was dominated by a coordinated strike wave the likes of which had not been seen since 1918-1919. The 1946 strike wave was centred in Hamilton, then the industrial capital of Canada. While the main focus of the campaign was the Steelworkers strike at the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco), Westinghouse workers repre-

sented by UE played a role that labour historians have never fully appreciated. More to the point of this biography, the outcome of the strike wave was certainly affected by a behind-the-scenes conflict between Bill Walsh and his CCF Steelworker nemesis, Larry Sefton.

In his book, 1005: Political Life in A Union Local, author Bill Freeman concedes that "the Communists played an important role in maintaining a spirit of militancy in Hamilton..."² He goes on to say, "it is clear, though, that they played a secondary role in the strike and that the political benefits of the struggle went to the CCF faction within the union." Of the latter, there can be no doubt; but to describe the Communists' role as secondary is less certain and at the least needs to be qualified.

A New Era

Bill Walsh had been overseas for barely three years, but in those years Canadian society experienced a shift in its social and political axis, and an industrial miracle. Whole new industries sprung up out of nowhere. The federal government created dozens of Crown Corporations to lead the way. Steel production doubled; employment in the aircraft industry rose from 1,000 to 55,000; Canada became the world's second largest producer of hydroelectric power, aluminum, and cargo ships. No country in the world produced more nickel, asbestos, or newsprint. By 1945 Canada, with a population of only 11.5 million, had suddenly become one of the world's foremost industrial powers. For the first time since World War I, there was a shortage of labour, producing a shift in the balance of class forces.

An aroused working class demanded secure jobs, better wages and working conditions, shorter working hours, unemployment insurance, universal pensions, and publicly funded health care. Workers flocked to unions and in 1943 one out of three of them had gone on strike, mainly for union recognition. In Ontario in 1943 the socialist CCF passed both the Liberals and the Tories in public opinion polls and formed the official opposition winning 34 seats, only four less than the Tories. A public opinion poll taken towards the end of 1943 showed that Canadians were more reform-minded than either the Americans or the British. In 1944 the CCF emerged victorious in Saskatchewan, forming the first social democratic government in North America. The prestige of the re-named Labour Progressive Party, propelled in part by Canadian admiration for the Soviet Union's heroic role during the war and its own calls for all-out prosecution of the fight against fascism, reached a new high water mark. It also enjoyed some electoral gains. For the first time ever, a Communist was elected to the federal parliament when Fred Rose won a bi-election in the Montréal-Cartier riding. Also for the first time, the Communists elected two members to the Ontario legislature, J.B. Salsberg and A.A. Macleod.

In the midst of these results, Prime Minister Mackenzie King was advised by the Chairman of the Bank of Canada, Graham Tower, that post-war workers would "likely face unemployment with far more resentment, to put it mildly, than what was displayed during the Depression years. In the interest of peace, order and good government," he warned, Ottawa must "assume full responsibility" for maintaining employment and providing some form of income security.³ The wily King was prepared for this circumstance. Against the tide of popular mobilization, he had written in his diary a few years earlier, "the most we can do is to go only sufficiently far with it as to prevent the power of Government passing to those who would go much farther, and holding the situation where it can be remedied in the future, should conditions improve."⁴ This is exactly what he did. To stop the stampede to the Left, he adopted a minimalist welfare state program: unemployment insurance, family allowance, and veterans' benefits, with the promise of improved pensions and public health insurance some time in the future. He forced employers to recognize any union that won a majority in a government-supervised vote, and he committed his government to maintaining "a high and stable level of employment and income," and to incurring deficits when unemployment threatened.

When, from his vantage point, conditions did improve, King placed the promised comprehensive health system on the shelf where it stayed for the next 20 years, pensions remained restricted and slight, and federal and provincial governments passed laws that restricted labour's rights and freedoms. C.D. Howe, the Minister responsible for reconstruction, dismantled most of the Crown corporations, selling off their assets to private enterprise at grossly deflated prices.

The Cold War was extremely useful in reversing the atmosphere that prevailed during and immediately after World War II. By acting as persistent apologists for the Soviet Union, the Communists seemed bent on confirming that they were in fact nothing more than "toadies" of Moscow. But in the new atmosphere of fear and loathing that quickly emerged, all forms of left-wing ideology were painted with the same brush as that applied to the Communists. There was no little irony in this, for in a real sense, CCFers were in many instances the first Cold Warriors, their no-holdsbarred campaign against the Communists for leadership of the burgeoning labour movement dating all the way back to the late 1930s. But no matter how zealously the CCF joined in the anti-Communist hysteria, it was unable to escape being branded by the same right-wing forces. The post-war election campaigns conducted by the Tories, the media, and the employer classes were particularly vicious, and the CCF lost most of the political ground it had so temporarily gained. Not surprisingly, Communists were turfed out of office too, but their losses in the labour movement would be far more damaging to them. Though they managed to retain control of a few unions and maintained a presence in some others, the Cold War cost them access to their working-class constituency, without which they were nearly indistinguishable from garden variety Left-wing sects.

Strike City, 1946

Within minutes of landing at Halifax harbour in December 1945, Bill Walsh had his first job offer. Colonel John Pangman, on hand to greet him and other soldiers from the Essex Scottish Regiment, pulled him aside. "I've been waiting to see you, Bill. I've been put in charge of the Maritime District and I've got a job for you. I'd like to make you my intelligence officer. The pay's good and the work conditions are excellent." Though taken by surprise, Walsh turned him down flat.

A troop train carried him to Windsor for discharge and a civic welcome. The crowds were so thick that the Essex Scottish could not even parade up Oulette Street. After a brief visit in Montréal, Bill went to Toronto. His first stop was the national office of the United Electrical Workers union where Esther Steele worked as secretary. "It was a happy reunion," he says, "but also sad." Esther introduced him to the national officers. He instantly liked George Harris and he recognized Ross Russell as the same Russell Greenberg whom he had met in Montréal ten or so years earlier, inquiring about the prospects of a Jew managing department stores in Russia. C.S. Jackson, national president of UE offered him a job with the union, but at this point he was reluctant to commit himself.

"So you finally found time to come to the Party," Sam Carr, Director of Organization, joked with him when he dropped into the Party office a few days later. "Which Party are you talking about?" Walsh teased back, "The Communist Party of Canada, the Communist Labour Total War Committee, or the Labour Progressive Party? You've changed names three times in five years!"

"Smart Alec — all you service guys are big shots now," Carr replied.

"Settle down, Sam, I've come here for a specific purpose." He told Carr about the discussions in London and asked that a meeting be set up with Tim Buck and whichever of the soldiers were free to attend. Two or three weeks later, Carr asked him to come to the Finnish Hall in the east end of Toronto: "We want the war veterans to be there." Thinking that this was the meeting he had asked for, Walsh called up some of the others to make sure they would be there. "When are we going to have our meeting?" he remembered asking Carr following Tim Buck's speech praising "our war heroes". "You've just had it," Carr responded. There was no meeting and there never would be.

Both Bill and Esther felt the social pressure from their friends to marry. "Everybody expected it. Everybody wanted it," Walsh recalled, "but I didn't have to be pushed. Dick had asked me to take care of Esther and the boys, but that didn't necessarily mean marriage. I decided I wanted to marry Esther." According to her friends, Esther was ambivalent at first, partly because of her concern that the twins, now age five, might not accept Bill as a father. Whereas he seemed to need the security of a life-time partner, Esther had come to enjoy her independence. Besides, as a wife of a union organizer she knew she would take second place to the job. It was only settled, both of them agree, when Johnny blurted out, "I want you for my daddy, uncle Bill." The wedding, a private affair, took place in March. In the meantime, C.S. Jackson had asked him if he would drop in on the UE office in Hamilton, where Westinghouse did most of its production. "We have certification there, but almost no members. Could you look at it and write me up a report?"

In accordance with the war imposed Order-in-Council PC 1003, the so-called Magna Carta of Canadian labour, any union was to be granted automatic recognition if it won majority support in a government-sponsored vote. It also promised collective bargaining, conciliation, and the right to strike. Westinghouse workers had voted overwhelmingly for the UE in spring 1944, but 18 months later only 200 of 3,800 plant workers had signed union cards. This situation was common enough among the industrial unions granted recognition towards the end of World War II. Equally common was the failure to negotiate a contract. An appointed conciliation board could not get union and management to even sit down in the same room. It was the conciliation board that wrote up the first UE-Westinghouse contract and it was signed separately in the respective offices of the company and the union. It was a one-year contract that denied both the dues check-off and compulsory union membership, gave no paid statutory holidays, no health plan, and allowed for no wage increase since wages were still fixed by wartime regulations.

In practical terms, except for the fact that the union was no longer a clandestine organization within the plant, little had changed with PC 1003. The union was recognized in name, but not in practice. Stewards still had to collect union dues personally, foremen acted as arbitrarily as ever, few grievances were settled, and the owners carried on as if the union did not exist. As far as they were concerned, any dilution of their authority over the conditions of work and the terms of employment was a violation of property rights. Whether or not unions would exercise any degree of control over

management decisions would only be determined in the next round of negotiations, outside the restrictions of wartime regulations. Both sides were poised for a major show-down.

"We had just won the war, freed the world from fascism and to advance to a new social order and good times for all," Bill Walsh offered, putting the period in context. "There was a whole new spirit in the world. Returning soldiers were looking for jobs but they weren't going to sit around waiting for handouts. They talked with new authority. They had been through hell and they weren't going to accept the world they had left behind — including the depression wages still being paid at Westinghouse and the other big companies."

The CIO unions set up a Wage Coordinating Committee to break through the wage freeze and to coordinate strike action, while on the ground local coordinating committees were being set up. The one in Hamilton included the three main unions there — Steelworkers, UE, and the Rubberworkers — and some smaller unions. The plants they represented were very large. Westinghouse employed up to 6000, the Steel Company of Canada 10, 000, and Firestone 1,500. These were the largest plants in each of these industries, so the outcome in Hamilton was bound to have consequences for trade unionism across the country.

Autoworkers had already won a major breakthrough following a dramatic strike at the Ford plant in Windsor. Justice Ivan Rand's arbitration ruling granted the union dues check-off. "I consider it entirely equitable," Rand wrote, "that all employees should be required to shoulder their portion of the burden of expense for administering the law of their employment, the union contract; they must take the burden along with the benefit."⁵ This was the Rand formula. It provided for voluntary membership in the bargaining unit. Not all workers in a plant had to join the certified union, but payment of dues was compulsory, giving the union the kind of financial security it needed. The Ford strike set the pattern for the automobile industry, but its gains were not automatically extended to other industries.

As in all the other disputes in this period there had been a clash over strategy between Communist and CCF trade unionists. Congress leaders were not enthusiastic about having a strike. Millard, still bitter about being defeated by George Burt for the UAW leadership, warned that the strike was showing signs of being run by Communists. C.S. Jackson supported a call from the UAW Ford local to hold a one-day sympathy strike, and the Westinghouse local of UE went out on 8 November, much to the chagrin of Congress leaders who were upset at the prospect of an illegal sympathy strike. The Congress held wage strategy sessions throughout the spring of 1946 without, however, the participation of the UE, whose leaders, C.S. Jackson and George Harris, had been censored for their anti-Congress statements during the Ford strike. The committee recommended that unions put forward their wage demands by 1 May, and quickly obtain strike mandates. Mass strikes in key industries, it hoped, would draw swift government intervention, leading to short strikes and good settlements.

"The main centre for the strike wave was bound to be Hamilton," Walsh explained. "We had the main steel company, the main electrical plant and one of the main rubberworker plants. But the employers knew our unions were weak. That's why it became so urgent to organize them. All the contracts were coming up for renewal and everyone sensed there was going to be a battle." Employers were seeking to render the unions ineffective, if they could not get rid of them completely. The unions, on the other hand, were out to establish a permanent place for themselves in the workplace.

Walsh reported what he had found to Jackson. The organization of UE at the two Westinghouse plants on Barton Street and on Longwood Row was very shaky. The man in charge, Lou Franko, a good in-plant leader, was a poor organizer and administrator. Jackson asked Walsh to take on the job as UE representative for Hamilton and surrounding area.

Esther decided to remain in Toronto. She knew how UE staff was shifted from place to place. There was no telling how long Bill would be located in Hamilton. In the meantime she continued to rent 211 Spadina, the only home the boys had ever known. Their day-care was close by, and Esther had a good job, a rich social life, and lots of friends in Toronto — mostly among union staff, the Party, and the United Jewish People's Order. Walsh commuted to Toronto weekends when he could get away, which wasn't often, at least through 1946. Not until 1949 did Esther and the twins finally move to Hamilton. Hershel Wolofsky had just died and left Bill \$3000, a sum they'd use to purchase a tiny four-room house on Archibald, in the industrial part of Hamilton.

Signing up members to UE Local 504 was the main order of business for Walsh. A strike vote looked increasingly inevitable and was coming up fast. Each day workers entering both Westinghouse plants were handed a new leaflet Walsh had drafted the night before. Amazingly, this became a practice he continued throughout his career at UE. There were frequent labour rallies downtown and in Woodlands Park, right across from the Barton Street plant. Drawing on his experience organizing the rubber workers in Kitchener, Walsh made special efforts to sign up workers in the crucial tool area. By the time the strike vote deadline arrived, 1800 of the 4000 Westinghouse workers had signed membership cards. It became obvious that only by inviting non-members to vote could the union obtain the majority it was seeking. This was the strategy Walsh recommended, and though it was an unusual one, it was accepted. Across industries demands were fairly uniform. UE Local 504 called for compulsory check-off, a 25 cents an hour wage increase, a 40 hour week, time-and-a-half for overtime, and increased vacations. It submitted its demands on 15 May. Westinghouse countered with 7.5 cents an hour and no improvement on the other major issues. An overwhelming strike vote brought an 8.5 cent an hour offer along with two paid holidays, two weeks vacation after five years, and voluntary check-off. Jackson, who handled the negotiations, recommended that the offer be turned down. So many workers turned up at the 4 July meeting that it was too crowded to take a vote, and the meeting was shifted to Woodlands Park. The result was overwhelming. The UE struck on 5 July, with a majority of Westinghouse's 4000 employees on the picket line, one of the biggest picket lines in Canadian history.

Westinghouse made no move to bring in replacement workers. Both management and union were waiting to see if the strike wave was really going to happen. They both knew that Steelworker Local 1005 would be the one to set the pattern in Hamilton and across the country. From the start UE and Steel were mutually suspicious. Even as the CCL was in the midst of setting up the wage coordinating committee, Charlie Millard held a meeting with Hamilton Steelworkers adopting 19.5 cents as the targeted wage increase, a demand that was at once denounced as weak and divisive by C.S. Jackson, and as outrageous by Stelco President Hugh Hilton. On 14 May, his offer of 5.5 cents drew an overwhelming strike vote by the workforce holding union cards, about half of the 6000 Stelco employees. Steel's vacillation in setting a strike deadline further disturbed UE leaders.

A UE rally at Woodlands Park heard Eamond Park, Communications Director of the Steelworkers, declare "our workers will be with you in a few days." But as the days passed with Stelco workers remaining on the job, Walsh increasingly began to think that Steel might not strike. "There was a schedule worked out by the CCL coordinating committee. They were supposed to come out on 8 July three days after us. We came out on time and so did the Rubberworkers. By this time we had a strike wave all across the country. But everybody was waiting for Local 1005 to join us. They had their date and it was called off, and they had a second date and it was called off. They said they were having meetings with the company and with government officials. But each time they called off the strike the workers began to feel demoralized. Not just their workers, but all the workers in the area and likely around the country. If they didn't deliver, it would make it hard for us to deliver."

Just hours before the 8 July deadline, three steel companies, Stelco, Algoma Steel Mills, and Dominion Steel Company (Dosco) were placed under the authority of a federal government controller. Any person who refused to work for him would be subject to a daily fine, and union leaders to a five-year prison sentence. This was the ostensible reason for the delay as Charlie Millard, Canadian Director of the Steelworkers, held last-minute meetings with Stelco president Hugh Hilton, in an attempt to head off a strike. Would the Steelworkers vote to defy the law and go on strike? The membership met on 14 July at the Playhouse Cinema on Sherman Avenue North to decide. Ultimately, they decided to strike. A reporter for the *Hamilton Spectator* described the scene: "Suddenly the doors opened, the crowd came out of the theatre and they all marched north on Sherman Avenue to Burlington, and right to the Wilcox Gate. The strike was on!"

By now nearly one out of five workers in the city of Hamilton was on strike. On the first morning of the steel strike, UE organized a mass meeting at Woodlands Park. Walsh described the moment. "We paraded down, UE workers, rubber workers, steel workers and lots of other people. The UE sound truck led the way, blaring 'Solidarity Forever' and picking up supporters all through working class district of Hamilton until the march was several thousand strong as it approached Stelco's main gates on Wilcox Street. All of a sudden somebody yelled, 'there's scabs inside', and there were. Stelco had every intention of keeping their plant running. All the postponements gave them more time to prepare. They built an airstrip and hired extra help, moved in 2,000 cots from the Kenilworth barracks and lots of food. Hundreds of people broke ranks and made for the wire fences the company had built around the plant. Dozens were already climbing over the fences to get into the plant and haul out the scabs when Millard grabbed the UE mike. 'This is Charles Millard of the union speaking,' he said. 'This is not the way we do things. I want all you people to climb back over those fences. We must keep our heads. We can't have any violence. We have to be disciplined.' The workers would have grabbed every one of those scabs out of there. There were hundreds at the fences and hundreds more behind them. We didn't plan this part of the action but it would have crippled the company's plan of keeping the plant producing. Unfortunately, the strikers obeyed Millard."

Since all of the other struck plants were shut down tight, the entire focus was the Stelco picket line. It averaged 500 to 1,000 people through each day. Local merchants donated large quantities of supplies to striking families. Farmers gave whole fields of crops. On 17 July, Hamilton mayor Sam Lawrence, a CCFer and former president of the Hamilton Labour Council, marched at the head of a parade chaired by Bill Walsh. Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger came to town to give a concert. Meanwhile the company had hired boats and planes to bring in the materials it needed to keep the plant going, including food and supplies for the scabs. Local 1005 countered by hiring a light plane to leaflet the plant. Aerial dogfights broke out over the picket line with opposing pilots trying to force the other away from the plant. There were also skirmishes on the waters of Hamilton Bay. Early in the strike Walsh contacted a bootlegger he had met in the Guelph jailhouse, who agreed to sell his motor launch to the union. It had been used as a rum-runner in the prohibition days. Rechristened "The Whisper", it was the fastest boat on the bay. Day and night through the course of the strike whenever a company boat approached the Stelco dock to unload "The Whisper" chased it out onto the lake or tried to swamp it.

A Commando Squad of young union militants went to the homes of workers still in the plant and painted the word "SCAB" in ten foot high letters on their walls. On some nights a few dozen Squad members would cut through the barbed wire and charge over to the sleeping quarters, smash in the windows, and toss in a few firebombs. The Squad regularly harassed scabs attempting to enter the plant at night, beating them with rubber hoses and stripping them naked. On 2 August, City of Hamilton controller Nora Frances Henderson, who said she deplored the "state of lawlessness" in the city, announced that she intended to test her right to enter the plant. When she appeared before the picket line and demanded to be let into the plant, the strikers stood aside and let her through. But by the time she reached the plant gate women picketers had seen to it that she was dripping in spit.

The evening before a special meeting of City Council was called to bring some law and order to the scene, Bill Walsh drafted this leaflet:

BE AT CITY HALL TONIGHT

To help the companies in their fight to smash the strikers and the unions, Controller Henderson is:

1) Trying to deny families of strikers their right to relief.

2) Trying to get Provincial and Mounted Police brought into Hamilton. Tonight, Thursday, City Council will meet to decide these matters. Exercise your democratic right to:

1) Contact your Alderman and Controllers and tell them what you think of these matters.

2) Come to City Hall tonight and see how they vote. RELIEF FOR STRIKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN NEED KEEP THE OUTSIDE POLICE OUTSIDE. THEY CAUSE TROUBLE

WHEN THEY COME IN.

When thousands of strikers and their supporters converged on City Hall they found all the seats in the chamber already occupied by office workers and managers of the city's struck plants. They jammed the galleries and filled the stairwells and the halls, with still thousands more packed into the narrow canyons of streets surrounding the City Hall, carrying placards and singing "Solidarity Forever." After four hours of debate, highlighted by

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Chief of Police Joseph Crocker's assurance that there were no serious problems on the picket lines, Council voted nine to seven that provincial police were not needed. But it also vetoed relief for strikers and their families. On the way out of City Hall, the strikers cheered Mayor Sam Lawrence and Labour Progressive Controller Helen Anderson who had led the debate on behalf of the strikers. When Nora Francis Henderson appeared she was met with jeers and taunts and a chorus of "We'll hang Nora Francis from a sour apple tree." Matters appeared to be getting out of hand as she crossed the square and entered her car. A crowd began to rock the car and it looked for a moment as if it might turn it over.

The next day the Steelworkers, concerned about their public image, issued this public statement: "We wish to make it explicitly clear that the demonstration at the city hall last night was in no way organized by the Steelworkers Union. The organization of the crowd emanated not from the union movement of the city, but from the Labour Progressive Party." The UE was unapologetic. Local President Al Stratford, himself a CCFer, told the *Hamilton Spectator*, "the people of Hamilton have nothing to be ashamed about. Controller Nora Francis Henderson lost a few locks of her hair. You won a great victory with your demonstration of solidarity."

Walsh's opposite number in the Steelworkers was Larry Sefton. In 1945 Millard had sent Sefton to Hamilton to become area supervisor of the Steelworkers, with the specific task of wiping out the Communist influence in the union. Only 28 years old, Sefton, with his dashing good looks and dynamic personality, proved to be a capable opponent for Bill Walsh. Sefton was a hard-rock miner from Kirkland Lake who had just led an important strike there while taking on the Communist-led Mine Mill and Smelter Union. It did not take him long to organize a CCF group and oust the Communists from leadership positions in Local 1005. But the Communist contingent still maintained some presence within the local.

As area representatives of the two largest unions involved in the strike, Sefton and Walsh were often called in by the civic authorities to speak for their unions. One such occasion was19 August, when Mayor Lawrence yielded to pressure to call a meeting of the Police Commission to deal with alleged violence on the picket line. In addition to the local magistrate and Chief of Police Joseph Crocker, Mayor Lawrence invited Sefton and Walsh to the meeting, along with the vice-president of Stelco who had to be flown out of the plant in a helicopter.

Bill Walsh has this recollection of the meeting: "First the company man insisted that the Hamilton police force couldn't handle the situations. He made a plea that provincial police be brought in to regain law and order. Sam Lawrence, in the chair, turned to the Chief: 'Joe, are your people having any trouble maintaining law and order?' 'No,' replied the Police

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Chief. 'Everything is under control.' 'Are you short of men? Do you need reinforcements?' asked Lawrence. 'No, we're handling the situation.' 'Well, gentlemen,' said Lawrence to the other members of the Police Commission, 'you heard what the chief said. As far as I'm concerned, there's no more to be said. We won't be needing outside police'."

He was bringing down the gavel to adjourn the meeting when Larry Sefton spoke up. "Mr. Mayor, I would like to say a few words." He was duly introduced. "I want to thank you for your show of confidence in our union and I give you my word of honour that there will be no interference with anybody wanting to go in or out of the plant."

"I was shocked," Walsh remembered, "and so was the Mayor. As an old-time trade unionist, he knew the importance of keeping the picket line closed. Until then, we had kept it closed and the Police Commission had just agreed to leave things as they were. We walked out of the building and were on the City Hall steps when I turned to Larry and said 'What the hell are you trying to do? Why did you just promise to open the lines?' I was livid. That was the end of the strike. And it wasn't just his strike; it was the whole strike movement across the country. Everybody knew there would be no settlement anywhere until Stelco settled. Now Sefton says to me, 'Don't give me any of that. I know what you Communists want. You want blood running down the gutters of Hamilton. Well, I'm not getting into that game.' An hour later instructions had gone out to the picket line not to stop anybody or anything going in or out. And that's what happened. Scabs and trucks were going in and out. Some of the strikers were setting up to go back to work. The picket line just collapsed."

"That night I went out and got the best guys I could find from all three unions and we met in somebody's basement to make a plan for the next morning. We got on the phone and went knocking on doors and by early morning we had five or six hundred people at the Wilcox gate. By 8 or 9 o'clock hundreds more started flocking to the gates from nearby homes. Now the company decided to challenge the picket line. An enormous diesel loaded with steel rails and I-beams geared down Wilcox Street, about a half mile long. A line of police walked slowly in front of the truck, urging the crowd to keep on moving, and the truck inched forward in low gear. By this time a young Steelworker had taken the mike from the union tent and he began speaking in an even voice saying things like 'alright fellas; I want you to stand there in the middle of the road when this truck comes and slow it down — that's right, slow it down.' The police line met the forward line of the strikers. The strikers didn't give an inch but the diesel crept forward right into the backs of the police. 'Alright now' said this the young Steelworker, 'lean, push, make it stop - now let him come to you - now lean back — now everybody stand, now move forward, push him back.' This guy

was tremendous. He was like a coach in a tug-of-war. We pushed this truck all the way back up Wilcox Street with the police getting squashed against the radiator and front fender of the truck. The diesel tried a few more times, but each time we stopped it. The company tested the line over the next few days and a number of strikers were arrested, but the line held.

"It was at this point that Police Chief Joe Crocker, forced by a vote at City Hall, called in the Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP. When we knew the police were coming in from all over, we devised a new tactic. We organized a parade of war vets from the Woodlands Park through the industrial side of town, to the Kenilworth barracks, and from there to the gates of Stelco. We carried banners and we had the sound truck singing: 'If the cops got in the way, We're going to roll right over them, Roll right over them, Roll right over them, We're going to roll the union on.'

"As we marched down Barton Street, more veterans came out to join us wearing their medals or berets. They streamed out of the veteran halls that had been converted into training centres. The night before we had leafletted these places, addressing them as Workers in Uniform and urging them to join us. They did, in the thousands, including some military bands. The outside police never showed up that day and they never showed up at all. But that parade was the beginning of the end of the strike."

The strike went on into September and there were continuous attacks on the homes of strikebreakers, some incidents on Hamilton Bay, and occasional skirmishes on the picket lines. On 1 October the workers at Stelco voted to settle. UE settled three weeks later. The workers got a modest wage increase of 13.5 cents. Altogether, the 1946 campaign won an additional \$64 million in wages for 223,000 workers. More importantly, the unions got a large measure of union security with the automatic dues check-off. But the precise terms of the settlement were less important than what it meant for the long term outcome for trade unionism and collective bargaining in Canada. There is no doubt that after the war the owners of Canadian industry manoeuvred unions into strike positions, believing that they could starve workers into submission and break the new industrial unions before they got firmly established. Their failure to achieve this objective amounted to a union victory. Henceforth, most industrial corporations recognized that in their relationships with employees they had to accommodate themselves to the presence of unions.

The Stelco strike gave the Steelworkers a reputation for militancy that, according to Bill Walsh, they never deserved. Clearly the Communist forces in Hamilton bolstered the union when it began to falter, and where necessary they circumvented its leaders. In this respect the Stelco strike was similar to the Ford strike in Windsor a year earlier. However important the Communists may have been to sustaining the Stelco strike, the political beneficiaries were the CCFers. Their hold on the union became so firmly established during this period, that to this day the Steelworkers remain a bastion of NDP support within the labour movement. As for the union itself, Millard was right in claiming that the Stelco victory "set the Steelworkers on its expansionary course,"⁰ for within a short time they were the largest union in Canada.

Over the next few years, CCF leaders within the CIO unions led a campaign to purge these unions of all Communist influence. For the most part they succeeded, and where they failed, as in the case of the UE, they had the unions expelled from the Congress of Labour.

Opening Shots In The Cold War

The public rhetoric over Canada's political environment was now rapidly changing. In 1944 Toronto had adopted the city of Stalingrad and a banner hung over the entrance to Toronto's City Hall with a portrait of Churchill at one end and Stalin at the other end. From the beginning, though, western leaders saw this as a temporary alliance. In Canada government leaders and the RCMP had always regarded Communism as a greater threat than fascism. But in 1945 the public rhetoric had the Soviets as our "northern neighbour" with the Liberal Party accepting Communist offers to help support Liberal candidates in the upcoming elections. In the "Spirit of Teheran", the LPP called for a "Liberal-Labour Coalition" in the 1945 Ontario provincial election as well as in the federal election. In addition to nominating some of its own candidates, the LPP joined the Liberal Party to support four leaders of the UAW who ran as Lib-Lab candidates in Windsor ridings. The Communists held on to their two seats in Toronto, but they took enough votes in some CCF-held ridings to assure victory for Tory candidates. Altogether the CCF lost 26 of the seats it had previously held. In the federal election, the LPP re-elected Fred Rose in Montréal-Cartier by a large majority and again cost the CCF seats, although the CCF nevertheless managed to elect 28 members to Parliament, up from eight in 1940. Both parties received all-time high votes, 832,000 for the CCF and 116,000 for the LPP.

This novel, if tenuous and marginal, place in the mainstream of Canadian politics ended abruptly on 5 September 1945, the day Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk in the Soviet embassy, defected. Four months later thirteen Communists were arrested and charged with spying for the Soviet Union. The same day the second report of the Royal Commission on Espionage was released — 15 March 1946 — Fred Rose was arrested. The Commission report was sensational. It was crammed with theories about an enormous clandestine conspiracy masterminded by the Soviet Union and involving hundreds of Canadians who had converted to Communism and turned traitor against their own country.

The USSR had been a war-time ally of Canada's when it established an intelligence agency in its Ottawa embassy to collect political and military information, and this was part of the arrested Party members defence. They were collecting information that would help an ally with its defences at a time when it was threatened with total defeat, information they had every reason to expect, though it was being denied them by the Canadian government. Helping the Soviet Union did not imply betrayal, they insisted. All of this was to no avail, nor did it matter that none of the information transmitted to the Soviet Union was sensitive or vital. Ultimately, 20 communists were accused of Offences under the Official Secrets Act and publicly named as spies. Nine were convicted. Fred Rose and Sam Carr, who set up the network, were sentenced to six years imprisonment, and they were abandoned by both the USSR and the CPC. The Soviet government denied that its ambassador was involved, and the CPC denied any knowledge of a spy network.

In her book about the post-war spy trials, *The Strangest Dream*, author Merrily Weisbord summarized the meaning and importance of this episode to the future of the Communist Party. Weisbord claimed:

The Canadian Communist Party's tie to the Soviet Union had begun to strangle the baby. The fact that Fred Rose, the most visible Canadian Communist, was collaborating with Soviet agents proved the dual allegiance of the Communist Party and served as a focus in the ideological war for the hearts and minds of English-speaking peoples. Despite the small number of Canadian communists who had given information to the Soviet Union, the trials were used not only to reveal the worst, but also to smear the best in the movement. They proved so effective as propaganda that even today political discourse in North America has not recovered its freedom.⁷

The trial of Fred Rose was the first of the many spy trials that was to include, among others, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the US. These trials put the Communists in a defensive mode which they were never able to reverse.

While the Government of Canada did not impose loyalty tests on its employees, it began vigorous screening led by the RCMP. Civil servants were called upon to assist by maintaining a "constant vigilance of their office associates."⁸ For nearly a decade through to the mid-1950s, tens of thousands of public employees were subjected to security screening. By 1953 the RCMP had active files on 21,000 individuals and 2,300 organizations, most of them trade unions. Cultural workers in organizations like the National Film Board were subject to a witch hunt, along with university professors, and every city had its own "Red Squad." In Québec the Duplessis government dusted off the infamous 1937 Padlock Law (An Act to Protect the Province Against Communistic Propaganda) which allowed the state to imprison anyone caught publishing or distributing Communist material.

Bill Walsh was in the midst of the 1946 Hamilton strike wave when the spy trials were being played out. Like most Communists, he regarded the espionage charges as the opening shot of the Cold War, and as blown way out of proportion — more a matter of stupidity on the part of Fred Rose and Sam Carr than a betrayal of Canada. It no doubt had an immediate effect on the atmosphere during the strike, particularly the increasingly bitter relations between himself and the Steelworkers leaders. But that hostility went back a long way, reflecting the traditional rivalry between Communists and social democrats for leadership of the working class and control of their unions. It was a rivalry that only temporarily subsided during World War II and that absorbed increasing time and energy until 1951 when the job of "cleaning out the Commies" was all but complete.

Party School

The summer 1947 Party School, six weeks of classes on the labour theory of value, internationalism, imperialism, class, and leadership was held at the Finnish Campsite in Sudbury. The Marshall Plan had just been announced in Washington, ostensibly to promote European economic recovery, but really to shore up a free enterprise alternative to the growing popularity of socialism. Further east, Stalin was consolidating control over the new People's Democracies. Walsh was not sure why he had been asked to attend. He hoped it would give him an opportunity to discuss the questions that had been concerning him. The outcome couldn't have been more different.

In the midst of the School, he was called back to Hamilton to attend to what was going to become a frequent occurrence, a challenge to the leadership of the Westinghouse local of the UE by a CCF group calling themselves the "New Dealers". As the School drew to a close, private interviews were arranged with the national leader Tim Buck and Stanley Ryerson, the School Director. "It was at this time that I finally had an opportunity to raise some of the problems that had been bothering me," Walsh related. "I told them about our meetings in London and how we wanted a session with the national leader where we could let our hair down, say what was on our minds without fear of being censored. Questions about our frequent reversals of party line as in the case of the World War II and

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how it damaged our credibility with the working class, about our Lib-Lab policy and how angry it made us feel that our Party was supporting Mackenzie King, how it was bothering me that in the 1920s and 30s the soldier's oath in the Red Army used to be "for socialism and brotherhood of all mankind" and now it was "for the motherland" or some such thing.

"Tim seemed not at all disturbed by these sorts of questions. He even seemed supportive, admitting that these were important questions and he put in the odd question or comment. I was disappointed in the answers he gave. He repeated the standard Party line. I wasn't satisfied but I didn't persist. With the Party under attack from all quarters those days, to persist might be taken as a sign of disloyalty. And I thought that was the end of the matter." But that wasn't the end of the matter. As with all Party schools, this one ended with a criticism/self-criticism session led by the School Director. When Walsh's turn came, Ryerson was brutal. Difficult enough to take were his barbs at Bill's vanity and pride. "But I was shocked that when I finally had an opportunity to voice these questions that had concerned me for some time, that my asking them was interpreted as an example of my vanity. I was told that some of these questions were still not resolved by the greatest Marxist theoreticians in the international Communist movement and here I was insisting on answers. Furthermore, according to him, I hadn't accepted the answers provided by the top officer of the Party. I was so devastated that I was unable to rise to my feet, let alone defend myself. All I could do was deny that I had disbelieved our Party leader."

This humiliating scene flashed before him time and again on the drive back to Hamilton. He winced at the memory of Ryerson's every word and tried to imagine different endings to the scene with himself springing immediately to his feet:

Since when is it disloyal in this Party to seek answers to questions that are important to a comrade. Even the national leader concedes that my questions are legitimate, legitimate enough for them to be debated by the top echelons of the international movement. Since when does the Party of scientific socialism refuse to review questions of strategy and substance. Even in the days of the bloody civil war the Bolsheviks debated the issues. There was no evasion, no intimidation, no hiding behind questions of personality, loyalty or vanity.

But he could not erase that scene from his memory. He felt shamed, puzzled by Tim Buck, and furious at Stanley Ryerson. And he argued weakly with himself. "How was I to know that my questions are not yet resolved, that they are still being thrashed out at the highest levels, even by Stalin himself? But even so, does this mean that an ordinary Party member like myself can't discuss them or even raise questions about them?" It was around this time, shortly after settling back to work, that he experienced his first serious health battle with ulcers. The pain was severe enough that he had to be rushed to the hospital. Lying in his hospital bed, he contemplated his future. "I remember deciding that I had better drop these questions that were regarded as delicate matters and just go on doing my work. So long as the atmosphere in the union permitted me to do this in an effective way, I could live with it. I was not prepared to quit the Party or my job with UE, which I knew amounted to the same thing, because not long after the School ended, C.S. Jackson let me know that he agreed with the criticisms made of me at the School. This also angered me since we had been told that these criticism/self-criticism sessions were confidential, strictly for the purpose of helping comrades overcome their shortcomings."

UE Politics — Opening Rounds

Almost from the beginning, Walsh felt some antagonism from C.S. Jackson, not unusual as Jackson was antagonistic toward many of his staff and fellow officers. He singled them out as opportunists, using their positions to get ahead in life; if not opportunists, they were police agents; if not police agents, Communists using the union merely as vehicle to advance the Party position. As for Walsh, Jackson regarded him as an egomaniac who had to make everything he did look large and everything everybody else did look small — always trying to show that he was more clever, a superior negotiator, a better organizer.⁹ Walsh's manner triggered something in Jackson, and he had his own ways of striking back.

An early example of the fractious nature of their relationshp occurred after completion of the 1948 negotiations in which Westinghouse workers won a pay increase substantially higher than Stelco workers, who until then had always set the wage pace in Hamilton. At a regular meeting of the leading Party group that functioned semi-officially in the UE under the name the National Staff Committee, Walsh expressed the view that Westinghouse workers were being held back by the ineffective leadership of the United Steelworkers local at Stelco. What was needed was a militant opposition group inside the Stelco local. If necessary the Party should put a man in there to organize the opposition. "Hell, it wouldn't be hard," he insisted. "The right-wing leadership isn't nearly as well entrenched as we give them credit for. They've got feet of clay. They're weak. We could easily knock them over." The leading officers were not convinced. Ross Russell added the clincher: "Besides, the Party doesn't have the money to hire an organizer there."

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"You're missing the whole point," Walsh persisted. "By challenging the Steel leadership and maybe taking it over, we'll take the heat off ourselves and get better settlements for our members. As for the money, hell, compared to guys in the Party we get large salaries and they work harder than we do. We can all chip in to handle the expenses for a while. It's our duty as revolutionaries and comrades." It was at this point that Jackson exploded. "Look, Walsh, I pay my dues to the Party, ten dollars a month and I give generous contributions besides. There's a limit. Pretty soon you'll have to be a millionaire to belong to this Party. Don't make a hero of yourself, Walsh. Not at my expense. You're no better a revolutionary than the rest of us. If you don't think so, ask Salsberg or Kashton."

Salsberg agreed. "I know. Before you were working for the Party and we paid you eight dollars a week when we paid you anything at all. Now you're working for the UE and they pay you something like \$25 and you think it's an awful lot. Well, it isn't. You can't expect these men to pay for an organizer out of their own pocket and they're right, the Party can't afford it either."

These run-ins with Jackson were not frequent because most of the time they had very little to do with each other. Walsh's work kept him mainly in the Westinghouse chain while Jackson was more concerned with General Electric as well as being the UE national president. The National Staff Committee, comprised of Jackson, Harris, and Russell, the three national officers, and a few of the key regional representatives, met only to discuss critical situations. "We generally regarded ourselves as the Party faction of the union on a national scale," Walsh remarked of the Staff Committee. "Our meetings would usually be confined to union matters, but sometimes it broadened to include discussions on Party campaigns like the peace issue and sometimes we had discussions on what was our job as Party people who were elected as union leaders or employed as union staff persons. I don't know for sure, but I think the three UE national officers or some of them would meet with top Party persons prior to our faction meetings, but it was very rare that this would happen with the group as a whole."

Jackson himself always insisted that Communists who were leaders of UE were required to put the union before the Party. "We start from the position of what is best for the members of the union," he told Jim Turk who was interviewing him for a book. "If a political campaign conducted by the Party is not germane to that principle we make it quite clear that we are the ones who make the decisions, not the Communist Party."¹⁰ Jackson, who was a closet member of the CPC, had his disagreements with "the guys downtown," as he disparagingly referred to Party headquarters. These would sometimes be fought out in the Staff Committee. "George [Harris] would come in after a central executive meeting of the Party where a decision had been made to go down a certain direction. Then the discussion would take place among

the three officers and then the internal fights would take place," claimed Frank Piserchia, a non-Communist staffer interviewed by Doug Smith for his biography of Jackson. As Smith remarks, these fights were about more than whether or not to go along with a Party decision. They were part of an on-going power struggle between Jackson and Harris. Most of it was ego. Jackson was jealous of Harris who was widely admired by UE members. Not coincidentally, Jackson let it be known to some, that he suspected Harris of being an RCMP agent, an accusation that appears unlikely.

About the conduct of National Staff Committee meetings, Walsh remarked that:

Jackson insisted we reach a consensus. Disagreements were talked out until a consensus emerged. From that time on no minority opinions were tolerated. Sometimes the debates were very sharp and only the officers would take part and the staff men like myself would keep quiet. Sometimes we would take part but when we did we would be sharply attacked by Jackson so we would retreat into our shells again. As a generalization, I would say that as long as the union as a whole was under attack, we worked together well to beat off the attack. When things were more quiet, it was not so harmonious.

One thing that bothered me most was the way a staff person who had for some time being regarded as an excellent comrade, even held up as an example for the rest of us, was all of a sudden fired and we were then told that he had always been a petty bourgeois; that he was a no-good-son-of-a-bitch; or that he was sick or gone off his rocker. And usually we never saw the fellow again. At about the same time or not long after being fired or being forced out of the UE they were out of the Party as well. Over the years I was in the UE there were at least a dozen or so that this happened to. It was very unusual for anybody to speak up about these people. We were told by the top officers that the guy was no good for this or that reason and who were we to question them. It was like what happened in the days of the purges in the Soviet Union when so many former leaders of the revolution were condemned and often executed and very few if any stood up to question what had happened to them.

Civil Wars Within Canadian Labour

Up until the mid 1950s at least, the UE was under severe attack, all the more so since C.S. Jackson had emerged as the most vocal, persistent, and effective critic of the Canadian Congress of Labour, and the leader of the "left" opposition within it. The proceedings of the 1948 Congress convention gave every indication that the UE's days in the Congress were numbered. With the Berlin blockade and the *coup d'etat* in Czechoslovakia still freshly imprinted on their minds, delegates were caught up in a frenzy of anti-communism.

The convention opened up with Congress President Mosher calling upon all unions to "free themselves from Communist leadership," and culminated in Secretary-Treasurer Pat Conroy's fervent appeal that if the trade union movement is "to live, if it wants to grow and flourish, if it wants to preserve its right to think and plan and if it wants to get on with the job of bringing security and freedom for the great mass of the workers," then the unions "must clean the communists out of their locals and out of the trade union movement."¹¹ On behalf of an already weakened opposition, Jackson gave back as much as he got. He damned the Congress's refusal to support another coordinated wage campaign, attacked its foreign policy in backing the Marshall Plan, which was bound to de-industrialize Canada and turn the "country into a raw material supply base for American big business," and he especially condemned open raiding of UE locals, red-baiting tactics, name-calling, and other "slanderous attacks."¹²

It was at this convention that Mine-Mill was suspended and that George Burt of the Autoworkers broke from the Communist group within his union. Despite the Left's diminished ranks, Jackson could still muster 154 votes to Mosher's 564 in the election for president, but at the 1949 convention, an overwhelming margin of delegates voted to uphold a decision taken that year to suspend the UE leadership from the CCL. A year later the UE itself was suspended. Despite ousting the UE, it proved a difficult task to persuade UE members to join the rival International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), created to take its place. The UE held its own against the combined forces of the CIO, the CCL, Steel, the IUE, the CCF, the media, and the churches. While Communists in every other union were ousted from positions of leadership, the UE membership never failed to back their leaders, despite all the external pressure to do so. And, with a few minor exceptions, the UE managed to beat back raids by the Steelworkers and the IUE. Politics had little to do with it. UE leaders were seen to be competent and honest, and good negotiators. They communicated regularly with their members and made a point of attending all meetings of the locals.

Throughout the late 1940s and into the 1950s the leadership's CCF opponents alternated their strategy, sometimes challenging for leadership of the locals, sometimes directly seeking to take locals out of the UE. At the Westinghouse shops in Hamilton, the anti-Communist group in Local 504 called itself the New Deal Committee. Alf Stratford, who had helped organize the local, was for a time a member of the New Deal group. "Better no union at all than a Communist-led union," was the message he got from David Lewis, who was at the centre of the drive to oust Communists from

trade unions. In any event, Stratford, then president of Local 504, promptly quit the New Deal Committee.

Because of American immigration laws which barred Communists from leaving or entering the US, the UE in Canada operated almost totally independent of its international headquarters in the United States. This proved to be a favourable circumstance, since the Canadian union was much stronger than its US counterpart.

An autumn 1948 radio broadcast given by Walsh, part of a weekly series he prepared on behalf of the UE, illustrates the way he responded to these outside pressures. This one was presented just after US government authorities had refused permission to nine UE delegates to attend a convention of the international union held in New York. Among those barred was C.S. Jackson.

Walsh's radio address reported:

The authorities' actions in regard to C.S. Jackson were spectacular of course. They deliberately allowed him to proceed to New York and in the meantime notified their officials in the city to be ready and waiting to seize him, while conveniently arranging for newsreel and newspaper photographers to be on the scene. All very spectacular with hints of international intrigue, espionage, iron curtain and what not.

... Oh yes, the big industrialists know they can count on the press and radio as well as on the government to carry their anti-labour activities. But even this is not enough to convince workers. So they fall back on the oldest devices in history. They search out Judas Iscariot among the workers themselves. They search out the weaklings who have compromised themselves with the employers and carry on the employers' propaganda. They search out those who would stab their fellow workers in the back for the modern equivalent of thirty pieces of silver — a better job — a little higher rate — freedom to wander about the plant. And of course there are some misguided workers who carry the boss-inspired poison for no personal gain who imagine they 'thought it out all by themselves'.

These constitute the most dangerous weapon against the working class, sometimes succeeding where the boss himself has failed, where the government and the courts have failed and where the press and radio have only partially succeeded. And that's precisely what happened last night not far from Hamilton when in a meeting of a hundred people a decision was made to disaffiliate from the UE and to throw in the lot of almost seven hundred workers not present with another union, the United Steel Workers.

I am sure that the United Steel Workers union will not have gained morally or otherwise from this move. It's quite certain that the workers of English Electric in St. Catherines, the plant in question, will lose. If the owners are able to get off paying their employees less by the confusion and division that has been created, then other workers in other plants will find it harder to win gains from their own employers.

Is it not time that the family of labour present to the employers a united front? How much higher does the cost of living have to rise before some union officials are prepared to sink their petty political and partisan attitudes in the interest of serving the working people who have honoured them by installing them in office? How many more workers must be arrested and sentenced to jail from picket lines seamen, textile workers, rubber workers and, yes, steel workers before some trade union officials realize that when employers are out to smash the labour movement, they will not spare even those splitters and red-baiters who helped them bring about disintegration?

In 1947 the United States Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, which banned Communists from holding union office and at the same time limited the right of unions to organize and strike. Though there was much pressure to follow suit, the Canadian government did not pass equivalent legislation, just as it refused to follow the US and West Germany in outlawing the Communist Party. It seemed unnecessary for it to intervene in union affairs because zealous Cold War CCFers, so anxious to demonstrate that they were free of any Red taint, accomplished the task for them. It appeared as if trade union leaders and the Liberal government had entered into a tacit agreement: if the unions would expel the Communists, thereby relieving the government from having to do so, the government would not bow to business pressure to introduce the anti-union provisions of Taft-Hartley.

Purged From The "House Of Labour"

By the end of this tumultuous decade, the Communist Party was on a political slide from which it would never recover. Its membership, which had reached a high of about 23,000 in 1946, dropped steadily over the next decade before suffering a near total collapse after Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 revelations. The Party lost its leadership role in many of the unions it had helped create. In the few instances where this had not occurred such as in the UE, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, and the United Fishermen, the entire union was purged from the "house of labour." Communist leadership was replaced by CCF activists, who were then able to move the Congress to endorse the CCF as the party of labour. This was part of the three-phase strategy worked out by David Lewis and doggedly implemented in conjunction with Charlie Millard and other CCF trade union stalwarts. First, get rid of the Communist; second win over the unions; third, make the CCF a mass-based party.

The CCF also purged its own membership of individuals who supported Communist positions on the Marshall Plan, NATO, and other issues. Bob Carlin was one prominent member purged from the CCF. A very popular member of the provincial legislature for Sudbury, Carlin had led the Mine-Mill drive to organize the International Nickel Company. He was told that "his loyalty" to the Communist group in his union had "become incompatible with his position as a CCF member of the legislature."¹³

It would have been hard to sustain an argument that the CPC ever posed a threat to the government of Canada. Notwithstanding all the hysteria manufactured to justify the extreme measures taken to destroy the Party, there is no evidence that its leaders ever advocated or discussed, let alone attempted, to overthrow the Canadian state. For Canadian Communists, revolution was always a distant goal and they had no notion of how it was to come about. Their actual activities were hardly subversive. Besides running for political office, they consisted of organizing demonstrations, petitions and marches, communicating information in leaflets, newspapers and publications, and helping workers and the poor organize themselves. Nor was there anything subversive about the conduct of Communist trade unionists. As Bill Walsh often complained, in their function as trade unionists, Party members avoided even talking about socialism. Norman Penner, himself a Communist leader until leaving the Party as part of the 1956 exodus, provided this explanation of the attack on Communist trade unionists:

The defeat of the Communists did not take place as a result of demands by the rank and file. In fact there were no trade union objectives at stake. The Communists were good militant trade union leaders and activists. They were pursued ... for Cold War objectives. It involved at different times the U.S. and Canadian governments, collusion between CCF and Liberal union leaders, and between the international officers of the major American unions and their Canadian affiliates. No holds were barred: laws were set aside or broken, the anti-Communist union officers launched massive raids.¹⁴

He could have added that the intimidation employed to purge the Communists often exceeded anything to be found in Communist-led unions.

The long term impact of the purges was substantial. The elimination of the Communist element removed one of the barriers set up by conservative trade union leaders to merge the two labour centres into what in 1956 was to become the Canadian Labour Congress. By the same token, the purges served to silence dissent in the labour movement. Substantive policy debates at conventions and council meetings all but disappeared. And, with so much energy and expenses being directed at removing officers, expelling and raiding unions, and healing the legacy of hate and bitterness that all this caused among a divided membership, unions were in a weaker position to press their bargaining demands, and the growth of union membership fell off. CCFers were able to gain control over most of the industrial unions although they were never successful in persuading their members to vote CCF. And, however much the CCF tried to distance itself from the Communists, among the general public the CCF was still regarded as the bearer of a foreign ideology. It lost electoral ground all through the 1950s, while the Liberal Party easily took on the mantle of moderate welfare statism.

By far the greatest impact of the purges was borne by the Communists. For them trade unions were the single most important vehicle to develop class consciousness among working people, which in turn was regarded by them as the most elemental step in the struggle to build a socialist society. Being marginalized or banished from playing a leadership role in unions was a total disaster. "The labour movement was, in a sense, their workers' parliament," write Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, "and they behaved like an opposition party. In the labour movement as nowhere else, the Communists were visible agitators, calling for radical changes in Canadian society and attracting the enmity of business leaders, conservative politicians and union rivals."¹⁵ For Communists, being barred from labour conventions was akin to barring scholars from libraries and scientists from laboratories.

Though the UE and the United Fishermen managed to hang on as independent unions, the long term effect was severe. It put the UE in a survival mode for the rest of its existence. The national leaders were determined to avoid initiatives that had any risks attached to them. This conservatism underlay a number of the major strategy disagreements that Bill Walsh was to experience throughout his career at UE. And this atmosphere was to contribute to the already paranoiac tendencies of its national president, C.S. Jackson.

Notes

¹Doug Smith, Cold Warrior (St. John's 1997), 3.

²Bill Freeman, 1005: Political Life of a Local Union (Toronto 1982), 62.

⁸James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941 (Toronto 1982), 206.

⁴Struthers, No Fault of Their Oum, 191.

⁵Cited in Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People (Ottawa 1980), 186.

⁶Freeman, 1005: Political Life in a Union, 68.

⁷Merrily Weisbord, The Strangest Dream (Montréal 1994), 175.

⁸Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, Cold War Canada: the Making of a National Insecurity State 1945-57 (Toronto 1994), 164. Smith, Cold Warrior, 104.

¹⁰Smith, Cold Warrior, 109.

¹¹Cited in Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 149.

¹²UE Brief to the Investigating Committee of the Canadian Congress of Labour, 14 April 1949.

¹³Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 100.

¹⁴Norman Penner, Canadian Communism, the Stalin Years and Beyond (Toronto 1983), 222-3.

¹⁵Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada, 316.

Chapter Nine

The 1950s

The Fabulous Fifties was the decade of the American dream: the detached house in suburbia, the double garage, the white-walled tires, electric washing machine, dryer, automatic dishwasher, supermarket, television, and the teenager. Jack Kerouac published his first novel and the "beat generation" was born — misfits who would not play the conventional role in this consumer society. Marilyn Monroe became the sex symbol of the new era. Raymond Chandler's last novel, *The Long Goodbye* was published in 1953. Elvis Presley swept the popular music scene in 1956. Rocky Graziano and Tony Zale fought it out for the middle weight crown until both were beaten by Sugar Ray Robinson, pound for pound the best fighter in the history of boxing, or so the pundits say. While a new decade brought new beginnings for some and great prospects for many, for Bill Walsh, the Communist Party, and the United Electrical Workers it was an ordeal, a continuous struggle for survival and all of the internal tensions and stress that brings.

In January 1950, scientist Klaus Fuchs was charged with passing information on the atomic bomb to the Russians. The hunt immediately proceeded for Fuch's alleged American accomplices. Fuch's evidence led to Harry Gold and to David Greenglass, a machinist in the atom bomb centre at Los Alamos. Gold fingered his sister, Esther Rosenberg, and her husband Julius. That weekend, Senator Joe McCarthy spoke to a ladies' club in Wheeling, West Virginia, holding up a piece of paper which he claimed was a list of 205 people who were known to the Secretary of State as members of the Communist Party, but were "still working and shaping the policy of the State Department." The witch hunt got serious, especially in wake of the Korean War which started in June 1950.

The "Hollywood Ten," a group of writers and directors who had refused to testify before the House of Un-American Activities Committee back in 1947, were sentenced to fines and imprisonment. Hundreds of actors, actresses, writers, and directors were blacklisted. In Canada, the National Film Board was purged of anyone suspected of having "left-wing" sympathies.

Paul Robeson, the great Afro-American singer and actor had his passport cancelled because, the US State Department said, he made speeches in foreign countries which did not reflect "a prevalent American view." In early 1952 Robeson, not allowed to cross the Canadian border to attend a Mine-Mill convention in Vancouver, sang from the American side of the border to an audience of 40,000 people gathered on the Canadian side of the International Peace Arch.

Meanwhile, communist unions continued to face problems from the CCL. "Desire for unity does not require us to retain within our ranks ... traitors to our nation who have given themselves over, body and soul to the totalitarian philosophy of Communism," intoned CCL chief Aaron Mosher, opening debate on the UE's final appeal against expulsion at the CCL's annual convention in September 1950. Like other Communist-led unions, the UE would remain in exile for 25 years, and be subjected to relentless raiding. For a while the main attack came from Millard's Steelworkers, with Millard assigning dozens of paid organizers to take over UE locals in Ontario and Québec. Hamilton was a lesser hunting ground for would-be raiders but they still occupied a lot of the attention of Bill Walsh and the UE staff.

In February 1956, Esther Walsh gave birth to a baby girl, named Sheri Joanne. Joe for Esther's father and Anne for Anne Weir. Within a year the Walsh family moved up the mountain to a home on David Street, away from the fumes and soot of the eastend. With the birth of the new baby, the family worked better, and had a new bond. The presence of Sheri also brought more structure to their lives. Meals were scheduled; soon they began to take regular vacations. Not that Bill Walsh gave up his seven-day week. The family would always take second place to the class struggle.

Alderman Bill Walsh

The city of Hamilton had always been something of a radical centre, with Communists and progressive CCFers like Sam Lawrence sitting in City Hall. But the politics of the Cold War came into play here too. In 1950 Peter Dunlop was defeated in Ward Six, the traditional Communist seat. When the alderman that beat him unexpectedly died in 1951, City Council should have followed precedence and appointed Dunlop in the interim. Instead, it appointed third-in-line Don Ellis, using as an excuse that Dunlop was away taking holidays in Scotland. Ellis, the perennial CCF candidate and New Dealer in the Westinghouse shops, immediately used his seat in City Council to launch a campaign against the UE. As the November civic elections approached, the Hamilton Party executive decided that Bill Walsh would stand the best chance of winning back Ward Six. Walsh was not happy with the decision and spoke against it, but in the end, he went along.

"I never had an interest in running for political office," he asserted. "My preferred field has always been organizing workers and I shunned most anything that took me away from that. For instance, except for the Party's Trade Union Commission, I never sat on any national Party committees and I turned down nominations to the Central Committee. Of course, I sat on the Hamilton Party executive, but that was different since a lot of what we did was related to the UE. At the time I was up to my ears in union work and I thought it might be hurtful to the union to be so openly identified." Running as an Independent Labour candidate rather than under the Party banner, he was still subject to smear tactics. He lost the 1951 election but agreed to take another crack at it a year later. This time around he decided to focus on one main issue: lowering property taxes on small homeowners. In his final pre-election radio broadcast, he promised that at his first meeting in City Hall he would make a motion to take a large part of the tax burden off home owners.

Enough voters overlooked the red-baiting this time to vote him in. And he fulfilled his promise, moving a motion at his first meeting to set up a committee to examine the possibility of exempting small owners from paying a portion of the general property tax. The motion went down to defeat seventeen to three with only Sam Lawrence and his cousin, Alderman David Lawrence supporting it. All of his motions suffered similar results, including a motion to build 500 low rental housing units and another to allow public meetings in the parks. "Not only did 10,000 striking workers hold open-air meetings in Woodland Park in 1946," he intoned, "but King John was presented with the Magna Carta in the open air in 1215, and William Lyon Mackenzie organized men in open fields to fight the Family Compact in 1837."

Civic politics took time he did not have. He conceded that some of the issues had political importance, but "whether fire alarm boxes and hydrants are painted with luminous paint or not is not exactly a burning question." He was convinced that the hours spent each week on Council business could be better spent on union work or other Party work. A large part of his political work, and even more so that of Esther, was to establish and build a Hamilton branch of the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. Esther Walsh identified deeply with the Rosenbergs since her sons were just a little older than Robert and Michael Rosenberg, who were about to be orphaned. Few events in the Cold War so polarized public opinion as did the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. While they had stoutly maintained their innocence, the jury found them both guilty of espionage and they were sentenced to death. Execution was set for January 1953. Thousands of citizens in Paris, Rome, London, New York, and Ottawa demonstrated in support of the Rosenbergs, and Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Jean-Paul Sartre and even Pope Pius XII joined the campaign to commute the death sentence. Since at worst the Rosenbergs had spied for the Soviets while they were still allies with the US, the death sentence seemed inappropriate. This was especially so for Ethel Rosenberg, as the evidence against her was much weaker than it was against her husband. It was suspected at the time, and since confirmed, that the government was using the sentence against Ethel to wring a last minute confession of guilt from Julius. Several times, desperate legal manoeuvres succeeded in delaying the execution. Until the end there was still hope that the new President, Dwight Eisenhower, might commute the death sentence. Such was not to be the case.

On 5 March 1953, Stalin died. The Party went into mourning. In response, Tim Buck spoke in Toronto's Massey Hall:

From Cape Breton to Vancouver, to the oppressed Negro people of Africa, to liberated China and embattled Korea, Viet Nam and Malaya, to the peoples of the many nations of Europe and of North and South America — everywhere, working men and women paused in their labours, grief stricken by the tragic news that came from Moscow. Without any question, Stalin was the greatest man of our age ... the man of his epoch ... History will recognize this epoch as the Stalin Epoch.

J.B. Salsberg interrupted the proceedings of the Ontario Legislature to say "I am confident that the calumnies which were directed for so long against Stalin will, as time goes on, sink into oblivion and the figure of Stalin will emerge and remain in history as one of the greatest among the great of all times." Only three years later Salsberg would lead the exodus from the Communist Party in the wake of the Nikita Kruhchev revelations.

Wallace-Barnes

In the midst of these events, as well as hosting a Labour Unity Conference of all the unions purged from the Congress of Labour, and fulfilling his aldermanic term, Bill Walsh headed into a new round of negotiations with Westinghouse. According to Walsh, UE leaders believed that they could risk a strike at the Hamilton Westinghouse plant only if the life of the union depended on it. "We could survive the loss of any of our smaller plants, but if we lost our largest General Electric plant or our largest Westinghouse plant, we could hardly lay claim to be the union of the industry and in no time at all we would picked apart by the other unions looking to destroy us. We estimated that our whole union would be on the line. So we developed a knack of being able to use every ounce of strength of Westinghouse workers without actually taking them out on strike. The company was aware of our problem, but it could never be absolutely sure, and neither could we. You can carry it to the point where you can't hold the workers back."

In the midst of drawn out negotiations with Westinghouse's new director of personnel, Jake Henley, a strike broke out at nearby Wallace-Barnes, an auto spring company employing 300 workers organized by Walsh a few years earlier. Back then the company had been shocked to lose its workers to a union, let alone the United Electrical Workers. The shock hadn't worn off before the first collective agreement was signed. Having gathered the three toughest anti-union lawyers in the business — David Lloyd George Jones, Norman Mathews, and Donald Pile — it was fully armed for negotiations. "It's likely that if we didn't have this big problem of not wanting to take on Westinghouse," Walsh explained, "we might have found some kind of compromise. Of course, it wasn't as if the conditions at Wallace-Barnes didn't justify a strike. But a conscious part of our tactic of striking at Wallace-Barnes was to show Westinghouse that this union wasn't afraid to take on a strike."

The Wallace-Barnes strike broke out toward the end of June. Before long the company brought in scabs including some workers who had joined a rival union led by Oliver Hodges, who was also the president of the Hamilton Labour Council at the time. With the union fighting to keep out the scabs, the company sought an injunction which drastically restricted the number of picketers allowed on the picket line to four per gate. "The fight was very, very bitter. We ignored the injunction and our people were being arrested," Walsh observed. "We had lots of Westinghouse workers come down to mass picket lines before reporting to work. 'Remember their fight is our fight,' I wrote in our daily bulletin. 'And that's the understatement of the year,' I said to myself. We were building quite a sentiment in the Hamilton area for all out support to fight the injunction. Wives and children came out, including Esther and Johnny and Mike."

"Among the first people arrested was Ed Pritchard, a very popular Westinghouse steward with a big family and a sick wife. While others got a \$25.00 fine, Pritchard got seven days and the pink slip from Westinghouse. The foundry crew was enraged and was all set to go on a wildcat strike to force the company to rehire him. Of course I reported this development to the national officers because it could lead to the result we were desperate to avoid. They told me that we couldn't afford the risk, 'Speak with Henley,' they said, 'anything but a wildcat'." "I protested. 'How can I speak with the company representatives? This union makes no private deals. We've always said that.' Jackson didn't like that. 'You always want to be the good guy,' he said. 'There's no moral question here. It's strictly one of survival. We can't afford the risk of a wild-cat. It could spread. You know that as well as anyone. Go see Henley. If he won't back down we'll find Pritchard a job someplace else.' I went to see Henley. There was no wildcat. It went to arbitration."

The Wallace-Barnes strike went on until December, lasting 24 weeks in all. It turned out to be one of the longest strikes in Hamilton history. Complicating the strike was the presence of Millard's protegé, Oliver Hodges. In 1949 he had been hired by the Congress and loaned to the rival IUE in the Hamilton area. Hodges saw the Wallace-Barnes strike as a golden opportunity to conduct a raid against the UE. Meanwhile, as president of the Hamilton District Labour Council he did what he could to limit broad support for the strike. Nevertheless, money and support poured in from unions in Hamilton and throughout Ontario. In the end it was not enough. "Bugs Bucking" Buckingham, president of the US company, was determined to keep the company open and to break the union at any cost. He succeeded.

But as far as UE was concerned, it was a worthwhile sacrifice. Walsh argued:

We showed Westinghouse and any other company that might take us to a strike, that they would pay a pretty penny, including the loss of a lot of their skilled work force. You could say we were fighting Westinghouse on the Wallace Barnes picket line. We were very conscious of that although for obvious reasons we couldn't allow the impression to be created that Wallace Barnes' workers were being used as pawns. I was uncomfortable with this situation, but I have to say that I went along with it completely. After all, I had been a military guy. I knew that to advance or hold on in certain fronts you sometimes had to sacrifice on other fronts. From that point of view it achieved its goal. For a number of years after there were still no strikes at Westinghouse and yet we were able to achieve reasonably good settlements.

In the midst of the Wallace-Barnes strike, the Liberal government called a federal election. It was a sweep for the Liberals. The large slate of LPP candidates collected a paltry 62,000 votes between them. And in November, still weeks before the Wallace Barnes strike wound down, Walsh sensed another defeat as Hamilton municipal elections rolled around. Between negotiating the Westinghouse settlement, coordinating the Wallace-Barnes strike, and performing his other union duties he knew he did not have the time to carry on a winning effort, especially with David Lloyd George Jones, "the patron saint of union busting," joining the other side to defeat him. Information from his RCMP file, a copy of which was acquired by Jones, was liberally used to smear his name. On 19 November an unsigned leaflet, one of many, appeared in the doorways of Ward 6 residents:

"ELECTORS OF WARD 6: FREEDOM AND LIBERTY ARE ONE AND THE SAME. VOTE TO PRESERVE WHAT OTHERS HAVE LOST."

Moscow dictates that her agents in world communication work in secret, hiding in an underground manner. Do not be deceived by the foxy stealth in trying to steal their way in. They have changed the name of their Party and even given new names to their stooges, in case the old name might taste bitter in Democratic mouths. Let us not tolerate the presence of a Communist alderman in City Hall.

Before Alderman Walsh's politics were generally known, he was elected to an aldermanic seat. Now that his identity is known, what are you going to do about this Communist at the next civic election?

When you vote, protect your freedom which has 'been so dearly bought.' Protect your Christian religion. Slavery was abolished by Abraham Lincoln. Who would wish its return but the emissaries of the devil!

The Communist candidate in your ward is William Walsh, formerly Moishe Wolofsky.

VOTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE AND THANK GOD YOU STILL CAN.

Walsh fought back with leaflets of his own, but it was not enough. In any event, loss of the seat was something of a relief for him. 1953 had been a trying and exhausting year that also included more ulcer problems. Aside from the internal squabbles with Jackson, which were becoming something of a regularity, the smear campaign was unsettling. "I never hid my Party connection," he explained, "but nobody knew about the change in name. I feared the whole thing might sound to some people like an episode from 'I was a Communist for the FBI'."

Trade Union Communist

"How was a Communist trade unionist different from any other?" I asked Walsh on more than one occasion. "At various times in my life in the Party," he'd answer, "two sides of this question would come up. The first was how do we work so that Party people get key elected positions. Well, the answer to that was simple. Communists have to be the best trade unionists. The next question was how do we show the face of the Party, how do we build the Party in the union? The problem was that this task could conflict with the other one. How do you get to be a leader in the union if you are a known Communist? In Jackson's case, there was no problem. He was the leader before there was a union. He started the union. And aside from his own abilities, we always had the key people on staff and on the local executive who were Party members, so there was never any problem re-electing him. In any case, of the three top officers in the UE, Jackson, Russell, and Harris,George Harris was the one chosen to show the face of the Party. Not that the rest of us denied our Party membership, aside from Jackson, that is. We just didn't make a big show of it."

"What did it mean in practice to show the face of the Party? Harris was a perennial candidate in federal and provincial elections running under the Communist banner, and during a speech at UE conventions once in a while he would say something like, 'I am a member of the Communist Party.' He didn't go about espousing socialism to the members. None of us did. And George didn't actively recruit guys into the CP. Nor did the rest of us. I suppose I did some, but most of those that came in did so at their own initiative. There were only about 25 or 35 UE members ever in the Party at any one time, although there were many more who were sympathetic."

"I always had the greatest respect for George Harris and I felt a lot of affection for him. He was a very lovable guy. He was also an excellent negotiator. He was the main negotiator at Westinghouse. I assisted him. But I used to think that in some ways he underestimated how far we could go in challenging management rights. I can remember him dismissing certain demands that members would raise at negotiating meetings. 'We can't raise that demand,' he'd say. 'Management will never give up that right. We'll never achieve that demand under capitalism. If you want to take that kind of control, then work with me to get rid of the capitalist system.' That was his way of promoting socialism. Now, he was right about some of the demands being raised, but in my view there were some that we could have achieved and some that we ultimately did achieve."

Was Walsh a trade unionist first and foremost, or first and foremost a Communist? Within Party ranks he was often criticized for protecting the union at the cost of the Party. Sam Walsh believed this to be the case. "Something happened to Bill after the internment camp and the war," he says of his brother. "He soft-pedalled the Party in the union." As for Walsh himself: "I always regarded myself as a Communist working in the trade union field." But, he added, "as a union official there were certain inhibitions about speaking as a Communist. You could promote specific policies that the Party supported and we did that all the time at conventions. And in our own discussions with individuals, which I did a lot. But you couldn't do so as a Communist. That wasn't just me. It was the environment we were living in and it effected how all of us worked."

In an unfinished letter written to George Harris, Walsh tried to formalize the problem in a more theoretical fashion.

Put in its bare-boned terms there are two outlooks: (i) our job is to fulfil all the functions of a union for its members and families. While doing this we must do everything to perpetuate our survival and the influence of fighters for socialism who are in positions of functionaries in the union. (ii) our job is to advance the cause of fighting for socialism in every way. While doing so we will try to fulfil our function as a union seeking to perpetuate the union and expand our influence as well. From time to time I've been on both sides of this question.

Walsh's reflections were confirmed by John Eileen. During the mid-1950s, Eileen worked with him at the headquarters of the UE in Hamilton. "The UE's priority was to deal with issues of the day in the plant, not to build socialism," Eileen told me. "The leaders didn't want their politics to jeopardize their union's position. They wanted Party members on staff and on the executives and as shop stewards partly so they could help build and defend the union but also to support and sustain their own leadership. Union leaders had a lot more sway in the Party than other leaders and they would often use their influence to make sure that the Party didn't interfere in union business. For instance, Walsh was the key man inside the Hamilton Party branch. A lot of the Party activity had to do with the UE plant, and Bill's opinions on these matters were decisive. In the union he weathered the red-baiting without backing off. Whenever it became an issue he'd say that the Party was legal in Canada, that there were Communists in the UE as well as in some other unions and that he himself was a Communist Party member."

What was Walsh like to work for? "Bill liked people and he had a lot of charm," says Eileen. "He was a very hard worker and a hard task-master, but whatever was going on, he always displayed a warm sense of humour. Bill was a workaholic and a perfectionist. He would often be at the UE office until 11:30 at night, meeting with different committees or staff members or putting out a leaflet for the next day. And it had to be perfect — the grammar, the spelling, the right-hand margins. He would do it over and over again. I think it was part of his ego. He was incredibly persistent in heading up organizing drives to get every possible membership card. Once he got me to go to the wedding of an employee in a plant we were organizing to get her to sign the card!"

"In negotiations, Bill was a power house. But as a negotiator he would use reason and persuasion rather than threats and bluster. That [threats and bluster] was more Jackson's style. And Jackson tended to run roughshod over the members of the negotiating team, whereas Bill would allow more participation. He was always well prepared and very intense. He smoked a lot in those days and worked late, as I said. It seemed very important to him to negotiate the best agreement in the industry. He argued down every point, fought hard for every nickel. He refused to meet with the company representative alone and would never fraternize with the company even when we would be invited by them to celebrate the signing of an agreement. He was very clear about those boundaries."

As a trade unionist, Walsh rejected the entire notion of union-management cooperation, a union philosophy much in vogue in the 1990s. "I never pulled any punches on this question," Walsh related, recalling a particular negotiating session. "I said to my counterpart, 'How can we cooperate? We have antagonistic interests. It's on the basis of the work that our members do that you make your profits. We know that under this economic system we'll never get everything that's coming to us, but we are going to get every damn penny we can from you. Contrary to what you say we're not in this together, we're fighting each other. You'll say what's a fair share, and I'll say a fair share is the most that we can get'." Admitting that some trade unionists found this a bit extreme, Walsh continued to hold this belief all through his career.

The Laverty Affair

Among Walsh's two best friends in Hamilton were old comrades-in-arms Jim Beattie from the Victoria Leather days, still a trade union activist, and Arthur Laverty, the textile organizer who had helped him out at the time of the Kitchener Rubber workers strike. The three of them were on the leading committees of the Party in the Hamilton district.

Arthur Laverty was born in Ireland just before the turn of the century. By the time he had emigrated to Canada in 1930, he had already fought in World War I, participated in Britain's historic General Strike of 1927, worked in steel and textile plants and coal mines, and was a veteran trade unionist and a socialist. He was introduced to Marxism in a Labour College back in England. "What was taught and discussed opened up a new system of thought to me," he says in his unpublished memoir. "No longer could I accept the 'will of God' as the be and end all of everything. At the end of four winters of study there wasn't a single spook left within my mental vision." When he and his family arrived in Canada, Laverty settled in Cornwall where he soon went about organizing the textile workers in the big Courtaulds plant. In 1936 he led the union through a bitter strike which managed to win a wage increase and a functioning shop steward system, but failed to gain union recognition. In 1939, after moving his family to Hamilton, Laverty joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and served as an instructor in England. After the war, he found employment at the Slater Steel Company and was soon elected president of his union local, and became a force on the Hamilton and District Labour Council.

"Arthur and Jim were very, very close. I was almost a third one of a triumvirate, but not quite," Walsh relates. "The main reason was that these guys were drinking guys and I wasn't, at least not like them. They spent a lot of time drinking. Jim was always in hot water in the Party. He never had any gods. He even got himself kicked out of the Lenin School for fighting. Jim Beattie was as close to a perfect Communist as I knew — militant, fearless, incorruptible. In the late 1940s he upset nearly everyone when he demanded to know from Helen Anderson whether she was donating all of her pay as city controller to the Party. Much to our amazement she answered that it was none of his business. I was startled. Since when isn't it the Party's business? If you're elected to office, you turn all your pay over to the Party. Jim paid a price for such disrespect. In the Communist Party you don't question your leaders."

Laverty also had problems with the Party. One perennial problem he faced was very familiar to Bill Walsh. "As Communists," Walsh explains, "we're accountable to the Party. As union leaders we're accountable to the union executive and ultimately to the members. It can create a real dilemma." Back in 1951, a leading member of the Party, Mel Doig, showed up at Slater Steel as a rank-and-file union member. He'd been sent into Hamilton from Toronto to "colonize" the plant, something that was quite commonly done back then. Doig, as a Party leader, insisted on being consulted with on the details of a set of negotiations. Helen supported him.

"Helen," Arthur objected, "no disrespect to Mel, but what in hell does he know about negotiations? He's never worked in a shop before. He's just come to work here. I should report to him? I'm trying to get him elected as shop steward in charge of publicity. But he'll get his information like everybody else, not through a Party committee. If it ever got out that I blabbed privileged information to someone outside the union structures, I'd lose all credibility in the union."

Walsh sided with Laverty. "Here I am a leader of the UE, an elected staff person, and there are other Party people on the executive, some are shop stewards, others are just rank-and-file union members. In the union things are cleared through the executive, or they're channelled through a committee, according to union procedure. They're the property of the appropriate body." He told Anderson, "You're asking Arthur to do something he can't do. As a member of the negotiating committee he can't report to a Party committee about union strategy. Nothing goes out of that committee except what the committee as a whole agrees will go out."

Joe Levitt was in his late 20s, a war hero, when he was sent by the Party to work in a GE plant around the same time. He ran into the same problem as Mel Doig, aggravated further by the fact that it was organized by the UE. He told me:

It was not easy being a Party rank-and-filer in a UE shop. We were expected to put in countless hours producing shop papers, distributing leaflets, and promoting UE policies, besides processing grievances and performing all of the other duties of a shop steward. At shop steward meetings it was our responsibility to present the union position on all the matters that would come up. We weren't free to take critical positions no matter what we might think. If we had a problem on a particular issue we were expected to raise it at our plant cell meeting or our Party branch meeting. But we always got shot down there, so we learned to keep our mouth shut. Democratic centralism worked for the leadership but it was sure confining for rank-and-file Party members. We put in very long days alongside union staff and we got reamed out if we didn't tow the line. When I moved to a UAW plant it was like a breath of fresh air. We still worked like hell and met in our Party cell. but we didn't always have to be defending the union leaders and we were free to develop our own positions on shop floor issues.

When he quit the Party a few years later, Joe Levitt attended university and he went on to become a professor of History and a prolific writer of scholarly works.

Throughout his years in the Communist Party, Bill Walsh tried to get the Party and the union to each work in their appropriate spheres. "The function of the leading party committee," he believed, "was not to direct the everyday activities of the union and its leaders, but only the political activities of the union." But he had admit it was a pretty thin line, and he could not help but recall his discussions with Alf Mustin almost twenty years earlier.

In the winter of 1953 Arthur Laverty dropped a bombshell. He appeared on local television to announce that he had quit the Communist Party. "I have been a Communist Party member since the 1930s," he stated. "For years I have stood up to red-baiting in the union movement. I believe in the ideals of socialism. I always will. I will never sell out my class. But I cannot accept the stories coming out of Europe where men whose writings I had read and learned from are denounced as traitors and disappear or are tried and found guilty. I cannot claim to understand what lies behind all these arrests and confessions but I do know that there is something terribly wrong. I need some time to think these things over." The Hamilton executive sent Helen Anderson to talk with Laverty. "He repeated essentially what he said on TV," she reported back, "but then he went further. He said that based on his experiences with the Party, if we ever had a revolution here, he would be put to the wall and shot. I said to him, 'Arthur, are you saying that I, as Party leader, would give the order to fire?' and he looked right at me and he said, 'yes, Helen, you would. You would have a tear in your eye but you would do it.' Well, that's what he said. Can you imagine? How ridiculous can he be?"

"I wondered how ridiculous it really was," Walsh said, recalling the incident. "I said to myself, 'Arthur isn't wrong. The only question is who would be first, me or him. And with me, I don't think she'd have a tear in her eye." Helen Anderson and he never hit it off. She may have resented the influence he exerted within the Hamilton central committee. Walsh believed she had two-timed his good friend Johnny Miller back in the late 1930s when they were living together. "It broke Johnny's heart when he discovered that she was sleeping around," Walsh observed. "I would tell myself, 'Don't be prejudiced; they're adults. Johnny can look after himself.' But I know I held it against her when I moved to Hamilton.

The catalyst springing Laverty to action was the announcement that yet another hero of earlier times had been purged from the movement. On this occasion it was Andre Marty, the French sailor who had led a mutiny on board his ship on the Black Sea, raising the red flag for the new Soviet Republic. Marty, who had subsequently become a member of the French Communist Party's political bureau, was formally accused of questioning the political leadership of the General Secretary of the Party, Maurice Thorez. According to Marty's accusers, "What happened to Tito and other spies shows how treason inevitably begins at the moment a Communist questions his unconditional loyalty to the USSR." When Marty refused to confess, the political bureau decided he also was a spy.

When Walsh sought him out a safe time later, Laverty said to him, "You'll see, Bill, pretty soon they'll be calling me a spy and a renegade, an enemy of the working class, and all the rest. That's what happens to anyone in this Party who strays from unconditional loyalty. That's why so few speak out. Why do you think I said nothing to you about this earlier? I knew you would have reported me. Even you, Bill. Look. You're the only one in the Party talking to me these days. How long will it be until you cave in? You haven't said if you agree with these purges. We held these people up to be model revolutionaries. And they were model revolutionaries. Now they turn up as spies, fascist monsters, and all the rest, and our leaders accept it as if it were the most natural thing in the world. It just don't wash, Bill. It don't wash." Walsh couldn't answer. He didn't every try. In the local Party executive, he kept his silence, merely denying the accusation that he had been forewarned about Laverty's TV interview. In such a paranoid atmosphere of "Spy Fever," simply refusing to join in on the smearing of his friend Arthur was enough to raise questions about his own loyalty. Even to ask a question, let alone reveal doubts, would be reason enough to find himself suspected. After Laverty was elected president of the Hamilton and District Labour Council, the Party was forced to change its attitude towards him. They did, however, manage to re-establish friendly relations.

The Revelations

By mid-decade, some academic theorists were certain that the class struggle was over. The old grasping capitalism had disappeared, they said, replaced by a mixed economy and welfare state with corporations responsible not only to their shareholders, but also to their customers, their employees, the community, and the nation. It was the end of ideology. The grand consensus had been achieved. No fundamental restructuring of society was required, only fine-tuning.

No self-respecting Marxist, certainly not Bill Walsh, believed this concoction, so remindful of the Browder line. But whatever its weakness as a theory, for now it worked. No one could ignore the fact that for the Left the decade had been a disaster. Even the timid CCF plunged into steep decline. For the Labour Progressive Party matters were far worse. The barrage of anti-communism made the recruitment of new members almost impossible. Of the old members, some who fought overseas never rejoined. A few were disgusted by the war-time policy of supporting the Liberals against the CCF. Still others who had joined the Party during the war out of admiration for the USSR became persuaded by anti-Soviet propaganda to quit. Virulent anti-communists among the Ukrainian and other ethnic groups received strong reinforcements from among the half-million refugees, sworn enemies of Communist Russia, who emigrated to Canada after 1945.

Fewer Party members were prepared to engage in public work arguing, with justification, that a Party member might lose his job or position if he became known as a Party member. And with the Party going nowhere, some upwardly mobile activists no longer felt that further personal or family sacrifice was justified. Between the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1956, a third of the membership either quit or drifted away from the movement. Yet Party leaders insisted on maintaining the extremely large Party machinery that included 350 full-time Party workers throughout the country. This expensive Party apparatus placed enormous financial burdens on those remaining.

Notwithstanding all of the above, the Cold War had not totally decimated the Party. Communist influence in the trade unions was decreased dramatically, but it was never broken. Despite the harassment and the purges, Communists maintained at least a toe hold in virtually all the industrial unions and even at the lowest point in the 1950s, five Communist-led unions still represented 70,000 workers. J.B. Salsberg and A.A. McLeod held on to their seats in the Ontario legislature, and Communists were still able to get elected on some councils and school boards in the large cities. The Party was able to launch a new literary periodical in 1952, New Frontiers, and attracted to its pages poems and essays by the likes of Milton Acorn and George Ryga, among others. Under the slogan "PUT CANADA FIRST," the Party showed some leadership in emphasizing the need for Canadian cultural and economic independence, and launched a campaign against American domination. In short, the post-war tailspin had probably bottomed out, and there were even signs of recovery. Then in February 1956, came the Khrushchev revelations.

Snatches of information about Khrushchev's secret address at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR appeared in the daily press immediately following its delivery. But nothing prepared Bill Walsh and other Canadian Communists for this 17 March headline in the Toronto *Globe and Mail.* "RED BOSS BLASTS REIGN OF TERROR IN STALIN'S TIME." The paper reported "Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Communist Party Chief, accused Stalin of massacre, torture of children, and a personal reign of terror, in a sensational speech behind closed doors at last month's Party Congress in the Kremlin, according to reports here today."

In their own paper, the *Canadian Tribune*, Party members were treated to articles on "the Soviet Renaissance" and "Blueprint for Miracles," written from Russia by Tim Buck, who had attended the Congress. Members were confused. Many believed that the stories being reported in the mainstream media were nothing more than the usual western propaganda. But some wrote into the *Tribune* demanding to know the facts, chastising the Party leadership for its fear of "printing the news before some authority has stamped it 'approved'." One sarcastically, observed: "We seem to be waiting for Tim to come home. Then we will know the answers."

When Buck finally returned home in April, he reported to the National Executive Committee of the party (NEC) that as a fraternal delegate he had been barred from the closed session and only heard about the contents of Khrushchev's secret speech while attending a funeral in Warsaw. The twelve members of the NEC felt stupid and humiliated. They had been waiting for this first-hand report before making a statement, and here he was telling

them that he knew no more than they. The NEC met almost daily for a month, pouring over Buck's notes of the secret speech, earnestly trying to understand the full meaning of the revelations and its implications for the Canadian Party. While the impact within that leadership core was generally one of shock, discomfort, and consternation, at that stage there was neither a consensus on what must be done, nor a clear division.

Other than what he had read in the papers, the first Bill Walsh heard from the Party was a May Day speech given to Hamilton members by Tim Buck. Buck reviewed Stalin's "gigantic services to socialism." He confessed that, "the LPP accepted the cult of the great man" and that this "interfered with our political thinking" and "marred our judgment." In Canada, the LPP would work hard to learn the lessons of these revelations — "to ensure that never again shall we succumb to the false theory of 'the great man'." This kind of presentation did little or nothing to clarify the issues and only raised more questions for distressed rank-and-file members.

At the May meeting of the National Executive Council, Joe Salsberg was reinstated to the Party executive. Bill, for one, had not even known that Salsberg had been removed from office two years earlier. So great had been Salsberg's following that news of his removal had been kept from the Party rank-and-file. Stories appearing in Jewish Communist papers in Poland and New York now confirmed Salsberg's complaints about anti-Semetic practices in the USSR. In 1952, large numbers of Jewish cultural leaders had been arrested and shot. In refusing to publicly defend the Soviet government's position on Soviet Jewery, "J.B. Salsberg was right and the majority of the national executive was wrong," the leadership now admitted.¹

On 18 June, the full text of Khrushchev's speech, reprinted from the *New York Times*, finally appeared in the *Canadian Tribune*. Walsh could not force himself to plough through the horrifying details, and only skimmed the document. The membership at large experienced the same shock, dismay, anger, and confusion initially felt by the leadership months earlier. A small number quit the Party there and then, but at this stage the vast majority resolved to see the crisis through.

Party Traumas

A convention to deal with the future of the Party was called for March 1957. In anticipation, the *Tribune* kept its letter pages open, and the pages of the *National Affairs Monthly* were given over entirely to an unprecedented inner-Party debate. Within weeks it was out of control. Critics demanded a much looser form of relationship with Moscow — "the centre of our gravity must be Canada, not the USSR," one wrote. No one yet advocated a severance

of ties with the CPSU but, as one contributor put it, "the time has come to speak out fearlessly and independently." For his part, Tim Buck admitted that there was room for self-criticism in as much as the LPP in its "immaturity" had adhered too closely to Soviet policy and had itself been permeated by the Stalin "cult." This had resulted in a breakdown of inner-party democracy, and inflexibility in some of its policies, which in turn had damaged its relationship with other "progressive" forces. He nevertheless insisted that, "the Party follow the example of the CPSU in making necessary changes while upholding the Marxist-Leninist principles of international working-class solidarity, democratic centralism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat."² Not surprisingly, Buck's interventions did nothing to dissuade what appeared to be a growing opposition. Some demanded an end to stifling of criticism, to "dogmatism and intolerance", and to "conceit in relations with non-Party people." They called for a re-examination of the principle of democratic centralism, and strict guarantees of the right to dissent and debate freely. Still others argued that the Party should abandon its allegiance to the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and move towards Canadian social democratic and parliamentary traditions.

In an effort to restrain the growing polarization and find a broad common ground, in August the Party dispatched four of its leaders to Moscow to evaluate how successful the CPSU had been in eradicating Stalinism. The Moscow trip failed totally. While the NEC released a predictable report following their return, expressing satisfaction with Soviet explanations and efforts, Joe Salsberg came back from the trip confirmed in his suspicion that the Soviet leadership had not moved away from its anti-Semitic past. The NEC noted only that Salsberg had "certain reservations," which were not specified.

The debate got fiercer. The Toronto and Montréal membership, many of them Jewish, was ready to explode. A Calgary member wrote:

There was nothing Stalin would not do in order to maintain himself in a position of prestige and glory. We also have many members in our Canadian Party whose hunger and jealousy for position and glory knows no bounds.... Under the guise of criticism we have seen sincere, modest comrades withstand a withering attack from some glory-seeking pip-squeak exercising his or her authority."³

By mid-October, restlessness in the Québec wing of the Party reached critical proportions. Tim Buck and Joe Salsberg rushed to Montréal to quell the revolt. They only succeeded in revealing the sharp differences between themselves. Montréal members were shocked by Buck's display of dogmatism. His open hostility to any serious questioning gave the lie to his posturing about the need for real democracy in the Party. The meeting lasted three nights. By the time it was over, the Québec provincial leader and five key organizers had resigned from the Party. Several hundred members followed. The mass exodus had begun. Within six months, membership in Québec dropped from 1,200 to 300.

At the National Executive meeting in October, the critics appeared to be in control. The NEC dispatched a telegram to Moscow criticizing Soviet interference in the internal affairs of the Polish Worker's Party, and passed a motion to remove Tim Buck from the leadership of the Canadian Party. Three days later this motion was withdrawn, but not the cable to the CPSU. A plenary session of the National Council was quickly convened to deal with the crisis in the Party.

The fate of the Party was probably determined during this thirteen-day marathon session between 28 October and 9 November. For the first time in the history of the National Council, the Party leader's report failed to get adopted, and Buck and the NEC were rebuked for failing to clarify issues for the members. The election of a new NEC gave a large majority to the Party's old guard, causing the others, including Norman Penner and Harry Binder, to resign from the committee. Binder reported that Buck followed a strategy of attacking the critics as "rotten elements" and "do-gooders" who were out to liquidate the Party.⁴ Penner blamed the election results on "fantastic rumors and charges," comparing the process to a "witch hunt."⁵ According to Penner, members of the Soviet embassy huddled in an upstairs room to guide Buck as to how far he could go to meet the demands of the opposition.⁶ At one point in the proceedings, Penner related, Norman Fried rose from his seat and, leaving the meeting, said. "The house is on fire and I'm not going to stick around to see it burn." At another point Misha Cohen, business manager of the Tribune, asked to address the Council. Long denied a seat on the Council himself, Cohen bitterly complained that several sitting members were themselves undeserving. "They talk a good game, but they're poor workers," he was reported to have said. "Norman Fried is always at the races; Mcleod, since he lost his seat at Queen's Park, walks about aimlessly; Comrade Ryerson is always sick with his headaches." In the course of his presentation, Council members sat aghast as Cohen ticked off the uncomplimentary habits of several veterans. In the midst of this chaos, Charlie Sims rushed in with the news that the Soviet Union had invaded Hungary.

News of the Soviet invasion also shattered the national convention of the UE meeting in Toronto. "We were just in the course of condemning US aggression, we're just giving them hell when we heard the news," Walsh recalled. "We called a quick meeting of our top group, the Staff Committee, to determine what we are going to do. We were in many respects the voice of the Left in Canada. CP positions used to be projected to the public

through the UE. No way are we going to condemn the Soviet Union, but we had to say something. 'Crazy bastards,' I wisecracked, 'couldn't they have waited until our convention is over. The least they could do is consult with us about their timing.' This episode made me very uncomfortable."

With the Party convention scheduled to take place in six months time, it was clear that the conflict in the Party was coming to a head. Two main opposition positions soon emerged. The first, headed by Norman Penner, called for a total shake up in the Party: an end to democratic centralism and domination by full-time functionaries; a Party press allowed to reflect diverse currents of thought; unrestricted internal discussions; and support of all movements towards independent labour action and other progressive parties. In Penner's view, Communists ought not to see themselves as the party of the working class, but only as one party of the working class, a Marxist party with a leading but not exclusive role in the movement towards socialism.

A second element, led by J.B. Salsberg, argued that the LPP, because of its long subservience to the CPSU, its dogmatism, its sectarianism, and the distrust with which it was regarded, could not be transformed. Salsberg thought it was impossible to build a viable Marxist party within the framework of the LPP. Instead, it should be dissolved and its members join with others in building a new party. "We need a new party," he wrote, "that will creatively apply all that is valid in the body of scientific socialist knowledge to Canadian conditions and chart our own Canadian path to socialism." Salsberg called for "a socialist realignment in Canada" that would include Canadian Marxists and all socialist-minded people. It would commit itself without reservation to a peaceful, parliamentary transition into a socialist society.⁷

Most Party members opposed both these positions. They saw the issue as it was characterized by Stanley Ryerson: it was time for people to declare themselves "for or against the Party." They wouldn't consider proposals for reform while the very existence of the Party was at stake. Still others took an even harder line. Veteran Party member Tom McEwan poured scorn on those who felt "guilty for the crimes committed in the USSR" and who wish to "re-write Marxism to suit the tastes of bourgeois respectability."⁸

Sam Papernick's Restaurant

Bill Walsh followed these events from the coverage provided in the *Canadian Tribune*. "We got very little information from Helen Anderson who sat on the National Executive, nor from other members who were part of the National Council," he said. But the fact of the matter was that he no longer

took as much interest in the affairs of the Party, except where it impacted on his trade union work. For a person who always kept himself well informed of international and national news, this is baffling, as Walsh himself admits. Certainly, his attention would have been partly diverted by the birth of Sheri in February, just a month prior to the first news about Krushchev's secret speech. Then again, by avoiding becoming engaged in the inner Party turmoil, he appeared to be following the practice of all of the chief officers of the UE. Many trade unionists took the position that the revelations changed nothing about the class relations in Canada. Deep down perhaps, Walsh was still smarting from the humiliation at the Party school ten years earlier. In any case, he readily admitted that he didn't follow the debates in *National Affairs Monthly*, where all of the critiques and alternative positions were fully aired, and, further, that he was barely aware of the various positions being put forward.

Early in 1957 Party clubs invited presenters of opposing viewpoints to speak to their members. Walsh recalled a Hamilton meeting addressed by Joe Salsberg. Salsberg's growling voice and broad moustache were probably the best known symbols of Communism in Ontario. Salsberg had been only recently defeated as a member of the Ontario legislature, where he had occupied a seat for thirteen years. Salsberg spoke for 50 minutes, describing his trip to the Soviet Union and the anti-Semitism displayed by the leadership, and repeating his call for an end to subservience to the CPSU and for a new socialist realignment. Walsh said this of his own participation:

There were about fifteen members present at Bert Mclure's home, where the meeting was held. I said that I regarded proletarian internationalism as the ABC of socialism, but that in practice this has always come down to defending the Soviet Union. This made perfect sense in the 1930s and during the war, when the Soviet Union was isolated and needed whatever support they could get. They don't need us anymore, I said. They have the Red Army and massive weapons and the bomb. They're a world power. When we place ourselves in the position of making every diplomatic manoeuvre of the USSR a matter of principle that has to be defended, we place ourselves in an impossible situation. Wasn't it Lenin who said that it is the duty of the Communist Party everywhere to fight its own bourgeoisie?

Walsh's intervention didn't go over very well, but Salsberg's reception was far worse, drawing muttering of disapproval throughout and hostile questions and comments after. After the crowd dispersed, Salsberg approached Walsh, "Can we talk?"

Walsh took him to Sam Papernick's restaurant. Sam Papernick had been in the dress maker's union with Esther back in the 1930s, and he recognized her instantly when she wandered into his restaurant shortly after moving to Hamilton. He became a close family friend. "We stayed there long after closing time," Walsh remarked about that evening. "Joe told me things he didn't say in the meeting. Sam sat with us through part of it."

"You know I spoke with Krushchev," said Salsberg. "Of course, he denied that anti-Semitism was an official policy. What would you expect? But when I reminded him of the closing of the Jewish theaters and the dismantling of the Jewish publications, do you know what he answered? That the Jews of the Soviet Union have chosen to assimilate and want no theater groups, schools, or publications. When I argued, he told me what he really thought: 'When a Jew sinks his anchor, there immediately springs up a synagogue.' He told me not to be taken in by the Zionists."

"I don't know about you, Bill, but reflecting back on my history in the movement, I find this business very disturbing. Good people, sincere, idealistic people, dedicated, joined the Party and became hangmen to their friends. Maybe this was the only way to build communism under the circumstances. Maybe any other way would take a hundred years. But you know, I think it's better to wait a hundred years than to build communism on the mountains of dead people."

Salsberg described the atmosphere at the National Executive meeting. "Neither Tim nor his supporters would debate substance with us. They engaged in a campaign of vilification, labeling us supporters of peoples' capitalism, rotten elements. They made a mockery of the word 'comrade.' They circulated fantastic rumours about plots and conspiracies. It was quite unbelievable. 'Just see who eats with who,' they said, 'and tell us there is no group functioning here!' How can you have free debate in such an atmosphere?"

"In the midst of all this came the reports from Budapest. We couldn't agree on a position, but a tough stance of the USSR was a boost to the old man. He knew that in this kind of emergency the CPSU expects unconditional support and as always Tim was prepared to give it and get their backing in return."

"Bill, either we break with the Stalin period, break with the USSR and develop a truly independent Party that recognizes the right to internal dissent and practices it, or we stagnate as we have been doing and remain a marginal force."

Only now did the full meaning of Salsberg's position begin to sink in. "Shocked" was the word Walsh used to describe his reaction. Salsberg had talked about the realignment of the Left when he spoke to the meeting, but in terms that Walsh found vague and difficult to follow. And he found himself in general agreement with many of Salsberg's criticisms. "You're talking about dissolving the Communist Party! What would you replace it with?" Walsh asked. "First of all," Salsberg answered, "it's already all but finished. I'm talking about dissolving the LPP but not the Marxist movement. I want to see a new militant working-class party, a Marxist party that is not a Russian party but a Canadian party. It won't happen over night. It's a gradual process. The first task is an educational one. The new organization will come later."

"I'm sorry, J.B. When you talk about the need for reform, I'm with you. Maybe not in every detail, but I'm ready to listen" replied Walsh. "But when you start talking about dissolving the Party and replacing it, with what? You've lost me. I just can't follow you on this."

And he got up to leave. "I'm surprised, Bill. I'm surprised that after all that's happened and that's still happening that you think the Party can be reformed. Until quite recently I thought so too. But my experience these past few months convinced me otherwise. I thought you were more of a realist."

"I don't see what's so realistic about what you're saying, Joe. Sounds like pie in the sky to me. We could wait forever for your new party."

A week later Walsh related the conversation to Ross Russell, saying, "I can't understand Joe."

"Never any good" responded Russell. "Imagine, after supporting the Soviet Union all this time, what a time to quit with Sputnik just happening." "How long will it be until the Americans put one up?" "Can't," came the reply. "Sputnik's a product of socialist science. Don't be a defeatist, Bill. Damn that Krushchev anyway. Should never have made that speech, washing our dirty linen in public like that."

The April convention was anti-climatic, the outcome a forgone conclusion. The opposition forces were fragmented and in any case most of their supporters had already left the Party. Over half the Party membership had left. Only a handful remained in Québec, the youth organization was decimated, most supporters in the Jewish community abandoned the Party, and several dozen of its most experienced and talented leaders quit. The Party's national office moved into two shabby rooms rented from the All for One Mutual Benefit Society. "A period of ideological consolidation," Tim Buck called it.

By decade's end things looked slightly better. Sputnik softened the post-Hungary antagonism towards the USSR; unemployment at home became a national dilemma; the second convention of the Canadian Labour Congress called for the establishment of a new party out of the old CCF; and the mere appearance of what would be the New Democratic Party seemed to have invigorated the entire Lcft. In October 1959, the Seventh Convention of the LPP voted to change its name back to the Communist Party of Canada. By the early 1960s the Party was beginning to re-engage with life outside itself, including a new Christian-Marxist dialogue, and to join the growing debates around the meaning of Marxism which were attracting a new community of socialist intellectuals. This opening to the broad Left would be cut short by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which again divided Party ranks since many members had become enthusiastic about the Prague Spring. Still another wave of dissidents left as the Party leadership once again stood behind the USSR and turned inward.

Notes

¹Canadian Tribune, 16 July 1956.

²Tim Buck, "New Pathos to Peace and Socialism," *National Affairs Monthly* (May-June-July, 1956).

³National Affairs Monthly (September 1956).

⁴Canadian Tribune, letter to the editor, November 1956.

⁵Canadian Tribune, letter to the editor, November 1956.

⁶Personal interview with Penner, June 1980.

⁷ "For a Socialist Realignment in Canada," National Affairs Monthly (February 1957).
⁸T. McEwan, "The Existence of the Party: Key Point at Issue," National Affairs Monthly (April 1957).

Chapter Ten

The 1960s

Throughout his life, work would always take first place for Bill Walsh. It was what nourished him, gave him an outlet for his creativity, and met his need to perform and to excel. That he would never allow any other obligation get in the way of his work was clear to Esther from the beginning. He was rarely at home and very commonly late for meals. Esther knew that she would have to take full responsibility for running the house and raising the children. It was her fate with Dick Steele and it was her fate with Bill Walsh. She may have resented it — if she did so it was a silent resentment — but she knew what she was getting into when she married Walsh. Once Sheri was in school Esther took up a career in childcare. But her life still revolved around Bill's needs, as it always would.

In many respects the 1960s augured the coming of a new age. The Cold War was beginning to subside. The birth control pill was developed. The Soviets landed a rocket on the moon. Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. Allen Ginsberg wrote "Howl" and in Canada George Grant wrote *Lament for a Nation*.

But for Bill Walsh the 1960s was a painful decade. In 1965 his 20 year relationship with the UE came to an end. Two years later he resigned from the Communist Party. The two events were inexorably related. In his final years of employment with UE relations became so strained that Walsh was in and out of the hospital with a severely ulcerated stomach. Walsh's condition was worsened by accusations from C.S. Jackson that he was egotistical for questioning Party trade union policy. Jackson dropped this charge on him repeatedly when Walsh persisted in questioning his strategy around the issue of organizing new plants. And later, after Walsh had left the UE, Jackson smeared him publicly at mass UE membership meetings in the midst of a bitter dispute between the UE and the Draughtsmen, a union of white collar employees at Westinghouse that had hired Walsh to lead their negotiations. It was the events surrounding this dispute that caused Hamilton's Communist Party to accuse Walsh of "conduct detrimental to the

working class." Totally fed up, Walsh tendered his resignation before this accusation was laid. But he found out that you weren't permitted to quietly resign from the Communist Party.

Just prior to the unfolding of these events, Walsh had become increasingly involved in the struggle to save another left-wing union, Mine-Mill. The International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Union had been under continuous attack from the Steelworkers. In the early 1960s, it found itself in a battle for its survival. As it turned out Walsh, in his new career as union consultant, would have a close working relationship with Mine Mill over the succeeding few decades.

Mine-Mill

From the 1940s the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers was by far the dominant union in Canada's mining industry. Mine-Mill had a splendid heritage, its roots going back to 1893 and the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). The WFM pioneered unionism in mining towns across western Canada and the US. It fought some of the most vicious employers on the continent and developed a well earned reputation as a militant union of radicals and socialists. Big Bill Haywood was the secretary-treasure of the WFM and brought it with him to the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). As a founding member of the IWW, the WFM advocated class struggle, direct action, and the general strike which would leave workers in control of production, an essential element in the social transformation of society. Haywood had no truck with collective agreements which he saw as leading to social peace and "put[ting] workers to sleep." He opposed mediation, arbitration, compromise, and anything else that would weaken the revolutionary force of workers, including restrictions on strikes and lockouts.

The credo of the miners and smeltermen is spelled out at the front of Mine-Mill's handbook, a near replica of the preamble to the IWW's 1905 constitution:

We hold that there is a class struggle in Society, and that this struggle is caused by economic conditions.

We affirm the economic condition of the producer to be that he is exploited of the wealth which he produces, being allowed to retain barely sufficient for his elementary necessities.

We hold that the class struggle will continue until the producer is recognized as the sole master of his product.

We assert that the working class, and it alone, can and must achieve its own emancipation.

We hold that an industrial union and the concerted political action of all wage earners is the only way of achieving this end. An injury to one is an injury to all.

By 1916 the WFM was in decline, like much of the TWW. It changed its name to the International Union of Mine and Smelter Workers but the change did little to revive the union. Mine-Mill was one of the founding unions of the CIO, but in Canada it was World War II that created the conditions for its renewal. By war's end, Mine-Mill held contracts with over 500 companies and had 125,000 members, mainly in northern Ontario and British Columbia. Local 598 in Sudbury which included employees of both the Inco and Falconbridge mines, was the single largest trade union local in Canada, and by far the largest Mine-Mill local in either Canada or the US.

Following the WFM tradition, Mine-Mill built union halls in every city and town where it had a presence. The union halls became centres of community life and in Sudbury in particular the union organized all manner of recreation including dances, picnics, the "Saturday Morning Club" featuring cartoons and films for children, softball, bowling, a boxing club, hockey league, and a children's day camp. In the early 1950s, Local 598 hired a full-time recreation director, Weir Reid, who produced and directed plays, organized the "Haywood Players" (named for "Big Bill" Haywood), established a ballet school, brought in films like *Salt of the Earth* and folk singers like Pete Seeger, and designed and ran the Mine-Mill residential camp on Richard Lake that was attended by 1500 youngsters in two week intervals.

While Communists held a comfortable majority on the national executive of Mine-Mill and a bare majority on the international executive, contrary to widespread opinion, hardly any of its locals were Communist dominated. That was certainly true of Local 598. Between 1948 and 1959 only five of the 37 men that served on its executive board were Party members and none of these held the top executive positions of president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, or recording secretary. In most years Communists held only one or two seats on the executive board and in some years, none. Most executive board members were, in fact, active CCFers. These facts are important in view of the wrenching battles that raged around the issue of Communist domination.

Unlike many other international unions, including UE, Mine-Mill's structure was highly decentralized, a heritage from the WFM days when communication between locals and international headquarters was problematic, at best. Locals were largely autonomous. They held the purse strings, doling out funds to the national and international office, the reverse of the normal situation. Certification was with the local. It did its own collective bargaining. So when Local 598 decided to strike Inco in 1958, the first since Mine-Mill had organized the company, it ignored the national executive which was dead set against it. The national executive feared the strike would be a disaster. It was.

The failure of the 1958 strike raised serious questions about the competency of the local leadership, just the opening its opposition had been looking for. Like the UE nearly a decade earlier, Mine-Mill had been pushed out of the Labour Congress on rather flimsy charges. The opposition was led once again by the ubiquitous Charlie Millard, Canadian Director of the Steelworkers, and not surprisingly the Congress gave the Steelworkers jurisdiction over mining, effectively sanctioning a policy of raids. Members in Mine-Mill turned out to be more loyal to their union than the Congress had anticipated and Steel was badly humiliated in its first attempts to win over the huge Mine-Mill locals in Sudbury and Trail. Even the smaller locals where Communist influence was non-existent rallied to Mine-Mill. Raids were moth-balled and initially it appeared as if the CCF and Steel had all but given up.

While delegates to Mine-Mill conventions regularly supported resolutions that followed Communist Party positions on NATO, the Marshall Plan and the like, the Communist issue was a smokescreen. What we had here was much more a turf war. Charlie Millard and Steel had ambitions to represent all organized miners in the country. Mine-Mill stood in the way. The CCF had ambitions to be the sole party of organized labour. The Communist Party was in the way. The solution seemed to be to get rid of the Communists in Mine-Mill and other left-wing unions or, if that were not possible, get rid of the unions themselves.

Still smarting over the electoral losses incurred at least in part because of the LPP's support of the Liberals in 1945, the CCF was now relentless in pursuit of its own strategy. In 1948 the CCF provincial executive refused to accept the nomination of Bob Carlin as CCF candidate for the Sudbury area. Carlin, already the sitting member and enjoying the largest majority in the Ontario Legislature, had been one of the early organizers of Mine-Mill and sat as the Canadian representative on Mine-Mill's international executive board. No one accused Carlin of being a Communist. He was not and never had been. His sin was that he would not take a firm stand against Communists within the union and that he would not recant policies supported by his union that ran counter to those of the CCF. When he ran anyway he was expelled from the party. For the CCF it was a costly intervention. It once again underestimated the independent mind of miners. Outraged by the party's rejection of their candidate, miners and their families deserted the CCF/NDP in the Sudbury basin for the next 20 years.

Things began to unravel for Mine-Mill after the disastrous 1958 strike. With the North American economy mired in a deep recession, and the end of the US government's stockpiling minerals, Inco had huge inventories and manoeuvred the union into a long and futile strike. After the strike, Local 598's officers were defeated by a reform slate headed by Don Gillis, who pledged to bring Mine-Mill back into the Canadian Labour Congress. Gillis and a majority of the others in the new regime were graduates of a leadership training course led by one Alexander Boudreau. Boudreau had been brought into Sudbury in 1958 to head up a newly created Northern Workers' Adult Education Association. It was part of the University of Sudbury, a Catholic college within Laurentian University whose chairman, not surprisingly, was a vice-president and operations manager of Inco. As texts, Boudreau used pamphlets from The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade and material provided by the CLC and the Steelworkers. His course included lessons on techniques for destabilizing organizations. His message was crude: "The philosophy of Communism is based on hate The Communist Party is an active, Soviet-dominated secret army, part of the hard trained troops of the Communist Conspiracy." With the support of the local clergy and the Catholic bishop, Boudreau threw himself into Local 598 elections appearing on every platform available, in churches, schools, and service clubs throughout the area as well as in regular television appearances. He characterized the election as a "last ditch fight between Christianity and Communism." A fund-raising letter sent out by his assistant readily admitted that "ever since the campaign started, the University of Sudbury through its extension department and particularly Director Alexander Boudreau, has been emphatically denouncing these Communist forces and attempting to educate the Sudbury population on the true nature of Communism."¹ The press also chimed in. Its campaign against Mine-Mill was vitriolic. "Ontario Reds Recruit 7-Year Olds," blared one headline in the Toronto Telegram in December 1959.

After ousting the old executive, Boudreau worked with the CLC to develop strategies for keeping the new executive in power. "Mine Mill must be destroyed and disappear from the map of Canada," he wrote to CLC President Claude Jodoin. "This can be achieved only by depriving the Communists of their milk-cow, Local 598 of Sudbury."²

The Left contested Mine-Mill elections in 1959 and again in 1960 and 1961, losing each time. A story in the Sudbury *Star* finally prompted the national president of Mine-Mill to oust the Gillis administration and appoint an administrator of Local 598. According to the *Star*, on 25 August 1961, the executive board of the local had met with Claude Jodoin, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, along with Larry Sefton and Bill Mahoney of the Steelworkers to discuss secession from Mine-Mill and affiliation with Steel. On the night the administrator, William Kennedy, took possession of the union hall, the crowd gathered outside the building soon turned into a mob of rioters, and only disbursed when the authorities read the Riot Act. Within short order the Ontario Supreme Court restored control of Local 598 to the Gillis group.

By this time Steel's raid on Mine-Mill was in the open and Gillis brought the heavyweights in to speak in the Sudbury arena: Mahoney, Sefton, and Jodoin. Four thousand Mine-Mill loyalists marched to the arena. When they jammed the doorway, fighting broke out and police lobbed a tear-gas bomb into the crowd. The three guest speakers were drowned out when they tried to speak and Gillis was forced to adjourn the meeting. On 15 September 1961 at a meeting in the Mine-Mill hall, Sefton and Mahoney announced their intention to start a sign-up campaign and urged Mine-Mill members to join the Steelworkers. In December, the Ontario Labour Relations Board accepted a Steelworkers' application to be certified as the bargaining agent for Sudbury's Inco and Falconbridge workers. The vote was set for 27 February to 2 March 1962.

Sudbury; City At War

Bill Walsh and Arthur Laverty took a bus load of Hamilton workers to Sudbury for a giant rally a few days prior to the vote. Trade unionists from all over Canada converged on Sudbury to lend support to Mine-Mill rubber workers from Kitchener and Hamilton, autoworkers from Oshawa and Windsor, electrical workers from Hamilton and Toronto, and miners from Nova Scotia. Walsh had contacted Laverty, then vice-president of the Hamilton area Steel Council and an executive member of the Hamilton District Labour Council to set up the Hamilton Unity Committee to support Mine-Mill. Leafletting Stelco, Algoma and other plants, the Committee carried the attack against Steel into its own union locals. The impact was immediate. Meetings of Steelworker locals called to endorse the raids ended up repudiating the Steel leadership. They directed their leaders to devote their time and the union's money to improving the wages and working conditions of their own members and to organizing the unorganized rather than raiding existing unions.

Sudbury was a city at war. Families split. Friends became enemies. Some pubs were Mine-Mill, others Steel. Workers took their lives in their hands by wandering onto the wrong street in a Mine-Mill jacket. Brawls erupted. Steelworkers were no safer on streets patrolled by Mine-Mill men. The city bristled with signs of the union war. Every major street corner seemed to have a billboard advertising the contesting unions. One said "STEEL CAN RED-BAIT, BUT CAN THEY NEGOTIATE?" The other said "ONLY INCO WANTS MINE-MILL; NICKEL WORKERS WANT STEEL." Downtown crowds appeared to divide evenly between men, women, and children wearing yellow and black Steel buttons or red, white, and blue Mine-Mill buttons. The Sudbury *Star* carried full-page ads from both sides and both made nightly pitches on radio and television.

The Mine-Mill campaign called upon the great tradition of the union and its service to Sudbury miners going back to 1944. Steelworkers talked mainly economics, reminding the men of the disastrous 1958 strike. Others, like Alexander Boudreau talked Communism. Mimeographed hate sheets appeared at meetings in Church basements and service clubs. Everything appeared to go Steel's way. Don Gillis was endorsed by the federal Justice Minister, Davie Fulton, and by George McClelland, the Deputy Commissioner of the RCMP. The Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, appointed him labour representative to NATO and just days before the vote the provincial government appointed him to the Ontario Economic Council. US Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg, visiting Ottawa in early October, declared that he hoped the Steelworkers would win over Mine-Mill; as did US Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, who denounced the activities of US Communists in Mine-Mill. In December the Subversive Activities Control Board declared Mine-Mill to be a "Communist-infiltrated organization." To a seasoned observer like Bill Walsh, this did not appear to be a Steel-run operation at all. He suspected that Sudbury would never actually see the people behind the Steel campaign.

Voting was quiet, orderly, and heavy. All but a handful of the 14,333 eligible Inco voters cast a ballot. Steelworkers won with a mere 15 vote margin. Mine-mill challenged 36 ballots on the grounds of "irregularities" but a request for a recount was denied. However, a simultaneous vote at Falconbridge was invalidated when several dozen Steel memberships brought before the Labour Board were found to be forgeries and the Steelworkers withdrew from the contest. As a consequence, Local 598 survived to represent the much smaller work force at Falconbridge, while the Steelworkers' Local 6500 was certified as the bargaining agent for Inco workers. According to Cameron Smith's biography of the Lewis family, the Steel victory in 1962 was the culmination of 17 years of relentless effort by the Steel/CCF nexus following the fateful 1945 election. During that time Local 598 was a pressure cooker with Steel constantly trying to divide the membership. Loyalties became divided. Feuds developed that were never forgotten. Meetings became shouting matches. And the Local never matured, never seemed to get its affairs on a stable, workman-like plane. Instead of having the opportunity to grow confident and outgoing, it turned inward and paranoid.

In Walsh's view the red-baiting alone had not been sufficient to destroy Mine-Mill. "It gave them yards, but ultimately what did Mine-Mill in was that they were short on militancy. In the '58 strike the leadership made a last ditch effort to prove its militancy but the timing was all off. Throughout the fifties Mine-Mill felt the only way to survive was to cooperate with the company and the mining companies actually began to prefer them. This was their greatest vulnerability and Steel took advantage of it. In the UE we avoided striking Westinghouse and General Electric, but we did everything short of striking. We survived by being militant."

After the loss in Sudbury, Mine-Mill's remaining large local was at the new Inco site in Thompson. Manitoba. In the late winter of 1962 Walsh accompanied Arthur Laverty who had been invited to speak at a mass rally a month or so prior to a vote to decide whether Mine-Mill or Steel would represent the Thompson miners. "It was 40 below the day we arrived," Walsh recalled. "We were met at the airport and taken to the Mine-Mill office. The local leaders were playing cards and barely looked up. I assumed the game would be over soon and that we would then discuss strategy for the meeting. But it went on and on and Laverty ended up playing. It was a new game for him and the stakes were high. They cleaned him out. He also got totally pissed. In the meantime I looked at the material lying around the office. While Steel was lambasting the living conditions with newly arriving single men still being housed in tents, Mine-Mill literature seemed to be defending the living conditions. When we got to the meeting, it was only half filled. There obviously had been very little preparation. Laverty, who was a very powerful speaker and as Vice Chairman of the Hamilton Area Steel Council could likely have influenced a few votes, was too pissed to speak. I had to deliver his speech. I had the feeling that the leadership had resigned itself to defeat. In any case that's what happened. When the ballots were collected, Mine-Mill was slaughtered."

In 1965 Mine-Mill launched a campaign to win back Sudbury workers and it signed up enough workers to force a vote. At the same time, Steel launched a counter-campaign to take Falconbridge from Mine-Mill. The Steel campaign fizzled, but Steel managed to beat back the Mine-Mill challenge at Inco with a comfortable majority. In 1967 a merger agreement was on the agenda and in a special convention in Winnipeg all surviving locals of Mine-Mill voted to merge into Steel. All, that is, except Local 598 whose members regarded the agreement as nothing more than the terms of surrender. It was the end of an era.There would be no more summer camp, no theatre group, ballet classes, sports teams, or union halls, except for the one in Sudbury. In time, the wounds inflicted over the period would heal. Inco workers were now a permanent part of the Steelworker organization. As for Local 598, along with the UE, it would eventually merge with the Canadian Automobile Workers.

By the end of the decade Bill Walsh, having resigned from UE, would return to Sudbury to head up Local 598's contract negotiations, a role he would repeat many more times into the 1980s.

End Of The Road At UE

The work of the Hamilton Unity Committee was a welcome diversion for Walsh, for it was around that time that C.S. Jackson and George Harris switched responsibilities. Harris moved from Westinghouse to General Electric and Jackson moved from GE to Westinghouse. Walsh had had a very successful partnership with George Harris. He knew it would not work out with Jackson. UE staffers in Hamilton saw the switch as a barely concealed move to oust Walsh from Hamilton, as it was around this time that rumours began to be circulated about him. The stories, emanating from the UE national office, circulated within the UE staff, but were also carried into the Hamilton Party branch. "I am sickened with the whispering, the conniving and intrigues by people who are on the same side as me in the same good fight, but who are so ready to believe the worst and carry on the gossip," Walsh wrote George Harris in the spring of 1963. "As you know I have often been attacked and slandered, and we all have" Walsh stated. "These things bring hurt but in the life we have chosen, we come to expect it. It's quite another thing when attacks are from my own side. I want to protect my family and myself as well as my friends from the hurt this causes. I want to preserve, if possible, the respect of quite a few people in the labour movement as well as some people outside the labour movement. But frankly I don't know how to proceed."

Walsh participated in one negotiation with Jackson. It was in 1963. "After it was over, I told him 'never again'," he recalled. Their negotiating styles contrasted sharply. "Jackson would call for a strike vote when workers were most riled up about a company offer, thinking that with a strong strike vote, we could get the best deal from the company. I would get the company to put forward its best offer and take that to the membership. They then had the choice of accepting that offer or striking. That's the way George Harris and I did it. In this instance the settlement offer the company brought forward had a clause in it that made no sense. Jackson wanted to take this offer to a membership meeting and expose this clause, certain to get a strong strike mandate. I wanted to bring it to the attention of the company and get it clarified so that what we brought to the membership was clear and the company's best offer. We argued this before the negotiating committee. When it went along with me, Jackson was furious at me for challenging him in front of the committee."

"After the settlement, Jackson called Jake Henley, Westinghouse's chief negotiator and asked him to send over a case of scotch. I grabbed the phone and when Henley asked 'is he joking' I said 'yes' and hung up the phone. 'How can you do this? It's not right to take gifts' I said. 'What would the membership say if they knew?'" That episode sealed his fate. A few weeks later Ross Russell dropped into to see him with an offer. "You've always said it was our responsibility to organize the last of the big three, Northern Electric. They've just opened up a new plant in Bramalea. We think you should take a crack at it. Tommy Davidson will mind the shop at Westinghouse."

Walsh readily agreed to take on the job. Bramalea was a new community half-way between Toronto and Hamilton, less than an hour's drive for him. This was like old times, setting up an office with secretary, typewriter, mimeograph machine, a few UE staff on loan to him, and heading up an organizing drive. When he arrived on the scene less than a hundred workers were on the job and the company had already recognized a company union, the Northern Electric Employees Association, which already existed in its Montréal and Belleville operations. With the help of a car load of rank-andfilers from Hamilton and Toronto, each and every worker was approached to sign a union card. Leaflets poured off the mimeograph machine. By the time of the vote Northern's employment roll had risen to over 300. They went overwhelmingly UE.

The new environment suited Walsh very well. Ross Russell was there with him, but in negotiations with Northern, Walsh acted as the main spokesperson. Urged on by Walsh, the young people who comprised the membership were eager to take up the challenge of using Bramalea as a springboard to help organize the Belleville plant and a new plant going up in London. But the national officers turned down his proposal for full-scale organizing drives. "The time is not ripe. They're not ready yet. Too risky. We can't afford a major defeat. We have to consider the good of the union as a whole. What if some of the larger unions make a bid too?"

"You know what Stalin said on the delay in opening the Second Front," Walsh responded, "'if you wait until every button on every last coat of every last soldier is in place, then you will get nowhere'. Besides, if we don't take Belleville and London, we'll lose Bramalea too. They'll go elsewhere."

Behind his fury, frustration, and wounded pride, Walsh was convinced that, having forced him out of Westinghouse and now questioning his judgment at Northern Electric, Jackson was deliberately marginilizing him to push him to resign from the union. When the national officers turned down a request by the Bramalea local for an interest-free loan to build a union centre, he did in fact come close to resigning. The frustration and suppressed anger put him in hospital with an aggravated ulcer.

Early in the new year, he again urged that cards be distributed at the Belleville plant, and once again he was turned down. But in February, this call came in from Russell: "Sheet Metal workers are moving into Belleville. You better get down there and distribute our cards." Walsh knew the score. It was far too late to win. What was wanted was to deny victory to the Sheet Metal Workers and keep the door open for another day. When it was all over, the Bramalea executive demanded an accounting from Jackson. Why did the UE wait so late? Why did they pull out of the organizing drive in London? "We traveled down to London on our own for no pay and we went up to Belleville. The rug was pulled out from under our feet. Why weren't we consulted? We have a stake. We need these places to give us bargaining power in Bramalea." Jackson did his best to shake off the attack, but after the meeting it was Walsh who got the real blast: He put these young people up to this. It was the kind of leadership he was giving them that caused them to attack the national president.

For Walsh this really was the last straw, the first time he had ever gone into a campaign to defeat another union so that in the end the company union could stay in. "I did it," he shouted at Russell, "I did this god-damn dirty work. You know why, Ross? It was our god-damn sloppiness, our overly cautious policy that puts us in a position where it had to be done. But I quit, Ross, I quit. I won't do this dirty work anymore."

Resignation

Just before entering the hospital for treatment of his ulcer, Walsh read out a 36 page presentation to the National officers. He began by reviewing the situation at Northern.

You see, our big advantage of being in Bramalea does not necessarily increase as time goes on. The idea that we can somehow become a model union, wrestling all kinds of gains out of the company way ahead of its other plants is completely unrealistic. The company is not stupid. Our hold at Northern is also threatened from other sources. This is probably the largest group of industrial workers in any one company that is not represented by a union. Congress unions are not going to sit back and allow us to become the union of Northern workers. They're bound to move in. We have one advantage. We represent Bramalea and we have good enthusiastic Northern forces at our disposal, willing and anxious to help us organize the other plants. Goodness knows I tried to say these things on several occasions, and I know I fussed and fumed. I know my impatience and perhaps my exaggeration of the problem and all my bitterness associated with previous differences and all of the gossip would colour the situation, and make it harder to get these points across — as somebody was always trying to psychoanalyze me instead of examining the viewpoints I was trying to express.

As you know, I'm convinced that I had a job done on me during the past few years in Hamilton, both from the top people inside UE and from people outside the union. A job has been done on me that tramples on, besmirches and spits on almost 20 years of hard work to build this union, to make a contribution to the left and to years of working to win friends for us and fighting for unity.

I came to realize that my lingering illusions about everything coming out in the open and the truth winning out, were just pipe dreams and there was nothing I could do about it that was worthwhile and meaningful. I received many reminders that the detractors are vicious and never tire of seeking new proofs of my sins and seeking new recruits for their cause. They will not be satisfied unless I am driven out of the union, out of Hamilton and am silenced forever. This is not an exaggeration.

The presentation took a full two hours. The national officers sat through it without comment. After the presentation nothing changed. A letter from Ross Russell advised Bill to contact the UE national office as soon as his health permitted. When Jackson told him that they were prepared to accept his resignation immediately, he offered no resistance. While in the hospital he had given some thought to what work he might do and this evidently was of some concern to the national officers. They became noticeably uncomfortable when he told them he'd decided to go into union arbitration and consulting work. He recalls the scene vividly. Jackson asked him "is that what you're planning? Why do that? Why not go into business?" The final dig. Bill took the bait and got in his own dig: "What do you mean business? I've never been in business, I've always been a labour guy. You're the one who started in business, Jack. You were a boss before coming to labour." He knew this was a sore point with Jackson, but Jackson let it pass, only to say, "get out of the labour field, Bill. There's no place in it for you now."

George Harris took a different tack. "The arbitration field is feast or famine. I've got a better idea. You could get into labour research. Research Associates in Montréal is talking about going out of business. You could take it over. Or if that doesn't appeal to you the Party is thinking of putting out a theoretical journal and they need somebody in Prague if you're interested in that." "I said these didn't interest me and that I'd like to try at working with unions in grievances and arbitration and negotiations." "Who's going to give you work?" Ross asked. "First of all the UE. After all, I've done arbitration at Westinghouse for years and more recently at Northern Electric. Other parts of the union have always come to me for advice about arbitration cases. I have some expertise in this field."

"Bill, there is nobody in the country who could do a better job for our people than you could. But you will never get work from the UE."

"Why is that Ross?"

"You're making it hard. It's because we can't get along with you. You make everybody feel like a schlemiel by always having to be right. That's why we accepted your resignation. You make it impossible for us to work with you. It's not just Jack. It's me and it's George. We just want to terminate the relationship."

On 14 June 1965, UE locals received a brief note announcing Walsh's resignation. A few days later, Bill gots this note from Mike Fenwick, veteran cold warrior and editor of the *Miners' Voice*, a Steelworker paper: "I heard rumours that you had left the UE. Do you care to make a statement about your disagreement with the UE?" He took only five words: "No thank you ... no statement."

Late in the fall 1965, Walsh found himself back in Sudbury when Mine-Mill asked him to help with its publicity campaign against the Steelworkers. For the second time in three years, Mine-Mill successfully beat back a Steel raid on what was left of Local 598, its Falconbridge local. But it failed in its own efforts to win back the much larger Inco local.

Walsh had anticipated defeat. Even before the results were in, he asked Mine-Mill leaders what they would tell Inco workers who had voted to go back to Mine-Mill. He reiterated his own long held view to Harvey Murphy, Nels Thibeault, Ray Stevenson, and Bill Longbridge that the right wing of Steel could be beaten from within. That's where they should be exerting their efforts. "In any case, what do you say to the 6,000 guys who voted Mine-Mill? Do you tell them that the other 8,000 who voted Steel are scabs? Or do you tell them to join in with them, give them leadership? Ultimately, they'll do it anyway and you will find the left base dividing. Tell them now. Tell them to join Steel, challenge for control, not to bring them back to Mine-Mill. That's over. But to make Steel a fighting union."

To the old Mine-Mill leadership such talk was treason. "Those bastards. We'll never tell our people to go over."

The Draftsmen

Ross Russell was right. There were no appointments from UE. At first it seemed that George Harris was right too. It was feast or famine. Within a few months, though, the work picked up and once it did, it would never flag. The role of union consultant proved to be a very good choice for Walsh. He had unique talents as a negotiator and he was a pioneer in the arbitration field, having in 1947 argued the first arbitration case ever recorded in Canada. While the role of staff representative had given him a fair amount of autonomy relative to the locals he worked with, the position never fully utilized his talent for leadership. He resented being in a position where his judgment would be questioned and his ideas arbitrarily rejected by the national officers. By contrast, as a paid consultant his expertise was sought after and his judgment respected. And it gave full reign to the free-wheeling nature of his personality. He found the diversity refreshing and he enjoyed working with new people from one contract to another. As a novice in the consulting business, Walsh had no idea what to charge for his services. He picked an hourly figure equivalent to the wage of a skilled plant worker, \$5.00 an hour plus expenses and until he discovered the standard practice in the industry, this is what he charged.

The Draftsmen's Association in Hamilton was among his first contracts. The draftsmen were white collar semi-professional workers and some of the officers would not even refer to the organization. The American Federation of Technical Engineers (AFTE), as a union. In 40 years as the certified representatives of draftsmen in three large Hamilton companies - Dominion Glass, Otis Elevator and Westinghouse - they had never been on strike. Officers of the three locals hired Walsh to help in their preparations for bargaining and to lead the negotiations. All three were new officers with little respect for either their Canadian director or their international headquarters. They said they were fed up with the treatment they had been getting from the companies and that they were ready for a fight. This boldness was part of the new times in the Canadian labour movement: teachers had organized into unions; postal workers had engaged in a nation-wide illegal walk-out; 16,000 Inco employees participated in a three week wildcat; 12,000 production workers and 3,000 office workers went on a wildcat strike against Stelco in Hamilton, and longshoremen went on strike on Montréal's waterfront.

Before this round of bargaining the three companies had treated the draftsmen locals with contempt, merely going through the motions of negotiations. The agreements were entirely company-dictated and had none of the standard provisions on seniority, union dues check-off and the like. Less than half the draftsmen were in the union. At Dominion Glass, which came up first, Walsh brought the draftsmen to a strike vote almost immediately. Settlement arrived at the zero hour. But a notoriously antiunion Otis Elevator would not settle without a strike. In the past it had never conceded a salary increase to AFTE as part of a settlement. "You're being paid enough as it is," they said over the bargaining table. "If we give the plant workers a raise, you can come to us and we'll consider it then." When a membership campaign brought nearly all of the employees into the union and brought a strong strike mandate, the company launched an all out campaign to discredit Walsh. It approached a number of the employees with information about his background, the Party membership, the change of name, the full-time Party positions, and the jailing and internship. And it contacted the head office of the union promising to settle if he were removed.

The Otis strike lasted three months. While the settlement was modest by the standards of the day, it nevertheless broke through on most fronts, and being Hamilton's first ever white collar strike it drew a lot of attention in the media and from academics at McMaster University. The Teamsters, railroad unions, and building trades honoured the picket line throughout the strike, but since the plant workers were crossing it was still a constant struggle for the draftsmen to maintain the integrity of their line. Steel had just been certified to represent the plant workers and had informed the Draftsmen that they would not take illegal action while seeking to negotiate a first agreement with Otis. They were heavily criticized by every section of Hamilton's labour movement, by the Communist Party, and by many individuals outside of organized labour who were angered by a big steel union crossing the picket line of a small white collar local that was taking on this giant multinational company.

The Otis strike was settled in mid-December 1966, just as Westinghouse's 200 draftsmen were in the final conciliation stage with the company. Six months before this set of negotiations had begun, Walsh had approached C.S. Jackson about cooperation between then two unions since both were about to begin their respective negotiations. He received no response. An official letter also got no response. When negotiations indicated the possibility of a draftsmen strike at Westinghouse, he raised the question with Harry Hunter, leader of the Hamilton Party organization. What if AFTE, with a Party member as its counsel and spokesman, was manning a picket line while the UE, led by Party members, crossed the line? Hunter insisted that this could never happen, but he promised to set up a Party meeting to deal with it. That meeting was set up but it was called off and no other scheduled.

The draftsmen twice postponed strike deadlines to get themselves in line with the UE deadline. Having had no success in getting the local branch of the Party to look into the matter, Walsh contacted his brother Sam, leader of the Québec Party to set up a meeting with the national Party leadership. He was told to keep himself in readiness for a meeting, but never got any call. "I concluded," he said, "that in the eyes of some Party leaders the top leaders of the UE could do no wrong. The Party leadership seemed determined to acquiesce in whatever the UE leadership might do regardless of any other consideration."

When both unions struck, members of the two unions developed a high degree of camaraderie, picketing, drinking coffee, painting picket signs and taking up collections together, but at another level the tension was mounting. At a meeting of the Hamilton Labour Council in mid-June, Percy Brown, Chairman of the Draftsmen Association speculated that the company was going to manoeuver the negotiations so that UE would settle first and would be expected to cross the draftsmen's picket line.

Beneath the surface of cooperation and mutual support, the old conflict between Jackson and Walsh came to the fore as the moment of truth approached. The UE insisted that Walsh not participate in joint meetings set up to coordinate picket lines. And an open letter to the Draftsmen read out on the platform of a large UE meeting was clearly designed to give the impression that while UE had consistently sought to extend full cooperation and coordination of efforts, the Draftsmen and particularly its counsel, Bill Walsh, refused such cooperation. While this back-handed attack was going on, word on the picket line was that Walsh was becoming the butt of open jibes by leaders at various UE strike meetings. When UE resumed negotiations during the strike, this campaign was stepped up, increasingly taking the form of personal slander. A number of UE activists were saying that the draftsmen were creating problems for UE because of a personal feud between Walsh and Jackson. And that Walsh wanted revenge against Jackson even if it meant hurting those he had worked with for many years.

Walsh finally got a meeting among Party officials but matters were left unresolved. The meeting tackled neither the concern that UE Party leaders were consciously setting their course to cross the AFTE picket line, nor the slanderous campaign which he was certain was designed to set the backdrop for violating the picket line.

The UE was set to vote on 21 June, on a contract the leadership was calling "outstanding." According to the Hamilton *Spectator*, there was some fear that Westinghouse plant workers might reject the settlement "rather than face the decision of crossing the picket line of a second union of Westinghouse employees." In a letter sent to the draftsmen's union, the UE requested that the draftsmen adopt an informational picket line if the plant workers accepted the agreement and returned to work. Making it clear that UE workers would cross the picket line, the letter concluded "It is our

obligation to make certain that what the draftsmen choose to do does not endanger our opportunity for an outstanding settlement." Jackson used the platform of a giant rally to get out the YES vote to blast Bill Walsh. He accused Walsh of using the draftsmen to get revenge on himself and the UE and of deliberately delaying the Draftsmen strike to embarrass the UE. "No Westinghouse worker is going to suffer because of this megolamaniac," he thundered. He called Walsh a bitter enemy of the UE and an enemy of working people who should have been fired from UE long before.

Most members of the audience had known and worked with Bill Walsh for years. They sat in stunned silence. Only one person, Alvar Carlstrom, a non-party member, dared to challenge the speaker. "Mr Jackson," she said, "Bill Walsh has worked for this union for over 20 years and throughout those years we always thought he did a good job for us. Now you people tell us things we know nothing about. You shouldn't be saying these things without Mr. Walsh being here to defend himself."

The news traveled fast. A horrified Esther asked "Where were all your friends, Bill? Where was Murray Thompson who we've known for so many years. I can't understand how he could listen to these lies and just sit there."

She reached Thompson on the phone. "Murray, I heard what Jackson said about Bill last night. You were there. What did you say?"

"I didn't say anything. If what Jackson said is true, I don't want to have anything more to do with Bill,"

Esther responded. "Murray, if what Jackson said about Bill is true, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with him. But both you and I know that none of it is true."

"But I don't know that it isn't true," Murray answered.

"Well, if that's what you think, Murray, after all these years, there's nothing more to say."

Bill Walsh seethed with anger. But for now there was still a strike to be settled. By early Wednesday evening the word was out. UE members voted to accept the settlement and Tommy Davidson announced that they would report for work the next day. Rumours circulated that the Teamsters would follow the UE across the Draftsmen's picket line. A number of UE members contacted the Draftsmen to say that they wanted a separate vote, vote yes for the contract but no to crossing the line, but that the UE leadership refused. Some said they would not cross the line in any event. Those few who contacted Walsh told him they didn't buy what was being said about him, but "who can argue with Jackson?"

Pressed by the Draftsmen, the UE and others, the government conciliator brought the company and union together in the hope that a last minute settlement could be achieved. Westinghouse, fearing that many UE members would refuse to violate the picket line, improved its offer conditional on the draftsmen removing their picket line by the next morning. Late Wednesday night the draftsmen were summoned by their leaders to consider the offer. "The terms of settlement were less than they had a right to expect from their efforts, their first real show of militant struggle against a huge company," Walsh said. It was after midnight by the time they took their vote and reluctantly agreed to the settlement.

When Westinghouse plant workers returned to work over the next few days they were handed a leaflet addressed to them as an open letter from the draftsmen. The leaflet was vetted by a committee but there can be little doubt who the author was. "This open letter," it read, "is written in hopes of helping to build the labour solidarity which was threatened during much of the strike, and badly mauled during the final days. Unless there are genuine efforts to heal wounds, and unless there are lasting lessons learned, all working people will lose and only labour's enemies stand to gain."

The four page statement was biting, acerbic, and sarcastic. It punctured holes in UE pronouncements. "Blatant UE propaganda" it called "the numerous efforts to create the impression that UE leaders fervently sought cooperation, but that Draftmen leaders didn't want to cooperate." It lambasted the leadership for being "unprincipled" trade unionists in "launching an all-out campaign to persuade Local 504 members to cross the Draftsmen's picket line," and for "misleading" its own members.

For Bill Walsh and the draftsmen the open letter no doubt "cleared the air" which was one of its stated objectives. It likely gave Walsh some personal satisfaction. It certainly provided him with an outlet to vent his anger. But it was hardly successful in helping to build labour solidarity and to heal wounds. Quite the opposite.

The Last Straw

The Party response was predictably swift. On 20 July Harry Hunter invited Walsh to a meeting of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Committee "to discuss your work as a member of the committee." Walsh promised to attend. The following day, a Saturday, a registered letter arrived at his doorstep confirming the meeting. "A registered letter for a meeting to review my relationship with the committee? 'That's it,' I said to myself. I knew what was coming down. 'This is the last straw.' I ran downstairs to my basement office and typed out a letter of resignation with a copy to Sam."

22 July 1967

Dear Sammy:

Think you are entitled to only extra carbon copy I have made. It's not much of a valedictory after more than 35 years of membership, including the joy and anger, the love and hatreds of work in the Soviet Union during the first five year plan, underground and open work, jail, war, strikes, demonstrations, comradeship — but also the enervating periods of acquiescence, compromise, etc. But it will have to do under the circumstances.

Anyway, why should anyone be interested in valedictions. The struggles continue and life goes on.

21 July 1967

Harry Hunter

Hamilton, Ontario

Your registered letter received today is the last straw.

There is lacking an atmosphere for real expression, and an inadequacy of genuine concern for people.

My own acquiescence during some of the 35 years of my membership has undoubtedly contributed.

I have sometimes been sustained by recalling the warm atmosphere and concern for people when idealists like Dick Steele and Muni Erlich were alive. But that was a different era. Although I resign, I retain respect for many and continuing affection for some who remain.

Letters were exchanged almost daily between the brothers, the first intensive contact they had had in many years.

28 July 1967

Dear Bill:

I received your letter together with the copy of the letter of resignation. It is of course very difficult for me to reconcile myself to the idea that you have actually resigned from the Party after all you have put into it, as the only effective vehicle for uniting and orienting the working people to the abolition of exploitation of man by man. Which is not, of course to try to conceal what are obvious imperfections which are very, very difficult to overcome.

4 August 1967

Dear Sam:

You refer to the Party as the only effective vehicle for uniting and orienting the working people and the imperfection in the Party and the members. In spite of all the problems I have had because of the latter, I could likely abide, did I not have growing doubts about the former. In fact, I'm beginning to wonder if many of the subjective problems are not reflections of inadequacies of "the only effective vehicle." Not that I know of any other effective vehicle in spite of my son John's efforts...

On 9 August, a second registered letter arrived from Hunter.

Dear Comrade Walsh:

Your letter of July 21 was received and is being forwarded to the club membership meeting for consideration. The committee is laying a formal charge against you. You are accused of conduct detrimental to the Party and the best interests of the working class, as provided for in the Communist Party constitution.

The matter will be presented to the club membership on Wednesday, August 16th at the Cannon Hall, 8 p.m. We sincerely hope you will attend and answer on your behalf to the above charges.

Two days later Walsh informed his brother that he has no intention to submit to these charges.

There have been actions detrimental to the working class (and the Party) I'm sure. But the charges are being laid at the victim, not the perpetrator, although I'm not pretending to be lily white.

As I've indicated once before, one of the holy cows in the Party is the UE establishment. Since I've had the audacity not to lie down and die to suit that establishment, and since they have not succeeded in slaughtering me with personal vilification, the Party is to be used as a channel to help accomplish same...

Oh well, as you know, I wanted to drop out quietly, but apparently this will not be permitted, and I'm to be labelled as some kind of enemy! (To the working class, yet!!) Outside of the establishment previously referred to I don't know who will benefit from this monstrous lie.

The Charges

As the date of meeting approached, Walsh was torn up inside. Could he just walk away from these charges however farcical they may be? A telegram from Sam urged him to attend and defend his record:

DESPITE EVERYTHING ATTENDANCE AND DEFENSE BEFORE YOUR COMRADES ESSENTIAL STOP REFUSAL TO STATE YOUR CASE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WILL NOT BE UNDERSTOOD OR ACCEPTED.

Similar pleading from Esther prodded him into action. He spent all day Wednesday writing out some notes.

The five page statement of charges read out to the 30-odd Party members in attendance started out by saying that while Bill Walsh's severance from the UE was strictly the business of the union, the Party understood it would have repercussions in the Party. "In spite of a history of antagonism between Committee members and Comrade Walsh," the Party did everything it could to encourage his active participation. "No one was under the illusion that the struggle for collectivity and for the elimination of competitive behaviour would come easy for all concerned. All were aware that for Bill it would be most difficult. Nevertheless it was believed that a strong fight for his participation was demanded in the interests of the working class."

But his attendance at Party meetings fell off and "was limited to purely industrial discussions which smacks strongly of using Party contacts for his own advantage as a labour consultant." He refused to participate in the last municipal election; neglected to inform the Party of his involvement in a CBC documentary "Steel Town" featuring that notorious anti-Communist Arthur Laverty; falsely claimed he could not get a Hamilton Party meeting to deal with the attacks made on him by some Party members and asked the Central Committee to intervene; and he refused to disassociate himself from the draftsmen's anti-unity open letter and condemn its generally disruptive activity in the labour movement. "The Hamilton Committee has given much consideration to these matters and is forced to conclude that Comrade Bill Walsh be charged with conduct detrimental to the Communist Party and the best interests of the working class."

His attendance at meetings "limited to purely industrial discussions!" The words exploded in Bill's head. Using the Party to make money for himself! Head pounding, stomach so tight the muscles seem ready to burst, he barely heard the rest of the statement. But now he was invited to respond. Doubtful that in his present state of mind he would find the words to say what he had been waiting so long to say, he read straight from his notes, thankful now that he took the time to prepare them. (reproduced in Appendix A)

In all he read for two and a half hours, but being unaware of the exact nature of the charges his notes did not cover the specific events of the previous year. A second meeting a week later allowed him to deal with the issues around the draftsmen's strike.

The day of the last meeting I sat down to try to put into writing some of the reservations and disagreements I had during past years, and some of the efforts I had made to clear them up. I was unable to finish my notes, and of course, when I prepared them I had not seen the specifics of the charges against me — something that every accused person is entitled to before he is called upon to reply or defend himself. I have since then received the statement of charges and of course the main thing seems to be leaflet of the Draftsmen and the injury to the party that is said to have flowed from it, and the charge that this action is "disruptive activity in the labour movement".

I refute this charge. I deny it. And I hurl it back at those who are responsible for the actions complained of.

The statement says that as of the fall of 1965 — less than two years after I left the UE, it became clear to the Hamilton Committee of the Party that it needed to initiate and promote an atmosphere in the Party whereby proper party relationships could develop. The statement says in brackets that my severance from the Union was not a Party matter, but the business of the Union — and it's dismissed that way.

Well, I think that's one of the problems. While it is true that my separation was the business of the Union — it must be borne in mind that the top officers of the Union were all in the Party and that this was a matter between Party people. As I said, it seemed to me that when a person has been on the Union staff and in its top fraction for so many years, that the Party should have some interest in knowing what brought about his resignation and final separation. It isn't as though I was the first one. There were a number more who had been in the Party and on the staff of the Union and who had resigned or been fired from the staff and most of whom were also lost to the Party. That fact alone, it seemed to me, ought to have caused some concern about Party comrades and what happens to them.

That's part of the problem you see. The relationships in the top circles of the Union were relationships between Party members, as were the relationships with the full time staff people of the union in the Hamilton area largely relationships between Party people in the Union. These relationships had become strained to the breaking point, and nobody was interested in looking into the matter and yet we are told the committee here calmly decided to promote an atmosphere in the party organization whereby proper party relations could develop.

I had misgivings about accepting nomination for the city committee because of this background, and also because it could result in some of the same UE staff people or those closely associated with them being on the committee. In addition, I was just then starting out in a new field of work which would take me out of town most of my time, particularly during the work week.

The committee statement says that my attendance at city committee and membership meetings was poor and makes a point that I had only attended three city committee meetings this year and that these were on industrial work, and that I was using Party contacts to advance my business. It also says that in the last municipal election I didn't participate because it was not important to me, and still later it is implied that I am somehow responsible for what Art Laverty said on a TV program. I want to deal with these three at the same time. In the first place industrial work is on the agenda in one way or another at almost every meeting. But more importantly, this shameful insinuation is completely without any foundation in fact and no effort is made to substantiate it.

Or take the thing about the last municipal election.

When Harry asked me to do something in the last municipal election, I told him frankly I had little interest. There are some comrades that are more interested and are drawn more to one kind of work than another — and can do better in one field than another. I happen to be drawn to the labour movement, to international developments including the question of war and peace and the Vietnam war, to the developments particularly in South America, and Cuba, and so on. I try to keep up with these fields and wherever possible to participate. But when offered a specific assignment in city elections or some other field and I can possibly do it, I do. So what's the big deal.

And now the bit about Laverty. Let me say right out that I had no more to do with Laverty being on the program or with what he said than any of you. My name was given to the CBC people by someone in Montréal, and so was Laverty's and some others. I don't know what is the purpose of bringing his name into such a document when he has no way of defending himself. And what is more to the point — it seems to me that this reference to Laverty, like the other references in the document about me only attending city committee meetings to make business contacts — all this is in my view the kind of malicious smearing that is not based on one bit of supportable evidence and that can only have been put in to colour the document and lay the groundwork for the main charge.

And now I think I should get back to the main matter, the question of the picket line developments and the aftermath. First, let's go back to the Otis strike. When the Steelworkers crossed their lines, the Draftsmen criticized them in the press, in the labour council, in leaflets to the Steelworkers with copies to other unions, in speeches to other unions, including to the Building Trades Council, in letters to other unions both here in Canada and in the USA. A press story carried in the Hamilton Spectator quoting the chairman of the Otis draftsmen as being critical of the steel union, was also carried in the Tribune. A number of representatives of other unions expressed to the Draftsmen at Otis their sympathy and their criticism of Steel for not honouring the draftsmen picket line at Otis. After the strike the Draftsmen at Otis received a warm letter of congratulations from John Ball, the President of the Westinghouse Local of UE, in which Comrade Ball said:

"As the first white collar group to successfully challenge anti-unionism in this city, the tremendous struggle of your members marks a stepping stone in labour's forward march towards 20th century conditions. The future struggles of other white collar groups for organization and improved standards, indeed, the future struggles of all of us, have been made less difficult by the courageous example of you and your members."

I am not aware of anybody criticising the Otis Draftsmen, or me, who was their consultant during much of their pre-strike negotiations and during much of their strike. I am not aware of anyone being critical of the position of the Otis draftsmen — their criticism of the Steel Union, which was made publicly and in leaflets to other unions. But why is it that when the Westinghouse draftsmen did much like the Otis Draftsmen they are attacked by the Party for putting out their leaflet and of course, I am attacked as their consultant. Remember, it would have been illegal for the Steelworkers to have honoured the draftsmen picket line at Otis — this was not the case at Westinghouse.

I must conclude by completely denying the charges. In fact, having read the statement, I consider it unworthy of the committee — certainly not based on all the facts. However, we all have a lot to learn, all of us.

Personally it has been a very bitter experience. Although I have taken a lot of time, I have still had to leave out more than I could put in because of the time and circumstances. I hope to be able to settle down and eventually get over it. As I said, I hope this experience will enable us to remain friends, and that it will perhaps contribute something of value to the struggles ahead, and to a greater sensitivity by the Party to its members and the things that weigh heavily on them.

The atmosphere in this meeting was less charged than the one held two weeks earlier. Although his statement then was eloquent and moving, Walsh had been shaken by the charges and he was seething with anger. Now he was on the offensive as the emotional tone of his refutation clearly indicates: "I refute this charge. I deny it. And I hurl it back at those who are really responsible for the actions complained of." The discussion that followed his presentation was perfunctory. When the vote was announced it was 27 to five with one abstention and two spoiled ballots to reject his resignation and expel him from the Party. Having gone this far, it didn't take much persuasion, mainly from his brother Sam, to get Walsh to appeal the expulsion before the Central Committee of the Party.

Most people who quit the Communist Party did not formally resign, they simply dropped out. Expulsion was a very serious business for this Party, and doubly so when the expulsion was appealed. A special committee was struck; there were oral presentations and written statements; and a detailed committee evaluation and recommendation which was finally submitted to the Central Committee for its ultimate determination. In this case the process took over a year to complete. This was the time of the Prague Spring which generated a hot debate in the Party. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 resulted in another spate of resignations including such Party veterans as Stanley Ryerson. Very likely, these events contributed to the delay of completing the Walsh appeal process. In the end the Committee ruled that his initial resignation was valid, but that even if there had been no resignation, censure rather than expulsion would have been the more appropriate penalty for his refusal to renounce the Open Letter which the committee agreed was injurious to the Party and to the working class.

This marked the end of Bill Walsh's relationship with the Communist Party. While he retained some bitterness towards certain individuals in the leadership of the Hamilton Party, he never expressed the same contempt towards the Communist Party as he obviously felt towards the UE. On the contrary, he honoured its history and principles, and regarded his personal experiences in the Party as mainly positive. Quite likely, had it not been for his break up with UE, he would have remained a Party member for many more years. At least there was no indication that he could not continue to swallow his disagreements over policy issues and tolerate the on-going hostility he felt from some Hamilton comrades.

Post-script

Walsh's view that the UE's survival as a union would be in doubt if it did not assume a more aggressive organizing policy turned out to be correct. But its failure to organize the entire electrical industry was less crucial, it turned out, than the industry trend to relocate most of its production out of Canada, both with regard to appliances and heavy electrical equipment. By the late 1960s and even more so in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a massive loss of employment in the industry. By then UE was a mere shadow of its former self. Eventually, it would merge into the rapidly expanding and diversified Canadian Automobile Workers.

Notes

¹Cameron Smith, Unfinished Journey, the Lewis Family (Toronto 1989), 517. ²Smith, Unfinished Journey, 518.

Chapter Eleven

A New Career

Bill Walsh was close to 60 years old when he began his new career. Working as a union consultant in the years following his severance from the UE turned out to be truly liberating for him. He relished both the variety of work and the variety of roles he found himself in. The problem of authority that had dogged his relationship with the national officers in UE now largely disappeared. As a consultant, advisor, spokesman, or representative, his role was always clearly defined. In a very short time, his services were in great demand and he was back to twelve hour days, seven days a week. The basement of his Hamilton home served as his office, and soon he was employing a near full-time secretary. He also took on a series of young men as apprentices, some of whom, such as Paul Middleton and Peter Warrian, went on to build distinguished careers in the labour movement. One of these voung men. Brian Switzman, would become a full-time assistant. By the mid-1970s only a small portion of his work was based in Hamilton, so in 1980 he and Esther moved to Toronto as they wanted to be closer to Michael and their grandchildren who lived in Toronto.

By the mid-1970s, Walsh had already worked for at least 50 locals and national unions. It is no exaggeration to say that he mesmerized many of the people he worked with. Many regarded him as one of the most outstanding trade unionist they had ever witnessed. What was the secret of his success? Jim Tester, president of the Mine-Mill local in Sudbury, saw him up close, as Walsh led that union through three sets of negotiations beginning in 1969. "There is no question that Bill Walsh is a masterly tactician in negotiations," wrote Tester. "His ability, opposite the best management lawyers, is brilliant.... He never equivocates, never bluffs, never lies. And for that quality, he is respected by all sides. I've seen it in the startled faces of management people, and in the admiring eyes and voices of our own people.... But it is as a strategist that he is an outstanding trade union leader. He knows how to bring the power and strength of the membership into the bargaining room. He can do this because he listens to the membership, gets to know their problems, their thinking. He can rally and unify them behind their program."¹ Percy Brown, Chairman of the Draftsmen, offered this comment in a tribute to Walsh at a Draftsmen banquet:

He has led us in six sets of negotiations. Each one has been an eye-opener. When Bill does it, when he speaks for us, it always sounds new and exciting, as if we were hearing it for the first time. Bill always insists that we keep in close touch with our members, that they are the source of strength. He inspires confidence among the members and among the leaders. What a guy!

In 1981, Walsh handed all of his clients over to Union Consulting Services, a firm set up by three of the men he had been working with. His goal was to finally remove the work from his home and to begin to reduce his own workload. Although listed on its letterhead, he was never a partner in UCS, but did act as consultant to the firm and continued as the nominee for those unions that insisted on it. He also took on some clients outside the UCS and continued in a reduced capacity until his full retirement at the age of 80.

Working For Mine-Mill

Bill Walsh considered his experience with Mine-Mill Local 598 in the late 1960s and the 1970s to be a highlight in his long career in the labour movement. He resumed his relationship with Local 598 towards the end of 1968. As part of the terms of the merger arrangement between Mine-Mill and Steel, the bulk of Mine-Mills national officers were absorbed into the Steelworker staff. This left the Falconbridge local with few experienced leaders. Walsh was thus asked to represent the union before arbitration boards and to help the executive prepare for upcoming negotiations.

He was shocked at what he found. The leadership appeared to have little understanding of the most basic elements of their own contract and was ill-equipped to formulate the demands for a new one. The existing contract was ghastly. It was not so much the wages, although even these had fallen drastically relative to other industrial workers; the main problem was that the operative language of the agreement — the grievance procedure, seniority, promotions, compulsory overtime — was on the lowest possible level, language that hadn't been seen elsewhere for twenty years. This neglect was a measure of the price miners paid for the years of internal disputes and raiding. Walsh's first arbitration involved a case where the union had launched a grievance over a practice that was within the collective agreement. "I don't believe you guys,' I said to them. 'Don't you realize that an arbitration board is obliged to determine only whether or not the company is living up to the collective agreement, not whether it's been nice to you, or carried on as it may have sometime in the past? What kind of a world have you fellows been living in?" He actually won that case, but only after convincing the chairman of the arbitration board that there was some ambiguity in the clause and that therefore past practice should prevail.

Walsh helped the executive formulate demands for the next round of negotiations which were then presented to the membership for ratification. This was the proper role of the union president, he knew, but the executive thrust the leadership function on to him and although he wouldn't admit it, he was not unhappy to accept it. Through the course of the negotiations and the strike that followed, he had in many ways become the de facto leader of the local. Another decision largely determined by Walsh was the strike deadline. According to Ontario law, a union could only strike after the existing contract had expired and a government conciliation officer had been brought in to help bring about a settlement. Quite often workers laboured for several months under the old contract while negotiations continued. Most unions conducted a strike vote only after the company's "final offer" has been rejected. In the meantime, many companies were willing to "sweeten the pot" to avoid a strike vote. This had become the established practice in Falconbridge. Walsh preferred the system long adopted by the auto workers' union - conduct a single vote on the eve of the expiration date: accept the company's best offer or strike - no contract. no work. The executive agreed with Walsh's approach and asked him to sell the idea to the stewards and members.

By mid-July negotiations had been ongoing for some time and the 21 August expiry date loomed. Inco workers represented by Steel were already on strike, and had been for two weeks. Walsh warned the company negotiator, Toronto lawyer Norman Mcleod Rogers, that the union would strike on 22 August if the members turned down their final offer. By this time the company, realizing that the union was serious, came up with a proposal which would have given Falconbridge workers an immediate 8 1/2 per cent wage increase and a guarantee that they piggyback onto the eventual Inco settlement. This looked good to many members, and had long been established practice at Falconbridge.

Walsh voiced his disagreement to this practise at the negotiation table and also had it reprinted in the 598 News for the membership. There is no point in you repeating to us again that if the company is not highly profitable it would have a bad effect on the workers — that we would have little job security. We tell you this: If it were not for the workers, you wouldn't make any profit at all! The ore would remain in the ground and your smelters would be useless. Your management, sales and personnel departments and all the rest would be redundant.

Your whole approach to monetary matters is that we follow 'district patterns.' Well, gentlemen, this committee has instructed me to say to you: we have no advance knowledge of what Inco workers will accept as settlement of their strike. We wish them the best and we will do what we can to assist them. But we want you to understand that it is for your workers that we speak. We will not be tied in advance to anyone else's settlement. If you tell us, in effect, that we have been the tail to Inco's dog, we tell you that whether or not that was the case in the past years, we are not such a tail now. We don't intend to be wagged by them or anyone else! Mine-Mill members are standing on their own feet. This fact had better be recognized.

At that point, there had never been a strike at Falconbridge, but realizing that one could be imminent, Rodgers improved the offer somewhat, though in the final analysis it still depended on the Inco settlement.

Walsh knew that repeating this pattern would be a disaster for the union, only perpetuating its weakness and widening the split with Steel. "I was beginning to sense a certain disquietude in the community," he explained. "The Inco workers were on strike and our people were still working. The Vietnam [War] was on and I was telling the executive that Mr. Nixon was going to be crying for nickel. I said there is no reason why the Inco strike should be undercut by Falconbridge. The thing to do is to shut down the industry and close off all the supplies. Then we have much more power in dealing with both companies."

The only executive member he knew from the old days was Jim Tester, a long-time Party member who had just recently been elected president of Local 598. Tester agreed with his position, and together they convinced the bargaining team to recommend rejection to the membership. 598 News carried this account of Walsh's appeal to the members:

You have a choice to make. You can choose the nice easy road; the comfortable full-stomach road; the road that assures your children will have shoes and socks when they start school after Labour Day. Or you can choose the hard road, the road on which the future is unsure — except that you will not be letting others fight the battles, while you hang on their backs. It's not the smart road — not the road of the business unionists. But it's the real union man's road. We ask you to turn your back away from the easy comfortable road, and put your feet

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firmly on the hard road of strike — the road of honest class conscious workers.



Bill Walsh is flanked by Jim Tester, Local 598 president and Homer Seguin, Local 6500 president in joint Mine-Mill and Steelworkers Labour Day parade, Sudbury 1969.

The hall was in an uproar, cheering and stamping. The vote was 92 per cent to reject. They struck at 8:00 p.m., 21 August and stayed out for three months.

The Labour Day parade that year was a historic event, the first time there was a united Labour Day in Sudbury in many a year. The Mine-Mill contingent, led by Bill Walsh and Jim Tester, marched down one street; the Steelworker contingent marched down another. A large crowd of cheering supporters was waiting for them when they merged. The strike ended 21 November. Letters of congratulations poured in from unions around the country. More important, nearly all Mine-Millers regarded the whole experience as a great triumph, a new beginning, and a victory of principle over expedience. In a statement to the membership, Jim Tester had this to say:

At the start of this negotiation battle with Falconbridge many people said openly we would fail because of our inexperience. Some were gloating because we would be humiliated and smashed, and they would pick up the pieces. I pledged at the time we would get the best trade union brains in the country to help us. Our members, our friends and our enemies know that's exactly what we did. We could have searched the length and breadth of this country and could not have come up with a wiser, more knowledgeable adviser and spokesman than Bill Walsh. He confounded the company experts time and again. He gave fantastic guidance to our negotiating committee, insisting that each proposition be completely understood and agreed on before being put to the Company. He gave leadership to our strike captains, pickets and general membership, such as we have never seen before. His spirit and energy inspired all of us.

There was one sour note to this episode, one that earned for Bill Walsh the hostility of yet another element in the labour movement. In July 1969, the Council of Canadian Unions held its founding convention in Sudbury. Roy Scranton, a militant underground miner and vice-president of Local 598 was elected president of the CCU.

The CCU was the creature of Kent Rowley and Madelaine Parent, longtime leaders of the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union (CTC), a small independent union they established in the early 1950s after Rowley and Parent were fired as Canadian directors of the United Textile Workers of America. As far as Rowley and Parent were concerned, the CCU was the realization of the 1953 Hamilton Unity Conference. Mine-Mill, proud of its made-in-Canada constitution, and a staunch advocate of independent Canadian unionism, was for many years a staunch supporter of Kent Rowley. During the worst days of the Steel raids, Rowley and Parent were frequent visitors to Sudbury, speaking on behalf of Mine-Mill. The history of mutual support spanned over a decade. But during the strike problems in the relationship surfaced.

During the strike the company had cut the workers off from hospital and medical programs and the union had to raise money to cover these payments as well as strike pay. Letters were sent around the country calling for financial assistance. The money poured in, a large part of it from Canadian locals of international unions, many of whom visited the Mine-Mill offices. In the midst of this hard-earned support, strategic to the success of the strike and perhaps to the survival of the union, Mine-Mill judged it necessary to remove CCU materials attacking these very same internationals.

When Madelaine Parent came up to Sudbury to prepare for the CCU convention, she urged Walsh to settle on the terms the company was offering. She wanted Walsh to let the Steelworkers fight their own battles. Why, she asked, make common cause with them? Whatever they get you'll get anyway. Walsh assumed that she feared Mine-Mill might get beat up in a strike and be vulnerable to another raid by Steel. "I told her 'If these people are going to be an independent union they have to earn the right

to be an independent union. They can't be a union on their own and put out their hands after another group has done their fighting for them. There's a name for that. That's a company union'."

After the strike was over, Local 598 agreed to affiliate with the CCU. Not long after, as Mine-Mill was preparing for the 1972 negotiations, CCU secretary-treasurer Kent Rowley requested that Local 598 aid CCU efforts in its campaign to raid the large Steelworker locals in Hamilton. Thompson. Trail, and Kitimat. Remembering the complications that arose from similar pressures in 1969, the executive declined. Jim Tester was the first to see the writing on the wall. Unless Mine-Mill made a clean break from the CCU, it was inviting another raid from Steel. Walsh backed up Tester. An April 1972 membership meeting voted to disaffiliate from the CCU. A series of increasingly heated letters of correspondence from Kent Rowley, vehemently denying that the CCU had a raiding policy, followed, with Rowley requesting a meeting with the Executive Board of the union. The request was denied and an editorial written by Tester appeared in the May Local 598 News supported the need for solidarity with all unions, but also the principle of independent Canadian unions. "[However,] we do not believe the road to Canadian unionism will be through raiding activities. We think this will only fragment the trade union movement still further, and makes us all easier victims for the employers."

In the middle of July, Rowley circulated an Open Letter, again requesting a meeting with the Executive Board and the membership of Mine-Mill. By then the union was in the thick of the 1972 negotiations. Tester described the letter as "a thinly disguised attack on the leadership of our union. Its distribution certainly was not calculated to strengthen our bargaining effort." Rowley's letter was read out to a membership meeting that passed a resolution "to bar Kent Rowley from further entrance to our halls."

Later, Jim Tester added this note to his President's Report: "I have known Kent for a good many years. As a former International Vice-President of the Textile Workers Union of America he got a dirty deal as did the textile workers in Canada. He has an axe to grind. But as far as I am concerned he is not going to do it at the expense of Sudbury workers."

Rowley struck back in an editorial appearing in the October 1972 CTC Bulletin. After reviewing the events leading up to his debarment from Mine-Mill halls, the editorial zeroed in on Bill Walsh, seen as the figure behind the sudden Mine-Mill reversal:

Their advisor in Sudbury is ... William Walsh, who also does work for American unions, including Steel. Walsh has become something of a 'god' to some officers of Mine-Mill. Every edition of the 598 News carries numerous pictures and the golden sayings of 'Chairman' Walsh. And what is Walsh's position? He doesn't really think that Mine-Mill should exist. He thinks they should be in Steel. Then Unity, O Unity! would finally come to the hard rock mines.... The Testers and the Walsh's of this world cannot or do not want to understand that the achievement of unity is the simplest thing in the world: All you are required to do is lay down your arms and join the enemy.... To save their faces, they concoct disgraceful and demeaning charges ... and since they cannot sustain their charges, they retreat before locked doors.

Predictably, Jim Tester answered the charges, concluding in his November President's Report in the 598 News:

... I am convinced that sooner or later unions in Canada will be run for and by Canadians.... At this stage it is impossible to know how this will come to pass. There is more than one road. Circumstances and experience will determine the best way. Each union must choose its own course in its own time. For our part, we must continue to play our small role, with principle and honour.²

These events had echoes as far away as British Columbia. It was a sad way to end Kent Rowley and Madelaine Parent's proud record of service to Sudbury workers. To the day he died, Rowley blamed Bill Walsh for having orchestrated it. Walsh waited until 1973 to answer Rowley. The occasion was a speech given at a 26 May meeting commemorating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Western Federation of Miners of which Mine-Mill was the direct descendent.

"Every union has the right to exist," he said, "only so long as its members consider it is protecting them from the employer's greed as much as is possible in the given circumstances; and only so long as it rallies its members to exert their combined strength in their own interests and in the interests of the community." Walsh continued:

But there is a special right to exist for this union ... The constitution of the Mine Mill union is unique today. It sets out the goal, not only to protect the workers in their role as wage earners exploited daily by the employers, but it speaks of the working class and its historic role — to transform the entire system of capitalism, with its uncertainties, its undernourishment, its pollution, its corruption, its wars and butcher of populations. It would transform this into a society where men and women work together for the good of all.

... Surely there is a distinct place for a union which calls on the working people of Canada to join together in the struggle for a genuine just society, a Socialist Canada for all the people.

What appealed to Bill Walsh was not that Mine-Mill was a Canadian union, but that it had socialist roots. His problem with Steel was never that it was an "international" union, but that it was an ineffectual union that consistently failed to find, develop, and use its potential power. Nationalism *per se* never had purchase for Walsh, especially if it produced weak unions. Socialism had purchase, but only a living socialism, not merely a historic one, which is no doubt why he chose to remind the audience about the socialist ideals and goals inscribed in the Mine-Mill constitution.

Walsh worked closely with Mine-Mill through most of the decade. A tape-recorded speech he delivered to the stewards in the winter 1972, before negotiations started, was published as a pamphlet entitled "The Name of the Game." The pamphlet has been reproduced many times since for use in union education programs (see Appendix B). Walsh led the Mine-Mill negotiations again in 1972 and in 1975. In the latter instance Falconbridge agreed to a pay and benefits package' that substantially exceeded the limits set by Trudeau's wage and price control regime and Walsh had to appear before the Anti-Inflation Board to defend the settlement.

In 1978, 29 year-old Dave Patterson led a brutal eight-month long strike on behalf of the Steelworkers against Inco. Another young man, Mine-Mill president Jack Gignac, very much a Walsh protegé, shared a platform with Patterson at a strike rally. For the first time in years a President of Mine-Mill was speaking to a strike rally in the Steelworker Hall in Sudbury! The large crowd in attendance was aware of the meaning of this moment. Twenty five years of enmity in the Sudbury labour movement had ended. Local 598 contributed a series of \$10,000 monthly cheques to Steelworker Local 6500. Plant gate collections at Falconbridge conducted by the Wives Supporting the Inco Strikers (WSIS) added several thousand dollars more. That fall at a Stewards' Banquet held in Sudbury's historic Mine-Mill Hall, Jack Gignac presented Bill Walsh with a life-time Mine-Mill membership scroll. Walsh would visit Sudbury many more times, but this pretty well marked the end of a decade long service to Sudbury miners.



Esther and Bill Walsh at Local 598 Mine-Mill stewards' banquet, 25 November 1978.

Postal Workers

Walsh was involved in several other significant contract negotiations in the 1970s. In the six month period between April and September 1970, he spent nearly every day working as a consultant for the Council of Postal Unions, then negotiated a contract with the federal government on behalf of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and the Letter Carriers Union of Canada (LCUC).

These unions, certified only a few years earlier, had signed their first collective agreement in 1968. But their histories as employee associations went back many years before then. A 1965 wildcat strike in the Post Office had a profound effect on Bill C-170, the Public Service Staff Relations Act. In its original form, this legislation provided only for compulsory arbitration as a means of resolving disputes. Its amended version adopted by Parliament in 1967 gave public service unions a choice. In the event they were unable to obtain a settlement through negotiation, they could chose to either strike or to accept an arbitrated award. It should be noted that the right to strike was granted to federal government employees only when it

became clear that some of them would strike anyway, whether or not it was legal.

On behalf of CUPW and the LCUC, the Council of Postal Unions elected to go the conciliation/strike route if its 1969 negotiations should end in a deadlock. Besides wages and tightening the contract language to assure employee rights, the main issues were fringe benefits and job security. The Post Office was in the early stages of modernization and automation, and Post Master Eric Kierans was committed to cutting the deficit from \$130 million to \$40 million in one year. The Treasury Board, bargaining on behalf of the Federal government, refused to budge from the six per cent voluntary wage guideline set up by the Price and Incomes Commission.

The Postal Council asked Bill Walsh to represent them on the Conciliation Board. Representing the government was Keith Campbell, Vice-President of the CPR. Chairing the Board was Judge Rene Lippe. Lippe's report, released on 7 May 1970, satisfied neither side. In its news release, the Council of Postal Unions announced that the minority report of union nominee Bill Walsh "may well become the strike manifesto of the postal workers." On 27 May the postal unions began their country-wide rotating strike which lasted three months before a settlement was reached. Throughout the intermittent negotiations, the unions retained Walsh as an advisor.

The strike was brilliantly orchestrated. By keeping the Post Office open in most centres, the unions concentrated their resources; by rotating the strike in 24 hour walkouts, they kept the Post Office off-guard and put pressure on management; by suspending the strike to deliver old-age pension cheques, the union kept public suppport. Even the *Globe and Mail* editorialized that it was unfair for the government to hold to the 6 per cent guideline for "the low paid postal workers while half the other unions in the country were romping gaily through it." Paymaster Bud Drury was concerned that if the postal workers were allowed to break through the six per cent limit, 190,000 public servants would also abandon binding arbitration and go the strike route as the best means for settling disputes.

In the third month of the strike the Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, stated that the rotating strike was intolerable. He threatened a government lockout, or a Parliamentary back-to-work order and an imposed settlement. In the end, he appointed a new mediator and gave him ten days to produce a settlement. At this stage Walsh was asked by the union to take over as the union negotiator. The final agreement broke through the voluntary guideline and achieved many of the objectives set forth in Walsh's original minority report. These included fringe benefits for part-time workers, greater job security for casual workers, and a commitment not to layoff any full-time employees. In announcing acceptance of the settlement to the press, Walsh chose the same words he used in describing every settlement he was ever involved in: "Its not what the workers deserve; it never is. But it is the best we could do."

Walsh acted as consultant to the postal unions on several other occasions, most importantly to draft amendments to CUPW's constitutional structure. He travelled several thousand miles, seeking input from union activists from one end of the country to the other. The constitutional structure he devised was presented to the 1971 convention and remained in effect until CUPW and the Letter Carriers were merged twenty some years later.

Bill Walsh And The Ontario Waffle Movement

At the invitation of the President of the Hamilton Mountain New Democratic Party, Walsh joined the NDP in 1969. With his hectic schedule, he thought there would be little time for politics. When he attended the 1970 convention of the Ontario NDP, he was surprised to meet up with some old comrades, many of whom he had not seen for a decade or more. They took him along to the caucus of the Waffle group, barely a year in existence, but already in high gear.

The Waffle Movement enjoyed only a brief moment in Canadian history. It began towards the end of the 1960s and had all but vanished by 1972. Yet, as much from its failures as from its successes, it had a powerful impact in its time and beyond. The Waffle reflected, galvanized, and focused left wing economic nationalism. "[Our] struggling against American control of Canadian oil and nickel industries was [part of] a worldwide resistance to American militarism and imperialism," James Laxer wrote in retrospect. "It took on an aura of immense moral urgency."³ The Waffle Movement challenged more mainstream nationalists like Walter Gordon and Peter Newman to establish their own organization, the Committee for an Independent Canada, so as not to leave the nationalist territory exclusively to the Left.

But by far the biggest challenge posed by the Waffle was to the NDP. The Waffle Manifesto had an electrifying impact on the delegates to the 1969 Winnipeg convention. It won the support of a third of the delegates. The Waffle Manifesto was reminiscent of the Regina Manifesto of the 1930s in that it called for widespread public ownership, but for many Wafflers its main rationale was to combat foreign ownership, something that was barely mentioned in the earlier document. In any event, the NDP never accepted public ownership as an important tool in building a better society. And its notion of a good society bore little resemblance to the socialist vision of either of the two manifestos. Rather, it was content to advocate a larger role for government in regulating and moderating the market economy of corporate capitalism. This had been party policy since the 1950s. Responding to pressure from the Waffle Movement, the mainstream NDP did come to accept foreign ownership and control as somewhat important, but it would never accept the Waffle's position on such issues as Québec's right to separate, workers' control of the workplace, and a host of other issues.

It was less this conflict over ideology and strategy and more the Waffle's challenge to the NDP establishment inside both the party and the NDP-affiliated "international" unions that was to be the Waffle's undoing. Party leaders were not prepared to see their authority challenged by a throng of long-haired, often bearded, unruly young people. Party parliamentarians were concerned that the Waffle's radical positions would cost them votes and possibly seats. For its part, the Waffle understood that it could not mount an effective offence against the leadership unless it established its own organization, and developed its own network and publications. It also mounted its own campaigns on issues such as promoting the public takeover of corporations like Imperial Oil. The Waffle's support for independent unionism was anathema to the heads of Canadian sections of "international" unions, and they were close to hysterical when the Waffle began to intrude into their space

Wafflers were often rowdy and headstrong. They could also be arrogant towards others in the party, relentless, and even abusive in their eagerness to nail down points of order and win debates. Though they never won majorities, they always had substantial support in the party. While most Waffle members were young, middle class, and university educated, Waffle extra-parliamentary campaigns most often involved working-class, trade union constituencies. In part this was because union locals frequently requested support from the Waffle group. Dissidents in some of the unions, including the Steelworker local at Stelco in Hamilton, and autoworkers in Windsor, gravitated to the Waffle group. In January 1972 the Waffle group sponsored a conference in Windsor on the Auto Pact. The conference was endorsed by the Windsor and District Labour Council and by the mayor of Windsor. The conference, which drew 350 participants, many of them autoworkers, attacked as inadequate the UAW leadership's attempts to preserve the Auto Pact safeguards through lobbying Parliament and writing letters. Instead, it called for a demonstration and a one-day work stoppage by Canadian autoworkers. These developments alarmed the various leaders of the Steelworkers and the United Automobile Workers. While initially they had complained that the Waffle was a collection of academics and students who had no concept of working class and trade union issues, now they began to fear that the Waffle group was making inroads into their own organizations. In the irreverent phrase of the Last Post magazine, the Waffle group's attacks on the union leadership were like "farting in church." Dennis

McDermott of the Autoworkers and Lynn Williams of the Steelworkers were the first to call for the expulsion of the Waffle from the NDP.

There was a lot of personal venom — both ways. The party establishment, especially those with a long history in the labour movement, saw the Waffle challenge as a reincarnation of the old battles with the communists. And some did not hesitate to borrow the old smear tactics they had mastered twenty years earlier. It was an over reaction. Even David Lewis argued against the take-no-prisoners solution that his son Stephen Lewis, provincial leader of the NDP, bought hook, line, and sinker from the international unions.

The end came on 24 June in an Orillia high school gym. It was here at a provincial council meeting that Stephen Lewis declared that the name, the group, the public identity of the Waffle group were in violation of the party constitution. "I too wish to fight for a free Canada but without the Waffle forever an encumbrance around my neck," he declared. Barely a year earlier Jim Laxer, a 28-year old sessional lecturer at Queen's University, had placed second to David Lewis in a bid for the NDP federal leadership. Throughout the four ballots, Laxer actually garnered at least as many, if not more riding votes than Lewis, but very few union delegate votes, which had gone overwhelmingly to Lewis. Now the Waffle's affair with the NDP was terminated.

The NDP paid a high price when it expelled the Waffles. It turned off a generation of activists and never did regain the intellectual vigour that made the NDP a lively venue for a time. As David Lewis was to remark some years later, "When the Waffle left the NDP, most of the brains left with them."

When Bob Laxer asked Walsh to join the Waffle, he readily agreed. It felt good to be back in politics again. He admired the circle of young academics like Mel Watkins and Jim Laxer that gave the Waffle its public leadership. Yes, he would help Bob Laxer set up a Waffle Labour caucus. Yes, he would sit on the Ontario Waffle Steering committee.

As busy as he was through this period — in Ottawa working with the postal workers, in Sudbury preparing Mine-Mill for the 1972 negotiations with Falconbridge, and handling dozens of arbitration cases for various unions in southern Ontario — Walsh was more actively involved in politics than he had been for years. On 4 March 1971, he found himself sharing a platform in Hamilton with Jim Laxer, Waffle's candidate in the federal NDP leadership race. On 3 April he was speaking on plant closures in London along with Mel Watkins. On 15 May he was delivering a talk to the Waffle Labour Committee on trade union strategy. On 26 June he was working out a Waffle strategy for the Ontario Federation of Labour annual convention. In August he was helping organize a Waffle support conference in

Brantford for Kent Rowley's striking Textpack workers. By January 1972 he was chairing a session of the Waffle's Auto Pact conference in Windsor.

From the start Walsh disagreed with the basic premise of the Waffle that the NDP could actually be transformed into a party that would one day build a socialist Canada. And he was always uncomfortable with the Waffle's nationalism. But its analysis of Canada's dependent economy was sound, he thought, and he agreed with the Waffle Manifesto's pronouncement that "capitalism must be replaced by socialism, by national planning and by public ownership of the means of production." Wherever things were heading, he believed that the Waffle could be a vital force, even if its only effect was to help develop a greater socialist consciousness among workers both inside and outside the NDP.

The Waffle Labour Caucus had an active core of 25, mainly veteran socialists, in the industrial unions from Windsor to Sudbury. They were never strong enough to organize caucuses in union locals, but the Labour Caucus did provide a political focus and strategic programme that its members could take into their locals. Political leadership within the Labour Caucus usually came from Bob Laxer. The priority Bob Laxer gave to independent unionism never sat well with Walsh. The "right-wing establishment has no stomach for the struggle to free Canada from the American Empire," said a pamphlet Laxer wrote, A Socialist Program for Canadian Trade Unionists. While it never went so far as to promote Kent Rowley's brand of break away unionism, it called for "completely sovereign and independent Canadian unions." Its tabloid, distributed at the Ontario Federation of Labour, urged "the Canadian working class to free itself from the permanent political shackles" and from having "some of its most important decisions requiring the formal agreement of Washington or Detroit " Walsh found this strident tone offensive, the attacks upon the union brass heavy-handed and simplistic, and the language often jargonistic. But the initiative lay with others and he contented himself with trying to moderate the attacks.

When the provincial council of the NDP voted to ban the Waffle movement, Walsh went along with the majority of the Waffle remnants who voted to establish a non-electoral Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada (MISC). He continued to work actively in the Labour Caucus, although its presence in union locals diminished considerably now that it operated outside the NDP. A year and a half later he again went along with the majority to form a new party, although he was not among the optimists. Unable to overcome internal divisions, the project died after a dismal result in the July 1974 federal election.

As the official opposition within the NDP, the Waffle contained many disparate elements that managed to tolerate each other because they shared

a common enemy, the tepid party establishment. Outside the NDP, these divisions could not be contained. The tensions between socialism and nationalism, and between the original founders and a group of younger upstarts, shattered the fledging organization. The Waffle had polarized and split into two groups: the "ultra-nationalists" and the "ultra-leftists," with the interface between independence and socialism lost in the heat and bitterness of the debate. Criticism of the Laxer leadership was attributed to "branch-plant radicalism" and "an Americanized, mini-left anti-nationalist sectarianism." The Laxer leadership, in turn, was attacked as putting forth vague classless slogans during the election campaign and turning the Waffle movement into the left-wing of a nationalist movement alongside the likes of Liberals Walter Gordon and Eric Kierans. An October meeting in Ottawa was scheduled to try to sort things out.

By the time the October 1974 finale took place, both sides had succeeded in becoming as outlandish as the caricatures of them drawn by their rivals. Having been inactive most of the year, Bill Walsh was unaware of how bitter the rivalry had become. Throughout that weekend he and some of the other trade unionists attempted to play the role of mediator, but to no avail. In the end, Laxer walked out of the meeting in disgust, his main proposals having been defeated by his younger leftist rivals. That was the end of the Waffle. Walsh eventually resumed his membership in the NDP and remained somewhat active at the constituency level.

The Arbitrator

After 1973 much of Walsh's time was spent acting as the union nominee on three panel arbitration boards. This may sound dull after a career on the front lines but, as Larry Robbins, a Walsh protegé put it to me, "he made that position very special. A lot of union nominees held to the view that they were there in a judicial role and therefore should be neutral. They took a hands-off approach. For Bill, there could be no neutrality for a union nominee. He was there to represent the union. Neutrality was a sham."

A lot of what he did involved grievance arbitration, but his greatest contribution in this field lay in so-called interest arbitration, particularly with the nurses. Many Ontario government employees and their unions were denied the right to strike by legislation. When they could not reach a settlement with their employers, an arbitration board was established to impose a collective agreement. On these panel boards, the union and employer would each name their respective nominee. The chairperson would be mutually selected, or failing that, would be government-appointed. In all arbitration cases, the employer and union would each present their arguments before the board and call in witnesses as required. On the basis of the evidence or arguments presented, the nominees' job was to persuade the chairperson of the merits of their respective sides.

While acting as an arbitrator, Walsh worked very closely with the individual presenting the union's brief to the board. "When he had the time," Robbins explained, "Bill would go through our briefs line by line and pick them apart. Some people resented him because his criticism could be brutal. But he was rarely wrong, and as he always reminded us, his own efforts with the chairman depended almost exclusively on what was contained in our briefs so as far as he was concerned we had to get it right!"

Everyone who worked with Walsh was struck by the intensity of his work habits. He would catnap twenty minutes during the day and get by with three or four hours sleep at night. "By the way he worked I was shocked to find out that he was already past 65 when I first got to know him in the mid-1970s," says Robbins. "He would travel days on end and he could be away weeks on the road. He always seemed to have arranged two or three meetings on every trip. In the early evening, we would motor down to a nearby city for an arbitration hearing set for the following morning. As soon as we settled into the hotel, he would set up shop in the bar to discuss some grievance case or another that he was involved in. Typically, he would be up to 1 or 2 a.m. meeting with various individuals. But by 6 a.m. he would be up and by 7 he would have gone for a walk and read the morning paper."

Rose Betcherman related another story that illustrates the point. Working into the early hours one morning in the early 1980s, Walsh had been reviewing a draft of an award she had prepared as chair of a board he had been sitting on. The draft upset him very much, so much so that he called her to talk about it. There was nothing unusual about this except that it was by then 3 a.m! He was so engrossed in the work that he had lost all track of time. Betcherman admitted that if it had been anyone else, she would have torn strips off him.

"He had a tremendous influence on the chair," says Robbins. "He was sharp, knowledgeable, and he had integrity. He could cite labour arbitration cases to the month and the page, sometimes word for word. "But the real secret of his success," in Robbins' view, "was the effort he put into his cases. He did way more preparation than anybody else, wrote everything out including how he was going to deal with a board chair. It was like a chess game for him. This is why he was so exacting to work with. He would go through drafts of our briefs in painstaking detail, and it really bothered him if our work was at all shoddy." Added Paul Middleton, another Walsh protégé who worked for him in 1973-4, "Our goal in life was to get through an arbitration without a Bill Walsh post-mortem."

After 1973 much of Walsh's work was connected with the Ontario nurses. His introduction to the nurses arose from his work with Mine-Mill in Sudbury where, in 1972, the Provincial Member of the Legislature, Eli Martel, asked him if he would represent three nurses who had been fired a year earlier from St. Joseph's Hospital. In this instance there was no collective agreement and a so-called consent arbitration process was put into place, with a single arbitrator who was to hear representations on behalf of the hospital and the three nurses. Shortly thereafter, Anne Gribben, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), asked Walsh to act as the nominee for the nurses on interest and grievance arbitration panels. This was only shortly after the Ontario Hospital Association was certified as a collective bargaining agent for the nurses. Up to then they had no union. They had a professional association, the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), but because the Association also represented nurse managers, the Supreme Court ruled that it would be a conflict of interest for the association to engage in collective bargaining.

Representing the nurses almost became a full time job for Walsh. The nurse's union would be the first to acknowledge that it was largely through his efforts that nurses wages jumped from a paltry \$7000 in the mid-1970s to \$50,000 by 1991, and that benefits and working conditions that had been non-existent now met the industrial standard.

Walsh also did some educational work for ONA. With his story-telling ability, he proved to be a superb teacher, weaving in his own extensive experience and the principles of a class conscious trade unionism. But ONA leaders felt threatened by his presentation. They wanted him as their nominee but they avoided inviting him to participate further in their educational sessions. He did give a series of lectures for McMaster University's Labour Studies and elsewhere.

Epilogue



In the early 1980s Walsh handed over most of his business to Union Consulting Services, which had been set up by a handful of young men that had worked with him over the previous five years. He continued to represent those clients that insisted upon it and he remained active as a union arbitrator until the early 1990s, by which time he was over 80 years old. In 1984 a testimonial dinner was held in his honour attended by his union clients, board chairmen, and some management representatives. He has been honoured as well by the Ontario Nurses Association and by various professional groups. The UE was the one union never to have honoured him or

even recognize his twenty-year contribution. Understandably, he would always feel bitter about this.

The only group of individuals whose mention brought what I would describe as a derisive response from Walsh was Charlie Millard, Larry Sefton, and the Steelworker crowd, circa the 1940s and 1950s. But except for C.S. Jackson and the UE experience, Walsh bore very few resentments. Nor were there many regrets. Specifically, he never regretted joining the Communist Party, even after the Soviet experiment lay in ruins and the socialist movement was in shambles. If he had the choice, I know he would do it all over again. The trip to the Soviet Union remained the highlight of his life, a story he would tell and re-tell with only the slightest prompting.

His fondest days in the Communist Party were in the 1930s. He was never able to recreate that feeling of warmth and comradeship after the war: partly because of the death of his best friends, Dick Steele and Muni Ehrlich, partly because he never felt the same spirit of friendliness and ease with the Hamilton branch, partly because of the toxic atmosphere in the UE, and partly because there were issues that dogged him which he never felt free to raise. Of course the atmosphere within the Party everywhere had changed. The Cold War and the spy scandals pushed the Party into a defensive mode. The struggle to survive superseded the struggle to challenge the system. Even moral victories, let alone real ones, were hard to come by. The gusto and the joyfulness of an earlier time were replaced by an air of grimness. There was less tolerance than ever for questioning the

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leadership, let alone policy or dogma. With the Khrushchev revelations, the Party lost whatever small energy it had retained.

Perhaps, had he not been employed by the UE, Walsh may have quit the Party then, or even before — although in my opinion this is most unlikely and he firmly denied it. In any case, having come into open conflict with the leadership of the UE, he could have no future with the CP. At most, however, he suffered an emotional disillusionment, never an intellectual one. Still alive while these last words were being written, Walsh never abandoned his own faith that a more equitable, democratic, and just society would one day replace capitalism in Canada and throughout the world.

As I met with him at length in the summer of 1994, and for a brief visit again in 1997, I thought he seemed serene and content, despite suffering from severe melanoma on his ear that required a major operation. In fact, the surgeon had made the decision that Bill was too old to operate on, but after he got to know him changed his mind. His cheerful disposition and positive outlook on life no doubt played a major role in his recovery.

Somehow, Walsh made the adjustment to a life of leisure as well as he had all the other adjustments in his life. As so often happens in old age, renewing acquaintances with old friends and family became an important part of his life. There were many Wolofsky family reunions, including visits to Montréal and visits to see Sheri in British Columbia. Esther was his constant companion and care-giver, a role she obviously took great pleasure in. "I've been very happy with Esther," he said to me the last time we met. "I have the highest regard for her. She's honest and genuine, just an excellent person and she's been a wonderful wife and friend to me."

Notes

¹Sudbury Mine Mill & Smelter Workers Local 598, News, January 1970.

²As we know now, Jim Tester's prophesy came true. The Canadian labour movement today is largely Canadian-based and there have been many different roads. In the 1990s Local 598 became part of the Canadian Automobile Workers, which itself broke away from the United Automobile Workers in 1985 and proceeded to attract many unions into its fold including the UE.

³James Laxer, In Search of a New Left (Toronto 1996), 151.

Appendix A

BILL WALSH'S TESTAMENT

"When I joined the Young Communist League during the depression years more than 35 years ago," his statement began, "I believed that only socialism is the answer to depressions, race hatred, chauvinism, antisemitism fascism and war — that socialism would open the door to a golden era for the people of the world, including me.

I believed it during the terrible defeats in Germany when the Nazis took over and crushed the Party, when the Popular Front in France was defeated, when the Spanish Republic was destroyed. I was shocked by all these events and many more, but I still believed it, and did so during the most confusing period of Munich, the Soviet-pact with Nazi Germany. We were for the war in the first few days, that is, the war against Nazi Germany. Then we were against it, calling for the withdrawal of Canadian troops and defeat of our own bourgeoisie, then we were all-out for the war against Nazi Germany after Hitler crushed France and attacked the Soviet Union.

I believed in it when old bolsheviks were liquidated in the Soviet Union, many of them after making confessions of all kinds, others by simply disappearing. After all the top leaders of the CPSU condemned these people as betrayers, as agents of the capitalists and even as allies of the Nazis. And the party in Canada fully agreed with these purges — and we believed what our leaders told us. If I had doubts and reservations, I didn't express them. After all, the enemies of the party were making capital out of these purges — and to express any doubt would be a mark of disloyalty. I did have doubts, but I didn't express them — not even to my closest comrades. When anybody else, outside the party sought to engage me in discussions on these matters — I defended the party position, condemned those who had been condemned by the purges in the Soviet Union. And I did this in the post-war years too, when new purges took place, including so many people in the field, the writers, artists — the Jewish doctors, and so on.

It is not that there weren't differences and debates and sometimes very sharp arguments on some questions, like the best way to fight evictions of unemployed from their homes; what kind of unemployed organizations to set up; how to work within the trade unions and how to build them; attitudes towards the CCF; how to work within what we used to call the language organizations; the press; the youth and so on. In fact, we used to have endless discussions and arguments on such matters.

I had differences of opinion on such questions and others. And we'd argue them out. Sometimes I was convinced by the arguments of other comrades. Sometimes I wasn't. But the things we all agreed on — the basic things — were far more important than what we didn't agree on. And there was a feeling of comradeship, of crusading, of friendship — we were all in the same situation pretty well — pretty poor, and never too sure there would be meals the next day. But when a comrade had nothing, you put him up with you and shared what you had with him. You felt you belonged to something big and grand and that you shared these beliefs and feelings with others.

With regard to differences, even if you were not convinced, and a decision was made contrary to what you believed, you didn't consider this so important. After all, sometimes with the passage of time the matter would become clarified one way or another. Other times, with the passage of time, the issue became less important or not important at all. And anyway, the things that my comrades and I agreed on, were so much more weighty and so much more important than what we disagreed on — and the atmosphere was warm and friendly. And as long as that comradely atmosphere was there so you could discuss and argue out things with people you respected and loved — the other things didn't seem to matter so much.

Even in the internment camp with 60 or so Canadian communists locked up together for a long period of time. We were with each other, close together 24 hours a day, day after day. We would discuss all kinds of things, political, personal, the most intimate personal things and the most intimate thoughts — but nobody ever questioned the bigger things. Nobody ever expressed any doubts about the general position of the Canadian Party, and nobody expressed the least doubt about anything at all that was being done in the Soviet Union. Certainly I never participated in or heard of any such discussions. I felt that to do so would be treason. Mind you, I harboured in my mind some doubts about the purges, about all those who used to be regarded as wonderful people and who were later labeled as traitors and disgraced and executed. But you didn't express anything about it. I can't speak for others, of course, but I would be surprised if they didn't also feel the same way.

Even my best friend, Dick Steele, with whom I went to school together in Montreal, we worked together and studies together in the USA, we hitchhiked through Europe together and into the Soviet Union, we shared and shared alike for many years. We joined the YCL and Party together. We became party organizers at the same time in Canada, and we still roomed together even though we were of course, assigned to different areas, we could talk about everything, and he was the warmest most dedicated man I ever knew as well as one of the most capable. No matter what problems there were, we could always discuss them and we both felt satisfied and improved as a result of these discussions. But even with Dick, we had no discussion on such things as the purges, except that we both took the very same position as others — that the purges were fully correct, fully justified, and absolutely necessary in the interests of keeping the party pure and strong and eliminating spies and enemies who had been uncovered through the vigilance of Stalin, the special party and state organs for the investigating and ferreting out of such enemies.

So, on questions like this, we fully agreed with the official position, or, if we had doubts, we certainly didn't let anybody know, not even your closest friend. Not even your wife who was in the party with you. But we had differences on many other questions, some of them were not so important, but from the arguments you would think that the arriving at a correct decision would make all the difference as to whether we were going to erect the barricades in the revolutionary struggle this year, or would have to wait a lot longer. And although there were some I was closer to than others, and one or two I never learned to like, by and large, I felt a solidarity and friendship with all my comrades, and I had no doubts that they felt the same way to the collective and to me as part of the collective.

Mind you, two years in jail and internment camp, and almost three years in the army, as a soldier during most of the second front — especially during this period as a front line infantry man — the death of several of my closest friends in the fighting. All these things combined to bring my doubts closer to the surface. But my loyalty remained deep and I smothered my doubts, and considered it necessary to defend every position.

I think it was only after the fighting in Europe stopped in May 1945 that some of the comrades who survived and were stationed not too far from each other get together a couple of times, while waiting to be transferred to the Pacific front. The comrades, including me, began to talk about the need for a change in the Party in Canada. We had heard about the Liberal-Labour coalition that the Party was championing, and it didn't sit well with us, although again we were all very reluctant to speak openly about our disagreement on this key line, while at the same time being very critical of other things about the Party about which we heard, or received letters, or gathered from some of the European comrades.

We had a sort of general idea that when we were back in Canada we would try to get the Party to convene us together where we could frankly and openly state our dissatisfactions and our views, on many question. We tried, but we never did get such a meeting. Instead, many of the army veterans were brought together to a banquet — a big affair somewhere in Toronto, where we heard speeches praising us for our individual and collective accomplishments in the armed forces, and so on. Some of us spoke to this or that leading person of our dissatisfaction with this arrangement, but of course, we were now scattered, and that was the end of it. Some of these comrades are now out of the Party, some are still in.

Although there was hope for the new world, there was also a lot of cynicism. Personally I was a lot older and sadder man. My mother had died while I was in jail, my wife had died, my first wife, Anne Weir, shortly after. My very closest friends Dick Steel and Muni Erlich had been killed in the war, only a few years after other close friends had been killed in Spain — these names won't mean much to most of you, but they were wonderful people Jack Steele, Izzie Kupchik and Jakob Loch, Milton Rapaport — and these had been close personal friends as well as comrades. I wasn't the only one who had lost friends, of course, we were all in the same boat, more or less, and maybe we looked to each other for new friendships and new warmth. I don't know. But I do know, I shall never completely get over the deaths, as likely is also the situation with some of you too, I don't know. Those things aren't talked about.

Just as I was being demobilized from the Army, I was asked to do some work for UE in Hamilton. This was approved by the then National Organizer of the Party, and I came here in February 1946.

The Union was still very small then — a couple of hundred paid up members in Westinghouse, and a couple of other small plants were in the Union. Those were the days when the immediate post-war boom in union growth and militancy was taking place — it was still before Churchill's Fulton Missouri "iron curtain speech" which is generally regarded as the real beginning of the cold war.

My home was in Toronto and I was rooming in Hamilton. I spent my time here trying to build up the Union to preserve it for the big strikes that took place that summer. We also tried to recruit a few people into the Party — I must say, mainly on the basis of a militant union position in the first place, and to get allies in the internal fight in which one or two former party people were aligned with others in fighting against the leadership of the UE.

We were able to build things up inside the Union and to take an important part in the strike wave that occurred in Canada and in Hamilton. Those strikes, as you know, played a big part in the post war developments in the trade union movement. The labour movement generally marks the beginning of real growth and the break-through of unions as starting from the winning of the Stelco strike in 1946 — and I think this is justified. And therefore the top leaders of steel were in general given credit for this great contribution — in spite of things they did later which were less popular. But what is known to very few people is how the Stelco strike was on the verge of being lost — and how it was a few union people, including a few party people who got together and decided on the bold moves that mobilized thousands of workers — closed the picket line, mobilized more thousands of people, including war veterans to defy the police — and thereby through this mass action, paved the way to winning the strike at Stelco, Firestone and Westinghouse, and the rest of the strikes in Canada at that time, and thus turned back the post-war boss offensive against the unions and gave the unions a great push forward.

As I said, I lived in Toronto and worked in Hamilton, and naturally I tried to get home whenever I could. I don't know if it was ever discussed with the Local comrades that I would be working here. I don't think it was, because it all happened so quickly. In fact, originally I was only supposed to work here for a couple of weeks to look into the UE situation here and give my opinions to CS Jackson, the top officer. You see, I was due to come to Hamilton to get my demobilization from the Army, and that's how it came about.

Whether the comrades resented the fact that they were not consulted, I don't know. Whether they resented that I didn't spend much time in party work, I don't know. In fact, there was some question as to whether I should be in a Hamilton unit or not since, as I said, my home was Toronto. In addition, I was trying to restore myself to civilian life, trying to do the big job to which I was assigned in the Union after being away from such work for years, trying to be a husband to my newly wed wife and a good stepfather to the young boys who orphaned by the death of Dick Steele — and likely I was very uncomfortable about some of the things bothering my mind that had come close to the surface during the war years and which I had hoped there would be some opportunity for discussing with the leading comrades in the party, along with some of the other comrades who were veterans of the war and some of whom also had serious questions. Whatever the reasons, I never felt any warmth from the top comrades here towards me. I felt like an outsider and felt resented, and there were a number of incidents then that helped to make me feel that way. On the other hand the comrades might have felt that I was keeping aloof - since I soon was aware that there were strong resentments between the top comrades here and the top officers of UE - and that I didn't want to associate too closely here. I don't know how much of this was involved. I know that I felt uncomfortable and hoped that things would improve and get ironed out.

During the next year or two after the strike, the work continued hectic. The Gouzenko trials had taken place, Fred Rose was arrested, other comrades had been put on trial as spies, the cold war was getting worse and worse here and in the world, comrades who had been elected to public office were being red-baited and defeated. I was up to my ears, as were other comrades, in fights within the union, trying to beat back the anti-communists forces and to build the union at the same time. The work was hard enough, that between it and my trips home, I was occupied full time. If I had differences, I always felt these could be argued out, and so far as the doubts on the bigger questions was concerned, I was trying to get to go to some Party School where I figured there would be some opportunity.

Well I did get to a Party school about that time. It was the only one I ever got to go to and it lasted for about 6 weeks or so, although I was taken out for a week or two to attend to some union work back here in Hamilton. Towards the end of the school we had interviews with the national leader of the Party, where we were to discuss anything we had in mind.

It was at that time I raised some of the problems that had been bothering me. I told how some of the other war veterans in the party had also had some things on their minds and had hoped for a session together with him where we could let our hair down - just say what was on our minds without worrying about whether this would be considered heresy if said under other circumstances. Such things as why World War II was first a people's just war - and how we could get into that position before the working people of Canada - and about the Soviet German Pact. I don't know how many other questions I raised, but such things as: these bothered me: In the 1920's and 1930's in the Soviet Union, the red army soldiers oath had been "For socialism and brotherhood of all making, I pledge my life even unto death.." But during World War II, and for sometime before this, I don't remember, it was changed to "For my motherland, and so on." And soldiers went into charges shouting for this motherland, for Stalin, and so on. How we had once prided ourselves on our internationalism, but during the War, we had come to condemn Germany and Germans and were impatient with anybody who sought to make any distinctions - and how had this come about. How we had applauded at the Atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - or had simply reported it without criticism.

As I said, I don't know which of these I raised or if there were others too. I do know that I sought to make the point that while these things genuinely disturbed me and I wanted answers, that I believed in the main principles of a scientific marxist revolutionary socialism for Canada.

I think likely Tim said these were big questions and they couldn't all be dealt with at the time, and likely he also dealt with some rights then and there, as well as with some others. However I was startled a short time later when, in the period of criticism and self criticism that occurred at the conclusion of the school, I was severely reprimanded by the top officer of the party at the school, for having sought answers to these questions. Some of these questions, it was said, are still not resolved on the theoretical level by the International Communist movement, and here I was trying to get answers. Furthermore I hadn't accepted Tim's explanations, and this indicated I didn't believe in the top officer of the Parry — maybe even I was calling him a liar, and so on, and so on.

Some of the other criticisms that this opened up, with respect to my tendency to overconfidence, to pride or vanity, were also made and had substance to them. But I was shocked that when finally I had an opportunity to voice some of the problems that had been bothering me under the most difficult conditions of party illegality, imprisonment, and warfare — I now sought answers, and wasn't content to forget them. It was the first time I had ever heard that such things were unresolved in the top circles of the International Communist movement. I hadn't even known they were being discussed.

This criticism of me was so acute and all-embracing that it rendered me quite unprepared and incapable of reacting. I found myself denying that I had disbelieved the top leader of the party, instead of insisting that it was not disloyal to seek answers to problems that had been bothering me.

In fact, after the school I became pretty sick, and had my first serious battle with an ulcerated condition. I think, I also became sort of intimidated and went into some kind of a shell. I guess I thought it better to continue to accept without question as I had in the old days, rather than to ask questions or raise doubts about what some obviously regarded as delicate matters that are not supposed to be spoken of. I remember thinking "Well, if these things are being discussed by the top echelons of communists in the world, then what's wrong with me discussing them too, or asking questions about them." I remember also thinking, that I'd better keep quiet about it, and just go on doing my work. So long as there could be debates on immediate day to day matters, so long as the atmosphere reasonably permitted this, it was good enough.

By the way, years later, sometime after the 20th Congress, the leading comrade who had made that devastating criticisms of me at the school, he visited me at home. He told me he had been wrong in what he did — that he had gone overboard in his characterization of me and that, as I recall, likely he too had been a product of the methods of work in the party that had been typical of the Stalin period which was exposed by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress. The comrade I'm talking about is Stanley Ryerson and I always had a respect for him before that and certainly a greater respect and affection for him since then. Not long after the Party school, since it looked as though my work would continue in Hamilton, and because of my health problem, and perhaps because the Hamilton leading committee wanted this — I don't really recall for sure — it was decided my family ought to move into Hamilton from Toronto. This we did in, I believe it was 1949, when Esther left her job in the National Office of UE, and moved to Hamilton with our two boys where we set up house in the east end of the city.

Now there was one other little incident flowing out of the school that is worth noting. I was given to understand that the characterizations or periods of criticisms were strictly confidential within the school and for the purpose of helping the person to overcome his shortcomings. I was therefore much surprised when in a meeting of the top people of the UE — that is the National Officers of the UE and some of the top staff people, all in the Party, the officers revealed they had been told about the characterization of me. Jackson let me know he agreed with the criticisms of me made at the school.

I think that should lead me into matters regarding the question of relationships within the UE, particularly during the past few years, because while these don't explain what happened that has brought about the present situation, they are part of the important background.

Just going back very briefly: In the internment camp where we had 60 to 70 communists, besides our prison work, we also had our own educationals, sing songs, we wrote and performed plays, some of the more talented people wrote songs, we played games like volleyball and we played cards and we shared food parcels, most of us did, when these were allowed in. All in all, we had good comradeship and conducted ourselves very well. One person with whom I had almost nothing to do was Jackson. He sort of kept to himself more than the others. I had known him a little in the mid 1930's when Dick Steele was in charge of Steel for the party, Jackson in charge of UE, and I was in charge of the rubber industry for the party. However, I hadn't had much to do with him.

I do know that I was only in the UE a very short time, when I knew he was antagonistic to me, or at least didn't like me. It was just small things, but they added up. Most of the time we had very little to do with each other, since my work pretty well kept me in the Westinghouse chain while he was more directly concerned with the GE chain as well as being national president.

We had a leading party group which functioned semi-officially within the union. It was called various names at various times, but it was generally made up of the three national officers, Jackson, Harris and Russell and a few of the key union representatives. It was at these meetings that we would look over the critical situations in the Union from the point of views, mainly

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of where we were being attacked, and we would engage in a certain amount of collective work to plan and meet the offensive. Our work would usually be with respect to the Union, but sometimes it broadened out to include discussions on general campaigns of the party.

Sometimes the fights were very sharp and only the officers would take part and the outside staff men like myself and the others would keep quiet, no matter how much the officers tried to get us involved. Sometimes we would take part, but we would be sharply attacked by the top officer, so we would retreat into our shells again.

As a generalization, I would say, as long as the Union as a whole was under attack, we tended to get together and work together to beat off the attack. But when things were more quiet, things were not harmonious at all.

One thing that used to bother me most of all was that a person who had for some time been regarded as an excellent comrade working full time for the Union, sometimes he was held up as an example to the rest of us, all of a sudden we would be told that he was a no good son-of-a-gun — and I'm now using polite language. That he had always been a petty bourgeois; that he lacked guts; that he was only working for himself or with cliques; and so on and so on. Usually we were told this after the fellow was let off the staff, usually we never saw the fellow again.

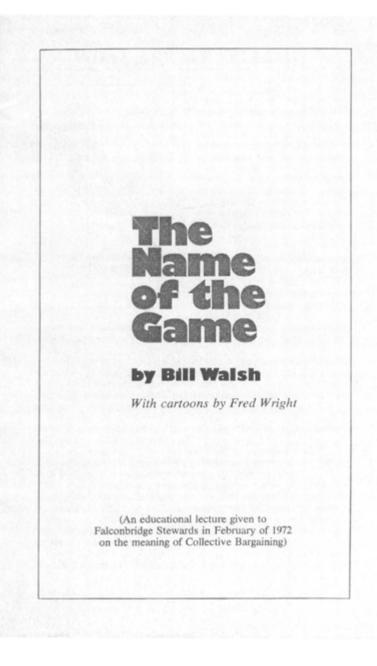
Now a lot of these people had been in the Party before coming on UE staff, but most of them, almost all of them, usually were out of the party about the same time or not long after going off UE staff. (John Wigdor, Len Harris, Jack Kennedy, Jim Napier, Jeff Hurley, Bill Campbell, Jack Taylor, Pete Hunter, Ellis Blair — who is in the Party now. And there were others.) Sometimes we were told the guy had gone off his rocker. Sometimes we were told he was sick. The odd one was severely attacked but later we were told it's OK and he is OK now, and he remained on staff, like Jack Bettes, Bobby Ward, and so on.

It was very unusual for anybody to speak up about these people, to defend them, even though they had previously been regarded as such good people. I personally did speak up a few times, but not too strongly I must admit. We were told by the top officers that the guy was no good for this or that reason — and who were we to question them.

It was like so many of the people in the Soviet union and later in other of the socialist countries who were condemned and often executed, and very few if any people stood up for them, or if they did so, it was not very strongly. Maybe some of these people did turn, maybe some were too sick to continue — but the point is, we didn't know anything except what we were told, as a rule, and all kinds of people formerly considered excellent were now considered no good and let out — on the basis of the say-so of a top officer. 269 Appendix A

I'm going ahead of my story now, but I just want to say that when I left the UE staff a little more than two years ago, whether you say I quit or was fired, Party people didn't question me either. For a long time not a single Party person asked me why I was no longer on staff, or what I intended to do for a living, or could they be of some help. Quite a few progressive people asked me and some offered me suggestions as to work, and some told me they could lend me money if I needed it, which I didn't, a number of other union people approached me the same way to find out what happened, and to ask what I intend to do, or to offer help in some way. All in all, there were about 40 people either phoned, or dropped into my place, or sent me a note. But you know, none of them were Party people. And this bothered me. It made me think that we in the Party are so accustomed to not asking questions when a member is set aside — of just taking some leading persons word for it, that it extends right to the kind of situations I described earlier and it extended to me in the first period after my separation from UE.

Appendix B



WHAT ARE WE SELLING?



For most workers, contract negotiations are something of a mystery. One of my jobs as a union activist, and I hope as a union leader, is to tear away some of that mystery. Leading groups, in particular rank and file leaders, like stewards, have to know the nature of negotiations, to know what they are all about.

If you know you are heading into a fight, it's wise to know the kind of fight you are getting into. Then, you have a damn sight better chance of coming out ahead, than if you go in without knowing the nature of the fight. And negotiations is a fight. And I'm going to advance some views from my experiences, as to what kind of fight it is.

Actually, negotiations are bargaining for the price. You are selling something; somebody else is buying something; you bargain for the price.

I told a little story about this to the Falconbridge negotiating committee in 1969. I think the story originally comes from George Bernard Shaw. I told them about this fellow who was walking down the street one night. He saw a beautiful girl. He approached her and said, "If I give you a million bucks, will you spend the night with me?"

She said, "Oh, a million bucks? Sure!"

So far so good. So he followed it up this way: "If I give you two dollars, will you spend the night with me?"

She was indignant. "Two dollars! What do you think I am?"

He answered, "We have already determined what you are. All we have to do now is bargain for the price for your services."

In a kind of way, that's what negotiations are. When we enter into negotiations with the Company, we have something to sell them. We are selling our ability to work, our muscle and our brain. We make a promise that we are going to come to work on time, according to our schedule and to work five days in every week, and maybe even some overtime on occasion.

Really, what we are selling is our ability to work, our labour power. We sell that to the Company, and to a certain degree, we also sell our commitment — our promise that during the life of the contract, for the price we are to get for our labour, we won't strike. So that's what we sell to the boss when we negotiate.

What is he buying? He's buying exactly *that*: your work, your services, your promise that you will be there every morning — barring sickness, accident, snowstorm, or the like. He's buying your promise that you will not conspire with your fellow workers to stop work (He's got that written into the contract. As a matter of fact, he has also had it written into the law!)

But you are not only bargaining for direct wages. Part of the price of your labour power is paid in the form of vacations, pensions, statutory holidays, premiums for overtime and shift work, and things like that. They are all a part of the price.

It even includes agreeing on matters such as seniority rights: for example, if there is going to be a cut-back, which workers are to be laid off, and in what order they will be called back; what weight will seniority have in promotions, etc... It is all part of the price we get in return for selling our ability to work. It goes into the contract finally reached at the end of the bargaining process.

The purpose of collective bargaining is to sell our ability to work, and the Company buys it. The argument is about the price. And that's what it's all about.

When a contract is reached and signed, the workers acting through their union. agree that they will not strike during the life of the contract. They have sold their ability to work for a given period of time — the life of the contract. Part of the contract provides that negotiations for a new contract will commence usually two or three months before the expiry of the present contract. According to the law you are not allowed to strike during the life of the contract, and even after the expiry date of the contract, except if you have gone through the conciliation procedure. Since you're selling your most vital asset — your ability to do useful work, your means of earning a living — it is a very serious process. The price you're going to get will be critical for you and your family during the two or three years of the contract.

THE NICE GUYS



Some people would have us think collective bargaining is really something like a pleasant debate among friends. That the side that scores the debating points is the winner. That it is anything but harsh. They would have us believe that the workers and management are really partners. You know, after all, the big thing is we are all working together for the same company! We have the same interests! Since we are all in this together — all that is needed

is an exchange of ideas on what's right and what's wrong — a meeting of minds — for the common good of all; owners, management and workers!

When you listen to your own company spokesmen opposite you at the bargaining table, you realize they are very able people. They are gentlemen, speak with courtesy, even considerate and friendly. Dollars aren't the important thing: friendship, partnership, co-operation, those are the most important things to keep us going as a big happy family! Just about every company in many industries I have dealt with as part of a union team representing workers — just about every company sought to create the same illusion. I must confess I was somewhat surprised to find that after so many years of negotiating with Mine Mill, your Company was still talking that way in 1969, in the first set of negotiations in which I was involved with them.

Falconbridge Company and Falconbridge workers, it seems, had a special kind of love relationship, different from other companies. Other companies may be interested in higher profits and lower labour costs. but not this Company! Their interest in producing nickel is not because of profits but because it's a useful product and satisfies the needs of certain people. Their interest in workers is not because they are essential to produce profit for the Company, but because they are essential to produce profit for the Company, but because the workers are people, and they are interested in people! Well, that's hocum! Companies are in business to make profit. They hire people to make profit for them. Everything else is secondary to that. If Falconbridge or Inco weren't making profits out of their business, they would get out of nickel and get into something else where they *would* make a profit.

The owners of General Motors, the owners of Ford, the owners of General Electric, Westinghouse, Firestone Tire—thcy're no different. If General Motors stopped making profits from automobiles, they would stop producing automobiles. If there was more profit in making

shoes, they would make shoes. Then you be able to buy General Motors' shoes, or General Electric shoes!

If Westinghouse stopped making profits as a result of producing electric light bulbs, they would stop producing Westinghouse bulbs. And if they stopped making profits from refrigerators, or electric motors, they would stop making them. The same with General Motors. They are not in the business of manufacturing cars because cars are good for people, or because cars give us pleasure.

Falconbridge is not in the mining business because nickel makes people happy with shining things. They're in business for profits.



IN BUSINESS FOR PROFIT

What are these profits, and where do they come from? Why are the companies so keen on making them? I would like to give an example.

When the Ford Motor Company opened their new plant at Oakville, they shut down a part of their operations at Windsor.

As you know, I live in Hamilton. Often when going between that city and Toronto, I would watch this whole thing being built. A great tract of land was bought at a very high price. Then the engineers and architects got to work. Pretty soon the buildings

were going up. They boasted the plant was the largest of its kind in the Commonwealth — all under one roof. They put up a great eight-story office building, tremendous parking lots, railway tracks and loading platforms.

Then they brought in all the latest machinery, including conveyors, electronic equipment to make sure the thousands of parts would come together at the right time and at the right place.

So they had their giant plant, their big office building, all kinds of raw materials and all kinds of electronic equipment and machinery. And if they stopped there, if that was all they had, they would have been there since that time — in the early 1950's — until today, without making a cent in profit.

Without one additional thing, all that plant and equipment would have gone moldy and rusty. They needed workers! They needed people to put things together. They wouldn't have made one cent of profit out of all their buildings, on all their machinery, on all their equipment, their railway tracks, or their conveyors. They had to have workers who would put things together, to make an automobile that people would buy. Only with the selling of that car, the company would realize a profit.

The point to think about is this: if Ford just had the land, the buildings, the machinery, the parts — it could have stayed there for ten years, and it wouldn't give Ford a cent! Only when the workers come in, start doing useful work, putting things together, only then can Ford start making profits.

Where do the profits come from? Think about it!

All companies are in business for one thing: to make a profit. They'll stay in that business only as long as they make a profit. If they can make more profit over there, they'll move over there.

I used to think that when someone said, "Labatt's", he meant beer. Today, Labatt's is in many things. They control many companies. They will make anything for a profit, not only beer. General Motors is the same. They produce hundreds of different things — for a profit.

Falconbridge is not different from other companies. They are in business to make a profit. That is important. Your manager was very upset when I said it during the bargaining in 1969. He said they are interested in people, interested in giving jobs to people. If Falconbridge wasn't operating, people wouldn't have jobs. If people didn't have jobs, they would not get wages. Without wages, their families would suffer.

He is a nice guy; I believe him. He probably doesn't want to see your family suffer. But, that's not why Falconbridge operates. Falconbridge operates for profits, and not to ensure that your family doesn't suffer.

PROFITS = **UNPAID LABOUR**



At Ford the metal parts, the wire, the batteries, the tires do not increase in value when they are sitting in the plant. In fact, they only rust if they sit too long.

Something adds value to the parts when they are put together to make a car. If they sold the car for what the company paid for the components, they couldn't make a profit!

The metal didn't increase in value. The rubber and upholstery didn't increase in value. So what increased the value? Workers!

They came into the production process. They were paid, say \$4 an hour for what they produced. But the finished product of their labour sold for \$8 an hour. That's where the profit came from — that \$4 an hour he didn't get — unpaid labour. *Profit is that part of a worker's labour that he doesn't get back in wages.*

So a worker at Ford gets say, \$4 an hour for working in the plant at Oakville, but his work is likely worth \$8 an hour. The profit of the Company is that part of the value which he gives to the car and for which the company doesn't pay him, when they sell the car.

That's what profit is, fellows! It's easier to use Ford or GM as an example. But, it's the same with a mining company, such as Falconbridge or Inco. Profit is the amount our guys add to the value of the ores. In the ground the ores aren't worth a hoot in hell. The ores can stay in the ground for thousands of years, but they aren't worth anything until somebody digs them up and smelts them, refines them, and so on.

Until they get the product to the market, it won't be sold at a profit.

It is you men who dig up the muck, who get it to the surface, crush it, smelt it, refine it — make it into something useful that can be sold. If this company pays the men four dollars an hour for the work, their profits come from the fact that the workers, by their labour, have added more than \$4 an hour in value to the product. The company pockets that additional value that you added to the muck by your labour, and for which you were not paid.

That's the only source of profits. The greatest economists have come up with no other explanation that makes sense. Any other explanation for the source of profits is nonsense. The worker at work is the source of profits. Profits come from his unpaid labour. Think about that when you go by some factory. It doesn't matter whether it is a clothing factory, or a shoe factory, an automobile plant, or a mining enterprise — think about where the profits come from! Why do they operate the plant? What makes the Board of Directors decide to invest money in this or that business?

WHAT IT IS ABOUT!



I would like to tell you a story I told the company during negotiations in 1969. I was not interested in educating them, but just trying to get rid of some of the smoke screen about them only being interested in the good of our people, and all that sort of stuff.

I told your negotiating committee and the company a true story of something that had happened to me in another set of negotiations, with another company. Some of you will remember there was a big strike wave across

Canada in 1946. After the war, workers in big steel companies, big electrical manufacturers, auto plants, seamen and lumber workers in Canada were on strike.

As it happened, I was a representative of a large number of workers in one of the largest companies in the electrical manufacturing industry. By that time we had been on strike about three months, but we weren't getting very far trying to negotiate a settlement of the strike — trying to get a contract.

We had no such thing as a strike fund in those days, and our people were having a tough time. But we were determined to keep fighting. We knew the company's profits were cut off so long as they didn't have workers in the plants producing for them.

On the agenda for negotiations that particular day was the subject of paid vacations. Some of you may not remember, but in those days, the sum total of vacations was one week with pay for most workers. I don't recall for certain, but I believe it took about ten years of service to get two weeks paid vacation.

That morning in negotiations, the company had their usual crew of experts there. But sitting behind them was a man I had never seen before. He sat quietly for some time. Then I began talking about wanting three weeks vacations for old time workers. I imagine it went something like this: "You have a man working for you for ten, fifteen. twenty or even thirty or more years — and he can never look forward to three weeks vacation before he dies".

I was making a big pitch about this oldtime worker, his wife and kids, who didn't have the right to a decent vacation during his entire working life. As I said, this new fellow on the company side had been sitting quietly behind the company experts, patiently listening for a couple of hours. Then he moved his chair forward. The other company people made room for him. Then we knew this was the big boy. The guy with authority.

He spoke with an American accent. He said: "Now listen, Mr. Walsh. My name is so-and-so. I was sent up here from the head office of the Company in the U.S.A. We want to get this plant back into operation. We recognize the only way we can do it is to settle the strike and sign a contract..." Those are not his exact words, but they're close enough. "We operate these plants to make a profit, and we can't make a profit if the plants don't operate".

He continued: "I've listened carefully to your remarks and what you've said about old-timers who ought to have three weeks paid vacations with their families. Sounds O.K. But to be honest, I'm not really interested in this old timer and his family. I don't even know him and probably never will. What really interests me is how much it will cost to give the old-time workers three weeks of paid vacation".

The big man from the U.S.A. made himself perfectly clear: "You see, in this electrical industry, we have to buy many commodities. We have to buy copper, rubber. We have to buy steel. We buy mica, enamel, paint, and many other commodities. When we buy these things we pay the lowest price we possibly can."

"We also need to buy your labour. That's what we're here for, to end the strike so your people will start working for us. So let's talk about the price we have to pay for the commodity you're going to sell us — your labour. Let's talk about the price you're asking. To us labour is just like copper, rubber, steel, paint and so on. It's a commodity that we need. And we're going to buy it for the lowest price we can — including the cost of vacations, if that's part of the price".

Of course, I had known for a long time that as working people, we are commodities to the employers. But I have to thank that gentleman from the U.S.A.. for teaching me something. He taught me that at the moment of truth, when the smoke is cleared. when decisions have to be made, employers recognize the facts of life too. Among themselves, I'm sure they make no bones about it. What was so surprising was that he said it to me and to the rest of the workers' committee. That's because he wanted to settle the strike, and was only interested in the cost. By clearing the air, he speeded up the time it took to settle the price of our labour — to settle the strike and sign the contract.

LABOUR IS A COMMODITY!



So in 1969 I told this true story to your company during negotiations. I concluded by saying, "That's what labour is — a commodity. You gentlemen are trying to buy it at the lowest possible price; we are trying to get the highest price we can — because that is all we have to sell".

Your manager got mad. He roared, "I didn't say labour was a commodity! You did! Workers are not horses; they are not animals. You're the guy who's saying that. We think workers are pcople; they are human beings".

To that, I say, "Horse Shit"! Excuse me Mr. Manager, but you are really interested in labour only

from one point-of-view — how to buy it at the lowest possible price. The fact is that if you can save one-cent-an-hour for every man in the work force, it comes to \$80,000 a year. Think of that: one cent a hour extra for every man, costs the company \$80,000 a year!

One cent an hour is a lot of dough. Ten cents an hour is a hell of a lot of dough. So, if the company can save ten cents an hour on their workers, that's getting pretty close to a million dollars a year. So it's all right for Mr. Boss to talk about being interested in your family. I am sure he is! But he's not likely to be handing out extra pennies an hour unless he has to — not at eighty thousand dollars for each cent.

I was at some sort of stag here a few weeks ago. Your union president dragged me out to honour a worker going on pension. This guy was an old-timer at the 'Bridge, and he is mainly known because his son is a prominent professional athlete — a hockey player.

I happened to be here to present one of your grievances in arbitration, but I went down there because your president said this was a big occasion and a lot of your members would be there. There were a lot of the men there, and quite a few bosses too, including your general manager. I noticed he talked to all kinds of men. He seemed to know them all by their first names, and he talked to them like buddies.

I think that was pretty interesting. He probably *is* interested in them. But when the chips are down that "buddy" stuff doesn't mean very much. We found that out in 1969. When the chips were down in 1969 this is how much the buddy stuff meant (Walsh extended his hand, snapping his thumb and finger together). If the company was so interested in your families, how come on the first day of the strike, they cut off our life insurance, cut off our hospital benefits, cut off our drug plan?

That didn't seem to show they were terribly interested in our families. The fact is they're not, excepting to keep up the illusion. So long as it doesn't hurt them; so long as it doesn't cost much, they are willing to be nice guys.

I hope what I am saying will not be taken as terribly unkind. I am not saying there is anything less than human about your managers, or any of the people who bargain for the company. That is not my intention. My intention is to be neither kind nor unkind. However, for men who are members and leaders of a union, it is important to know the facts of life.

If you don't know the facts of life, you can get badly hurt. You can suffer defeats that would have been avoidable. It helps to know the facts of life, even if the facts are not pleasant.

THE SETTLEMENT — A POWER STRUGGLE



We've talked a little bit about negotiations, what they are about. We've discussed where profits come from. Now I want to deal with what is really the most important thing in negotiations.

I'm going to put the same question to you that I asked your Local Union Executive and Negotiating Committee at the leadership school we held a short while back. I asked them to consider this: After about 4¹/₂ years of World War II, a settlement was negotiated. But what kind of negotiations were held between the so-called Western Allies, our side and the other side — the high command of the German general staff?

Hitler was dead. Admiral Doenitz was in charge. Eisenhower and Zhukov and some others represented the Western Allies. After over four years of war with more than 25 million killed, the entire negotiations lasted probably less than an hour. A document was set before the German command and they were told to read it and sign it. They read it and signed it. That was the negotiations!

What about the negotiations that settled the Far Eastern sector of the same World War II? General MacArthur, some representatives of the Soviet Union and other allies met some officers of the Japanese high command on an American battle ship. The Japanese also had a piece of paper put in front of them. They read it and signed it. That ended those negotiations.

On the other hand, if you remember the Korean War you will recall that those negotiations took three years. The two sides sat opposite one another for all that time, before the paper was signed. And when that agreement was signed, the important clause was the boundary line between North and South Korea. The boundary line was set very close to the battle lines, where the fighting had actually stopped. It was adjusted by a hundred yards or so on one end, and a compensating hundred yards on the other end.

A QUESTION OF POWER



All of you know the negotiations in Viet Nam have now been going on for over three years — with no settlement in sight. The first six months of those negotiations were spent in deciding what shape the table should be, what city they should be in, who should be there, and who should sit at what part of the table. Sounds silly, doesn't it? But, there were good reasons for it.

What about the recently concluded war between India and Pakistan? Did you see it on T.V.? The general of the Pakistani army

was sitting there. The general from the Indian army came up and sat beside them. They both signed the document that was put before them.

Then the Pakistani general took off his side-arm and presented it to the Indian general; then he touched the other's forehead, which in that part of the world apparently means, "I surrender".

The whole war was over in a week or ten days. Negotiations lasted a brief enough time so it could be fully presented on T.V. That was it.

Now think about it. The negotiations to settle World War Two and the India-Pakistan war lasted about an hour. But the negotiations to settle the Korean war lasted three years. How come?

In the World War Two negotiations, one side had all the power; the other side had none. In Korea and Viet Nam, the balance of power was pretty nearly equal. Nobody has been able to win. The question was one of power; and what was achieved through power. That's what made the big difference!

In Germany, Japan and Pakistan, one side was crushed by the other. The victor was able to impose his will on the other, because of his power. This was translated into the terms of settlement. The document was a reflection of the realities of power.

All during the negotiations in Korea, the fighting was going on. The same thing is taking place in Viet Nam today. After the three years of negotiations in Korea, both sides settled for pretty close to exactly where the troops were. They agreed the dividing line would be where the fighting was going on. This happened to be close to the old border line, but that was only a coincidence. What did this mean? It meant that the balance of power was such, that when they negotiated, they had to recognize the facts of life.

Let's put it another way. The most brainy man who ever lived was probably Albert Einstein, a brilliant mathematician and outstanding thinker. Let's say that when General MacArthur and the allied high command went on that battle ship in the Pacific Ocean in 1945, they found Albert Einstein as one of the negotiating team of the Japanese Imperial Command.

In other words, let us assume the Japanese had on their side the most brilliant genius who ever lived. How much difference would that have made in the results of those negotiations? Very little. The fact is that the Japanese armies were crushed and destroyed. Einstein might have been able to get a settlement that was a tiny bit less tough, but that is all. Brilliance is important, but it can never make up for power. It can't change the facts of life.

The facts of life are that power is the main determinant in any struggle. Intelligence, knowledge, brilliance are of vast importance, since they are immensely valuable in building up power, knowing how to use it — understanding timing and other factors. And they are important in knowing when not to use power. But these skills can hardly fill in when all power is gone.

That's not much different from the essentials when unions negotiate with big companies. Skill, experience, intelligence, understanding of strategy and tactics, these are important in helping to build up, to recognize power, to know how and when to use power — or to avoid using power. On both sides, those who recognize the facts of life know that it is the balance of power which will decide — the balance of power and the knowledge of how to use it. Like in warfare, these skills have to be used early when power is being built up, when strategy is being planned. They cannot be successfully used as a substitute when all power has been destroyed for all to see. At best these skills can be of some value in perhaps moderating the agony of defeat.

I would like to avoid carrying the comparison with military matters too far, but in many respects, there are essential parallels. And that too is a fact of life.

THE REAL MEANING OF LEADERSHIP



Does that mean there's no value to skill and even brilliance in the negotiating room. That what happens in the room is of no consequence, since it is only power that counts? I think it would be a mistake to come to that conclusion. Wide-awake, skilled and able people are of tremendous help in the negotiating room. It would be quite wrong to say that what happens in the negotiating room and in the private meetings of the committee is not important; that the outcome is decided only by

naked power. What happens (or does not happen) in the negotiating room is important largely because of the way it helps or hinders the building up of power in the struggle as it reaches the critical period.

It is very important to have people in the negotiating room who know how to plan, how to bargain, how to negotiate. But without the leadership that builds up the basic powers of the members outside, the negotiators would be mainly fanning the air.

At \$80,000 a year for each 1c an hour per worker in our unit, what chance is there for us to convince the company by appeals to their sense of justice, to their morals — if we don't have the power to give meaning to the basic justice and morality of our position? Remember Einstein in the example I suggested to you. What chance did an Einstein have without power, to convince the powerful and victorious allies to toss in the towel — to surrender after destroying the power of the enemy?

In negotiations with the employer a union committee is able to extract from the employer only the amounts of benefits equal to their power.

Unfortunately, there are too many leaderships who achieve less in negotiations than the strength of their members would entitle them to achieve. Some of them just don't understand the nature of negotiations. They think only in terms of finding clever things to say, of debating with the other side, of manoeuvering with the Company. They may think of themselves as knights in shining armour, who, with their brilliance alone, or their appeals to justice, will convince the companies to concede big things. They forget the power of the members. They ignore the people down below. It would be wrong to say that what happens in negotiations isn't important; that the outcome is solely decided by naked power on the two sides. What happens in the negotiating room is important, largely because of the way if affects the building up of power in the struggle with the companies.

It is important to have people in the negotiating room who know how to bargain; how to negotiate. But without the power outside supporting them, they are mainly fanning the air.

At \$80,000 for each 1c, what chance is there to convince the company by appeals to logic, morality or brilliance? After his armies were destroyed, how could Einstein convince the victorious MacArthur to surrender?

How could he persude MacArthur to forget the whole deal and start from the beginning? He couldn't! He could not do with brilliance what his side lost in the battle. All he could do was perhaps to moderate the terms a little, modify the harshness.

In negotiations with an employer a union negotiating committee is only able to extract from the employer the amounts of benefits equal to their power. It is true that a lot of union leaderships get less in negotiations than their strength, their power, entitles them to. It's true, many of them do get less.

Some union leaders just don't understand the nature of negotiations. They only think in terms of manoeuvering with the company. They forget all about the power of the people. They think of themselves as some kind of knights. They mistakenly think the people down below have no part to play at all. These are the kind of leaders who come out of bargaining with a proposed settlement that is less than the power of the people entitles them to, less than what the balance of power really reflects.

It takes very able, very experienced, very sensitive negotiating committee to come out of negotiations with just about everything to be had, based on the balance of power between the two sides. It is the most unusual and rare committee that can come out with a little bit more!

A rare committee can do that, and a very rare kind of struggle can do that. I don't want to deal in detail at this session with the function of a negotiating committee, but it should not be downgraded. The committee can do a lot of good, or a lot of harm, depending on how it works. It has to plan. It has to work as a team. It has to be a unified group. It cannot be a committee that merely plans tactics to deal with the company. It has to recognize itself as representing the organization. It has to work so as to make the power of the workers felt in the negotiating room.

That's the challenge: how to build power and make it felt in the negotiating room, at the right time. If your power is built up too soon, long before the critical time, it may be on the skids when it is needed.

That's the test of leadership. That's the test of an understanding of the course of the struggle. It's the test of correct team-work, to be able to come up with the effort and direction needed to get what the workers are entitled to — based on the balance of power you strive and work to achieve.

TO STRIKE — OR NOT TO STRIKE?



The bargaining committee is not neutral as some union leaders seem to think. It cannot stand outside the process of building up the membership's strength. Naturally, a most important group in the building up of this strength in your own union is the steward body. They are that part of the leadership who are in direct contact with the membership.

Quite often during negotiations the top leadership of the Union is physically separated from the remainder of the executive and of course from the membership. The

negotiating committee is sometimes compelled to spend days on end locked up in the bargaining room or close to it. I think they should find ways of getting back to people without staying away for critical periods. But they may still be away from the stewards body, which has the main responsibility for building the strength of the membership. When that happens the power of the members can suffer. Things are required to be done to develop the power of the membership, so as to peak that power at the most decisive time. At such times, particularly, a great added responsibility rests on the stewards. Your function as part of the over-all leadership of the Union becomes tremendously critical at such times.

You may possibly conclude from all I am saying that all I can see ahead in the next set of negotiations is a strike. I'm not saying there's going to be a strike in the up-coming negotiations or in any set of negotiations. I'm in no position to know it at this time, and neither is anybody else. Anyway, before there would be a strike, the issues would be debated and the members would decide.

What's important is to bear in mind that the employer wants to buy our ability to work, and to have us continue to work. Generally speaking, the thing he wants most is the assurance there will not be an interruption of work, that there will not be a strike. He bargains for the price he has to pay to get our work and to assure himself that we will continue to work — that we won't go on strike. But if he concludes there's no possibility that we will strike, or that we can't strike — then he knows he does not have to pay as much for our labour power. If you think about it, when an employer understands that the workers can and will strike if necessary, this will often make it possible to extract a higher price for our labour without the necessity of actually going on strike. If you know the other guy can knock your block off, it's unlikely you'll test him to see if he can. You know he can! Why risk your block by asking him to prove it?

Therefore, the job in building up power is not for the purpose of going on strike — although we may have to — but to build up power so that we don't need to go on strike. So long as the other side knows that we can and, if necessary, we will — that often will be enough. Sometimes there are mistakes, and miscalculations — but generally speaking, that's the key.

It's important to bear in mind: The *threat* to withdraw our labour and the power to back it up — that's what brings real pressure on the boss during negotiations.

I thought I should mention this so you wouldn't conclude we are already getting the picket signs ready. As I said, the union stewards have the main job of building up strength. They have to keep up the fighting spirit and maintain the morale and discipline of our members. They have to squelch rumours, because all kinds of rumours circulate during negotiations. The stewards have to keep their ears open, because there are some people who spread stories and try to create divisions.

You know the kind who make out that they know all the answers, but they really don't. They spread gossip and stories. They are really playing the company's game, these people. They are doing the very thing the company wants, the company needs. We had a few of those around in the 1969 strike. The one thing the company doesn't want is a strong and united body of workers facing them in bargaining.

Excepting for your ability to unite and stop production from going on, what the hell else has the company to fear? Those who create division are doing the company's work. If they are not being paid to do it, they should be. If they are not on the company's payroll, they're being cheated. They are doing a hell of a lot more for the company than the company can do for themselves. When the Company tells the workers a story, the workers say, "That's more of Mather's propaganda. That's Tricky Dick!" But when the story comes from one of our own guys — well — this is the guy who may have the inside dope. He heard it from somebody, who heard it from somebody else, who really heard it! Stewards have to know how to deal sharply with such people.

I don't know of any substitute for the stewards' body, to be on their toes, to make sure there is a steady building up of our strength for the test of power. I don't know anybody else but the steward who is going to maintain discipline and morale, who is going to put down people who create division and gossip.

THE POWER OF THE OWNER



We should understand that it isn't only a question of *our* power. It's the *balance* of power. It is not only a matter of how much power we have, but also how much power the other guy has. The other guy is the company. Let's not underestimate his strength, because he has plenty of strength.

First of all, he owns the bloody place. It's his. If he wants to, he can shut it down. Lots of companies have done just that during the past year-and-a-half. He can keep it running; he can lay us off; keep us out; call us back. He has a tremendous amount of power in connection with that.

I have in my hand the last three financial statements for Inco. Every six months Inco seems to issue a financial statement to the shareholders. I have the last three. The first one is for the period ending September 1970: the next for March 1971, and the most recent one for September 1971.

They are not talking to you in these financial statements. They are not talking to the men in their mines and smelters. They are talking to the shareholders.

On September 30th, 1970 — a year and a half ago — Mr. Wingate, Chairman of the Inco Board said the sales and earnings for the first nine months of 1970 were the highest in the company's history ("Earnings" are really profits, but somehow they prefer to use the word — earnings! As though *they've* earned it!) Earnings for the first nine months in 1970 were \$160 million. This compared with earnings in the same period of 1969 of \$97 million, and in 1968 with \$104 million.

In the three months from July to September in 1970, Inco made a profit of $58^{1/2}$ million. During the same period in 1969, profits were only \$16 million. What happened? Wingate tells us the workers were on strike.

So what? The nickel was still there. The copper was still there. The platinum was still there. They still had the mines. Everything was still there, but the profits went down. In fact, the reason they made any profits at all was because they still had products to sell from a stockpile. Otherwise, they wouldn't have made a cent during the strike period.

So in 1970 they had the highest profits in their history. You might have thought they'd say something like this: "Now we can share the wealth a little bit by cutting the price of nickel. Maybe we could give the workers a few more bucks". Is that what they did? Let's look at it. A couple of weeks after the report the company announced an increase in the price of nickel by five cents a pound! That's really funny. They just made the highest profits in history, and two weeks later they announced an increase in the price of nickel.

You may think that all they wanted was to make even more profits because they're greedy. No sir, it's for the good of the country! And Mr. Wingate explains the patriotic reasons behind the increase in the price of nickel. He said the price increase will partially compensate for the reduction in Canadian currency and will help in the "realization of externally generated funds".

That's pretty tough language to understand. But listen to this: The price action is also expected "to have a constructive effect on the world nickel market". It would head off interest customers around the world now have in nickel in anticipation of an early price rise.

The price increase is therefore expected to hasten the time when nickel supply and demand will be in balance. Now who understands that? What he is saying is that those who are buying nickel now, are doing so because they are expecting a price increase later. So they're buying it fast now. "We don't want that! We think they should buy it later. So we've increased the price of nickel to discourage them from buying it now".

What the hell! They are selling lots of it, so they jack up the price a nickel a pound. But he uses all this fancy language. They just want to level out the peaks and valleys! Who is he kidding? The shareholders know what it's all about: We have the highest profits in our history. We want more.

Six months later, Mr. Wingate is talking to the shareholders again, this time, March 31st, 1971. His message is very short. He said that things ain't quite what they expected. In the previous report they were trying to stop the nickel consumers from buying too much. He seemed to be saying, "Hold it fellows, just hold it". Now he complains that there is a "softness in demand". Softness means that they are not buying so much.

The softness in demand is a reflection of the lower levels of business activity throughout the world. It seems customers have adopted a policy of reducing their inventories. This is because they recognize their orders for nickel can be met promptly.

But, says Mr. Wingate, the economic experts tell us the demand for primary nickel and rolling mill products is expected to rise in the near future, as the general level of business resumes normal patterns.

So in 1970, Inco had the highest profits in history. The demand was tremendous. They increased the price of nickel. But by March 31st, 1971, they say business isn't so good in the U.S.A. There is a softness in demand. By November of 1971, while noting business is bad, they expected to see an early improvement in the nickel market.

But hold on! You will remember Mr. Wingate said there was a softness in demand since the spring of 1971. But production wasn't cut. Inco's board chairman explains it this way: "The Company has been producing nickel substantially in excess of sales since the spring of this year in order to build inventories to meet a possible surge in demand and to be in a position to satisfy customers' needs should there be a loss of production connected with next year's labour negotiations in Ontario".

THE NAME OF THE GAME IS POWER



What does all this mean? First they increase the price of nickel. That has nothing to do with the good of the people, or anything else. They get a buck where they can get it. They knew a few months ago that sales were dropping, but did they lay guys off at that time? The hell they did! They took on more men. They continued building up their inventories in case production was cut off as a result of negotiations with the union.

Do they recognize that the name of the game is "power"? You bet they do. Our manage-

ment people at Falconbridge and Inco can claim they are victims of the economy. These guys help to *make* the economy! They decide whether you are going to produce more or produce less. We have it right from the chairman of Inco reporting to his shareholders. He says they are building stockpiles of nickel in case there is a strike.

He's worried like hell about his customers? Or is he worried that he would have stuff to sell in order to make profits?

What about Falconbridge? They are no different. I suspect Inco and Falconbridge are closer than a man and his mistress. They are just that tight together. I am sure Falconbridge is the junior partner. We have to recognize that is the name of the game, the same as companies do. The fact is they are all the same. There is no difference. It is just that some have learned to cover up a bit better than others.

So companies have power. It is important to remember that, because the result of the contract negotiations struggle is to a large extent, dependent on the *balance* of power — the relative power at the time.

How much do we have compared to them — in terms of power? How much harm can we do them, compared to how much hurt they can inflict on us? Who can suffer more; who can take more? What determines the outcome of the struggle, is who is strong enough and can hold out longer.

That doesn't mean we want to hold out. It doesn't mean we want to suffer. But we have to show we can, if necessary. We have to show that if necessary to do battle with them, we have the determination, the unity, the strength and the confidence — to win!

THEY, TOO, HAVE ALLIES



But the company isn't alone. They have allies. When they are in a fight they can count on the big insurance companies to cooperate with them. In '69 we had a hell of a time with the insurance companies. We had to keep our members covered with life insurance. We had to keep up their hospital coverage. In fact, the union had to go all over the place to borrow money. The insurance companies said, "If you don't pay, you'll be cut off". So to keep up these benefits for our people, we had to cough up the dough.

The companies have other allies. For example, most mortgage companies are willing to wait a month or two for their dough, but after that they start putting the squeeze on. The mortgage companies aren't really worried the buildings are going to fall apart. If they are demanding their dough, it may be because their social friends and allies are telling them to put on the squeeze.

Sometimes they will tell you in confidence they want to be neutral, but they are friends of Mr. So-and-So. They don't want to do anything to hurt his feelings! Usually, they say they are in business and have to do this. The fact is they are big creditors — natural class allies of the company.

In addition, the law is on the company's side. When you are on strike you are obviously unemployed. But you don't get unemployment insurance. That's the law. As a matter of fact, if the company locks you out, you still don't get unemployment insurance.

The law is on the company's side when it comes to picketing. Lots of workers have problems with their picket lines in a strike, as we did in 1969. Court injunctions are part of the law that is sometimes used against workers on strike.

And who enforces these laws? The police and the courts. They are allies of the company, too, willing or unwilling.

BIG BROTHER



And of course, the biggest allies of any company are other companies. The biggest ally of Falconbridge is likely Inco. Big Brother — the muscle-man who is expected to give real support in time of need.

Let's look at this Falconbridge-Inco situation for a moment. Both companies produce the same metals. They are rivals on the world market. In hockey, you could almost compare them with sharp competitors as the Canadiens and the Maple Leafs. They are both in the same league. They're rivals too. When you see those opposing teams on a

Saturday night, you sometimes think they are going to kill each other. The opposing players are really serious. They want to win so badly they don't stop short of drawing blood.

But the owners especially are out to win. A winning team gets bigger gates. People are more willing to pay five or ten dollars for a seat in the arena. In short, there is a lot of dough involved in professional sports for the owners, and some of the players.

The owners of the Canadiens and the Maple Leafs will battle one another for first place. They are the bitterest of enemies.

But there is one time they will get together. That's when there is a threat to both of them. If the players get together and organize a union to get better salaries and pensions, it is wonderful how the team owners get together and become buddy-buddy. They really do. Whereas in most cases, they are bitter enemies, they become allies when it comes to facing a common enemy.

It's the same with the companies. They have a certain rivalry which they call competition. Sometimes it does not seem to be very tough competition. One company seems to have its main markets in one part of the world, and the other company in other parts. In some arcas, or with some of their products there may be a degree of rivalry for markets, but I get the impression they avoid getting in each others way by playing in different leagues. But competition or not, when it comes to advancing their profits, they think alike.

Who is their main problem with regards to profits. It is you guys. The more you get out of them in wages, the less return they get for their

product. Then, the only way they can increase profits is by boosting prices. They don't mind doing that, as you noticed. But it may be an additional problem for them.

Make no mistake: when it comes to the question of dealing with labour, these two guys are alike. They are no longer rivals. The fact that they are both in Sudbury makes it easier for them, although we mustn't believe all the plans and discussions are held in the Nickel Belt. Some discussions are held in New York, Washington, Chicago, maybe Toronto, or even in Bermuda on somebody's yacht.

Of course these two seem to agree to pay the same basic wage. Maybe they agree that if one of them gets into trouble and has a strike and has a pressing problem supplying customers, the other will fill in for him and won't raid those customers.

They also seem to have another deal: to have the same general labour cost, the same fringe benefits, by and large.

We have no proof of that; sure as hell they don't write it on a piece of paper for us to see. They're supposed to compete. But hell, I'm told you've had twenty-eight or more years experience seeing this happen, year after year!

If you saw a young guy walking into a hotel with a girl at midnight, then coming out at two o'clock in the morning brushing his clothes, and paying her some money, you would begin to wonder. But if we saw him do it the next night, and the night after that, you would begin to suspect that he wasn't just going in for a glass of beer. When there is a certain pattern of behaviour it leads us to certain conclusions.

If year after year, after year, we find that on basic questions such as wages and fringes they amount to about the same thing throughout the industry, it is not likely to be an accident!

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Does that mean the situation is hopeless? Does it mean there is nothing we can do to change the situation, particularly when we bear in mind that the company we work for is the junior in the deal? You could come to that conclusion. But in my opinion, that would be wrong thinking.

Let's look at what happened in 1969. The Inco guys were on strike. Falconbridge said to us, openly, "Don't you go on strike; work! Why should you guys go on strike? When they settle at Inco, whatever they get, we'll give you.

Just to show you our good faith and that we are nice guys, we'll give you some of it right now, even before the contract expires''.

The company offered us a down-payment of twenty-five cents an hour in wages. In some ways, it was tempting. The company said, "What the hell, it has always been that way before, why should it be any different now?"

We discussed their offer and then we went before the workers. We said "Tell them to shove it". That's what we said. That's what the workers voted on. 92 percent voted *not* to accept the Falconbridge offer; they voted, instead, to go on strike.

It wasn't a question of us getting more than the Inco workers. It was a question of them being on strike, and with our going on strike, we strengthened the whole camp of nickel workers. We presented a solid front to the nickel bosses, so that both Inco and Falconbridge workers would get more.

And brothers, we will never know what would have happened if we hadn't gone out. There is no way you can turn back history and start over again. But everything indicates that is exactly what happened — we both got more. Both Inco and Falconbridge workers gained the highest basic industry settlements in Canada that year.

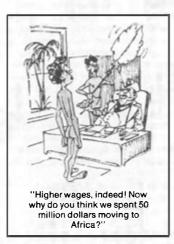
It is true in Mine Mill we got more than they did at Inco — some six or seven cents an hour more. Some gains we made in the first year of the contract, they had to wait until the third year. Inco workers also had to repay the company money the company had paid out for hospital and medical insurance during the strike. We managed to negotiate ourselves out of most of that, in the last week of our strike, after they had gone back to work.

In addition, we got other things they didn't get, some of which cannot easily be counted in cents per hour. As one example, we didn't concede that the strike period would be deducted from our seniority, or vacation credits, or pensions, etc. That is valuable to Mine Mill people. The Inco-Steel Agreement does include such an unfortunate provision. And there appears to be other non-monetary improvements we accomplished that they did not. I know the big majority of our members were very pleased with those results. I don't blame you. But that is not the main point I'm making. In my view, even if you hadn't achieved better than they, both groups — you in Mine Mill at Falconbridge and they in Steel at Inco — both groups got a lot more than they would have, if you had not gone out on strike when they were out in 1969. Your action added to the total power of the workers in that fight in this Sudbury Basin — and put both groups in a stronger position in dealing with the companies.

Nevertheless, we have to recognize that to break through the solid front of the employers in this district on such highly critical issues as, for example, the minimum basic rate, even by one cent, is very difficult. I'm not saying it's impossible. But on easily recognizable critical items like the rate of Job Class #1, it will be tough to break through to different rates. In our 1969 struggle, we recognized that fact of life. We decided that since the Inco workers were on strike and were determined, our responsibility in those circumstances, was to strengthen the whole strike front, not only for their sakes, but also for our own sakes. We recognized that it would be good for our Inco brothers and good for us. It would also be a big assist in beginning to heal some of the very deep wounds of all the raiding years of agony, division and bitterness.

In summary, therefore, of this part of our remarks, I merely want to emphasize how in your future rounds of negotiations, we must always keep in mind that what counts is power — the relative power of the two sides. We must examine and understand how best to unite our ranks so as to bring the maximum of power to bear in our struggle, and to keep in mind that this should peak at the most important time. Able leadership, strong participation by all parts of the leadership, including especially stewards, building the strength of the members from the time when demands are first formulated, all the way through the struggle. This should also include building the support of the families of our members and of course, creating the best possible co-operation with our main allies, the other unions in this area, and particularly the Inco workers.

OBJECTIVE FACTORS



All of the things I have said up to now regarding building power by strenthening our own ranks can be referred to as the subjective forces. That is, mainly the people in our own leadership and the members. Without their understanding, their strength, we have very little indeed in any serious struggle. These are ourselves and the people to whom we are supposed to give leadership. It follows that if we work properly, honestly, wisely, in a planned way, and courageously. we can do a tremendous amount to give us the maximum possible power.

Nevertheless, 1 must draw to your attention another set of fac-

tors that are very important when you try to estimate the balance of power. In sharing my thinking with you up to now, I have no doubt indicated something of this already. For example, when I referred to the power of the company.

Our power in relation to that of the other side comes not only from what I referred to as the subjective forces, the members and leaders of the union.

It also comes from what can be called the objective factors. For example, the state of the economy generally. Is it on the upgrade or the downgrade? The industry — does it look like more nickel (and your other products) will be required, or less? The stockpile of the company — is it built up high enough to withstand a long stoppage, or not? The labour situation — are there lots of people unemployed and anxious to get work in our industry, or is there a shortage of workers in our kind of industry. What are the trends in the labour movement generally, and particularly with regard to struggles and settlements?, etc., etc.

This is the other big aspect of the question of power which every leadership worth its salt must do its best to know and keep tabs on. Most of these things develop outside of ourselves. With some exceptions (for example, the matter of stockpiles) there is not too much we can do about *objective conditions*. But it is of tremendous importance for leaders to study these things, to know them, to keep tabs on them. If they don't, they're not worthy of their positions of leadership.

In this talk to this group of stewards, I'm not developing this question

of the objective factors, since I regard the main problem now as having to do with the subjective factors, as we move closer to the time of preparation for the next negotiations. But I feel compelled to make some scant reference to this whole bundle of questions having to do with objective factors. Hopefully, it can be developed more fully at some future time.

THE OTHER GUY — AND UNITY



I want to deal a bit more with the question of you and the Inco workers. I know this is a sensitive question and a touchy question, but I'm going to tell you the way I see it.

Let's put it this way: A certain guy is living next door to you. It's not fully known what you are fighting about, but you don't get along. You could be fighting about real things. He may have moved his fence over to your side two feet, or he may be using your driveway. His land may be six inches higher than your land so that when it rains the water runs off his land on to yours. And his dog

bites your kids, or craps on your lawn.

You don't want to have anything to do with the guy. You may think he is the worst son-of-a-bitch in the world — and you may be right. And if his house catches fire, you may think, "I hope he burns".

You may think that, but I doubt it. You'd probably want to help him. But even if you didn't give a damn about him and secretly hoped he would burn, you are still going to help him put out the fire. because if you don't, your own house is in danger.

It's as simple as that. If we had let those Inco guys down in 1969, we ourselves would have been in serious danger. Don't forget the company said, "We'll give you the same as the Inco men get". If they lived up to their word, that's what we might have got.

That's all the company promised. We'd get the same as them. If they had the you-know-what beaten out of them, that's what we would likely have had. Anyways, that's what your company would have tried to do to you. So if the guy next door is burning, even if you don't care about him one bit, even if you are operating just to save your own hides, you are going to help. You have no alternative. You are part of the same situation.

Those are the facts of life, brothers. It doesn't mean we have to become buddy-buddy, but we do have to realize we are natural allies when it comes to facing the common enemy. It doesn't mean we have to join his union, or his club, or that he has to join our union, or our club. What it does mean is that you have a common enemy, even though you have differences of opinion. We have to work together as best we can, and argue out our differences some other time.

Men who won't face that are not thinking, or for some reason, they would rather have workers split and fighting one another. Just think for a moment: Who *else* wants workers split and fighting one another?

Who would have gained in 1969 if the workers of Sudbury had been split and fighting one another? Both companies would have gained.

We must never forget the only power we have comes from our ability to unite and work together. What else have we got? You may be a good-looking guy, but you can't rely on your looks to make a living.

All we have is our ability to get together, work together and, confront and fight the employer together. If we haven't got that, we have nothing. The lessons of labour history, will tell the same story. It doesn't matter whether they came from Europe, Cape Breton, the West or Northern Ontario, those who have lived through it or studied it, all understand this question of unity. Workers move towards unity the way a flower moves to the sun.

It's a perfectly natural thing for workers to understand this question of unity. Actually, people who want to keep us separated are trying to do something that is unnatural and harmful to us. They are trying to blot out the sun. For our own reasons, as workers, we have to move in the direction of co-operation. We have to do what is necessary.

The important thing to remember when you are entering a fight is that you need allies. Allies increase your power. And where power decides the issue, only a damn fool will make an enemy where he could make a friend.

It takes good, able leaders to make friends and allies in a common fight. I hope we are capable people. I hope we are the kind who don't work to make needless enemies. We have a big enough enemy in the company. Working together with natural allies may not decide everything, but it does go a long way towards that end.

LEADERSHIP AND THE DEMANDS



Right now we haven't got unlimited time. We have to get on with the job and get into the first stages of preparing our contract demands. In connection with this, the leadership of the union has the responsibility of drawing up a proposed programme of demands. They are in the best position to know what the situation really is. They then ought to come before the members and say, "This is what we think the union should demand".

The union membership has the right to discuss and change it. But the leadership has the responsibility to draw it up and bring it before the members. I don't think the

leadership should try, or be allowed, to pass that responsibility to . anyone else. It is their responsibility to sit down and draw things together. Then, let the members kick the programme around, discuss it, and change it where necessary.

It is quite wrong to say, "Everybody will draw up the demands". Then you will have a real hodge-podge. You will have no sense of direction. Many will tend to put forward their own pet beefs or projects. That is an abdication of leadership. If leadership is not to lead, then what is it for?

Now I should wind things up. I have tried to share my thoughts with you as to the main elements in the fight; to advance some of my views as to what negotiations are about. You can answer the questions of where profit comes from. You know what the decisive things are — of linking up discussions, working out of tactics, of building power among our membership. Of the need to look at objective factors, too. You know some of the answers to the problems of the special role of stewards in the fight to build that power, so that we have the morale, the discipline, the unity, the sense of common direction.

You know the importance of seeking allies, and the importance of leadership. So let us get on with it. Let's see if we can't make the upcoming set of contract negotiations the best ever.

And let's keep track of what happens this time too. We never know it all. None of us. We must keep right on learning. Each struggle we are in

can teach us something. And as we learn we can be better equipped for the next struggle of the workers for improvements. Under the present system we can never get a full return for all we produce. Our job is to give leadership to the workers in their efforts to get the maximum obtainable now and in the future. Thank You.

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A Very Red Life

Montreal-born Moishe Wolofsky was a nineteen year-old unemployed university drop-out in 1930 when he and his friend Dick Steele took a job aboard an ocean vessel, beginning a journey that would change his life forever. Out of money, they stumbled into Russia and took jobs

in a tractor factory. There, they became dedicated communists. Dragged back to Canada by his father, the well-known Jewish publisher, Herschel Wolofsky, he soon began a career as an organizer for the Communist Party of Canada. By then Moishe Wolofsky had become Bill Walsh. Still a very young man, he led the drive to organize the rubber workers in Kitchener and subsequently the auto workers in Windsor. Jailed and interned along with several hundred other Communists, upon his release Walsh fought overseas in Holland and Belgium. After the war he took a



staff position with the United Electrical Workers in Hamilton, a job he retained for over two decades. After years of conflict with UE President C.S. Jackson, Walsh was forced to quit his job and subsequently the Communist Party. In the late 60s, he began a new career in labour arbitration.

This is the story of how a young idealist became a Red and helped build industrial unionism in Canada. But it is also a story of romance and adventure. Walsh actively participated in many of the 20th century's historic events. Everything he did was touched with an intensity. He was a brilliant strategist and an extraordinary teacher. Because he never held high office either in politics, in uniform, or in any of the unions he was associated with, his contributions have gone unheralded. This book provides an inside, bottom-up look at some of the most important episodes in our trade union history as well as an insight into the functioning of a venerable communist-led union.

Author:

Cy Gonick is the founder of Canadian Dimension magazine and acts as its editorial coordinator. Until 2001 he was professor of economics and labour studies at the University of Manitoba.