

## "When our membership awakens": Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965

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Volume 40, 1997

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt40art04>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Tillotson, S. (1997). "When our membership awakens": Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 40, 137-170.

Résumé de l'article

Plutôt que d'analyser l'anti-communisme des dirigeants syndicaux de l'après-guerre comme une opposition à l'activité politique de leurs membres et comme une pratique de droite, il convient de saisir plus précisément l'attitude de ces dirigeants comme l'expression d'une idéologie de la diversion, adaptée aux conditions de la nouvelle légitimité industrielle issue de la période de la guerre froide. Pressés par le nouveau régime de relations industrielles, ces bureaucrates syndicaux ont été obligés de réévaluer leurs pratiques et d'amorcer la démocratisation des anciennes structures syndicales, fondement de leur pouvoir. Cette thèse est illustrée par le biais d'une étude du travail d'assistance sociale, et de ses promoteurs. L'argumentation est fondée en outre sur une analyse des interprétations idéologiques concernant le travail d'assistance sociale des syndicats, et de l'usage politique auquel ce travail était destiné.

# “When our membership awakens”: Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965

Shirley Tillotson

People sometimes can't understand why the wrong element gets control of an organization. Well, the answer is simple. If anyone had wanted to get control of the Calgary [Labour] Council for 1949 they sure could have succeeded last Friday night.<sup>1</sup>

PLAYING ON COLD WAR paranoia about communist infiltration of labour organizations, Gordon Cushing (paid organizer for the Calgary Labour Council) hoped to *ginger up the troops*. The men and women of the Council were some of Calgary's most active craft unionists, delegated by their locals to serve in the city's parliament of labour. Their numbers had grown substantially in recent years, thanks in part to the boost given the union movement by wartime industrial relations law reform.<sup>2</sup> But in spite of expansion, the organizer complained, there were not sufficient delegates willing to stand for election to the Council's committees.

This failure to fill necessary committees, suggested Cushing, was symptomatic of larger failures, both on the part of new unionists and of their union officers. Too many of the new members had joined without informing themselves about unionism. Consequently, they lacked “union consciousness”; that is, they did not understand that the labour movement was a “co-operative enterprise,” a “democratic body of workers” whose effectiveness depended on shared responsibility, inspired by an understanding of unionism's larger meanings, such as its commitment to social justice. Lacking such consciousness, the membership tended to play the union “like a slot machine” — dues in, higher wages out (maybe). In the view

<sup>1</sup>“The Secretary Reports,” *The Call*, 5, 2 (1949), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Between 1941 and 1949, the number of unionists represented on the Council had grown from 1270 to 4551, and the number of locals involved was 67 per cent greater.

Shirley Tillotson, “‘When our membership awakens’: Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 40 (Fall 1997), 137-69.

of the Council's paid and volunteer leaders, the membership's failings were matched by their own: they had not done a good enough job of union education.<sup>3</sup>

The Calgary Labour Council was not alone in its problem. Other labour movement bodies had also enjoyed significant growth as a result of wartime movement militancy, the 1946 strike wave, and a short-lived period of public support. Between 1941 and 1961, union membership as a percentage of non-agricultural paid workers almost doubled — from 18 per cent to 31.6 per cent. But this bigger labour movement was not necessarily a more activist one. This was so, in part, because the post-war phase of growth, in particular, was fostered by a framework of industrial legality which changed what unions could do. Gone was the union recognition strike, replaced by administrative procedures; gone was the sympathy strike, virtually precluded by regulation of the timing of strikes. Not quite gone, but apparently diminished in importance, was the union leader whose authority depended mainly on the ability to foster a fighting spirit in the rank and file.

Historians have focused particularly on this change in leadership style. They depict the Canadian labour leadership of the post-war years as a bureaucracy, more oriented to constraining membership energies than to mobilizing them.<sup>4</sup> Often given as evidence of the post-war leadership's bureaucratic tendency is the fact that, between 1945 and 1955, some of the labour movement's most spirited activists, communists who had been key organizers for the new unionism, were expelled from the country's two largest labour centres, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL).<sup>5</sup> Based on largely unsupported allegations and therefore deplorable in their violation of liberal democratic values, these expulsions may have helped reduce the vitality of debate at the labour centres' annual conventions. A kind of ideological chill descended on the parliaments of labour when ill-defined "communist sympathies" became grounds for expulsion. The limits on direct-action tactics imposed by industrial

<sup>3</sup>Gordon Cushing, "The Secretary Reports," *The Call*, 5, 1 (1 January 1949), 2; "Organized Labor Fights for Better Living Conditions," *The Call*, 1, 9 (1 July 1945), 7; "Do You Play Your Union Like a Slot Machine?" *The Call*, 1, 7, (1945), 2; "Support Your Union [editorial]," *The Call*, 2, 2 (15 January 1946), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Craig Heron, "Male Wage-Earners and the State in Canada," in Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton 1989), 252-3; Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto 1992), 284. Elsewhere, Heron moderates the depiction of alienated labour bureaucrats by acknowledging the element of responsiveness to the membership sustained by labour leaders' being seekers of elected office in their unions. See *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* (Toronto 1989), 98-9.

<sup>5</sup>Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto 1994), chapter 15 and Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956* (Toronto 1973).

legality were thus complemented and compounded by limits on unionists' ideological freedom. The labour movement seemed to be caught in something like the paradox of social democracy: the popular forces that had won power for their institutions were apparently being dismantled by the thing they had made.<sup>6</sup> Labour leaders — the "labour bureaucrats" — were suppressing activism among the membership — "rank and file."<sup>7</sup>

One response to this bureaucratization thesis is Mark Leier's argument that bureaucracy was a longstanding tradition of most North American unionisms, and its roots therefore must lie elsewhere than in new labour law or anti-communism. Another is to point out that, if bureaucratization was the general trend after 1945, there were nevertheless important exceptions. In this vein, Charlotte Yates has argued that the Canadian arm of the United Auto Workers "continued to pursue militant, mobilization-based forms of political action until the early 1960s."<sup>8</sup> Yates's approach was to study closely the political processes by which this particular union's internal diversity and conflict were accommodated in a collective identity. Such studies help to suggest on what factors the notable bureaucratization of the 1950s was contingent. But to complement studies of precursors and exceptions, I want to offer here an alternative perspective on the general trend. Rather than seeing the mainstream, anti-communist labour leadership as opponents of membership activism<sup>9</sup> and as politically right wing,<sup>10</sup> we might more accurately see them as architects of an activism designed to suit the institutional conditions of the new industrial legality in the Cold War era. Labour bureaucrats they indisputably were, but the new regime of industrial relations prompted them, not simply to suppress activism, but to re-examine and to attempt to democratize the basis of their institutional power. This democratization project, admittedly, was

<sup>6</sup>Robert Brenner, "The Paradox of Social Democracy: the American Case," in Mike Davis, Fred Pfeil, and Michael Sprinker, eds., *The Year Left, 1985* (London 1985).

<sup>7</sup>Although I use term "rank and file" when summarizing the views of others, I typically avoid it, because I see the labour movement in the 1950s as a civil association rather than a quasi-military organization. The routine use of a term derived from military language seems to me to participate in the discursive construction of precisely the kind of institutional relationships a democratic unionism, even one geared to do battle, should forswear.

<sup>8</sup>"From Plant to Politics: the Canadian UAW, 1936-1984," PhD (Political Science), Carleton, 1988, iii.

<sup>9</sup>Heron, *Canadian Labour Movement*, 99.

<sup>10</sup>Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 293. Although New Left labour historians sometimes, as 1950s communists did, refer to social democrats as "right wing," this term seems inappropriate when applied to social democrats of the 1950s. By using this term in quotation marks, Palmer distances himself from it, perhaps in recognition that the "trimming [of] ... radical sails" he notes (301) was not the same as relocation to the right wing of politics in the 1950s. In the 1950s, as in the 1920s and 1980s, social democratic unionists occupied an embattled place on the left of political opinion in the community at large. The label "right wing" was one based in a truncated and tendentious definition of the political spectrum.

limited by its intolerance of the communist political minority. But activism could be and was promoted in ways that accommodated the large range of political opinion on the socialist left and liberal centre of Canadian life in the 1950s.

The argument for this perspective must do two things. One is to enlarge the depiction of labour activism in the 1950s to include not only the shop floor, but also the community. To do so is to extend into the 1950s, as Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has done for the US, the kind of research that others have conducted on, for example, unions of the 1880s, 1910s, or the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> By examining the community side of union activism, we avoid assessing on incomplete data the amount of union activism or its political meanings. The other is to sever the theoretical connection between bureaucracy and conservative labour politics, derived from early 20th-century debates within socialism. Since Michels and Lenin, there have been not only right-wing but also left-wing labour bureaucrats; as Mark Leier points out, what defined all varieties of labour bureaucrats was not, for example, their specific views on the nature of class or their theory of history, but rather their power over the members of the unions they led. We need not endorse Leier's hyper-democratic refusal of the principle of leadership to appreciate his having suggested persuasively that whether or not a labour bureaucrat is a "revolutionist" or a "reformist" is contingent on historical circumstance, rather than bureaucrats' being by definition ideologically conservative.<sup>12</sup> The historical circumstances of the unions I discuss in this paper permitted their leaders to expound a range of political ideologies, from class-conscious socialism to Christian social liberalism. But these same circumstances — new labour laws and Cold War anti-communism — prompted all of them to embrace a pro-democracy ideology that affirmed the value of rank-and-file activism. Whether they were socialists or merely labourite liberals, these union leaders saw a vital union democracy as helping to distinguish their conception of unionism from that of both the left (communists, perceived as tools of Moscow) and the right (for example, those who regarded unions as merely an imperfection in "free" labour markets).

To the labour leadership studied in this essay, "activism" did not mean only (or even necessarily) militant, mass-based tactics. Gordon Cushing wanted unionists to be more involved in union life and social justice campaigns, while avoiding direct-action tactics. (In 1949 he actually condemned Alberta's labour law for tending to lead "employees" into going on strike.)<sup>13</sup> Instead, many labour leaders

<sup>11</sup>I have been influenced in this research by various contributions to this large literature, generated initially by E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Some of these are Bryan D. Palmer and Gregory S. Kealey, *Dreaming of What Might Be* (Toronto 1987); Sylvie Murray, "Quand les ménagères se font militantes: La Ligue auxiliaire de l'Association internationale des machinistes, 1905-1980," *Labour/Le Travail*, 29 (Spring 1992), 157-86; Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle* (Chapel Hill 1991), and Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice* (Cambridge, MA 1991).

<sup>12</sup>Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape* (Toronto 1995), 25-7 and chapter 8.

<sup>13</sup>"Dr. Robinson Draws Ire of Calgary Trades Council," *The Call*, 5, 4 (1949), 3.

in the 1950s assiduously promoted other sorts of activism: organizing and participating in union recreation, attending labour education courses, forming and contributing to ladies' auxiliaries, and promoting a labour viewpoint in local communities (whether through electoral politics, or in other forums). Unquestionably cautious about combative activism, these leaders cultivated energetically, as Cushing did, other, more everyday kinds of membership participation in the labour movement. For some, these activities included promoting a socialist viewpoint, for others, just a labour one.

To explore the scope and political meanings of this activism, I conducted wide-ranging research that would give me a sense of developments across the country in various labour organizations. I focused on one particular kind of community activism, that touching on welfare services. This focus recommends itself for the study of activism for several reasons. One is that unions' role as service agencies for their members was (and is) a site of the power relationship between bureaucrats and members. A leadership may be judged more or less democratic by how it defines and responds to members' needs for services. In addition, this focus helps us see the range of ideological meanings expressed in the 1950s promotion of union activism. This is so because the role of the state in welfare is a key point for distinguishing socialist and liberal positions, and so efforts to engage the membership in certain kinds of welfare work involved various and calculated expressions of political ideology. Also, (though not unique in this respect) welfare work was a kind of activism that brought unionists into collaborative relationships with other social justice groups, often middle class ones, in their communities.<sup>14</sup> A few union leaders had long been involved in such cross-class collaborations. What was distinctive in the 1950s leaders' use of welfare work to foster member activism was that larger numbers of unionists entered into these community relationships, as unionists. The greater the number of union members involved in such relationships, the more numerous were the occasions welfare work provided for heightened awareness of class differences, or for recognition of cross-class commonalities. Union leaders' ideological interpretation of these experiences of class reveal what welfare work, as a representative exercise in fostering union democracy, would mean for the politics of Canadian labour in the 1950s and early 1960s. An additional point of interest in 1950s union welfare work is its resemblance to the coalition-building of present day social unionism. I will return to this point in my conclusion.

Concentrating on union welfare work, then, I have examined documents by and about the *International Woodworkers of America (IWA)*, the *United Auto Workers (UAW)*, and the *United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners*, and have fleshed out these sources with material from labour centres' publications and from the records of the Canadian Labour Congress's Department of Provincial Federa-

<sup>14</sup>Labour committees on human rights and on co-operatives were other such groups. Research on human rights and its relation to community unionism in the 1950s is being conducted at present by Ruth Frager, Ross Lambertson, and Eric Fure-Slocum.

tions and Councils. These latter records contain many detailed reports on labour council and welfare services committee activities in the 1950s and 1960s. I have paid particular attention to the "home" labour councils of unionists who were especially active in national welfare service committees. These were the Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montréal (QFL) councils.<sup>15</sup> While all union records are generated by labour leaders, one can read them with an eye to indicators of member activism. For example, in examining publications and records of local unions, I looked for events and activities that involved larger numbers of people than usually attended meetings, or activities that engaged as committee members people who otherwise never appeared on union committees. Similarly, where the record of a city's labour council or councils showed the involvement of more than just a small core of leaders, I took this to indicate a relatively more participatory democracy in that city's labour movement. Finally, 1962 scholarly study of a west coast IWA locals' views on welfare questions provided an exceptionally direct source on members' views on welfare work, to complement the leaders' views overrepresented in sources such as labour council resolutions.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Union welfare work defined*

To those active in union welfare work in the labour movement of this period, "welfare work" meant three related kinds of activity, all with antecedents in earlier days, but each with new dimensions and meanings in the 1950s. These people used the one term — "welfare work" — to describe both projects that have often been opposed by socialists and projects socialists historically have endorsed and that liberals have repudiated. This fact suggests that welfare work served purposes other

<sup>15</sup>The CLC records contain information on labour bodies across the country, but I also focused on particular union bodies, chosen for a mixture of reasons in addition to the one given in the text. These were, from west to east, IWA Local 1-217 (Vancouver), Vancouver Labour Council (CLC), Calgary Labour Council (TLCC), UAW Local 27 (London), UAW Local 458 (Brantford), UAW District 26, Toronto Labour Council (CCL and CLC), Local 83 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (Halifax). I chose these in part because of the availability of scholarly literature for each: the locals and districts have been the object of historical research, or their parent body has, and related historical literature existed for working-class history for each community, excepting London (which I chose as a substitute for Brantford, a nearby city whose social history I know well from other research). These and the councils represent both old unions and new ones, a variety of regions, organizational forms, and tendencies in the union movement, although the tendencies represented were those most welcoming to welfare work, broadly defined. To argue the wisdom or success of the union welfare project would require a wider sample; the present example was meant as a basis for an assertion of the project's existence and an explanation of its logic.

<sup>16</sup>E. Pennington and I. Walker, "The Role of Trade Unions in Social Welfare: An Exploratory Study of the Attitudes of Trade Union Members Towards Health and Welfare Services," MSW thesis, University of British Columbia, 1962.

than advancing a consistently socialist or liberal political economy. Indeed, as Geoffrey Finlayson has argued for the British case, in neither socialist ideology nor public policy during the post-war period were statutory and voluntary provision of welfare mutually exclusive alternatives.<sup>17</sup>

One kind of welfare activity was the provision of welfare services by union members for other unionists: for example, providing laid-off members with information on unemployment insurance, supplementary unemployment benefits, and community services. A second category of welfare work included research, policy analysis, political organization, and education on welfare issues. And a third kind was fundraising for and administering non-state social services, such as those provided by charity agencies like the members of the United Way. All of these, but especially the latter two, were done both autonomously, by individual locals, labour councils or labour federations, and in co-operation with other, non-labour groups, such as Councils of Social Agencies or the actual social service organizations.

As parts of the Canadian labour movement's history, two of these three kinds of welfare work are relatively well known and were an important part of union work even before World War II. The first — mutual aid — is basic to the union idea, and in the form of unions' unemployment, sickness, and death benefit insurance, working-class mutual aid had had an explicit social security aspect. In 1937, Canada's National Employment Commission said unions paid out approximately \$300,000 a year in such benefits, making unions some of the most important private agencies engaged in "the alleviation of distress."<sup>18</sup> After World War II, the emphasis in this work shifted towards advising on and supplementing the new forms of public provision. Familiar, too, is the second kind of welfare activity — intervention in welfare policy making, chiefly on social security questions.<sup>19</sup> Both in cliché and (if only partially) in reality, labour was in the vanguard of the fight for the welfare state. In this fight, as in its insurance schemes, the labour movement's welfare work clearly was "union work," i.e. taking care of the membership's needs and interests. As part of a principled opposition to a market-centred political economy, campaigns for welfare state programs had been important features of

<sup>17</sup> Developments between World War II and the mid-1970s in British Labour Party views on the value of voluntary, as distinct from statutory, welfare provision are discussed in Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830-1990* (Oxford 1994), 287-321 and 13-4.

<sup>18</sup> National Archives Canada (NAC), MG 28 I 10, Papers of the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), vol. 103, file 776 (1937-8), National Employment Commission, "Excerpt from 'The Co-ordination of Effort in the Alleviation of Distress'," 25.

<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Piva, "The Workmen's Compensation Movement in Ontario," *Ontario History*, 65, 1 (1975), 39-56; James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto 1983); Leslie Pal, *State, Class, and the Bureaucracy: Canadian Unemployment Insurance and Public Policy* (Kingston 1988); Margaret McCallum, "Keeping Women in Their Place: the Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-1925," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (1986), 29-56.



both reformist and revolutionary socialist labour politics. In the post-war period, historic arguments for the social wage came into sync with liberal demand-management economics, blurring some of the distinctions between socialist and liberal ideologies.<sup>20</sup>

But the third form of welfare work that expanded after 1945 — participation in community services — is today less well known as part of the labour movement's traditions. This kind of welfare work had no necessary connection to socialism. Nor was it historically a common form of labour activism, although in the past labourites such as Tom Moore had had seats on the boards of charitable agencies. In referring to welfare services activism, unionists in the 1940s and 1950s sometimes distinguished between "this type of work" and "labour work." After all, in the narrowest idea of unionism, helping to run the John Howard Society, for instance, was irrelevant, because it was unrelated to the wage bargain. To union activists on the left, whose idea of unionism included more than making wage deals, work for social services may have seemed inconsistent with socialism's historic call for "justice, not charity." Moreover, the federated charities organizations that financed services such as the John Howard Society were dominated historically by business leaders. For that reason, charitable fundraising was more likely to be the object of union criticism than of support.<sup>21</sup> In this context, then, the expansion of

<sup>20</sup>Canadian socialists looking to the example of the British Labour Party (as many did in the 1940s and 1950s) would have seen after 1947 in both party policy and publications by Labour intellectuals evidence that there was little difference between "a managed economy under socialism and one under capitalism." See Stephen Brooke, *Labour's War* (Oxford 1992), 332-5. As Alvin Finkel points out, Cold War pressures in Canada also contributed to minimizing differences between socialist and liberal economic strategies, as even the self-identified socialists in the CCL leadership retreated from aspects of policy that risked being identified as communist. See Finkel, "Trade Unions and the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1990," forthcoming in *Socialist Studies*, 1996.

<sup>21</sup>A good sampling of union leaders' diverse views on community service work can be found in the CCL's debate on the report of the Community Services Committee in NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-18, CCL Proceedings, 1954, 108-19. The distinction between "labour work" and other work is made on page 110 by Delegate Collingdon (Steelworkers, Hamilton). This distinction is also noted in NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, 1942-65," and clipping from *Labour Digest*, "Labour Field Wide and Varied," December 1942. In 1947, Percy Bengough of the TLCC said charity would be unnecessary if there were a complete social security system: Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), MG 20, United Way of Halifax-Dartmouth Papers, vol. 1718, scrapbook 1940-51, untitled clipping, probably Halifax *Herald*, dated October 1947, no pagination. On the community chest as a businessmen's organization, see, for example, NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-12, CCL Convention Proceedings, 1953, Delegate Allan Porter (Toronto, Office and Professional Workers Union), 43. Relations between unions, working people, and the Community Chests are discussed in more detail in my "Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933-60," paper presented at the North American Labour History Conference, October 1993.

the labour movement's community service work in the 1950s and early 1960s departed more sharply from labour traditions than did the other two aspects of welfare work. Of the three kinds of welfare work, community service activism is the one that most clearly indicates what was new and distinctive about unionism in this period. For an understanding of the purposes and political meanings of union welfare work in the 1950s and early 1960s it is therefore especially important to understand this community service work.

There is considerable evidence of local unions, labour councils, and women's auxiliaries undertaking this community service work even before the 1956 formation of the CLC's Community Services Committee. In 1948, for example, national labour leaders endorsed the United Nations' Children's fund appeal, and Halifax Carpenters' Local 83 contributed \$25.<sup>22</sup> In 1952, Oshawa's Labour Council gave \$100 to the Community Chest, as Halifax's Carpenters had been doing since the war years.<sup>23</sup> The Toronto Carpenters' Auxiliary (#303) held annual bazaars to raise money for Christmas presents for the Children's Hospital.<sup>24</sup> In 1949 in Port Alberni, the Carpenters' local helped run a "Klondyke Nite" to raise money for a new hospital.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, when Mount St. Vincent University in Nova Scotia had a major fire in 1951, the Halifax and Dartmouth Labour Council organized a fund drive among its affiliated unions. Universities elsewhere also benefitted from union support: labour was a big giver in the campaigns for Assumption University in Windsor, Ontario, and Trent University in Peterborough.<sup>26</sup> Through the London Labour Council, UAW Local 27 added its ten dollars one year and fifteen the next to a fund for furnishing rooms in a seniors' home and the Institute for the Blind.<sup>27</sup> Labour Councils served to coordinate and collect smaller donations from affiliates, making municipal labour's charitable contributions comparable in size to those of the service clubs.

In the early years of the 1950s, fundraising seems to have been (in most places) labour's main form of community work. By the end of the 1950s, four years after the national Community Services Committee was formed, labour's service activities were more diverse. For example, a single issue of the UAW *Auxiliary Newsletter*

<sup>22</sup>NAC, MG 28 I10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour-General, 1952-62," "Trade Unions Here Back Children's Aid," newsclipping, 21 January 1948; PANS, MG 20, Carpenters' Local 83 Papers, vol. 1634a, #1, minutes, 3 February 1948, 166.

<sup>23</sup>"Labour Council Holds Meeting," *Canadian Unionist*, 26, 11 (1952), 407; PANS, MG 20, Carpenters' Local 83 Papers, vol. 1636, #10, account book, October 1945, October 1946, October 1947; PANS, MG 20, United Way Papers, vol. 1718, scrapbook 1940-51, clipping, "Donate \$100," 6 October 1943.

<sup>24</sup>*The Carpenter*, 69, 2 (1949), 40.

<sup>25</sup>"Vancouver Island Members turn Sourdough for Good Cause," *The Carpenter*, 69, 3 (1949), 35.

<sup>26</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H223, "Memo from Brakely," 1965.

<sup>27</sup>ALUA, UAW Local 27 Collection, series I, box 2, Executive board minutes book, 18 March 1954, 5 July 1954 and 6 January 1955.

reported the women of the union movement not only fundraising and making donations, but also visiting people in institutions. In St. Catharine's, the auxiliary's activities were oriented towards children — sponsoring a young boys' minor lacrosse team, supplying a trophy for the young girls' softball team, and adopting a foreign foster child. The list of Brantford Local 321's auxiliary's activities shows that they mixed strike support and union label work with games for senior citizens and a strawberry social for other UAW women and a "fraternal" (sororal?) organization, the Canadian Daughters of England.<sup>28</sup> In 1959, the news section of *Canadian Labour* reported that, in Montréal, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union had contributed to both their community and their own pleasure by commissioning an original ballet — "The Little Hands" — from the National Ballet of Canada.<sup>29</sup> Serving a very different municipality's recreation needs, Fort Erie's Labour Council co-operated with the Legion and the fire fighters to address the lack of a movie theatre in town, by running a weekly movie night for school children.<sup>30</sup> In Calgary, the labour council had donated a water fountain to a local park and was co-operating with the Optimists to run a "Boys' Town" civics club.<sup>31</sup> And labour councils everywhere were continuing or beginning to raise money for hospitals, seniors' homes, or wheelchairs.<sup>32</sup>

#### *The leaders of union welfare work*

The meaning of these activities and the other kinds of welfare work for the ordinary unionists who participated in them was determined in part by men and women among the labour movement's leadership who were especially convinced that welfare work could serve important purposes. In a period when demands on labour leaders were sometimes overwhelming, welfare work only developed because these people valued it and gave it some of their much-called-upon time and energy.<sup>33</sup> Welfare work was never central to the labour movement, but the fact that

<sup>28</sup> NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 177, file 177-1 "Canadian Labour Congress 1956-76," *Auxiliary Newsletter*, vol. 1, 2 (1960).

<sup>29</sup> *Canadian Labour*, 4, 12 (1959), news section.

<sup>30</sup> *Canadian Labour*, 4, 12 (1959), news section.

<sup>31</sup> NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-61, Annual Report of Calgary Labour Council, Report of the Secretary-Treasurer-Organizer, 1958.

<sup>32</sup> NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, Returns of one-page questionnaire from T.B. Ward to labour councils, 7 January 1960.

<sup>33</sup> The problems that arose in the mid-1960s, after Tom Ward left the CLC, when such time and energy were not available are apparent in NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, Mike Rygus (chairman of CLC Welfare Services Committee) to W.D. Kearns, 27 January 1966 and Clifford Scotton to W.D. Kearns, 26 January 1966. The stress endured and the long hours of work put in by labour centre officials are difficult to document precisely, but it seems more than coincidental that two national directors of education (one previous, one actual) suffered ulcers in the late 1950s: NAC, MG28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564

it prospered at all reflects, not only structural causes, but also the personal charm, political convictions, moral seriousness, influence, and commitment of these men and women. Most had been organizers back when personal leadership counted heavily in unions' ability to collect dues. In their social origins and personalities, we can see some of the reasons why they came up with ideologically diverse ways of explaining the value of community work to workers' well being and labour politics.

For the growth of welfare work on the national scene, one union leader was especially significant: Gordon Cushing, the organizer for the Calgary Labour Council in the 1940s. An active member of the United Church, who believed that "wrong shall fail, and right prevail," Cushing was a morally serious man. Some found him a dry speaker, and others recall him as stuffy, but Gillie Kearns's correspondence with him suggests genuinely warm fraternal feeling between Cushing and some of the other union welfare people.<sup>34</sup> Another Toronto labour council man, Larry O'Connell, was impressed, rather than bored by Cushing's "facts and figures" and their effect on the "churchmen" at a Religion and Labour Convention in 1955.<sup>35</sup>

Cushing had in fact started off his working life with figures, as a clerk and bookkeeper. His class background was an odd mix, his father being an intermittently employed machinist, apparently the only adult male wage earner in a propertied and politically influential Calgary clan. Cushing himself appears to have failed in a foray into middle-class status, an independent bookkeeping venture in 1933. Then, in 1935, he got a job in a malting factory, where shortly after a CIO union was formed, with Cushing as a charter member. At age 25 he married Grace LeDrew, a stenographer who lived down the street from the Cushing home in east Calgary, and started a family. Hardworking and respectable, in 1949 Cushing was elected as the youngest ever (age 36) secretary-treasurer of the TLC. Although working-class by marriage and, briefly, by occupation, Cushing seems unlikely to have seen his life chances as defined inescapably by the shared constraints of class.

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"Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, 1942-65," Gordon Cushing to Max Swerdlow, 26 October 1956; NAC, RG 29, Records of the Department of Health and Welfare, vol. 843, file 224-1-64, Howard Conquergood (Education and Welfare director, United Steelworkers) to Doris Plewes (Physical Fitness Division), 16 August 1955.

<sup>34</sup>Max Swerdlow, *Brother Max: Labour Organizer and Educator* (St. John's 1990), 59; Author's interview with Don Montgomery, 5 April 1993; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, W.D. Kearns to Gordon G. Cushing, 25 February 1958.

<sup>35</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, reel M-2294, minutes of the Toronto and District Trades and Labour Council, "Report of Delegates to Religion and Labor Convention," 21 February 1955.

He ended his working career as the assistant deputy minister of the federal department of labour.<sup>36</sup>

Cushing's main contribution to union welfare work was that he made the connections between the national labour centres and the Canadian Welfare Council (CWC). In the 1950s, the CWC's public welfare division was a key site for social policy interventions, as Rodney Haddow has shown.<sup>37</sup> There was power there. In late 1951, the social workers in the CWC were being attacked as "communistic" by right-wing business elements, just as social workers in the affiliated Toronto Welfare Council had been several years earlier.<sup>38</sup> Looking for support from the left of the Canadian political spectrum, and having had their offer of Board membership refused by the CCL, the CWC's director, R.E.G. Davis, turned to the union movement's "right wing," the TLC. Davis's contact with the TLC was Gordon Cushing, who had been a CWC volunteer since his Calgary days. In those days, he had been a member of the CWC not in his capacity as a union leader, but as a western regional representative of the Community Chests. Cushing very definitely believed in the value of private philanthropy: he had been a vice-president of the Calgary Community Chest and was strongly supported in this work by Calgary's labour council newspaper, *The Call*. Praising the Chest, *The Call's* editor wrote:

Socialist labor believes that the welfare of the crippled and needy should be a problem of the State. Possibly that is correct and Canada is moving closer to that position every year. ... What do we do in the meantime however? We're not going to sit down and let our old people go short are we? We're not going to have the cream of the earth, our coming generations — the children, suffer in any way are we? Certainly we're not. ... Think that you may be the next one that might need some of the help given by the 21 participating organizations in the Community Chest.<sup>39</sup>

If these remarks indicate the general slant of Cushing's views, it is not surprising that, when the CWC's Davis met with Cushing to discuss fuller co-operation between organized labour and organized welfare, they "very quickly reached

<sup>36</sup>*The Call*, 5, 18 (1949), 4; *Canadian Who's Who*, 1958-60, 259; *The Call*, 2, 12 (15 June 1946), 1; "Brewery Union Stands Pat" and "Serious Dissension Develops In C.I.O.," *The Call*, 2, 20 (1 November 1946), 1, 8; *Henderson's Greater Calgary Directory* (Calgary 1913-1938); "In Memoriam, Gordon Cushing," *Canadian Labour*, November 1965.

<sup>37</sup>Rodney S. Haddow, *Poverty Reform in Canada, 1958-1978* (Kingston 1993), esp. chapter two.

<sup>38</sup>Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto, 1918-1957* (Toronto 1995), 101; NAC, MG28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour — General, 1952-62," R.E.G. Davis to Norman Dowd [executive secretary, CCL], 11 June 1952.

<sup>39</sup>"Ten Years of Good Work [editorial]," *The Call*, 5, 5 (1949), 2.

general agreement on [their groups'] common interests."<sup>40</sup> Cushing would raise no barriers of class analysis as obstacles to labour participation in welfare work.

Nationally, Cushing's conservative influence was prominent in union welfare work. Between 1956 and 1962, as a CLC vice-president, Cushing was perhaps the chief promoter of co-operation between labour and social workers on the national scene. He arranged panels of labour people to talk to welfare people, and vice versa. Between 1956 and 1959, his speeches on labour participation in charitable fundraising became the texts of CLC policy. He spoke of labour's wish to be responsible, to do their share for the common good.<sup>41</sup> With its affirmation of common interests, this was an easy (and conservative) message for business to hear from labour.

Not all those unionists who took up welfare work as a special cause were as conservative or as close to middle-class status as Cushing. Doris Archer, the chair of the Toronto Labour Council's very active Welfare Services Committee in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was the daughter of a communist barber named Smith. She had married textile union organizer and CCF activist David Archer in the late 1930s when she was seventeen.<sup>42</sup> Years later, her husband wrote that to "a worker" a union is "a way of life" — "the union is the worker's family" — and for the Archers, that does seem to have been true.<sup>43</sup> For the Archers, "labour work" would not easily be divided into separate categories of "politics," "service," and "economic issues."

Another of the Toronto committee's leaders learned that David Archer's "family" metaphor carried real material meaning for the union movement's leadership. W.D. "Gillie" Kearns was a long-serving labour council officer, and a labour representative on various social agency boards after the war. He had been a bartender at a Cabbagetown hotel in the 1920s and 1930s, and in the late 1940s, he had been the business agent for Local 280 of the Beverage Dispensers' Union. Maybe his days slinging beer had something to do with the concerns he later expressed about alcoholism as a welfare problem. When, in 1952, he was in his late fifties and facing old age without a pension, the prospect arose of a paid position

<sup>40</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour — General, 1952-62." R.E.G. Davis (CWC Director) to Norman S. Dowd (executive secretary, CCL), 11 June 1952, R.E.G. Davis to Gordon G. Cushing, 17 November 1949, and Memo from D. Crawley to R.E.G. Davis, "Approach to Organized Labour," 29 January 1952.

<sup>41</sup>Gordon G. Cushing, "Fair Share Plan Is Sound Principle," *Canadian Labour*, 1, 7 (1956), 19-20; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-62, Donald MacDonald to Lloyd Whalen (president of Vancouver Labour Council), reply to Whalen's 19 February 1958 letter requesting CLC policy and speech writing material on labour's participation in community chests.

<sup>42</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, vol. 37, file 1/2.1, clippings, "A modern woman activist: Doris Archer," *Labour Review* (November 1969), 2 and "There Once was a Union Maid," *Local 439 News* (October 1969), 5; Author's interview with Don Montgomery, 5 April 1993.

<sup>43</sup>David B. Archer, "Our Pledge for Labour Day," *Canadian Labour*, 4, 9 (1959), 45.

for a TLC unionist on the staff of Toronto's United Welfare Fund. Kearns's personal need may have been as important as any of his other qualifications in the labour council's decision to reward his long service with the appointment to the Welfare Fund's well-paid and stable labour liaison position.<sup>44</sup> The labour movement would take care of the welfare of some of its older members — recognizing, as families also do, obligations incurred by past service.

Both Kearns and Moses McKay, the other Toronto labour council's Welfare Fund labour liaison, became in the late 1950s highly influential figures on the CLC's Welfare Services Committee. Moses McKay's popularity and sense of fun may have been some of the greatest assets available to those who wished to start up welfare committees in labour councils. He was a welcome speaker. From the stream of charitable appeals that passed through his hands, he collected weird charities: one for orphans whose parents were victims of Barbary pirates, another that gave scholarships to students who owned two cats. Born on a farm near Belfast, Ireland, McKay's travels had taken him through Verdun, Québec and the Dominion Textiles factory there before he came to Toronto during World War II to work at Massey Harris. Somewhere between Montréal and Toronto, he had gone "on the wagon," but in later years, reportedly for laughs, would do imitations of his earlier antics as a drunk. At the time he became the CCL labour liaison staffer for the Welfare Fund, he was president of the UAW local at his plant. There, he had made friends with Doris Archer when she was that local's secretary. Together with Kearns (after the labour councils merged in 1956), Archer and McKay were the leaders of welfare work in Toronto's labour movement.<sup>45</sup> By family and political background, this group was disposed to a clear sense of working-class identity and loyalty. McKay's basic justification of unions' involvement in welfare activism was that the people who got help in this way were members of the working class.<sup>46</sup>

In records from other labour councils and local unions across the country, one can see evidence that tends to confirm some of what the above biographical sketches suggest. Often, though not always, union welfare activists were past presidents of council or paid organizers: people, like the Archers, who wanted workers to appreciate the importance of their unions. In Halifax, Carpenters Local

<sup>44</sup>*Toronto City Directory*, 1936, 1939, 1947; Author's interview with Don Montgomery, 5 April 1993; William H. Dewar, "A Labour Participation Program," *Canadian Welfare*, 28, 3-4 (1952), 20-1; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, W.D. Kearns to T.B. Ward, 9 December 1959; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, minutes of the Welfare Services Committee of the CLC, 20 January 1960, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Author's interview with Don Montgomery, 5 April 1993; William H. Dewar, "A Labour Participation Program," *Canadian Welfare*, 28, 3-4 (1952), 20-1; *OFL Bulletin*, 4, 4 (1952), 3 and 4, 2 (1952), 4; *Lowell's Montreal City Directory* (Montréal 1928-29); NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, Toronto and Lakeshore Labour Council minutes, 23 April 1951 to 8 February 1954, *passim*, and post-1956 Community Service Committee files, *passim*.

<sup>46</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, minutes of the CLC Welfare Services Committee, 7 January 1965.

83's George A. Smith, awarded an M.B.E. for his labour movement work, was a welfare activist; H.D. Grant did related work with co-operatives and adult education. Both of these men served at one point as officers of Local 83. In London's UAW Local 27, the welfare work torch was at first carried by one of the local's early presidents, George Day. But after Day's departure, the welfare committee was led by an older man, Art Francis, who had not previously held union office. In Kamloops a hospital worker I know only as "Mrs. C.E. McInnes" was labour council secretary, active in the CCF, and a major force in seeing that the labour council derived public relations benefits from its community service work. In the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, President Lloyd Whalen and IWA Local 1-217's Charles Lamarche appeared after 1957 in prominent welfare roles. Lamarche went on to be labour liaison staffer for the Vancouver United Way. In Fort William-Port Arthur in the late 1950s, a particularly active committee was headed by H.E. Boreski, whose enthusiasm for the visit of a labour-sponsored clergyman suggests the religious convictions that were important to some union welfare activists. Associated with these core leaders were other union members who helped out with union welfare work. These latter men and women remain shadowy figures, their names (usually without first names or initials) appearing for a few years on a welfare services committee and then disappearing, having contributed to the work of the labour movement without having themselves become "leaders" or "bureaucrats."<sup>47</sup> There seems no reason to think their motivations — whether political,

<sup>47</sup>PANS, MG 20, Carpenters' Local 83 Papers, vol. 1634, #8, minutes, 16 June 1931, 242; #9, minutes, 21 May 1940 and 18 June 1940, 197-8, and vol. 1634a, #1, 15 June 1948, 178, and 16 November 1948, 207; vol. 1634a, #2, minutes, 15 November 1955, 191; PANS, MG 20, Records of the Halifax-Dartmouth Trades and Labour Council, #3, minutes, 11 February 1953, 74; ALUA, UAW Local 27 Papers, series I, box 2, executive board minutes, 17 September 1953, general membership minutes, 22 April 1954, 27 May 1954, 28 April 1955, and 26 May 1955; ALUA, UAW District 7 (Toronto Sub-Region) Papers, box 81, file Local 27, London, 1960-61, local union election results re: vice-president position; ALUA, UAW Local 27 Papers, series I, box 2, general membership minutes, 28 May 1959, 28 January 1960, 26 May 1960, 26 October 1960, 24 November 1960, 21 December 1961, and 22 March 1962; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-61, T.C. Gooderham (CLC District Representative, BC) to Tom Ward, 7 June 1960; "CLC Committee on Community Services," *Canadian Labour*, 2, 3 (1957), (re: steelworkers' Gower Markle), 31; NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, 1942-65," "A.F. of L. Union Members Serving on Community Chest, Welfare Council and Agency Committees, Toronto, Ont.," June 1954; NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1946-59," "Programme: Labour-Social Work Institute, Vancouver, 1955"; NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1946-59," newsclipping, "Labour's Responsibility in a Community Welfare Program," 3 March 1958; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, Charles Lamarche (labour staff



religious, or personal — would have been any less diverse than those of the leaders whose lives are better documented.

Gordon Cushing represented the right wing of the union welfare leaders, but they were not all as nearly middle class as he. Social democrat Doris Archer had deep roots in working-class Toronto, as did Gillie Kearns. Nothing in Moses McKay's background suggests he would have had any doubt about his class identity or interests. This sketch of some of the leaders of union welfare work highlights the various ideologies capable of being attached to union welfare activism. Welfare work might serve various political programs. Although diverse in their politics, within a centre-left range, those leaders who promoted welfare work shared the beliefs that (a) it offered practical benefits to union members and that (b) welfare work might translate into political influence for the labour movement. Those two goals themselves were linked by the expectation that welfare work would broaden the basis of unionists' involvement in their unions, which would translate into better union democracy and thus into an improved place for labour in public opinion, a means to political influence. Committed to different degrees of social change, the socialists and liberals among these unionists both justified welfare work as a multi-faceted exercise in democracy.

#### *Union welfare work's purposes and political tendencies*

The ideological tensions inherent in 1950s unionists' broad definition of "welfare work" were muted and often bypassed, while common goals were pursued. Socialist objections to community service work were respected, reflected in the fact that few union community service activities directly targeted poverty.<sup>48</sup> The

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representative, Community Chest ... of the Greater Vancouver Area) to E.A. Jamieson (secretary-treasurer of the Vancouver and District Labour Council), 15 December 1959; reel H-225, "List of Councils who have a Welfare (Community) Services Committee," 11 April 1961"; reel H-225, *Returns of one-page questionnaire from T.B. Ward to labour councils*, 7 January 1960; NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, vol. 8, file Community Services Committee 1958, re: various appointments to welfare agencies, 2 October 1958, 3 July 1958, and 2 January 1958. On the topic of religion, see NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, reel M-2294, minutes of the Toronto and District Trades and Labour Council, "Report of Delegates to Religion and Labor Convention," 21 February 1955 and minutes, 3 March 1955 and 17 March 1955; Gordon G. Cushing, "The Canadian Who's Who, vol. 8 (1958-9), 259; Ian McKay, *The Craft Transformed: An Essay on the Carpenters of Halifax, 1885-1985* (Halifax 1985), 95; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, H.M. Borecki (Fort William-Port Arthur Labour Council) to Rev. Dr. David F. Summers (Religion-Labour Council of Canada), 27 May 1960; F.C. Bodie (Calgary Labour Council) to Summers, 3 June 1960; T.B. Ward (Director, CLC Department of Federations and Councils) circular letter to labour councils, 13 October 1961; and Ward to Summers, 14 November 1961.

<sup>48</sup>Only in Victoria, BC did the labour council run a "surplus food stall," delivering "parcels to [the] needy once each month." The Ottawa labour council described all their community

labour movement was committed to seeing most income problems addressed by public policy remedies such as full employment and an improved unemployment insurance system.<sup>49</sup> In this context, participating in the work of private social services — “charity” — was compatible with a commitment to socializing the risks of the labour market and regulating the economy — “justice.” Nor was to engage in community work necessarily to accept business leaders’ priorities and purposes. Admittedly, community services work could promote the incorporation of workers into a consensus liberalism. But the work was nevertheless capable of credibly being described as service to the working class, to promote class-specific organization. Its promoters in the union movement interpreted the meaning of welfare work in multiple ways, agreeing fundamentally only on the value of the work for fostering active member involvement in the movement.

One aspect of this work’s ability to engage the membership’s involvement was that labour participation in community services offered tangible benefits to working-class families. The relatively low incomes of many unionists and their working-class neighbours meant they relied more than did the well-to-do on collective consumption. Working-class family resources (whether of wage-earner income or domestic labour power) could not easily accommodate private nursing, home care for the aged and infirm, residence fees for children at university, a country vacation for a developmentally handicapped teenager, or the visiting of family members at remote hospitals. Working-class families therefore benefitted from local hospitals, the VON, homemaker services, elder care institutions, an increased number of smaller universities, and recreation programs for children with special needs. Unions’ involvement in raising funds helped make those services available. Also, by financing and organizing social and recreational events, labour people were providing alternatives to commercial entertainments — sometimes expensive or sometimes unavailable — and to possibly unattractive employer programs. Welfare work in the community was, in many ways, just another form of mutual aid. Union activism in “community” services was also “labour work.”

Welfare services committees’ advocacy on behalf of individual members of local unions was even more clearly the routine work of an effective union. For example, when the company-funded welfare program at Ford mistreated an ill worker, the Steelworkers’ welfare services committee intervened on his behalf.<sup>50</sup>

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work as directed to those “in need.” See NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, Returns of one-page questionnaire from T.B. Ward to labour councils, 7 January 1960.

<sup>49</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, “Mosher Addresses Red Feather Meet,” clipping from *Canadian Labour* (marginal comment by M. McKay, endorsing the content), March 1953; Henry Waisglass of the Toronto and District Labour Council made this point in the debate on the Community Services Report, NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-18, CCL Proceedings, 1954, 117-8.

<sup>50</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-18, CCL Proceedings, 1954, Delegate Sharp (Steelworkers), 109.

Similarly, in London, a union sister got support from the Welfare Services Committee of UAW Local 27 when she was fired after her doctors told the company she had been having cancer treatments.<sup>51</sup> In individual cases of deportation, eviction, or welfare disqualification, Toronto's union counsellors acted as advocates who knew not only the relevant laws, but also the available private supplements to inadequate public services.<sup>52</sup>

But as well as being a service to members, this work was also potentially political. When welfare committees heard of particular individuals' problems, their responses might include attempts to enforce "proper standards" in public welfare. For example, the Toronto Trades and Labour Council's welfare committee protested to the minister responsible when they learned that a welfare investigator responded rudely to a citizen's inquiry about pension benefits.<sup>53</sup> Advocacy thus might slip from being help for individuals into policy intervention. There was, for instance, certainly more political than personal content in the 1946 resolution by the Calgary Labour Council attacking city relief authorities for the systematic deprivations imposed on one Mrs. Emma Klein. Mrs. Klein was dead by the time of the Council's protest, but they made sure the public knew her death from an asthma-related heart attack had been hastened by her having had to live on \$25 a month.<sup>54</sup> In the labour council chamber, concern with the sufferings of individuals might be translated into political statements.

This connection between practical service and political action was also developed by unionists as volunteer union counsellors. Union welfare counsellors acted as both welfare watchdogs and welfare rights educators. When unemployment insurance, non-means-tested pensions, and family allowances were new, and the memories of depression-era relief officers fresh, it was a real benefit to union members to have a trustworthy labour person rather than a government employee to explain procedures and entitlements. An informed and critically minded union counsellor could also usefully explain the tricks and turns of workers' compensation.<sup>55</sup> As a CLC welfare circular pointed out in 1962, sometimes even municipal

<sup>51</sup>ALUA, UAW Local 27 papers, series I, box 2, general membership minutes, 21 December 1961.

<sup>52</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, reel M-2294, minutes of Toronto and Lakeshore Labour Council, 11 May 1953, 25 May 1953, 9 March 1953, and vol. 7, file 1956-57, "Report of the Community Services Committee," 26 March 1957.

<sup>53</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Report of the Welfare Services Committee to the Toronto and District Labour Council," 7 December 1961.

<sup>54</sup>"Council Critical Of Treatment Of Relief Recipient," *The Call*, 2, 22 (1 December 1946), 3.

<sup>55</sup>Gordon G. Cushing, "Family Allowances: Should I Register?" *The Call*, 1, 3 (1945), 1; Gordon G. Cushing, "Unemployment Insurance: How and When to Register," *The Call*, 1, 3 (1945), 6; ALUA, UAW Local 27 papers, series I, box 2, General Membership minutes, 22 September 1959.

officials were ignorant of legislated welfare provisions.<sup>56</sup> Criticism of public provision was part of developing the political energies to fuel campaigns for improvements.

The link between welfare work's practical benefits and its political meanings was also forged as unionists participated in their communities' social leadership. Helping to administer community services was something only few working people had been permitted to do in the years before World War II.<sup>57</sup> Incorporation within anti-labour middle-class culture might seem to be an intrinsic risk of this work. However, the broadening of labour participation during the 1950s meant that, in some areas, the class character of social service work was genuinely less homogeneous than it had been. Take the example of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, which was in the 1950s a fast-growing industrial town and rail centre. Its labour council had representatives on the library board, the boxing and wrestling commission, the Union hospital board, the social aid board, the community planning commission, the board of zoning appeals, the vocational education committee, and more. No wonder this town was described in the CLC welfare services course as an example of a labour-dominated municipal administration whose competence would give the lie to anti-labour slanders.<sup>58</sup> Representing the labour movement on community boards was an opportunity, not only to look out for working people's interests, but also to demonstrate *wage-earners' intelligence and ability to the larger community*. On previously business-led bodies such as the Community Chest and United Appeal, union participation affirmed in a quasi-corporatist way labour's standing as one of society's decision-makers. This was not revolutionary socialism, but

<sup>56</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, J. Harold Daoust to Mike Rygus [General VP], International Association of Machinists, 24 August 1962; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, circular letter by BC Opposition leader R.M. Strachan, distributed by the Nanaimo, Alberni and District Labour Council, [1960?]

<sup>57</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 10, vol. 158, file "CWC Division — Community Organization, 1940, Organizing a Financial Campaign," L.H. Serene [executive director, Greater Winnipeg Council of Social Agencies], "Organizing a Community Campaign: Some suggestions for the actual organization of a campaign for voluntary funds for welfare purposes, in a community of average size in Canada," Canadian Welfare Council publication 97, (1940), 16. See also, for examples of the constituent membership of Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa Chest Boards of Directors, the campaign literature in NAC, MG 28 I 10, vol. 158, file "1935-37." The occupations and industry affiliations of these board members are tabulated in my "Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933-60," paper presented at the North American Labour History Conference, October 1993. Unionists numbered 3 out of a total of 169 individuals identified for 1937 in a sample that also included data from the Halifax Chest.

<sup>58</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H224, "Wel.[fare] Ed.[ucation] Mat.[erial]," 8. On Moose Jaw's 1950s development, J. William Brennan, "Moose Jaw," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, second edition (Edmonton 1988), vol. 3, 1387.

neither was it an arrangement that denied the specificity of working-class interests or assumed ideological consensus.

As labour involvement in social administration increased, the boards of social agencies often became less peaceful places. Not all union welfare activists simply gave quiet assent to the liberal or even conservative agendas of these boards. Admittedly, even socialist unionists could find like-minded people among welfare activists, such as the Health League representative whose presentation to the Toronto TLC council stressed that the best way to prevent illness was to end poverty.<sup>59</sup> But relationships with social service's old guard could also be difficult. When unionists disagreed with other board members or social workers on social policy, they were sometimes blamed for being too critical, or poorly informed, or for unreasonably wanting contradictory things such as both low taxes and expanded government programs.<sup>60</sup> To express criticism from an alternative ideological viewpoint was to invite the casting of aspersions on one's character and intelligence. Such conflict indicates that the socialist unionists active in welfare work did not leave their sense of class and awareness of its political meanings behind them at the factory gate.

Union counselling courses helped equip an increasing number of unionists to administer social services and to debate welfare policy on terms of equality with — or more skilfully than — other welfare volunteers. These courses were open to the general membership, and welfare expertise was also distributed from labour officials to members by means of community services guides, such as the one published by the Edmonton Labour Council's Welfare Information Service in 1963.<sup>61</sup> By the mid-1960s, hundreds, perhaps thousands of Canadian unionists had attended union counselling courses.<sup>62</sup> After attending these events, unionists shared

<sup>59</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 44, Papers of the Labour Council of Metro Toronto, reel M-2294, minutes of the Toronto and District Trades and Labour Council (TLCC), 17 January 1952.

<sup>60</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, 1942-65," Hazeldine Bishop (executive secretary of London, Ont. Council of Social Planning) to the CWC, 14 April 1955; NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour—General," news clippings, "Says Charity Groups Growing Like Weeds," *Ottawa Journal*, 13 June 1950; "Unjust and Unfair," *Toronto Star*, 17 June 1950; and "Brotherhood Forum," *Canadian Railway Employees' Monthly*, December 1950.

<sup>61</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, "Information and Welfare Services Guide" prepared for the Edmonton and District Labour Council, 1965.

<sup>62</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, M[oses] McKay, "Short Training Course on Welfare Services," (circa 1960), and NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, 1942-65," "Welfare Services Program, Guide No. 3: Union Welfare Counselling"; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, Mike English (executive secretary of Edmonton and District Labour Council) to Cliff Scotton (Director of Provincial Federations and Councils, CLC), 1965, cover letter attached to "Information and Welfare Services Guide" prepared for the

what they had learned with the general membership, usually by reporting back to meetings but also in more widely accessible ways, such as a program on charitable fundraising made by the Steelworkers for the union television show in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Often, in the 1950s, the word that activists brought back from their courses and meetings was that welfare agencies had changed: as bus driver Larry O'Connell told the Toronto Trades and Labour Council "the welfare work being done now is much superior to what was done after the first world war."<sup>63</sup> Undoubtedly, structured differences among the membership — in education, in leisure time after domestic labour — meant some acquired welfare expertise and others did not. The training of union counsellors and publishing of welfare guides, however, were real attempts to disperse expertise beyond the ranks of paid officials and so to empower union members as citizens of their unions and their communities.

These kinds of activities — ensuring that union members benefitted from available services and making certain that welfare agencies (public or private) did their job — were obligations of a "militant union," according to the CLC's 1959 Welfare Services programme guide. Welfare work potentially strengthened important loyalties — those of members to their unions and of working-class people to the labour movement. This work "furthered the meaning and respect of [the] trade union cause," according to Alice Trenchard of Auxiliary #303, Toronto Carpenters.<sup>64</sup> Practical work with genuine relevance to the material conditions of working people's lives, it was also work capable of being given political meanings, providing opportunities (sometimes used, sometimes not) for identifying and presenting a class analysis of the failures of the welfare system and the wage system.

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Edmonton and District Labour Council; reel H-224, union counselling course outline for a Toronto and District Labour Council course, 20 January 1959; reel H-224, report of the Welfare Services Committee to the Toronto and District Labour Council, 7 December 1961. Numbers involved are difficult to estimate — attendance figures for any given course quoted from Toronto, the Lakehead, and Edmonton range from 23 to 94; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-12, CCL Convention Proceedings, 1953 (printed), comment on Congress Community Services Programme resolution, 43; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, W.D. Kearns (Toronto Labour Council) to T.B. Ward (Director of Provincial Federations and Councils, CLC), 11 March 1959; reel H-224, Fort William and Port Arthur District Labour Council Welfare Services Committee report, 6 December 1961; reel H-226, Lincoln Bishop (CLC Regional Director of Education for Ontario) to T.B. Ward, requesting for Cornwall Labour Council a course on welfare matters, 23 February 1962; reel H-223, minutes of the CLC Welfare Services Committee, 11 February 1964, report of the secretary (general comment on increasing numbers).

<sup>63</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, reel M-2294, *minutes*, 6 March 1952. For a union welfare activist's observation that welfare, and not union values, had changed, see NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1946-59," newsclipping, "Labour's Responsibility in a Community Welfare Program," 3 March 1958.

<sup>64</sup>*The Carpenter*, 59, 3 (1939), 46.

Although welfare work had no intrinsic, fixed, political meaning of its own, union counsellor courses and other means of promoting welfare activism were indeed cast in ideological terms. For example, participating in community chest fundraising was a kind of welfare work that Gordon Cushing had presented in terms of workers' responsibilities to "the common good." In other hands, though, this work was linked to workers' rights. According to Donald MacDonald, CLC vice-president after Cushing,

[United Appeal] services are not charity in the commonly-accepted sense of the word, not something being given for nothing to someone who possesses no right to them, but rather the extension of assistance to people *entitled to them by right of participation in making them possible, a form of insurance, if you will.*<sup>65</sup>

MacDonald thus acknowledged and rejected welfare work's association with class hierarchy. Instead, he represented charitable fundraising so that it appeared both as mutual aid and as social insurance, powerful positive images in progressive labour traditions. In the same speech, MacDonald went on to describe union welfare work as being the fruit of labour's victories in collective organization. Organization has given workers time, money, and status, MacDonald said, with the result that they could take up the functions of citizenship. Rather than being based simply in an individual's moral character (the liberal view), citizenship in MacDonald's representation depended on material conditions (a socialist interpretation). Some unionists who took up welfare work may have understood their experience in Cushing's terms, others in MacDonald's.

While union welfare leaders might have disagreed on the nature and meaning of class relations, they agreed that an active membership was desirable and that welfare work might engage greater numbers of members in the life of the union. In addressing union audiences, union welfare activists argued that welfare work not only provided practical services to the working class, but also that it would help strengthen unions by increasing member participation. As J.P. Nichol of the Pulp and Sulphite Workers in Montréal wrote: "The broader union objectives become, the more widespread will be Labour's interests and the more appeal it will have to its membership."<sup>66</sup> Moses McKay similarly expressed the view that unions needed to broaden their significance to their members. He told those attending his welfare courses that when the members' pockets were full, there was a risk they would lose interest in their union.<sup>67</sup> Community service committees could help them with

<sup>65</sup>Donald MacDonald, "Labour Participation in Community Chests," *Canadian Labour*, 1, 7, (1956), 28.

<sup>66</sup>J.P. Nichol (chairman of the labour participation committee of the Welfare Federation of Montreal), "Organized Labour and Welfare Services," *Canadian Unionist*, 26, 9 (1952), 286.

<sup>67</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Short training Course on Welfare Services," course outline typescript, "Why! What! How! Summing Up," circa 1960.

problems other than low wages, and so win their appreciation.<sup>68</sup> At the very least, if "Joe Union Member" was active in his church or a service club, but would not come to union meetings, maybe the union could attract his attention through sharing in the service work of these other organizations.<sup>69</sup>

According to these representations of welfare work, its practical benefits were not simply the surface ones. More fundamental was the contribution welfare work might make to solving the organizing problems the labour movement faced in the new regime of industrial legality. Unions protected by contract clauses such as "maintenance of membership" and dues payment by payroll deduction appeared to have attained a longstanding aspiration of many union activists — union security. But with security came a weakening of the ties between leaders and members, ties that had depended not only on leader charisma, but also on the membership's being involved in union work themselves.<sup>70</sup> The reasons for this alienation have been well described elsewhere, and its potential dangers are clear.<sup>71</sup> Union officials' ability to bargain depends on the memberships' willingness to act collectively — under a bargaining committee's direction. Leaders with no sway over union membership have no power over employers. A completely passive, uninvolved membership may be as hard to bargain for effectively as a fractious, ideologically diverse one. To create an active membership was to fashion a union capable of collective mobilization.

Consequently, union leaders took courses such as "Creating Greater Membership Activity" and came up with projects such as welfare work. Encouraging welfare services committees and union counselling courses were tactics within a

<sup>68</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, W.D. Kearns to Gordon G. Cushing, 25 February 1958; and Michael Harris, "Unionists Told Of Their Welfare Responsibilities," clipping, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 October 1959.

<sup>69</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Short training Course on Welfare Services," course outline typescript, "Labour's Role in Community Affairs," circa 1960, 2.

<sup>70</sup>Bill Freeman quotes Hamilton steelworkers' remarks about the stagnation of the 1950s, attributing it to the leaders' "resting on their laurels," but also to the "the complete abdication of responsibility by the rank and file." According to Freeman, both were exaggerations, but both expressed truths, too. See *1005: Political Life in a Union Local* (Toronto 1982), 82. Ian McKay describes the Halifax Carpenters' leaders' concerns about the inactive membership in *The Craft Transformed*, 128-9. In London, UAW Local 27, in its first year of existence, decided that until the membership reached 1000, 15 would be quorum for the general membership meetings. To induce attendance, they offered door prizes. See ALUA, UAW Local 27 Papers, series I, box 2, general membership minutes, 25 March 1953, 23 April 1953, and 1953-54 minutes, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup>McKay, *The Craft Transformed*; Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 284. For a comparative study that spells out some of the larger dangers of bureaucratization and other features of the post-war labour movement's institutional structure, see Bruce Spencer, "Trade Unionism, Workplace, and Politics in Post-War Britain: and Inferences for Canada," *Labour/Le Travail*, 28 (Fall 1991), 187-217.



larger, and inescapably paradoxical, strategy of leaders acting upon the members, to induce the members to become leaders. As David Archer put it,

No matter how repugnant it may be to us, we are going to have to employ some of the Madison Avenue techniques to resell the labour movement, first to our membership, secondly to the public at large. When this is done and our membership awakens from its lethargy to inquire, direct and lead our movement, the danger of infiltration from undesirables will have passed. Racketeers and gangsters can only operate in an atmosphere of complacency.<sup>72</sup>

To have an active, participating membership, union officials had to exercise leadership by, among other things, crafting an image (and a reality) of unionism that would appeal to union members. Blowing their own horn about the community work they did was not just about looking good to the public, but also about inspiring pride and participation among members.<sup>73</sup> The promotion of union welfare work showed that the labour bureaucracy of the 1950s knew that its own self-interest — the legitimacy of its own authority — required sharing expertise, looking for ways to serve members' needs, encouraging members to become active in the union, and, in so doing, leading members to become at some level leaders themselves.

The problem of inactive, Rand-formula members was only one of several circumstances that prompted pragmatically calculating leaders, as well as idealists, to deploy welfare work and other similar projects in a union democratization strategy. Other circumstances requiring member activism were also connected in one way or another with industrial relations law. The very union security measures to which the post-war union movement owed a degree of stability harmed the movement's public image, in ways that risked also undermining the movement's effectiveness as a policy actor. As David Kwavnick has shown in a detailed analysis of the success and failure of the CLC's policy initiatives between 1956 and 1968, one of the best guarantees of the CLC's success was the fit between a particular initiative and the general climate of public opinion.<sup>74</sup> Unionists in the 1950s could remember a time in the 1940s when significant progressive elements of public opinion supported unions as essential means to industrial democracy.<sup>75</sup> But pro-

<sup>72</sup>David Archer (president of the Ontario Federation of Labour), "Public Relations," *Canadian Labour*, 6, 6 (1961), 12.

<sup>73</sup>Bob Buchanan, "Local Union PR," *Canadian Labour*, 6, 6 (1961), 9.

<sup>74</sup>David Kwavnick, *Organized Labour and Pressure Politics: the Canadian Labour Congress 1956-1968* (Montréal 1972), chapter 8.

<sup>75</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 10, CLC Papers, vol. 185, file 185-3, *Toronto National Labour Day Souvenir*, 1 September 1940, 5, and same publication, 1943 issue, 3; Laurel Sefton McDowell, *Remember Kirkland Lake* (Toronto 1983), 178; Donald MacDonald, "The Challenge of Labour Day," *Canadian Labour*, 4, 7-8 (1959), 28-9; W.L.M. King's 1940 Labour Day speech quoted by Peter J. Warrian, "'Labour is Not a Commodity': A Study of the Rights of Labour in the Canadian Postwar Economy, 1944-48," PhD thesis, University of Waterloo, 1986, 9.

gressives and union-bashers alike had both begun to comment in the 1950s on the fact that union security might compromise unions' claim to be democratic institutions. The lucrative machinery of dues collection was quite plausibly depicted as making a few workers into fat cats who would resort to corrupt practices to protect their comforts and power. Far from protecting workers' rights, the critics claimed, unions had become bastions of new kinds of selfish privilege. Union leaders were depicted as bosses, thugs, and racketeers.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the effective power of well-organized unions was perceived as leading to high wages for their members, *cost-push inflation*, and consequent hardship for working people in non-union jobs. There was a war on for public opinion, and in 1954 Charles Millard — labour official and former Ontario MLA (CCF) — worried that labour was losing badly.<sup>77</sup>

Matters worsened in 1957 and 1958, as (following American developments) proposals for anti-union "right to work" legislation began to get a serious hearing in Ontario.<sup>78</sup> The point of depicting unions as gangster-dominated tyrannies then became crystal clear. If unions' legitimacy as democratic institutions could be undermined, their opponents could hope to sabotage even the limited labour market control secured through legal provisions for the union shop.

The new legal regime was, indeed, fertile ground for crooks such as Canada's most famous labour racketeer, Hal Banks of the Seamen's International Union. Ironically, the worst tyrant of the 1950s union leadership was this man who had been imported to oust the supposedly anti-democratic communists from labour organization on the Great Lakes.<sup>79</sup> But the mainstream labour bureaucracy did not merit the mud slung at Banks, and the general attack on labour leaders as undemocratic seemed to be threatening hard-won labour rights. In light of Kwavnick's findings, there was probably some truth to union strategists' perception that public opinion about unions would at least affect, if not necessarily decide, the success of at least some of labour's campaigns for state intervention in the labour market, through industrial relations, human rights, or welfare law.

Protecting that part of their political effectiveness that lay in public opinion support was thus another reason labour leaders promoted union welfare activism.

<sup>76</sup>"PR Drive Backed," *Globe and Mail*, 26 April, 23; Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, "The Lighted Union Hall: Building Union Consciousness, 1945-60," paper given at North American Labour History conference, 1992, discusses American labour movement responses to this campaign in its US form.

<sup>77</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 331, file 31-10, CCL executive committee, minutes, 2 October 1954.

<sup>78</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-67, Roy Wood (executive secretary Timmins and Cochrane District Labour Council) to Tom Ward, 21 January 1958, and Gordon Cushing (executive vice-president, CLC) to Roy Wood, 28 January 1958.

<sup>79</sup>One of *Labour's* reviewers pointed out this irony, and I agree that it is worth mentioning. Acknowledging such ironies is, after all, not inconsistent with respect for these labour bureaucrats' efforts. Few lives of political activism, perhaps none, are without a few awkward moments of self-contradiction.

This explains why it was a union publicity director and CCF member of the Ontario legislature, Murray Cotterill, who, in 1950, instigated the post-war expansion of welfare work in the path-breaking Toronto and Lakeshore Labour Council.<sup>80</sup> He was devising a tactic in the war with business for public opinion "points." Other leaders also encouraged unionists to see welfare work in this context. Moses McKay told his union counsellor trainees that the labour movement had to match employers' benevolent works, if unions were to keep up in the competition for good public opinion.<sup>81</sup> An American business publication asserted, nervously, that union welfare work might "diminish business influence among workers" or "further political objectives by establishing unions ... as useful, responsible, and civic minded organizations." Moses McKay commented in the margins of that magazine: "I only hope they are right."<sup>82</sup> Public relations, to serve labour's policy interests, was the (not very deeply) hidden agenda of union welfare work.

In 1959, concerns about labour's public image heightened, as the problems with Banks's Seamen's International bore down on the CLC. Labour's allies spoke out to challenge the labelling of unionists as gangsters.<sup>83</sup> The CLC's Donald MacDonald was granted an honorary degree from Saint Francis-Xavier University, with the following comment in the citation:

[I]n a day when Unionism, especially on the national and international levels, is being weakened by attack from without and dishonest leadership within, Donald MacDonald and the organization he represents stand out without stain or blemish.<sup>84</sup>

In the April 1959 *Canadian Labour*, union members learned that "a respected Vancouver lawyer," Victor Dryer, Q.C., speaking to the Canadian Bar Association, had deplored "immoderate utterances in high places" that had attempted "to smear millions of honest workingmen, led by hundreds of competent and honest officials, with the 'gangsterism' brush."<sup>85</sup> Union leaders' ability to protect the movement's public image was made a competence issue in at least one labour council's factional fights.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, though, matters only seemed to be getting worse. After

<sup>80</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-223, Moses McKay, "Labour and the United Appeal," clipping from *Information*, 1964; Author's interview with Don Montgomery, 5 April 1993; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 331, file 31-7, minutes of CCL executive committee, letter from Murray Cotterill, 27 November 1950, 30.

<sup>81</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Short training Course on Welfare Services," course outline typescript, "Labour's Role in Community Affairs," 4-5.

<sup>82</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Your Community: Labor's New Frontier," *Nation's Business*, clipping, October 1956.

<sup>83</sup>Douglas G. Hartle, "The Power of Organized Labor [sic]," *Canadian Forum*, 38 (December 1958), 193, 211-5.

<sup>84</sup>*Canadian Labour*, 4, 6 (1959), 9.

<sup>85</sup>"Who is Labour?" *Canadian Labour*, 4, 10 (1959), news section.

<sup>86</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-62, minutes of the Vancouver Labour Council, 16 June 1959.

the 1958-59 suspension and expulsion of Banks's Seamen's International Union from the CLC, further violence in waterfront union circles led to the 1962-63 Norris inquiry, whose 108 days of hearings thoroughly exposed labour's rough edges.<sup>87</sup>

In this context, we should not be surprised to find that, in 1959, CLC officer Bill Dodge told the CLC Welfare Services Committee it could have whatever money it needed to do its important work.<sup>88</sup> Nor was it remarkable, then, that the four year period after 1959 saw the Welfare Services Committee's greatest activity.<sup>89</sup> Between 1959 and 1963, union welfare leaders actively pursued public relations benefits. To potential allies in campaigns for labour law and to potential members in as-yet-unorganized sectors of the economy, welfare work (they hoped) would temper unions' image as just one more giant "grab bag."<sup>90</sup> They wanted to show that unselfishness, the cardinal virtue of the community-minded, was also a feature of the union movement.<sup>91</sup> As well, they hoped to show that "the trade union member was the average citizen." One PR advisor cautioned against using "the man in overalls" to represent unionists, perhaps because such an image did not match well with the drive to organize in the public sector.<sup>92</sup> Donald MacDonald regretted that unions were no longer as they had been (in his view) during World War II, regarded

<sup>87</sup>Peter Edwards, *Waterfront Warlord*, (Toronto 1987), 78, 114, 124, 152.

<sup>88</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, minutes of the CLC Welfare Services Committee, 18 February 1959.

<sup>89</sup>By this time, the national CLC welfare services committee was headed by Tom Ward — a former school teacher and miner from northern Manitoba. NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1942-65," CLC Welfare Services Program pamphlets (#1-#4); NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, minutes of the CLC Welfare Services Committee, 18 February 1959; reel H-225, Returns of one-page questionnaire from T.B. Ward to labour councils, 7 January 1960; reel H-225, Michael Harris, "Unionists Told Of Their Welfare Responsibilities," clipping, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 October 1959; reel H-223, G.E. Hart (United Way) to T.B. Ward, 16 August 1962; reel H-223, circular letter from J. Harold Daoust (chairman of the CLC Welfare Services Committee), 24 August 1962; reel H-223, minutes of the CLC Welfare Services Committee, 12 February 1963; reel H-223, Clifford Scotton (Ward's replacement as Director of the Department of Federations and Councils) to W.D. Kearns, 26 January 1966; "Appoint Ward to UI Commission," *Canadian Labour*, 9, 7-8 (1964), 24.

<sup>90</sup>That unions had such an image is illustrated in NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564, "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1946-59" and "Organized Labor. Relationship of Community Chests and Councils in the United States with The Labor League for Human Rights," 11. A railway union official, E.G. Jones, commented on labour's image as "selfish" in "Organized Labour and Welfare Organizations," *Canadian Welfare*, 28, 3-4 (1952), 19.

<sup>91</sup>William Dodge, "Three Images of Labour," [address to the directors' luncheon of the Canadian National Exhibition], *Canadian Labour*, 4, 10 (1959), 26-28.

<sup>92</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, minutes of a conference of labour federation officers, presentation by Harry Kelman, 6 April 1965.

as "something as normal as the churches, the press, veterans' organizations, the service clubs, [and] fraternal societies. ..." <sup>93</sup> We are not a "socially separatist" movement, said Moses McKay, and co-operation in community service work was one way to show that. <sup>94</sup> The particular threats to labour's image and thus to the effectiveness of its legislative program therefore prompted both an expanded promotion of welfare activism and an articulation of its meanings in a communitarian language of shared citizenship rather than in class conscious terms.

In addition to promoting member activism and protecting labour's public image, welfare work was also part of the relationship between unions and Canada's social democratic party. This relationship was, of course, also an element in the tactics of promoting labour's legislative program. Many, though not all, of the union welfare activists were involved in the CCF and the "New Party." <sup>95</sup> Participation in these parties encouraged citizenship rhetoric rather than class language. And unionists could indeed link welfare work to the party cause without any allusion to class differences, as an American leader of union welfare work demonstrated in a 1953 address to Canadian unionists:

Political power is achieved through community action and community organization. It is not something academic, theoretical or philosophical. It is something you do every day in the week in your ward or community or province. It is a job of service to your fellow human beings, to your fellow workers, a day-to-day, year-round dedication and organization, a year round job of training, education, and service in the minds of our people, not only loyalty to the goals and objectives of the CIO but instilling into the minds of the people a consciousness of community responsibility. <sup>96</sup>

Social democrats who linked welfare work and politics in this way could easily relinquish the rhetoric of class conflict. In the Cold War climate, the explicitly anti-capitalist commitments of the 1930s, expressed in the Regina Manifesto, seemed to some to be harming the electoral fortunes of the CCF, and so, in 1957,

<sup>93</sup> Donald MacDonald, "The Challenge of Labour Day," *Canadian Labour*, 4, 7-8 (1959), 27.

<sup>94</sup> NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, "Labour and the Community," post-1956, 1.

<sup>95</sup> "Rygus Heads IAM in Canada," *Canadian Labour*, 6, 7-8 (1961), 28; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224, Mike Rygus (chairman of CLC Welfare Services Committee) to W.D. Kearns, 27 January 1966; NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-61, T.C. Gooderham (CLC District Representative, B.C.) to Tom Ward, 7 June 1960, and circular in same file about CCF nomination; NAC, MG 28 I 44, LCMT Papers, vol. 37, file 1/2.1, clippings, "A modern woman activist: Doris Archer," *Labour Review* (November 1969), 2. Moses McKay's training course on welfare services included a session on "Canadian Unions and Their Role in Society," which promoted involvement in the "New Party." See NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-224.

<sup>96</sup> NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, vol. 247, file 247-12, Leo Perlis quoted in CCL Convention Proceedings, 1953 (printed), 67.

the class conflict language was jettisoned from the party's constitution.<sup>97</sup> But even though this change situated the CCF to "the right" in labour movement terms, we should not forget what the real right wing in Canadian politics in the 1950s thought of social democratic politics. Ron Williams, the *Financial Post's* labour reporter, observed in his analysis of a union education school (using an offensive racial metaphor to mark his disapproval): "broader community interests and involvement [were] ... the Socialist nigger in the political woodpile."<sup>98</sup> Any assertion of the social rights and the full citizenship of working-class people, whether labelled "community work" or "class struggle," was recognizable by the right as the latter. When the assertion of workers' citizenship meant a claim to working peoples' right to a secure, decent standard of living, then a social democratic politics of citizenship was, in fact, a challenge to the class structure of social, economic, and political power.<sup>99</sup>

But the politics of citizenship could be and was also appropriated by consensus liberalism, in which "prosperity" without reference to justice in the distribution of wealth was the common goal, and in which working-class grievances, as such, had no place. This appropriation of citizenship to liberalism was entirely understandable, given that the ways unionists' citizenship-style welfare activism was supposed to strengthen unions could also diminish the distinctiveness of unions and their members' consciousness of class.<sup>100</sup> That is, to strengthen workers' loyalties to unions, labour leaders made unions more like non-class-specific service clubs or churches by supplying welfare services, fellowship, and (for some members) avenues to community status and political influence. Thus, unions could be an avenue to citizenship by a route that led away from class-specific demands. In the logic of union welfare work, it was the reduction of class differences — in leisure time, in standard of living — that made possible unionists' sharing in community work. Once attained, this "citizenship of contribution" had no necessary connection to working-class identity.<sup>101</sup> By 1965, unions were being invited frequently to send union delegates as full members of service clubs and business councils, as if nothing prevented unions' easy assimilation into these business and professional organiza-

<sup>97</sup>Gad Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto 1968), 174.

<sup>98</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 10, CCSD Papers, vol. 77, file 564 "Labour, Relationships with and attitude to welfare services, community planning, Welfare Services, 1946-59," clipping, "Education — This Is Our Road to Power," *Financial Post*, 12 February 1949.

<sup>99</sup>Bryan S. Turner, *Citizenship and Capitalism* (London 1986), 44-52, summarizes various arguments for this position.

<sup>100</sup>Elizabeth Fones-Wolf comes to a similar conclusion in her "Labour and Social Welfare: the CIO's Community Services Program, 1941-1956," paper given at the North American Labor History Conference, October 1996.

<sup>101</sup>The expression "citizenship of contribution" is from Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain*, 9.

tions. Some unionists found such invitations repugnant.<sup>102</sup> But at the other extreme were the unionists of Owen Sound, where the Labour Council itself was a member of the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>103</sup>

The labour leaders who began in 1950 to promote welfare work as a means to foster member activism did not have Owen Sound in mind when they conceived their plans. What labour organizer with experience in Canada in the 1930s would have expected a Chamber of Commerce to invite a labour council to join? The union leaders I have discussed here hoped the labour movement might be regarded in Canadian society as a normal, but distinct participant in economic and political life, democratically authorized to represent the legitimate interests of union members and recognized also as an informed voice for social justice. They hoped, in other words, to have unionists recognized as active citizens. To attain this recognition, unions certainly needed a public relations strategy, but the community work unionists did was not simply cynical window dressing. The projects pursued within union locals and by labour councils provided real benefits to union members and working-class communities. The leaders and the led all knew, first hand, that working-class neighbourhoods had welfare problems that could not be dealt with at the contract table. The leaders who promoted this union welfare work and, it seems likely, those who carried it out, often believed there were real social welfare needs that they had an obligation to address. In this context, organizing union welfare work was a positive act of leadership that elicited, not surprisingly, some support from union members. Some of the leadership energy that, in earlier days, had gone into promoting unionism so as to collect dues now went into signing up members for union welfare courses and advancing the idea of community unionism.

Designed to serve members and strengthen unions, union welfare work was part of a continuing attempt to engage members actively in the labour movement. This was a democratic project, even though some of those who undertook it were also involved in the illiberal repression of communists. Union welfare work's contribution to democracy within and outside the labour movement consisted in claiming a place for unionists in the governance of Canadian communities, equipping many people to express effectively a labour viewpoint in those communities, and working to secure basic social rights, not only to adequate employment and welfare income, but also rights to care and to opportunities for personal development. This was the work of fostering citizenship, both in the sense of claiming rights and of shouldering responsibilities. The labour leaders who thus undertook promoting citizenship deserve, by virtue of that undertaking, to be known as democrats. That they themselves hoped to derive more effective power as leaders

<sup>102</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, minutes of a conference of labour federation officers, 7.

<sup>103</sup>NAC, MG 28 I 103, CLC Papers, reel H-225, responses to CLC questionnaire, 7 January 1960.

from a more engaged membership means that they were not purely altruists in this work, but their self-interest in democracy makes them no less genuinely democrats.

That title does not, however, distinguish other aspects of their political ideologies.<sup>104</sup> Some were socialists, seeing the job of community service as entailing also the practice of fostering class consciousness through policy debate and criticism of welfare agencies. Others were liberals, interpreting service as a matter of social responsibility that fell on all citizens alike, and divided the world among the selfish and the responsible, rather than along class lines. Welfare work made sense in both these ideological frameworks. Citizenship claims might be either socially transformative or socially conservative. But the class challenge potentially posed by citizenship politics had certainly to be muted when unionists wished to cash out their welfare work chips in the political currency of community influence. This meant that defending or promoting desirable industrial relations law was the political project least well served by the public opinion benefits of welfare work. As Kwavnick points out, in this area, where well-organized opposition existed, with comparable claims to citizenship rights and community influence, labour's legislative projects were less likely to succeed. Citizenship language served labour better in social policy initiatives than in labour law.

I have attempted in this essay to describe an example of and explain the logic behind the promotion of member activism by mainstream, anti-communist Canadian labour leaders in the 1950s and early 1960s. My main purpose was to recover for labour history something of what was distinctive about the newly secure unions of this period. The distinctive feature was not that the 1950s leadership felt no need to rouse the members to activism. They did attempt in various ways to foster member activism and, like other labour leaders in the past, they worried (and sometimes complained) about those workers less active than themselves in the labour movement. In this sense, they were not "mere bureaucrats," content that the membership be passive. But they were bureaucrats in the sense of being experts, full time labour activists, their paid positions distinctively situating them to pursue strategies that required them to direct the membership. In this aspect of bureaucracy, the financial resources and legislative context of their time made them newly able to develop their strategies and to work on inducing the desired varieties of activism among the membership. Characterized by the paradox endemic in all attempts to induce autonomous action in others, these labour leaders' democratization project nonetheless at least affirmed the value of member activism and

<sup>104</sup>On the freedoms, and ideas about the relative importance of various kinds of freedoms, that compose different types of democracy, see C.B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (Toronto 1965) and Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is ... and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, 2, 3 (1991), 75-88.



apparently prompted some who otherwise might not have done, to participate in the life of the union or of the labour council.<sup>105</sup>

An additional purpose of this research was to explore points of comparison to other political uses of welfare issues. When I first encountered the evidence of 1950s union welfare activism, I was struck by its resemblance to today's social unionism. Then, as now, the labour movement contributed money and personal energies to community development projects. Now, more than in the 1950s, these projects consistently have a clear social justice purpose. But the spirit of community activism is common to the two periods. So, too, is the sense that many, though not all, unionists involved in this activism are doing so out of commitments to a larger political purpose, somewhere on the left. Finally, there is the similarity in the public relations purposes of social unionism and the welfare work I have described in this paper. In the *Globe and Mail*, many months pass without a warm word for a labour organization, for example, but one has only to attend community events such as International Women's Day or Gay Pride Week to hear appreciations for financial support provided by the CLC or the Autoworkers or a teachers' union, to name a few I have recently encountered. The pursuit of public support for labour through community alliances continues.

Comparing today's social unionism to the welfare work studied here underscores the importance of the ideological interpretation of welfare work. Identical activities — debt counselling or immigrant aid, for instance — could be given quite different political meanings, depending on their treatment in speeches and resolutions and labour journalism. With one interpretation, labour's involvement in the community becomes a reason to join with business in a class-blind pursuit of

<sup>105</sup> While I agree with Leier's useful notion that the labour bureaucracy is defined by its power over the membership, I think it politically helpful to identify more or less democratic forms of leadership within the considerable range of possible political practices that lie between the imperial style of the Teamsters' Jackie Presser and the anti-leadership culture of the Wobblies. (See Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 13-4, for the vivid contrast between the Teamsters and the Wobblies.) Leadership in a success-oriented campaign of strategic action inevitably requires that people will sometimes be required to do "what they would not have done otherwise." (Leier, 34.) Leier is again quite right that participants in such strategic action are always in some measure constrained and that there is, therefore, no purely consensual, "uncoerced" action in such contexts. (Leier, 37) But it seems to me worth distinguishing as more democratic a leadership who direct members' choices by "constraints" such as arguments grounded in a widely shared understanding of the options, because such constraints are less coercive than, for example, the threat of a beating. Rather than making the measure of union democracy be an erasure of difference between leaders and led, with such an erasure's real costs to some kinds of strategic effectiveness, the hallmarks of good democratic practice might be a leadership system that generates, not just a single "opposition" party, but multiple organizational foci of leadership, so as to foster regenerative criticism of and change in the personnel and the tactical approaches of the labour bureaucracy.

prosperity. In another, community service includes social criticism and the promotion of a spirit of transformation. The same concrete tasks of funding institutions or offering counsel or opening up opportunities for the oppressed (or "disadvantaged") may thus be used to enlist the support of unionists in political projects whose goals are ultimately divergent. They may have fundamentally in common in this community work only the view that this "other" work is really "labour work," which is to say, that it is a means to promote member activism in and community influence for the labour movement.

A social democratic and a liberal unionist may indeed in this way be just two sides of the same coin, joined by an unwillingness to engage in tactics that undermine their one common strategic goal, a strong labour movement.<sup>106</sup> But if one accepts that that goal is, in fact, of real value for any politics of social justice, as a precondition of at least the possibility of workplace democracy, then the similar limits unionists bring to their social justice alliances may be less important than the differences between the ideological work each does. This "rhetoric" may be the "only difference," as Palmer suggests, between social and business unionism.<sup>107</sup> But less dismissively labelled, ideological interpretation is recognizable as an essential part of the shaping of a political movement. Even with the common limits of both unionisms, the one that is willing to claim unpopular loyalties contributes more to social justice politics. A labour organization that will interpret its community work in terms of social transformation, even if it will not sacrifice its own existence to that transformation, still serves a more radical purpose than the one who puts down the dollars for PR but shows in its rhetoric, as Gordon Cushing did, that its politics are fundamentally conservative.

*The research for this paper was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council post-doctoral fellowship. Access to papers was granted by the Canadian Labour Congress and the Labour Council of Metro Toronto. For encouragement and for challenging comment, in various mixes, I thank Stephen Brooke, Michael Cross, Alvin Finkel, Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, Mark McColloch, James Struthers, and the anonymous reviewers of this journal.*

<sup>106</sup>This is the charge that Palmer makes against Art Kube and other arguably "progressive" union leaders in *Solidarity*, 60, 83-5 and against Bob White in *Working-Class Experience* (1992), 373-7. Leier uses the "two sides of the coin" metaphor in his comments on Palmer's book in "Labour Struggles," *Acadiensis*, 23, 1 (1993), 187.

<sup>107</sup>Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 373.