

# William R. Plewman, The Toronto Daily Star, and the Reporting of the Winnipeg General Strike

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# NOTE AND DOCUMENTS

## William R. Plewman, *The Toronto Daily Star*, and the Reporting of the Winnipeg General Strike

Michael Dupuis

IN MAY AND JUNE 1919 almost every Canadian and most American daily newspapers presented the Winnipeg General Strike in flaming editorials, gripping headlines, and news reports as a One Big Union<sup>1</sup>-Bolshevik plot to topple constituted authority and replace it with a Soviet-style form of government. In describing the walkout, newspaper owners and their editors as well as many employers and government officials appeared to be caught up in the extremism of the Red Scare. Among the contemporary commercial press, *The Toronto Daily Star* provided the most impartial and comprehensive treatment of the Winnipeg General Strike.<sup>2</sup> *The*

<sup>1</sup>The OBU or One Big Union was not yet operational at the time of the Winnipeg strike. The OBU was intended to combine all workers regardless of trades or skills into one large labour organization. The OBU had been a serious agenda item at labour's Calgary Conference in March 1919.

<sup>2</sup>Most historians of the Winnipeg General Strike, including Donald Masters, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1950); Clare Pentland "Fifty Years After," *Canadian Dimension*, 6 (July 1969), 14-17; Norman Penner, *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1973); Kenneth McNaught and David Bercuson, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Don Mills 1974); David Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Kingston and Montreal 1990); and Jack Bumstead, "1919: The Winnipeg Strike Reconsidered," *The Beaver*, 74 (May 1994), 27-44, cite contemporary newspaper accounts as supporting primary source material, but do

Michael Dupuis, "William R. Plewman, *The Toronto Daily Star*, and the Reporting of the Winnipeg General Strike," *Labour/Le Travail*, 57 (Spring 2006), 167-81.

*Star* editorialized and reported that for the majority of the strikers in Winnipeg the real issues were collective bargaining and higher wages, not conspiracy and revolution.

*The Star* took this position for several reasons. First, its owner, Joseph Atkinson, was sympathetic to organized labour and needed to cater to his paper's working-class readers. In fact, *The Star*, which first appeared in 1892 as the result of a printers' strike at *The Toronto News*, started with a definite pro-labour viewpoint. When Atkinson became editor in 1899 and later acquired complete ownership and control of the paper, he maintained this pro-labour stance. Second, in early 1919 Atkinson was contemplating a way to embarrass the Union-Conservative government of Robert Borden, hoping to pave the way for the return of the Liberal party, led by Mackenzie King, to power in Ottawa. The mishandling of the strike by the Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, and the Acting Minister of Justice, Arthur Meighen, gave Atkinson the perfect opportunity to criticize Borden's government through *Star* editorials and informed news stories. Third, and finally, *The Star* offered such objective coverage of the Winnipeg strike because the paper, unlike other dailies, sent its own veteran newsmen to Winnipeg to supply first-hand reports and analysis of the lengthy dispute.

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not examine in detail the specific role played by the press or newspaper accounts. A. Balywalder, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1967) and J.E. Rea, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1973) refer specifically to contemporary newspaper coverage, with Rea describing *The Star* as the most impartial. Works on John W. Dafoe, the longtime editor of *The Manitoba Free Press*, include George Ferguson, *John W. Dafoe* (Toronto 1948); Ramsay Cook, *The Politics of John W. Dafoe and The Free Press* (Toronto 1963); and Murray Donnelly, *Dafoe of the Free Press* (Toronto 1968) contain useful information on Dafoe's personal feelings as well as editorial viewpoint in *The Free Press* during the strike. The biography of Joseph Atkinson by Ross Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of the Star* (Toronto 1963) details the philosophy and the direction of *The Star* under Atkinson for the period leading up to and including the Winnipeg General Strike. Three articles by Tom Mitchell, "'To Reach the Leadership of this Revolutionary Movement': A.J. Andrews, the Canadian State, and the Suppression of the Winnipeg General Strike," *Prairie Forum*, 18 (Fall 1993), 239-255; "Repressive Measures: A.J. Andrews, the Committee of 1000, and the Campaign Against Radicalism after the Winnipeg General Strike," *Left History*, 3 (Fall 1995/Spring 1996), 133-167; and "'Legal Gentlemen Appointed by the Federal Government': The Canadian State, the Citizens' Committee of 1000, and Winnipeg's Seditious Conspiracy Trials of 1919-1920," *Labour/Le Travail*, 53 (Spring 2004), 2-25, illuminate the role played by the Citizen's Committee of 1000 and its paper, *The Citizen*. Chad Reimer, "War, Nationhood, and the Working-Class Entitlement: The Counterhegemonic Challenge of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike," *Prairie Forum*, 18 (Fall 1993), 219-237, examines the strikers' daily bulletin, *The Western Labor News*. Two works by the author, Michael Dupuis, "The Response of the Toronto Daily Press to the Winnipeg General Strike," MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1973, and "*The Toronto Star* and the Winnipeg General Strike," *Manitoba History*, 49 (June 2005), 2-14, discuss the role of the commercial press during the strike.



William R. Plewman,  
circa 1940, family photograph,  
provided by George Plewman.

The two reporters were Main Johnson and William Plewman. Of the two, Plewman<sup>3</sup> stayed the longest (5 weeks), wrote the most stories (over 50), and interviewed key labour leaders and supporters, government officials and employers, volunteers and returned soldiers. As a result he delivered the most complete coverage of any Canadian or American newsman about the strike. During the walkout, from 23 May to 7 June, Plewman sent his reports to *The Star* by telegraph via Thief River Falls and Noyes, Minnesota. In order to do this his dispatches were taken by train across the border into Minnesota. His decision to send his stories *via* the United States was necessary to avoid censorship by the strikers' Press Committee. After 7 June, when union telegraphers returned to their keys, he was able to use unrestricted wire service in Winnipeg to transmit reports to Toronto.

What follows are eight documents about William Plewman and the reporting of the Winnipeg General Strike. First, appears a letter to the author in 1972 from

<sup>3</sup>William Rothwell Plewman was born in Bristol, England, on 3 August 1880. Along with his family he immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1888. In 1903 he joined *The Toronto Daily Star* and, after a lengthy career as a telegraph operator, reporter, editor, columnist, and editorial writer, retired in 1955. He was most famous for his *Star The War Reviewed* column written between 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. He wrote three books including *Adam Beck and the Ontario Hydro* (Toronto 1947). Plewman died on 10 August 1963.

William's brother, Charles, who was also in Winnipeg during the strike. He was Boy's Secretary of the downtown YMCA on Vaughan Street from 1917 to 1921. The letter backgrounds William Plewman and describes Charles' thoughts about the strike. Then are two interviews by the author, conducted in 1972, the first with Charles Plewman and the second with William Plewman's son, Richard. These interviews focus on William Plewman as *The Star's* reporter in Winnipeg, as well as conveying something of the atmosphere during the strike. Extraneous material from these interviews has been edited. Next is a map showing Plewman's beat, the area in Winnipeg he covered to obtain stories, and, in particular, specific locales that it can be ascertained he frequented or visited. Finally, there are excerpts from four *Toronto Star* reports about the strike written by William Plewman.

#### 1. Letter from Charles Plewman, 27 March 1972

Dear Mr. Dupuis

W.R. Plewman was of English-Irish extraction. He was religious and brought up as a Protestant. In the better sense of the word he was a 'Wasp'. He was a non-smoker and for most of his life a non-drinker. He married Claire Hocken, the daughter of H.C. Hocken, a former mayor of Toronto and later a Senator. At one time he [William] was editor of *The Orange Sentinel*. Owing to a disagreement over the temperance issue with his father-in-law, H.C. Hocken, who owned the paper, he resigned and went with *The Star*, where he finally became an editorial writer. During both World Wars he wrote a feature *Star* column entitled *The War Reviewed*. This gave him a large audience and a very good reputation as a war analyst. *Time Magazine* said that he was the best in Canada. During the Second World War it is said that 30,000 *Toronto Telegram* readers were buying the noon edition of *The Star* in order to read his comments.

He enjoyed the confidence of J.E. Atkinson, with whom as an editorial writer he was constantly in close touch. You probably know that the *The Star* started off more or less as a labour paper in the wake of a strike at *The Daily News*. It was strikers under the leadership of H.C. Hocken that brought *The Star* into the world.

W.R.P. was a Church worker — a Sunday school teacher and a man who was considered left of centre. He was quite sympathetic to labour. He was opposed to the closed job and felt that labour was right in fighting it in Winnipeg. What both he and I deplored was the method of going about it. Both of us have the English respect for law and order. When any group challenges that we have to then line up on the side that upholds the law.

Never before or since have I experienced anything so closely resembling civil war as I did during the strike. Winnipeg was a city torn down the centre. When the chips were finally down I had to go into barracks with the rest of the people who

were prepared to support the recognized representatives of the people. By this time labour forces had taken over practically the complete control of the city.

## 2. Interview with Charles Plewman — April 1972, Toronto, Ontario

*How long had you been in Winnipeg before the strike?*

I went there in 1917 so I had been in Winnipeg for two or three years. Like my brother, I was sympathetic to what the unions were asking. I thought it was their right and I thought they had a right to make an issue of it.

*What do you recall about your brother William Plewman and the Winnipeg General Strike?*

You know, in some ways my reaction might not be as good as someone who is quite detached. I was with the YMCA in Winnipeg when all of a sudden a tap came on the door and there was my brother, unannounced. All I knew was that he was there to report on the strike in Winnipeg but obviously he was quite favourably disposed to organized labour. My brother ... was a humanitarian. He had strong views, strong convictions ... he leaned toward the Liberals in politics because of his humanitarianism. He came to Winnipeg a great believer in trade unionism, which up until that time had not begun to attain the position it now holds.

You must remember trade unions had never achieved anything like ... today. Things changed at the time of the Winnipeg Strike ... They (unions) wanted to organize and to deal with the employers as representatives of labour but the employers would not concede. So here was a direct confrontation between organized management on one hand and organized labour on the other on what the unions considered a pretty basic and fundamental issue ... Well the more organized labour in Winnipeg thought about it, the more it realized that this was a pretty basic issue and this was not only the problem of these particular sets of workers but, was an issue that involved organized labour itself. So then they had the General Strike.

*How did you feel about the strike then?*

When my brother and I began to find ourselves at odds with the movement was when the organized union overstepped what we considered to be its rightful place in the scheme of things and began to usurp the authority of the government ... when they said to me you can't get bread unless you get a chit from us, when they said you can't get milk unless you apply for it, when they said you can't have any fire protection unless we give it to you. One night they went out and cut the hoses as I saw them and stopped the volunteer firemen from putting out a fire. They took upon them-

selves ... the authority of the government and challenged the elected representative of the government to carry out the will of the people ... I ended up in the barracks learning how to shoot a rifle and I'm a pacifist.

It was a terrible situation. The only time in my life, the only time, never before and never since then, have I been in a similar predicament. Never before have I seen a part of society cut down the centre in what is virtually civil war. If you didn't challenge the right of organized labour at that time, they were going to take over. They had taken over. When you have no police force, no fire department, no milk, no bread, no transportation, when you are at the mercy of this group for your very existence — you either go along with them and let them make a government, or else you back the elected representatives. In our staff there would be two or three fellows on the opposite side of the fence. It was a very, very disturbing and uncomfortable feeling. The feeling that you were pitting brother against brother and sister against sister in what amounted to civil war.

*You still have very strong feelings about the strike.*

You can't go through those things without it. I never experienced a situation when the government of a country was challenged as the Manitoba government was challenged on that issue.

*What about the fact that your brother was a newspaperman who was supposed to deal with events objectively?*

I think he would be very objective. I don't know if he would show his own reaction, his own view to what labour was doing at that moment. He would certainly treat the things that were happening pretty objectively.

*What do you think your brother felt about how the authorities handled the strike? Like Mayor Gray?*

I think my brother felt it was bungled instead of trying to seek compromise. Too much black, too much white.

*Do you remember the parades?*

I remember the one parade in particular on June 21. They (the strike supporters) were going to have a parade on Saturday no matter what and the authorities said they were going to stop it.

*I understand Mr. Atkinson was The Star and The Star was Atkinson.*

Atkinson was a man of very high principles and had strong convictions.

*And also sympathetic towards organized labour.*

Yes I think he was very sympathetic towards organized labour. He inherited the paper, which was the result of a strike.

*I'm interested in finding out a little bit more detail about the actual strike. For instance, churches. How about going to Church? Was that a problem?*

No people attended Church ... the rank and file would split down mainly on the basis of their social position in the community, whether they belonged to labour. If you were a Methodist, you supported labour. In an issue of that kind the way people will decide will not be on the basis of religion ... but ... on the basis of their own position in society. You would think that it might be determined on great underlying fundamental basic principles, which would be Christian principles ... But it isn't. It is which side of the street you live on, which side of the town you live on.

*Did you ever hear about the Labor Church and William Ivens and James Woodsworth?*

Will had a lot of contacts with those two. Woodsworth and Ivens were very active in the strike. Will was discussing with Woodsworth their right to do certain things. Woodsworth was a minister and Will was a religious man ... the kind of thing Will would be saying is, "I'm going along with this and I don't think you should be doing this, or I don't think you should be doing that." This might never percolate into Will's writing because the moment he sat down to write he'd write objectively.

### 3. Interview with Richard Plewman — February 1972, Trenton, Ontario

*First of all I would like to ask you about your father's newspaper acquaintance, Mr. Main Johnson.*

Well, to my knowledge Main Johnson was one of the ... writers of *The Star* and I think my father and he were sort of what you would call puppy reporters (in 1919). Main Johnson was sent out west ... then they sent my father out to follow him up in Winnipeg. Dad stayed out there through the strike period and in my memory it appeared to me that there were tremendous problems such as communication. The strike was a General Strike and to get news ... the only way was telegraph and even those boys were being threatened. The newspaperman himself was a near spy from another country. They were not given any privileges whatsoever. They had to fend



for themselves. In fact they had to protect themselves because I recall some instances when there might have been some violence ... There was a resentment ... I recall of ... the population towards the invasion of the newspaper man arriving in their ... town.

*What kind of friend was Mr. Johnson with your father? Was he a social friend, personal friend?*

I don't think Dad was a particularly close friend to Main Johnson although they had tremendous respect for each other, but they had a very decided different viewpoint on certain subjects and while there was never any animosity there was always a certain amount of rivalry which I wouldn't doubt that Mr. Atkinson fostered because he was an astute man to take two younger men and place their intelligence one against the other.

*Had your father ever been out west before?*

Not to my knowledge. In fact I remember all my mother put together was a pair of shoes, a shirt and one set of underwear and that was it because he was only going to go out there and be back tomorrow. They didn't know how long it (the strike) was going to be a temporary thing. Even the stores were closed up. There was nothing to do and they had to fend for themselves including food.

*You mentioned that when he left your mom packed him bare essentials.*

Oh, he was shoved out of Toronto if I recall very quickly.

*Was this Mr. Atkinson, The Star's owner?*

I don't know if it was Mr. Atkinson who ordered him out or what happened but don't forget he was still a pup reporter. But whoever gave the orders said just get there. And mother just packed a little ditty bag and said there you are and they thought he'd get out there and back in two days. But it didn't turn out to be that way. So he arrived there with basically no clothes. There were a few others in the same spot trying to change clothes and if anybody had clean clothes he was lucky. What we don't understand today was that it was a total strike, everything was closed.

*Did your mother hear from your father for five weeks?*

I don't believe so. There was quite a vacuum. In fact she was quite concerned because there was a lot of wild reports coming through, some of it very scary but no there was little or no correspondence because there was just no way. The mail didn't

move and he couldn't put it in a press release. He was totally on the other side of the world. She had three children and she had to sit and hold her hands.

*Any incidents you remember after he returned?*

A rather comical thing. Dad was always clean-shaven but when he came back he had a full beard and goatee and I think that lasted about three days after he was back.

*You mentioned some interesting things about your father during the strike, about him using a horse.*

Well, you know it got so rough ... then he had another means of transportation, which was to get old Dobbin, which was a horse. I can recall him going out walking some distance ... Then he got a plow horse, Dobbin. Dad had never been on a horse in his life. He galloped down the main street in the town on this crazy horse — I don't know how long he stayed on it. But the problem was what do you do when you get there because he was not a farm boy in any shape. So he took the horse back to wherever he was staying and they tied it up and he put on it 'union' and that was to protect the horse.

*I'm getting the impression it was more difficult than I thought it was.*

Certainly it was. As I say it was total ... so living in a fancy hotel didn't mean a darn thing ... Simple things such as running out of razor blades. So he didn't shave, so he arrived back with a beard and the same clothes. I don't know what happened to those clothes but they certainly didn't hang around long. The newspapermen in that time in that particular event put up with a heck of a lot. They were not prima donnas in any way.

*Main Johnson knew many people quite well, but when your father arrived in Winnipeg he did not have the contacts that Main Johnson had. Is this right?*

Well, I don't think it is a bad impression. I think father probably started off with an advantage. He didn't know anybody so he was ignorant and therefore he didn't get conned, brown nosed or brainwashed by anybody. He went out there as a reporter to report it as he saw the facts and that was it and no personalities involved ... Dad respected James Woodsworth but didn't like the fact a man of education and of the cloth ... would use his influence to get involved in such a very, very serious thing.

*He mentioned this?*

Oh yes he mentioned this because father being so religious this was rather contrary and he was very concerned that religion was being used. This is nothing against Woodsworth because he had such strong convictions, but on the other hand my dad felt it was misplaced and there were words, I know there were.

*Your dad was also a city alderman at that time in Toronto. In fact he left his municipal post to cover the strike. Do you think his experience as an alderman helped him evaluate what was going on?*

I think it helped. I think also what it did when he got back is disillusioned him as to what politics meant.

*I know 1919 was his last year in city politics.*

Yes it was. Well there were two reasons. He had a job, which was at *The Star* and he went into politics on goodwill, but when *The Star* told him it was interfering with him being a good newspaperman he had to quit and also he was disillusioned with politics.

*When he was in Winnipeg during the strike, The Toronto Telegram, which was a great rival of The Star at the time, ran a piece saying things like the traveling alderman for The Star is in Winnipeg and his rightful place is back here in the City. Apparently Toronto was experiencing its own labour problems at the time. Did he feel bad about these suggestions being leveled at him?*

No, no Dad felt he was elected an alderman at the public's wish and he was out there (in Winnipeg) doing a job and trying to even inform Toronto people what was going on. So trying to interpret his mind this is goose for the gander when it comes to rivalry between two very hot papers, *The Telegram* and *The Star*, and so they would take any advantage they could politically but on the other hand he cared less.

*What about the rivalry between The Telegram and The Star. Was it vicious?*

How vicious do you want to make it? It was very vicious.

*Canada had never seen a General Strike before and it was an awful thing to come into. I am still amazed by his impartiality and non-partisan writing. Certainly he must have discussed events with the other newspapermen.*

I can't recall that he discussed his personal opinions with other newspapermen partly because, this is rather corny, he was the property of *The Star* and the property of the citizens of Toronto, so whatever his opinion was it was from him not from other people ... But now that you bring this up I have a feeling or heard or am trying to grope in my memory that he had meetings with Woodsworth and the other minister (William Ivens) and suggested kind of cool it type of thing. In other words today we would call him a mediator and he was trying in his way to find reason and logic as to why all the viciousness ... it is true that he did have many conversations with the leaders of both sides trying to find out why they aren't together, what's the big problem, can't we iron this out without having total war, which was darn near with the General Strike. I like to think he had a little piece of the action in relationship to them getting together and saying well let's call it quits.

*There was one day, known as Bloody Saturday, when the RNWMP made their charge. Was your father present?*

I believe so. There again of course with mixed emotion ... he felt force was necessary and then of course the RNWMP were put on the carpet if they were vicious or rough ... I believe he did write something about they were doing their duty as they were told, they had to have some kind of discipline, law and order.

*We had talked about your father being a non-drinker and non-smoker. I have since found out that a lot of reporters in those days were very heavy drinkers. One famous journalist from Montreal, George Ferguson, now retired, told me that two or three of the reporters from Winnipeg were known to be very hard drinkers, and some of them wrote their copy in bars. I thought this added weight to what your dad was writing, in other words he was a sober man writing the facts.*

Well yes ... Half the news reporters in those days used to do their reporting in the bar because this is the place to be. This is where they thought they were getting the news, where the action was. This was not true and for one reason or another Dad did not drink and did not smoke.

*Just in case we have missed it earlier, maybe we can try and sum up once again the nature of your father's character. Some of his major beliefs.*

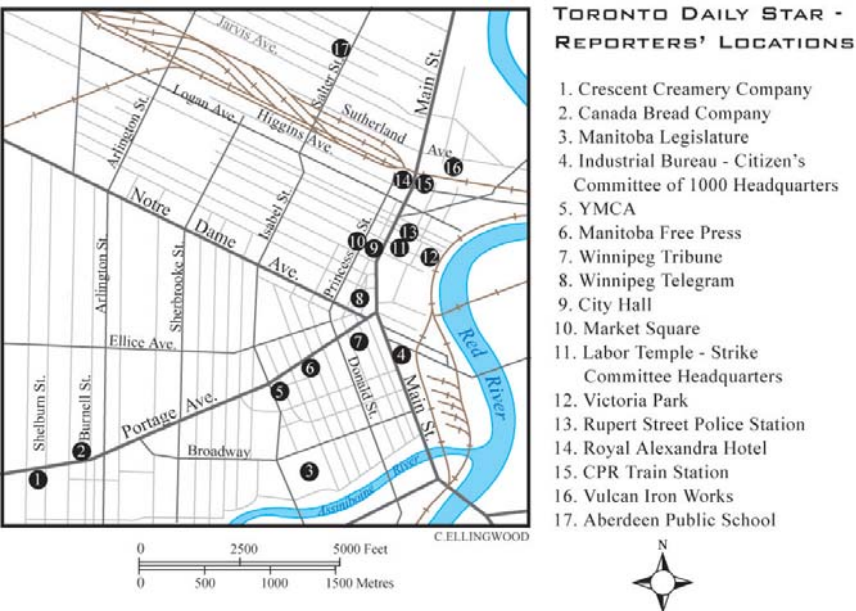
You mean you'd like to know what made this man tick? He was a very lowly, common man insofar as prestige or money. He had a broadness of vision and thought which the average person didn't have because he worked at it. He would not speak nor would he write about any subject unless he was completely immersed in it and then convinced that what he was going to put on paper was correct. He could never be accused of putting in print or words anything that wasn't the truth. It didn't mat-

ter what the competition was or what the variation of the attack may be he could prove it and he just let it stand that way. He was a man of terribly strong convictions. He believed in a God but he didn't believe you had to be a Methodist or United Church or Anglican or anything else. One of the things he told me was just believe, don't be nothing.

*His feelings towards labour, were they sympathetic?*

He believed in labour very definitely, because at the time ... industry as a whole was taking advantage of labour and we go right back to ... children being exploited in England. And he had seen all this and so to that extent he believed in labour and in unionism but when he saw the possibilities of unions being directed or controlled by politics or otherwise ... putting a gun to industry's head, he was very anti (union) that way. So he was of two minds.

4. Map of *Toronto Star* Reporters' beat, in Winnipeg, developed by Michael Dupuis



5. Excerpts of *Toronto Star* news stories on the Winnipeg General Strike by William Plewman

*The Toronto Star*. Friday, 23 May 1919

Outward Appearances Show No Sign Of Any Big Strike

Special to *The Star*. Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

(By train from Winnipeg)

By W.R. Plewman

The strikers have gone pretty far and they have made some mistakes but they have not perpetrated Bolshevism. The writer came to the city (Winnipeg) understanding that the Strike Committee of Five had inaugurated a reign of terror, preventing willing workers from serving their employers and the public and allowing only a few employers, who would submit to the humiliation of displaying signs "By permission of the Strike Committee" to carry on. It was that idea and the vision of impending Bolshevik horrors that drove nearly all the non-strikers into one camp and made virtually all those who are not manual workers enthusiastic supporters of the offensive now being waged by the Citizen's Committee. But the whole thing is a delusion and a figment of the imagination. There is no Soviet. There was little or no terrorism.

*The Toronto Star*. Tuesday, 27 May 1919

Metal Workers Strike Started The Trouble

Special to *The Star* by Staff Correspondent. Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

(By train from Winnipeg)

By W.R. Plewman

Just what did happen in Winnipeg? As nearly as the writer can determine, this in brief is what happened.

Three weeks ago the metal trades workers in contract shops went on strike to enforce collective bargaining as they have it in the railways. The building trades also struck to enforce the same principle. Twelve days ago, the Trades and Labor Council, which within a year has unionized all the clerks, waiters, food makers and distributors, and movie employees, called a general sympathetic strike to assist the fight for collective bargaining.

The non-striking elements of the community at once envisioned Russian Bolshevism and organized military and other forces to secure the essentials of life. In the meantime, the strikers, who claim they had no intention other than to show their power to cut off supplies, arranged with the Mayor to partially operate some of the services and tack up words on bread and milk wagons, restaurants, and movies, indicating that the service was by permission of the strike committee. The entire

community, barring strikers, was enraged by this development, which was interpreted as meaning that the employers were being given permission to do business. Instead of that the strikers were being allowed to serve the public.

*The Toronto Star*. Tuesday, 17 June 1919  
Ivens, Russell and Bray Now Held By The Police  
Police Raid Homes Of Ten Men And Take  
Them Out Of The City In Automobiles  
Labor Temple Is Thoroughly Searched,  
Doors Broken Down, And Destroyed  
Special to *The Star* by Staff Correspondent. Winnipeg.

By W.R. Plewman

I was at the Labor Temple at six o'clock today and saw the window in the front door broken clean out. I was told that a dozen redcoats, backed by more than five hundred special constables, had surrounded the building and finding the door locked and the strike committee not in session, as it had been sometimes early in the morning, broke into the building and seized all the papers they could find.

As I was standing outside the building Woodsworth, the former Methodist Minister and later a longshoreman in Vancouver, who is here assisting the strike and doing some special writing for the *Labor News*, came hurrying up from the Canadian Pacific Hotel where he is staying. I asked him what he thought of the authorities' action. He replied: "It is a stupid, high-handed move. Already the workers feel that the Government is not truly representative, that it represents only a section and not all the community."

"Will the strike collapse now that the leaders are removed?" he was asked. "Not at all," he replied. "The Government can't arrest thirty-five thousand strikers, and if the strike were broken the people would still insist upon handling their affairs and securing the ancient rights of Britons."

*The Toronto Star*. Monday, 23 June 1919  
Three Classes With One Big Union Plan  
Majority Desire To Secure Results In A  
Reasonable Way  
Special to *The Star* by Staff Correspondent. Winnipeg.

By W.R. Plewman

Supporters of the One Big Union do not all feel themselves committed to the same program. They seem to be made up of three classes, as follows:

Those who would use the One Big Union to secure a larger share of profits of industry and by solidifying the vote of the workers obtain a larger influence in democratic Parliaments. Roughly speaking, these seem to represent the rank and file and include workers of a wholesome type who want to be reasonable.

Those who would use the One Big Union to secure control of Parliamentary bodies and by a combination of strike and political action socialize all productive industry. Some think this would end the capitalistic system, and others have their doubts. This second class balk at the use of force but speak of their programs as direct action. Woodsworth, Ivens, and A.E. Smith, of Brandon, and possibly a moderate like Fred Dixon, MPP, and a radical like Pritchard, of Vancouver, belong to this class. Their answer, if they choose to talk, probably would be that they would be in a majority and represent the constitution. In fact, I have heard such views expressed many times from platforms in Winnipeg.

Those who would organize along IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] lines and hasten Soviet rule by resort to violence. These are very few in numbers and mostly foreigners. Naturally, they work under cover and don't openly utter their intentions.



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