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Article abstract

Historians contend that the heyday of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) in the U.S. and Canada ended when it was suppressed by the authorities in the First World War because of the “foreigners” within its ranks. However, the IWW went underground and re-emerged briefly in the late 1920s and 1930s as a force in lumber and mining unions in both countries. Little is known about its organization during this period, particularly the operations of the Canadian Administration established in 1932. This article explores the activities of Canadian Wobblies and their attempts to form a Canadian Administration between 1931 and 1935 in Port Arthur, Ontario. It establishes that the Canadian leadership increasingly separated itself from an ineffectual American leadership and attempted to establish uniquely “Canadian” polices.

Spittoon Philosophers or Radical Revolutionaries?

The Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1932-35*

By Michel S. Beaulieu

“We have blazed the trail for all other organizations for many a year. Let us now turn attention to ourselves now.” We have won! We have succeeded in making the worker class consciousness to a much greater degree than ever before. They are clamouring for Industrial Organization.”¹

With these words the newly established Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) launched, in 1932, *The Organizer*, its official publication. After years of toiling in obscurity and operating in the shadow of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), the IWW appeared to be going on the offensive to re-establish what it perceived was its natural position of leadership within the Canadian left. The decade and a half following the First World War had not been easy for the IWW in Canada. Its existence had been rocked by internal instability, its position successfully challenged by a growing number of newly formed un-

ions and socialist organizations, its leadership decimated by trials and imprisonment, and its key body of supporters, the Finnish socialists of Northern Ontario and British Columbia, were split over the new Marxism that emanated from Russia following that country's dual revolutions in 1917. Those now leading the IWW's new Canadian Administration (CA), however, believed the dark years had finally given way to an era in which wage slavery could finally be abolished.

Established in the United States in 1905, the IWW was a radical syndicalist organization that favoured militant actions and general strikes.² It remains one of the United States' only native socialist

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¹ *The Organizer*, August 1932.

² Although a shadow of its former self, the Industrial Workers of the World does claim to have active branches in Europe, the UK, Australia, Canada, and the United States. It also publishes in the United States a newspaper *The Industrial Worker*. Recent activities include pickets at Starbucks locations in New

Abstract

Historians contend that the heyday of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) in the U.S. and Canada ended when it was suppressed by the authorities in the First World War because of the “foreigners” within its ranks. However, the IWW went underground and re-emerged briefly in the late 1920s and 1930s as a force in lumber and mining unions in both countries. Little is known about its organization during this period, particularly the operations of the Canadian Administration established in 1932. This article explores the activities of Canadian Wobblies and their attempts to form a Canadian Administration between 1931 and 1935 in Port Arthur, Ontario. It establishes that the Canadian leadership increasingly separated itself from an ineffectual American leadership and attempted to establish uniquely “Canadian” polices.

Résumé: *On suppose généralement que les Industrial Workers of the World (IWW ou Wobblies) ont été le plus influents aux États-Unis et au Canada avant la Première Guerre mondiale, durant laquelle les autorités les ont supprimés, craignant la présence des “étrangers” parmi leurs membres. En réalité, entré dans la clandestinité, l’IWW a réémergé brièvement vers la fin des années 1920 et pendant les années 1930, quand il a exercé une influence réelle dans les syndicats forestiers et miniers des deux pays. On connaît mal leur organisation à cette époque-là, particulièrement les opérations de l’Administration canadienne établie en 1932. Cet article examine les activités des Wobblies canadiens et leurs tentatives pour former une Administration canadienne entre 1931 et 1935 à Port Arthur (Ontario). Nous montrons que les chefs canadiens se sont distancés de plus en plus d’une direction américaine inefficace, et ont essayé d’établir des politiques spécifiquement canadiennes.*

movements, and, as such, much of what is known about the IWW’s structure and international platform is derived from the works of American historians.³ In the Canadian context, A. Ross McCormack has described the doctrine of the IWW as “Marxist, its syndicalism was pragmatic, and it flourished during industrial cri-

sis.”⁴ David Schulze writes that the IWW in Canada advocated industrial rather than parliamentary action to achieve a new social order, differing from “socialists and other trade unionists who were willing to work within the existing political and social confines.”⁵ As Schulze suggests, however, of all the movements

York City. For more information, consult the IWW’s website located at <http://www.iww.org/>. The IWW as it exists today while may be similar in rhetoric, it is not in action. Perhaps the most telling is its decision to sign contracts, something that was abhorrent to early ‘Wobblies’.

³ The standard works on the IWW remain Melvyn Dubofsky’s *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, reprinted and edited by Joseph A. McCartin (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) and Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labour Movement in the United States*, vol. 4 *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

⁴ A. Ross McCormack, “The Industrial Workers of the World in Canada: 1905-1914,” in Peter Ward and Robert A. McDonald, ed., *British Columbia: Historical Readings* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981).

⁵ David Schulze, “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Cal-

that arose in the early twentieth century, the IWW was “remarkable among North American labour unions for two things: the radicalism of their ideology and the daring of their tactics.” A classic example of this radicalism occurred in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, where an attempt was made to foster “inter-ethnic solidarity founded on the right to work ‘regardless of race, colour, or nationality.’”⁶ However, despite an active presence in many regions of Canada, few substantial works on the IWW in Canada exist beyond Mark Leier and Jack Scott’s separate examinations of the organization in British Columbia.⁷ Both the work of Scott and Leier, however, treat the IWW as a failed alternative to the hegemony established by other socialist organisations in British Columbia.

American and Canadian historians have also typically ignored the existence of the IWW following the First World War focusing instead on the Communist parties of the United States and Canada. Melvyn Dubofsky, for instance, writes that in the United States the IWW was “no longer a vital presence on the American radical scene after 1919, only a shell of its former self after 1924,” and despite “on occasion momentarily recapturing the essence of its remarkable past,” it was a spent force in North American labour

organizing.⁸ Similarly, Leier argues that “despite the creations of a separate Canadian administration,” the IWW in Canada by the 1930s was “little more than a debating society.”⁹ However, Leier is only partially correct in his conclusion. While the changes brought on by the First World War and the rise of the CPC did reshape the Canadian left and the IWW did lose much of its stature, it still played an important and significant role in parts of the country.

It should be no surprise, considering McCormack’s characterisation of the IWW, that the industrial crisis of the late 1920s and 1930s led to a renewed interest in the IWW on the part of Canadian workers. The “tattered remains” of the IWW, as Leier describes them, were an active and effective force in the bush camps of Northern Ontario and British Columbia during the period. It was in these camps that recent immigrants found a space to organize as such opportunities had increasingly been blocked by mainstream trade unionism and even the Communist Party of Canada following the pressure to dissolve language organization after the Comintern began its “Bolshevisation” policy in 1926.¹⁰ Between 1924 and 1936, its membership fluctuated between 3,600 and 4,400, a respectable number considering the CPC’s membership ranged be-

gary in the Depression of 1913-1915,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 25 (Spring 1990), 48.

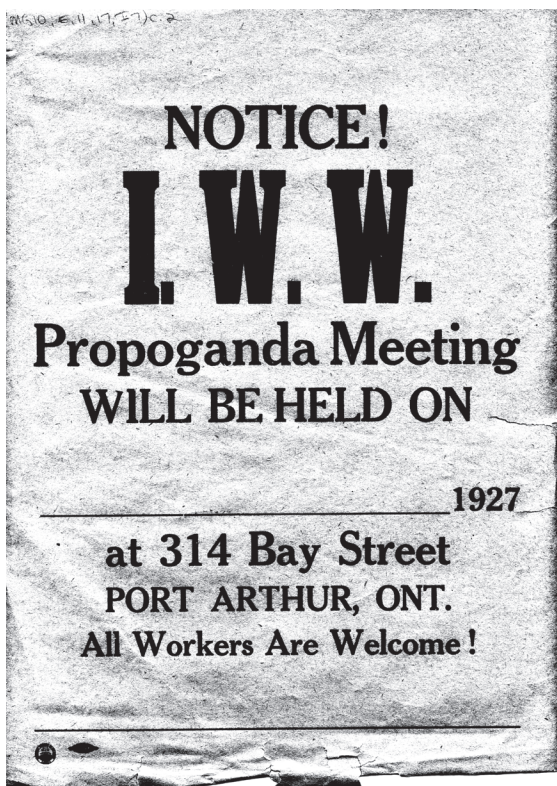
⁶ Schulze, “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed,” 75.

⁷ See Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990) and Jack Scott, *Plunderbund and Proletariat* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1975).

⁸ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 267.

⁹ Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, 108.

¹⁰ See Michel S. Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead: Ethnicity, Socialism, and Politics, 1900-35* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).



Advertisement for Propaganda Meeting at the Finnish Labour Temple, c.1927. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

western Ontario between 1926 and 1932 reveals at least some bite existed in “the debating society.”¹² Even the CPC’s powerful Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada’s (LWIUC) own annual report for 1926-1927 acknowledged the presence of the IWW in the lumber camps and realized that nothing could be accomplished as long as two organizations competed for membership.¹³

However, while the work of Peter Campbell and Ian Radforth sketch the activities of Wobblies and its relationship with the CPC, little is known about its larger organizational challenges and relationship with the organization’s General Executive Board (GEB) located in Chicago.¹⁴ Such information is important as it provides a window into the failure of the IWW to become an international force, and reveals much about the divisions within the organization. This article explores the activities and actions of

tween 1,385 and 8,000 during this same period.¹¹ The participation and leading role of Wobblies in major strikes in North-

¹¹ For IWW membership numbers, see G. Jewell, *The History of the IWW in Canada* (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1975), 5-6. For CPC membership numbers, see Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 120 and 139, and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party of Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 54-74 and 77.

¹² For more on these strikes, see chapters 7 and 8 of Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead*; Michel S. Beaulieu, “Finnish Kanadalainen Sosialismi: Towards an Understanding of Canadian-Finnish Socialist Activity, 1900-1939,” *Faravid* 33 (2009), 107-26; Peter Campbell, “The Cult of Spontaneity: Finnish-Canadian Bushworkers and the Industrial Workers of the World in Northern Ontario, 1919-1934,” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (1998), 117-46; and Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario 1900-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Campbell’s work has also been reprinted in Michel S. Beaulieu, ed. *Essays on Northwestern Ontario Working Class History: Thunder Bay and Its Environs* (Thunder Bay: CNS Press, 2008), 93-126.

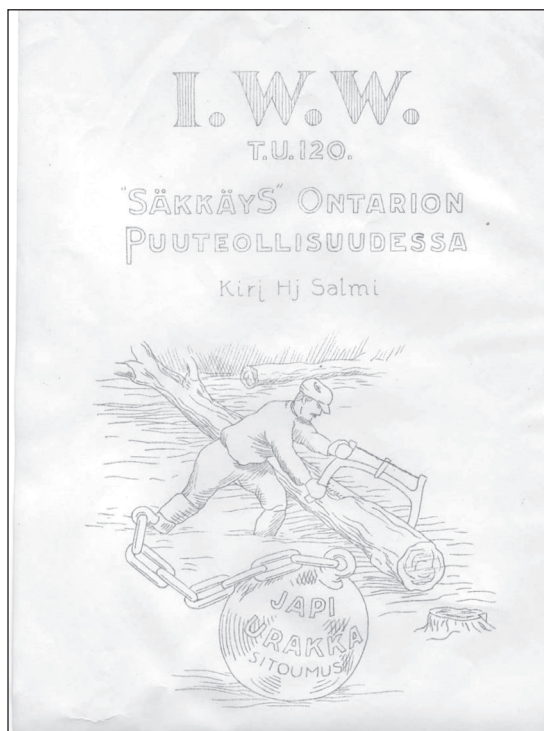
¹³ Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC,) Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG 28, IV4, vol. 143, file 6, Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada Annual Report 8 March 1926 to 5 March 1927, n.d., 3.

¹⁴ For brief mentions, see Campbell, “The Cult of Spontaneity” and Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*.

Cover of a Finnish language Lumber Workers Industrial Union pamphlet produced by the Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus (Canadian Industrial Worker Support Circle or CTKL), nd. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

Canadian Wobblies and their attempts to form a Canadian Administration between 1931 and 1935. It establishes that the Canadian leadership increasingly separated itself from an ineffectual GEB and attempted to establish uniquely “Canadian” polices. However, this resulted in a growing autonomy for its various branches and, like its American counterpart, the success of the Canadian Administration was partially hampered by its inability to make “up their minds on what kind of structure their organization should adopt.”¹⁵

The story of the IWW and, in particular its strong hold in Port Arthur, Ontario, is intertwined with that of Finnish socialists in North America. Shortly before the First World War, members of the Finnish community in Port Arthur led by Finnish union organizer and future prominent member of the CPC Amos Tobias (A.T.) Hill established an IWW branch at the Lakehead.¹⁶ Much of the IWW’s organizing in Northern Ontario occurred in the lumber camps. Hill and others with support from the Finnish



Socialist Organisation of Canada, helped organize workers under the IWW banner in camps throughout Northwestern Ontario between 1913 and 1915.¹⁷ By 1915, total IWW membership in Canada has been estimated at 8,000.¹⁸

Socialist organizations in Canada, however, were dramatically affected and altered by the First World War and the Russian Revolution.¹⁹ Between 1914

¹⁵ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 270.

¹⁶ The term “Lakehead” refers to a region located at the head of Lake Superior in Northwestern Ontario and defined primarily by the municipal boundaries of the former cities of Port Arthur and Fort William (present day Thunder Bay).

¹⁷ Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society (hereafter TBHMS), Personal Papers, A.T. Hill fonds (hereafter ATH), 17/2/1-16, A.T. Hill, “Thank You,” 1. The most notable organizing took place at the Shevlin Clark Sawmill in Fort Frances in 1913 and at another of the company’s camps in 1915.

¹⁸ Jewell, *The History of The IWW in Canada*, 2.

¹⁹ Surprisingly, few studies exist dealing specifically with the Canadian reaction to the events in Russia in 1917. The most thorough studies to date dealing with the reaction in Ontario are Theresa Catherine

and 1918, the imperialist-driven war tore deep holes in the socialist tapestry of Canada. The war itself often pitted members against each other, while the Russian revolution set into motion attempts to sew it back together using wholly different threads. During the First World War, the Royal North West Mounted Police watched socialist organisations very closely and the Finns in particular.²⁰ While many Finnish socialists such as Martin Hendrickson, F.J. Syrjala, and Sanna Kannasto toured throughout Canada at the start of the war speaking against the conflict and selling literature, often this surveillance had as much to do with domestic concerns as it did international conflict.²¹

Resulting from growing concerns such as those voiced by the mayors of both Port Arthur and Fort William, the Canadian Government on the advice of the RNWMP passed an Order-in-Council on 25 September 1918 declaring that, under the War Measures Act, all socialist, syndicalist, anarchist and other subver-

sive organizations were illegal. Over 15 socialist organizations were mentioned by name in this ban, including both the IWW and the Finnish Socialist Organisation of Canada.²² In addition, most domestic and imported socialist publications were also declared illegal, including the widely read Finnish IWW papers *Työmies* and *Industrialisti*. During the First World War Finns, Ukrainians, and other “identified” as socialists were arrested, often for simply failing to produce a passport or naturalization papers. The declaration that many socialist organizations were illegal had a profound impact as socialists, such as the fledgling IWW support circle established by Hill in Port Arthur, were forced underground until the early 1920s.

Nevertheless, many IWW organizers continued to speak and organize workers. When the Winnipeg-based One Big Union (OBU) was established in 1920 they were some of the first to join.²³ As with the case of the Port Arthur Finns, many Wobblies merely transformed their

Baxter, “Selected Aspects of Canadian Public Opinion on the Russian Revolution and on its Impact in Canada, 1917-1919,” (MA thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1972), and Elliot Samuels, “The Red Scare in Ontario: The Reaction of the Ontario Press to the Internal and External Threat of Bolshevism, 1917-1919,” (MA thesis, Queen’s University, 1971).

²⁰ A.W. Rasporich, “Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics,” *The Lakehead University Review*, I (Summer 1974), 39. See also Arja Pilli, “Finnish-Canadian Radicalism and the Government of Canada from the First World War to the Depression,” in Michael Karni, ed., *Finnish Diaspora I: Canada, South America, Africa, Australia and Sweden* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981), 23.

²¹ Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection (hereafter TBFCHS), MG8, A, 1, 3, 3, A.T. Hill, “All People Should Accept the Truth and Reject Lies and Misrepresentation,” 17 June 1974, 1.

²² A.T. Hill, “Historic Basis and Development of the Lumber Workers Organization and Struggle in Ontario,” 4 and Nick Viita, “The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement,” *Industrialisti*, 9, and 13 October 1970, trans. Ahti Ilmari Tolvanen, 9.

²³ See, Oiva W. Saarinen, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Historical Geography of the Finns in the Sudbury Area* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), 193.

IWW support circles into OBU ones. In Port Arthur, this included the transference of controlling shares in the Finnish Building Company, the entity that controlled that city's Finnish Labour Temple.²⁴ The Lumber Workers' Industrial Union #120 (LWIU) also affiliated with the OBU to regain the legality it had lost after the introduction of government restrictions, bringing with it thousands of workers and becoming the single largest union within the OBU.²⁵ However, from the outset, many believed the industrial unionism of the OBU was not the best possible solution as it was still felt that the creation of unions competing against the Trades and Labor Congress would weaken the movement.²⁶ During the second OBU convention in Port Arthur in 1920, the organization split when the western members of the OBU's LWIU walked out.²⁷ Soon after former Wobblies such as A.T. Hill toured Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba organizing on behalf of the communist movement and, after its creation in 1921, the Communist Party of Canada. Hill helped estab-

lish the LWIUC, a member of the Communist International's Red International of Labour Unions.²⁸ By 1923, sections of the party had already been organized in the traditional IWW strongholds of Fort Frances, Red Lake, and Sioux Lookout (many of which Hill had helped establish between 1913 and 1915).²⁹

Sensing the growing threat of the Communist Party, the IWW quickly moved to re-establish itself when wartime restrictions against it were repealed in 1923. However, it was not until 1924 when, through a general vote, the remnants of the OBU's LWIU reformed the IWW. An even smaller group later joined the newly formed CPC.³⁰ The transfer, however, was not without its problems. For some, like bushworker Lawrence Pound of Port Arthur, the transition occurred slowly as some continued to hope for a reorganization of a lumber workers' union under the One Big Union banner.³¹ By 1924, the Finnish support circle of the OBU in Port Arthur transferred back its shares in the Finnish Building Company to the re-established IWW's

²⁴ Viita, "The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement," 7.

²⁵ See, for example, David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978) and Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*.

²⁶ William Eklund, *Builders of Canada: history of the Finnish Organization of Canada 1911-1971* (Toronto: Finnish Organization of Canada, 1987), 196.

²⁷ For more on the split see, Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead*, Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, 166-67; Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1974), 20-21; and Viita, "The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement," 10.

²⁸ Jean Morrison, "The Organisation of Labour at Thunder Bay," in Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp, eds., *Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 131.

²⁹ See TBHMS, A.T. Hill, "Here I am starting kind of a Historical reconstruction with photos," n.d.

³⁰ Viita, "The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement," 11.

³¹ LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds (hereafter CTKL), MG10, C, 4, 6, Unknown IWW representative to Lawrence Pound, 23 April 1924.

Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannattus Liitto (CTKL). Nationally, the IWW began to seek out its traditional support from miners and lumber workers.³²

The same year that the post-War history of the IWW in Canada begins, is the very same one that historians have typically earmarked as the beginning of the end of the IWW in the United States. "By the time of its 1924 convention," according to Melvyn Dubofsky, "the IWW stood on the verge of collapse, needing only a slight nudge to push it over into the abyss of non-existence." The Chicago convention itself was in disarray and confusion was rampant with "two separate sessions scheduled—one called by existing officials, the other announced by James Rowan and the West Coast lumber worker's union."³³ The damage had been done, however, as many pre-war Wobblies either left or never returned causing membership numbers to dwindle. Between 1925 and 1931, only two national conventions were held in the United States and, "by then," Dubofsky writes, "IWW conventions seemed more like college homecomings in which alumni exaggerated the good old days than like the sessions of a radical labor organization."³⁴ According to Fred Thompson,

former Secretary-Treasurer of the GEB in Chicago, after the war, while the "woods went unorganized and gyppo," the IWW in both Canada and the United States showed "its vitality only in new fields, particularly coal mining."³⁵

The first significant post-war activity in Canada involved coal miners in Alberta; however, aside from this limited activity in the early 1920s, the story of the IWW in Canada following the First World War is one that largely revolves around the lumber workers in British Columbia and Northern Ontario. In fact, despite claims by the CPC that the Canadian IWW was on the road to extinction, by April 1926 it was an organization seeing modest improvements in finances and membership and it had taken the lead in major strikes in Northwestern Ontario.³⁶ Wobbly agitation committees and several industrial union auxiliaries had "swamped northern and western Ontario with leaflets, papers and pamphlets."³⁷

While the CPC blamed the LWIUC's inexperience for the general lack of progress in strikes throughout Northern Ontario during the late 1920s, no excuses for the IWW's growing influence in other aspects of the region's economy were forth-

³² Viita, "The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement," 11.

³³ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 265.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 265.

³⁵ Fred Thompson, *The IWW, Its First Fifty Years (1905-1955)* (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1955), 151.

³⁶ *The Worker*, 4 June 1927 and LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Port Arthur "Branch News Letter," 1 April 1927.

³⁷ Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC,) Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, vol. 143, file 6, Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada Annual Report March 8, 1926 to March 5, 1927, n.d., 3.

coming. Buoyed by its success in the bush camps of Northern Ontario, by April, the IWW began to expand into other industries, focussing its efforts on the Marine and Transport Union Industrial Union #510 which was active in Ontario at ports such as Port Arthur, Fort William, Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, and in B.C. in Vancouver.³⁸ However, while Vancouver branches benefited from their close proximity to the IWW Seattle Branch, branches at the Lakehead and elsewhere in central Canada were left without a direct connection to the General Executive Board.³⁹ As a result, by 1927, most Canadian branches operated like the one in Port Arthur, largely autonomously from the GEB in Chicago, taking the initiative on a number of matters and consulting headquarters only after changes had been made.⁴⁰

Due to a lack of constant communication with an ineffectual GEB, Canadian Wobblies began to discuss alternatives. Despite ideological and organizational differences, the LWIU favoured unity with the LWIUC even though the communist lumber workers had rebuffed previous merger attempts. Some viewed the cooperation and resulting success during the strikes of 1926 as proof that a merger was a way to bolster the strength

of the lumber workers as economic conditions within the industry began to worsen. However, the majority agreed with the Sault Ste. Marie branch that the only way such as union would work was if the competing unions followed the IWW platform, something the CPC was unwilling to allow.⁴¹ With thoughts of a merger with the LWIUC now mere fantasy, members of the Ontario District of the LWIU backed a proposal in October 1928 to contact the remnants of the OBU with the purpose of holding a joint conference to bring the two organizations together.

Union with the OBU was not a new issue. The splits within the lumber unions in 1920 and 1923-24 had not been as clear-cut as the CPC and IWW would like to have believed. In the intervening years, many workers had become disillusioned with the communists or had become nostalgic for those days when lumber workers spoke with a much more united voice. Such calls, however, were not being made just within Canada. Members of the OBU on the West Coast of the United States, who had been left isolated following the split in 1923-24, began a movement to unite IWW, OBU, and ex-communist lumber workers together under the IWW banner.⁴² Such

³⁸ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Port Arthur "Branch News Letter," 1 April 1927.

³⁹ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Secretary-Treasurer, LWIU No. 120 IWW to Thomas Hill, 25 June 1927; 1 July 1927; 11 July 1927; 17 October 1927; and By-Laws Committee to The Members, L.W.I.U. #120, I.W.W., 18 April 1927.

⁴⁰ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Secretary-Treasurer, LWIU No. 120 IWW to Thomas Hill, 22 October 1927; 24 October 1927.

⁴¹ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 30, "Minutes of Eight Semi-Annual Ontario District Conference of the Lumber Workers I.U. of the I.W.W.," 1 April 1928.

⁴² LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 20, J.D. Golden Resolution dated 30 March 1927 to Sixth Semi-Annual On-

a union, it was hoped, would eventually form a Canadian Administration of the IWW and an official publication headquartered in Winnipeg.⁴³ Although a merger never occurred, the notion of a Canadian Administration (CA) took hold.

As early as 1925, J.D. Golden of the LWIU in Port Arthur and Sudbury had taken up the cause and could be found disseminating material in favour of such a move within both the United States and Canada. Vancouver members, perhaps sensing the GEB's shift in attention from the West Coast to Central Canada, increasingly took issue with Golden's activities. At a mass meeting in December 1925, they even called for all Canadian branches to go on record as to whether they supported Golden and the creation of a CA.⁴⁴ However, as in 1926, it appears that the membership in Canada felt that it was still not strong enough to support an administration.⁴⁵

Yet, by 1927 seven branches could be found across Canada with a combined membership of 4,400, a number that would remain stable until 1931.⁴⁶ Canadian Wobblies also began to butt heads

with the GEB over rules requiring workers who leave the lumber industry for employment as harvesters to transfer to another industrial union. The secretary of the Port Arthur Branch, J.D. Golden, argued that this left the union, according to LWIU by-laws, in bad standing and ineligible to accept nominations in any positions. In the past, this had not only prevented many of the most active LWIU members from either taking harvesting work or doing so with credentials to organize, but also had resulted in a lack of activity by organizers in the field. Golden brought forth a resolution at the 1928 LWIU conference in Port Arthur suggesting that members of competing industrial unions should not only enter the harvest drive together, but not be subject to transfer fees or loss of delegate status. The change was believed necessary to stem loss of members. Despite the GEB's criticisms of the plan and a declared unwillingness to recognize the workers credentials, Canadian Wobblies agreed to the change and the motion passed without opposition.⁴⁷

By 1931, interest in the formation of a Canadian Administration had gained

tario District Conference of Lumber Workers Industrial Union #120 of the I.W.W.," 3 April 1927.

⁴³ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 31, Minutes of the L.W.I.U. of the I.W.W. Ninth Ontario District Conference, 7 October 1928.

⁴⁴ LUA, CTKL F, 14, 6, Mass Conference of the I.W.W. Members at Vancouver, B.C., 27 December 1925.

⁴⁵ See an assortment of branch minutes in LUA, CTKL F, 14, 19 and F, 14, 10, "Minutes of Ontario District Conference of I.U. 120, I.W.W.," 26 December 1926.

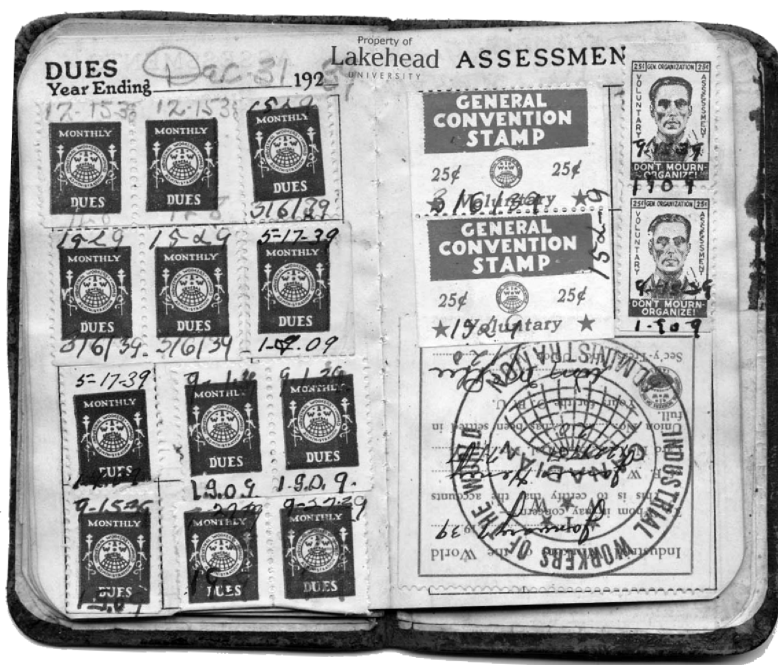
⁴⁶ See *Labour Gazette*, May 1928, 484 and October 1929, 1094;

⁴⁷ LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 30, J.D. Golden, Resolution No. 2 to LWIU Conference, 1 April 1928; "Minutes of Eighth Semi-Annual Ontario District Conference of the Lumber Workers I.U. of the I.W.W.," 1 April 1928. By 1929, membership had decreased by 425 to 3,975 and one branch had folded. See *Labour Gazette*, August 1930, 922.

Membership Booklet containing monthly dues stamps. 1927 to 1939. Show here are the 1938 to 1939 stamps. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

steam. In 1928, concerns over organizing and the remittance of dues resulted in a general meeting of the IWW branches in Canada at Port Arthur on 20 September 1931. Despite having only five branches scattered across the country, the IWW's member-

ship was almost 3,500.⁴⁸ At the meeting, Wobblies resolved to establish a CA, due to both the perceived ineffectiveness of the GEB and "because changes in the immigration laws make it practically impossible for organizers to cross from the States to Canada... customs laws and news bans being made almost every day make it harder than ever to get literature and supplies which are made in the United States."⁴⁹ Another meeting followed in March 1932, with discussion over the location of the potential CA headquar-



ters. Upon the suggestion of the Vancouver branch, it was decided that the location of the new headquarters would be picked by referendum. It was also agreed that the temporary General Organizing Committee was to be located at the Vancouver branch. Ballots for the referendum were also to be issued and tabulated by the Vancouver branch.⁵⁰

The result of the referendum indicates a clear east-west divide over Vancouver or Port Arthur as the potential headquarters for the CA.⁵¹ Sometime

⁴⁸ *Labour Gazette*, May 1932, 543.

⁴⁹ *Industrial Solidarity*, 20 October 1931. In fact, the IWW's official history claims that the custom's issue was the reason for the establishment of the Canadian Administration. See, Fred Thompson and John Bekken, *The Industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years* (Cincinnati: Industrial Workers of the World, 2006), 167.

⁵⁰ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 5, "Minutes of general membership special meeting of the IWW held at Port Arthur, Ont.," 23 February 1932.

⁵¹ The March meeting also nominated members for executive positions to be decided at the founding convention of the Canadian Administration. Those nominated for Secretary-Treasurer included H.J. Lindholm, J.D. Golden, and J.P. Rohne. Those running to represent Canada's industrial unions to the

between July and August 1932, Canadian members chose Port Arthur as the home for the new Canadian Administration. A *pro tem* Canadian Executive Branch (CEB) was established and charged with the organisation of a conference to formally establish the administration. The CEB quickly launched a Canadian IWW publication *The Organizer* and, through its pages, began to lay the foundation for the new administration and to establish goals for the IWW in Canada. The *pro tem* CEB moved quickly to re-establish a Wobbly presence in Canada and renewed its verbal attacks on Canadian Communists, "Labour Parties, Unions, Liberals, Conservatives, Churches, and many other organizations" for the inability for the unemployed to receive relief.⁵² The only way, the *pro tem* CEB claimed, that this situation could be changed was if one industrial union was formed in such a way that "all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department."⁵³ As *The Organizer* proclaimed in its inaugural issue, "we of the IWW, who have tasted of both victory and defeat, know of old that our tactics and our principles are sooner or later to be recognized by the great mass of workers, both employed and unemployed."⁵⁴

While the Canadian IWW organ-

ized itself, it also began to lend moral support to the activities of other organizations attempting to disassemble trade unionism and to those regions where the communist threat was most apparent. One such example was the formation of the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia under the leadership of Michael McNeil in 1932. The CEB viewed the Amalgamated Mine Workers' "unloading [of] their autocratic rulers," the United Mine Workers, as inspiring as it had "all the ear marks of the kind of tactics used by the IWW." Clearly writing to the Miners of Nova Scotia, *The Organizer* called upon them "to study the structure of the IWW. and how it is so built that out of its industrial units is built the model ONE BIG UNION."⁵⁵ Instead of following those urging them to enter the political field, the CEB urged the Miners and Steel workers of Nova Scotia to "enter the MILITANT INDUSTRIAL UNION field, and take the 6 hr. day and 5 day wk. and do away with unemployment by depositing capital."⁵⁶

When delegates arrived on 12 September 1932 at the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur, their goal was to "put the Industrial Workers of the World on the map in Canada," and to lay the foundation for the First Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration to be

General Executive Board were A.F. Harbaugh, Nick Viita, Dave Dubo, J. Colville, Peter Aho, and Henry Koivisto.

⁵² *The Organizer*, September 1932.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

held in June 1933.⁵⁷ H.J. Lindholm, *pro tem* secretary-treasurer, presided over the meeting of seventeen other delegates representing branches and industrial unions from across Canada.⁵⁸ While motions were passed, for example, to “use all means in our power to abolish the wage system,” much of the conference was given over to more immediate administrative and financial concerns.⁵⁹ Reacting to the worsening economic conditions resulting from the Depression, delegates voted in favour of organizing the unemployed. In order to facilitate the organization of these workers, initiation fees were reduced from \$1.00 to twenty cents and monthly dues to five cents.⁶⁰ The reduction of fees, delegates believed, would also assist in bringing back into the fold pre-war members. Many of these former Wobblies were currently unemployed or working in relief camps and, it was thought, only needed this small incentive. It was arguably the delegates that needed “these former members, while they in turn [were] in need of the union.”⁶¹ A concern was also voiced that the membership was comprised of older members and that younger and more “vigorous” members were needed for official and

executive positions.⁶² The membership situation was so grim throughout North America that the Secretary-Treasurer of the GEB, Herbert Mahler, reminded Lindholm that when the CA submitted its membership figures to the Canadian Department of Labour, “don’t give them a figure that would show too much of a decline.”⁶³ There was strength in number, even if those numbers were not accurate.

In addition to the lowering of fees for the unemployed in the hopes of attracting more members, the Port Arthur General Recruiting Union’s motion to raise funds through “entertainments” and “dances” was carried, as was the reduction in prices for buttons, card cases, and pins in order to generate more revenue. Canadian branches were also instructed to remit all dues and stamps directly to the CA, a drastic change from each industrial union’s previous system of remitting directly to the GEB in Chicago. The Canadian Executive Branch also demanded that the GEB “credit newly initiated members regardless of length of membership” to increase the number of eligible voting workers and delegates. This was a reflection of the unique situation facing lumber workers and the grow-

⁵⁷ *The Organizer*, October 1932 and LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian IWW. Held in Port Arthur, Ontario,” 12 September 1932.

⁵⁸ In addition to delegates from the Port Arthur Branch and General Recruiting Union, the conference was attended by representatives from Kingston, Ontario and the Vancouver and Merritt branches of British Columbia. In addition, while their delegates were not present, several other localities sent resolutions, minutes, and correspondence from across the country.

⁵⁹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian IWW,” 12 September 1932, 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *The Organizer*, October 1932.

⁶² LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian IWW,” 12 September 1932, 2.

⁶³ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Herbert Mahler to H.J. Lindholm, 21 September 1932.

Finnish worker in front of the Hoito workers restaurant, Finnish Labour Temple. c. 1930. LUA, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG 8.

ing number of relief camps in Northwestern Ontario and the BC interior at the time of the convention.⁶⁴ In keeping with the pan-Canadian focus of the Administration, delegates also discussed once again the formation of the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia. Clearly, the Canadian IWW shared its pre-war predecessors' dislike for the American Federation of Labor, but, as indicated in the rest of the resolution, its support for the Nova Scotia Miners also reveals an active desire for Eastern expansion.⁶⁵ In doing so, the CA attempted to position itself not as a radical alternative, but as a more moderate force that would fight for "personal liberties" and would expose the "truth" about the current system of government in Canada and "the dirty scum that infest the legislative bodies." The CA felt that they were already "black enough



without the need of lying.”⁶⁶

However, the Canadian Executive

⁶⁴ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian IWW,” 12 September 1932, 1.

⁶⁵ Specifically, a resolution was passed congratulating the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia for their “victorious fight against the autocratic and treacherous rule of the United Mine Workers of America officialdom” and hoping that they too would join in discussion. In particular, the delegates wrote to the Miners that, “We see in the formation of the Amalgamated Miners of Nova Scotia a forward step in the direction of the ultimate aim of labour: the welding together of the bonds of solidarity within the ranks of Canadian workers for the final abolition of the wages system, and the creation of a new distributive system, wherein the toiler is guaranteed the full product of his labour. May the ranks of labour be still further solidified with this end in view, by the amalgamation of All Workers into a real One Big Union, of which the Industrial Workers of the World is the original exponent.”

⁶⁶ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian IWW,” 12 September 1932, 3.

Branch, despite its attempts to portray itself as both moderate and revolutionary, still advocated, like its pre-war incarnation, for the general strike. “Nothing less than the thunder-bolt of the General Strike,” wrote the CEB, “can uproot the profit system and destroy it, branch and limb.” Using the short lived socialist republic in Chile during the summer of 1932 as inspiration, in October 1932 the CEB began renewed calls for a general strike and industrial unionism. It argued that the events in Chile were just another example that “the dream of a Socialist Commonwealth is—but a dream, without the strength of Industrial organization.” Although acknowledging that both the French Commune and Russian Revolution had, to a degree, changed material conditions, the CEB argued that both of these events were “failures insofar as freedom from slavery was the objective.” “No armed insurrection or revolution,” they pointed out, had “yet changed the social system.” The French, the CEB contended, were “still slaves of capitalism” and the Russians were “slaves of State Capitalism.” Only Revolutionary Industrialism “with its well developed plan for control of the state through control of industries, is the only logical answer to our prayers or salvation. Make your laws in the Union Hall.”⁶⁷

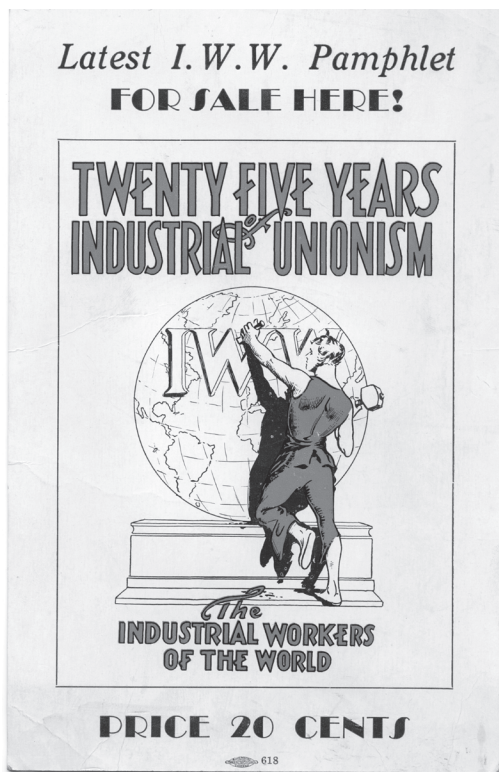
The Canadian Executive Branch also took issue with what it perceived was the Communist Party of Canada’s manipulation of the plight of the unemployed,

especially among recent immigrants. The CEB claimed that in locations throughout Northern Ontario communist leaders failed continually to provide relief for workers and exercised little solidarity, yet were quick to take credit. “As in other communities in Canada,” the CEB argued, “the discontent of the people was seized upon by a bunch of rowdies calling themselves Communists, and the hunger of these people was made the reason from Communist propaganda and the self advancement of the politicians infesting the Communist Party of Canada, which represents Communism no more than it does God.”⁶⁸ The CEB also attacked the communists for their lack of internationalism. “Real revolutionary labor movements,” *The Organizer* wrote, “are international, but really Communism is falling in line with the R.B. Bennett regime in Canada: ‘Run those damn foreign agitators out of the country.’”⁶⁹ However, while the Canadian Administration attacked the CPC for what it perceived as its lack of solidarity and internationalism, the IWW was, in truth, little better. Between 1924 and 1935, only a handful of general conventions were organized, and most had little or no Canadian or other non-American representation. In addition, the conventions that were held in the 1930s tended to focus more on the GEB’s survival than any new initiatives to organise workers. In many ways this situation was reflective of the same problems and issues that

⁶⁷ *The Organizer*, October 1932.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, September 1932.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, October 1932.



Poster advertising the sale of 25th anniversary pamphlets. This example used to hang inside the Finnish Labour Temple. c. 1930. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

the World Administration and its officers elected from the various national administrations.” Mahler blamed his predecessors for a lack of support for Canadian Wobblies, arguing that it had resulted from the IWW’s “failure to develop into a world organization” and “left the IWW practically an American organization or, at best, a North American organization.”⁷⁰

What is most striking is the distance that grew between the two administrative branches by November 1932. Between 1931 and 1932, only one IWW-supported speaker visited Canada, and he only went so far as Vancouver. In fact, except for the Canadian Administration’s Secretary-Treasurer, no IWW speaker visited Northern Ontario for nearly eight years. After the September 1932 conference in Port Arthur, the Canadian Administration took it upon themselves to give two traveling delegates the task of “invading” Eastern and Northern Ontario. The Canadian Administration claimed that, through the efforts of Fred Anderson and George MacAdam, Sault St. Marie was brought back into the fold and over 40 new members enrolled in the final weeks of October alone.⁷¹

The CA claimed that total IWW membership in Canada had increased by almost fifty percent since its establishment in July 1932. This situation was in

faced the newly established CA.

From the beginning, the GEB was lukewarm to the decision by Wobblies in Canada to create their own national administration. In a letter to Lindholm, the barely functioning GEB and its secretary-treasurer Herbert Mahler took exception to the originally proposed name “Canadian General Administration,” believing it would create confusion among the members stating that it “actually should be Canadian Administration.” He reminded Lindholm that, “the General Administration was originally intended to be

⁷⁰ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Herbert Mahler to H.J. Lindholm, 8 March 1932.

⁷¹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14, Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention, 1 November 1932, 1.

direct contrast to the GEB's report of diminished membership during the same period. The Vancouver, Port Arthur, Sault Ste. Marie, and Timmins LWIU support circles, and the Port Arthur General Recruiting Union, were all reported to be holding regular meetings and exchanging minutes. Membership meetings were also being held in Kingston and Nipigon, and the Finnish Auxiliary Union, *Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto* continued to be active. The success of the CA's organizing efforts is reflected in the Port Arthur LWIU's branch signing thirty new dues paying members in November 1932. Despite their best efforts, aside from the group in Sault Ste. Marie, other regions expressed a growing need for members in order to stay active.⁷²

The Canadian Administration also reported on two initiatives being undertaken at its discretion. Delegates at the General Convention were informed that Anderson, MacAdam, and all Canadian Wobblies had begun a campaign to organize the unemployed into industrial unions throughout Canada. While the Canadian Administration acknowledged that organizing the unemployed was "a seemingly unsound financial step... [it] will turn into a sound step with the acquiring of a larger membership."⁷³ The

Canadian Administration also submitted resolutions calling for alterations to the constitution of the IWW to reflect the realities of the current situation in Canada. The two most significant, and representative indicators of the continuing membership troubles in Canada, was the reduction of executive board members from the required seven to five, and the reduction in initiation fees for unemployed workers.⁷⁴ The Canadians were on the move in 1932, but their's was an uphill battle.

The fortunes of the IWW in Canada began a precipitous decline when *The Organizer* reported the sentencing of George MacAdam, Ben Taylor, H. Snider, and T. Spenuk to six months in jail in January 1933. The men had been arrested in December during a strike by 190 Wobblies in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Despite the use of force by local police, workers stood firm in their demands for better wages and were eventually arrested. Subsequent peaceful protests of the arrests resulted in the surrounding of a camp and the arrest of individuals at gun point. Violence erupted when a police officer fired through the roof of a tent and a worker wielding an axe was arrested following a melee resulting in three police requiring medical attention.⁷⁵

⁷² *The Organizer*, November 1932.

⁷³ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14, Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention, 1 November 1932, 3.

⁷⁴ While all the delegates at the September conference had approved these moves unanimously, a general referendum to all Canadian IWW members in Canada was held following the Vancouver industrial union's protesting of the validity of the change.

⁷⁵ LUA, CTKL, F, 15, 6, H.J. Lindholm, "Canadian Justice is Farce," nd. The men arrested had been in the region organizing meetings to discuss and plan action over the unsanitary conditions in the camp and lack of proper food.

The arrest of the Canadian Administration's leadership, aside from an example of the Canadian state's position on such issues, further reveals the division between the GEB and the Canadian Administration. As entitled, the remaining leaders of the IWW in Canada appealed to the GEB for money to assist in the defence of the arrested leadership. However, they were flatly refused despite having recently donated over \$300 to the GEB general defense fund. While expressing sympathy, the GEB Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Wagner wrote that events occurring in Kentucky took precedence.⁷⁶ Rebuffed by their fellow Wobblies, and having no comparable means to defend themselves, the CPC's Canadian Labor Defence League was contacted to organize a defence for MacAdam and the others arrested.⁷⁷ The League informed them that they should contact those arrested to find out if the help was desired. The members, though, were unable to talk to MacAdam as local police refused them entry. Eventually, contact was made and MacAdam personally wired the Canadi-

an Labor Defence League for help. Not surprisingly, the League, despite agreeing to help, provided no lawyer for the trial and the men were unable to secure funds for an attorney. They were forced to defend themselves with the result that they were sentenced to between three and six months in jail.⁷⁸ As a result, the Canadian Administration lost three of its leaders. Lindholm, however, seamlessly filled in for MacAdam until his release, going ahead with MacAdam's plan to distribute Italian, Hungarian, and Spanish language syndicalist newspapers, in addition to those already available in English and Finnish.⁷⁹

The First Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration in June 1933 was disrupted by an IWW-organised strike in Port Arthur. Several delegates, George MacAdam among them, left to attend to the strike.⁸⁰ That year featured ten strikes in Northwestern Ontario logging camps involving over 3,000 workers. According to the Department of Labour, they accounted for one-third of the total time lost in Canada.⁸¹ The strike that co-

⁷⁶ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Joseph Wagner to H.J. Lindholm, 11 January 1933 and Herbert Mahler to H.J. Lindholm, 17 October 1932. Ironically, in the very same letter informing the CA that no funds were forthcoming for workers in Sioux Lookout, Canadian Wobblies were commended for their generous support of ongoing court cases against in the United States.

⁷⁷ LUA, CTKL, F, 15, 6, Unknown to H.J. Lindholm, 9 December 1932; Telegram from J. Poulin to H.J. Lindholm, 10 December 1932; and George D. MacAdam to J.H. Lindholm, 16 December 1932.

⁷⁸ The men were first sent to Kenora for incarceration and eventually the Fort William Industrial Farm. See also *The Organizer*, January 1933. The CLDL did retain an attorney in Port Arthur for the appeals. The GEB was informed that the little money supplied for the defence fund went to the CLDL.

⁷⁹ *The Organizer*, January 1933. The newspapers in question were *Il Proleterio*, *Bermunias* and *Solidaridad*.

⁸⁰ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the First Annual Convention of Canadian Administration of IWW," 26 June 1933, 1. The suggestion that the strike was organized by the CEB can be found in Joseph Wagner's letter contained in the conventions minutes. A report of the convention can also be found in *The Organizer*, 1 July 1933.

⁸¹ *Labour Gazette* XXXIV (February 1934) and *Ontario Sessional Papers*, LXVII, 1934, Report of

incided with the convention was run by a strike committee consisting of representatives from the Communist LWIUC, the LWIU, and unorganized workers. The total number of strikers involved exceeded 1,300. The IWW hall was not only used as the strike headquarters, thus causing some logistical problems during the conference, but MacAdam and other members of the executive sat on the strike committee and took lead roles, clearly indicated that the organization was not dead.⁸²

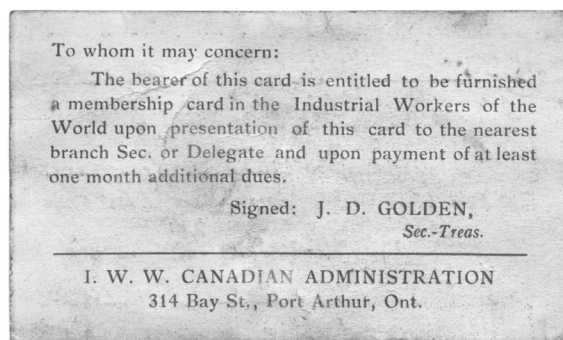
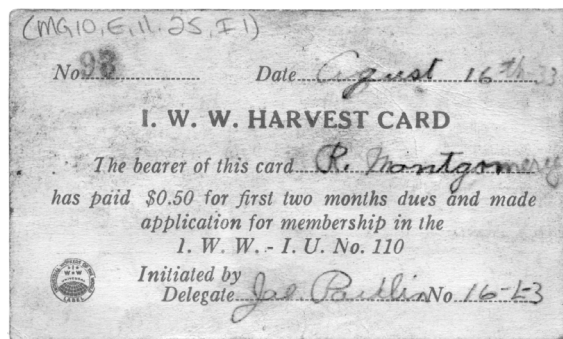
However, despite the Canadian Administration's increasing presence, the "legal" nature of the administration in the eyes of the IWW GEB remained an issue of contention. In a letter to conference delegates, Joseph Wagner, Secretary-Treasurer of the GEB, contacted the CEB about the issue and the Canadian Administration's position within the IWW structure. While he argued it was entitled to an IWW charter, the CA never received one. Apparently the Canadian Administration also viewed its "legal" situation very differently than the GEB. "From the very inception of the IWW," Wagner writes, "we were against any governmental approval, especially as such was not necessary. But probably in Canada it is different."⁸³ In the "official" communication from the GEB to the conference delegates, Fred Thompson and Joseph Wagner outlined the major concerns of the GEB and, specifically, asked for co-operation and to consider

the Department of Labour, III, 8.

⁸² *The Organizer*, July 1933 and August 1933.

⁸³ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the First Annual Convention of Canadian Administration of IWW," 26 June 1933, 2.

⁸⁴ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the First Annual Convention of Canadian Administration of IWW," 26 June 1933, 3.



Membership card for the Agricultural Workers Industrial Union 110. 1933. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

supplementing the IWW efforts in Detroit to organize Marine Transport Workers Union by organizing those in Ontario and around the Great Lakes.⁸⁴

The First Annual Convention in 1933 witnessed the nomination of both J.D. Golden and George MacAdam by delegates for the position of the first secretary-treasurer of the Canadian IWW. Although Golden defeated MacAdam 144 to 4 votes, the latter became chair of the Canadian Executive Board and was quick to assert and justify himself by ar-

guing that the “Chairman of the C.E.B. could function more satisfactorily if he was in the same locality as Canadian Headquarters.”⁸⁵ MacAdam inherited an administration in financial crisis. Membership cards could not be purchased due to border restrictions. Those issued to organizers in the Western Canadian and Ontario harvest fields were drafted on Canadian IWW letterhead. Delegates to the convention also exercised their perceived autonomy by passing a number of resolutions aimed at increasing the Canadian Administration’s control over industrial union auxiliaries operating in Canada. American delegates of IWW would no longer be allowed to do business with American supplies in Canada and the GEB was informed that the issuing of new credentials be at the discretion of the Canadian Administration.

The most notable decision, however, was creation of the Canadian Defense Organisation “to defend members of the IWW in the toils of the law for labour activities.”⁸⁶ From experience MacAdam viewed the Organisation as an important necessity because, he argued, “if the IWW functions with success in the economic field, it will incur the hostility of the masters and their tools.”⁸⁷ Although voting against its establishment at the First Annual Convention, the GEB’s un-

willingness to assist the Canadian leadership the previous year had changed the position of MacAdam and many others. While General Secretary Joseph Wagner did write to the Canadian Administration apologizing for his response and expressing his “embarrassment” and reassurance that “you fellow workers are entitled to get support from the G.D.C. [General Defense Committee] when needed, especially since you fellows loyally have helped raise funds for the GDC,” the damage was done.⁸⁸

Unfortunately, the Canadian Defense Organisation proved difficult to institute. Due to the lack of funds and competition from the CPC’s Canadian Labor Defence League, membership could only be made available to members of the Canadian Administration and the Port Arthur CTKL until it “could prevent any Commy outfit from tramping our toes.”⁸⁹ The CEB and MacAdam also proposed to model the Canadian Defense Organisation after the General Defence Committee established by the GEB in Chicago. Funds would be generated through membership cards and stamps patterned after those then used by the CTKL and Junior Wobblies Union; however, as these were unavailable in 1933 and the cost was prohibitive, it was decided that a 25-cent stamp be made

⁸⁵ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Report of Ballot Committee on Referendum of Incoming Officials of the Canadian Administration of the IWW,” 30 June 1933 and LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to C.E.B, 1 July 1933, 1.

⁸⁶ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Annual Convention of Canadian Administration of IWW,” 26 June 1933, 7.

⁸⁷ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, 1.

⁸⁸ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Joseph Wagner to H. Lindholm, 18 January 1933.

⁸⁹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to C.E.B, 1 July 1933, 1.

compulsory to those members one year and over and voluntary to those under one year. "Older members," MacAdam argued, "thoroughly understand the necessity of raising monies."⁹⁰

The situation surrounding the inability of the General Executive Board to provide support for the defence of Canadian Wobblies also reveals both a lack of interest and understanding in the plight of workers in Canada by the American administration. In fact, the GEB of the IWW was surprisingly ignorant of events in Canada. For example, despite frequent reports and newspaper clippings being sent to both the GEB and *Industrial Worker*, GEB Secretary-Treasurer Herbert Mahler himself admitted that, when it came to Canadian news, "I seldom see it and none are kept on file, so it has gone the waste basket route." Responding in the same letter sent to Mahler from H.J. Lindholm in July 1932, he further showed the GEB's lack of information, by requesting "the clippings, then we can look it over and take a shot at them. Perhaps you could accompany the clippings with an article. That would be better as you know the local situation."⁹¹

Canada and Canadian workers were an afterthought despite having supported the cause in the United States. Although many of MacAdam's desired reforms would have made the Canadian Administration less dependent on the GEB, the establishment of a Canadian Wobbly Press was not high on his list.

While less than a month earlier the First Annual Convention had empowered the Canadian Executive Board to establish a Canadian IWW paper, MacAdam voiced his personal dislike for the proposal. In contrast, many like the Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer H.J. Lindholm strongly urged members to support an IWW paper "chuck full of Canadian and World Wide labor news." Although the *Industrial Worker*, Lindholm suggested, "leaves nothing to be desired for our fellow workers across the line," the success of *The Organizer* clearly demonstrated a "crying need" for a "nice little paper" printed at the Lakehead. Such a paper, he argued, would appeal to both former and current members of the IWW and provide food for the increasingly radical labour movement.⁹²

The proposed content of the paper provides a window into how Wobbly leaders in both Canada and the United States viewed the world around them. Lindholm, for instance, argued that a Canadian-based paper would satisfy the growing appetite for information in technocracy and technology. He encouraged Canadian Wobblies "to bring the matter of subscribing for a paper which advocates practical Technocracy to them and see how soon they will buy a subscription." Even Joseph Wagner of the GEB, who would neither support nor condemn the establishment of a Canadian-based paper, agreed "the I.W.W. should profit as much by the development of the

⁹⁰ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to C.E.B, 11 September 1933, 1.

⁹¹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Herbert Mahler to H.J. Lindholm, 8 July 1932.

⁹² LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16, H.J. Lindholm to All Members, 12 January 1933.

Technocrats' moves as possible."⁹³ Lindholm's and Wagner's interest in "Technocracy," an approach to the crisis of the Depression derived from the scientific management writings of Howard Scott, an admirer of Thorstein Veblen, suggested that Canadian Wobblies shared some of the utopian aspirations of their American counterparts for a post-capitalist, scientifically-managed society informed by the most advanced concepts of expertise and efficiency.⁹⁴ Despite claims by Lindholm that the Canadian Administration already had 200 subscribers lined-up by July, MacAdam, citing once again the financial crisis that faced the Canadian Administration, argued that a Canadian paper could not succeed when the *Industrial Worker*, despite its large subscription base, was teetering on the brink of financial collapse and dragging the GEB down with it.⁹⁵ Many Wobblies, such as August Tortilla, agreed and instead it was decided to petition the *Industrial Worker* to create a "special space for Canadian news."⁹⁶

The situation facing the IWW in Canada only worsened in the following months as members increasingly began to perceive the Canadian Administration having done "little or nothing" during the last few years. Echoing the

thoughts of many Wobblies, MacAdam argued that the IWW in general "had been living on our reputation too long." He also challenged the Canadian Executive Board and the membership in general "to get busy and lay the ground work for a drive... that will put the I.W.W. on its feet in Canada... Either we change our tactics and get down to the facts that are confronting us or [we] will be relegated to the ranks of 'spittoon philosophers.'"⁹⁷ One of the biggest obstacles to success, according to MacAdam, was the "lack of efficient organizers who have the ability to hold meetings, especially outdoor meetings."⁹⁸ The need for good organizers was paramount in MacAdam's view as, he aptly observed, the IWW lacked "the pep that the 'commies' have. They are always on the go and manage to get a lot of publicity which is essential to a labour union that is just growing." By stealing the 'thunder and publicity' of the Communist Party of Canada, MacAdam reasoned, the IWW could draw away workers disillusioned by the "brass band bally-hoo" of a party that was still dominated by Moscow.⁹⁹

When delegates arrived in Port Arthur for the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration on 18 June 1934, they came to a meeting dominated

⁹³ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Joseph Wagner to H. Lindholm, 30 January 1933.

⁹⁴ For more on the Technocratic movement, see William E. Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocratic Movement, 1900-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

⁹⁵ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, 1. At the June Convention, George MacAdam went on record as opposing the establishment of a Canadian Wobbly Press.

⁹⁶ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16, August Tortilla to George MacAdam, 12 July 1933, 1.

⁹⁷ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 11 September 1933, 2.

⁹⁸ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, 1.

⁹⁹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, 1.

by representatives of the LWIU and the Port Arthur General Recruiting Union.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps a testament to the troubles facing the Canadian Administration was the first resolution carried following the appointment of committee representatives. Just as the GEB had been forced by the Canadians to amend its own rules during the Twentieth Annual Convention in 1931, the articles in the Canadian Administration's constitution dealing with delegate qualifications were suspended as most did not meet them. Secretary-Treasurer J.D. Golden's report to the convention also reveals much about the success of the IWW in Canada during the previous year, when it participated in a number of strikes, the largest being in Northwestern Ontario where the LWIU took the lead and the communist LWIUC took a supporting role.¹⁰¹ Between July 1933 and July 1934 funds acquired through entertainment and dances had resulted in the Canadian Administration being able to provide financing to the Junior Wobblies and the payment of all the Administration's outstanding bills. Revenue, Golden reported, had almost doubled since July 1933 and, he suggested, "with the proper efforts now on the part of the members the organization will grow steadily in the future as the sentiment for industrial unionism,

especially amongst the Finnish workers of Ontario and on the west coast and the Scandinavian workers of B.C. is better than it has been for several years."¹⁰²

Total membership had increased by over 275 in the previous few months, and, of these, 122 were those currently employed with the balance being unemployed. Since the establishment of the Defense Organizing Committee during the 1933 convention, branches were successfully established in Sault St. Marie, Nipigon, Hearst, and Port Arthur. Owing to the success in Northern Ontario, the convention delegates voted in favour of focusing greater attention on organizing lumber workers in the Thunder Bay and Kapuskasing Districts. Attention was also given to unionizing miners throughout Northern Ontario. These resolutions make sense considering these areas were ones in which the CPC were making significant strides and eroding traditional Wobbly support.¹⁰³

Throughout 1933 and 1934, the Canadian Executive Board continued its gradual separation from the GEB in Chicago. The GEB was asked to allow Canadian supplies to be used in printing in Canada to counter the continuing problem of getting supplies across the border. The Canadian Administration also informed

¹⁰⁰ Attendance fluctuated between twelve and seventeen delegates. LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World," 18 June 1934, 1.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion of this period and IWW and Communist relations, see Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead*, 179-202.

¹⁰² LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World," 18 June 1934, 3.

¹⁰³ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World," 18 June 1934, 5 and 8.

the GEB that they had undertaken the printing of Junior Wobbly material for the betterment of the Junior Wobbly organizing efforts. Not unlike the establishment of the Canadian Administration, the Canadian Executive Board essentially asked for affirmation for an initiative already in progress. Perhaps the most significant decision at the convention was to alter the very structure of the Canadian Administration. During 1933, the five member board consisted of representatives from only Port Arthur, Sault St. Marie, and Vancouver.¹⁰⁴ William McPhee, chairman of the Canadian Executive Board, told the convention that he, along with the other members, realized that, "they could not function to the best interest of the IWW owing to the industrial and geographic conditions existing in Canada." Citing delays in correspondence, and the generally perceived futility of having an executive board that "is useless," members voted for the abolishment of the CEB and replaced it with representatives from the District Organizing Committees that had been established during the First Annual Convention.¹⁰⁵

The use of the District Organizing Committees was an interesting choice for two reasons. First, it put more direct control into the hands of Canadian Wobblies. This differed dramatically from the industrial union centred approach that

had been the hallmark of the IWW since its establishment in 1905. It also further separated the actual function of the Canadian Administration from the GEB, as the District Organizing Committee was to be guided by "the general constitution of the IWW and revised by-laws of the Canadian Administration of the general organization." In March 1934, Secretary-Treasurer J.D. Golden had written all branches and district members to remind them that they needed to hold general membership meetings to elect a five- or seven-member District Organizing Committee. By the next convention in July only a handful had been created.¹⁰⁶

By 1935, the optimism and unity of the early Canadian Administration was no longer evident. While it still existed, there is ample evidence to suggest that it had little control or even influence over the various IWW branches in Canada. Originally scheduled for August 1935, the convention was delayed until October because of the unwillingness of some branches to send delegates. While some, such as the Vancouver Branch, were unable to pay for delegates because of the increase in railway fares following the On to Ottawa Trek and suppression of workers in Regina, other branches gave no reason and did not send delegates to the October meeting.¹⁰⁷ As it was, only ten members were present at the Third

¹⁰⁴ The CEB consisted of MacAdam, Maitland, MacPhee, Johnson, and Torttila

¹⁰⁵ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, "Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World," 18 June 1934, 5.

¹⁰⁶ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 7, J.D. Golden, Secretary-Treasurer Canadian Administration to All Branches and District Members, 22 March 1934.

¹⁰⁷ For the Vancouver Branch's correspondence, see LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 8, Vancouver Branch to William McPhee, 9 July 1935. The minutes of the postponed convention on 12 August 1935 can also be

Annual Convention, with the committees largely composed of all the same people.¹⁰⁸

Many Wobblies began to “feel that these three years have not resulted in any marked gain... the organization is still numerically small and lacking in finances, organizers, and the means of distributing the necessary information and education.” However, while grim, Secretary-Treasurer William McPhee argued that,

to those familiar [with] the actual conditions of the organization in Canada in 1932, these three years are years of progress and advancement for the IWW. Membership has increased, new branches have been formed, two within the past year; tens of thousands of leaflets and other literature has been distributed with result, the IWW is known and discussed by workers everywhere today.

The Canadian Administration’s lack of progress, McPhee suggested, was in large part a direct result of the organization’s inability to “take advantage of the many opportunities for organization work that have occurred from time to time.”¹⁰⁹

Another issue was the voluntary job delegates’ system that was put in place shortly after the previous year’s convention. This system, as McPhee argued, was ineffective and paid traveling delegates obtained results in the lumber industry (where the IWW was already strong). Similarly, the District Organizing Com-

mittees, which the 1934 conference established to replace the Canadian Executive Board, were only active in a few districts and, “in practicality,” McPhee told delegates, “did not function.” The abolition of the Canadian Executive Board had resulted in unforeseen complications and confusion throughout the industrial unions operating in Canada. The granting of new charters in 1934 was rendered impossible because the new system of District Organizing Committees required the signatures of the “administrative body of the organization which at present is the chairman of the various organization committees” on all new charters. Add in the fact that not all districts formed committees and the number of signatures was in fact much larger than the five or seven necessary under the old Canadian Executive Board, and it became obvious that the new system intended to streamline and increase the effectiveness of the IWW in Canada was actually hindering its expansion.¹¹⁰

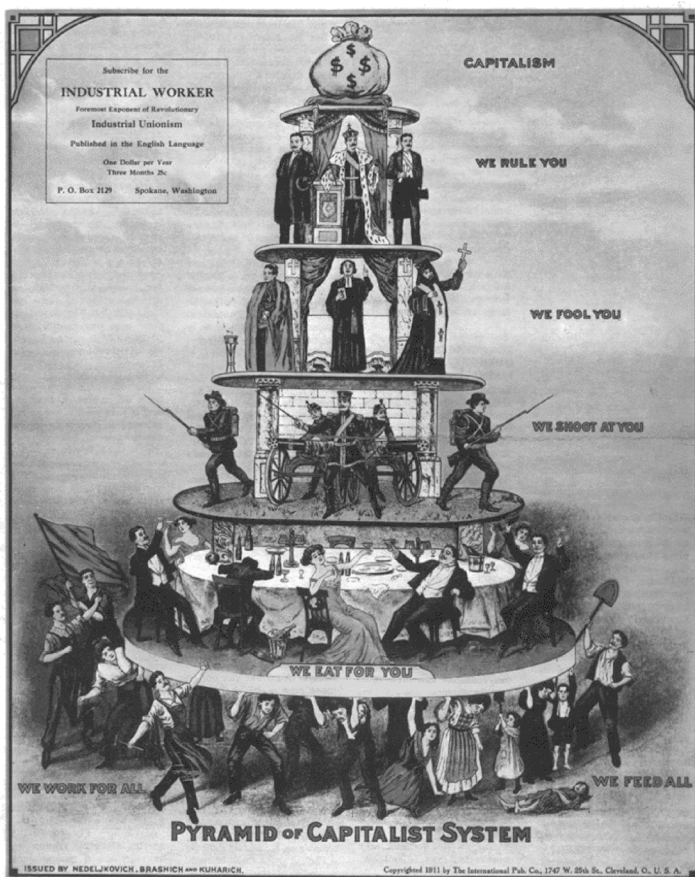
Yet, despite the inability of the District Organizing Committees to function effectively, the same branches that had argued for a separate Canadian Administration continued to argue for more regional autonomy at the convention. Resolutions put forward from the Vancouver and Port Arthur Industrial Units asked for at least “50% of all money re-

found in E, 10, 8.

¹⁰⁸ See LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 9, “Minutes of the Third Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the IWW,” 21 October 1935.

¹⁰⁹ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 9, William McPhee to Delegates of the Third Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration, c. 21 October 1935, 1.

¹¹⁰ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 9, William McPhee to Delegates [of the] Third Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration, c. 21 October 1935, 2.



"Pyramid of Capitalist System." Once hung in the Finnish Labour Temple. nd. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

Vancouver branch also attempted to pass a motion that enshrined the right of local industrial unions to set their own separate initiation fees. The Port Arthur and Nipigon branches brought a similar resolution forward. While the convention chair ruled both these resolutions out of order and in violation of the IWW constitution, their suggestion reinforces the loss of control the Canadian Administration was experiencing as resolutions allowing individual branches to issue voluntary stamps for local organization purposes did pass.¹¹²

The increasing independence of branches and the lack of revenue being received from them by the Canadian Administration exacerbated the Canadian IWW's inability to provide services to its membership. Even before the 1935 convention, the Junior Wobblies had been dissolved because of a lack of available finances and the general apathy of the District Organizing Committees. George MacAdam, for example, viewed the District Organizing

ceived from dues and initiations for employed workers and to remit in full... unemployed initiations and dues."¹¹¹ While the resolution was not adopted, such a request reveals the growing independence of Industrial Units and the increasing plight of the Canadian Administration. If this measure had been passed, the Canadian Administration would have been left with little or no revenue. The

of revenue being received from them by the Canadian Administration exacerbated the Canadian IWW's inability to provide services to its membership. Even before the 1935 convention, the Junior Wobblies had been dissolved because of a lack of available finances and the general apathy of the District Organizing Committees. George MacAdam, for example, viewed the District Organizing

¹¹¹ LUA, CTKL, E, 9, "Minutes of the Third Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the IWW," 21 October 1935, 2. The Port Arthur Industrial Union argued for 60% of all initiations and dues regardless of status.

¹¹² LUA, CTKL, E, 9, "Minutes of the Third Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the IWW," 21 October 1935, 3.

Committees' responsibility to the Junior Wobblies to have been a complete failure. "Not at anytime," MacAdam wrote in the January 1935,

have the DOC's initiated any move to aid them in organizing or in ways and means to educate them. We leave it all to themselves and call it "Democracy" and pride ourselves that we use no dictatorial methods, but fulfilling the duties of an office is not being "a la Moscow" and would at least, be of encouragement to member of both the Juniors and the IWW.¹¹³

Perhaps, though, the most insightful of all was the Canadian Administration's report that it did not have enough revenue to cover the expenses of the Canadian headquarters. This situation persisted despite an increase in financial donations and the reduction of expenditures to a minimum. By 1935, only the IWW hall in Vancouver and the two secretaries in Vancouver and the main office were being maintained by the Administration.

Some believed that the solution lay in moving the Canadian Administration from Port Arthur to Sudbury, where it would allow the Finnish *Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto* to establish the educational groundwork needed for the IWW to succeed in the area and provide a closer base of operations for activities in Southern Ontario. By 1935, the CTKL controlled the only

workers'-owned hall in Sudbury. However, even if the Canadian Administration had decided to relocate to Sudbury, the decline of the organization could not have been turned around. The January and February membership bulletins reveal not only a growing apathy on the part of District Organizing Committee, but a disregard for edicts and resolutions passed by the Canadian Executive Board in Port Arthur.¹¹⁴

Branches were also becoming increasingly concerned over the Canadian Administration's continuing argument against the IWW's longstanding position that it needed to sit "on the fence regarding political action." The Canadian Administration contended that "nothing of lasting value has resulted in the past by misrepresentation or soft pedalling of any respect, principle, tactic or policy inherent in consistent adherence to revolutionary industrial unionism." Further, "time and experience have proven the fallacy of an international movement with powers vested in Chicago."¹¹⁵ The Canadian Administration held the opinion that the IWW had to develop to meet the changing conditions of inherent in the international labour movement. "With the growing decentralization within the IWW," the Administration argued, "so there must be a corresponding decentralisation of the international aspects so

¹¹³ LUA, CTKL, E, 11, 9, Industrial Workers of the World, Canadian Administration, *Membership Bulletin* (January 1935), 4.

¹¹⁴ See LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 8, Vancouver Resolution Committee to Fourth Annual Convention of the IWW. Canadian Administration, n.d. c. 1935 and E, 11, 9, "Membership Bulletin," January 1935 and February 1935.

¹¹⁵ LUA, CTKL, E, 11, 9, "Membership Bulletin," July 1935, 3 and 4.

(MG10, F15, 22, 512) *Sunnyside Assistance.*

A Bank of England Director says that now people have given up saving money. They have also given up wagging their tails and for the same reason.

Boss - No! I haven't enough work to keep my own men busy.
I, W. W. - No, take me on boss, I work work hard!

Clothes of a military cut are being affected by the helpless type of zigzag bill this spring, about ninety percent of the guests of the Winnipeg soup line being dropped out in them this Easter.

The pants are worn short, about three inches above the ankles, and very tight, a short horn being necessary to get in and out of them. The coats are patterned after a Kingling Bore-Burgue lint, being gathered up in the back and pinned with a tin penny nail. The sleeves rolled up unmentionables. The hats are either three sizes too large or too small, popular sizes having been all worn out during the war by the heroes. The boots are all size twelve, regardless of the size of feet, for "the same reason." The complete assembly has a very idiotic and monkeyish affect, and the hob-nailed boots galloping over our city streets from one soup line to another reminds us of the old horse and buggy days. These clothes are a badge of slavery.
Pork Chop Slim.

Letter from organizer "Pork Chop Slim." nd. LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto fonds, MG10.

tive once again emerged as the existing position could not longer be filled. Affiliation with the International Workingmen Association was also contemplated as was the movement of the Administration's headquarters from Port Arthur.¹¹⁷ However, as Peter Campbell argues, "the fate of the Finnish Wobblies and Finnish Communists was not all that much different. The forces eating away at the Finnish Wobbly culture were also eating away at Finnish Communist Culture, and ironically, as the North American left moved into the era of the CIO and industrial unionism, bush-

long as the coordination and effectiveness of action is not impaired."¹¹⁶

By 1935, it appears that the Canadian Administration of the IWW had become the very "spittoon philosophers" George MacAdam had feared. That year, in the face of devastating losses in membership and the hegemony established by the CPC in the lumber camps in Northern Ontario, talks of restructuring the execu-

workers in Northern Ontario were moving in the opposite direction."¹¹⁸

While this article has, in many ways, provided a factual basis for the general conclusions made by both Mark Leier and Jack Scott on the fate of the IWW following the First World War, one distinction can be made: many in Northern Ontario and throughout Canada still remained true to the idea of revo-

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁷ LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 30, "General Referendum Ballot Issues by the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World," 1 November 1935

¹¹⁸ Campbell, "The Cult of Spontaneity," 144.

lutionary industrial unionism long after the Communist Party of Canada had turned its back on it, and long after the GEB in the United States had become insular. Did the IWW and, more specifically, the Canadian Administration leave a legacy? Some, such as Nick Viita, believed until their deaths that many bush workers well into the 1970s benefited because of the actions of the IWW. However, as suggested, “with solidarity and more mutual tolerance, results would have been ten times better.”¹¹⁹ Its members remained inspired

even if they lacked the leadership and talents to make the IWW a *bona fide* threat to the hegemony achieved by the CPC in the 1920s and 1930s. While it is also clear that by 1935 the Canadian Administration was largely ineffectual, the continued presence of the Finnish Auxiliary Union CTKL in Port Arthur well into the late 1950s and the continued existence of Wobbly branches in Canada, twelve in all, with an estimated membership of 4,200 in 1935 alone, is cause for further study of its role within the Canadian left after 1914.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Viita, “The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement,” 11.

¹²⁰ *Labour Gazette*, September 1936, 782 and September 1937, 972.