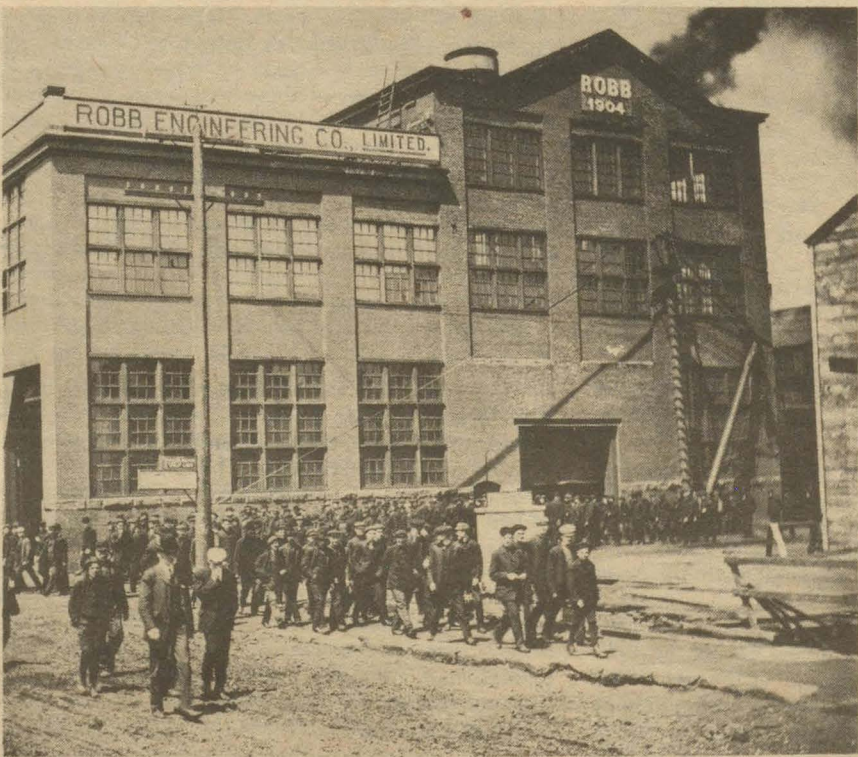
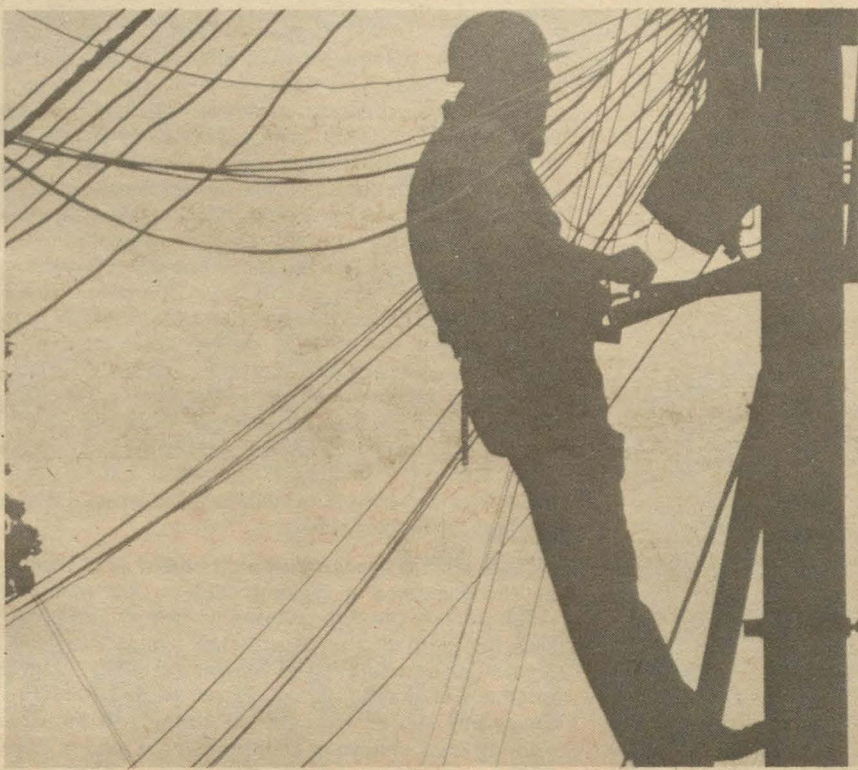


GROWING STRONGER, FIGHTING BACK

NOVA SCOTIA LABOUR ON THE MARCH



A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY THE NOVA SCOTIA LABOUR RESEARCH & SUPPORT CENTRE, THE NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF LABOUR, AND THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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J. B. McLachlan

A real Nova Scotian hero

by David Frank

Meet James Bryson McLachlan. Born in Scotland in 1869, McLachlan came to Canada in 1902 to work in the Cape Breton coal mines. As the popular leader of Nova Scotia's coal miners, McLachlan became one of the most effective and brilliant individuals in Canadian working class history. His story is in many ways the story of the coal miners and working people in Nova Scotia, and a short sketch of his life and times can help remind us of an unusual man and the movement of which he was a part.

McLachlan's family were cotton weavers and farm labourers who left the countryside of southern Scotland in the 1870s to find work in the booming mining towns of industrial Lanarkshire. McLachlan grew up in the bleak poverty of the Scottish coalfields and he was only ten years old when he followed his brother and his father into the mines. There he learned the pride and skill, danger and hardship of the miner's work. As he progressed from trapper boy to collier, the clouds of coal and stone dust caked his lungs and his hands and face became pitted with the blue scars that mark the dangers of the mine. These years made a strong impression on McLachlan's character. He always remembered the "blood splashed over the coal"; for all the millions the coal operators put into the mines, nothing could match the human investment the miners made every day.

As a young man McLachlan supported trade union leaders like Keir Hardie who were trying to build strong unions in the Scottish coalfields. Like them, he saw the miners' fight as a battle for better conditions, higher wages and, in Hardie's words, "the complete emancipation of the worker from the thralldom of wagedom." McLachlan's careful study of the Bible and of social critics like Thomas Carlyle convinced him that the chaos, cruelty and inhumanity of industrial capitalism must be ended. Like thousands of coal miners of his generation, McLachlan was a staunch socialist and trade unionist by the time he left Scotland in 1902.

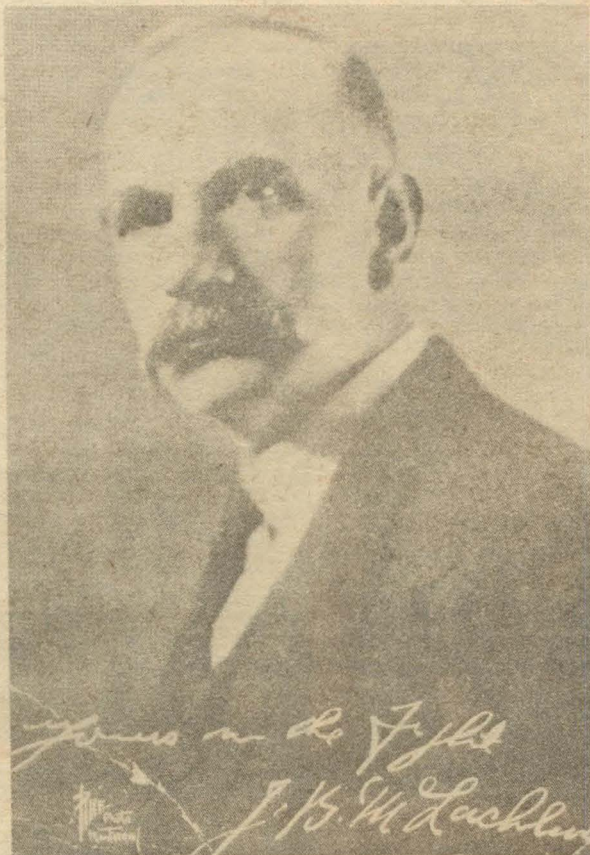
Large scale industrial capitalism arrived in the Nova Scotia coal industry in the 1890s and McLachlan was among the thousands of workingmen who settled their families in the expanding mining towns. Conditions for the coal miners in Cape Breton were no better than in Scotland; the same harsh poverty and exploitation prevailed and McLachlan again plunged his energies into efforts to build a strong and aggressive union. The existing Provincial Workmen's Association (PWA), formed in 1879, was no match for the large new coal companies and the majority of the miners voted to merge the PWA with the more powerful United Mine Workers of America.

In March 1909 District 26 of the UMWA was formed and McLachlan was elected secretary-treasurer. With the encouragement of the coal companies, the PWA leaders bitterly resisted the new union and a long struggle followed. McLachlan was at the centre of the storm. During the 1909 strike, he administered the union strike fund, gathered relief, found homes for evicted families, organized parades and fought court battles. Blacklisted for the rest of his life from the province's coal mines, McLachlan remained a tireless agitator, speaking widely in halls, theatres and kitchens, writing letters, leaflets and speeches, visiting immigrant workers in their crowded boarding houses to convince them, through an interpreter, to support the union. The long, hard work of union organizing could sometimes prove dangerous. For years McLachlan could not walk down the street without having his movements reported by company policemen. McLachlan later recalled that at one union meeting during these dark years two men got into a fight and one of them was shot dead; it turned out that both men were detectives sent to disrupt the union's campaign.

These years established McLachlan's reputation as a devoted working class leader. His popularity grew; never defeated in a union election, he remained secretary-treasurer of the miners' union until 1923. The campaign for effective trade unionism finally succeeded in 1917 when the government, anxious to prevent a wartime strike in the coal industry, forced the coal companies to recognize a union which had the miners' support. The result was the dissolution of the PWA and the formation of the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, which in 1919 became District 26 of the UMWA. That year the miners at last gained the eight hour day and they looked forward to great improvements in their long substandard living and working conditions. "It took a long time for us to wake up," commented one veteran miner at the time, "but we have alarm clocks all around us now and McLachlan is one of the noisiest of them all. Good luck to him."

Almost at once a new crisis faced the coal miners. At the end of the war the coal industry was in trouble: markets were disappearing and unemployment and suffering invaded the mining towns; the formation of a new profit-hungry corporation, the British Empire Steel Corporation (BESCO), added more troubles, for the new company soon launched a damaging round of wage reductions, beginning with a one-third cut in wages in 1922. McLachlan led the resistance to BESCO. Few miners

who lived through the 1920s can forget the defiant picture McLachlan cut on the stage of local theatres, pacing restlessly back and forth, his red mustache bristling, his eyes flashing, his pipe issuing a steady stream of smoke, his deep Scottish burr reading out endlessly from government reports, financial statements, family budgets and pay slips. To demonstrate the company's profits he asked his audience to imagine a trail of silver dollars, end to end, all the way from Cape Breton to Vancouver — and back; to represent the wage cuts he spilled milk from a child's full glass; to measure the miners' poverty he conducted contests among the miners' wives asking them to show how it was possible to support a family on the meagre wages the miners received.



Behind his oratorical flourishes was McLachlan's underlying argument, one he never tired of repeating: "You hold your present jobs not because your employer cares whether you get a living, but because he can make profit out of your labour. Profit is the end for which you are employed at all. The kind of life you live is only an incidental matter with your boss." "This land is yours, all yours, and you should own it and work it," he told his listeners, "You are doing the work and the capitalists are getting the riches." McLachlan believed that there could be no permanent peace for the working class under capitalism, which he saw as a basically irrational and inhuman system. Perhaps his most profound belief was his conviction that the working class must "redeem the world from the chaos of capitalism" and he devoted his life to this cause.

A superb agitator, McLachlan was also a practical leader. His intimate knowledge of coal mining conditions and his utter loyalty to the coal miners made him an effective trade union leader. As secretary-treasurer he negotiated the first detailed wage agreements in the Nova Scotia coalfields and under his leadership the miners made important gains in their standard of living. McLachlan demonstrated his tactical resourcefulness during the 1922 strike, when his imaginative application of the traditional Scottish miners' weapon, the "wee darg" or restriction of output, countered the one-third cut in wages with a one-third cut in coal production. Perhaps one of the greatest tributes to McLachlan's effectiveness came from Besco President Roy Wolvin, who blamed McLachlan as "the concentrated cause" of the unrest among the coal miners. McLachlan would have been amused to hear Wolvin's comments; a firm believer in democratic trade unionism, McLachlan knew that no leader could ever cajole or intimidate the independent-minded miners. His popularity and leadership depended as much upon the militancy and radicalism of the coal miners themselves as on any of his personal qualities.

One of McLachlan's greatest hopes was to see the benefits of trade unionism extended to the steelworkers of Sydney. By 1923 the steelworkers had been struggling for 20 years to establish an effective union at the steel plant. When they went on strike that summer against Besco to try again to win recognition of their union, the company and provincial government retaliated with armed force. A squad of mounted provincial police ran riot on Victoria Road, riding down and beating residents of the working class neighborhood near the steel plant. At McLachlan's urging, the coal miners came out on strike to protest their

outrage and to support the steelworkers. For this gesture of working class solidarity, the miners paid heavily. John L Lewis, president of the international UMWA, withdrew the autonomy of District 26, suspended McLachlan from office and expelled him and other officers from the union. At the same time the provincial government jailed McLachlan on a charge of seditious libel and sentenced him to two years in Dorchester penitentiary. It was clear that neither the province nor the international union would tolerate the militant, class conscious trade unionism McLachlan represented. Supported by protests from workers all across the country, the coal miners won McLachlan's release from prison early in 1924 and he returned home to Cape Breton to a hero's welcome. But the strength of the miners' union had been broken and the traumatic 1925 strike proved a crushing blow. Not until the 1940s did the union come near to regaining the effectiveness it had under McLachlan's leadership.

As well as leading the coal miners, McLachlan played many other important roles in the labour movement. He was a pioneer advocate of working class political action and belonged in turn to the Socialist Party of Canada, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party of Canada. He ran six times for the provincial and federal parliaments; never successful, his campaigns opened the way for victories by other labour candidates locally, provincially and nationally. In 1917 he was a founder of the Independent Labour Party in Cape Breton and two years later he helped form the provincial ILP, which scored a great success in the 1920 provincial election. In 1919 McLachlan helped organize the original Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, which did not survive the 1920s. He was also prominent on the national scene and was widely known in the early 1930s as president of the Workers' Unity League, a federation of radical Canadian unions which heralded the achievements of industrial unionism in the later 1930s and 1940s.

McLachlan's formal education ended at a young age, but he remained a lifelong student. He read widely, ranging freely through philosophy, history and economics studying mathematics and foreign languages, devouring reports, newspapers and magazines. His impressive command of fact, figure and arguments helped make him a compelling leader. He believed strongly in the need for working class education and through the miners' union he tried to start labour scholarships for miners' children and to begin a labour college in the industrial area. A vigorous advocate of the labour press, McLachlan in 1921 helped establish the *Maritime Labor Herald*, which he edited from 1924-1926, and in 1929-1935 he edited the *Nova Scotia Miner*. In the pages of these and other newspapers he renewed his constant efforts to agitate, educate and organize. Perhaps his belief in the importance of an independent working class point of view was summed up in his statement to a royal commission in 1925: "I believe in education for action. I believe in telling children the truth about the history of the world, that it does not consist of the history of kings, or lords or cabinets. It consists of the history of the mass of the workers, a thing that is not taught in the schools. I believe in telling children how to measure value, a thing that is not taught in any school."

When he died in 1937 McLachlan left behind a considerable legend. His funeral procession stretched for miles through the streets of Glace Bay and tributes poured in from across the country. The press of his day had pilloried him as a wild anarchist and madman; to the RCMP he was a "fiend" and to John L Lewis "an evil genius." But those who knew him always remarked upon his great personal character; his generosity, humour, honesty, courage and his keen appreciation of people. A radical, McLachlan had no simple formula for the achievement of socialism, but he knew that no revolutionary changes could be accomplished without constant struggle by the working class. Over the years he made an outstanding contribution to this struggle.

For the working people of Cape Breton, the name of James Bryson McLachlan has come to stand as a symbol of those historic years of hardship, struggle and achievement by the coal miners. But 50 years after the dramatic 1920s, industrial Cape Breton remains a monument to the colossal failure of industrial capitalism in Canada. This winter unemployment was higher than 30 per cent and the local economy, drained for so long by private capital, now requires immense transfusions of money from the government in order to stay alive. That Cape Bretoners have survived so many years of economic exploitation is a tribute to the determination and confidence of the community. The future remains uncertain, but Cape Bretoners have never been willing victims and the lessons that McLachlan taught 50 years ago have not lost their relevance.

(David Frank lives in Dominion, Cape Breton and writes about Maritime working class history.)

Downhill slide in Amherst

Workers keep up the fight

by Nolan Reilly

The Amherst and Sackville workers of Enheat Ltd. have not had a good year. Without a contract from December 1975 to July 1976, they struck the company last summer for over 12 weeks. When a settlement was reached in September, the workers were forced to endure a further 8 weeks of unemployment while Enheat sought start-up financing. This article describes the problems these men and women encountered in their struggle to win a new contract and explores the history of working class conflict in Amherst.

"Busy Amherst"

Seventy-five years ago Amherst was a bustling manufacturing center. The town's industries employed over 3,000 men and women in the making of boilers, engines, boots and shoes, bathtubs, stoves, woolen goods, trunks, pianos, and railway cars. Rhodes-Curry Co. was one of the largest railway car building factories in Canada and often employed 1,500 workers. While Maritimers left by the thousands in search of jobs, "Busy Amherst" grew and grew.

Businessmen invested in Amherst because there was a profit to be made. But after 1907 it became harder and harder to make money anywhere in the Maritimes because investment money and industry were being concentrated in central Canada. Some businessmen tried to continue as usual and were wiped out by competition. Most, however, plugged their operations into the larger national system. It meant higher profits for them, but hardship for the working people.

Nathaniel Curry, the railway man, for example, made a bundle in one of these deals. He merged his Amherst plant with two others in Montreal. This transaction made old Nathaniel a millionaire, and he moved to Montreal with the profits made in Amherst to become president of the newly formed Canadian Car & Foundry Co. Later, as president of 11 companies and a director of 30 others, he rounded off his career in the Senate. So much for the old myth that Nova Scotia doesn't have any industries because there aren't any smart businessmen. We must look farther than this if we want to discover the answer for regional underdevelopment.

The Canadian Car & Foundry Co., the new monopoly, had no interest in modernizing the Amherst works. In fact it did exactly the opposite. Between 1909-1921 it moved department after department to Montreal, until the Amherst division was completely shutdown. Most of the other industries in the town had a similar fate. The closing of Amherst's factories in the 1920s brought high unemployment, low wages in the few available jobs, and an uncertain future for the workers and their families. Hundreds of working class families left the area in search of employment.

One Big Union

The workers didn't sit still and allow this process to run its course. Before World War I carpenters, machinists, painters, moulders, tailors, carmen, and boot and shoe workers organized union locals. Many of these working people became members of the Socialist Party of Canada. In 1919, many workers joined the One Big Union movement.

The O.B.U. was politically and organizationally very different from the labour bodies of today. All workers in a factory, skilled and unskilled, organized into a unit of the O.B.U. This combination of all tradesmen and labourers into a single body was a radical concept in 1919. For example, previous to this time the moulders, machinists, and carmen in the Canadian Car & Foundry Co. had separate unions. The labourers were almost totally unorganized. These small locals, however, did not have the necessary resources to defend their members against the actions of the large corporations.

The O.B.U. took their concept of industrial unionism one step further by organizing the town's entire working class from rolling mill employees through garage mechanics. Each shop formed a branch of

the O.B.U. All grievances were taken through the central body to the businessmen. This kind of organization greatly benefited the workers in the smaller shops. The boot and shoe employees, for example, depended on the support of all O.B.U. members in the town. This certainly improved their bargaining position.

1919 General Strike

In May 1919, the solidarity of the O.B.U. members was tested and proved to be strong. The working men and women, already upset by their low wages and long hours, discovered that the carworks paid its Montreal employees higher wages than the Amherst workers. The O.B.U. called a mass protest meeting for the evening of 19 May. They confronted the problem directly.

One Big Union Ties Up Industrial Amherst. All workers join the carmen in demand for the concessions granted Montreal employees of Canada Car Company — 2,000 men out — great processions and overflow meetings. But the men are calm and orderly.

So began the newspaper reports of Canada's second major general strike of 1919 (Winnipeg was the first). After three weeks the O.B.U. returned to work with higher pay and shorter hours. Also the carmen had won parity with Montreal. This victory, however, could not reverse the long range trend of underdevelopment and in the 1920s Amherst's economy collapsed.

Drifting into the 1960s

For the next 40 years Amherst drifted. Small factories came and went, wages remained low, jobs were scarce, and the young left for central Canada in search of employment. Then came the 1960s and new promises of prosperity. Things began to change. Or did they?

American and Canadian multi-nationals moved into the town to reap the benefits of government handouts and the further subsidization of low pay scales. However, if the workers organize and demand a living wage or the government ceases its corporate welfare programmes, the companies move their assembly plants elsewhere. They reappear in places like Mexico where wages are even lower.

In the summer of 1976 a number of companies suspended production in Amherst. Several hundred men and women were thrown onto the unemployment rolls. At least 25 workers followed the westward path that thousands of Maritimers have travelled in the last century. This up-rooting neither was, nor is, easy. It often means the breaking up of families, loss of money on the sale of the workers' homes, and a difficult adjustment period in unfamiliar surroundings.

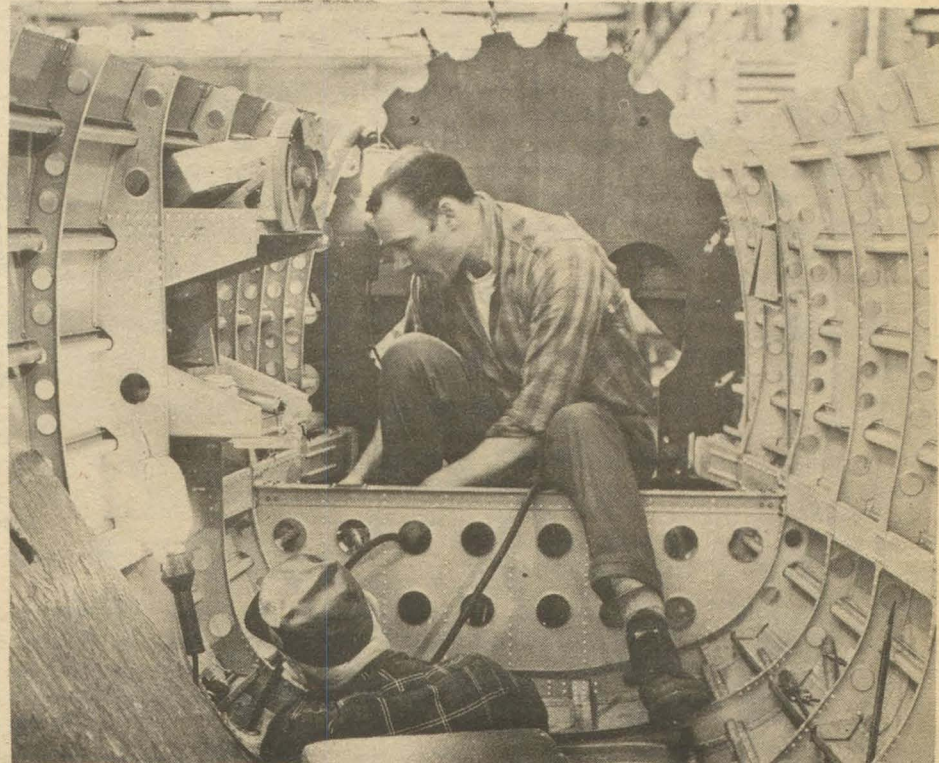
If these companies weren't already strong enough, the introduction of wage controls provided them with yet one more tool to erode the living standards of Maritime workers. They have not hesitated to use it. Last summer the Enheat Ltd. workers in their struggle to secure a new contract had to confront not only the problems of living in an underdeveloped region but also the company's hiding behind the Anti-inflation Board.

Enheat Ltd.

Quebec based, Enheat operates in Amherst a rolling mill division with 200 employees during peak production periods (which aren't often) and an aircraft division with 150 workers. In nearby Sackville, the company has an appliance division employing 185. The workers are organized into 4 locals of the United Steel Workers of America but bargain as one unit.

The previous contract between the union and Enheat expired in December 1975. In negotiations that stretched through autumn 1975 and into spring 1976, the company never budged from the AIB guidelines of 8% in the first year of a 2 year contract and 6% in the second year. In July, just before the strike, the offer was raised to 8% for both years.

The small increase offered by the company again demonstrated its contempt



Enheat worker in Amherst, N.S.

for the workers. In previous contracts the union members had accepted low wage settlements because of Enheat's apparent financial problems. As a result, wages had fallen behind other Maritime industries, let alone the rest of Canada. Given the already low wages and the high inflation rate during the life of the last contract, acceptance of the AIB guidelines in 1976 would have meant a decline in the workers' real wages.

The Strike

The union was not willing to compromise. It demanded wage increases of 15 and 10 percent over 2 years, and the introduction of a new job classification scheme known as the Co-operative Wage Programme (CWS). The rolling mill employees also demanded a commitment from the company to modernize its facilities, since they fear that the plant will close if it is not made more competitive.

By July, Enheat workers were fed up with the company's arrogant attitude. On July 5, they voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. Seven days later the picket lines went up in Amherst. The New Brunswick government used a technicality in the labour laws to force the Sackville employees to remain at work for an additional two weeks.

The Nunn Report

The strike dragged on through July and by mid-August the inevitable rumour began to circulate. Enheat was bankrupt and about to close. The union decided to settle this question and asked the Nova Scotia government to investigate. The government appointed lawyer D.M. Nunn to study the situation. On 20 September, after two days of hearings Nunn submitted what even he described as "unorthodox" recommendations.

Nunn reported that the company was on the verge of insolvency and called on the employees to sacrifice all demands to save Enheat. He urged the union to return to work without a contract or retroactive pay. Also the workers were asked to accept a wage increase lower than what the company had offered before the strike began 11 weeks earlier. The final absurdity of the report, however, was that even if the union accepted these recommendations there was no guarantee that Enheat would continue to operate.

The workers response to the Nunn report was an immediate and resounding no. Union members insisted that they would no longer subsidize the company by accepting low wages. Paul Lepage of the USWA staff emphasized that, "it is high time new management and ownership was put in here [Enheat] to build a viable and prosperous industry." Lepage also warned that any attempt to place responsibility for the bankruptcy of the company on the workers would be "sheer damned dishonesty." Furthermore, the workers decided that if

new management could not be found, the company should be nationalized.

When news of the union's decision reached Halifax, the government quickly rallied to the defense of its wealthy business friends. Labour Minister Fitzgerald had the audacity to tell the workers that he doesn't think "it's fair to expect that if a company can't meet its payroll, workers [should] automatically feel the government will pick up the difference."

The Settlement

After several weeks of sustained union pressure the government finally began to consider financial assistance for Enheat. However, the signing of a collective agreement was set down as a requirement for the issuing of government support. Near the end of September, the union and management returned to the bargaining table and eventually reached an agreement. The workers ratified the contract which includes hourly increases of 50c plus 13c over 2 years (original offer 44c plus 39c), and another 40c under the CWS plan. A joint union-management committee was established to supervise the modernization of the rolling mill.

Ed Steele, the USWA staff person involved in the negotiations is unhappy that the contract doesn't give the Enheat workers parity with other steelworkers in the region. But he feels the agreement was the best that could be secured under the circumstances.

The Future

Although the strike was settled by 1 October, the Enheat workers were not recalled until December. The company claimed the delay was created by the complicated loan negotiations with the various levels of government. During this time a \$8 million contract was signed with Lockheed Ltd. Enheat is to provide parts for the new Aurora patrol planes.

The workers still face uncertainty. The AIB has not ruled on the contract and considering the pattern of its previous rulings, it may decide to roll the wages back. The long-term problems the employees face are even more disturbing. Will the financial position of Enheat be any better in another year when the contract expires or will the union have to fight the same struggle all over again? Will the company actually undertake the modernization of the Amherst rolling mill?

There is an ironic twist to the summer's struggle of the Enheat workers. The company's rolling mill occupies the same facilities vacated by the Canadian Car & Foundry Co. In 1919, the OBU members in the rolling mill played a prominent role in the general strike. Their key demand — revitalization of the mill.

(Nolan Reilly is researching the labour history of Amherst, Nova Scotia)

by Mike Bradfield

Nova Scotians need jobs and lots of them. Jobs to produce the goods we need. Jobs to generate incomes to buy the goods we need, whether locally produced or imported. But do we need jobs of any kind, jobs at any price? How many ways are there to create jobs?

The accepted myth is that the best and fastest way to create jobs is with foreign investment. But is it always true that what's good for the multinationals is good for Nova Scotians?

The benefits of foreign investment is obvious. The multinational looks like instant success. Take one teaspoon of foreign investment and add two quarts of concessions and presto: employment. The multinational brings in its sophisticated technology, its up-to-date management techniques, its credit rating, its international sales system with a market already carved out. Easy as baking a cake — or are we cooking our goose?

Too often we see only the benefits because they are immediate. The costs are ignored and never weighed against the benefits. But any fool can make a deal to get some benefits. It takes ability to make a deal in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

The majority of multinationals receive major concessions for locating in Nova Scotia — direct grants from DREE (Department of Regional Economic Expansion), loans from I.E.L. (Industrial Estates Ltd.), and grants of land and tax concessions from municipalities. Sometimes they receive other breaks, such as subsidized power rates and access to our resources at ridiculously low prices, as in the case of stumpage on crown land or the tax on gypsum. (For instance, last year Nova Scotia Forest Industries made a profit in Nova Scotia of \$18 million. The company paid less than \$200,000 for cutting rights and received a power rate subsidy of approximately \$2 million.)

At what cost?

No one wants to be a kill-joy and mention these costs at a plant opening. With so many people getting jobs, it seems ungrateful to ask "At what cost?" Is the question not worth asking, or are we afraid of the answer?

In fact, the costs of foreign investment are often shocking. You don't have to look at the disasters like heavy water and Clairtone. Look at some of the "success" stories of foreign investment. IEL loans have been as high as a quarter million dollars for each job created. Ignoring the major disasters and excluding DREE grants and municipal concessions, IEL assistance

Who owns Nova Scotia? Us or Them?

to the multinationals averages \$23,000 per job! Compare that to IEL's small business loans to local firms. For small businesses, the cost per job is about 1/6 the cost per job with foreign investment! And the small businesses do not qualify for the DREE and other subsidies worth millions to the foreign companies.

These subsidies to foreign investors mean higher taxes. They also mean that there is very little risk for the foreign investor. Canadians put up the bulk of the money.

When foreign companies use their credit ratings, it is often at the expense of potential Canadian investors. Our banks are only too happy to lend to foreign subsidiaries. The foreign companies siphon off Canadian savings that otherwise would be for Canadian investors. Just one more way that Canadians finance their own dependence!

Subsidized foreign investment is really Canadian investment. We raise the money, we take the risks, but the foreign company walks off with the profits. And when the foreign company decides how to re-invest the profits, the needs of Nova Scotia are generally dismissed.

Many of the "advantages" of foreign investment carry costs with them. For instance, the size of the multinationals allows them to start plants which employ many people from the day they open. Growing pains are avoided. But, the very size of the employment gives the firm excessive power in dealing with the government and the labour force.

Firms put extreme pressure on governments for subsidies, for a low minimum wage, for watered down safety regulations, for minimal environmental standards, and for changes in labour legislation to make it more difficult to unionize. While the multinationals have the support of local business in these efforts, it is the foreign companies, with millions of dollars of taxpayers' money and control over hundreds of jobs, that wield the biggest stick.

The multinational's size and diversity give it a lot of clout at the bargaining table. The company can use its financial strength and production from other plants to ride out a strike in any one plant. The workers, on the other hand, have few alternatives; an extended strike can ruin an entire community when hundreds of jobs are involved. The company may threaten to move out

— and even if the union calls their bluff, the government will often cave in and order the men back to work, as happened in Newfoundland in the St. Lawrence lockout last year.

Even the short-run benefits of foreign technology carry significant long-run costs. After all, if we "need" foreign investment because we lack modern technology, relying on foreign investment only delays the day we develop our own expertise. In the future we will still lack technology and again will rely on foreign investment. Dependence on foreign technology only increases our dependence in the future.

Long-run costs are also created by relying on the foreign company's access to markets and funds. The multinational guarantees a sufficient market to start a large scale plant, but also tends to restrict branch plants so that they don't compete with each other. Relying on foreign funds means that investment funds generated in Nova Scotia in the future will be controlled by outsiders. Consider this: The profits, savings, and pension and insurance premiums generated by Nova Scotians are just about equal to our level of investment. So why do we need foreign funds? Because the funds we generate are removed from Nova Scotia in the form of profits, or by the financial institutions and insurance companies. Because of past foreign investment, we "need" more now. But if we increase the amount of foreign investment, we increase our dependence in the future. The longer we're on this treadmill, the harder it will be to jump off.

People who think that our future is tied to foreign investment are caught in the trap of a dependence psychology. They believe that we cannot make it on our own, that we cannot generate our own leaders, that we cannot make our own decisions. As long as people accept this dependence, they will not try to do things themselves. They will find that, yes, they are dependent. And as long as we are dependent, we will pay enormous costs — economic, political, and social — for the benefits of foreign investment which increases the very problem it is supposed to solve.

Of course, some foreign investment is necessary and desirable. The benefits of foreign investment are real and should be seized — as long as they are worth the cost. What we must recognize is that the costs are often too large to justify and that THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES.

(Mike Bradfield teaches economics at Dalhousie University and is the NDP candidate for the Halifax Citadel riding in the next provincial election.)



Supporting Organizations

These pages, admittedly not your everyday student newspaper material, reflect our concern for the world of the people who work outside our university's walls.

The **Dalhousie Gazette** has joined in publishing this supplement because we recognize how easy it is for those who come to study at Dalhousie (like any other university) to forget about the community at large. Perhaps the most valuable thing we can learn and think about in our last years of formal education — how people live and work, what difficulties they face, and how we can work to solve these difficulties — all too easily slips away from us. We hope that these articles reopen a few windows to the world outside.

We have to remember, as well, that it is average Nova Scotians, working people, who foot the bulk of the costs of our educations. Maybe this supplement will, in some small measure, pay some people back.

EDITORS:

Geoff Clare and Rick Plociennik

Special thanks to John McLeod, Donna Treen and Kerry DeLorey for their assistance and to the Dalhousie Arts Society for their generous support.

We live in a province where the vast majority of the people — those who produce and move the goods, catch the fish, farm the land, maintain and distribute the services — live in insecurity and debt. Furthermore, they are denied decent housing and good education.

The **Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre** stands firmly and openly on the side of labour. We attempt to collect and provide information about the conditions of labouring Nova Scotians, their untold history, their wages and working conditions, and their struggles to gain an adequate standard of life. The **NSLR&SC** also seeks to give concrete assistance to working people's demands for secure, healthy and well-paid employment, for better housing and education for their children, and for time and facilities to enjoy leisure and recreation.

The **Nova Scotia Federation of Labour** is a federation of Unions in Nova Scotia that are affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress. The membership of approximately sixty thousand includes the Nova Scotia section of membership in International Unions, National Unions, and Regional Unions.

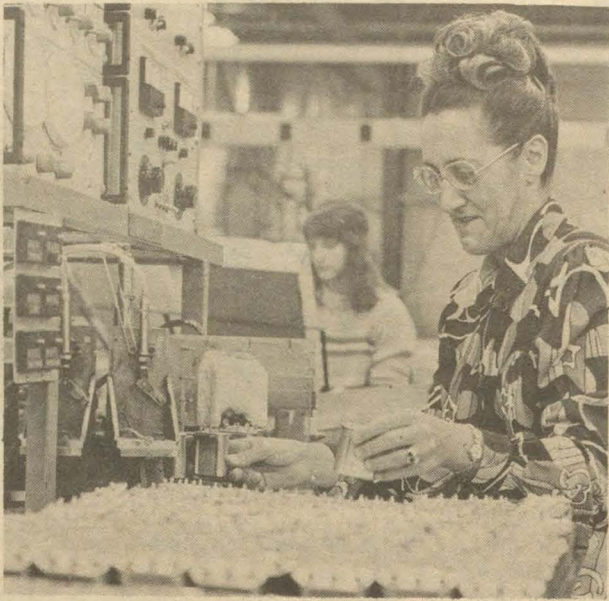
The Federation has a legislative function on a provincial basis, where it recommends to Government new legislation or amendments to existing legislation in the jurisdiction of the Province, i.e. Workmen's Compensation, Safety, Minimum Wages and Standards, Health, Highways, Education, etc.

The Executive is made up of the Executive Officers: President Gerald Yetman, and Secretary-Treasurer J.K. Bell, seven Regional Vice-Presidents and two Vice-Presidents-at-Large.

How did you like this supplement? How could it have been made better? Do you know about any other events, working conditions, or labour battles (perhaps one kept quiet by the media) which should be written about?

The editors would like to have your comments. Please write to them at Box 3368, Halifax South P.O., Halifax, N.S.

Runaway Shops: Industry on the move



by Kim McLaren

Remember the last time you saw the big headlines trumpeting the relocation of a plant in Nova Scotia and read about all the job opportunities being created? Remember the not so prominent articles about the last plant that waved goodbye and moved on due to inflation, or the high cost of materials, or heavy competition, or the energy crisis? Remember the workers who joined the unemployment payrolls? Chances are good that we'd been hit by an international "runaway shop".

THE RUNAWAY PLANT

The term "runaway shop" is not new. It originates in the United States. In the 1930's, the huge unionizing efforts in the industrial north began to pay off. "As the workers' movement started cutting into profits, corporations packed up their machines and moved to non-union areas. In the deep south, the factory owners, aided by state governments, local police and the Ku Klux Klan, kept unions out of factories. They paid unorganized Southern workers one-half the wages of Northern workers. And they paid black workers in the south even less. The workers in the North called them runaway shops."

This evacuation process is occurring in many manufacturing industries, and especially in labour-intensive industries such as electronics, textiles, leathersgoods and auto manufacturing. For example, 95% of radios and 50% of black and white TVs sold under American brand names are made outside the U.S. Over 60,000 U.S. electronic workers have seen their plants moved to Taiwan, South Korea and Mexico. In 1962 in Canada, over 2,000 workers were employed by Canadian General Electric, Philips and Canadian Westinghouse. Now only 10% of those jobs remain in Canada. Even with higher transportation rates it is cheaper and more profitable to ship component parts abroad, have them assembled there and ship them back for sale in North America. The real savings are made from the huge differences in wages paid to workers in the less developed areas.

All of these industries have several characteristics in common. Labour costs in the overall production are high. There is low capital investment in buildings and machinery which can be packed up and hauled off to a new location. The labour employed is often low-skilled and unorganized. Finally, the production process is not tied to any specific natural resource, such as minerals, but involves the assembling or finishing of materials or components which are easily transported. Because the Nova Scotia economy is underdeveloped, we are more vulnerable to this type of exploitation. There are two examples which stand out, the Aerovox Company and General Instruments.

AEROVOX

"Big Future for Company with Micro-size Outlook". Such was the headline in the Hamilton Spectator, March 4, 1968, when Aerovox Canada Limited, a subsidiary of Aerovox Corporation of New Bedford, Massachusetts, completed the research and development of a new micro-circuitry system for TV and radio, on a 50-50 cost sharing basis with the Defence Research Board in Ottawa.

In 1970, two years after the headline, Aerovox headquarters in the U.S. informed the Canadian plant that it would have to shut down. Company officials claimed that sales for the total operation had dropped \$8.5 million between 1966 and 1970. Competition was stiff from cheaper electrical components imported from Taiwan, Japan and Portugal. Shortly after the company announcement, the Federal Department of Regional and Economic Expansion announced that it would grant \$236,000 for the plant to move to Amherst, Nova Scotia. The uneconomical position of Aerovox looked suddenly much brighter. The company general manager had stated that, "We just can't face the labour rates in Hamilton". Wages in Hamilton had been influenced by a strong labour union which had brought rates up to \$3.26 an hour. In Amherst, labour rates were considerably more attractive,

at about \$1.25 an hour. Unemployment was being exported from Nova Scotia to Ontario. (Aerovox was just one of the crowd that year. C.G.E., Westinghouse, Dunlop and Kelvinator plants left Ontario, and Philco-Ford's radio assembly in Oakville left for Brazil).

The government response was that this was regrettable but that certain areas of the electronics industry in Canada are now obsolete and should be phased out, while newer technologies are developed to take their place. Since the Canadian electronics market has always been small, we can not profitably produce electrical parts and still be in a competitive position with imports from Japan, Taiwan and other low-wage areas. The irony of this situation is that many of these foreign imports which undercut our own electronics industry (which is largely foreign owned), are themselves products of U.S. branch-plants abroad which have run away to avoid high labour costs at home. It was the intention of Aerovox to follow suit. But low wages in Nova Scotia and other government incentives helped the company to change its mind. In 1974, after three years of operation in Nova Scotia, Aerovox employees continued to work without a union, at a base rate of pay which was 15c above minimum wage levels.

GENERAL INSTRUMENTS

In 1967 a new electronics assembly plant opened in Sydney. Negotiations with the provincial development corporation, Industrial Estates Limited, had been successful, and an agreement had been reached. Manpower found the women whose families needed a second income and I.E.L. came through with the funds. A low-rent plant was built, \$75,000 of free services (water and power) was offered, a ten year municipal tax rate of 1% was arranged, (the Sydney homeowners paid 3.5% at the time), and an interest-free loan of \$2,900,000 was granted by I.E.L.

General Instruments is a large U.S. based company with headquarters in Chicopee, Illinois. The plant in Illinois had been shut down with a loss of 1,400 jobs. General Instruments has invested instead in branch-plants in low-wage areas such as Taiwan, where 12,000 workers are paid pennies an hour.

The Cape Breton plant was to build radio tuners for automobiles. The parts were made in the U.S., shipped to Sydney for assembly, then shipped back to the U.S. where the radio cabinets and buttons were produced by Ford and Chrysler. Company management was interested in only one thing, a cheap supply of labour. The company lawyer, a Mr. Shapiro, had stated that once labour rates in Nova Scotia rose too high, the company would move to another country. In 1967, the wage paid to the hard working female workforce, was 85c and hour.

From 1967 until 1974, the company and the union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, carried on an intermittent pitched battle over wages and working conditions. Not until 1973 did the union succeed in winning a clause to keep wages 10c above the provincial minimum.

In March 1974 the final word came. General Instruments was leaving. As the Cape Breton Highlander stated, "Exit General Instruments: Cape Breton Can't Match Mexico". Wages had gone up to \$2.10 an hour. In Mexico, the company's next stopover, the going rate was 55c. As the Chronicle Herald reported, "General Instruments' biggest competition comes from plants, many of them sister subsidiaries of giant international operation, in Mexico, Taiwan and Portugal. Low labour costs give the competing plants an edge in bargaining with the big customers. The division manager stated, 'with a 35-45% cutback in markets and steadily rising costs, the foreign labour market begins to look more enticing.' Thus was the move explained, even though the last of General Instruments' 14 managers, Mr. Woodhouse, had confided to an employee that at least during his time at the plant, the company was making money. All efforts by the union, I.E.L., and the Department of Development to keep the company here were in vain.

So what did General Instruments leave behind? What are the lasting benefits from its presence? There are no new industries linked to it, no markets dependent on its product. There is only an empty building and 1,200 now skilled and experienced women out of work - a labour force which is demoralized and potentially a prime target for another General Instruments. It should now be clear that plants like General Instruments do little or nothing to overcome our situation of underdevelopment. If anything, they contribute to the province's financial and social indebtedness to outside industry and control. Regardless of their immediate needs, workers in Nova Scotia, especially those with experience in such plants, will have to face the fact that to work in these sweatshops, under such miserable conditions, is against their long-term interests.

NOVA SCOTIA AS HOST

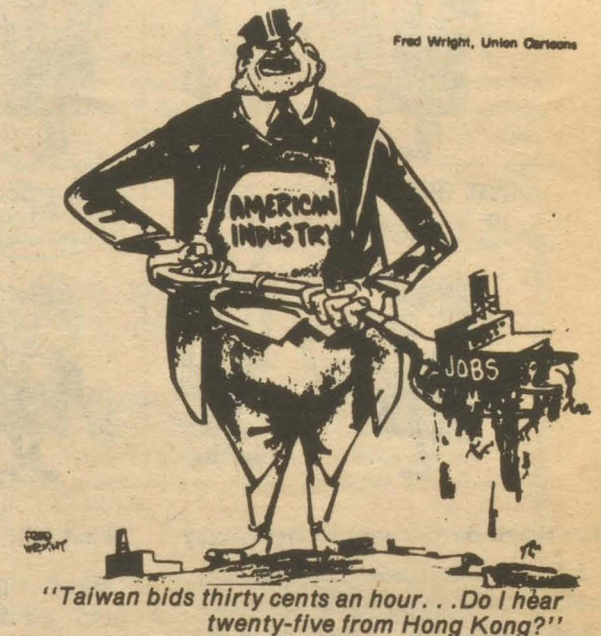
These two plants moved into Nova Scotia to take advantage of a vulnerable economy, firstly with respect to labour costs and secondly in accordance with stated government aims and policies. Although government incentives are not the most important element in a decision to relocate, they help pave the way and make the move more appetizing to big business. Often, provincial

governments compete with one another to attract industry to their areas. So a company planning a move will assess which of these "bait-packages" is most lucrative. As an official of Canadian General Electric put it, "In this free trade environment the basic manufacturing of goods will move to the location in the world where the particular commodity can be produced most efficiently. The rate at which this happens can only be influenced by the short-term attitude of governments involved, and the utilization of controls like tariffs, non-tariff barriers, quotas, subsidies, etc." It's a kind of tradeoff, 'we'll stay and provide you with the jobs, if you make it worth our while'. The Canadian government and the provincial governments have scrambled all over themselves competing with one another to follow this advice. It all happens in the name of development. We can't afford to do it ourselves, so we import it.

We must maintain, so the argument goes, a good climate for industry. The importance of maintaining a stable, dependable and submissive labour force is reflected in the following statement by the Atlantic Development Council, "The manner in which labour exercises its role in the industrial, social and economic community will be a crucial factor in the performance of the economy in the decade ahead. Harmonious labour-management relations are crucial to a successful development effort in the region, and ways must be found of minimizing industrial discord and friction."

THE COST TO US

What have we paid for this experiment in economic development? About one-third of the companies that have been assisted by I.E.L. have failed or moved out. Risks are high in this type of venture, but debts incurred by I.E.L. have often been covered or forgiven by the province. The government picked up the near worthless shares in Clairtone and Deuterium when these plants were in trouble. Clairtone subsequently went broke at tremendous public expense. According to the calculations of Dalhousie economist Roy George, between 1958 and 1971, I.E.L. lost a total of \$63,000,000. In some cases, I.E.L. loans have been give-aways. The prime example is Michelin, which



was loaned \$50,000,000 at about 3 1/2% below what I.E.L. needed to cover its own borrowing costs. Over the life of this loan, I.E.L. will lose about \$30 million or about \$350 per family in Nova Scotia as of March 1971. But then there are those jobs, and that's what sells the public.

Underdevelopment is a vicious circle. Because Nova Scotia is underdeveloped it attracts certain kinds of industry, interested in exploiting local resources and relying on our weak bargaining position. These industries, by their actions, by our dependence on them and by their responsiveness not to our needs but to those of their head-offices, in turn contribute to our economic and social underdevelopment.

As the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council states, "Such labour-intensive industries may be of limited significance in closing the income gap with the rest of the country: often they are low-skill, low-wage industries. Moreover, increasing wages discourage further entry by labour-intensive industries and may ultimately lead to the departure of existing industries to new low-wage areas."

It is clear that economic development cannot be furthered by adherence to present policies and practices. If development is what we want, then Nova Scotians, especially labour organizations, must demand a say in determining what kinds of industry we need, who controls and owns it, and ensure that it serves our long-term interests. Until we are organized to fight against such exploitation of labour and resources, we can only expect a dreary future of more of the same.

(Kim McLaren works for DEVRIC and does research and educational work on development issues in Canada.)

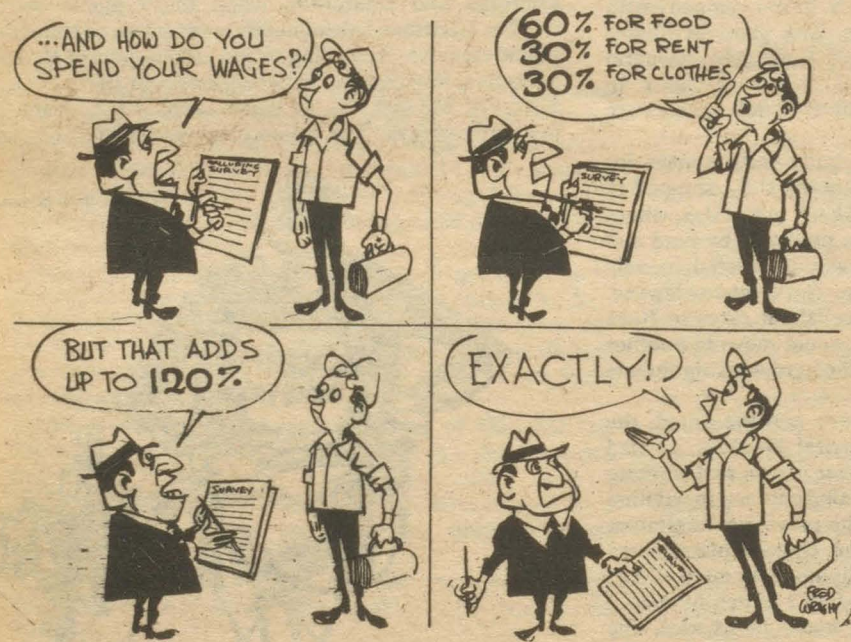
Higher learning Lower wages

by Geoff Clare and Rick Plociennik

Fred and John are fictitious names for two Dalhousie maintenance workers who are members of CUPE local No. 1392. Both men would have preferred to use their real names but, as Fred told us, "At Dalhousie if they don't like you very much they can get rid of you ... one way or another."

Last fall, their Union (which includes the over 250 cleaners and grounds crew at the University) experienced an unjust wage rollback of over 15% on their 1975-76 contract with the university. The consequences: below poverty-line wages for many, repayments to Dalhousie of hundreds of dollars per worker, poorer contract settlements in the years to come.

Just after the Federal Anti-Inflation Board made their ruling, we visited Fred's home in North End Halifax and talked with Fred, his wife Susan, and John, a fellow worker at Dal. In a very informal chat, we talked about what it is like to work at Dalhousie, and what impact the recent A.I.B. ruling had on their lives. Both men have worked at Dal for more than five years, and both are married. Fred has four children; John has two with one on the way.



How much do you earn at Dalhousie?

John: I take home \$240 every two weeks. That's about \$4.05 an hour — Christ knows what it's going to be after this rollback.

Fred: Right now I earn the same as John, which amounts to about \$8,000 for the year...not very much to support a wife and four kids.

Do you have any other jobs?

John: Yeah, I work part time in the evenings as a cleaner. I needed the second job so I can live. I put in thirty hours a week down there and forty hours a week at Dal — a good seventy hours a week. I've been doing it for four years. It's not easy, you get use to it, but it's not easy.

Fred: Most of us are forced to take two jobs to hold up our obligations. I have to have a part-time job to pay my bills and live on. We're not making as much in the university as we should make, Dalhousie has never paid a living wage since I started there.

I leave here at 7:00 in the morning and usually don't get home 'till 11:00 at night, five days a week...not much of a family life, eh? But without that extra money I can't survive, can't pay my bills.

John: That's right. I couldn't make ends meet with one job. Since we had our raise in January, we were just getting settled. Maybe in another year or so I could have given up the part-time job. But now with the rollback it might be another ten years before I can give it up. If I lose either of them, I'll be finished. The next step would be bankruptcy.

Why does Dalhousie pay you so poorly?

Fred: I don't know. Back in 1970 I made \$1.84 per hour and at the same time city cleaners doing the same work were making \$3.30. They say they don't have enough money to pay us a living wage, but they usually find the money to buy houses and pay administrators \$25,000 a year. We'd be better off on welfare than working for Dal.

It's not only us that's getting ripped off — look at some of the secretaries making \$5,000 a year...that's no money.

What bills do you have?

Fred: I'll tell you, they aren't luxury bills. It's finance bills that hurt the most after we buy stuff at Christmas for the kids. And if something goes wrong with the house I've got to go to the finance company to borrow some more.

On top of that I've got phone bills, light bills and heat bills...which is a big problem. It cost me \$900 to heat this place last winter. Three times we ran out of fuel and had to move in with the relatives — we didn't have the cash.

John: I owe few bills, and they're a sizeable amount. Loans on stuff you like to have, and you like to have it now and not later. So you pay on it through your teeth. I don't own a home, probably never will. I don't think I could make it if I wasn't living with the wife's parents. I pay them part of the rent. If I had to pay my bills, pay rent, oil, electricity, and everything else that goes with living today, I couldn't do it. But where I am now, some day I've got to face the fact that I've got to get out and live on my own. It's going to be pretty tough. We're just hanging by a thread right now.

What did you think of your last contract?

Fred: We had to fight like hell for a half decent wage and since that time they've cut back the working staff by 35%. In the end what they gave us was a little more money and twice as much work. We paid a penalty for making half decent earnings.

Susan: When they signed that contract we thought for the first time that we would get ahead. We need a new fridge...now with the rollback we'll have to go to the finance company again. Finance companies rip you off, but where else can you go for money?

John: You know, with that raise it was almost like heaven. But with this rollback, well, usually you figure getting a raise one year and another the next. You don't figure on going down the ladder again the year after.

What was your reaction to the rollback?

John: Well, I suppose you just have to take what comes. It bothers me a great deal and I think about it a lot, but what can I do.

Fred: I was dumbfounded. Trudeau claimed that poor people weren't going to get hit by the A.I.B. He lied!

Susan: If Fred is cut back \$3.50 an hour we just can't survive, not with the lights, fuel, and groceries going up...and we can't even afford a car. We wanted one badly this year, but there was no way we could make it. Not even a second hand one.

John: It makes you cut back on everything. You just do. Now if I lose 50c an hour off my pay, there's \$4 a day, \$20 a week, \$80 a month. You know, there's a lot of uncertainty about what to do. Might have to go out and get a third job. I've been thinking about it seriously — a couple of hours a week, anything I can get will help.

My wife says she'll get a job after the baby comes along, but then you have to have someone to look after the kids, and pay them. It always seems like you're paying out more than what's coming in.

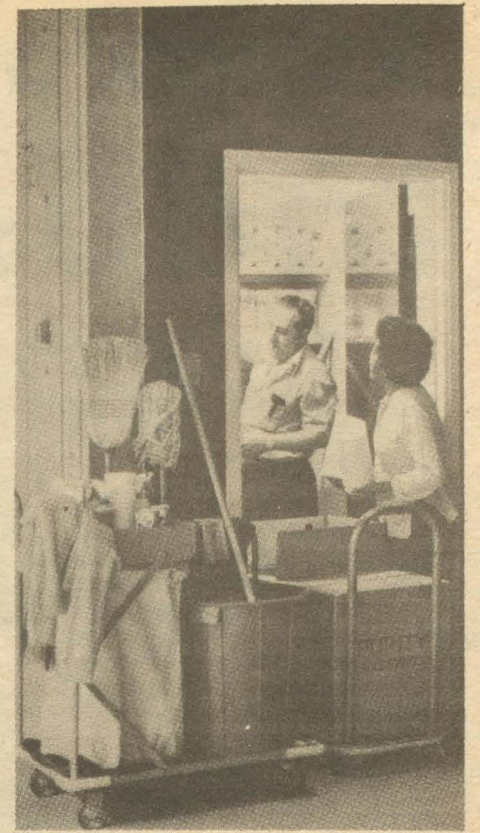
Susan: Well, I said that if Fred got rolled back I'd have to take Peter out of school and put him to work...he's only 15 and I hate to do it but we're going to have to...he'll miss a whole year of school, maybe more...it isn't fair, but what can we do?

What if Dalhousie orders you to pay back, say \$400?

John: I won't be able to pay them back this week, and not the week after, either. Weekly deductions will be hard, too. I can't say anything about it if they say I got to pay them back. I'm not in a position to say no to them...I need this job, so I got to go along with what they say. \$400 doesn't sound like too much, but we just don't have that kind of money, especially to give back to Dal.

Susan: If they do that then we'll die. I'll tell you right now I wouldn't know where it would come from. They might as well tell us to starve to death because Fred is killing himself as it is. Instead of a part-time job he'll have to get another full-time job.

John: Well, when we die the city will always bury us.



What do you think about the A.I.B.?

Susan: Trudeau is trying to break the back of unions. He's telling them that they don't have any rights now. Is that democratic? If this goes on labour is going to have to take the biggest fight they have ever had. Not just one day, but longer...a lot longer.

Fred: Lights go up 65%, groceries are going sky-high and yet they tell us that we're only allowed 6% in the next contract. In a free country people are telling us what we should earn for our labour...Under the A.I.B. the rich'll get richer and the poor'll get poorer. I'm sure of that.

What do you think of Dal's reaction to the rollback?

Fred: Personally, I didn't believe Hicks when he said he was concerned about the rollback. If Dalhousie was any kind of management at all they would stick up for our rights. But based on past history we know better than that.

Susan: If anyone puts down on paper what Dalhousie is making on this rollback—they're laughing. As far as I'm concerned, the A.I.B. is doing Dal's dirty work for them. They're going to save thousands of dollars on the backs of the poor.

What does the future hold for you?

John: You get awful depressed at times. We get depressed at this, somebody gets depressed at something else. You can't win, but we're going to try.

Fred: John's right. The future doesn't look very good now. I'll tell you, with Christmas only two months away, I'll have to go to the finance company again, and I can't afford to do that, that will put me deeper in the hole. I don't know what's going to happen.

Susan: They're telling us to do the impossible, but we can't...there's no way. What's the sense of working hard when you don't get anywhere for it? They are going to push poor people so far and then they'll have a war on their hands.

Fred: That's true — I've been fighting ever since I was a small boy; first in the war, and now against my own government. It doesn't seem right.

I know that my children will have to continue the fight...they will have to be a strong generation...I often wonder about their future.

(Geoff Clare is a history student at Dalhousie University. Rick Plociennik is a student at Dalhousie and a member of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.)

ANTI-INFLATION BOARD

Now it's patriotic to starve

by Paul Burgwin

Filled your tank lately? Ever think that a five dollar bill is just enough to pay for a case of beer? Worried about where you're going to get the money to pay the next power bill — if the Power Corporation hasn't already cut the electricity off? Wait till you have to pay 25% more for your 1977 license plates.

Now, hold it. Before you start complaining that prices are going up all the time, just remember that the Chairman of the Anti-Inflation Board, Jean-Luc Pepin, has declared "a victory in the war against inflation." But on the other hand, it could be his own battle against inflation he's talking about; after all, his salary is a cool \$60,000 a year. Or it could be that he's speaking on behalf of Westinghouse Corporation, where he sits on the Board of Directors. They won their battle long ago — their profits from 1971 to 1975 rose 513%.

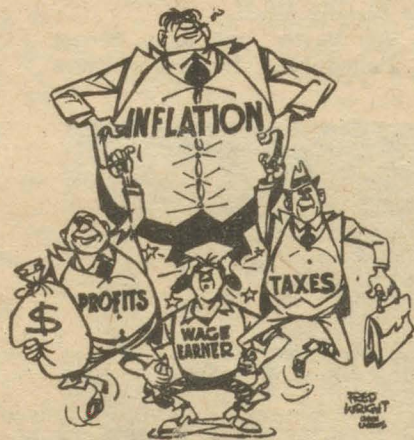
What about our battle against inflation? Says Pepin, working people "are actually better off with controls." That's hard to swallow for the working men and women whose yearly wage increases have dropped from 17% to 10% due to A.I.B. rollbacks. Or for the 890,000 unemployed workers across Canada.

At the same time as wages are falling, prices keep rising. Look at housing. Prior to controls housing costs increased at a rate of 9.2%. Now they are going up at a rate of 11.2%. And food prices are also increasing. If you live in Halifax it costs 18% more to put food on the table than it did before controls.

So if the A.I.B. is a fraud, if it's keeping down wages while letting prices rise, then why is it in existence at all?

To answer this question we have to go back to the period before the controls were introduced. The single statistic which best explains why Pierre Trudeau became a convert to "wage and price" controls is the 9.3% drop in corporate profits in the second half of 1975.

The inflationary trend in Canada really caught fire about three years before wage and price controls were announced. During these three years, food prices rose by 20%. Corporate profits were up from 8.6 billion to 18.3 billion, a rise of about 111%.



During the same period wages rose only about 25%, making a lie out of the old business theory that it's wages which cause inflation. Then, towards the end of 1975, the trend reversed itself. Feeling the pressure of rising prices organized workers began to fight for, and won, half-way decent wage increases. This caused the 9.3% drop in corporate profits, costing the corporate establishment some 4 billion dollars.

And big business had more of the same to look forward to. From mid-October, 1975 to the end of the year some 500,000 workers were due to sign new contracts. In 1976 another million more would be represented at the bargaining table, many of whom had been locked into two or three year contracts and were looking for hefty increases to make up for lost ground.

Pierre Trudeau knew what controls were for — holding down wages at the expense of workers. In 1974, he used the truth about controls as a convenient stick to beat Robert Stanfield. He said, "Robert Stanfield has already said he would not freeze the price of U.S. imports or Arab oil, and he admitted he would exempt housing prices (so has Trudeau). So what's he going to freeze?" Trudeau shouted at the election rally. "Your wages! He's going to freeze your wages!" Trudeau has since stuck to the letter of his 1974 assessment of controls. Under his legislation, the items which cause 75% of price increases were left uncontrolled.

And while the A.I.B. paints a glowing picture of business and labour working shoulder to shoulder in beating inflation, it has helped to create a far different reality. Since mid-August it has recommended price rollbacks for only six companies. Apparently it has been too busy rolling back 1,949 collective agreements affecting 556,901 workers. In the process they took \$175 million out of workers' pockets and placed it in corporate pockets.

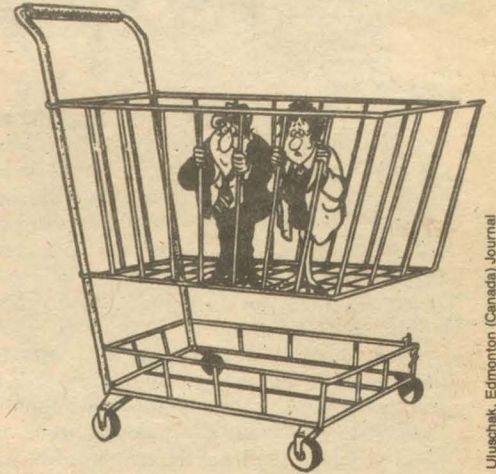
In the past year and a half, the anti-inflation legislation has weathered the test of time. It has had its desired effect — profits are again on the rise; they're up by 117%.

The A.I.B. isn't the only weapon governments and businesses have used to make workers pay for depressed profits; it's just the biggest one they are using right now. Their general attack includes reduced UIC benefits, tax laws favouring the corporations, forced unemployment, and cuts in health care and education.

But the main focus for the attack is the workers' traditional protective organization, the trade union. The first step was to take away the union's right to freely negotiate wage settlements, by imposing rigid controls designed to limit workers to a prearranged increase.

The next stage could be a series of anti-union crusades like the one carried out by the Mid-Island Public Employers Association (MIPEA) in Nanaimo, B.C. There the employers' goal in recent negotiations was to deprive union members of more than 100 already-won benefits, from seniority rights to overtime premiums.

An MIPEA spokesman defended their position by saying that collective bargaining "...doesn't mean improving the living and working conditions of workers." When the union accused the MIPEA of engaging in a reckless



Ulusshak, Edmonton (Canada) Journal

and reactionary programme, the response was, "Reactionary, yes. Reckless, no."

Similar attacks have taken place right across the country. In New Brunswick the provincial Treasury Board is requesting the forfeiture of union shop provisions and a longer waiting period for employees before they receive four weeks vacation. In Quebec, construction workers were forced to strike when the companies tried to limit the role of on-site stewards, and attempted to do away with union-controlled hiring halls. In Campbellton, N.B., 44 municipal workers were fired for participating in the Day of Protest.

Even more of this kind of tactics can be expected in the next year. Because of continuing slow economic growth, businessmen will pull out all the stops as they scramble for higher profits.

Ray Thomas, Vice-president of Polymer International (N.S.) Ltd. put it this way: "The most important subject businessmen should be discussing with political leaders is not disparities but how to improve profits." The President of the Bank of Nova Scotia agrees, saying, "The number one priority in Canada must be the further ratcheting down of the rate of wage and salary advances."

Just at the time when unemployment is higher than it has been in 20 years, right in the middle of the A.I.B. onslaught, the attitude of the corporations can be summed up as — To hell with workers and their families; we want lower wages, higher profits!

To combat these blood-thirsty "captains of industry", we will have to stand united, to resist the cutbacks of wages, to fight back against unjust attacks. Not individually, or one trade union here and another over there. Instead, it has to be a collective effort, bringing together rank and file workers from Yarmouth to Sydney, and across the country.

For it is still true — workers' strength is in our active and united defense of our interests.

(Paul Burgwin is a worker living in Halifax, and a member of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.)

J.K. Bell on wage controls

J.K. Bell, Secretary-treasurer of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, has been one of the most vocal opponents of wage controls. Paul Burgwin talked to J.K. about present battles and future prospects for our labour movement.

How effective has price-control legislation been in keeping down prices and reducing the rate of inflation?

J.K.: Price controls have been very ineffective so far. There are quite a few corporations whose profits are a lot bigger than they were prior to controls. Yet very little has been done about it.

Working people certainly can't see price controls. There's no controls on energy costs, on interest, on land speculation or on food stuffs, for example.

O.K. What's it all about? What's the A.I.B. for then?

J.K.: There's a general attack on the standard of living of this country's working people going on right now. It's happening on all fronts. Take social services; the federal government is scheming to unload its assistance in health and education back onto the provinces. If that happens we'll lose a lot.

In certain parts of the country, not here yet, politicians are attacking working class organizations. All the fuss over what they call the "right to work" clause, for example, is an attempt to destroy unions. It's part of a campaign to take away working people's

rights. In every field of endeavour you can notice restrictions and cutbacks facing ordinary workers.

Trudeau suggested that by holding back the wages of those workers who made more, he'd be helping low-paid workers catch up. Has this happened?

J.K.: No! Nothing like that has happened. In fact, it has been our experience that in the Atlantic region the lower the wage the more severe the A.I.B. has reacted against wage increases. We can show that, for example, in the case of hospital employees, the highway workers and other groups whose wages average somewhere around \$3.00 an hour.

Is this the first time that you know of that wage freezes have been used to make working people pay for an economic crisis?

J.K.: Trade unionism in Nova Scotia's coal industry started with the Provincial Workmen's Association, and that began out of a wage cut in the Springhill area. Prior to the turn of the century one of the biggest union efforts always was to fight against the large number of wage cuts employers were always arbitrarily imposing.

During the depression years I can recall, for example, that a lot of companies introduced two 10% cuts in one year. So wage cuts have been part of struggles in our working people's history. Workers, then as now, had to fight corporations to get wages in line with living costs. Companies, on the other hand, tried to maximize their profits

by introducing wage cuts.

The Day of Protest on October 14 was called, by the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, an attack on the country, upon the whole people of Canada and their way of governing themselves. What do you say?

J.K.: It's not true. I guess it all depends on what you mean by the country. If you equate it with the trust companies and the banks and all the corporations, naturally it is against those. But they are not necessarily the country. In a democratic country people are supposed to count ahead of property.

The fact is the trade union movement in Canada is the single largest organization in the country. Yet policies of major importance are being introduced by government without any consultation with labour. If anything that is a more basic attack on the people's democratic rights.

I would think that in any democracy an organization that comprises the largest group of people certainly should have some impact.

What should workers be doing to protect themselves?

J.K.: Not too long ago I listened to a broadcast where a representative from a large New Brunswick corporation was interviewed. When he was asked about unions he said, "Well, I have no position on unions; they are still legal." Still legal! And he emphasized the "still". It sounded like he's just waiting for the time — soon, he



J.K. Bell

hoped — when they wouldn't be legal any more. Then he would be able to operate without any interference at all. There'd be no threat that his workers would become unionized.

Somewhere along the line workers have got to realize that there are people around who will deprive them of all their rights and have so far just tolerated unions. That's going to be a real fight for us.

Nova Scotia Labour Chronology

by John Bell

The educational system and the media represent two of the most important sources of information available to us. Both of these institutions exert an enormous influence on our lives, ultimately moulding the prejudices which determine the way we perceive the world. To control them obviously requires power and wealth — both of which business has in surplus.

Labour, however, derives its strength elsewhere — from numbers and solidarity, neither of which can buy a T.V. station or influence educational policies. In short, labour is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to presenting its case before the public. And it shows. For example, you will look in vain in our textbooks for an account of the contribution of working people to Nova Scotia. Similarly the media, when not neglecting workers, allows half-truths and lies to pass as facts.

All of this contributes — and is intended to contribute — to labour's isolation. Without public knowledge of their past struggles, and with lies prevailing about their contemporary struggles, workers can expect little understanding or support.

While the following chronology cannot, of course, redress this situation, it may serve to outline just some of the highlights of the history of N.S. labour, a history of sacrifice, determination and, above all, courage.

1777 Wage controls were imposed throughout the province.

1789 The Brother Carpenter Society of Halifax was organized.

1814 Shoemakers were organized by this date, if not earlier.

1816 The government, in an effort to thwart union activity, passed an Act which outlawed all associations attempting to increase wages and improve working conditions. The statute pointed to the growing influence of unionism among tradesmen, journeymen, and workmen in Nova Scotia.

1840 Coal miners at Albion Mines, Pictou County conducted what was probably the first recorded strike in N.S. Appropriately, a wage reduction was at issue.

1841 Pictou miners went on strike against company efforts to force a wage decrease. During the strike over 100 women and children besieged the house of a company agent.

1861 Miners in Stellarton founded the province's first cooperative.

1864 A miners' strike for higher wages at Sydney Mines was met with violence and intimidation as the company and the government colluded to defeat the workmen. The tactics employed were later to become familiar to Cape Breton workers: importing strike breakers, forcing evictions, calling in troops, and pushing through anti-labour legislation. In the face of such an overwhelming onslaught the strike was broken.

Journymen house joiners (carpenters) participated in one of Halifax's first recorded strikes.

1869 Robert Murray organized the Halifax Typographical Society which was chartered as Local 130 of the International Typographical Union. This marked the arrival of the first international to the province.

1879 The Provincial Workmen's Association was formed at a secret meeting organized by Springhill miners.

1880 The Provincial Workmen's Association successfully struck for recognition at Drummond Colliery, Westville.

1882 A year-long miners' strike occurred at Lingan, Cape Breton. The company resorted to the importation of Scottish strike breakers and militia.

Bricklayers and masons in Halifax were organized.

1883 The first attempt was made to amalgamate Halifax unions.

1884 Stonecutters in Halifax were organized. An attempt was made to prohibit the employment of children in N.S. mines with a Child Labour Act which was finally enacted in 1885.

A Halifax dock strike, the largest strike action in the city during the nineteenth century, ended in victory for the Halifax Labourers' Union.

1886 The Provincial Workmen's Association fielded candidates in the provincial elections. This marked labour's first participation in the electoral process.

1889 The Amalgamated Trade Unions of Halifax was formed.

1891 Halifax letter carriers formed a union.

1893 The newly formed Dominion Coal Company was granted a 99-year lease and exclusive rights

to unworked coal deposits. It was also offered the option to assume control of existing collieries.

1897 The Knights of Labour made substantial, but short-lived, gains in the province at the expense of the conservative P.W.A.

Both Halifax railway carmen and plumbers organized unions.

1898 The Halifax Trades and Labour Council was organized.

The International Typographical Union strikes occurred at the *Herald* and *Mail*, and the *Chronicle* and *Echo*. Striking workers published *The Toller* and *Weekly News*.

1900 By the turn of the century about 70 local unions existed in the province.

1902 The Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (T.L.C.C.) chartered the Halifax District Trades and Labour Council.

J.B. McLachlan, a recent immigrant from his native Scotland, arrived in Nova Scotia.

An International Longshoremen's Association local was organized in Halifax.



19th century fish plant at LaHave, N.S.

1904 The Provincial Workmen's Association's bid to embrace a much wider range of trades came to an abrupt halt with the defeat of a P.W.A.-sponsored steel strike against wage cutbacks. Troops were brought to Cape Breton during this strike.

1905 The Fishermen's Union of Nova Scotia was incorporated. Textile workers in Windsor struck.

1906 The British Canadian Cooperative Society was founded at Sydney Mines by a group of miners.

1907 The International Longshoremen's Association struck at Halifax. Electrical workers in the capital formed a

union.

The Canadian Federation of Labour held its convention in Glace Bay.

1908 The first United Mine Workers (U.M.W.) local was chartered at Springhill.

An extraordinary P.W.A. convention voted in favour of affiliation with the U.M.W.

1909 District 26, U.M.W. was chartered as battle lines between the P.W.A. and the U.M.W. were drawn.

A bitter strike began over the issue of U.M.W. recognition. Over half of the man-days lost in Canada this year were to be attributable to this divisive strike which pitted miner against miner.

1910 The P.W.A. - U.M.W. confrontation continued until April 27 when the U.M.W. was forced into submission.

Dominion Steel Co. was formed. Dominion Coal was a subsidiary of this firm.

The Provincial Workmen's Association, about 5,000 strong, affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Labour thereby providing Nova Scotia with a powerful voice in that organization.

1911 John T. Joy, a Halifax longshoreman, contested a Halifax seat in the provincial election for the Direct Labour Representation Party. Joy would later become Labour's first representative on the Workmen's Compensation Board.

1914 The war ushered in a period which witnessed a general slackening of trade union activity as working people diverted their attention, both on the home front and the battlefields of Europe, to the war effort.

1915 J.B. McLachlan ran in the provincial election on the Socialist ticket.

McLachlan, Bob Baxter, and Silby Barrett organized the United Mine Workers of Nova Scotia.

Although it was earlier agreed that the A.M.W. would remain an independent, provincial union, the organization's move to affiliate with the U.M.W. provoked no protest.

Sixty delegates met in Halifax in a convention sponsored by the N.S. executive of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Delegates resolved to form a provincial Federation of Labour and endorsed a proposal to establish a N.S. Independent Labour Party as well.

More than 3500 Amherst workers, members of the One Big Union, organized a three-week General Strike, the second such strike in Canada during this year.

The building trades in Halifax struck. Included in the work stoppage were carpenters, joiners,

Sing the song of the workers in a picket line patrol
Who fought to add some elbow room, a dollar to the dole,
And through all cops and clubbing kept to their far-off goal.

Sing the song of the workers, the great anonymous
Who on a thousand lonely fields gave up their lives for us,
Living without a fanfare and dying without a fuss.

masons, bricklayers, plasterers, electrical workers, painters, and plumbers.

The first issue of the Halifax anti-capitalist weekly, *The Citizen*, appeared. The paper, founded by E.E. Pride, was endorsed by the Halifax Trades and Labour Council. Joe Wallace was appointed editor.

1920 U.M.W. District 26 voted \$500 to the Winnipeg Strike leaders' defense fund.

The Halifax Labour Party contested 4 wards in the Halifax civic election, winning three seats: J.A. Scanlon, Ira Mason, and E.J. Rudge. In addition, Dr. Hawkins, a candidate endorsed by Labour, was elected Mayor.

The Halifax Labour Party organized the founding convention of the N.S. Labour Party which met in Truro.

Farmers and the N.S. Labour Party agreed on joint action in the forthcoming provincial election.

BESCO, a merger of the Halifax Shipyards, Dominion Steel, and Dominion Coal, and the third largest employer in the country, was formed.

2000 Halifax Shipyards workers struck for a wage increase, a 44-hour week, and recognition of their Marine Trades Council. Strike breakers from Great Britain were brought to the city. The workers were eventually starved into submission and blacklisted.

The Farmer-Labour coalition elected 11 members, forming the official opposition in the provincial legislature.

A group of waitresses in Halifax struck. The government passed a statute which it did not enforce: A Minimum Wages and Maximum Hours for Women Act.

The International Typographical Union finally won closed shops at both the *Herald* and the *Chronicle*.

1921 The *Maritime Labour Herald*, a spirited anti-capitalist weekly, was founded by J.B. McLachlan, D.N. Brodie, and others.

BESCO announced a 1/3-wage cut.

1922 The Workers' Party (W.P.) made significant headway in the province recruiting, among others, J.B. McLachlan and Joe Wallace.

Police moved to squash the Halifax Unemployed Movement which was becoming increasingly more militant in its demands.

Joe Wallace succeeded in engineering the affiliation of the Halifax Labour Party with the Worker's Party.

A 100% strike commenced in the coal fields. The government responded with brute force, dispatching 250 troops to Cape Breton from Halifax. Their number was augmented with troops from Petawawa and London, in Ontario.

1923 Steelworkers, after having been lured back to work from a short-lived walkout, struck once again. A battle ensued over the coke ovens, which the workers refused to relinquish. The armed forces invaded Sydney. The Provincial Police ran amok in Whitney Pier, whipping, clubbing, beating, and trampling innocent men, women, and children. A child was killed and a number of people were seriously injured as a consequence.

Miners, outraged by this violence directed

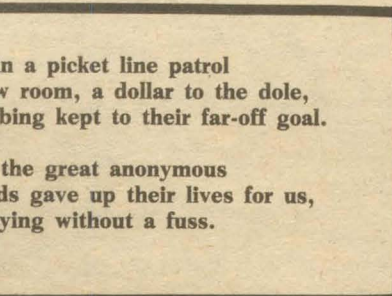
against innocent citizens, struck. The government responded in customary fashion — more troops were ordered to Cape Breton.

The courts were used to undermine the United Mine Workers District Leadership. Dan Livingstone, president, and J.B. McLachlan, secretary-treasurer, were arrested by the Provincial Police.

1924 As a result of a mass campaign J.B. McLachlan was released from prison, arriving in Cape Breton to rallies and parades.

Ben Legere, One Big Union organizer, former locals among N.S. steelworkers.

The *Maritime Labour Herald* publishing plant was destroyed by fire.



1925 Miners were forced to strike against further wage reductions.

The *Maritime Labour Herald* was once more a victim of arson.

In June BESCO seized the New Waterford power plant from workers who had controlled it since the inception of the miners' strike three months earlier. Once in control BESCO cut off power and water to the town. A week later, workers recaptured the power plant only to be driven out by BESCO goons later in the day. The next day, BESCO goons rioted in New Waterford beating innocent citizens. 3000 people marched on Waterford Lake. The mounted police charged and fired on the marchers, wounding several people and murdering William Davis. About 30 goons were hauled from their horses in the melee which followed and were marched back to New Waterford where, after running a gauntlet of outraged citizens, they were jailed. Later in the day they were sprung by BESCO police. Only the intervention of the clergy saved them from lynching when they were intercepted at Sydney.

The government's reply to BESCO's crimes was to dispatch more troops and police. Burning and looting of company property occurred throughout the coal mining district as a result of BESCO violence.

1928 Dosco emerged from a reorganization of BESCO.

St. Francis Xavier University inaugurated an Extension Department devoted to Adult Educa-



The old Windsor furniture factory.

tion, under the direction of Moses M. Coady.

1929 The Women's Federated Labour Union was formed. The organization lobbied the government for enforcement of the minimum wage and maximum hours legislation passed 9 years before. J.B. McLachlan launched *The Nova Scotia Miner*.

1930 The first women representatives sat on the Halifax Trades and Labour Council.

The Liverpool Paper Makers' Union was chartered.

The United Maritime Fishermen Federation was formed in Halifax.

1932 The government established a Department of Labour.

A convention organized to probe the deteriorating situation faced by N.S. miners decided to form the Amalgamated Mine Workers, a union which would be distinguished by its rank and file democracy.

The first provincial credit unions were founded at Broad Cove and Reserve.

1935 George MacEachern, a leading trade unionist, spearheaded a drive to organize a steelworkers' union.

1937 The N.S. Trade Union Act, the first of its kind in Canada, was passed. The Act, which secured the right to union check-off and collective bargaining for N.S. workers, was largely the work of steelworkers MacKay, Neville, and MacEachern.

Lodge 1064 of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers at the Sydney Steel plant received an overwhelming majority in the first certification vote held under the provisions of the new act.

1938 A District 26 convention, held in Truro, committed itself to the establishment of the Nova Scotia C.C.F.

1940 George MacEachern played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Cape Breton Labour Council.

1943 Trenton steelworkers organized a meeting of N.S. union representatives to forge a strategy to combat Dosco's announced intention to close its Trenton plant. The outcome of this gathering was the province's first general strike which enjoyed the support of well over 20,000 workers.

1946 A steel strike began in Sydney. Workers, in addition to national demands, sought to wipe out the wage differential which separated them from their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

1947 In the face of chronic unemployment, the government deported workers to Upper Canada.

Fishermen, organized by the radical Canadian Fishermen's Union, a Canadian Seamen's Union affiliate, were denied collective bargaining rights when the government bowed to concerted pressure from the fish companies and classified fishermen as 'co-adventurers'.



George MacEachern, militant rank and file steelworker.

1948 Deep Sea Fishing Co. cut the wages of Canadian Seamen's Union members.

1949 Dosco, with the blessing of the government, joined in the national campaign to smash the Canadian Seamen's Union, breaking a C.S.U.-sponsored strike in Sydney.

1951 The Cold War manifested itself in N.S. The Nova Scotia Labour Relations Board rejected a bid for certification by the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of Canada as a consequence of J.K. Bell's Communist affiliations. In addition, the District 26 annual convention was marred by anti-communist hysteria and witch-hunting.

1952 A mining disaster in Stellarton claimed 19 lives.

1956 A mining disaster occurred in Springhill, with a death toll of 39.

1958 Another 75 men died in another tragic mine disaster in Springhill.

1959 A long, bitter strike of 14 months duration occurred at Canadian Gypsum near Windsor, as quarry workers, under the leadership of local president Sam Shiers, became the first Nova Scotia workers to confront one of the most intransigent and powerful enemies of workers throughout the world — the U.S. multinationals.

1962 N.D.P. candidate Malcolm MacInnes won a seat in the Federal House. The Provincial N.D.P. held its founding convention in Halifax.

1966 The Donald Report was released, recommending the death of the Cape Breton Coal Industry.

1967 The United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union dispatched organizers to Nova Scotia.

Black Friday — Hawker-Siddeley stunned the people of Cape Breton with its announcement of the closure of the Sydney Steel Plant. A march 35,000 strong took place in Sydney, demanding government action to save the steel industry. A provincial corporation, Sysco, was established to continue operation of the steel plant.

1970 Fishermen led by the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union struck for union recognition. Acadia Fisheries at Mulgrave and Canso, and Booth Fisheries at Petit de Grat turned to the courts and succeeded in securing an injunction against picketing. The injunction was ignored and twelve fishermen were arrested and sentenced to up to nine months in jail. Some 2,500 construction workers walked off the job in sympathy with the fishermen. They were followed by 3,000 miners; a general strike was also threatened.

1971 As the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union awaited revisions to the N.S. Trade Union Act which would allow the fishermen to ask for a certification vote, the companies voluntarily recognized the American-based Canadian Food and Allied Workers Union.

1972 N.S. Highway workers rallied to the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which earned them the right to bargain.

1976 Nova Scotia Labour joined in the first national general strike, precipitated by the Trudeau government's imposition of wage controls.

John Bell works at the Dalhousie University Archives, which has recently established a Labour Archives in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

Hospital workers- 'We've

by Ken Clare

The more of our past we rediscover, the more we learn of a strong strain of militancy which runs through the story of Nova Scotia labour. It was there in the coal mines during the 1920's, 30's and 40's; among farmers in the 1930's, in steel plants in the 1940's and 50's and among Canso strait fishermen in the 1970's.

But it's not all tradition, history, it's not in our past alone. Sometimes in areas with a tradition of workers' battles and now, ever-increasingly in new places Nova Scotians are fighting back. No longer willing to put up with shoddy working conditions and near-starvation wages they want things better, a whole lot and not just a bit, and sooner rather than later.

For more than two years the province's hospital workers — technicians, nurses, janitors, dieticians, and more — have been one of the most active parts of our labour movement. In a few short years they have shed the false

cloak of professionalism, joined the ranks as militant workers.

Like a lot of government employees, hospital workers have paid a heavy price for their passivity. But the 1970's medical workers were being squeezed hard: They'd been getting annual wage settlements of 7%, 6% or even less, while inflation was running into double digits. Almost half of the Victoria General and Pathology Institute technicians earned less than \$7200 a year, the 1974 'poverty line'; some starting salaries were as low as \$5145.

In July, 1975, nurses in this province were getting as little as \$651 a month, compared with the Ontario starting salary of \$945. In mid-1976 some hospital employees were making less than \$100 a week before deductions.

In a horribly cold and calculating way our government and hospital administrators have proven in the past two years how little they care for the province's sick, except as a bargaining tool. For years they've jeopardized people's health with inadequate care and poor safety conditions in

hospitals, paying wages which literally force some of our best medical people to look for jobs elsewhere. They've done their best to make sure that people doing vitally important jobs are disgruntled, dissatisfied, often half-hearted about their work.

Up until a strike vote the government tells them their jobs are so insignificant that they rate pennies-an-hour increases; once they leave work the jobs magically blossom into an "essential service".

Three times in these past two years, our hospital workers simply decided that they'd suffered long enough. The era when they'd be satisfied with pittance had come to an end, they went for substantial raises.

In each case the government responded with pitiful offers. They pleaded poverty, they pleaded patriotism (read A.I.B.). In each case the government said, "We're just not going to offer any more." In each case the workers took up the challenge.

Three major strikes have been fought. In each case

Recent battles: technicians...

It's doubtful if Halifax's Victoria General Hospital and Path Lab technicians had a choice to strike or not. Every step the government took seemed designed to force the workers to walk out.

They started with an offer of about 10% a year over two years. They added a split-contract offer, paying larger percentage increases to the technicians who were already getting higher wages. Then, just after a mediator had been appointed to look into the dispute, hospital administrators declared war: they began collaring technicians, asking them to train interns and residents as replacements.

The technicians weren't buying any of it. They weren't about to train scabs, especially ones — as the interns and residents admitted publically — whose work would only jeopardize patients' health. And they certainly weren't going to go for a low wage, split-contract offer. They stuck, as a unit, with their \$3200-a-year, across-the-board demand.

Denied by law the right to strike, the technicians opted for the mass resignation tactic. Their resignations were planned for Feb. 5, 1975, but as soon as administrators started talking about training replacements, technicians started walking out. By Jan. 30 they handed in their resignations; 86% were out for good.

They knew they were taking on hospital heads, the government, and the province's repressive labour legislation, with no strike fund, no experience in the strategy and tactics of the labour movement, and with no certainty that there would be jobs for them to go back to after the strike. What they didn't know was that they also faced a seven-week battle with their own 'union', the Nova Scotia Government Employees Association.

The N.S.G.E.A. did all it could to smother the striking members' initiative, to muzzle them, to keep the technicians' battle for a living wage looking like a friendly 'dispute'.

The Association president, Cyril Reddy, refused to call on other unions for help of any kind, despite the technicians' pleas and a clear offer of help from N.S. Federation of Labour head Gerald Yetman. Reddy ordered local leaders Ron Stockton and Ken MacKenzie to stop



Hospital technicians on strike.

issuing statements, to stay away from the press. The Association discouraged offers of financial assistance from other unions, and actually withheld one contribution that was made. The executive kept technicians' elected representative out of meetings where vital decisions about the strike were made.

...general workers...

In June, 1976 yet one more group of underpaid hospital workers faced the same government across the bargaining table. Some 1300 housekeepers, engineers, kitchen and dietary aids, and certified nursing assistants, taking home as little as \$92.50 a week, demanded a \$300 a month, across-the-board increase. The government (this time hiding behind the title 'Nova Scotia Health Organization') stuck with its usual first-offer, take-it-or-leave-it stance.

The workers decided to leave it. After their early-July walkout, the battle followed a familiar pattern: the government refused to discuss any possible compromises; in some hospitals scabs were brought in to break the strike.

By July 19 the union had scaled down its demand to a \$200-a-month raise; still the government wouldn't talk. Although the Neils Harbour hospital had returned to work, CUPE representative Harold Martell told the press that the rest were still solid, ready to last three months or more if necessary.

CUPE showed it was prepared to make a contest of it. When scabs came to work at New Glasgow's Aberdeen Hospital, union members not on strike walked off their jobs. Halifax citizens were treated to a little 'union theatre' in front of the legislature. Demonstrations were held, there was a brief sit-in inside the House of Assembly building.

But with one tactic, things began to go sour. Upset by a poor show of support from other hospital unions, notably the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport, and General Workers, CUPE decided to set up picket lines in front of the hospitals. CBRT leader Gerald Jollimore told members to cross the lines and by-and-large they did,

turning the CUPE attempt into a public flop.

"Irregardless of the issue involved — and ordering men to cross a picket line under those circumstances is a serious matter", said one long-time local trade unionist, "CUPE should have known better than to go ahead with their plan if they weren't pretty sure it would succeed. There were a lot of really discouraged picketers out there."

Into mid-August the government wouldn't budge. Even CUPE national president Grace Hartman found nobody home when she went knocking on Province House door. She left charging that the government was trying to "crush" the hospital workers.

By the end of the month workers at one more hospital, Pictou's Sutherland-Harris, had been forced back to their jobs. With the strike now seven weeks old and the government still sitting tight, time and the ever-increasing financial burden of being off the job were beginning to take their toll.

On August 27 Martell admitted that once more "our position has softened. There will be no heroes coming out of this strike." It was clearly only a matter of time. On September 2 union leaders, saying, "there's no hope left", urged acceptance of a two-year settlement: a 6% - 30% raise plus \$400 lump sum for some, 10% plus \$1000 lump sum for others in the first year; 8% for all in the second year.

A clear government victory, but perhaps an empty one in the long run. The union's last comments could be prophetic: "There are some surprises to come, and they (the government) will live to regret the day they starved the hospital workers back to work."

And in the end, Reddy simply sold the workers down the river.

If anything, the government's response was even more vicious. Their first attempt to get an injunction to ban information picketing failed, so they kept trying, and eventually succeeded. They advertised for replacements for resigned workers. Attorney General Alan Sullivan used the legislature to threaten that no matter what else happened, the 'instigators' (read, democratically elected leaders) would never be rehired. Hospital administrators spread wild rumours about technicians too intimidated by each other to return to work, even calling workers at home to try to talk them into coming back.

Technicians' chairman Stockton explained the government's campaign this way: "The government doesn't care about reason, justice, or health care for hospitalized patients. All it cares about is breaking the 'strike' group up because they know we are setting the trend for a stampede of dissatisfied technical workers all across the province."

At first the lab techs stood by quietly, letting the government and the N.S.G.E.A. seize the initiative with their combined attack. Simple 'withdrawal of services' was the only tack they knew for workers to take. But the more they found themselves forced to the wall, the more they were forced to come up with imaginative counter-tactics, keeping the striking workers active and up-to-date, combatting management-spread demoralization.

When you look back at the strike, it was this phase of the technicians' battle which stands out: they used the energies, ideas and enthusiasm of the full membership to turn an unequal match-up into a real contest of wills.

Weekly meetings turned into full strategy sessions, lively discussion generating top-notch ideas. Committees drafted public leaflets; others distributed them all over town. Phone committees kept in touch with all technicians, squelching the latest rumours. Support petitions were taken into the community, in shopping centres and door-to-door. Almost daily demonstrations in front of and inside the legislature kept them in the public eye.

By mid-March they had gained enough support to hold a public rally on their own. More than 700 trade unionists and Halifax citizens heard the strikers' leaders and other union representatives rip into government and hospital administration irresponsibility. The Federation of Labour promised full support any time the N.S.G.E.A. asked for it. N.S.G.E.A. president Reddy, however, revealed that the Association still hadn't decided whether or not to call its members out to support the by now six-week-old strike.

During the next week support continued to grow. Sydney city hospital technicians walked out, others seemed likely to follow. For the first time substantial donations started to flow in from union locals around the province.

The increased backing forced the government's hand; they had to reopen negotiations. But this time there was a difference: no technicians could take part in the talks.

The result was predictable — a slightly higher wage offer, but still a split contract. Technicians' leaders Stockton and MacKenzie would be reinstated in their jobs only if an arbitrator agreed. And the Association's message to the technicians was clear: accept the package, or forget about any more support.

The government now knew that it had the technicians at a tremendous disadvantage. Without N.S.G.E.A. support, the rising tide of labour backing would soon begin to ebb. After eight weeks, some simply couldn't afford to stay out any longer.

And yet, even when so badly undercut, the majority wanted to fight on. The settlement they had been offered was worse than an insult, and they didn't want to abandon their leaders. For four more days they discussed and debated, trying to find a way to hold out. But by March 24 it was clear they couldn't. Stockton and MacKenzie recommended that they return to work.

One last fight remained—winning back their leaders' jobs. A March 26 rally of hundred of technicians and their supporters served notice to the government that the return to work was conditional. This time the government had to listen; within two weeks the two men were back on the job.

'suffered long enough'

hundreds of workers hit the streets. Two of the strikes lasted more than seven weeks. The government and hospital administrations fought back with every low trick in the books — legislation, manipulation, threats, even firings.

In each case these underhanded tactics sent the employees back to the job defeated. But in each case the workers vowed that they had learned valuable lessons, that they would be back with a vengeance.

It's not an easy way to learn. But lessons learned in the heat of battle are not soon forgotten; next time they'll have a better idea of what to expect, of how to organize to win.

And there'll be a lot of next times for hospital workers and for the rest of the province's civil service workers. For all public servants now face the same situation: grinding inflation, rising taxes, and a government under pressure to cut costs — how?... by cutting civil service wages. Previously secure employees now find themselves living on the edge of poverty. And from across the country the response has been the same — teachers, post office workers, medical workers, government clerks are all forging links with the labour movement, joining the wave of worker militancy.

More than a few hospital workers have expressed similar sentiments: "A few weeks on the picket line really opened my eyes. The way things are, is that the way they're supposed to be?... We came into this as nice little innocent boys and girls. We've come out hardened labour people. You can't change everything in eight weeks, but



Hospital technicians confront Attorney-General Sullivan with new demands.

this has been a good start...I used to believe that nonsense about being a professional. In the hospital, with my lab coat on I thought maybe, just maybe, someone

would mistake me for a doctor. I learned the hard way. You can't eat that clean white coat. Now I call myself a worker, and I'm proud of it."

...and nurses, too

Just four months after the technicians' strike began it was the nurse's turn. Fed up with the government's callous offer of 19% and 10% over two years, they pulled the plug on June 12. More than 1000 nurses from 12 provincial hospitals walked off their jobs.

Almost immediately the Regan government claimed to find a serious deterioration in health care in Nova Scotia. The day after the walkout began, a bill to force the nurses back to work was introduced in the House of Assembly.

The labour movement's response was immediate and strong: Trades and Labour Councils, Building Trades Councils, the Federation of Labour, and individual union leaders bitterly denounced the planned legislation. Nurse's Association president Theresa Murphy claimed the hospital workers were being 'set up' as an example to other trade unions. She said that the negotiations up until the strike were just a 'charade' — the government put them in a position where they had to strike, and then introduced a compulsory back-to-work law. It was "the most gutless piece of legislation ever introduced in Nova Scotia."

But within days the legislative attack had been stalled. Brought into the open by the admission of a Halifax-area supervisor that conditions in hospitals were near-normal, the government suspended discussion while it fished for new excuses to back the legislation.

The members of the Assembly were even more embarrassed when their unswerving dereliction of duty was made public. While the province's health care system was supposedly in a crisis they had been spending their time partying. When it came time to reopen debate on the bill they found that they couldn't — they were too drunk!

One nurse put it bluntly but accurately to a minister: "We've been out pounding the pavement for three days only to get in here and find you guys drunk, stumbling around."

The government had lost ground. It had to make a new offer, one which would be better but not too much, and by a means which would make it look better than it really was. This means was a surprise announcement in the legislature by Health Minister MacEachern — 37.5% over two years was the new offer.

It worked. In bypassing the union's negotiators and appealing directly to the membership, the government created even more confusion among an already demoralized Halifax-area membership. Within a couple of days the Halifax nurses had voted to accept the offer, split from their Cape Breton fellows, and had returned to work.

Nurses in Cape Breton fought on for another week, though the handwriting on the wall was clear. In the end, they found that they too were unable to cope with the government's "misbehavior and contradictions", as they called it. They were simply not able to match the unlimited resources the government had been willing to spend to break the strike.

Theresa Murphy and her fellow nurses lost that round, but they are just as sure that the fight isn't over yet. Either the government recognizes nurses "as an essential service and pays nurses appropriate salaries", was her parting shot, or they'll "become more militant and really strike without providing emergency services."

(Ken Clare is a member of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.)

THE DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY LABOUR ARCHIVES

In 1976, the Dalhousie University Archives, in conjunction with the N.S. Federation of Labour, inaugurated a Labour Archives devoted to the collection of

local union papers and other Labour related material. The establishment of such a depository represents a decisive step forward in the process of documenting Labour's untold story.



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N. S. FISHING INDUSTRY

Workers toil, companies take



by Gene Barrett
Ken Clare

Six mornings a week, a Guysborough County fisherman gets up to start his workday at 1:30 or 2 o'clock in the morning. At 5 o'clock in the evening, some 15 hours later, he gets home. For his efforts he is paid 14 cents a pound for cod, the same price he got three years ago. He and his fellow Guysborough fishermen averaged \$4,000 each from their catches last year.

A fish plant worker in Lismore doesn't get up to go to work at all any more. She, and about 85 others like her, hasn't had a job in more than half a year. The plant she worked in, the town's only industry, closed down without warning one day last summer, and she doesn't know when or if it will open again.

Meanwhile W.O. Morrow, president of National Sea Products, was receiving an invitation to join the renowned Lloyd's of London. It's an exclusive club, with a traditional, if crude, standard for membership — how much money a person has. Morrow, apparently, has enough.

Low wages and uncertain jobs for most, tremendous wealth for a few — it's the age-old story of the Nova Scotia fisheries.

TWO BATTLES

Two battles, so closely mixed together that it is hard to distinguish one from the other, have marked the lives of those who live by fishing. From the beginning they've had to struggle against the fierce elements of nature to wrest a meagre living from the sea. At the same time they've fought over and over again to win prices and conditions which would make their battle for simple survival outdated.

The story of these battles began in the early part of the 1900's when, even by today's tough standards, conditions for fishermen were desperate. This was in large part due to the structure of the industry. Even as late as 1950 the local fishing business, though dominated by a few large firms, was mostly made up of many small, specialized, often family-based operations. Some firms were buying from the fishermen, others were processing, sometimes still others acted as wholesalers, and then there was the retailer yet to come. With all these businessmen each getting a bite out of every pound of fish sold, fishermen ended up with as little as a fraction of a cent a pound for fish most other Nova Scotians could barely afford.

Today the industry's domination by a few firms, who take the product the whole way from the fisherman to the grocery shelves, is complete. And while the companies could more easily afford to buy fish for higher prices and pay plant workers more, their greed hasn't changed. They've learned how to use the greater power which has come along with their size to keep the industry's workers in the same miserable conditions.

THREE GROUPS

The people who do the work in our fishing industry can be bunched in three broad groups — plant workers, independent inshore fishermen, and the men who work on offshore trawlers and dragnets. Each group has unique problems, of course, but they face in common the same major difficulties: seasonal employment, low pay, and dwindling fish stocks. In the last 40 years they've found one more thing in common — for the first time all are

fighting back against the power of the monopolies and their government allies.

Even though he often works the longest hours in the dirtiest conditions for the lowest pay, it's the inshore fisherman whose conditions of work make him least able, of all the workers in the fishing industry, to organize and fight back. Labouring as they do individually, or with just another man or two, hardly having the time to catch a breath let alone the leisure to talk over common problems, and all too often being too independent to join in a united stand, some inshore fishermen have not always been ready to form a union.

Still, inshore fishermen were organized well before others in the industry (in protective associations as early as 1905, the Fisherman's Federation in the 20's, and the United Maritimes Fishermen in the 1930's.) But then, for nearly 15 years from the mid 30's on, the offshore men and plant workers set the pace, breaking with associations and forming a union.

THE UNION

The Canadian Seaman's Union, a large industrial union strongest on the Great Lakes, began the first organizing effort in Nova Scotia. The campaign, led by Pat Sullivan, Charles Murray and Dane Parker, founded a single union including offshore fishermen, plant workers, even some inshore fishermen. It was the Canadian Fishermen's Union.

Seeing the organization as a threat to their traditional domination of the workers, the companies unanimously refused to recognize or bargain with the union. With the support of Angus L. MacDonald's provincial government the companies embarked on a 20-year anti-union drive.

Three hard-fought strikes, two in 1938 in Lunenburg and Halifax, and one in 1939 in Lockport, marked the early stages of the struggle. Following the 1939 strike plant workers won collective bargaining rights, but offshore and inshore fishermen were forbidden by law from unionizing.

In 1947, following a war-time lull in union activity, the CFU again fought to win bargaining rights for offshore fishermen. Once more the industry was shut down in a long and bitter strike. To turn public opinion against the fishermen, the companies whipped up the anti-union right-wing hysteria then sweeping North America. Ralph Bell, the founder of National Sea Products, criss-crossed the province, led by full-page newspaper ads and filling the airwaves with radio interviews, all with one theme — the union was a communist plot; it threatened the freedom of the fishermen themselves, indeed the whole province!

The strike collapsed, leaving the fishermen demoralized, their union broke, and the labour movement running scared. Capitalizing on their victory, the government shoved through new labour legislation which formally restricted fishermen to one organization, the long-dead Fishermen's Federation of Nova Scotia. Once again divided from their co-workers, the fish-plant section of the union collapsed as well.

20 YEARS LATER

It would be more than 20 years, beginning with the monumental Canso strait trawlermen's strike, before strong union sentiment would again be a force among fishermen. But when it came back, it came on a wave of fierce determination, the like of which has seldom been seen even in a province with a long history of labour

battles.

For more than a year, beginning in March 1970, trawlermen from the town of Canso, Petit de Grat, and Mulgrave, fought to win recognition for their union, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union.

For years the men and their families had suffered under the whim and will of the fish companies. Low wages did nothing to compensate for the brutally long hours worked, or the weeks spent away from families. The men worked in peril on ships so unsafe that even the lifeboats were rusted to the hull: They knew they needed a strong union.

One of the early lessons a new and militant organization learns is that when the chips are down, they face more than the companies alone. Along with Acadia and Booth Fisheries were all the allies the companies could muster. The provincial government gave willingly of its courts, jailing strikers for up to nine months for the crime of walking a picket line. Just like it did in the 40's, the *Chronicle-Herald* sang harmony with the companies — running scare headlines, featuring distorted stories. Other fish companies filled Acadia's and Booth's contracts, guaranteeing them their markets when the fight was over.

DETERMINATION PLUS ORGANIZATION

The trawlermen had their weapons, too. The chief one was their daring and iron determination, driving them towards a goal they knew was a just one. The union organization, blending the most capable of the local leaders with West Coast men who had years of successful organizing experience, gave the fishermen the full measure of good leadership that the struggle deserved.

And they were not alone. Though in the end they got less than the total support they earned, there were a few times when it seemed like the whole province stood poised, ready to join them in the fray. For each man jailed tens came to take his place. In June, 1970 thousands — from Halifax to Cape Breton, construction workers to coal miners — walked out to protest the vicious jail sentences, forcing the courts to release the men right away.

But if the men were determined, the companies were desperate. They would never, they vowed, let the United Fishermen get a foothold in Nova Scotia, for they feared its grass-roots dedication to its members and its militant-fighting stand on their behalf.

Little by little, the fishermen were stalemated. In the end, when the Canadian Food and Allied Workers Union crawled in through the back door, signed 'sweetheart agreements' and won company recognition against the will of the workers, the men lost their union.

They lost, but this cannot diminish the accomplishments of this determined band of workers and their families. By standing up to the companies they not only got their first signed agreement, they not only won for all offshore fishermen the right to bargain collectively, a historic accomplishment in its own right. They also rekindled, in those who live by fishing, an interest in uniting to fight for better lives.

What's won from now on will be their victory, too.

NEXT TIME

It's impossible to guess in advance who among fishing industry workers will come to the fore in the next battle. It could be fish plant employees, if the fighting spirit of the woman of Lismore is any indication. Their seven month long struggle to have their plant reopened has shown that even unorganized workers are capable of unexpected resoluteness and militancy.

Or it could be inshore fishermen. A number of tough new Associations have been formed in the past couple of years. Their brand-new strength and sense of purpose was shown during the successful Northumberland Fisherman's Association boycott of local lobster buyers this past summer.

But it may well be the present crisis in the industry will require the united efforts of all the workers to solve it. "Dwindling stocks" is the term most often used, and it means that foreign fleets are taking more of the catch than ever before, that Canadian vessels are forced more and more to fish inshore (where they are joined by ships of other nations, too), that inshore fishermen are bringing home fewer and smaller fish than they ever have before, and that plant workers have to squeeze shorter periods of work between longer periods of unemployment.

If it keeps up, there will be no fish left for Nova Scotians to catch.

To save their livelihood is a critical task, but is also a huge one. Will Nova Scotia fishermen be able to forge the tremendous unity needed, stand firm for common goals agreed to by strong and united organizations?

Or maybe, after years of struggle, after many past disappointments, fishermen will give up, learn to accept their fate? Maybe the fire's gone out?

One fisherman answered these questions with a few of his own: "Have the companies gone away? Have they started to pay decent prices? When did they begin to manage fish stocks so that we'll have a future? Have we any dignity left to fight for?"

The embers left from past fires are still glowing. Who knows what new breeze will fan them back into flames again?

(Gene Barrett is a graduate student at Sussex University, England doing research on the fishing industry in Nova Scotia. Ken Clare is a member of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.)

SYDNEY STEEL

On its last legs: How come?

by Ron Crawley

Jacques Desrosiers

For more than ten years Nova Scotians have been taking a daily media dose of doom and despair about the Sydney steel mill. The impression of hopelessness has been so strongly fixed in us that it must be hard, even for a lot of steelworkers, to remember that there was a time when the steel plant's future was full of promise.

The Dominion Iron and Steel Company, as it used to be called, was once the biggest in Canada. It had (and the present plant still has) a lot of natural advantages over other steel plants in Canada and other places in the world. It had easy access to plentiful and cheap raw materials. It was located on tidewater and it was closer to the British and European markets than the steel plants of Pittsburg and central Canada.

So great were these advantages that the English iron masters called the Sydney plant the 'Damocletian sword' that threatened their businesses.

The company's first general manager, J.A. Moxham, boasted, "So great is (its) promise that it has ceased to be local...ceased to be sectional. It has become international in influence...the strength of her position is conceded by every expert." H.M. Whitney, the original owner and president, waxed eloquent when visions of future profits danced in his head. "Here in the home of the great basic industry of iron and steel, all other industries will surely follow."

It was widely expected that Sydney would become "The Pittsburg of Canada."

Well, Sydney never became, and certainly isn't today, a Pittsburg. The early promises have a hollow ring — the people of Sydney, indeed all of Cape Breton, have never been so unsure of the future.

You only have to visit Sydney and walk the streets to sense the frustration, even despair, that grips people. In the last two years more than 1500 workers have been laid off at the steel plant, the cornerstone of the area's economy. Most of them are young people, hired during the modernization and reconstruction phase, as they called it. Many were just getting married, beginning to raise families, and investing in new homes. Now, with no jobs, they face the same high mortgage payments, and even higher food and electricity bills.

In the last year hundreds of these young people have been 'going down the road' — this time as often to Alberta as anywhere else. Laid off almost two years ago, one young ex-steelworker said, "I can't afford to wait any longer. So I've joined the armed forces. It was either that or go out west. I figure I have more security in the forces and I don't have to pay my way out there. Things may never pick up here and even if they do, I just can't afford to wait."

The stagnation and open despondency is closely tied to the fate of the plant: from early promise to a decaying industry in a little more than sixty years. How did it end up in such a sorry state?

A *Cape Breton Post* editorial furnishes some of the answer. "A large part of the blame for the present situation must go to the company's (Hawker-Siddeley's) failure to explore every avenue of development and diversification."

But the industry could only have developed and diversified if the plant's profit was reinvested in Sydney steel. Throughout its history, there was plenty of profit made. From 1913 to 1920 the plant netted a profit of \$41,520,932; in six years (1959-64), when it was controlled by Hawker-Siddeley, the net profit was \$17,055,952.

But instead of reinvesting these enormous sums, ensuring a healthy, modern steel industry for Sydney, the owners pumped their millions into mainly U.S.-controlled Upper Canadian industries. The Canadian Steel Corporation, Dominion Bridge Company, and Essex Terminal Railway Company, all American steel subsidiaries, were purchased with profits from Sydney. Because of these dealings the Cape Breton steel industry grew only 33% between 1944 and 1964, while the Steel Company of Canada expanded 194% and Algoma Steel grew 198% in the same period.

The government played its part too. Unequal freight rates made it more expensive to ship finished goods from the Maritimes to central Canada. "Freight rates on a ton of finished steel are about twice as much as for ingot steel," explained one recently retired steelworker. "The problem is they don't want us to make any finished steel that will compete with the products in central Canada."

When steel production was down in Sydney, the government had low tariffs which allowed American steel to



be sold competitively in Canada. The final straw came in 1967, when Canada signed the Kennedy rounds of tariffs, doing away with the \$3.00 per ton duty on imported steel.

Sixty years of company rip-offs and mismanagement, aided by their government allies, left Sydney steel largely outmoded and run-down by 1967. Hawker-Siddeley said the plant could no longer compete for markets, couldn't produce a profit. It has been losing millions, they said. On October 13, 1967 — Black Friday, they still call it in Cape Breton — Hawker-Siddeley told the people of Sydney their steel mill would be closed for good.

Strong local reaction forced the provincial government to buy the plant and keep it open. For a while a honeymoon atmosphere prevailed: newspaper stories told of new hope and enthusiasm among steelworkers. The provincial government promised tens of millions to rebuild the plant, to again make it the industry of the future.

Just talk to steelworkers these days, and you'll soon learn how quickly that rosy dream faded. Many now say that the government has treated the industry and people no different from the way the private companies did. The province hasn't begun to solve the basic problems of the steel industry. The mill continues to deteriorate, and the government shows little desire, and is making next to no effort to put Sydney steel on its feet.

Many more workers now realize that the provincial government was no saviour — in 1967 it stepped in to pick up the pieces from a situation it helped to create. It wasn't until Black Friday that government officials discovered Hawker-Siddeley's lack of "corporate responsibility", its lack of "ethics". Large companies like Hawker-Siddeley have only one "corporate responsibility" — to themselves, to increase their own profits.

Even now, nearly ten years after they took over the plant, the province is doing nothing to combat high freight rates, or get the federal government to reimpose tariffs on American steel.

Cape Bretoners ask, "Has anything really changed since the government take-over?"

Not when it comes to diversification. Today the plant is producing fewer and fewer kinds of products. "Back in 1941 or '42 we had a plate mill for making plates for ships during the war, but at the end of the war they sold it to some outfit in Texas to make pipes for oil wells," recounts one veteran worker. "And the same kind of thing has happened since the government take-over. In 1969 they took the wire and nail mill out of here, just when there was a construction boom on. Nails soared from 10c a pound to almost a dollar."

The quarter of a billion dollars spent on rehabilitation hasn't made too much of a difference, either. It's an impressive figure, but as one steelworker tells it, "Of the \$225 million spent on the plant, more than \$70 million was unaccounted for and what was spent wasn't used in the best way. There was a lot of waste and things were done backwards."

Another worker backs him up. "Instead of building Basic Oxygen furnaces which are known to be the most efficient, they went and poured millions into the Submerged Injection Process (SIP) which was being abandoned by other

companies and which was shown to be less efficient and have all kinds of problems."

And when it comes to excuses for a poor performance, there's no big change. Just like the private companies before them, the government is singing that old favourite tune, "Soft Markets". A lot of steelworkers don't believe a word of it. One says, "They say we have a soft market. Sure, there are soft markets, because we don't make the steel that is required. We need a diversity of products; this plant can't be run on just rail steel."

"If you look at the pipe and structural steel that is being used in the Maritimes for construction, you'll probably find that most of it comes from the U.S. or Japan or some other country. Why can't we produce this kind of steel?"

But one thing is new. Gerald Regan and his government are promoting the construction of a new steel plant at Gabarous, outside Sydney, to replace the present mill. Most steelworkers, and their union, see this as an unnecessary move. The site is there, right in Sydney, they say, and not all of it is useless by a long shot.

"I think Gabarous is a red herring," is the idea of one steelworker. "They say it will be good because it's a deepwater port and they will be able to bring in 200,000 ton ships. You can't bring those boats in, though, without building a 12-mile breakwater. They have some of the roughest coastline in the world there and it's full of shoals."

"Regan made a statement that we only have 38 feet of water at high tide in Sydney. But when Regan was talking we had a 45,000 ton ship come in and dock at the harbour, and it needed more than 38 feet of water. It would be better if we just dredged the Sydney harbour for 1½ miles. After all, only 3 or 4 ports in the world can take 200,000 ton ships, and how many of them are steel ports?"

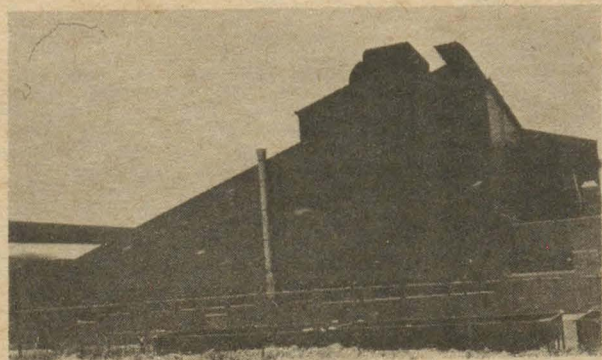
"There has been talk about making the steel in Gabarous and rolling it at the Sydney plant, more than 30 miles away. That'll cause a lot of problems, especially in cold weather. And what's the good of it anyway? It will just do away with the furnaces at Sydney and we'll be making the same kinds of steel as before."

"How is that going to improve the markets?"

The provincial government, many steelworkers have learned, has no more of the solution for Sydney's problems than the private companies did, and they cared for nothing but the number of dollars they could carry from Cape Breton. The government's control of steel production is no better than the old-fashioned private robbery. Workers have learned that neither corporations nor business-controlled governments have been able to keep a healthy steel industry going in Sydney.

So it's only the energy and initiative, the united efforts of Cape Breton working people, that will save Sydney steel. For they, not the Hawker-Siddeleys, not the Regan governments, are the real steel makers.

(Ron Crawley is a native of Sydney, Cape Breton who is doing graduate work on the early history of Sydney Steel. Jacques Desrosiers is a member of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre who last year completed a study on Sydney Steel.)



Sydney steel plant.

by Pat Connelly, Joyce Conrad, Sharon Stolzman

Today more and more women are going out to work. In 1951 one out of five women, and today one out of every three women in Nova Scotia works outside her home.

What's in store for us when we go out to work? Certainly not pleasant working conditions. Not good wages or fringe benefits. Not much by way of daycare services for our children. Just the opposite. There are hardly any benefits for working women. So why are we going out to work?

Some people say that we get jobs because household work and child-rearing are no longer a full-time job what with all the modern conveniences. So they say we're bored. Or that we're working for the family "extras". Still others think that we simply don't want to take care of our children. All of these people think that we have a choice, but we don't. The real reason we work is that we need to.

Women Support Families

"I don't make enough at this job (secretary) to pay someone to look after the baby. I may have to quit my job and go on welfare."

It's clear that women who do not have husbands need to work outside the home. Single, divorced, separated and widowed women must work to support themselves and in many cases their children.

In many cases women who must support families cannot afford to work. Available jobs pay so little that we cannot pay for the transportation, daycare (if it's available at all), additional clothing and the other unavoidable costs which result when we work outside the home. For this reason many female heads of household have no choice but to go on welfare. However, there is little doubt that those who are able to go out to work do so because they need to.

What About Married Women?

"I'm in a stew. I have to get out to work. I've been working since I was 14 and I'm 62 now. We can't keep up on what Jack makes. The bills mount up. I don't know how people with small children manage today."

Are married women working for the "extras" while their husbands support them? The answer is that many men in Nova Scotia, like everywhere else in Canada, are not being paid enough to support their wives and children. Over half of the incomes of Nova Scotia men fell below the poverty line in 1971. Most of these men were trying to support a family.

The majority (57%) of working women in Nova Scotia are married. It has been shown in Canada that it is the women with low family incomes who are most likely to enter the labour force. So, many of the men who are earning low wages are married to women who are earning even lower wages.

The poverty line for an average Canadian family of four in 1971 was \$4,697. Even then, some families with two people working still do not have incomes over the poverty line. Many other low-income families barely manage to keep above the poverty line only because both husband and wife are working.

In Nova Scotia, as elsewhere in the country, more and more families are finding it necessary to have more than one worker in the family in order to live adequately. And this second worker is usually the wife. Proof of this is the fact that employment of women in Nova Scotia was four times as high in 1971 as it was in 1951.

We Are Cheap Labour

Women work not only because we need the money but

also because the economy needs our labour. In the past few years there has been a huge increase in the demand for women in certain kinds of jobs such as clerical work. When an employer wants to hire a secretary he always looks for a female secretary.

Women are a useful type of labour for employers. We are cheap and available labour. Because we are not considered the main breadwinner we can be hired cheaply when needed and fired easily when not - World War II is a good example of how this works.

We can readily be used in part-time and seasonal jobs since we already have full-time jobs in the home. When we are no longer needed we often have no other choice than to return home. Since we return to the home, we do not become a "burden on the economy" as do men without jobs.

But this doesn't work out very well anymore. Today women who work outside the home need a job whether or not the economy is able to provide it. This is reflected in the increasing rate of unemployment among women which has tripled in the last six years.

On the one hand, then, there is an increasing demand for female labour and on the other hand there is a high rate of female unemployment. How can that be? The answer is that the demand for female labour occurs only in certain areas of Nova Scotia while the women who need to work are spread throughout the province. The demand is mainly in cities where there is a need for white collar and service workers and in small pockets of the province where female labour is needed in those industries which have traditionally used women such as textiles and fish processing.

There are reasons, then, why increasing numbers of Nova Scotia women are entering the labour force. The first reason is that we need to work in order to help support ourselves and our families. It is not a matter of just choosing to go to work! The second reason is that the economy needs us as a source of cheap labour in certain types of jobs and in certain areas of the provinces.

Low-skilled, Low-paid Jobs

"I've been cleaning other people's houses for thirty years, and I'm not making much more now than when I started."

Women have always been drawn into low-skilled, low-paid jobs. And this has not changed in recent years. The demand for clerical workers is almost three times greater than in 1951. Large groups of women are also employed as waitresses, cooks, and cleaners. While many women enter the professions, this is mainly in the lower paid ones like teaching and nursing.

Many jobs have become stereotyped as "Female jobs". These are the ones which require very little training, offer no opportunity for advancement, are often looked down on, and where the worker can easily be replaced. In such situations, women as individual workers have no bargaining power. They must accept the going wages or be replaced by another worker.

Equal Opportunity?

With all the publicity given to the increasing numbers of

women in the labour force, a false image of the working woman has been created. People are led to believe that women now enjoy equal opportunity and job status with men. Granted, some token women have made inroads in a few fields formerly considered the male domain such as law, architecture and medicine. These scattered success stories of individual women make the media headlines. This makes it appear that women's role in the work force has been completely transformed. But this image is only an illusion that serves to hide the real conditions of working women who are mainly used as a source of cheap labour.

Same Jobs, Different Pay

"I can't believe that he is making \$200 a month more than I am for doing practically the same book-keeping job."

Even in those jobs where women outnumber men, the men's wages are higher than the women's. According to Nova Scotia Department of Labour statistics, in 1971, 69% of all clerical workers in Nova Scotia were women. Yet their average income was \$4,040 while the average income of male clerical workers was \$6,271. In 1974 female sales clerks in Halifax retail food stores averaged \$115 per week while their male counterparts averaged \$171 per week.

When we consider the large numbers of single women who try to provide decent living conditions for themselves, and the many women whose husbands are ill, unable to find work, or low paid, the financial situation of working women in Nova Scotia looks pretty grim.

Having Jobs: The Price We Pay

"I know the kids are o.k. while they are in school but I worry about them after school. But what can I do? I have to work."

There is still more to this grim picture. Since most of the working women in Nova Scotia are married and many of them are mothers, they face problems over and above those of working men. This is because women are still almost always responsible for housekeeping and raising children. Whether a woman goes out to work or not, the work in the home still has to be done. Therefore a working woman really has two jobs.

But even though she still does a great deal of the work herself, there are certain things she can't do to maintain her family. Child care while she is on the job is one of them. This work has to be done by others, and it usually has to be paid for. This takes a large percentage of what she earns.

A working mother must not only face the economic problems of lower wages and having to pay someone to look after her children, but she must also pay the psychological cost of continually worrying about the quality of that care. Both these costs put an enormous strain on the entire family.

The Cost of Daycare

In many areas of the province, there are no daycare facilities. But even when it is available, those who need it most can afford it the least.

Full cost for daycare is \$6.55 per child per day. This comes to between \$136 and \$150 per month or about

THE MAINTENANCE ENGINEER

One Friday night it happened, years after we were wed,
When my old man came in from work; as usual I said,
"Your tea is on the table, clean clothes are on the rack;
Your bath'll soon be ready; I'll come and scrub your back."
He kissed me very tenderly and said, "I'll tell you flat,
The service I give to my machine ain't half as good as that."

CHORUS:

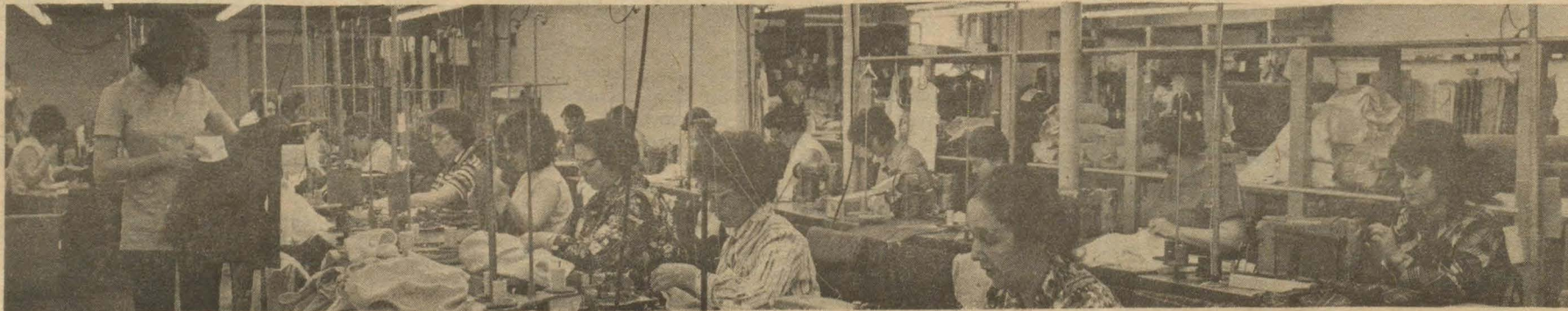
I'm not your little woman,
Your sweetheart or your dear.
I'm a wage slave without wages;
I'm a maintenance engineer!

And then we got to talking; I told him how I felt,
How I keep him running just as smooth as some conveyor belt.
The terms of my employment would make your hair turn grey;
I have to be on call, you see, twenty-four hours a day.
If I keep up full production with another kid or two,
Some future boss will have a brand new labour force to screw.

The truth began to dawn then, how I keep him fit and trim
So the boss can make a nice fat profit out of me and out of him.
And as a solid union man he got in quite a rage
To think that we're both working hard, but getting one man's wage.
I said, "And what about the full-time factory job I do?
That's three men that I work for, love—my boss, your boss, and you.

He looked a little sheepish and he said, "As from today,
The lads and me will see what we can do on equal pay.
Would you like a housewives' union? Do you think you should be paid
As a cook and as a cleaner, as a nurse and as a maid?"
I said, "Don't jump the gun, love; if you did your share at home,
Then I'd have lots of time to fight some battles of my own."

"I've often heard you tell me how you'll bring the bosses down;
You'll never do it, brother, while you're bossing me around.
Till women join the struggle—married, single, white or black,
You're fighting with a blindfold and one arm behind your back."
The message has got over; he has realized at last
That power to the sisters must mean power to the class.



\$1600-\$1700 per year. For a family with an income of less than \$9,000 the government will subsidize part of the cost. This of course helps some, but not nearly enough.

Consider this. The 1975 poverty line for the average Canadian family of four in a city the size of Halifax was \$8,422. So if, for example, it takes two breadwinners to earn \$8,300 they will receive some government subsidy for daycare. But it will still cost them \$1,056 a year to put two children in a daycare centre — provided there is a centre to put them in.

The high cost of daycare diminishes the economic benefits of working for the woman, to the point where it often hardly seems worth it. It also forces alternate child care arrangements which many times are substandard.

Makeshift Child Care Arrangements

Many women share similar problems. In 1975 there were about 10,000 children under 5 years of age whose mothers

worked here in Nova Scotia. Yet there were accommodations for only about 1,200 children in publicly subsidized daycare centres. Who cares for these children while their mothers are away? Most children are looked after by relatives, friends, neighbours and hired babysitters, often under makeshift conditions.

The following report about a low-income family with one child illustrates the problems working mothers and their families face: "Both parents work in shifts. The mother sleeps during the day, the father is out to work, and their child of three is left to roam the house alone. The neighbours say that the little girl spends most of her days in the window, watching the activities in the neighbourhood..." It can't be said that this mother doesn't care about her child; she just has no alternatives.

And what happens when a child gets sick? In most cases, the mother has to stay home from work. Because of these

kinds of circumstances, working mothers with young children are considered "unreliable" workers. Worse yet, when a mother has to stay home to look after her sick child, she usually loses her wages and maybe even her job. So that badly needed, low-paying job which is hard enough to get is harder still to keep if you are the mother of young children.

Our Double Workload

Despite the fact that more married women are working outside the home, new ways of organizing housework have not been introduced. Each woman must still do housework each day for her individual family.

Since the total family income of most working women is low, many of the modern convenient appliances are out of their reach. Two people must work to buy even the required appliances such as fridge and stove.

Contrary to public opinion, then, work in the home has not decreased very much. Therefore women with families who work outside the home really have two jobs - one that they are paid very little for and one that they are not paid to do at all.

Women Are In The Workforce To Stay

Most of us work out of necessity: because of a low family income.

Most of us have low-paid, low-skilled jobs because we are considered a source of cheap labour!

Being forced to do cheap labour cheapens the labour of our male co-workers which contributes to the old game of dividing workers from each other. Men really have nothing to gain from our more meagre wages. They can improve their own conditions only by also helping us win our fight for better jobs and for equal pay for equal work.

So it is clear that we are forced to work and we don't work for "pin money". Most of us are eager to join our male brothers in the workforce. It widens our horizons and makes us understand the common problems that all workers face in their struggle against profit-hungry bosses.

The fact that we women also need our own organizations to press for daycare, maternity benefits, job security, and more equal treatment on the job is for the good of us all. Together we hope to overcome the enforced conditions which keep men and women apart and to forge a new fighting spirit of common solidarity.

[Pat Connelly, Joyce Conrad and Sharon Stolzman are all members of the Nova Scotia Labour Research and Support Centre.]



1400 laid off in Trenton We can't live on promises

by David Gutnick

Trenton as well as the rest of Pictou county has a long history of industrial development. Shipbuilding, mining, and heavy manufacturing have generated much employment during this century and the latter decades of the last. Today, the Hawker-Siddeley Railcar Plant stands in mute testimony to that fact.

Hawker-Siddeley, of England, is an international heavy manufacturing empire with more than 98,000 employees in over 200 separate companies around the world. Besides the Trenton plant, which employs at peak production upwards of 1700 persons, the Company owns the largest shipbuilding and repairing facility in the Maritimes—the Halifax Shipyards.

Ability to produce does in no way guarantee production however. Since late October 1976, the work force in the plant has been greatly reduced in various stages as work along the assembly lines and in the assorted shops was completed. Machinery that could be used in manufacturing goods, needed for the well-being of people lies idle while highly skilled workers with years of experience in a certain trade walk the streets. Much can be attributed to a lack of planning and well reasoned foresight on the part of Hawker-Siddeley and its major customer, the Canadian Government.

SITUATION REMAINS GRAVE

Despite a recent work order by the Federal Government for 688 boxcars, the situation in Trenton remains grave. "Simply because," J.K. Bell, longtime trade unionist and

Secretary-Treasurer of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour argues "688 boxcars won't keep the men working for much longer than three months. Once the order is filled it will be another long wait...perhaps as long as six months." And even after this nothing remains sure.

Even before the contract announcement was made, Leo McKay, a former employee at the steelworks and now Executive-Secretary of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour was vocal in his pronouncement on the plant's future. "If we receive let's say, those three thousand boxcars promised to us in December when we visited the Federal Transport Minister Otto Lang, we still must remember that all they are doing is advancing an order. The government has only so many boxcars they want built and what ever they give us ahead of time is only coming off the other end. When we finish with this group there is no assurance that there will be more work to do. And, because there exists that possibility, it means shutting down all over again." Other trade unionists are equally concerned. Financial-Secretary for the Local representing the Trenton workers United Steelworkers #1231 Earl MacKenzie says that, "the six-hundred and eighty-eight boxcars will ensure jobs for only one half to two thirds of the available workforce, that is, over a seventeen week production period, six to nine hundred people will have work while the rest remain jobless."

FAMILY HARDSHIPS

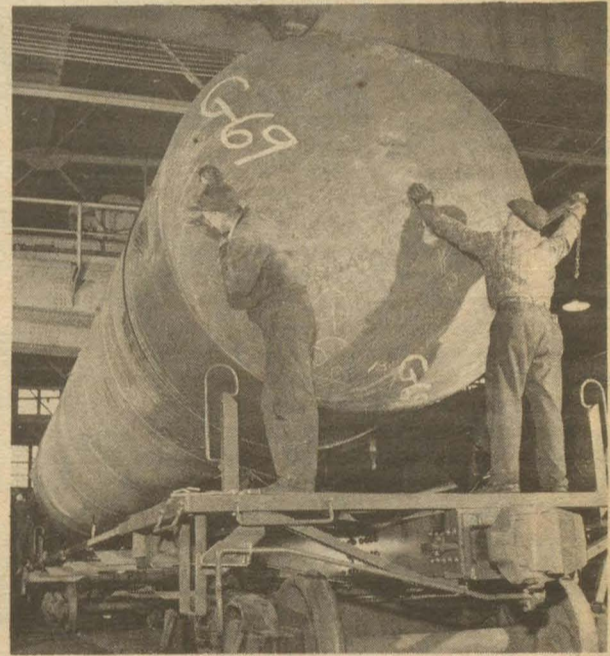
Official government statistics calculate unemployment in the province at 9.9 per cent. Unofficial statistics peg it much higher, perhaps twice as high. And these figures in no way fully explain the urgency of the situation. The cost of unemployment in the Trenton area, as indeed all areas where unemployment exists, can only be explained in terms of lost opportunities, lost incentive, and family hardships.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour has for many years been fighting for labour's interest in this province. It has been Bell's responsibility to negotiate with the government and private industry in an attempt to hammer out of them commitments conducive to the well-being of workers. It is not an easy task given the unplanned and chaotic pattern of Nova Scotia's growth. "The effects of such anarchy—because that's what it is—are multifold" says Bell.

"Whenever business slumps, and it's been doing that more and more frequently in the last fifteen years, working people suffer. It's not the Hawker-Siddeley owners or major stockholders who have their comfortable lives upset when profits dip. What sort of system do we have that can kick skilled workers with thirty and thirty five years of seniority in the steel industry on to the street without any security for themselves or their families?"

INVENTORY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Bell pulls no punches about what is happening in



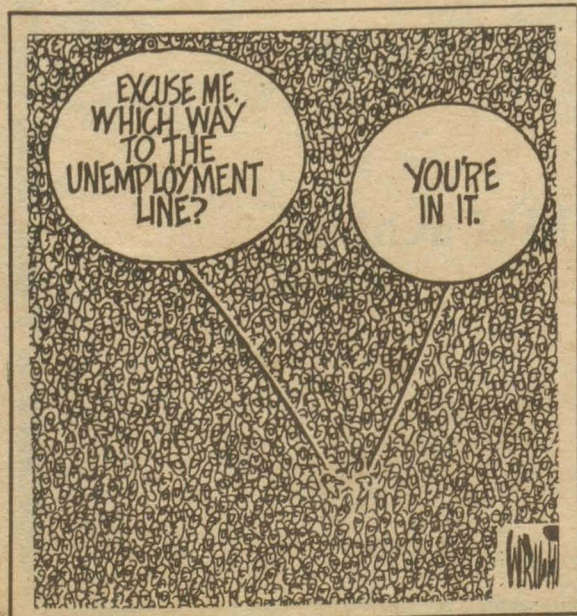
Trenton. "It's another example of how some huge company is out to make a fast buck. And as soon as the profit-taking slows from a gallop to a trot...they leave and don't give a tinker's damn about the mess they've left behind."

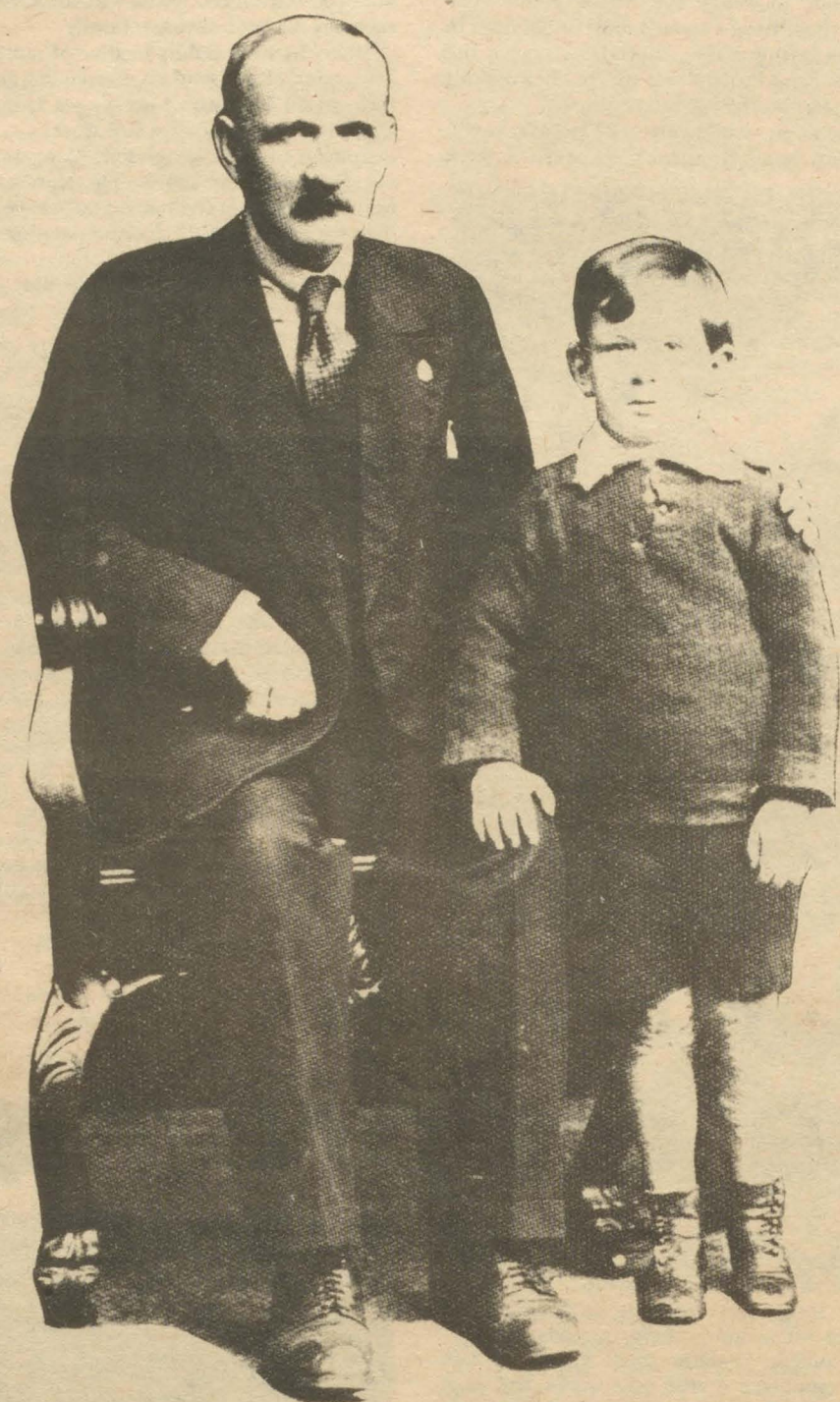
In an attempt to combat the deteriorating and dismal prospects facing Trenton, the NSFL has organized what it calls the Inventory Support Program. The programme is a list of recommendations drawn up by organized labour with the expressed purpose of forcing government and private industry into a position where they would recognize their immediate and long term responsibilities to both the employees and the community.

Knowing as well as they do that private companies and their government allies have failed to demonstrate a liking for labour's interests, the workers in Trenton have been unified in fighting back. According to Earl MacKenzie, the support could not be better. "On October 14, the National Day of Protest, we had 100 per cent agreement among our people to go out. That same feeling is present now."

It is clear from the events in Trenton that a program to distribute work is only a short term solution to a major problem. Private industry will not consent to any program that harms its opportunity at profit. Thus it is only through concerted efforts that organized labour will be able to bring about a planned economy and all the benefits that accrue from it.

(David Gutnick is a student living in Halifax, Nova Scotia.)





I believe in education for action. I believe in telling children the truth about the history of the world, that it does not consist of the history of kings, or lords or cabinets. It consists of the history of the mass of the workers, a thing that is not taught in the schools. I believe in telling children how to measure value, a thing that is not taught in any school.

James B McLachlan