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In the Buzzard's Shadow:  
Craft Subculture, Working-Class Activism,  
and Winnipeg's Custom Tailoring Trade, c1882-1921

A Thesis Presented to  
The Department of History, University of Winnipeg  
and  
The Department of History, University of Manitoba  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
Joint Master's Program Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By John Erwin Hample  
June 1989



IN THE BUZZARD'S SHADOW:  
CRAFT SUBCULTURE, WORKING-CLASS ACTIVISM,  
AND WINNIPEG'S CUSTOM TAILORING TRADE, c1882-1921

BY

JOHN ERWIN HAMPLE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers formed four unions during 1882-1921. This master's thesis in Canadian labour history finds that their institutionally-differentiated practice of labour organization expressed a sustained remedial effort to codify, enforce and reformulate elements of their craft subculture. They mounted this effort in response to the competitive constraints of clothing sector capitalism as these conditioned workplace experience in the city trade, as well as the tailors' identifications with other working-class Winnipeggers. The study first discusses the reproduction of tailoring craft subculture in the emerging city market, and offers a periodized sketch of the 'double jeopardy' which merchant tailors faced as master artisans and as clothing sector capitalists. The remaining chapters employ this periodization to organize discussion of the course of working-class activism pursued by the tailors.

During c1882-1900, the integration of national markets in sewn clothing and in tailoring craft labour power exhausted the jour tailors' earliest attempts - the 'Winnipeg Operative Tailors Union' (fl. 1882) and Harmony Local Assembly 9036 of the Knights of Labor (fl. 1886-87) - to devise a viable labour organization. Only with the chartering of Journeymen Tailors' Union Local 70 (fl. 1892-1919) was this achieved. During c1901-13, Local 70 secured significant wage and other concessions from boss tailors.

Wheat Boom-era economic development, coupled with a persisting city-market skills scarcity, broadly favoured such gains. Meanwhile, JTU Local 70 imbibed ideas about industrial unionism and social radicalism which were encouraged by such figures as John T. Mortimer (d1908), a Socialist Party of Canada activist.

During c1914-21, the custom tailors' experience was overshadowed by the exigencies of war-making, the labour revolt, and of the post-war recession. Paradoxically, Local 70 momentarily became in 1918 the largest JTU local in Canada, yet soon bolted from the international parent body to reconstitute itself as Tailors' Industrial Unit Number One of the One Big Union. The study interprets this development in terms of Local 70's war-time isolations from the south and the east, which were counterbalanced by an epochal quickening of working-class activist identifications and social conflict in the city itself. But the new OBU Unit retained the jour tailors' craft-bounded distinctiveness within the OBU's organizational structure, and was blooded in 1921 attempting to enforce a contractual measure inherited from Local 70.

The study's major primary sources include the local labour press, as well as an intensive reading of the JTU's journal, The Tailor, 1887-1921. The study's general approach is indebted chiefly to perspectives suggested by the work of Gregory S. Kealey, Herbert Gutman, Eric Hobsbawm, David Montgomery, Geoffrey Crossick, and David H. Bensman.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Those who read acknowledgments, and perhaps some who have had occasion to write them, may know the deep but inadequately-expressible thankfulness to other people which a writer rediscovers toward the end of a difficult and protected job of work. I hope that this thesis begins to do justice to its true sine qua non: the compounded good will, encouragement, counsel, and other resources which my family, friends, fellow students, teachers, historical protagonists, and other members of the karass variously have lent, directly and otherwise, to the conducting of this study. I alone am responsible, however, for any errors of commission and omission.

I thank Allison Sproule-Dixon and members of the University of Winnipeg Library staff, Chris Kotecki and his colleagues at PAM, and the staff of the City of Winnipeg Archives for assistance in collecting primary source materials. I thank, too, Dr. Henry M. Trachtenberg, gracious and indefatigable scholar, for his exceptional contribution toward identifying some fundamental aspects of the tailors' experience. Professor Ross McCormack, Frank Yeo, Gerry Berkowski, Zenon Gawron, and Warren Breckman also have lent a helping hand along the way, and I thank them. Thanks are due, too, to the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba for fellowship support and many other considerations without which I could not have undertaken this work.

I acknowledge my gratitude to several scholars and teachers who helped awaken and temper my interest in practicing history. For this, I particularly thank Professors Walt Stein, Victor Batzel, Bob McCormack, and Dan Stone at the University of Winnipeg, as well as Professors Ed Rea and Peter C. Bailey at the University of Manitoba. Nearer the point of production, Professors Nolan Reilly and David G. Burley have made an inestimable contribution to the work, and to my enjoyment in attempting it. To each of these people, my heartfelt thanks for their interest, humane rigour, and consistent encouragement of some years' standing. Special thanks are due to Nolan, my thesis advisor, for his skill, knowledge, and patience, generously bestowed throughout our work together in labour history. Perhaps above all, I hope that he knows how much I value the considerable pains he has taken with this thesis in its several incarnations, and with its author.

When, a hundred times or so and in as many ways during the course of the work, I 'got my sleeve-lining twisted,' Carolyn Hample's wisdom and profound clarity as wife, friend, and critic never have been wanting. I dedicate this thesis to her.

20 June 1989

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...[W]e can't look to other trades to help us as custom tailors....if you look into this you will find something very wrong and selfish, for you can...take a look at their clothes and then safely say that not ten per cent have custom-made clothes and the rest have what we call buzzards or ready-mades. Now I would like to ask those gentlemen, if they ever gave a thought where their clothes were made, whether in prison or in filthy tenement blocks of the large cities of this country....I only ask, why don't the working-men of the country try to support honest labor and do to others as they would be done to?

- Open letter by a Detroit tailor (1890)<sup>1</sup>

\*

THE DEFEAT OF TAILORISM. Time was when tailors were looked upon as a necessary evil - that's a bygone! Time is when they are exposed as extortioners - that's fact! What excuse can they advance for asking \$30 for a suit or overcoat no better than ours at \$15 to \$18? Only one! And that is they have not the machinery or capital to economically manufacture clothes. Is that any funeral of yours? Is it any reason that you should pay them \$15 extra for the same clothes? Guess not! But, say! You don't know what our clothes are like until you see them!

- Winnipeg retail advertisement (1898)<sup>2</sup>

\*

There are markets in men's minds, images of institutions and norms, which determine what is fitting, just, and acceptable in transactions. First, there is the imprint of the exchange economy, where goods and services are traded with varying degrees of efficiency. There is also a political market, where collectively permissible behaviour is defined through the competition of interest groups and parties.... Finally there is a moral economy, a less well understood realm of just price, trust, equity, and legitimacy, where religious and secular ethics reign. Each of these economies has institutional and behavioural norms that demarcate the shifting bounds of expected and acceptable conduct.

- Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles (1986)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Open letter by a Detroit tailor on a recent labour federation meeting in Saginaw, The Tailor, April 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Winnipeg labour press advertisement for Hoover and Company's 'The Commonwealth' clothing store, Voice, 7 October 1898.

<sup>3</sup>Armstrong and Nelles, Monopoly's Moment: The Organization and Regulation of Canadian Utilities, 1830-1930 (Toronto, 1988), 322-23.

Chapter One  
Introduction to the Study

Many of us will have encountered the 'traditional' tailor first in early childhood, perhaps by pestering tractable elders at bedtime or on rainy afternoons. The brave little tailor is one of those tinkering, cobbling, preindustrially questing artisans who hazard the fairy tale mindscape's daunting giants, king's men and fantastic tutelary beasts to emerge a gladdened and deeper person. However, by 1900, his real-life counterpart - who crafted clothing to the order, measure, and idiosyncratic whim of individual consumers - had arrived at a far more equivocal pass. Indeed, the Brothers Grimm figure in the custom (bespoke) tailors' history not as recorders of a peasantry's canny oral traditions, but as the pair of Dayton, Ohio merchant craftsmen who provoked a "hot fight" with union journeymen in summer, 1916.<sup>1</sup> From the early 1800s, the invention of cost-competitive, mass-market men's clothing helped heighten such conflict between organized tailoring craftworkers and their wage-paring, job control-wresting bosses on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose," in Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York, 1985), 11; 58-65; Tailor, 11 July 1916.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., see discussions in: Christopher H. Johnson, "Economic Change and Artisan Discontent: The Tailors' History, 1800-48," Roger Price, ed., Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic (London, 1975), 87-114; James A. Schmiechen, Sweated Industries and

The present study explores labour organization and workplace conflict among those tailoring craftworkers who chose Winnipeg, Canada as their destination during c1870-1921. Attention to the Winnipeg union tailors' case may be of interest on several counts. Firstly, it illustrates how these largely-neglected 'hinterland' artisans responded to the geographic biases and other conflictual imperatives of Dominion industrial development, including their social situation as members of an exploited class. Secondly, it rounds out the uneven literature on Winnipeg's early career as an important western centre for sewn-clothing production and distribution. Third, our discussion will suggest indications for further research concerning these protagonists in a broader context. This thesis, then, is offered as a contribution to the historiography of Canadian working class experience. It documents the convergence of tailoring craftways, clothing sector competition, and working class activism in Winnipeg men's custom tailoring trade. It analyzes how this convergence was implicated in the sequence of trade unions established by city tailoring

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Sweated Labour: The London Clothing Trades, 1860-1914 (Urbana, Ill., 1984), 1-44; E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1980), 282-85; Margaret Stewart and Leslie Hunter, The Needle is Threaded: The History of an Industry (Southampton, 1964), 109-16; Jesse Eliphalet Pope, The Clothing Industry in New York (New York, 1905; rpt. 1970), 1-60; Charles Jacob Stowell, Studies in Trade Unionism in the Custom Tailoring Trade (Bloomington, Ill., 1912), 11-37; 111-28; Stowell, "The Journeymen Tailors of America," University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences 7,4 (December 1918), 20-61; 82-3.

craftworkers during our period, and with what historical consequences.

Winnipeg journeymen tailors first were involved in the western Canadian labour movement in 1882, when they formed an obscure, ephemeral local-market union. Subsequently, they were represented in each of the great waves of working-class activism which swept the West during the next four decades. City tailors established their own trade assembly of the Knights of Labour during 1886-87. They organized Local 70 of the Journeymen Tailors' Union of America (JTU), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labour, in 1892. After the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, members bolted JTU ranks to reconstitute themselves as Tailors' Industrial Unit No. 1 of the One Big Union.<sup>3</sup>

The study argues that the tailors' institutionally-differentiated practice of labour organization expressed a sustained remedial effort to codify, enforce and reformulate elements of their craft subculture.<sup>4</sup> They sustained this

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<sup>3</sup>Stowell (1912), 143, Cf. "Winnipeg Operative Tailors Union: Prices Mutually Agreed to By the Employers and Employees to Take Effect on March 20th 1882," typescript facsim. in Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts RG 27 Vol. 301 (1913); Frank Yeo, "An Army of the Discontented: The Knights of Labor in Winnipeg," (unpub., 1984), 16, 24-6; Tailor, May 1892, June 1892; One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921.

<sup>4</sup>This interpretation is indebted to perspectives developed in: Gregory S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892 (Toronto, 1980), 83; David Montgomery, The fall of the house of labor: The workplace, the state, and American labour activism, 1865-1925 (Cambridge, 1987), 3-4; David H. Bensman, The Practice of

effort in response to the imperatives of clothing sector competition as these impinged, directly and otherwise, upon the trade, its personnel, and their expressed identifications with other women and men of Winnipeg's working class. This core argument is advanced in the form of linked inquiries which respectively correspond with each of the study's constituent chapters. The form and burden of this argument is outlined immediately below. The rest of this introductory chapter identifies the study's historiographical departures and major primary sources.

Chapter Two, then, describes the custom tailors' craft subculture, along with the implications of conceiving it in this way. The chapter empirically characterizes these skilled working people as proponents of a well-articulated, avowedly 'ancient' transatlantic craft subculture which organized their experience as a purposefully self-conscious human group. Winnipeg's custom tailors were predisposed toward certain ways of apportioning, executing and evaluating work, and of relating to each other, whether with equanimity or sharp animosity, by a prior-established complex of customary meanings and practices. Consequently, 'old-time' Tailordom generated colony-like cachements of

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Solidarity: American Hat Finishers in the Nineteenth Century (Urbana, Ill., 1985), xxix-xx; R.A. Leeson, Travelling Brothers: The six centuries' road from craft fellowship to trade unionism, (London, 1979), esp. Ch. 16; Eric Hobsbawm, Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour (London, 1984), 224.

'traditional' craft activity which thrived, at least for a time, in scores of smaller provincial places while these communities struggled to become viable centres of commercial and industrial activity. Winnipeg was one point of this centrifugal craft-colonization. The local trade reproduced in some essential particulars (e.g., recourse to a distinct work regimen, wage form, and gender-task segmentation) the tailors' accustomed ways of plying their craft, and of apportioning its tasks and spoils.

However, to view the tailors' history solely from the perspective of craft subculture is too partial. It cannot adequately account for the incidence of conflict within the trade, nor for the interplay of market forces and conditions which helped point such conflict throughout our period of study. Winnipeg's custom tailors did not operate in a social or economic vacuum as they strove to secure a place for their craft in this new market centre. If such endeavours had met with some success by the early 1890s, a longer, less reductive view of their experience indicates that this was a frangible and increasingly qualified achievement at best.

Chapter Three thus suggests that merchant tailors faced a double jeopardy in their quest for consumer favour and profit. Its dual terms corresponded with those of the very nomenclature by which merchant tailors, as such, commended their services to consumers. On the one hand, as merchants, they competed among themselves and with others whose

business it was to sell men's clothing in the local retail market. On the other hand, as tailors - tailors, moreover, whose proprietorial status represented the flower, even the vindication of a 'traditional' life course in the craft - they at once were liable to the claims and traditions of the tailor's work subculture, to which their relationship was variable and ambivalent. Geography, then, in itself was no solvent of the subcultural ties which uneasily held together journeymen and master tailors in a craft-bounded community of perceived interests. But the constraints of competition in an industrializing economic sector were a dialectically-acting solvent of precisely this kind - and a corrosive one, too. The resulting cleavages, moreover, were much implicated in the way social class historically 'happened' among these craftworkers and their bosses, and in the trade's history of labour organization.

Subsequent chapters explore JTU Local 70's emergence in the city market, and profile this union's scope, achievements, and the program which its members sustained, sometimes haltingly, in the Winnipeg market during our period of study. Substantively, the discussion emphasizes that, despite the institutional restlessness evident among tailors at both temporal limits of our study period, and although the evidence for their several organizations is extremely uneven, important (if qualified) continuities of workplace experience, political engagement and social

aspiration mark their history as unionized working people. The field claimed by Local 70 optimally ranged from the 'legislating' of wages due for the most minute 'extra' task in producing a vest or suit coat to the bruited of broadly-conceived common interests with all people who shared the jour tailors' "class position."

Tangible realization of such aims and identifications was another matter, of course. The tailors mounted seven major strikes in the city market during our period, and engaged in several other, more-circumscribed skirmishes involving individual firms only. These conflicts, it will be suggested, are most usefully understood as sharply articulated, dynamic occasions in the complex continuum of season-to-season negotiation - formal and informal, individual and collective - whereby these organized craftworkers successively tested and redefined their relations with their bosses, with other working-class activists, and with the community at large.

The final chapter comments briefly on the study's main findings, and on directions which they may point for further historical exploration of the union tailors' craft experience in Canada.

The argument outlined above is associated with several important considerations that want further prefatory comment. In particular, as with any piece of historical research, this study has incurred several conceptual debts,

attempted to come to apt terms with the relevant secondary literature, and has culled for analysis and interpretation a body of evidence from primary source materials. Of necessity, each endeavour has influenced the general approach, emphases, and limits of this thesis in Canadian labour history. It is necessary to indicate, here, several historiographical points of departure. This will amplify earlier remarks about the worth of bracketing Canadian custom tailors of our period for further attention, both in the present study, and in terms of a more-extended inquiry which it may serve as an initial sounding of the record.

Reconsideration of the custom tailors' history is overdue in light of several current perspectives on working class experience, technological change, and the industrialization process. Of most immediate concern, the "cultural baggage" of skilled urban wage-earners who migrated westward during the late 1800s and early 1900s has been examined mainly for its ethnonational and ideological contents, but less satisfactorily for the at-least equally consequential, 'subjectively coherent' stuff of craft practices and other ways of subsistence. Ross McCormack's pathbreaking work in the late 1970s did much to secure for this portmanteau-like unit of study an important place on the Canadian labour studies agenda.<sup>5</sup> The question of what

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<sup>5</sup> Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto, 1977), 15, 16, 76.

the post-migration fortunes of North America's working-class immigrants might have owed to their ethnic and other 'roots' remains a crucial and difficult one. Those who take it up likely will discover, with one recent writer on western Canada, that "class consciousness, community-based solidarities, political ideologies, and ethnic identities are not easily sorted out and compartmentalized in this history."<sup>6</sup>

However, when we dip into the 'cultural baggage' of migrant artisans to understand their history in the West, it surely is important to broaden this endeavour to unpack, also, those craft-specific qualities which predisposed particular groups of skilled workers toward accustomed ways of carrying out job tasks, structuring workplace relations and adjudicating conflicts, apportioning work and its 'rewards', and generally functioning as skilled workers. These are the constituent elements of what this study conceptualizes as the tailors' craft subculture.

The present study has sought to accomplish this task for Winnipeg's custom tailoring trade, and regards the tailors' craft subculture as an essential pre-condition of their half-century involvement in working-class activism. The study's treatment of craft experience thus begins with

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<sup>6</sup>Allen Seager, "Class, Ethnicity and Politics in the Alberta Coalfields," in Dirk Hoerder, ed., "Struggle a Hard Battle": Essays on Working-Class Immigrants (DeKalb, Ill., 1986), 320.

the suggestion that the union tailors did not invent a whole new realm of human productive endeavour when they migrated to western Canada.<sup>7</sup> I have approached their history in the West essentially as a subset of their aggregate, transatlantic experience of working life, which was organized within, and by, the adaptive, subculture-like complex of skills, sanctions, and corporate self-concept peculiar to their avowedly 'ancient' craft.<sup>8</sup> The tailors arrived in the West as proponents of an established (if embattled) body of craft-specific skills, business practices, and ways of relating with each other and with their customers. Again, my sense is that, far from heading West to cast off the mantle of traditional work practices or the craft identity that went with it, the tailors sought to transplant, purge and regenerate these very practices on new ground. If anything, they came to renovate, not innovate. Westward migration patently was a strategy for restoring to the craft and its agents the vital lustre which had been so compromised in the older and more densely-populated labour markets of central Canada, where the wage-paring, skill-sundering competitors of the 'cheap trade' afflicted

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<sup>7</sup>This assumption develops from J.E. Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," in Prairie Perspectives, ed. David P. Gagan (Toronto, 1970), 48-49.

<sup>8</sup>This terminology John Clarke et al, "Subcultures, Cultures, and Class," in Tony Bennet et al, eds., Culture, Ideology, and Social Process: A Reader (London, 1983), 64. Cf. Chapter Two.

traditional Tailorhood from without and from within. In this sense, westward-bound custom tailors - journeymen and merchants alike - wished to become more, not less, like their 'old selves.' And these selves, first and foremost, were creatures of their own anterior craft experience. In the breach, it did not work out quite this way, but neither did custom tailors altogether forfeit the qualities which distinguished their particular 'world of labour.'

Very broadly speaking, secondary literature on the clothing trades generally has dealt with the custom tailors in a tangential, if not incurious way. One problem with this literature, for a study like the present one, lies partly in its otherwise-unexceptionable metropolitan bias. This quality seems conspicuously implicated in the general neglect of the custom tailors as a working-class population worthy of sustained historical inquiry. To regard the tailors' North American history from a perspective oriented almost exclusively toward the continent's great garment centres virtually has ensured that these working people vanish from view at a very early date indeed. In part, this is because it was not in metropolitan but in provincial venues - like the Grimm Brothers' Dayton, but also like St. Catharines, Ontario and Calgary, Alberta - that the 'front lines' were drawn in many of the union tailors' struggles. Regional segmentation recently has been identified as an important feature of industrial development in the men's

clothing sector generally.<sup>9</sup> An interesting reflection of this phenomenon in the unionized custom tailoring trade is that in 1918, western branches of the JTU accounted for more than half (359 out of 710) of the parent organization's entire Canadian membership. Moreover, Winnipeg's branch momentarily boasted about a third of this national membership, and was the JTU's largest Canadian local.<sup>10</sup>

One of the best earlier accounts of Winnipeg's history as an apparel centre is problematical on a different but related count. Albeit with qualifications, Ronal T. Hastie's helpful study consigns the city's custom tailors to a late 19th-century 'proto-industrial' period in the city's history of clothing production, "blending...into a continuous progression" which describes the development of Winnipeg's "modern" apparel industry.<sup>11</sup> There are several reasons to question this earlier interpretation as it bears upon the present study. For one thing, its tidy but one-dimensional presentism, ironically enough, seems in hindsight opposed to the central contribution which current scholarly debate about 'proto-industry' yet might offer us: viz., a richer and less-schematic understanding of industrial development

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<sup>9</sup>Steven Fraser, "Combined and Uneven Development in the Men's Clothing Industry," Business History Review 57 (Winter 1983), 541-43.

<sup>10</sup>Tailor, 23 August 1921; See Appendix, Table 13.

<sup>11</sup>Ronal T. Hastie, "Development of the Apparel Industry of Winnipeg," Tony J. Kuz, ed., Winnipeg 1874-1974: Progress and Prospects (Winnipeg, 1974), 129, 131-33.

as a social and economic process.<sup>12</sup> His approach, which seems to owe something to modernization theory, tends to flatten out and too-categorically compartmentalize what in fact was an intricately-contoured, volatile field of production, exploitation and conflict. The germane issue here, I believe, is not the 'evolution' of Winnipeg's garment industry per se, but social reverberations from what Gregory S. Kealey has termed 'Canada's Industrial Revolution.'<sup>13</sup>

It is this field, and these reverberations, which decisively conditioned the tailors' fortunes in Winnipeg. And it is this field which our discussion describes as the city's clothing sector: a differentiated complex of competing capital interests which strove to derive profit from the production, distribution, and supply of sewn-clothing (especially men's suits) in the Winnipeg market. City merchant tailoring firms themselves comprised a component of this complex, as did Winnipeg's own factory-based clothing industry, itself established, as Hastie has

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<sup>12</sup>Scholarly debate continues, of course, about how best to approach (or typologize) industrialization as an historically-articulated process. See, e.g., the renewed and provocative controversy about 'proto-industry' pursued by Jean H. Quataert, Jonathan Prude, and Charles F. Sabel in International Labor and Working-Class History 33 (Spring 1988), 1-37.

<sup>13</sup>Kealey (1980), 3.

demonstrated, only from c1900.<sup>14</sup> For our purposes, one point bears emphasis. Well in advance of 1900, the industrialization of sewn clothing production, concentrated in central Canada, saliently influenced workplace conflict, and the fortunes of small capitalists in Winnipeg's custom tailoring trade.

Other accounts of Winnipeg's clothing sector, as a field of labour activism, are less relevant. Thelma Audrey Johnson's 1948 thesis on the political economy of labour relations in Winnipeg's post-war clothing industry is an essential treatment of its contemporary main subject, but could convey the impression that the United Garment Workers (UGW), chartered in the Winnipeg market in 1899, was the city's first viable clothing sector union.<sup>15</sup> This erroneous impression seems carried forward in the 1958 account of the city's needle trades by Jimmy James, a prominent local official of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA). With fraternal graciousness and some irony, this article also awards the pioneer's laurel to the UGW.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hastie (1974), 133. Cf. Tom Kosatsky, "Jews in the Clothing Industry in Winnipeg," Jewish Life and Times: A Collection of Essays (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1983), 40; Thelma Audrey Johnson, "The needle trades in Winnipeg: a study in trade unions," MA thesis, University of Manitoba (1948), 46.

<sup>15</sup>Johnson (1946), 66, but cf. 47. On the UGW, see Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902 (Toronto, 1982), 267.

<sup>16</sup>Jimmy James, "The Winnipeg Clothing Industry," Canadian Labour (October 1958), 18.

However, as indicated earlier, this distinction belongs to the JTU and its immediate predecessors. James' union absorbed the JTU at the international level in the mid-1930s.<sup>17</sup>

Interest in the tailors' history is further warranted in light of recent social history scholarship on the nature of industrial development and technological innovation. Some of this work, at least secondarily, has raised related questions about the history of consumer preference, and a particular, largely unexamined field of such preference. Specifically, Raphael Samuel's influential essay on the persistence of 'traditional' ways of doing work (especially those involving hand power) in 19th-century Britain establishes that the transformation of many industries historically described an untidily-differentiated process of 'combined, uneven' development, in which the toil of handworkers was superceded neither so early nor so monolithically as has been believed.<sup>18</sup> Samuel also finds that one noteworthy pocket of sustained reliance upon hand work lay in those trades which commended their product to consumers on the basis of the 'artistic' quality apparent in these goods' design, execution, or finish. These goods

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<sup>17</sup>H.A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning (Toronto, 1948), 209; Joel Seidman, The Needle Trades (New York, 1942; rpt 1970), 219.

<sup>18</sup>Raphael Samuel, "The Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain," History Workshop 3 (Spring 1977), 57-60.

possessed "that priceless quality of individuality which bourgeois householders have always sought after so eagerly and held in such esteem."<sup>19</sup> Samuels' work has influenced how we think about the social experience of the industrialization process - i.e., as an irregularly-contoured amalgam, in fact, of many complex and unevenly articulated social sub-processes, rather than as an outright shift from one to another tidy and self-contained phase of production within capitalism. However, his secondary observations about the production of 'artistic' commodities - whether as a particular category of consumption, or as a variegated field of work experience - want elaboration.

Custom tailors par excellence were producers whose 'artistic' hand work persisted in the midst of industrial development well into the 20th century.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, they themselves on occasion described their trade as a "belated industry." Moreover, the custom tailoring trade, by definition, was engaged fundamentally in 'artistic' production of goods which incorporated the 'priceless

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel (1977), 56: "In consumer durables there was a well-established preference for hand-made goods, not only because of their better quality, but also because of their superior finish, and of those embellishments which manufacturers were apt to call 'artistic.'"

<sup>20</sup>By one account, fully one-third of the 20,000 or so stitches in a custom made men's suits were drawn by hand in North American midcontinental market centres as late as 1910. Tailor, March 1912; See Appendix, Table 4.

quality of individuality' alluded to by Samuel.<sup>21</sup> One interesting (and for our discussion, problematical) result was that tailors also occasionally complained that their 'real' boss was the individual custom clothing consumer whose personal emergencies or whims frequently extended the length of the jour tailors' working day beyond reason.

Consequently, the custom tailors' case bears re-opening in part because of what such inquiry eventually might tell us about the social history of consumption, and about the place occupied by historically-constructed, commercially-mediated valuations of authenticity, artistry, and economy which impinge so deeply upon needs, satisfactions and latitudes for expressiveness within the labour process, as well as other elements of human social being.<sup>22</sup> Labour

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<sup>21</sup>Thorstein Veblen also reserved a special place for hand-crafted, artistically-finished goods, consigning them to a particularly 'wasteful' category of conspicuous consumption. See Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions, (New York, 1934), 159-60.

<sup>22</sup>Worthwhile approaches to aspects of this complex subject include: William Leiss, The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities (Montreal, 1988); Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness (New York, 1982); Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture (New York, 1976); Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory (London, 1984); Raymond Williams, Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays (London, 1980); Peter Kropotkin, Fields, Factories and Workshops: or, Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Work, (London, 1898); A.L. Morton, ed., The Political Writings of William Morris (New York, 1973); Thorstein Veblen, The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts (New York, 1918); T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (New York,

historians have an important contribution to make in this broad and complex field, as Samuels' own work, and Harry Braverman's observations about 'the universal market', surely attest.<sup>23</sup> But more recently, Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen have pointed the case in terms which are of much interest to our discussion.

Like almost all of the goods by which we supply our needs, clothing comes to us ready-made...our experience within the world of merchandise is one where goods mysteriously appear. Their source is unknown. The people who produced them are unseen. Their presence in our lives, as a historical phenomenon, is generally unexamined. Fashion images abound, and their lure touches the lives of multitudes. What was once a concern of privilege is now known and consumed by almost everyone; it is the hallmark of a "democracy." Yet...before the nineteenth century, ready-made was virtually unknown. For people of means, clothing was produced by skilled artisans of cloth....The opportunity to wear a skillfully crafted garment symbolized a status within society - the status of one able to afford the employment of those whose long labors and intricate touch could be mobilized to construct an appropriate public or private image.<sup>24</sup>

These are compelling words for labour historians. Concern about the historical experience and relative 'invisibility' of working people, past and present, is fundamental to our discipline. This concern has been

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1981); Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy (Palo Alto, Cal., 1982).

<sup>23</sup>Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1974), Ch.13.

<sup>24</sup>Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen (1982), 159. Cf. Leiss, (1988), 67.

advanced, in part, by newer revisionist historiography on the clothing trades expressly concerned with the experiences of skill, gender, ethnicity, and social class.<sup>25</sup> This discussion is offered as a contribution to this literature, and the broader, ongoing research commitment of which it is a part.

The present study also finds a related point of departure in our discipline's broadening-out beyond its conventional focus on shopfloor, pit-face and union hall to embrace the baseball field, the dance-hall, the saloon and other important way-stations of North American working-class life.<sup>26</sup> Such current scholarship attests that "work experience and other realms of life...are inseparable and are dialectically linked."<sup>27</sup> Clothing consumption clearly has a place on this agenda, partly as an expression of

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<sup>25</sup>E.g., see Raelene Frances, "'No More Amazons': Gender and Work Process in the Victorian Clothing Trades, 1890-1939," Labour History [Australia] 50 (May 1986), 95-112; Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davidson, eds., A Needle, a Bobbin, a Strike: Women Needleworkers in America (Philadelphia, 1984), Mercedes Steedman, "Skill and Gender in the Canadian Clothing Industry, 1890-1940," Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada (Kingston, 1986), 152-76.

<sup>26</sup>E.g., see Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds., Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community and American Society (Urbana, Ill., 1983); Charles Stephenson and Robert Asher, eds., Life & Labor: Dimensions of American Working-Class History (New York, 1986). For Canada, see Gregory S. Kealey and Peter S. Warrian, eds., Essays in Canadian Working Class History (Toronto, 1976), as well as W.J.C. Cherwinski and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., Lectures in Canadian Working-Class History (Toronto, 1985).

<sup>27</sup>Stephenson and Asher (1986), 9.

class-consciousness,<sup>28</sup> but not least of all in light of North America's largely unexamined (and ongoing) history of boycott and union label campaigns.<sup>29</sup> Both considerations were implicated in the Winnipeg tailors' history. Incidentally, their workplace struggles do not appear to have extended to community baseball diamonds proper, but on occasion did spill over onto a lacrosse field and a parade route, and rattled the rafters of the city council chambers.

From several perspectives, then, the custom tailors' experience as trade unionists and as 'traditional' craftworkers warrants study. To my knowledge, the last person who concertedly addressed this subject for the North American context was Charles Jacob Stowell, the jour tailors' one-time balladeer and author of two monographs in the labour economics and 'policy' of the Journeymen Tailors' Union.<sup>30</sup> Stowell had been a JTU clerical worker before his

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<sup>28</sup>Hobsbawm (1984), 199-200; Gareth Stedman Jones, Languages of Class: Studies in English working class history, 1832-1982 (Cambridge, 1985), 201; Geoffrey Crossick, ed., The Lower Middle Class in Britain (London, 1978), 25.

<sup>29</sup>See, however, the new work in Bensman (1985), esp. Ch. 9 and Ch. 11; Gregory Zieren, "The Boycott and Working Class Solidarity in Toledo, Ohio in the 1890s," in Stephenson and Asher, 131-49. For a revealing contrast with an older labour history tradition, see Philip Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Volume III (New York, 1981), 142-43; 177; 426.

<sup>30</sup>Tailor, September 1912; Stowell, Studies in Trade Unionism in the Custom Tailoring Trade (Bloomington, Ill., 1913), a published master's thesis in economics presented to the University of Illinois Graduate School in 1912. Stowell's doctoral thesis is was published as "The

apotheosis as an academic and "special investigator" for the Great War-era United States Industrial Commission. His elegaic but not-uncritical master's thesis enjoyed such approbation by the JTU that the union's General Executive Board itself opted to publish this work, and enthusiastically promoted its distribution among the organization's membership.<sup>31</sup> The board was not alone in its enthusiasm. No less a personage than John R. Commons liked it, too. But as this latter endorsement might suggest, Stowell's work is thorough, even-handed, but rather dated in its virtually exclusive preoccupation with institutional function and labour economics.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, it remains unsurpassed to date as an extended discussion of labour activism among North American custom tailors.

In entering upon the generally neglected path of inquiry which Stowell opened, I have chosen to broach the subject of the custom tailors' portion of labour organization and social class experience in terms of their craftways and encounter with the 'modernity' wrought by clothing sector capitalism. This subject warrants pride of

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Journeyman Tailors' Union of America: A Study in Trade Union Policy," University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences VII, No. 4 (Urbana, Ill., 1918).

<sup>31</sup>E.g., see Tailor, February 1913, April 1913, May 1913.

<sup>32</sup>Common's appraisal of Stowell's first study is published in Tailor, July 1913; for a contemporary perspective on Commons-school labour history, see Bensman (1985), xv-xvi.

place in our discussion partly because, for a group of workers like the tailors, and more problematically, for a group of merchant craftsmen like their bosses, the matrix of craft subculture was fundamental to their history in western Canada - at least to the extent that they were conscious agents of that history. In viewing them this way, our discussion deliberately departs from that sturdy convention which, with few exceptions, has relegated our protagonists to the margins of coverage. Both by contrast and design, the tailors occupy this study's foreground. More specifically, their struggle to maintain a viable labour organization in defence of their interests comprises its major focus.

To recall the concerns pointed by Raphael Samuel's work, and by others alluded to above, our discussion asks what the tailors' engagements with the 'artistic' and the individualized had to do with the historical experience of these craftworkers. How, if at all, did the peculiarity of their 'belated industry' influence workplace relations and conditions, the nature and vicissitudes of skill, modes of promotion and relations with clientele, and so on? What were the 'lived' historical implications, for working people and their employers, of plying a trade in which the historically-constructed categories of the artistic and the individual were so closely associated with doing the job of making and selling? Is it valid, for example, to assert with other writers that the custom tailors catered exclusively to

relatively well-heeled, conspicuous consumers? What made the craft distinctive in the eyes of its embattled proponents, and worth defending? And what terms did they make with capitalist 'modernity' as its dislocations were posed to them as 'traditional' craftworkers?

We have some direct testimony on such questions from the tailors themselves. In a remarkable passage published in JTU's journal toward the end of our period, Arthur Keep, working tailor and labour-press editor, likely spoke for many traditional jours when he offered to encapsulate the peculiar satisfactions and travails of his craft. Keep wrote:

The undersigned has known tailors all his life and knows that the reason any jour tailors exist today is that lots of us, among whom is the writer, like the trade because of its lack of system, its absence of regular hours, the non-existence of foremen, the "devil may care" freedom of the back shop and the fun to be gotten out of the blanked trade. [Yet]...There is but one universal, never changing, never ending law, and that is the law of Change. And that law doesn't stop for the tailoring trade. Every old-time jour realizes that no matter under what system you make or help to make clothes when all is finished they're only clothes. Some are worn by rich, some by poor, but what's the odds in a hundred years from now?<sup>33</sup>

The present study inquires into this experience in a single localized context. The evidence upon which the thesis is based has been culled from several primary sources, including a close reading of The Tailor, 1887-1923, official organ of the Journeymen Tailors' Union, and Winnipeg's The

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<sup>33</sup>Tailor, February 1912, 28.

Voice, 1894-1918, quasi-official organ of the city labour council. This research has been supplemented by a more-closely targeted use of the city's daily popular press, Winnipeg municipal directories, the Winnipeg Knights of Labor Industrial News, 1886-87, The One Big Union Bulletin, 1919-23, and the federal labour department's Labour Gazette. The study has drawn, too, upon various archival materials, notably including federal labour department Strikes and Lockouts files, and the 1891 federal census manuscript for Winnipeg. The archives of the Hudson's Bay Company and the City of Winnipeg, along with several private collections in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM) have yielded some sparse but worthwhile further evidence concerning clothing sector trade activity and municipal clothing contracts.

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Chapter Two  
Rare Qualities & Stray Bastings:  
The Tailors' Craft Subculture in Winnipeg and in Transition

I

Custom tailors were among the thousands of working people who sought opportunity and refuge in late 19th-century western Canada. From the time European mercantile ambitions began to dispossess the indigenous men, women and children of the Americas, the tailor was, "like the blacksmith and the shoe-maker, one of the pioneers among tradesmen....in the vanguard" of such acquisitive endeavour.<sup>1</sup> This held true during the Dominion of Canada's own venture in westward territorial expansion after 1870. Many tailors arrived early to 'run a tack' of their own, or hired on for a season's piece-work wages at smallish outposts of craft activity in the new towns and cities of the west.

Winnipeg was among the region's earliest-established and largest market centres where custom tailoring craftworkers transplanted their trade on new ground. By the early 1890s, the custom tailoring trade had coalesced here in recognizable form. Winnipeg's railway-driven attainment of western metropolitan status after 1885 had attracted a burgeoning white-collar population to the city's

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<sup>1</sup>Stowell (1912), 16.

proliferating grain-trade, governmental and other offices.<sup>2</sup> Their sewn-clothing demands helped more than triple the number of city custom tailoring shops to 25 between 1885/6 and 1891.<sup>3</sup> Already, too, by the early 1890s, the city trade had seen two local unions crest and subside, had been blooded in a short but bitter strike, and was being eyed by central Canadian craft activists who feared the new-fledged Manitoba market centre might undercut their own beleaguered wage scales.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, although organizer E.C. Christopherson of the Journeymen Tailors' Union (JTU) was startled to find the city trade as well developed as it was when he visited the city in 1896, there is no question that he both recognized and felt right at home among his unionized craft brethren here.

[A]fter traveling over endless prairies I arrived...in the metropolis of Winnipeg. I was surprised to find such a city up in that region...with all the modern improvements of a city. I was most cordially received by the tailors and the citizens in general. On September 7 Labor Day was celebrated and it was a success in every respect...On September 8, the tailors held a meeting and we received eleven new members, and when I left we sent to headquarters a good report from Winnipeg. The tailors of that city are real gentlemen in the full sense of the term, and it was a real pleasure to be among them. For the future, I predict success in the local of that city. In many ways the people of Canada are

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<sup>2</sup>Ruben Bellan, Winnipeg: An Economic History (Winnipeg, 1978), 72-77.

<sup>3</sup>Appendix, Table 1; Hastie, 131-32.

<sup>4</sup>Tailor, May 1891.

better off than in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The present chapter explores the intricate, craft-bounded complex of work practices, values, and social relations which so patently informed the early course of tailoring trade experience in the city. It seeks to enter the tailors' world of labour - a world of 'barring' and 'cocking', of 'crooks' and 'snobs' and 'buckeyes.' Having inquired into some of the intricacies of the tailors' way of subsistence, we will turn (in Chapter Three) to look closely at the particular ways in which Winnipeg clothing-sector capitalism at once structured and undermined this dynamic complex of workplace practice and precept, and eventually evoked responses which were not comprehended by the tailors' craft as it originally was elaborated in the Manitoba capital.

## II

One potentially fruitful way to conceptualize the tailors' experience in the city is in terms of what our introduction glancingly designated a 'craft subculture.' The suggestion that some notion of subculture might be worthwhile to historians as a conceptual tool is neither novel, nor yet uncontroversial.<sup>6</sup> Our own variant derives

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<sup>5</sup>Tailor, October 1896.

<sup>6</sup>E.g., see Robert F. Berkhofer, A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis (New York, 1969), 87-8, 114-16, and Bryan D. Palmer, "Classifying Culture," Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82), 177. Cf. Gregory S. Kealey, "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada:

from current work by John Clarke et al.<sup>7</sup> They write that subcultures

...are not simply 'ideological' constructs...They serve to mark out and appropriate 'territory... They focus around key occasions of social interaction...cluster around particular locations. They develop specific rhythms of interchange, structured relations between members younger to older, experienced to novice...They explore 'focal concerns' central to the inner life of the group: things always 'done' or 'never done', a set of social rituals which underpin their collective identity and define them as a 'group' instead of a mere collection of individuals. They adopt and adapt material objects - goods and possessions - and reorganize them into distinctive 'styles' which express the collectivity of their being-as-a-group. These concerns, activities, relationships, materials become embodied in rituals of relationship and occasion and movement. Sometimes, a world is marked out...by names or an argot which classifies the social world exterior to them in terms meaningful only within their group perspective, and maintains its boundaries....<sup>8</sup>

The tailors' craft subculture functioned in each of these ways, as we'll see, and often by dint of formal and quasi-formal provisions fielded by tailoring labour organizations toward just such ends. Inquiry which problematizes their craft and its practice of labour organization in this manner, as a unit of historical process

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Prospects in the 1980s," Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (Spring 1981), esp. 86-91; and Ian McKay, "History, Anthropology, and the Concept of Culture," Labour/Le Travailleur No. 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82), 185-241.

<sup>7</sup>John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, "Sub cultures, cultures aand class," in Tony Bennet et al., eds., Culture, Ideology and Social Process: A Reader (London, 1983), 53-79.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 64.

and study, might usefully refine what has been described as the 'cultural baggage' of western Canada's immigrant working people during our period. Firstly, such an approach affirms that the kind of formation with which we are concerned was cultural in a broad, ethnographic sense. As an historically constructed complex of sanctions and adaptive strategies associated with a particular mode of subsistence and with a 'whole way of life', then, it embodied provisions for its own continuity across time and place. Secondly, however, this view of subcultural processes emphasizes that they can mediate, but in themselves cannot resolve inequities arising from one's social class situation.<sup>9</sup> The tailors' 'craft subculture' was not a class-bounded formation of the kind Clarke et al. describe, but is viewed in this study as one which became increasingly polarized along class lines during our period, and in so doing contributed to a broader process of social class formation in the city which proceeded along other paths, involving other working people, other experiences of exploitation.

More specifically, the theoretically-predicted limitations of subcultural process seem to apply with some force to the tailors' subcultural identity as craftworkers,

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<sup>9</sup>Thus, write Clarke et al., when subcultures "address the problematics of class experience", they "often do so in ways which reproduce the gaps and discrepancies between real [inter-class] negotiations and symbolically displaced 'resolutions'. They 'solve', but in an imaginary way, problems [e.g., poverty or boring, unremunerative work] which at the concrete level remain unresolved." Ibid., 64.

and beyond this, to the possibility that the tailors' historical experience of social class (or of classes) was more or less reflexive with the virtual exhaustion during our period, despite successive adaptations, of certain elements of their craft. The limitations of this subcultural identity became painfully apparent to them during our period. At the very least, such limitations, perhaps inherent in subcultural formations of this kind, are important in understanding how, when and why some tailors like Arthur Keep, and like Winnipeg's John Mortimer (c1900-08), or Brother G. Wildeman, shortly before the Winnipeg local bolted JTU (and AFL) ranks to affiliate with the One Big Union, subordinated the claims of craft in favour of an explicitly class-conscious identity, premised upon what they knew tailors now shared with, rather than what distinguished them from, other contemporary working people.<sup>10</sup> Keep, himself a Florida master tailor, labour press editor, and national figure within the JTU, wrote of clothing workers: "we are all poor."

Here was a sea change in the way North American custom tailors 'traditionally' had regarded and styled themselves in relation to others. Those who had migrated to Canada from mid-Victorian Britain - such as Winnipeg's George Clements - were lamented, in eloquent terms, as lost exemplars.

...[W]hen we reflect that it requires a

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<sup>10</sup>Voice, 7 February 1907; Tailor, 19 March 1918.

combination of the rarest qualities - ability, persevering industry, combined with almost superhuman self-denial - to realize out of a working tailor's income a sufficient sum to emigrate, we can then fairly estimate the loss to the trade of such a body trained to its requirements [and] possessing that native ability characterized by elegance, combined with solidity.<sup>11</sup>

However, many late 19th-century North American custom tailors subsequently confronted painful questions about themselves and their craft. Of course, they did not use a construct like our own in posing such queries, although the terms which they did use were in some respects highly resonant with it.

HAS THE TAILOR LOST THE 'AIR'? There was a time when a tailor could be told as far as he could be seen...His clothes were of certain character, his walk had a certain sprightliness that seemed to be the consequence of relief from much sitting... In conversation he soon told, as if in so many words, that he was a tailor and proud of it...he never strayed far from the tailor's lingo and that tongue had a vocabulary all its own. This "air" enveloped him when he was on dress parade as well as when he went forth in pursuit of his duty and never did he and it part company. To-day a tailor walking along the street can only be distinguished by the stray bastings that persist in clinging, or by the paper-covered, tell-tale package that hangs over his arm when he is hurrying to the store with a try-on or completed garment. Has this been brought about by any specific thing, or is it merely the leveling effect of the changes that time brings?<sup>12</sup>

This is, for our purposes, an essential question. Let us begin to tackle it, in this chapter, by situating the 'air'

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<sup>11</sup>London Operative Tailors Association circular to employers, 15 February 1866: Parliamentary Papers.

<sup>12</sup>"Losing Individuality," Tailor, 6 October 1914.

of the "old-time jour" tailors in the realm of concrete, purposeful productive activity whence it historically emanated.

### III

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the tailors' craft subculture was the geographic and historical scope which the knights of the needle and of the 'goose' overtly claimed for it, and for themselves. Although custom tailors plied their craft in a wide variety of work environments,<sup>13</sup> the vagaries of place generally were not proof against their prior-existing craft identity, nor of the work regimen from which derived these skilled workers' corporate sense of themselves. Tailors looked upon Winnipeg and other new western Canadian market centres of the late Victorian period not as a field for innovation, but as one to which they might transplant the trade at a salutary remove from unsettling conditions which were coming to prevail in the industrializing and more densely-populous market centres of their own prior acquaintance. To the extent that the tailors' radiation into western Canada manifested a tacit purpose broader than that incidental to their personal circumstances and goals as individual working people, they appear to have come to the West to renovate, not to innovate.

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<sup>13</sup>Stowell (1918), 64; Duncan Bythell, The Sweated Trades (New York, 1978), 65.

They were selective in doing so, of course, although even in this, they had imbibed and now promulgated a variety of craft usages whose significance and motive would have been unmistakable to their contemporaries in other centres of craft activity. Thus, for example, in 1898, Winnipeg tailors forsook their erstwhile, gentlemanly practice of riding along city's Labour Day parade route in open rigs, and instead perpetrated an allegorical sweatshop on wheels, which was "greeted with applause, mingled with groans." Their float - part of an on-again, off-again campaign to bar the notorious practice of sweating from gaining a foothold in Winnipeg - featured a whip-wielding overseer, a crew of emblematically-wretched clothing producers, and a placard blazoned with a tag from Thomas Hood's famous outcry against the capitalistic discounting of human flesh and blood.<sup>14</sup>

For many such tailors as these, Winnipeg merely was one urban centre among many others which served them as a stopping place for a few trade seasons. For example, a tailor-pro prospector, Alex Cameron of Rossland, B.C., was a pioneering alumnus of Winnipeg Local 70.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Archie Fairclough, a Nova Scotian whose family moved to Winnipeg in the late 1880s when he can have been barely out of his time

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<sup>14</sup>Free Press, 6 September 1898; Voice, 9 September 1898. For Hood's "Song of the Shirt," see Walter Jerrold, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood (London: Oxford, 1906), 625-26.

<sup>15</sup>Tailor, June 1892, August 1905.

as an apprentice, joined Local 70 in 1903, and subsequently skipped like a stone westward, successively appearing on the rosters of the JTU's Revelstoke and Victoria branches in 1907 and 1909 respectively.<sup>16</sup> Another early member of the Winnipeg union, James F. Ross, was instrumental in the abortive establishment of a JTU local in Regina in 1910.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Local 70 charter member and sometime-officer John Warwick made several passes through the Winnipeg trade. His repeated sojourns to the west coast were interspersed with stints in Winnipeg both as a jour and a local union executive officer, along with fitful-seeming, inconclusive forays into proprietorship in c1898 and c1905.<sup>18</sup>

But whether these jours remained in or merely passed through the city's shops, their everyday working lives, their corporate sense of themselves, and their paths of advancement within the trade were well within the pale of tailoring craft tradition and practice. This was no accident. Itinerancy and migration were comprehended by the complex craftways which comprised their work subculture.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Fairclough's family and personal circumstances are inferred from data in the federal Census manuscript schedules for Winnipeg in 1891; Tailor, May 1903 (Winnipeg); November 1907; September 1909. Henderson's, 1889.

<sup>17</sup>Tailor, June 1892, November 1910.

<sup>18</sup>Free Press, 2 March, 14 March, 15 March, 20 March 1893; Voice, May 1897, 9 December 1898; Henderson's, 1905; Tailor, June 1892, January 1899, June 1899, November 1909, July 1916, June 1917.

<sup>19</sup>Leeson, passim.

These were formally regulated with the implementation of the JTU's travelling card (and later book) system in Winnipeg after 1892.<sup>20</sup> Such provisions for 'rituals of movement' were particularly important for obvious tactical and other pragmatic reasons, serving as a kind of craft passport. On two occasions before organizer Christopherson filed his heartening report from Winnipeg, city tailors had lost strikes because they had been unable to restrict entry to the local trade by 'foul' workers whom their own bosses recruited in central Canada. Yet beyond this, such craft accoutrements as the travelling card also were valued for the less-tangible qualities (and solace) they lent to a tailor in unfamiliar or distressing circumstances. Without them, a tramping tailor might meet the fate of the poor soul who perished beneath the wheels of a train one night near Dunkirk, Ohio, with only a few receipts and small implements in his pockets to commend him as a member of the craft to Dunkirk union officials, who then set about trying to notify his kin.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps understandably, then, did Brother Al Belanger of the Winnipeg JTU branch ascribe high personal value to his 'book' after he was wounded during the Great War:

...I kept my book with me all the time. I took it with me to France, and it's the only thing I had

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<sup>20</sup>Stowell (1913), 86. The system was established by a parent body constitutional enactment of August 1885.

<sup>21</sup>Taylor, July 1893.

when I came back to England, and I will take it back to Canada or the U.S. if I ever get back. You see, I was so well used to carrying it in my pocket and that's the reason I have it now. All the other stuff - you know, little stuff I wanted to keep - I left in my knapsack and I never saw that any more. I remember when I came to and they were taking me away from the first little hospital in France, I asked for it and the disc I had on my neck.<sup>22</sup>

Winnipeg's craft contingent remained full citizens of the 'modernity'-beset principality of Tailordom. Its practitioners in North America were both conscious of and proud of their craft's long, sometimes fancifully-conceived history. They were curious about, and expressed a kind of craft-kinship with, knights of the needle in nations and cultures other than their own. During our period, the immigration of Europeans to North America almost certainly was implicated in this. Indeed, when one tailor wrote that "ours is the most cosmopolitan of trades," he was referring to the numerous, ethnationally-varied people who came to occupy a labour-force niche represented by a trade which a generation of North American native sons conspicuously shunned from around the turn of the century.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Al Belanger to Ed Bekoshi of Auburn, Washington, from Queen's Hospital, Lidcup, Kent, 18 June 1918, in Tailor, 30 July 1918.

<sup>23</sup>On immigrants moving into manual occupations generally during this period, see Gutman (with Ira Berlin) in "Class Composition and the Development of the American Working Class, 1840-1890," Berlin, ed., Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class (New York, 1987), 380-94; Montgomery (1987), 65, 70-79; Pope (1905), 52-7; Steven Fraser, "Landslayt and Peasani: Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of

That such cosmopolitan convictions and sentiments were well to the fore in the tailors' craft-consciousness from an early date is evident. This quality further embodied the experiential residues of their hard travelling with persons other than those within their own trade. The tailors proudly participated in, and remembered, working-class social movements of the nineteenth-century. Tailors had occupied a point position in Robert Owen's abortive, grand national consolidated effort to hatch a general strike throughout England in the early 1830s.<sup>24</sup> The Chartist Robert Crowe (d1907), who 'crossed the damp pot' around mid-century and later was adopted as the craft equivalent of a 'living treasure' by the North American union he helped consolidate in the 1880s, had been jailed as a young man for political activities in his native land. Similarly, a Texan local of the JTU proudly claimed among its members a former Paris Communard. Earlier, the London craft activist George Druitt, who had extended a fraternal hand to Canadian tailors in the mid-1860s, proudly alluded to his membership in the

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America," in 'Struggle a Hard Battle': Essays on Working-Class Immigrants, ed. Dirk Hoerder (De Kalb, Ill., 1986), 280-303.

<sup>24</sup>Margaret Stewart and Leslie Hunter, The Needle is Threaded (Southampton, 1964), 33-45; T.M. Parssinen and I.J. Prothero, "The London Tailors' Strike and the Collapse of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union: A Police Spy's Report," International Review of Social History 22 (Spring 1977), 71, 79-80; Barbara Taylor, "The Men are as Bad as their Masters...': Socialism, Feminism, and Sexual Antagonism in the London Tailoring Trade in the early 1830s," Feminist Studies 5 (Spring 1979), 16, 26-31.

International Workingmen's Association (the First International). For their part, Winnipeg tailors of a later period formally affirmed their own susceptibility to such solidaristic claims when they urged JTU General Executive Board support for the bid by Germany's H. Stuehmer to help establish an international tailoring craft federation.<sup>25</sup>

#### IV

The forcing bed for these bonds and identifications was the custom tailors' preparation for and experience of work. An arduous apprenticeship of from four to seven and more years' duration remained, if tenuously, the basis of the jour tailor's practical job skills during our period, and of his legitimacy in the eyes of craft peers. Historically, it had been apprenticeship which equipped craft learners to make their way in the trade as sound, self-respecting workers who would generate profit for their employers, and assume mutual obligations toward companions on the shopboard and in the union meeting hall. Tailor-poet Fred Meister elegantly and prescriptively apostrophized the figure who ideally emerged from the course of craft learning.

So work that when on Saturday eve you join  
The other jours who go  
To that mysterious realm where each shall have  
His job cocked by an artist of the shears

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<sup>25</sup>Dorothy Thompson, The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution (New York, 1984), 188-96; for Crowe, see Tailor, August 1901, October 1902, December 1902, October 1903, September 1907, October 1907, February 1910; on the Paris Commune's human legacy to the Lone Star State, see Ibid., June 1890.

Thou go not like the quaking snob  
 Who knows his job is killed,  
 But sustained and soothed by the star coat in  
     your hand,  
 Approach his nobbs like one who fears no ill --  
 And draw thy check.<sup>26</sup>

The tailoring craft's tutelary regimen long since had become prone to abridgement and substantive alteration by the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup> Such changes occurred not only within the more 'traditional' tailoring trade, with the training of semiskilled 'helpers' (usually women), but perhaps especially in those initially peripheral craft precincts where so-called "cheap John" tailors plied the lower end of the custom clothing market. Beyond these precincts lay signal achievements of 19th-century innovators who devised the panoply of new rival systems of clothing manufacture which displaced tailoring artisans. These achievements minimized or dispensed outright with the need for work skills inculcated through apprenticeship, thereby realizing significant and notorious economies of production. Already in Winnipeg by the mid-1880s, jour tailors were chafing at the amount of work being awarded to women in the trade, who appear to have been obliged to take this work below a wage-scale agreed to in 1882.<sup>28</sup> Recourse to the labour of lesser-skilled women during the 1890s evoked

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<sup>26</sup>Tailor, March 1913.

<sup>27</sup>Schmiechen, 9, 12; Stowell (1918), 65-81.

<sup>28</sup>Industrial News, 3 July 1886.

critical comment that a "girl" who undertook to learn the tailoring trade would spend fully three months doing so before she could expect any remuneration.<sup>29</sup>

During our period, too, commercial opportunism and the tender solitudes of the state further introduced a threatening new dimension to the unsanctioned reproduction of custom tailoring craft skills. Although some craft leaders, such as JTU patriarch John Brown Lennon, greeted 'vocational' training initiatives with civic-minded practical suggestions about how best to train tailors under new auspices, others were less accommodating.<sup>30</sup> They were haunted by (or at least they conjured) graphic visions of young people being "spoiled" irremediably by such new commercial and statist measures for "incubating" the next generation of tailors. They evoked nightmarish images of numberless "embryo tailors" being hatched with pathologically-unformed fecundity, akin to a cancer within or adjacent to the craft. Such reservations impelled organizer Hugh Robinson, the JTU's Edwardian-era 'Canadian premier' and Lennon loyalist, to meet with Royal Commissioners on Technical Education in Amherst, Nova

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<sup>29</sup>Free Press, 23 February, 1893. Voice, 9 February 1895: "What employment are ['our girls'] to seek? Sewing? Dressmaking? No: there are too many seamstresses and dressmakers already.... Tailoring? Yes, they can come for three months to learn the trade, but they will have to find their own food and during that time receive no recompense."

<sup>30</sup>E.g., see Tailor, March 1909; cf. Stowell (1918), 80-81.

Scotia, and suggest that "Solar Rays or some other agency" had led Halifax merchants to misrepresent publicly the merits of a vocational training scheme to recruit new hands.<sup>31</sup>

Amidst such changes, many period jour tailors in North America regarded themselves as an endangered species, the last of a distinguished and increasingly senescent line. If some jours overdrew this dispiriting scenario and its consequences for themselves and for the broader commonweal, it nevertheless significantly conditioned their sense of themselves - perhaps most palpably in terms of their group historical consciousness. They regarded themselves as the keepers of an ancient and dying art, one which for whatever reason was failing before their eyes to function in a generative way. In subcultural terms, significantly, they were failing to transmit to a new cohort of young working people their craft's values and ways of worldly cunning, and - perhaps most immediately galling - to maintain its viability in their own day.

The generation of custom tailors, like Winnipeg's Harry Jennings, whose working lives were approximately coextensive with the half-century following Manitoba Confederation, entered the trade through the portal of apprenticeship. They were in some respects the last age cohort for whom such tutelage may be asserted with relative confidence.

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<sup>31</sup>Taylor, September 1910.

Evidence compiled from the Winnipeg census manuscript schedule for 1891 discloses that apprenticeship indeed was among those conventions of the traditional trade to have been transplanted to late Victorian western Canada.<sup>32</sup> However, its foothold appears to have been no less tenuous here than contemporaries judged it to be in other, longer-established market centres. The 203 tailoring trade workers so identified included only seven apprentices.<sup>33</sup>

Although it is hazardous to base historical inference on so small a population and such isolated, slender evidence, closer inspection of the data for these seven young people and their families discloses two interesting, and perhaps related possibilities about contemporary tailoring craft activity in Winnipeg. Firstly, and partly through default, this evidence suggests that the city's social stratum of skilled bricklayers, printers, metal workers - and, significantly, tailors themselves - do not appear to have looked with much favour upon custom tailoring as an occupation in which to apprentice their children. Secondly, data for the handful of households in which our seven apprentices were found suggest that a family's prior connections with the clothing sector (but not necessarily with the custom tailoring trade proper), along

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<sup>32</sup>Appendix, Table Three.

<sup>33</sup>Viz., John Goodman, William Henry, Lillie H. Hodgkison, Harry Jennings, William Portman, Francis Tuck, and Charles Wigston.

with a palpable precariousness of family circumstances (e.g., dead or otherwise-absent fathers) might have been significant in predisposing these apprentices to their occupational fate.

Economic precariousness seems to have conspicuously characterized them. At the time of the census, none of these households were headed by craftsmen or other elite 'breadwinners' who commanded the best wages urban working-class people were able to secure during our period.<sup>34</sup> William Henry's father was a farmer whose family appears to have been in Canada only for eight or nine years at most - perhaps just enough time to launch a farm amidst uncertain market conditions; the family was not faring well enough, in any event, to obviate the need for William's 20 year-old sister to work as a servant. Goodman's father was a gardener; it is reasonable to surmise that this family's economy was no stranger to scarcity, dependent as it appears to have been upon the proceeds of seasonal employment earned by Goodman's father and by the one daughter (possibly two) who were tailors' seamstresses, whose income cannot have been very prodigiously supplemented by John's own earnings as a tailor's apprentice. It is more difficult to speculate

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<sup>34</sup>Harry Jennings' father, blacksmith William Jennings, would appear to be an exception to the general case. However, Jennings pere appears to have died c1890, while Harry was still in his time, and Harry's mother is identified as a widow in the census manuscript. Cf. Henderson's, 1889-1891.

about how well people may have subsisted in the household headed by Portman's brother-in-law (an undertaker's assistant); the same is true of that headed by Tuck pere, a bartender whose sons had made inroads into the coatmakers' relatively-privileged echelon of the custom tailoring trade.

The remaining three of our apprentices all lived in households headed by their widowed mothers, one of whom was herself a tailor's seamstress. Lillie Hodgkison and her mother Hanna supported the family's four younger children; Harry Jennings was the youngest of three fatherless sons. Such straitened family circumstances appear to explain why Charles Wigston was not yet out of his time at age 23, when many significantly younger men already had entered the Winnipeg jour's estate. Just as Wigston's 19 year-old brother was delivering groceries to make a contribution to family finances, so too might Charles have had to postpone in this way his own bid to learn a trade until he was older than most others who underwent the tailoring craft's rite of instruction. The forfeiture of earning years paid at a skilled worker's wage-rate probably was not Charles' only disadvantage due to such delay. One contemporary version of conventional craft wisdom held that an excruciating introduction to the bench awaited a beginner as old as Wigston - one which he could not but have felt, all too literally, in his very bones.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>"Choosing a Career," Tailor, June 1892.

What of the craft curriculum to which our apprentices were exposed? Contemporary craft veteran Joseph Culverwell held that custom tailors should get their start in working life early: "A boy about 12 years old is about right to begin."<sup>36</sup> There was a practical reason for this, however, as our Winnipeg acquaintance, the belated apprentice Charles Wigston, painfully might have discovered. A 12 year-old most likely would have "a fair rudimentary education" by this age, but perhaps more consequentially,

[a] boy must be young enough to bend his legs easily in the tailors' squat, and after 18 this is not an easy thing to get accustomed to. The first thing a boy has to do is learn to sit on the bench...It will take from three months to a year to get used to sitting with the legs crossed all day without giving the sensation of a broken back. Before he is able to do it he will get many a crack with the sleeve board from the boss of the shop.

The practical intent of this painful posture was to provide a level work surface for hand-sewing, to which the craft tyro was introduced during the first year. "The cloth has to be kept flat on the knee to keep the seam even and the learner unconsciously raises it to rest his back." He could expect to begin with learning to pad collars ("This looks like an easy thing; but if it is not done right the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid. Culverwell was "secretary of the [New York?] Journeyman [sic] Tailors' Protective and Benevolent Association" who had been "in the tailoring business for a quarter of the century [and]...knows all about it." All material attributed to Culverwell in the following section derive from this detailed "dissection" of a contemporary apprenticeship in the trade, which appears to have been based on an interview.

set of the collar is spoiled"), and spend "many weary hours in doing things that seem useless to him."

The tailors' tools were unprepossessing enough. In addition to needles and thimbles, they included

...a press stand or buck, a 'cheese' or half a block to press out and stretch seams, the sleeve board, a 'hung' or cushion pad to press off the body of a coat, sponges and rags [probably to protect the goods from scorching when they were being pressed], and irons weighing from twelve to thirty-five pounds.

Indeed, as another tailor affirmed, "our trade is not a trade in which the tools and things of that description are very expensive. A workman with a thimble, a sleeve board, and an iron, has pretty well all his implements."<sup>37</sup>

During this first prentice year, the beginner was expected to learn hand-sewing as a matter of general technique, although full mastery of its many particular applications to the work of fine garment construction - such as in the setting of sleeves and lapels - came (if at all) years later, and only within the purview of advanced students. The craft tyro first made what was intended to be a life-long acquaintance with the needle, thread, and thimble by being assigned to fell on linings - perhaps because the material involved was less costly (if spoiled) than the textile 'goods', often imported from Great Britain, of which fine tailored clothing was fashioned. Botched or

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<sup>37</sup>Parliamentary Papers: Leggatt testimony to House of Lords Select Committee on Sweating, 21 May 1889, 260 [28860].

spoiled work on linings probably was an experience common to all apprentices, because "sewing by hand is very hard at first. The stitches are not made even and the needle seems to run on its own hook....It often takes three months for a boy to learn how to take a stitch and to sew a seam correctly," explained Culverwell.

This sufficiently challenging task was made more onerous by the surveillance of one's master, who watched the apprentice like a hawk. "If the boss is a cranky sort of fellow, the boy will wish that he were dead before he fells the first piece of lining to suit his master." The habit of close scrutiny - seam by seam in this case, and inculcated now and and again with a whack of the sleeve board by a craft mentor who was "very exacting and never tire[d] of finding fault" - was of singular importance in the less-than-gentle care and nurture of young custom tailors, and had many resonances in subsequent working life.

This habit of close scrutiny was itself part of what what was being learned. "Cocking" was "a word of vast and momentous importance" in the argot of the trade.<sup>38</sup> No fully-fledged tailor had learned the craft without exposure to it, nor could he defend himself against the impositions of the often-idiosyncratic and 'artistic' arrogations of "His Nibs" the cutter. For cocking occurred when the cutter or merchant tailor inspected finished work, and the jour responded in

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<sup>38</sup>Tailor, June 1912.

kind, accepting or challenging the considered appraisal of the job, upon which his wages depended. A revealing poem by Indianapolis tailor E. Keller suggests how cocking made the surface of workplace social relations resemble nothing so much as crazed old porcelain, riven by a myriad small latitudes and occasions for conflict.<sup>39</sup>

"Tailor and Crook"

....Of pleasures and pain in sunshine and rain  
 There's none so well as a tailor can explain  
 With try-ons, alterations, and pads hard as rocks  
 And at times pulled about by the fault-finding "cocks."  
 You take down the garment you've pressed with care.  
 He mauls it about with a know-something air....  
 He finds that the sleeves are pitched rather too high;  
 It isn't half dampened - see, there's gloss to the  
     saye.  
 He'll look at the pockets, then pull at the tacks;  
 He'll scan the foreparts, then views down the backs;  
 He'll say, look at the lapel, it is as soft as an old  
     sock;  
 Your rag was too wet, says the heartless old cock.  
 He drags at the buttons, he grins at the holes,  
 He finds out the silk is too full on the rolls.  
 He thumbs at the edges whether stitched, bound or bluff  
 And then with a bound he springs onto the cuff.  
 If there's holes at the hand, whether real ones or mock  
 They surely will not escape the keen eye of the "cock."  
 He'll pull at the lining, the felling is too thin;  
 Facings too full - they're not worked enough in.  
 Sleeve linings soiled, and puffs in wrong place;  
 The job is altogether quite a disgrace.  
 Then down on the board his fist he will knock  
 Clear off at once says the would-be snobbing "cock"....

In fact, 'cocking' sometimes was employed as a punitive labour relations strategy. Ontario union activists variously feared or encountered having their work subjected to unusually (and pointedly) intensive cocking. It even became

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<sup>39</sup>Tailor, July 1900.

part of the quasi-ritualistic, craft-mediated way in which tailors reportedly greeted each when they gathered in solemn conclave at international union functions. As George Sangster of the Toronto JTU anticipated, perhaps only half-humourously, in 1913:

Now that our Convention is close at hand, members of our craft...will meet, shake hands, take a glance at the beautiful lines on each others lapels, and look in the faces to see if they look much more worried than they did four years ago, caused from trying to change a pair of sleeves that has been botched in the cutting. After these preliminaries will come the more serious talk of How much do you get in your city from making a coat like that?<sup>40</sup>

Another ritualistic shopboard practice to which the craft learner was introduced was that of 'barring,' which likely had an important place in containing and defusing the kind of interpersonal conflicts which could arise in small shops where people worked at close quarters, during periods of intense activity and bouts of imposed, rancour-inviting underemployment alike.

The custom of emitting a single sharp whistle when anyone gave a derogatory or vile name to another, was greatly indulged in the backshops, and used to provoke a great deal of mirth. It was very annoying to the earnest and fluent arguer who dropped a severe adjective or opprobrious noun, when, if he did not say "barring" immediately after, the whistle made it recoil upon himself. Thus, if he said of some other tailor that he was a "snob," which means a poor worker, the whistle called him one too; or if he described another as a great "posh," which means well-dressed, the whistle would place him in a humourously ridiculous light if he happened to be careless in

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<sup>40</sup>Taylor, July 1913.

dress himself.<sup>41</sup>

"Boys often quit between the first and second year," Culverwell reported, "because they have not learned to sew or to sit on the board." Such fallen-away apprentices, even those who quit before being in their time two years, not only cost employers their seed investment of initial instruction and the kind of close attention upon which Culverwell remarked, but wreaked vengeance of particular sharpness, whether inadvertent or not, upon the traditional craft. "Runaway apprentices," along with "scabs...and other refuse from the eastern cities" were conspicuously identified as culprits in crushing the Winnipeg tailoring trade's 1887 strike.<sup>42</sup>

However, those who went the course, and especially those who showed promise, were favoured with new opportunities to learn and to earn. After his first year, if its lessons had been well mastered, and if he were working in a backshop (and not for a tailoring homemaker), the apprentice "may earn a little more money...by helping the [jour] tailors in their work," Culverwell said. And although his routine work would remain largely confined to collar-padding and the felling-on of linings for fully three years, "[i]f he takes an interest in the work, he will be taught in this time how to put on a binding and perhaps be permitted

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<sup>41</sup>Tailor, June 1912.

<sup>42</sup>Industrial News, 28 April 1887.

to experiment in making a suit of clothes for himself."

Between the third and fourth years, the persisting apprentice was taught how to put on a binding, baste seams along the chalk lines made by the cutters, and how to make and put in a sleeve. Culverwell evidently judged sleeve-setting an occasion for the learner to realize in a salutary way that he still knew little. It was difficult to do properly, i.e., "so that the sleeve will hang without wrinkles in any part." Success sometimes led to self-congratulation.

When the learner puts in the first sleeve to the satisfaction of the boss, he thinks that he knows the whole thing and wants to start out for himself [i.e., probably, to work single-handed]. He soon finds out that he does not know anything; then he is put on the sewing machine and sews sleeves and some inside seams.

The sewing machine no longer was an object of the sporadically violent resistance with which an earlier generation of jours had greeted its advent, but a generally accepted and even necessary fixture in the trade.<sup>43</sup> Winnipeg merchant tailors seem to have agreed in 1882 to make machines available in their shops at no direct cost to the jours.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, a craft learner optimally needed both

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<sup>43</sup>Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1981), 12-13; Kealey (1980), 39-40. See Tailor on subsequent accommodation with machine, 11 January 1921.

<sup>44</sup>"Sewing machines to be in shops for use of men at these prices," stipulates a clause in: "Winnipeg Operative Tailors Union: Prices Mutually Agreed to By the Employers and Employees to Take Effect on March 20th 1882," typescript

to be proficient on the machine and to remember his hard-won hand sewing skills. By one rare count, more than a quarter of the 32 thousand-odd stitches involved in crafting a custom-tailored coat still were drawn by hand well into the 1900s.<sup>45</sup>

During the fourth year, the apprentice also learned how to make vests and trousers, although this almost exclusively was women's work.<sup>46</sup> Next came learning to baste and then to sew in place the side bodies of coats. The apprentice must be meticulous: "If the seams are not even he is liable to receive a sound cuffing and do the work over until it is right." By the end of the fifth year, he was expected to have learned, too, how to do "the minor operating...such as stitching on the inside of the coat," and on other "seams that are not prominent."

But dauntingly enough, "the hardest part of the trade to learn" - "making and putting in the front of the coat with the exception of the lapel, which can only be done by an expert workman" - awaited our apprentice during his sixth

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facsim. in Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts RG 27 Vol. 301 (1913).

<sup>45</sup>Tailor, March 1912; Appendix, Table 4.

<sup>46</sup>Free Press, 23 February 1893; William White, labour council secretary, to Winnipeg City Council, 18 June 1898, City of Winnipeg Archives (City Clerk's Office); Harriet J. Williams to Department of Labour, and extracts from new and old wage schedules "affecting women employees," April 1913, in Strikes and Lockouts RG 27 Vol. 301.

year. He now learned to baste on the coat-body and skirt linings, to install canvas reinforcements where required, and to put in buttonholes below the lapel. At last, "[w]hen he can do all these things to the satisfaction of the boss, he has reached the end and can start out for himself."

## V

Those who entered the jours' estate in Winnipeg were pieceworkers, as were the vast majority of their contemporaries elsewhere. Their wages were reckoned on the basis of an elaborate document known as their 'bill of prices' - much as they were in other market centres. The bill of prices was the form collective agreements assumed in the custom tailoring trade.<sup>47</sup> Its complexity, which even some journeymen themselves found archaic and mystifying, arose from its minute specifications variously of what would be paid for each incremental production task, along with how this would vary as a function of which class of textile goods were being worked, and sometimes, of how much time, in whole and in fractional hours, would be paid for said task.

Beginning in spring 1882, Winnipeg's wage scale 'officially' had been set forth in an agreement known as the "Boom Bill", which pegged wages at an inflationary rate which many merchants, subsequently contending with depressed market conditions through the early 1890s, found onerous. In c1912, fully 80 per cent of the unionized custom tailors

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<sup>47</sup>Stowell (1913), 159; Stowell (1918), 19-20.

still were pieceworkers, and all of them worked single-handed on the individual system, rather than on the task-subdivided "team" system of production.<sup>48</sup>

This document [facsim.], setting forth the "Prices Mutually Agreed To and Signed by the Employers and Employees to Take Effect on March 20th, 1882," identifies the various garments custom tailors produced in Winnipeg.<sup>49</sup> The bill's categories indicate that tailors crafted dress and frock coats, surtout and frock overcoats, morning and shooting coats, sacque coats, skating and pea jackets, with separate prices specified, in most cases, for these items of clothing when made in boys' sizes. The Boom Bill also lists separate categories for vests and pants, which, as mentioned, comprised the women's branch of the trade.<sup>50</sup>

Let us look more closely at the Boom Bill's dress (frock) coat category for what it suggests about how city jours worked and were paid. The Boom Bill breaks down this garment into more than 15 different indices: e.g., single-breasted as opposed to double breasted; "1st class material" [faced cloths, Venetian], "2nd class" [worsted, meltons], and "3rd class" ["Tweeds of all kinds"]. It allots hours and

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<sup>48</sup>Stowell (1913), 154.

<sup>49</sup>See correspondence between Lawrence Pickup and Labour Gazette editor R.H. Coats, October 1913-January 1914, in Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol. 301 File 13[29], which includes a typescript copy.

<sup>50</sup>See above, n47, documenting this widespread form of gender-task segmentation in Winnipeg's tailoring trade.

fractional hours for some items, and sets out what will be paid for producing garments either entire or in part.

Interestingly, this bill also seems to reflect a debt likely owed by Winnipeg's tailoring trade to contemporary British craft practice. The Winnipeg bill exhibits a particular blending of flat-rate items (e.g., \$9.00 for making a frock coat of 1st class material, as opposed to \$7.00 for a tweed garment of the same kind), with those items for which are specified a time-allotment as well as a price, e.g., "Basting to try on, back shoulders, collar and sleeve....1 1/2 hours, '37 1/2' cents".<sup>51</sup> This feature marks the bill as one of a particular kind. It is, in fact, a so-called "time log" as recorded for British tailoring craft practice of the 19th century.<sup>52</sup> Stowell believed that bills of this kind were found only in Canada, and did not link this bit of craft exceptionalism to the Canadian and Winnipeg trade's craft-subcultural ties with Britain. Again, to recall one of the main themes of our chapter, the form and function of tailoring practice in western Canada affirmed the congruence between tailoring trade practice in Winnipeg and elsewhere. This might be explained by the fact that around 1890, about 80 per cent of local boss tailors

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<sup>51</sup> I would translate this to indicate that a tailor was paid 37.5 cents for the allotted 1.5 hours his employer felt sufficient to baste together the back, shoulders, collar and sleeves of a coat to the point that a customer could try on the garment and interim adjustments made.

<sup>52</sup> Stewart and Hunter, 50-51.

were British born, and presumably reared in British craftways.<sup>53</sup>

Winnipeg's Boom Bill did make some provision for journeymen who were to be paid solely for their time, and not by the piece. This is suggested by the clause stipulating that "repairing and alterations [were] to be charged at the rate of 30 cents per hour" - i.e., a nickel more than pieceworkers were paid on those items for which a time-interval as well as a production task is specified in the Bill. Such hourly-paid duties were the province of the tailoring craftworker known in North America as a "bushelman." This all-round troubleshooter's eleventh-hour ministrations sometimes salvaged items of clothing afflicted by ill-advised experiments in sartorial artistry. Bushelmen often were older craftworkers (indeed, they were known as "codgers" in England). During our period, many of them won a relatively stable niche working in department stores or dry-cleaning and clothing repair establishments.<sup>54</sup> They worked year-round and were less subject to seasonality than were other jours. Generally, they were paid at an hourly rate higher than other jours, but their annual earnings were on a par with the pieceworkers, because pieceworkers had an opportunity during the trade's busy seasons to increase

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<sup>53</sup>Stowell (1918), 31; Stewart and Hunter, 50-51; Appendix, Table 3.

<sup>54</sup>Tailor June 1912; Cf. "Characteristics of Tailors," Ibid., May 1892.

their earnings, and bushelmen did not.<sup>55</sup> Winnipeg's Boom Bill pegged the bushelman's rates somewhat above the 25-cent level assessed for other custom tailors.

## VI

Many of the themes we have been considering in the present chapter converged and are illustrated in the career of the apprentice Harry Jennings. He was born in England c1874, the youngest of three sons born to blacksmith William Jennings and his wife, before the family emigrated to Winnipeg. By the time Jennings pere died c1890, he had taken his eldest son and namesake into his own trade, and probably helped place the younger sons, Harry and Albert, in their tailoring-craft berths along Main Street. Harry began his apprenticeship around age 15 in L.D. McPherson's shop, and was still in his time there at age 17 in 1891. Albert, two years older than Harry, worked just a few doors down in R.J. Nichol's small shop.<sup>56</sup> Harry later served on the bench at William T. Peace's shop, operated by a craft union charter member and former union president.<sup>57</sup> Peace first had 'put up a cat's face' during a major strike in 1893, and - prior to the control strike of 1900 - styled himself "the old union tailor," whose firm was a haven for such late Victorian city

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<sup>55</sup>Tailor, June 1892.

<sup>56</sup>This draws on the 1891 federal manuscript census, and Henderson's, 1889, 1890, 1891.

<sup>57</sup>Henderson's, 1896; for Peace, see "Labor Day Souvenir," Voice, 5 September 1896, and Chapter Three.

craft activists as George McCord and John T. Mortimer.

Both Jennings brothers made contributions of their own as executive members of the union. Harry Jennings subsequently proceeded through the life stations of his craft to establish a long-standing merchant tailor shop of his own.<sup>58</sup> Unlike Peace, he remained on friendly terms with the union until well into the new century. JTU Canadian organizer James Watt, who had befriended Harry Jennings during his own stint in Winnipeg at the turn of the century, renewed their acquaintance during a return journey in 1916. Watt found Harry

...conducting one of the best established trades in Winnipeg and a thoroughly union shop. We hope for his continued success. In many ways he helped to make the stay of your organizer one of pleasure while in Winnipeg and a benefit to the organization.<sup>59</sup>

However, such craft-inculcated amities were not proof against the imperatives of doing business during the post-war recession. In 1921, Harry Jennings was among those city craft bosses who abrogated a contractual self-renewal clause and locked out their journeymen and tailoresses to impose a wage cut.<sup>60</sup>

The craft subculture, then, into which Harry Jennings had been initiated in Winnipeg, and as we have begun to

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<sup>58</sup>Henderson's, 1913, 1915, 1920, 1925.

<sup>59</sup>Tailor, 5 September 1916.

<sup>60</sup>One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921.

sound it in this chapter, was a field of purposeful, sensuous endeavour which 'produced' not only items of sewn clothing, but also a distinct population of skilled working people. It involved a particular work regimen and life-course, as well as a corporate identity and certain prized attributes, notably including a high valuation of sartorial artistry at points of production and self-display, along with a qualified individuality which bordered on cranky idiosyncrasy. By the 1890s, too, when Harry Jennings entered it, the custom tailors' subculture long had included a propensity for and a history of mutual aid and collective struggle in a wide variety of Euro-American settings. But significantly, this subculture, and the way of life which it organized and helped make coherent to its human agents, was in real difficulty, not least of all with respect to the exacting and embattled labour process upon which it ultimately was premised. The next chapter of our discussion examines how the competitive situation merchant tailors encountered in the Winnipeg clothing sector circumscribed their prospects and helped precipitate conflict in the city trade.

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Chapter Three  
Buzzards and Bosses:  
A Sketch of Winnipeg Clothing Sector Competition,  
1874-1921

I

Workplace social relations in Winnipeg's custom tailoring shops were grounded deeply in the form and function of the city's clothing sector during c1870-1920. Merchant tailors' conduct toward the people who worked in their shops was conditioned by, and expressed, the way these master artisans conceived of their prerogatives as craft employers, as well as their purview as clothing-sector competitors. The integration of national markets in sewn clothing and other commodities, attendant upon central Canada's Industrial Revolution, loomed large in the merchant tailors' business life.

The realities of competing in an economically volatile environment sorely tested these small capitalists' susceptibility to the claims of their craft subculture. The resulting attenuation of craft bonds and identifications in the city trade was a complex process. It was not a lock-step progression which categorically overtook all tailoring firms by some given date. It demands attention here because of its salient influence upon labour organization and working-class activism among the Winnipeg journeymen and tailoresses throughout our period. Labour organization was, in part, a practice which sought a formalized, qualified restatement of craft-subcultural obligations between tailoring craftworkers

and their bosses. It also was a practice informed by the disparateness of those several 'markets in men's minds' whose claims were to be no more readily reconciled among the tailors than in any other 'traditional' craft community beset by change.

Our discussion so far has suggested that the practices and the human agents associated with the trade broadly resembled those recorded for other centres of contemporary tailoring craft activity. The local trade reproduced in some essential particulars the tailors' accustomed ways of plying their craft, of apportioning its tasks and spoils, and of preparing personnel to proceed through those stations which parsed one's life-course within this craft. Yet as was intimated earlier, to view the Winnipeg tailors' history solely from the perspective of craft subculture is too partial. Such a view cannot adequately account for the incidence of conflict within the trade, nor for the interplay of market forces and conditions which helped point such conflict throughout our period. City tailors did not operate in a social or economic vacuum as they strove to secure and maintain a place for their craft in this new market centre. If their ventures had met with some success by the early 1890s, a longer, less reductive view of their case indicates that this was a fragile and increasingly qualified achievement at best.

Other aspects of westward expansion clearly impinged

upon the outlook of tailoring craft employers. Perhaps the most significant of these was the trade's early encirclement by that creature they so resonantly and ingeniously alluded to as the 'buzzard.'<sup>1</sup> For Winnipeg's earliest tailors, the buzzard's initial appearance in the West signally was the work of central Canadian manufacturing and marketing interests, and only belatedly involved the city's own, ever modestly-scaled modern apparel industry. The present chapter describes the Winnipeg tailors' vexatious encounter with the buzzard, and relates it to city clothing sector development, in terms of three phases: 1) a period of localism (c1870-1900); 2) a period of equilibrating adjustment and differentiation (c1901-13); 3) a period of contraction and renewed conflict (c1914-1921).<sup>2</sup> This chapter concentrates on the first of these periods. It was then that the major dynamics of the tailoring trade (as distinct from other clothing sector components) were elaborated in the emerging city market. Complex shifts in the composition of the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Ingeniously' because this usage seems to work as a metaphor in two related ways: visually, it reflects an invidious, craftsmanly aesthetic judgment upon the appearance of readymade clothing (consider how a buzzard's skin 'fits', and the bird's attributes of form); situationally, the usage reflects a perception that the flocking of buzzards in 19th-century men's clothing markets ominously implied the imminent morbidity of the traditional craft. (These are inferences, of course.) For examples of usage, see headnote to study, and Tailor, December 1905; February 1908.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'localism,' to describe the broad outlook and competitive situation of master artisans, draws on Crossick and Haupt.

clothing sector, which in themselves would require a separate study to explore as fully as they deserve, subsequently changed the context in which tailoring trade bosses conducted their business.

The rigours of competition, not only within the trade, but also in confronting those interests which made or marketed men's readymade suits, represented a significant limiting factor which circumscribed and coloured the fortunes of the city's custom tailors. Most important to our discussion, the disciplines of competition inflected merchants' identity and behaviour away from the claims and traditions of their craft subculture, and strained their relations with the men and women in their shops. These developments were decisively implicated in open ruptures and other expressions of working-class activism during our period.

## II

When springtime once again allowed steamboats to resume trundling passengers and freight northward down the Red River from the Twin Cities in 1874, George Clements, a one-legged English tailor in his mid-twenties, was among the first to disembark at Winnipeg.<sup>3</sup> Neither the city's prospects, nor those of the young immigrant craftsman who

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<sup>3</sup>Biographical material on Clements derives from F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba, Vol. III (Winnipeg: S.J. Clarke, 1913), 271-72; James Elder Steen and W. Boyce, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Her Industries (Chicago, Steen and Boyce, 1882), 57, and other sources as indicated below.

adopted Winnipeg as his new home, were especially prepossessing at the time. In unforeseen but related ways, this would change on both counts during the years immediately ahead. The city's experience of abrupt population growth and economic diversification first would ensure, and then dramatically circumscribe the place which 'traditional' tailoring craftsmen like Clements were able to enjoy within its expansive boundaries.

Winnipeg was a community of fewer than 4,000 souls the year Clements, a recently-married native of Reading, England, arrived here following a stint in industrializing Ontario, where a tailoring skills surplus and a depressed economy helped confront such immigrant artisans with a 'very miry slough.'<sup>4</sup> Clements' Middle Passage undoubtedly had enhanced his reputed heedfulness of the 'call of the west.'<sup>5</sup> Yet his new home initially can have presented only a marginally more promising prospect. In 1874, Winnipeg's future role and stature as prairie Canada's metropolis was little more than that. Winnipeg essentially had been a trading hamlet of only 100 people just four years earlier, when the Dominion of Canada imposed with a show of military force and fecklessly-belated negotiation the 'postage stamp'

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<sup>4</sup>Alan Wilson, John Northway: A Blue Serge Canadian (Toronto, 1965), Ch. II, offers a fine discussion of the Ontario context into which his protagonist emigrated from England, contemporaneously with Clements.

<sup>5</sup>Schofield, loc. cit., views Clements in these somewhat hackneyed terms.

boundaries of Manitoba, its newest province.<sup>6</sup> Despite Winnipeg's new status as a provincial capital, the Hudson's Bay Company's Upper Fort Garry was, and would remain for a few years yet to come, among the more imposing features of the unfledged cityscape.

However, in the 1880s, Winnipeg's metropolitan temper soon was defined amid a stressful welter of railway construction, boom-and-bust real estate speculation, and the ascension of a tenacious, elite group of commercial and industrial capitalists to the helm of civic development.<sup>7</sup> Clements himself prospered from real estate investments in the 1882 western land boom, phlegmatically withstood the smashing of a shop window during a wage dispute between journeymen and city merchant tailors, and by 1891 was, at least momentarily, the Winnipeg trade's largest employer. Subsequently, the tailors' potential market burgeoned with the onset of western Canada's great grain-fed surge in immigration, settlement, and investment activity.

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<sup>6</sup>C.P. Stacey, "The Military Aspect of Canada's Winning of the West," Canadian Historical Review, 21 (March 1940), 1-24; on like experience further west, see Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History, (Toronto, 1984), 116-17, 236.

<sup>7</sup>For perspectives on the local context in which the tailoring trade emerged, our discussion is indebted principally to Ruben Bellan, Winnipeg's First Century: An Economic History (Winnipeg, 1978), Chs. 4-5; Alan F.J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth: 1874-1914 (Montreal, 1975), and Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto, 1984), Chapter 9.

Amidst such frenetic activity, during c1870-1900, Clements and other city merchant tailors took their place as one component of the modestly-scaled but intricately-variegated complex of competing capitals which tapped this growing local demand for men's sewn clothing. The clothing sector so constituted achieved a precocious intricacy.

Around 1880...readymade-to-wear apparel, such as pants, shirts, and coats, was being made available through eastern Canadian manufacturers. Winnipeg merchants, and wholesale dealers, soon after, began to acquire stocks of these goods. Seven companies identified themselves as dealers of ready-to-wear apparel in Winnipeg as early as 1881, and by 1884 their number had grown to 36.<sup>8</sup>

For Winnipeg's custom tailors, in particular, the National Policy's imperatives and sectional biases helped translate the international craft-jeopardy posed by the invention of new clothing industries into an interesting and distinctively-nuanced local competitive situation. The city was emerging as an intricately-segmented major market for sewn clothing and other commodities - including readymade and 'special order' suits produced in factories. However, these late Victorian 'buzzards' were not only a harbinger of the custom tailoring trade's global crisis. Overwhelmingly, they also were the spawn of industrializing clothing sector interests based in central Canada.

Ronal Hastie's pathbreaking and valuable work on Winnipeg's history as an apparel centre has found in the

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<sup>8</sup>Hastie, 131-32.

city's late Victorian tailoring trade the evolutionary stuff of a 'proto-industrial period' which was eclipsed with the development of Winnipeg clothing factories, established from c1900. But despite his aside about some degree of 'overlapping' between his 'proto-industrial' and industrial phases, he effectively writes traditional tailors out of the historical record around the time of Queen Victoria's death.<sup>9</sup> From our perspective, however, this oversimplifies the case and is potentially misleading.

The local tailoring trade remained functional well into the period in which Winnipeg was established decisively as a centre for the 'modern' (factory-based) production of sewn clothing. This is not immediately apparent from the rather gap-toothed statistical profile of Manitoba clothing production which can be culled from federal published census materials for our period.<sup>10</sup> The most interesting thing about such tallies well might be the misleading impression they convey (pace, R.T. Hastie) that the tailoring trade was a dead letter after 1901, having been superceded by a concentrated handful of intensively-capitalized clothing factories.

Other evidence, however, documents the actual persistence and proliferation of tailoring firms. Far from germinating, tidily, into a 'modern industry' at the turn

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<sup>9</sup>Hastie, loc. cit.; cf. Fraser (1983), 547 n33.

<sup>10</sup>Appendix, Table 1.

of the century, the tailoring trade soldiered on well into the 1920s. Municipal directories furnish a (very) crude index of this phenomenon over time.<sup>11</sup> This evidence indicates that tailoring firms actually increased in number after the turn of the century, and in some cases undertook such specializations as "jobbing" (probably a form of subcontracting), and catering to the women's and children's market.

Such evidence, although equivocal in itself, at least will suggest the inappropriateness of exploring the tailors' case primarily with reference to the establishment of Winnipeg's 'modern' garment industry. Rather, it might suggest the aptness of Geoffrey Crossick's suggestion, in a different context, that "...only when we recognize the vitality and the complexity of small producers...and their diverse relation to capitalist industrialization, and stop viewing them as a declining pre-industrial sector, shall we be able to interpret their social and political role."<sup>12</sup>

With this corrective in mind, let us look at these small producers in a broader social historical context. This will help illuminate how (and when) Canada's traditional tailors were affected by the invention of new systems for clothing production and distribution. Firstly, J.E. Rea has

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<sup>11</sup>Appendix, Table 2.

<sup>12</sup>Geoffrey Crossick, "The petite bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century Britain," in Crossick and Haupt, 71.

emphasized how important was the temper of central Canadian development - at the time it bestowed an aggressively thrusting, stamping and acquisitive 'fragment' upon the new West - as a determinant of the prairie social fabric. Secondly, Gregory S. Kealey has told us much about the industrializing central Canadian social crucible at the time it generated, among much else, this cohort of people determined to wrest profit and opportunity from new territories. The work of these two scholars would predict that the social and economic imperatives of Canada's contemporaneous industrial revolution, which significantly included changes in the way sewn clothing was made and sold, could not but impinge deeply upon the tailors' fortunes in the west.<sup>13</sup>

A third consideration, moreover, deriving from clothing trades literature, impels us to approach the Winnipeg tailors primarily with reference to the international predicament which beset traditional tailors in general, and only secondarily with regard to the establishment of the city's own garment factories. As the men's mass-market cheap suit became increasingly competitive in price and quality during the late 1800s and early 1900s, "old-time jour" Tailordom was beset, from without and within, by a protracted, deepening crisis. Great Britain's bespoke

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<sup>13</sup>Rea, esp. 48-49; Kealey (1980), 3, 9, 28, 32-33; cf. Gerald Tulchinsky "Aspects of the Clothing Manufacturing Industry in Canada: 1850s to 1914," unpublished.

tailors, from mid-century onward, saw the burgeoning of new clothing industries "set a limit to the expansion of the traditional trade and...encroach upon its markets."<sup>14</sup> These tailors' American cousins faced the same prospect with the socially-concussive surge in United States industrial activity during the Civil War and its aftermath. Factory-made clothing "began to supplant tailor-made men's garments especially after 1870"; by the 1920s, custom tailors accounted for less than 10 per cent of the national men's clothing product.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, in Canada, where new methods of producing and distributing sewn-clothing ultimately wrought a similar spectacle of competitive containment and encroachment, it has been estimated that the custom tailors' share of the national clothing market plummeted from 90 per cent in 1870 to less than 26 per cent in 1911.<sup>16</sup>

But how was this predicament expressed in a local market like Winnipeg?

### III

From the plumber to the provincial premier, from the sodbuster to the street railwayman, clothing sector interests feverishly offered something for everyone throughout our period. They offered consumers everything

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<sup>14</sup>Stewart and Hunter, 115.

<sup>15</sup>Steven Fraser (1983), 527.

<sup>16</sup>N. Maurice Davidson, "Montreal's Dominance of the Canadian Men's Fine Clothing Industry," M.A. Thesis: University of Western Ontario (1969), 30; 44n8.

from overalls, Balbriggan underwear and home-sewn shirtwaists to Stetson hats, Norfolk jackets, and ostrich plumes. Indeed, when proprietors of the Hoover Company, a prominent and versatile player in Winnipeg's emerging clothing sector, vocalized their 1898 "business war-whoop" in city-market advertising columns, the din was well matched to the explosive report with which such clothing-sector interests typically "shattered rates" with a "fusil[1]ade of bargains." These interests even reached into the carceral, per-diem cost-conscious interstices of the provincial asylum system to make intimate contact with inmates and their uniformed keepers alike.<sup>17</sup>

As with so much else in this socially-stratified prairie metropolis as it developed during our period, income and social position were important determinants of the kind, quality, and provenance of the clothing Winnipeggers consumed. The Hudson Bay Company's senior officers might retain ties with a fine-trade tailor in London, England, and pass along this tailor's name to a friend; spouses like Mrs. James Graham ordered clothing - including her dresses of black silk, serge, and homespun - from a London house as

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<sup>17</sup>E.g., see public accounts regarding clothing for use at the Selkirk, Manitoba Asylum for the Insane in "Expenditure - Public Works Department", Manitoba, Sessional Papers (No. 1), 1890, items 1855-73), np.

well.<sup>18</sup> At the nether limit of the city's social hierarchy, the marginalized "Indian in his ragged coat" was evoked by one visitor to Winnipeg as a human portent of 'civilizing' changes afoot in the new West, while others in distress looked to one E.B. Michaels, Winnipeg's "first licensed pawnbroker" to help supply their apparel (and subsistence) needs. Between such extremities, there was brisk business to be done.<sup>19</sup> The market tapped by clothing sector interests was both an expanding and segmented one, and displayed many of the features of what William Leiss has termed a "high intensity market...in the process of formation."<sup>20</sup>

Current literature on the social situation and political behaviour of 19th-century small shopkeepers and master artisans characterizes "tailoring everywhere" as a virtual "metropolitan trade" par excellence.<sup>21</sup> It thus was fortuitous for tailors like George Clements that Winnipeg emerged as western Canada's metropolis in the early 1880s.

Now, no metropolis can do without a contingent of white-collar workers, and Winnipeg certainly did not do so when it arrogated to itself a lynch-pin position in the

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<sup>18</sup>E.g., see George Chipman Letterbook (c1893), Hudson's Bay Company Archives; Clothing invoice of Marshall and Snelgrove, London, to Mrs. James Grahame (September 1875), HBCA D26/25 fo.5.

<sup>19</sup>This draws on scrutiny of the Winnipeg popular press, 1887-1893.

<sup>20</sup>For this terminology, see Leiss, 7.

<sup>21</sup>Crossick in Crossick and Haupt, 11.

transformation of western Canada during the National Policy period. The city's economic diversification was highly consequential for the flourishing of the city's tailoring trade, for it entailed an increasing local population of commercial and clerical workers. Their proliferating 'white collars' were not, of course, the item of apparel that most would interest the tailors. Rather, this was their perdurable 'cloak of morality' - the tailored suit of whatever quality, whose dark woollen or satin-faced lapels would render, by chromatic contrast, the collar unignorable and gleaming.<sup>22</sup> Winnipeg's clerks were perceived by at least some contemporaries to exhibit the uncertain hauteur in relation to manual workers which has been identified as a distinguishing feature of this lower middle class social stratum in other contemporary contexts.<sup>23</sup> Quite likely, this social distancing was expressed partly by their choice of apparel in Winnipeg as it was elsewhere during the late 19th century.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>For an excellent discussion of the business suit as an enduring constant of masculine social performance, see Ewen and Ewen, 130-33; cf. Harry A. Cobrin, The Men's Clothing Industry: Colonial Through Modern Times (New York, 1970), 19-20.

<sup>23</sup>E.g., an editorialist in the Voice, 13 October 1894, wondered at the "uninviting position...assumed by the retail clerks toward organized labour," and pointedly suggested that "[s]urely it is not that they consider themselves above the average workingman?"

<sup>24</sup>Crossick, ed., The Lower Middle Class in Nineteenth Century Britain (1977), 25, 49.

If such qualitative considerations pertaining to the formation of Winnipeg's clothing market might be inferred readily enough, however, it is somewhat more difficult to assess quantitatively what share of this market was enjoyed by city's merchant tailors. One indicator of their relative competitive weight - again, an admittedly crude and problematical one - is afforded by the documentation of municipal firemen's clothing tender awards during the period of localism.<sup>25</sup>

In this micromarket, at least, there is some indication that the tailors' circumscribed and declining market share recorded for the contemporary trade elsewhere indeed was replicated in Winnipeg. Broadly speaking, this sounding suggests that just two firms commanded about half of all the firemen's contracts for which the city's merchant tailors competed seasonally. It is significant that one of these was a clothing factory, and not a 'traditional' merchant tailoring firm, and that the other was a 'modern business enterprise' - the Hudson's Bay Co., which maintained a custom tailor shop as but one feature of its hydra-headed presence throughout western Canada.

This finding is all the more resonant in light of other points of contact between the HBC and city merchant tailors. It is eloquent of the dislocations with which metropolitanization confronted the tailors that, for

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<sup>25</sup>Appendix, Table 6.

example, the Company actually was a member of the city's on-again, off-again Merchant Tailors' Association during the 1890s, even as its advertisements for readymade spring overcoats denigrated the cost of custom tailored spring overcoats.<sup>26</sup> As an Association member, the HBC must have been a strange bedfellow. The impression is amplified when we consider the astronomic disparity between the pools of capital upon which the Company could draw in competing with other city tailoring enterprises for city clothing contracts and for the favour of other clothing buyers. By c1890, when the Company was drawing hundreds of thousands of dollars from its fur trade operations and applying this money directly into the capitalization of saleshops throughout western Canada, and rationalizing policies for managing and operating these retail sales outlets, its competitors, such as the tailoring firm of T. Brazier, carried stock and equipment valued at about just \$3,000.<sup>27</sup>

#### IV

In joining this unequally-weighted battle with other clothing sector capitalists, Winnipeg's merchant tailors

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<sup>26</sup>E.g., see Free Press, 9 March 1893; on MTA membership and use of a strikebreaker, see Ibid., 21 February 1893; 4 March 1893.

<sup>27</sup>Sun, 14 April 1887; "Growth of Capital in Saleshops" (August 1892), HBCA D26/2 fo. 17-18; "Rules and Regulations for the Management of Saleshops," 1887, 1896, HBCA D/24-9; See Appendix, Table 6; Alan Wilson, "In a Business Way": C.J. Brydges and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1879-1889." In The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton, ed. Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto, 1976), 114-39.

were at a grave disadvantage for a variety of reasons. These had much to do with their being locked into certain relatively localized constraints. Their solicitude toward the usages of craft subculture, coupled with the reality of a skills shortage in the local labour market, obliged merchant tailors to bear the direct costs of providing workplaces and equipment to their employees.<sup>28</sup> Stowell's 1913 study indicates that Winnipeg was one of few large, exceptional cities where tailoring bosses provided so-called free shops to their employees, rather than levy charges for 'seat rent.'<sup>29</sup> Moreover, merchants nominally were bound to a wage scale which had been forged in dramatically different conditions than those which prevailed by the early 1890s.

The latter arrangements in fact antedated Winnipeg's metropolitan experience, and were grounded in the 1882 Boom Bill. Here, it is significant in that through the turn of the century, the merchants' assessment of labour costs proceeded within the 1882 Boom Bill's pale, dappled shadow. The city's tailoring craft employers tirelessly twisted ingenious fingers through the Bill's nicely-wrought fabric of classifications and piece-rates, or cast it from their shops as if it were a sun-rotted curtain. As a tailors' union officer put the case in 1893: "the scale of prices agreed to by the employers in March, 1882, is not adhered to

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<sup>28</sup>E.g., see Commercial 14 February 1893; 22 May 1893.

<sup>29</sup>Stowell (1912), 157.

in any of the tailoring establishments in the city, some of them not acknowledging the scale at all, and others only partially."<sup>30</sup> The Boom Bill's very name marked it the relic of a notoriously avid, inflationary moment in the city's recent past. But whereas factory made clothing, and most other commodities available in Winnipeg, reportedly were cheaper in the depression-bitten late 1880s and early 1890s than they once had been, it was complained that only custom tailored suits had withstood the downward turn in consumer prices.<sup>31</sup>

The merchant tailors responded to their competitive situation with an interesting range of stratagems, most of which partook of localism in one or another sense. Winnipeg craft bosses variously lobbied the municipal state to regulate business hours and impose tax measures to curb the competitive prowess of central Canadian manufacturers of men's readymade suits and of their local representatives, including some retailers and drummers. They persuaded city council to impose an early closing bylaw on their competitors in 1893, and sought other considerations from

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<sup>30</sup>Recording Secretary John Warwick, JTU Local 70, to Secretary W. Clarkson, Merchant Tailors Association, 25 February 1893, Free Press, 2 March 1893.

<sup>31</sup>E.g., see Industrial News, 9 April 1887: "It is generally thought that [custom] made suits in Winnipeg are higher than they ought to be...."; Free Press, 6 March 1893: "There is a great change from 1882; everything is cheaper today in Winnipeg, (except tailor-made clothing)...."

the municipal state.<sup>32</sup> Merchants also pursued economies of production variously in the procurement and utilization of materials,<sup>33</sup> facilities,<sup>34</sup> and labour power,<sup>35</sup> irregular payroll practices,<sup>36</sup> as well as through recourse to arcane, craft-specific sophistries in the assessment of wages due. In the latter case, the amalgam of these expedients imparted a crazy-quilt quality to the way in which merchant tailors reckoned with wage costs in particular, as an 1893 adumbration of shopboard grievances suggests:

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<sup>32</sup>"By-Law No. 818: A By-law to provide for the early closing of Merchant Tailor shops" (25 June 1894), Bylaws, City of Winnipeg; Minutes, City Council, 25 June 1894, items 1056-57. Cf. Voice, 22 June 1894; 11 August 1894; 3 November 1895; 15 June 1895; Commercial, February 1893, 705-06: "Winnipeg merchant tailors have asked the city council to place a license tax of \$200 upon travellers who come here to take orders for eastern tailoring houses."

<sup>33</sup>E.g., George Clements' handbill to customers, c1893, crowded to customers that his spring and summer woollen suitings were more various than ever, and that: "My Scotch Tweed Suitings are imported direct from Glasgow, and I will be able to make suits at the lowest possible prices, owing to the fact that I am now importing direct and have no middle men to pay a profit to." [Greenway Papers, PAM MG13 E1 2818/1.]

<sup>34</sup>See Chapter Four.

<sup>35</sup>E.g., the city tailors' union complained that Clements was importing men from central Canada "when there were more than enough men in the city to do the work," and "intimated that this was done for the purpose of lowering wages." Voice, 7 August 1897.

<sup>36</sup>Voice, 30 June 1894: "There appears to be a very pernicious practice pertaining among the union tailors of this city in allowing their wages to go unpaid for several weeks at a time...curtailing their independence and crippling the unions in dealing with any irregularities they may become cognizant of."

1st. The almost impossibility of getting wages after being hard earned. 2nd. Being paid by checks which were dishonored at the banks. 3rd. Only being able to secure a small portion of wages due at each time of settlement. 4th. The continual reducing of the scale of prices which we were supposed to be working by. 5th. No two shops paying the same price. 6th. Putting on "extras" and not paying for them because they were not specified on the bill of prices. 7th. Discharging men who refused to work at a large reduction on the scale supposed to be paid. 8th. Clerks making up the [job-price] tickets of first and second class garments, and paying for them as second and third class garments, thereby reducing the price one dollar in each case, and this without even consulting the man who made said garments.<sup>37</sup>

Some of the boss tailors' competitive strategies, however, enjoyed the approbation of tailors' union officials - a number of whom themselves became merchants. Organizer Christopherson, the first-ever international representative of the JTU to visit the city, obligingly took up the rhetorical cudgel against national-market readymade-clothing manufacturers and their agents when he addressed a Labour Day audience in 1896, and struck a 'buy local' note which must have gratified more than a few local craft employers. He reportedly won enthusiastic applause when he urged his Labour Day audience to:

support the locality in which they lived and...to give agents from Montreal and eastern cities, seeking orders, a cold shoulder when solicited for their trade. If a man spends money he earns here on buying the necessities he desires in other

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<sup>37</sup>JTU Local 70 president George McCord to the Editor, Free Press, 13 April 1893.

centres of trade, how can the community prosper?<sup>38</sup>

The use of the JTU label was another expedient which some merchants adopted in seeking to consolidate their competitive position. However, there were some nice reckonings involved in this, too. Only so long as individual merchant tailors had cause to credit the claim, by craft activist George McCord, that Winnipeg "railwaymen and mechanics of all kinds" were a 'chief' source of custom, were there were obvious benefits to be gleaned from use of the label.<sup>39</sup>

Among city merchants, William T. Peace was most conspicuous in pursuing the union trade during the 1890s by using the label and other promotional expedients of like spirit. He was reputed to do "the biggest union trade in Winnipeg."<sup>40</sup> He styled himself as Winnipeg's "old reliable UNION TAILOR," and cultivated an amicable association with editor C.C. Steuart of the city's labour newspaper, The People's Voice.<sup>41</sup> Peace advertised heavily in this journal, and sometimes waggishly, as when his copy included some crazily scrambled typography certain to catch the eye of any union printer who might be in the market for (and able to

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<sup>38</sup>Voice, 12 September 1896.

<sup>39</sup>Free Press, 4 March 1893.

<sup>40</sup>Voice, 12 May 1899.

<sup>41</sup>For this sobriquet, see Voice, 15 May 1897.

afford) a new suit. Peace also proudly presented Steuart with "a novelty in the advertising line...a fine useful clothing brush on the back of which is inscribed 'With the compliments of Peace and Co....'"<sup>42</sup> He even allowed Steuart to prevail upon him, in 1897, to hire John T. Mortimer, a prominent tailors' union leader, so that Mortimer could work in a label shop.<sup>43</sup> When the Voice took up the union's campaign to confine city clothing contract awards to label shops, Peace was the logical man to interview for expert testimony in the labour press about how unconscionably one contractor, J.T. McLelland, was trimming labour costs. Predictably, it occasioned pointed comment that McLelland hailed from Ontario.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, however, at the turn of the century, Peace fired Mortimer during a job control fight, and issued a great huffing and puffing declaration of his "independence" from city unions. Working-class activists responded to this development by baldly charging - perhaps with much justification - that Peace's solicitude toward the union merely had been an opportunistic bid to build up his business to the point that he could afford to dispense with his clientele of labour men, and concentrate on other

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<sup>42</sup>Voice, 15 December 1894; 2 December 1894.

<sup>43</sup>Voice, 7 April 1899; cf. Voice, 1 June 1900, 8 June 1900, 15 June 1900.

<sup>44</sup>Voice, 15 April 1898.

pockets of trade.<sup>45</sup>

As this acrimonious episode suggests, the trouble with the label as a competitive tool was that it simply was not in demand among those relatively well-heeled clothing consumers upon whom custom tailors increasingly depended. Its appeal lay mainly among Winnipeg's labour aristocrats, and uncertainly at that. Even John Lennon, the JTU's international helmsman, conceded that "[i]n the fine trade which we so largely control, there is practically no demand or very little, for our label."<sup>46</sup> Most Winnipeg firms simply did not use it, either prior to 1900, when the JTU's label agitation was at its most intense, or in the new century, when merchant tailors throughout North America appear to have increasingly disdained it.<sup>47</sup> As Stowell observed, the label trade was a residual and secondary component of the custom tailors' clientele:

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<sup>45</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900, 8 June 1900, 15 June 1900.

<sup>46</sup>Tailor, June 1908. Cf. One JTU militant, *Ibid.*, 18 January 1916, complained that "Though [] neither the merchant tailor nor the jour ever used the label on first-class tailoring," both somewhat arrogantly held that its use on middling-priced suits "is degrading our union."

<sup>47</sup>Tailor, 2 February 1915, documents a statistical decline during the period 1903-14:.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Labels Used</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Labels Used</u>
1903	792,500	1909	465,202
1904	621,154	1910	447,578
1905	518,809	1911	511,000
1906	540,686	1912	529,681
1907	511,712	1913	597,251
1908	465,202	1914	<u>659,662</u>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>5,965,498</b>

Custom tailoring of the better grade is distinctively a luxury, and the rich or well-to-do classes constitute upon the whole its principal patrons. The greater part of the trade is made for business men and professional men in cities. There is little expensive tailoring done for the agricultural classes; the farmers usually patronize the special order or the ready-made. The same is true of the laboring classes as a whole, although a custom suit is occasionally bought by the better paid tradesmen in the cities.<sup>48</sup>

George Clements, to my knowledge, never used the label, probably because the clientele he was pursuing were receptive to selling points other than 'supporting honest labour,' and because he would have had to forswear other competitive expedients which he clearly favoured - much to the union's intermittent disdain. In order to use the label, Clements would have had to pay wages in accord with a bill of prices established through an agreement with the union, ensure that all workers in his shop were union members, and (which amounts to the same thing) that the garment to which the label was affixed was made by a union member.<sup>49</sup>

Instead, Clements relied upon assiduous cultivation of certain clientele and the importation of fine woolen goods from England.<sup>50</sup> He, like other merchants, also engaged in

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<sup>48</sup>Stowell(1913), 37.

<sup>49</sup>Stowell (1913), 144.

<sup>50</sup>E.g., Clements' decorous notes to Premier Thomas Greenway, asking that this apparently prized customer drop in to select goods for new suits, or try them on finished garments, or to see goods ordered before Clements cut them. Greenway Papers (PAM), MG13 E1 3976/1 [8 September 1891], 5695/1 [24 March 1893], 5988/1 [27 February 1893].

short-lived and somewhat fluid partnerships - presumably to spread the risk and the costs of doing business.<sup>51</sup>

Except for the skullduggery in and around the reckoning and disbursement of wages, none of these proprietary competitive manoeuvres in themselves occasioned conflict. Indeed, as we've seen, jous sometimes lent their support to merchants' efforts. Moreover, proprietorship itself could, and sometimes did, begin as a tactical response which provided at least a few jobs for 'underemployed' journeymen in and around times of trade conflict. This was the case with a co-operative workshop established in 1887, and with a number of shops operated by such partnerships as those of Peace and McCord (c1894), Munro and McCulloch (c1893), W.B. Squire and H.E. Turner (1900), and Alex Cameron and W.W. Gillis (1900).<sup>52</sup> Some merchants also looked to combination: Peace, for example, was active in the city Retailers Association c1895.<sup>53</sup>

Other proprietary stratagems, however, brought merchants and journeymen into open conflict. During strikes, the sporadically-functional Merchant Tailors' Association emerged to pool funds to recruit central Canadian labour.

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<sup>51</sup>E.g., Clements and Campbell, c1878 (Steen, 60); Clements and Donogh, c1890 (Henderson's, 1890).

<sup>52</sup>Industrial News, 28 April 1887; Free Press, 20 April 1893; Voice, 15 September 1894; 22 June 1900; Telegram, 23 June 1900.

<sup>53</sup>For Peace in the Retailers Association, see Voice, 19 January 1895.

From the merchant tailors' perspective at least, major strikes in 1887 and 1893 were significant largely as an opportunity and pretext for pooling resources under the aegis of this employer association to import workers from central Canada, thereby seeking to redress the local-market skills scarcity. Scab-herding was a rather drastic expedient, of course, which merchants may have lit upon only when other measures - such as the award of work to the women in their shops - proved either too conflictual or too modest as a way of paring wage costs.<sup>54</sup>

Controversial merchant competitive stratagems also included the reclassification of work. In 1893, a new bill of prices proposed by merchants actually offered wage increase for so-called 'first-class' work. However, it also would have reduced wages paid on 'second-class' work, which presumably was in greater demand even then, and upon which merchants relied to win over the customer who otherwise might satisfy himself with a buzzard.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the merchants' competitive manoeuvres precipitated conflict in 1900. Contrary to promises made one year earlier, the merchants persisted in compensating for the functional shortfall in productive 'plant' capacity by extending the working day; this issued directly in a control strike by the

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<sup>54</sup>Chapter Four.

<sup>55</sup>Free Press, 21 February 1893.

tailors' union.<sup>56</sup>

As these stratagems suggest, then, localism - whether as a determinant of responses to market forces or as a selling point premised upon chauvinisms of place - signally conditioned trade experience during our first period in contradictory ways. Localism worked to the merchants' advantage when invoked as a quality which they and their customers could attach to the product of city shops - no small consideration in a boosterish and growth-oriented city like the Manitoba capital. Localism also was yoked to and amplified conventional appeals for consumer favour premised upon the individual distinctiveness and 'sartorial artistry' of custom-made clothing. But localism, as a characteristic of the labour market and its wage differentials, also could function to the merchants' disadvantage. The city's distinctiveness as a labour market entailed a skills scarcity which constricted latitudes within which wages, a substantial and peculiarly 'elastic' element of their production costs, could bear the brunt of merchant quests for economy.<sup>57</sup>

In this competitive environment, even merchants who had been union pioneers were forced to resort to business class stratagems when they became proprietors, contending with

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<sup>56</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900.

<sup>57</sup>Fraser (1983), 546; cf. Bensman, 214; Appendix, Table 5 indicates the proportion of production costs associated with the purchase of labour power.

other capital interests which operated or were represented in Winnipeg's clothing sector.

## V

Rather different considerations came to the forefront of trade experience after 1900, although wages remained not merely a bone of contention between merchants and journeymen, but its very spine. During our second period (c1901-1913) of local trade experience, tailors strove to find ways of accommodating themselves to a changed competitive environment. The integration of national markets in labour and apparel commodities by now was an accomplished fact. Competition earlier had been couched in terms of localism, but further growth in city population stimulated the establishment of new and specialist tailoring firms, and benefited from an influx of skilled producers, notably including European immigrants, to work in them. Meanwhile, the establishment of the city's own factory-based local garment industry ensured that Winnipeg tailors now encountered the buzzard as a creature indigenous to their own home market.<sup>58</sup>

The city's merchant tailors greeted the new century with a burst of relatively conflict-free, bustling

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<sup>58</sup>Hastie, 133; for documentation of commerce between country retailer Arthur Curtis of Macdonald, Man., and the national market firm of W.E. Sanford, formerly of Hamilton, which established a factory in Winnipeg c1900, see Arthur Curtis Collection (PAM), P387. An invoice of 25 March 1907 includes an itemization of men's and boy's suits.

industriousness.<sup>59</sup> In part, this was encouraged by Winnipeg's own portion of 'fashion democracy' as a modern industrialized city.<sup>60</sup> Her large urban wage-earning class included an apparently conspicuous proportion of clothing-conscious males, as the visiting British Socialist MP J. Ramsey MacDonald observed in 1906, when he congratulated a Labour Day audience on being "the best-dressed body of workingmen in the world."<sup>61</sup> Such sartorial scrupulosity turned up even in that small fraction of Winnipeg's working-class activist ranks which one might expect to have been least susceptible to it. Nevertheless, the avowed anarchist F. Kraemer's 1907 cri-de-coeur against the appropriation of Winnipeg's May Day by capitalist philanthropy (which he invidiously contrasted with the organic solidarities of 'primitive' peoples) was fuelled by his bitter recollection of how he and his wife-comrade had been housebound on one recent occasion in part because the spring suit he had ordered was not yet ready. The needs, whims, and financial limitations of such consumers stimulated competition between merchant tailors and other interests in the city's changing clothing sector.

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<sup>59</sup>Labour Gazette, e.g. November 1900, 95, December, 1900, 151, January 1901, 215, April 1901, I:411, July 1901, II:12, October 1901, II:5, January 1902, II:393, February 1902, II:448, includes market reports on Winnipeg tailoring trade activity which suggest this impression.

<sup>60</sup>Ewen & Ewen, 159, 247.

<sup>61</sup>Free Press, 4 September 1906.

Merchants evidently were successful enough as competitors to concede a wage increase and other terms in 1903, evidently without any occasion for dispute.<sup>62</sup> The restrained and business-like tenor of workplace social relations in the trade contrasted with the endemic, well-publicized frictions which had marked our first period. It appears that a moderating influence was exerted by the number of merchants who had themselves been on the bench in Winnipeg, and in the tailors' union, although the limitations of this as basis of accommodation and temperateness in workplace social relations had been well exemplified by the Peace/Mortimer fracas right at turn of century, and other expedients to which even other relatively sympathetic trade bosses were forced. If William T. Peace had declared independence from union interference, others - like Harry Jennings - for the time being enjoyed generally pacific relations with their employees. This almost certainly was due to further increases in the city population, which left merchants still hungry for labour power, but willing to concede wage increases and other terms which were without precedent in earlier trade history.

Merchants and jours of the traditional trade also were preoccupied during this period with orienting themselves to new possibilities and challenges posed by structural changes within the clothing sector and its market. The viability of

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<sup>62</sup>Chapter Five.

the balances struck during 1901-13 subsequently would be subjected to severe stresses and strains, but for the moment, pacific relations prevailed in craft workplaces.

In this altered context, the competitive manoeuvres of local tailoring craft employers found several different focal points. Some experimented with production system changes which aimed to keep the cost differential between custom-made clothing and the ever-improved readymade (or special order factory work) within the tolerance of their customers' clothing budgets. Other proprietors were less inward-looking in their struggle to remain viable, and focused their competitive manoeuvres on taking advantage of new, specialized market opportunities garnered to them by the city's further population growth and economic diversification.<sup>63</sup>

The intensification and further diversification of clothing sector activity was registered by the establishment of large department stores, mail order systems (at least one which was transatlantic in scope), and garment factories, along with clothing repair and dry cleaning outlets. These enterprises did not supplant custom tailors outright; rather, the self-identified jobbing tailors, for example, among their number very likely may have subsidized 'traditional' production to the order and measure of

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<sup>63</sup>E.g., see the classification 'jobbing tailors' in Henderson's, 1904. These likely were subcontractors.

individual customers by entering into subcontracting-like arrangements with other clothing sector interests. This could not have been a very viable expedient, because none of the jobbing tailors were in business (or identified themselves as such) by 1913, and the vast majority of them vanished from our roster of city tailoring firms within a very short interval following their emergence c1905.<sup>64</sup>

Earlier strategies of competition, which had so much turned on the dichotomy between the local custom trade product and the so called 'cheap custom work' imported from central Canada - no longer applied. Tailoring trade proprietors responded to the situation variously by turning inward to experiment with production system changes designed to stave off the buzzard whatever its geographic provenance, or turned outward to profit from the buzzard trade.<sup>65</sup> An overall impression is that new balances were struck within the city's clothing sector during this period. Prosperity and intense activity generated by the Wheat Boom enabled tailors to concede wage increases in 1903, 1910 and in 1913.<sup>66</sup>

## VI

### The aftermath of the Balkan War recession in 1913

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<sup>64</sup>Analysis of Henderson's through 1913.

<sup>65</sup>E.g., Henderson's, 907. W.T. Peace diversified into the so-called 'Semi-Ready Tailoring Co.'

<sup>66</sup>Chapter Five.

ushered in a third period of custom tailoring trade experience in which recently-struck balances were subjected to the exigencies of war-making and acute social conflict. The stringencies of war-time most obviously put a crimp in the availability of materials, and of tailors and customers. Those who remained on the prairie home-front had less money to spend on clothing; production system changes displaced unionized employees.

In this environment a number of merchants favoured open-shop manoeuvres and, in an apparently small number of cases, laid off workers whose skills became superfluous with the adoption of production system changes - such as the weekly system - which brought tailoring systems of production into line with the costs and the labour process which prevailed in buzzard factories.<sup>67</sup>

Winnipeg tailors, as businessmen, likely were hurt by the contingencies of war-making, and this had consequences for the way they treated with their employees. In one of the city's unorganized shops, for example, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, a 25 per-cent wage cut was reported.<sup>68</sup> Some Winnipeg tailors did make military uniforms, but apparently not as civilian proprietors or employees. They enlisted, and then - though a curious hybridization of soldiering and individual enterprise -

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<sup>67</sup>Taylor, 6 October 1914; 28 December 1915; 8 June 1915.

<sup>68</sup>Taylor, 6 October 1914.

turned out the so-called 'khaki work' on a piece-rate basis.<sup>69</sup>

The sparse evidence available suggests that war-time consumer demand for custom-made clothing contracted. The Winnipeg trade variously was reported as being 'unsettled', 'dull', and 'very dull.'<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, trade clearly benefited from sloughing off of khaki during the immediate post-war reconstruction period. However, subsequent recession likely counterbalanced the trade gains which might have accrued from the demobilization of uniformed men and their reappearance as consumers of civilian tailored clothing.<sup>71</sup> Clothing sector industrialization and style changes also helped erode and qualify these gains. The disciplines and scale of war production had been a forcing house for the further industrialization of clothing production, and this similarly coloured whatever advantages custom tailors might have derived from the otherwise-heartening surge in demand for men's civilian clothing.<sup>72</sup> Post-war consumer preferences tended toward clothing which was relatively casual and loose-fitting, and which hence demanded less 'styling' of the kind upon which many custom

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<sup>69</sup>Taylor, 3 August 1915.

<sup>70</sup>E.g., *ibid.*, and Taylor, 30 January 1917, 22 May 1917.

<sup>71</sup>Taylor, 20 September 1921.

<sup>72</sup>This draws on Stewart and Hunter, 150-54.

tailors staked their reputations.<sup>73</sup> It was in this recessionary context that Harry Jennings, whom we encountered elsewhere as a Winnipeg apprentice and pro-union merchant, joined other city trade bosses in locking out members of the One Big Union Tailors Unit in order to impose a wage cut.

## VI

Substantively, then, our overview of local trade experience finds that merchant tailors faced a double jeopardy in their quest for consumer favour and profit. Its dual terms corresponded with those of the very nomenclature by which merchant tailors, as such, commended their services to consumers. On the one hand, as merchants, they competed among themselves and with others whose business it was to sell men's clothing in the local retail market. On the other hand, as tailors - tailors, moreover, whose proprietorial status represented the flower, even the vindication of a 'traditional' life course in the craft - they at once were liable to the claims and traditions of the tailor's work subculture, to which their relationship was variable and ambivalent.

It is true, and important to note that the merchants' retreat from these claims was curbed to some extent by the proprietary ventures of such former unionized shopmates as William Peace, George McCord, and Harry Jennings. Often,

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

they set up shop - as in 1887, 1893 and 1900 - with the express purpose of providing a haven for craft fellows with whom they were on strike. Some retained the good favour of the union, too. Yet even by 1900, the limits of this kind of accommodation - grounded in a much older provision of the tailors' craft subculture - had been demonstrated in Winnipeg. They uneasily attempted to maintain a foothold in three 'markets in men's minds.' Caught between the claims of business culture and artisan culture<sup>74</sup> in a 'belated industry,' finding strange (and elephantine) bedfellows in such modern business enterprises as the Hudson's Bay Company, this smaller group of merchants were at the edge of the social class horizon which was being articulated in the tailoring craft subculture which they helped promulgate in the Manitoba capital. This finding broadly corresponds with Veblen's contemporary but enduringly-suggestive formulation regarding traditional crafts and their internal divisions between those who make and those who sell. He wrote:

The habitual outlook and the bias given by the handicraft system are of a twofold character - technological and pecuniary. The craftsman was an artificer...working with tools of which he had the mastery, and employing mechanical processes the mysteries of which were familiar to his everyday habits of thought; but from the beginning of the era of handicraft and throughout his industrial life he was also more or less of a trader. He stood in close relation with some form of market,

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<sup>74</sup>This antinomy has been formulated in Clive Behagg, "Masters and manufacturers: social values and the smaller unit of production in Birmingham, 1800-50," in Crossick and Haupt, 148-52.

and his proficiency as a craftsman was brought to a daily practical test in the sale of his wares and services, no less than in the workmanlike fashioning of them....In one way or another, this trading or huckstering traffic, which had been intimately associated with the handicraft industry and guild life, branched off in the course of time as the industries advanced to a larger scale and a more extensive specialization; and this increasing "division of labour" between workmanship and salesmanship led presently to such a segregation of the traders out of the body of craftsmen as to give rise to a business community devoted to pecuniary management alone.<sup>75</sup>

David Bensman, similarly, has found that those journeymen hatters who turned master remained sympathetic to the values which had been inculcated on the shopboard. Alas, they also found that "their business values clashed with their sentiments." In the breach, "under constant pressure to keep production costs down so they could make a profit....[t]hey frequently turned to their journeymen's wages as sources for potential savings."<sup>76</sup> Indeed, merchant tailors - including those like William Peace who had been union activists in the city - demonstrated many of the characteristics and adopted many of the expedients identified in current social history concerning their political behaviour and social engagements as members of a class.

In short, if it can be said that geography in itself

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<sup>75</sup>Thorstein Veblen, The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1918) 210, 214.

<sup>76</sup>Bensman, 214.

was no solvent of the subcultural 'glue' which held together journeymen and master tailors in a craft-bounded community of interests, it must be added that the constraints of competition represented a dialectically-acting solvent of precisely this kind - and a corrosive one, too. From an early date, the buzzard cast a long and capricious shadow in the Winnipeg market. One implication of these developments was that the tailors' craft subculture itself was being redefined and elaborated in formal enactments by the men and women who forged labour organizations in the city trade. These adjustments were tested in the teeth of open conflict between journeymen and merchant tailors, which in turn also were a forcing-house for defining the tailoring craftworkers' relations with other city wage-earners and their struggles. It is to this topic which our discussion now turns.

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Chapter Four  
The Boom Bill and its Discontents: c1882-1900

"Let's blame ourselves if we don't start  
To bring the laws to shield our art."  
- John Murphy, "The Tailor's Goose"<sup>1</sup>

I

"What's a union?" rhetorically asked Arthur Keep, tailor and labour editor, in 1912. "It's a tool...for raising the wages and bettering the conditions of the men who work. For a man to talk of the sacredness of a tool is as ludicrous as a tailor to talk of the divinity of a thimble, and to boast of a tool because it was old and used by our grandfathers or the first tool on earth is the acme of insanity." For Keep and many other tailoring craftworkers of our period, it made no "odds...in the cutting edge of a pair of shears" whether they called their organization "the Thingumbole of Swat," or anything else.<sup>2</sup> Keep's assertion that the name was not the thing appears to have had many tacit adherents, at least, among Winnipeg's custom tailors.

From an early date, Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers favoured labour organization as a major path of response to the social dislocations which beset their trade and their class during 1882-1921. In succession, they established four distinct unions for the purpose of mutual aid and direct action in pursuit of their interests. Among these four,

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<sup>1</sup>Tailor, February 1891.

<sup>2</sup>Tailor, May 1912.

Journeymen Tailors' Union (JTU) Local 70 was by far the most significant and durable. Chartered in May 1892, it lapsed only in the immediate aftermath of the 1919 General Strike, when it was supplanted by Tailors' Unit No. 1 of the One Big Union.<sup>3</sup> A generation earlier, Local 70's own, less-robust antecedents were the free-standing Winnipeg Operative Tailors Union (fl. c1882), and Harmony Local Assembly 9036 of the Knights of Labor (fl. c1886-87).<sup>4</sup>

As in other centres, Winnipeg's tailoring craftworkers were impelled away from fixating upon any given 'Thingumbole' both by the trade's precarious competitive position, and by leading tenets of their craft subculture, as these were selectively reformulated in response to industrial change. Such craft-instilled, quasi-traditionalized values as those of timeliness, aptness, and mutualism, refracted by the impacts of capitalism upon experiences on the bench and in the market, were incorporated into the custom tailors' trade union engagements.

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<sup>3</sup>Tailor, June 1892; 23 August 1921; cf. One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921: "All organized tailors in Winnipeg are members of the Tailors' Unit of the One Big Union."

<sup>4</sup>The WOPU is identified as signatory to a March 1882 collective agreement [typescript facsim.] collected in Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 301 File 13 (29), April 1913; cf. Stowell (1913), 59, which corroborates the existence of a tailors' union, presumably the WOPU, in Winnipeg c1882. For Harmony LA, the best source is Frank Yeo, "An Army of the Discontented: The Knights of Labor in Winnipeg" (unpub., 1984), 16; 24-25, but cf. Doug Smith, Let Us Rise: A History of the Manitoba Labour Movement (Vancouver, 1985), 16.

For example, just as the term 'tailor-made' originally designated a nice-fitting, unornamented job of journeywork, the makers in question sometimes praised a closely-marshalled, well-wrought strike as an "elegant struggle."<sup>5</sup> The Winnipeg tailors' institutionally-fluid practice of labour organization was partly a localized instance of this phenomenon of selectively transposing reformulated craft precepts into the usages and imperatives of workplace struggle.

The present chapter explores this process with respect to the Winnipeg tailors' experience during c1882-1900. Previous chapters have emphasized the reproduction of the 'traditional' tailors' craft subculture in the city, along with its social divisions. We have considered, too, how the imperatives of competition in the city's clothing sector drove a wedge into these lines of cleavage. The present chapter will examine how jous and tailoresses responded during the period of localism, ending c1900. By establishing labour organizations which had the immediate purpose of repairing and containing their craft's material and other ills in the city market, these craftworkers not only were brought into the fold of an international craft union, but also began to participate in the city's own rich array of institutional and other forms to which working-class activists gave their energies and convictions.

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<sup>5</sup>OED; Tailor, March 1913.

## II

Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers were among the many North American people who experimented with relatively circumscribed and localized forms of labour organization during the 1880s, when new consolidations of capital and of capitalist endeavour helped precipitate and then pointed the limitations of such strategies of mutual aid. These tailors had established WOPU by March 1882, and in 1886 either scrapped this or reconstituted it as Knights of Labor Harmony LA 9036.<sup>6</sup>

The people and events involved in these important early developments unfortunately are a matter of some obscurity in the record. Nevertheless, it is clear that WOPU made a signal pioneering contribution in 1882 when it secured concessions encoded in the Boom Bill. Specifically, as noted elsewhere, this document affirmed the principle that merchants themselves should bear the direct cost of providing equipment and production facilities, and also honour a piece-rate scale which was pegged at inflationary levels. WOPU's success on the latter point probably benefited from a contemporaneous shortfall in Winnipeg sewn-clothing supplies experienced during spring 1882.<sup>7</sup> However, it also is clear that such provisions had been conceded in a rapidly changing local trade environment, and city jours had

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<sup>6</sup>See n4, above.

<sup>7</sup>Bellan, 28.

a difficult time making their 1882 gains stick.

As alternative, cheaper supplies of men's tailored clothing entered the market, city craft bosses sought wage-bill economies to bring their production costs closer into line with lower rates which prevailed in Toronto, where their competitors also benefited from less-erratic seasonal fluctuations in the intensity of productive activity. In 1886, the year tailors established Harmony LA, journeymen complained that merchants were relying to an undue extent upon the cheaper labour power of women in the trade.<sup>8</sup>

Sympathetic commentary in the city labour press encapsulated how such conditions, closely associated with the merchants' own travails as clothing sector competitors, pushed Winnipeg journeymen and their bosses over the brink of conflict in spring 1887.

It must be borne in mind...that the occupation of tailors is of an exceedingly laborious nature. They work in the busy seasons almost day and night, while in other periods of the year they are compelled to be at call on the premises all day without sometimes even earning their salt. There is no such thing as being paid for overtime - nothing extra for night work, and surely it will be conceded by all fair-minded people that on the average they should be granted fair remuneration for their labor. It is generally thought that [custom] made suits are higher in price in Winnipeg than they should be, and the public have a right to know how it is, and who are making the high profits in this business....it is very certain that it is the employers who are pocketing above a fair share of the profit.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Industrial News, 3 July 1886.

<sup>9</sup>Industrial News, 9 April 1887.

The first of Winnipeg's major tailoring trade strikes began on 1 April 1887 and was called off on 25 April; it secured neither a proposed new bill of prices for Harmony LA, nor employer recognition of this new organization.<sup>10</sup> Rather, this short but acrimonious dispute brought home to tailors some of the sterner implications of operating in an increasingly integrated national market in labour and sewn-clothing commodities, along with those heralded by the convergence of the well-articulated clothing-sector class interests ranged against them.

By one estimate, the new bill proposed by the Knights at the outset of the spring 1887 trade season would have increased the jour tailors' average weekly earnings from \$12 to \$15 - par with wages in St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>11</sup> However, the 14 members of the Winnipeg Merchant Tailors' Association who were hit by the strike would not even discuss the proposed bill.<sup>12</sup> They had been willing to meet union representatives only if the agenda were confined to revising the chimaerical, unevenly applied bill of 1882 which nominally specified the prevailing city-market wage scale, and whose loopholes even now presumably were well-known to

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<sup>10</sup>Free Press, 2 April 1887, 28 April 1887; cf. Yeo, 24-5.

<sup>11</sup>Industrial News, 9 April 1887; but cf. contradictory statements about specific wage demands, Free Press, 4 April 1887 and Ibid., 5 April 1887.

<sup>12</sup>Sun, 9 April 1887.

craft bosses. This refusal, coupled with their precipitous pledge to recruit strikebreakers, makes it moot whether employers were serious about avoiding conflict.<sup>13</sup>

The MTA's scab tailors arrived from central Canada in several groups. Bosses met an initial contingent of three potential strikebreakers from Toronto at the railway station before the strike was a week old.<sup>14</sup> These migrants quickly left Winnipeg when informed of the local situation.<sup>15</sup> A larger group of 14 tailors from St. Thomas, Ont. arrived at mid-month "to take the place of the strikers," and soon was followed by another lot from Toronto, which joined them in city shops.<sup>16</sup> The tailoring Knights called off their strike immediately afterward; their defeat was directly attributed to the merchants' scab-herding tactics.<sup>17</sup>

The strike in the city in the tailoring trade came to an end on Wednesday [afternoon], when it was considered, owing to the arrival in this city of a number of scabs, runaway apprentices, and other refuse from the eastern cities, to be useless to continue the struggle. These beings, if they have any sense of feeling, must in the course of time, reproach themselves for having come here to take the bread away from honest men. As they are well known, a sharp eye will be kept on them, and as

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<sup>13</sup>Free Press, 2 April 1887; cf. the Association's inflammatory advertisement of its members' strike-proofness, Sun, 9 April 1887.

<sup>14</sup>Industrial News, 9 April 1887.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Industrial News, 14 April 1887; cf. Sun, 14 April 1887; Free Press, 15 April 1887, 25 April 1887.

<sup>17</sup>Industrial News, 28 April 1887.

long as they remain here a slime will cling to them which will make them loathsome before the people of Winnipeg.<sup>18</sup>

These recruiting efforts quite possibly had provoked two incidents of damage to merchant tailors' property. Coincidence, rather than any turn toward violent direct action, might have been the cause of the broken glass and billowing smoke which marked the strike with innuendo and anxious denials. Even so, both the smashing of the rear window at George Clements' tailor shop, and the mysterious fire which demolished the premises of his fellow MTA member T.B. Brazier, occurred when the arrivals of scab-contingents were imminent.

The incident at Clements' establishment occurred around 9 o'clock on Wednesday 6 April, while "[a] number of women and men were working in the shop," despite the week-old strike.<sup>19</sup> "Some miscreant...threw a stone through the workshop window." Nobody was injured, but strikers were quick to exculpate themselves. Police attention and a concern for public opinion undoubtedly encouraged this. "The men on strike deny all knowledge of the deed and are incensed that such a thing could have been done. They charge it to some person who wishes to cast discredit upon them."<sup>20</sup> This was reiterated more forcefully - and perhaps more

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<sup>18</sup>Industrial News, 28 April 1887.

<sup>19</sup>Free Press, 7 April 1887.

<sup>20</sup>Sun, 7 April 1887.

urgently, given possible reverberations from Chicago's contemporaneous Haymarket travesty - by the Winnipeg Knights' own newspaper.

It has been reported...that a marble stone has been thrown at the windows of Mr. Clements....and from the way the papers put it any one would think some boulder had been sent smashing through the plate-glass windows of the said gentlemen. The fact is that a small pain [sic] on the rear part of the premises is alleged by the proprietor to have been broken by the men on strike. We ask any unbiased person whether if the men wanted to injure Mr. Clements' property, why they could not have thown it through the front windows, and again, if they think the men are such idiots as to injure their cause by being guilty of such a dastardly act.<sup>21</sup>

Those who ascribed to this view well might have been nonplussed a week later when Winnipeg's fire brigade arrived too late to extinguish the blaze which left the aptly named-MTA member T.B. Brazier's shop a gutted ruin.<sup>22</sup> The Free Press blithely insinuated that the fire "apparently was an incendiary one as it started on the ground floor where there had been no fire in the stove all day."<sup>23</sup>

Neither of these incidents can be linked to Harmony LA, although it is curious that both involved MTA-member shops which remained in operation despite the strike, and that in both cases, the damage was done between nine and ten o'clock

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<sup>21</sup>Industrial News, 9 April 1887.

<sup>22</sup>Free Press, 14 April 1887.

<sup>23</sup>Brazier was insured only for one third of the \$3,000-damage sustained by his business, which appears never to have recovered from the conflagration. Ibid.; Manitoba Sun, 14 April 1887.

in the evening, immediately before strikebreaker contingents arrived.<sup>24</sup> Whatever may have been the case, the strike's primary events found a different and less lurid focus.

Even as the sound of breaking glass echoed in the columns of the popular press, ineffectual third-party attempts at conciliation were mounted by R.J. Whitla, a prominent dry goods wholesaler.<sup>25</sup> His intervention nearly settled the dispute before mid-month.

After arguing the matters in dispute from their different viewpoints in a calm and sensible manner, in which all acrimonious feeling and expression was conspicuous [sic] by its absence, the basis of the Toronto scale or bill with 25 [cents] per hour [added?], was generally agreed upon, with some few exceptions, and as the case stands now the men will gain an advance of something like 10 per cent on their old prices.<sup>26</sup>

The Knights' official newspaper was relieved and even enthusiastic about this turn of events:

[W]e cannot refrain from, complimenting the merchants on the forbearance and good sence [sic] displayed in meeting their employes in a spirit of fair play and justice, and we believe that in the future they will both work harmoniously for each others good will and benefit, and it will be found in the end that the spirit of mutual concession displayed in this case will tend to more last[ing] good than a clean victory gained by either side which would leave the vanquished smarting under

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<sup>24</sup>The three Toronto men arrived on Thursday 7 April, the day after Clements' window was broken; the Brazier shop fire occurred on the evening of 13 April, the day before the press announced that the St. Thomas scabs were en route to Winnipeg.

<sup>25</sup>Sun, 7 April 1887; Industrial News, 14 April 1887.

<sup>26</sup>Industrial News, 14 April 1887.

the sores inflicted.<sup>27</sup>

Alas, this was to prove prescient in unintended ways. Winnipeg District Assembly's cheerleading for Whitla at the very least suggests the Knights' uncertain stance toward working-class militancy, and their related concerns for respectability and harmonious social relations. As in other contexts, it is sometimes difficult to judge whether the glass of 'alternative' culture is most validly judged half full or half empty.

Another prong of the Winnipeg Knights' response to the city tailors' strike was to encourage the establishment of a co-operative workshop. The News helpfully published an article on one such exemplary tailoring enterprise which likely was intended to spur the launching of a Winnipeg imitator.<sup>28</sup> Jours heeded this counsel only belatedly, after Whitlas's conciliatory efforts foundered in the face of the city merchants scab-herding program, and merchants cemented their pact by pledging that "the first one who agrees to pay an advance on the old scale will forfeit \$500."<sup>29</sup>

The jours set up their co-operative workshop, but were hamstrung at this tactical moment when the city's dry goods wholesalers suddenly re-entered the picture, not as a force for mediation, but as the perpetrators of a supplier

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Free Press, 18 April 1887.

boycott.<sup>30</sup> This action was sufficiently effective to require co-operating craftworkers to seek alternate supplies of textile goods in central Canada. The co-operators waited for these materials until May, by which time the strike had been called off.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, this venture appears to have established a noteworthy local precedent in subsequent trade disputes. Strike-time forays into entrepreneurship were sufficiently grounded in tailoring craft subculture that union activists occasionally suggested that instead of conventional strike benefits, monies should be disbursed during trade disputes to capitalize new shops to capture the business of strike-beset merchants.<sup>32</sup> However, the 1887 strikers' producer co-operative was a fragile precedent, and supported only two individuals at the time it commenced operations; other strikers found respite from city bosses by tramping to St. Paul.<sup>33</sup>

Winnipeg's custom tailoring trade was but one of the many Dominion industrializing venues which made the 1880s a time both for the efflorescence and the "last stand" of "a host of purely local unions, most of them short-lived", and

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<sup>30</sup>Industrial News, 28 April 1887.

<sup>31</sup>Industrial News, 12 May 1887.

<sup>32</sup>Tailor, April 1904.

<sup>33</sup>Free Press, 28 April; Frank Yeo, 25.

oriented essentially to local labour markets.<sup>34</sup> Both the Winnipeg Operative Tailors Union, and Harmony LA of the Knights of Labor were organizations of this kind. The advent of new forms of business enterprise, which tapped emerging national and continental markets, impelled working-class activists to contemplate organizations of corresponding scope and jurisdictional competence. In North America's beleaguered custom tailoring trade, the Journeymen Tailors Union of America was to emerge as an organization of this kind.<sup>35</sup>

Harmony Local Assembly, on whose behalf the Industrial News pledged dark vigilance against the scabs who had arrived in the city, fell away within a few trade seasons of its 1887 debacle. Indeed, by 1891, the Winnipeg market was described as one in which jour tailors worked without benefit of labour organization. John D. Simpson of the JTU's recently-chartered Owen Sound, Ont. local, called on the international executive to bring Winnipeg and other centres within the organization's 'control.'

You know the places where there are [JTU local] unions in Canada, but, sir, think of the large

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<sup>34</sup>Bryan Palmer, "Labour Protest and Organization in Nineteenth-Century Canada," Labour/Le Travail 20 (Fall 1987), 82; Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1912-1902 (Toronto, 1982), 138.

<sup>35</sup>This draws on Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War (Toronto, 1974); Alfred Chandler, The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business (Cambridge, Mass., 1977); Stowell (1913); Stowell (1918).

number of towns and cities where there are no unions. Notably, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Fergus, Durham, Whitby, Meaford, Collingwood, Orangeville and hosts of other towns and cities in Ontario, besides, there are no unions at all in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba or our great northwest territories, and only one in British Columbia. Here is work for at least two or three men. Then there is the vast area of the United States hardly touched as yet. If we want to control the trade then some effort must be made, or it will be no use to control it by getting detached sections into the union, with large spaces separating us, for the parts separated cannot control those between, and they force us to accept terms that would not be accepted if we had these towns, etc., between us in the union in union with us and working for the same ends.<sup>36</sup>

In the event, the JTU's imminent foray into the Winnipeg market, which would provide city journs and tailloresses with a coherent presence within the North American labour movement for a generation to come, was a push-pull measure. Central Canadian craft activists had valid reasons for exhorting the international union's senior officer to organize the city trade as part of a farther-reaching initiative. But for their part, so too did Winnipeg journs and tailloresses have abundant cause to look to the JTU.

### III

Within four years of the Harmony LA strike, the city's economy was limping through a period of world-wide financial retrenchment aggravated by low wheat prices. The depression of this period was highlighted in the Canadian Northwest by

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<sup>36</sup>Taylor, May 1891.

reduced railway traffic and lay-offs.<sup>37</sup> Winnipeg newspapers bore home to their readers the familiar vignettes of economic depression: the suicide in a London railway car of a failed British banking firm's principal partner; a mob scene in distant Nashville which filled the streets with "hundreds of excited citizens" agitated by the collapse of city banks.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, in the absence of an effective labour organization, merchant tailors enjoyed a relatively free hand in retreating from or confounding provisions of the Boom Bill. The number of firms operating in the Winnipeg market increased dramatically during the period 1886-91. However, by the latter date, these firms on average were smaller, less intensively capitalized, and reaped smaller returns per dollar invested in wages and capital.<sup>39</sup> At once, other clothing sector interests which now crowded the local market encouraged merchants in their flight from the obligations they had assumed in the heady spring of 1882.

It was in this dismal situation, contending with various ills ranging from unilateral scale-reductions to outright non-payment of wages, that thirty men and two women employed in Winnipeg's tailoring shops organized and applied to the JTU's New York international office to be chartered

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<sup>37</sup>Bellan, 56.

<sup>38</sup>Free Press, 23 February 1893, 28 March 1893.

<sup>39</sup>Appendix, Table 1.

as a branch of this emerging union in late spring of 1892. They were awarded their charter on 11 May 1892.<sup>40</sup>

It was not long before the fighting mettle of this new-fledged organization was tried. The test came during the following winter slack season when merchants made a bid to cast the tattered remnants of the Boom Bill from their shops by means of imposing an entirely new scale. This precipitated strike action. There was some cunning in the new bill's reported design, which was sharpened by the merchants' awareness of their worsened competitive situation.

As is usual, wages is the stumbling block and just how long the strike and the lockout whichever it is will last is unknown, and in the meantime, readymade clothing will have a boom. The 1881 "boom" bill has never been altered until now, so that the prices hitherto have not been low. The new bill is an advance on fine work, while the tweed or second-class work is lowered. It has been apparent right along that merchant tailoring is not on a sound basis in the city, and a uniform bill will work a benefit, not only in discouraging readymade or slop business, but in keeping the trade from being driven to the east.<sup>41</sup>

The so-called 'second-class' jobs presumably would be more in demand given the prevailing economic climate. Whether this was the merchants' intent or not, it certainly was perceived in this light by the Winnipeg JTU.

When merchants presented their new bill to individual

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<sup>40</sup>Tailor, May 1892, June 1892; Free Press, 13 April, 1893; Alan F.J. Artibise, ed., Gateway City: Documents on the City of Winnipeg, 1873-1919 (Winnipeg, 1979), 114.

<sup>41</sup>Free Press, 21 February 1893.

employees in February 1893, the union was able to call out some 77 tailoring craft workers - more than twice the number of people who had banded together only months earlier to launch the new organization.<sup>42</sup> The strike continued for more than two months, when merchants again defeated unionized journeymen by recruiting strikebreakers from central Canada.<sup>43</sup> But before conceding defeat, Local 70 would go to unusual energetic lengths in mounting its first challenge to the bosses.

On the evening of 13 March occurred one of the more sensational episodes of the strike: "Battle in the Dark...The Master Tailors Discover a Leak."<sup>44</sup> The scene of this nocturnal altercation was the skylighted rooftop of Cole and Emory's Main Street tailor shop. Below, the recently-revived Merchant Tailors Association was meeting in private conclave, having posted sentries because journeymen somehow had obtained information about earlier meetings. The two sentries "delegated to watch the cellar had nothing to report except that it was a gruesome spot and called up thoughts of a future state in the minds of the watchers."<sup>45</sup>

The merchants' rooftop detail had less time for

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<sup>42</sup>Free Press, 3 April 1893.

<sup>43</sup>Free Press, 6 March 1893, 16 March 1893, 22 March 1893; cf. Tailor, July 1893. The announcement of a settlement in Free Press, 11 April 1893, was premature.

<sup>44</sup>Free Press, 14 March 1893.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

infernal reveries. Shortly after taking up their posts, they saw two stealthy men approach the skylight "with catlike movements." Sentries laid strong hands upon the intruders: a scuffle ensued, a stovepipe collapsed with a crash, a ladder was cast down to prevent the spies' escape, but the "prime mover" leaped onto an adjacent building and fled, albeit "not without a gentle reminder that his presence was not welcome." The other spy reportedly was led, cowed, from the roof, at the mercy of a man whose humour could not have been improved by having swallowed a plug of chewing tobacco during the melee. The captive was led into the meeting, where his former employer and others waited. Apparently when one of the merchants reprovvingly pointed a long pair of glittering shears in his direction, the captive cried out: "Don't shoot...it's only me!" Having been lectured "on the meanness and littleness of his conduct," he was permitted to leave.<sup>46</sup>

This episode and the ensuing public exchange of accusation and coy denial were freighted with comic-opera overtones that contrast with the innuendoes of arson and willful damage which attended the earlier trade dispute.<sup>47</sup> However, to those most intimately affected by it, the current conflict was a grave matter. This is suggested by the elaborate efforts both sides made to best each other and

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Free Press, 15 March 1893, 16 March 1893.

win community support for their respective positions.

These efforts issued in public exchanges involving JTU Local 70 President George McCord, Secretary John Warwick, and MTA Secretary William Clarkson. Beyond these exchanges, the campaign for community favour was pitched along class lines in which the social composition of the trade's clientele was much implicated. The support of other unionized working people in the city and elsewhere for the striking tailors was evoked by McCord's none-too-veiled assertion that city railway workers and other "mechanics of all kinds" were the customers upon whom merchant tailors chiefly depended, and that such customers could be counted on to boycott the merchants.<sup>48</sup>

Both McCord's implied threat and his assessment of the social composition of trade clientele were close to the mark. Merchants demonstrated the validity of the latter claim when they posted circulars at city railway shops which spuriously claimed that the strike had been settled.<sup>49</sup> McCord's claims regarding working-class consumer solidarity with the union's cause were affirmed by a spate of resolutions passed by city bricklayers, carpenters, and other unionized tradespeople.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, the

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<sup>48</sup>Free Press, 4 March 1893.

<sup>49</sup>Free Press, 17 March 1893.

<sup>50</sup>Free Press, 23 February 1893 [bricklayers], 25 March 1893 [carpenters], 27 March 1893 [railway tranimen and conductors]; cf. 28 March 1893.

misleading circulars posted by the merchants reportedly were hurled to the ground by railway shop workers who took the trouble to ascertain that these were untruthful.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond labour circles, the campaign for community favour took the form of pseudonymous letters which appear to have been written by merchants. These variously intimated that Local 70 was the cat's paw of an alien and high-handed organization headquartered in distant New York, to which it looked for ratification of a bill drafted and counterposed by the local to the bosses' bill, and that tailors were more than well-paid relative to other city workers. Such appeals patently were targeted to the depression-bitten ressentiment which no doubt prevailed at least among some Winnipeggers. It was noted, for instance, that tailors enjoyed the opportunity to work indoors and so be spared exposure to Winnipeg's inclement weather, which was true enough, in itself.<sup>52</sup> (Such disinformation tactics bedevil efforts to ascertain how much merchants were attempting to pare from their wage bills.) Although the public exchange of conflicting statements had its counterparts both in contemporary trade practice elsewhere, and in Winnipeg's own

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<sup>51</sup>Free Press, 17 March 1893.

<sup>52</sup>E.g., Free Press 23 February 1893 ["A Journeyman"; "Another Journeyman"], 6 March 1893 ["Hayseed"; "Gaspard Valdez"]; for McCord's suspicions as to the authenticity of such missives, see Ibid., 23 February 1893.

earlier portion of tailoring trade conflict,<sup>53</sup> the use of spurious handbills and apparently pseudonymous letters to newspaper editors was a new twist.

Consumer consciousness was bracketed in yet another way during the strike, and in a manner which dramatically suggests the nature of clothing sector changes which the previous seven years had wrought. In 1887, merchant tailors themselves had assured the buying public that the then-current strike could not affect their business in the least. An identical advertisement now was published during Local 70's strike, but it was not the work of city merchant tailors. Rather, it was placed by Smith's Clothing Manufactory - of Hamilton, Ont.<sup>54</sup>

However, the recruitment of strikebreakers from Toronto and Montreal, rather than campaigns for popular support, decided this conflict in the merchants' favour.<sup>55</sup> A contingent of strikebreakers - five men and a woman who had been guaranteed three months work - arrived from central Canada during the first week in March. Officials of the Merchant Tailors Association had been in communication with "several eastern houses since the trouble began," apparently with just this tactic in mind. But its implementation hit an

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<sup>53</sup>For the Knights' attempt to dispel confusions so engendered, see Industrial News, 9 April 1887.

<sup>54</sup>Sun, 9 April 1887; cf. Free Press, 29 March 1893.

<sup>55</sup>Scab-herding initiatives are documented in Free Press, 6 March 1893, 16 March 1893, 22 March 1893.

initial snag.

The union was...posted, and the express was boarded at Bird's Hill by two or three members of the [JTU] executive, and those on board were prevailed upon to get off at Louise Bridge and were driven to the Park Hotel. Several of the masters who were at the [CPR] depot to meet the newcomers were somewhat dismayed and disgusted when they did not alight from the train, but a little detective work disclosed their whereabouts and after some trouble they secured an interview with them with the result that they changed their hotel and are now ...at the Grand Central in charge of the Association. They went to work yesterday and were joined by four more in the afternoon, who arrived on the morning train. The members of the union, on the other hand, state they are perfectly satisfied with the way things are going, and President McCord states most positively that the men who arrived Sunday are not at work today, and that they are in perfect sympathy with the union. Both sides seem to be perfectly confident of the ultimate results.<sup>56</sup>

If so, such confidence was misplaced. City merchants telegraphed a Montreal collaborator to "spare no cost,"

...but send along all the hands that he can get, and in all probability a merchant tailor will leave...for the East, each merchant having subscribed \$50 to bringing in hands. The merchants say...they are in dead earnest now and will fill every vacancy. They claim the girls are staying out without any cause just to assist nine journeymen, as all other positions are filled...it is expected that a full complement of men will occupy the benches within another week....<sup>57</sup>

Amid this escalation, after mid-March, there were overtures to end the strike. Both sides entertained a proposal of uncertain origin that would have prompted withdrawal of both bills, and brought the two sides together

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<sup>56</sup>Free Press, 6 March 1893.

<sup>57</sup>Free Press, 22 March 1893.

to "arrange a new scale on the basis of old prices."<sup>58</sup> An unnamed "mutual friend" appears to have been instrumental in bringing this proposal to pass, but it was a barren and premature effort. On April 4, the two sides attended a meeting chaired by Winnipeg Mayor Thomas Taylor. His Worship's intervention recalls Whitla's 1887 efforts, but Taylor was appointed through the efforts of other city labour organizations. Mayor Taylor's moral authority as a mediator almost certainly derived from his public office; he neither entered nor, as seems more important, was he admitted to trade counsels as a private-sector agent, however well-regarded. An impression is that the tailors well might have wanted it that way, after the experience of 1887.

The strike dwindled to its conclusion as "a doubtful victory for the masters" after Taylor's intervention failed.<sup>59</sup> McCord's leadership was implicated in the blanket condemnation which JTU general secretary Lennon issued regarding the recent costly strike wave of which Winnipeg's struggle was a part.

In every one of the above cases and many others, the [local] unions assured the General Executive Board that the demands made by the Union could and surely would be secured by a very short contest, but the outcome proved that they had not the least conception of the resistance they would have to meet. This is the very worst kind of generalship,

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<sup>58</sup>Free Press, 4 April 1893.

<sup>59</sup>Artibise (1979), 114.

and no union should make such blunders.<sup>60</sup>

#### IV

Local 70 appears to have been stricken by its defeat in 1893, and was not to recover for several years. Through 1894-5, the Local admitted few new members. The organization even incurred sharp words in the labour press about its willingness to allow some members to work at wages which were lower in one shop than in others - a stinging rebuke when one secondary element of the recent defeat had been to push for uniform wages in city shops.<sup>61</sup> However, in 1897, the local appears to have begun a renewed push against the depredations of the boss tailors.<sup>62</sup> This recovery was associated with several developments, perhaps the most important of which was the onset of the Wheat Boom. Indeed, such activity entailed growth in consumer demand for custom made suits which actually outstripped the capacity of city merchant tailoring shops. Shop-space pressures and label agitation became rallying points for Local 70.<sup>63</sup> These concerns built upon a contemporaneous heightening of public consciousness of homework in the clothing trades, itself

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<sup>60</sup>Tailor, August 1893; cf. Stowell (1912), 122.

<sup>61</sup>Voice, 30 June 1894, 24 November 1894.

<sup>62</sup>Voice, 7 August 1897.

<sup>63</sup>E.g., Voice, 21 August 1897 reported that unionized jous were "beginning to boom their label."

pointed by the pathbreaking examination of government contracting practices by which the young Mackenzie King would make his first cryptic mark upon Canadian public life.<sup>64</sup>

Local 70's rousing from its doldrums was fostered by developments in addition to intensifying trade activity and public scrutiny of Canada's clothing sector. Specifically, the local was given a boost in 1896 when JTU organizer Christopherson hit town, and subsequently initiated 11 new members - among the first since Local 70's debacle of 1893.<sup>65</sup> The momentum generated by Christopherson's visit was sustained. As the local continued to regroup into 1897, it elected an executive which included as its president John T. Mortimer, who two years later became the first and only JTU member to occupy the city labour council presidency, and filed an unprecedented report dealing with the Local 70's experience since the rout of 1893.<sup>66</sup> During autumn 1898, Local 70 set its allegorical sweatshop-on-wheels rumbling along the Labour Day parade route - an augury of Local 70's nascent drive for the use of the union label and for free

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<sup>64</sup>Paul Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911 (Toronto, 1980), 68-72.

<sup>65</sup>Voice, 12 September 1896; Tailor, October 1896; Appendix, Table 10.

<sup>66</sup>Voice, 19 June 1897, 7 August 1897; 11 September 1897.

shops.<sup>67</sup>

Local 70's rally after mid-decade built upon and carried forward earlier aspects of city trade experience and workplace struggle. As had been presaged by the involvement of Mayor Taylor as would-be peacemaker in the 1893 strike, the Tailors' Union now oriented some of its most rigorous label agitation at city council in an unsuccessful bid to legislate use of the label on municipal clothing contracts.<sup>68</sup> The push against sweating, not incidentally, would embrace the free shops slogan which united thousands of jour tailors throughout North America against being obliged to provide production facilities - which all too often were their own homes. Yet it must also be noted that recent Winnipeg trade experience, coupled with the ascension of new local union helmsmen, and encouraged by a small handful of newly-established shops operated by former members or officials of Local 70 itself, enabled the union to tackle trade issues afresh, without undue preoccupation with the Boom Bill. Instead of again directly pushing for a comprehensive new agreement, Local 70 began in 1899 by focusing on control issues which were pursued only in four shops where merchants indicated sympathy with this initiative

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<sup>67</sup>Voice, 9 September 1898.

<sup>68</sup>E.g., see Mortimer and George Dales to City Council, 28 May 1898, Correspondence (Clerks Office ref. no. 3841); Council Minutes, 6 June 1898; Cf. Voice, 13 May 1898, 15 April 1898, 24 March 1899, 31 March 1899, 14 April 1899, 21 April 1899, 28 April 1899.

- if only the union would postpone enforcement until spring 1900.<sup>69</sup>

However, in thus charting its course afresh, Local 70 kept in sight issues which had engaged its obscure predecessor, the WOPU, in 1882. Just as the WOPU had secured pioneering concessions which in effect bound city merchants to provide production facilities and equipment, the resurgent Local 70 reformulated these provisions in a set of shop rules which essentially had the same intent, thereby potentially affirming a qualified continuity in city trade experience.<sup>70</sup>

This instance of intracraft accommodation is of interest as the immediate backround to the strike which defined its limits. Let us explore more closely the shop rules and the merchants' response to them.

#### SHOP RULES

Rule 1. All work to be performed in free workshops furnished by the employers.

Rule 2. The hours in which all work must be performed shall be from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the period of the year commencing April 1st until November 1st, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. for the balance of the year. Ten hours to constitute a day's work.

Rule 3. Whenever through press of work, inability to obtain sufficient shop accommodation or similar causes the employer is unable to comply with above rules in their entirety the following modifications shall be allowed:

Modifications -1. Where an employee has undertaken to finish a job within a certain reasonable time and for good reason is unable to do so he shall be allowed to work such overtime

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<sup>69</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900.

<sup>70</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900; cf. below.

without extra cost to employer as will enable him to finish the work. 2. Employers may make arrangements with other union men in union shops to have his surplus work performed or his direct employees at their option may work overtime by receiving [12.5] cents for each hour in addition to bill.

Rule 4. No work shall be given out or overtime permitted save as herein provided.

Rule 5. The shop steward shall see to the observance of above regulations and present monthly reports to the union.<sup>71</sup>

These rules cut, and were seen to cut, to the very core of the employers' amour propre as master craftsmen. They did so in a way that clearly (and no doubt alarmingly) called into question the employers' purview as businessmen proud and anxious to assert the distinctiveness and free-standing integrity of their respective, individual firms. It was one thing - and a very familiar thing in tailoring craft practice - for a merchant to send work home with a journeyman. It was quite another thing to send work to one's competitor's premises. The rules would have been a substantial bulwark against homework, and hence against sweating, but demanded that merchants enlarge their shop space so as to avoid being saddled with overtime costs which they were not prepared to assume. Instead, they negotiated a compromise to forestall implementation of the shop rules while they expanded their production facilities. A year later, in 1900, they had second thoughts. In the ensuing breach, the merchants managed to face down the union's job

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<sup>71</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900.

control bid.<sup>72</sup>

Here was a departure from earlier disputes.

Neither wages nor hours are directly involved. More than any other thing else it is a refusal on the part of the shops to live up to a contract and conditions they accepted some time ago respecting shop rules, overtime and the employment of union labor. A union willing to work ten hours a day at the old scale is not likely to ask for unreasonable conditions.<sup>73</sup>

The JTU's control strike began in the four targeted shops in May 1900, when merchants broke their promise to accede to the new shop rules. It continued until late September, when the strikers conceded defeat.<sup>74</sup> However, a telling blow to the tailors' cause was delivered early in the strike, when it spilled over into the 'apolitical' realm of popular leisure.

Throughout the weekend of 23-24 June 1900, Winnipeggers sweltered under a staggering heat wave. On Saturday, Winnipeg saloons and ice cream parlours enjoyed a roaring traffic, while many families took what comfort they could from the hot breezes which buffeted them as they were trundled in open streetcars along sun-baked pavements. Boys and men alike gathered in large numbers to splash in the shallow, dubious waters of the Red River at the Louise Bridge. However, for other Winnipeggers, aficionados of

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<sup>72</sup>Labour Gazette I (October 1900), 49-50.

<sup>73</sup>Voice, 8 June 1900.

<sup>74</sup>Voice, 28 September 1900; cf. Labour Gazette, October 1900, 49-50.

late Victorian Canada's 'national game', Fort Garry Park was the only place to be that Saturday.<sup>75</sup>

By mid-afternoon, these stalwarts were massed at the park for a scheduled championship run-off game between two popular amateur lacrosse teams, the Victorias and the Winnipegs. The Winnipegs' keenly-anticipated return match with the green-jerseyed 'Vics' was slated to start at three o'clock. Instead, "an impatient crowd...roasting in the great heat for over an hour"<sup>76</sup> watched peevishly as an unbidden - and to some, an outrageous - spectacle was enacted on the field. For without known precedent in the annals of local sport, and to mixed reviews even among city trade unionists, Winnipeg's "latest class struggle"<sup>77</sup> now flared up from strike-beset tailor shops to breach the apolitical sanctum of sportsmanship in the full glare of the summer sun.

Minutes before the lacrosse match was to begin, the Vics' well-regarded goaltender J. Sheppard, a union printer employed by the city labour council newspaper, refused to play unless team-mate Joseph M. Armstrong, a jour tailor, were barred from the game. Armstrong had been scabbing on Local 70, which three weeks earlier had ~~been~~ called out the

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<sup>75</sup>Free Press, 25 June 1900.

<sup>76</sup>Telegram, 25 June 1900.

<sup>77</sup>Voice, 8 June 1900.

34 members who worked in the four targeted shops.<sup>78</sup> At this juncture of their experience, city jours had ample cause to shun those who countermanded or otherwise undercut their collective efforts. They also had favours to call in from other unions. Local 70 had voted to fine itself if members purchased tobacco products that did not bear the Cigar-makers' Union label.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, they had cancelled subscriptions to a Winnipeg daily newspaper, at the behest of Sheppard's own local organization, the Typographical Union, during a recent printers' strike.<sup>80</sup> But even some of those who were well-disposed to the tailors' three week-old work stoppage were surprised and deeply offended by Sheppard's gesture, and judged it "almost incredulous [sic] that labor unionism should interfere in sporting matters, where all men meet on an equal basis...."<sup>81</sup>

Lacrosse officials shared this view. Nonplussed by Sheppard's ultimatum, and mindful of the crowd fuming and fidgeting in the stands, they appealed urgently to WTLC President Mortimer to persuade or permit Sheppard to play. What transpired upon Mortimer's arrival is unclear. The popular press alleged that he threatened Sheppard with

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<sup>78</sup>The strike is documented in Voice, 1 June 1900, 8 June 1900, 15 June 1900.

<sup>79</sup>Voice, 11 November 1898.

<sup>80</sup>This was recalled by a Typo who urged support for the Tailors' own struggle in Voice, 29 June 1900.

<sup>81</sup>Free Press, 25 June 1900.

dismissal if he went on side with a scab, and that the printer's gesture issued not from conscientious trade union scruples, but "the loquacious" [sic] Mortimer's sinister, undue influence as labour council president.<sup>82</sup>

In the event, both Sheppard and Armstrong played, but Vics backers likely wished that the tailors' partisan had not. Visibly "rattled" by his pre-game travails, Sheppard's goaltending was so maladroit that most team supporters left in disgust before half time. Those who stayed on saw the Winnipegs rack up a twelve-to-one final score. The unionized tailors whose cause he championed fared no better in their own, considerably graver contest. But the strike's resolution, and its significance to Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers' history of militant collective action in defense of their interests, lie elsewhere.

This conflict marked a momentous transition between two distinct ways of waging workplace struggle in the city trade. It was the last of the three major disputes which erupted while the 1882 Boom Bill ostensibly governed wages and conditions in city shops. The strike coincided with a peak in Journeymen Tailors' Union prominence within Winnipeg labour circles. The strike's defeat helped force adoption of a quite different approach to the waging of strikes than applied until c1900.

In effect, the demands of 1900 were a bid to

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<sup>82</sup>Free Press, 25 June 1900; Telegram, 25 June 1900.

reformulate and enforce a way of coexistence which assumed the pro-forma continuance, at least, of the scales which had been negotiated 18 years earlier by the WOPU. This was an overtly softer if not chastened approach to the tailors' Boom Bill problem. By the time the strike erupted, merchants not only rescinded what was in effect an informal agreement to comply with the jours' proposed job-control measures, but further gave Local 70 cause to regret that its members had been patient and sympathetic concerning employer pleas about the constraints they faced as businessmen.

And yet, the 1900 control strike demands affirmed more clearly than had the Boom Bill the principle of working only on premises provided by merchants. In this, as noted elsewhere, Local 70 was seeking to apply the program of its international parent body which had launched a continent-wide campaign for the free shop, duly carving up North America into five districts and setting for each a deadline by which all members were to enforce the free shop rules within their respective districts - or strike. The free shop issue thus was instrumental in the creation of a distinct Canadian territorial jurisdiction where the free shop deadline was set at September 1902.<sup>83</sup> Here was an important new dimension in Winnipeg trade strikes, for Local 70, once its strike action was launched, asserted that it could do no other than insist upon the shop rules which, they claimed

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<sup>83</sup>Taylor, October 1901, September 1902.

with some justice, reflected a virtual command of the JTU's international executive.

However, if the lines of compromise were so drawn and delimited, and the imputation of authorship was intended to soothe merchant tempers, it served only to make the bosses more obdurate. The antinomy between the values of business and artisanal culture, elsewhere remarked upon, were highlighted during the period of localism which was now ending. It was thrown into relief by the spectacle of none other than the city's 'old union tailor,' William Peace, firing John Mortimer.

## V

In retrospect, the control strike of 1900 decisively catalyzed, but did not engender overnight, this pragmatic turning away from the practice of bargaining in public, with all that it implied about the tailors' increasingly acute consciousness that they lived and worked in a socially divided city. The tailors' disaffection must have sprung in part from the notes of levity, innuendo and ridicule which attended the strikes in 1887 and 1893, as well as the intimations of consumer fickleness when custom tailored clothing production was suspended. No such levity attended the 1900 strike, when striking tailors reached more ambitiously (and ill-advisedly) into the realm of community sentiment than ever before, and were roundly rebuffed, even by some others of their own social class.

Local 70 ventured too far into the arena of public opinion, and in the process exposed one of their best and brightest 'hustlers' to hurtful reaction which neither Mortimer nor the union could well withstand. The appeal to community standards of fairness, and to contemporary ideas about the proper scope of labour movement precept, was ill advised at best. The Local subsequently charted new directions which consolidated the lessons of earlier defeats. After 1900, Local 70 would look for sustenance in times of trouble only to other sections of the working-class movement.

Other seeds of such disaffection, which ultimately issued in the shift in strike tactics after 1900 are to be found in the jeers which greeted Local 70's allegorical 'Song of the Shirt' float - the sweatshop on wheels - as it was drawn along the 1898 Labour Day parade route, and in city council's 1899 decision to "bow to Baal," and award firemen's clothing contract work to the HBC's non-label tailoring shop, rather than heed the union's repeated protests.

The collapse of the 1900 control strike had more immediate concomitants. Several of Local 70's noteworthy activists quit the Winnipeg trade, including Mortimer himself, who suffered blacklisting.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, James Watt,

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<sup>84</sup>Mortimer's victimization by Peace is documented in Voice, 8 June 1900; for his blacklisting, see Western Socialist, 11 October 1902.

who joined the local shortly before the strike erupted, and whose efforts as "one of the hustlers" of Winnipeg's labor movement were remembered (but unfortunately not specified) years later when he revisited Winnipeg as the JTU's Canadian general organizer, migrated to Toronto in the strike's aftermath.<sup>85</sup>

It is possible, of course, that such departures from JTU ranks had sources other than, or ancillary to, the strike itself. A similar exodus had followed the rout of 1887, and very likely contributed to the subsequent withering away of Harmony local assembly.<sup>86</sup> The evidence for its 1900 counterpart is incomplete. Those who remained nursed their wounds, which stung so sharply that for the one of the few times in its known history, Local 70 resorted to the drastic remedy of fines and expulsion as provided for in the JTU's constitution. The Local expelled one member outright, and fined five other men and a tailoress.<sup>87</sup>

In short, then, by 1900 the city's unionized tailors had been blooded in several hard-fought but ineffectual

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<sup>85</sup>Taylor, December 1899, identifies 'J. Watt' as a new member admitted to Local 70. Cf. *ibid.*, 20 June 1916: "...some twenty years ago Jim was one the hustlers of the local labor movement in the Manitoba capital...and many of the old-timers there will remember the good work he did there at the time."

<sup>86</sup>As noted above, Frank Yeo has suggested that many of Winnipeg tailoring Knights departed for St. Paul, Minnesota following the tour of 1887.

<sup>87</sup>Taylor, September 1900.

contests. The most recent of these figuratively left Local 70 a decapitated organization with a record of defeat, inwardly divided and striving to cauterize its wounds. The period's strikes had brought this into focus, pointing the need to rethink how such struggles best were conducted. Meanwhile a lesson appears to have been learned about the limits of proprietorship as a strategy of resistance during times of 'underemployment' occasioned by strikes. One consequence was the quite different figure Local 70 collectively cut during the Edwardian period, as we will next consider.

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Chapter Five  
Style Changes 'of the Radical Socialist Type': 1901-13

I

After the turn of the century, Local 70 maintained a wary reticence through the onset of the 1914-18 World War, in marked contrast to the union tailors' earlier style of waging workplace struggle. Local 70's adoption of this leaner, more laconic style might seem a trivial matter. Yet style changes, albeit of a different kind, historically have been a serious matter to tailors. Winnipeg's unionized tailoring craftworkers changed their minds about how best to contend with their bosses, and this departure incorporated, in part, these wage-earners' new-fledged, tacitly pessimistic judgements about the social environment and practical benefits and the potential liabilities involved in seeking broad community support for their struggles. The flamboyant, feverish exchanges which former president George McCord, for example, had pursued in the popular press during the 1893 strike, now became a thing of the past.

This development during the custom tailoring trade's period of equilibration and functional differentiation within a changed clothing sector corresponded with two concomitants which concern us in this chapter. Specifically, Edwardian Winnipeg's tailoring craft activists channeled their energies into more radical forms, which appears to have led them away from an exclusive focus upon the city trade's workplaces. This at once promoted a quieter but more

resolute stand in the workplace, and eventually laid the basis for further identifications with other working-class people in the city. This latter development was to reach its apogee during 1918-19. But during this second period, the other important development was the achievement and enforcement of new terms that were codified in collective agreements achieved in 1903, 1910, and 1913.

These agreements clearly built upon the tailors' late Victorian experiences of defeat and tacit judgements about how to transcend these. However, the tailors' subsequent gains were furthered by the Wheat Boom. Population growth favoured the trade sufficiently to support a proliferation of tailoring shops and the concession of unprecedented wage and other gains to those who worked in them.

Such are the developments which concern us in the present chapter. We have noted elsewhere how competition in earlier periods forced tailors to embark upon initiatives aimed at formulating and securing agreement to new provisions which governed the terms under which their labour power was exploited. The important development of the early 1900s was the achievement of new understandings with trade bosses. These represented a striking of new balances in the realm of workplace social relations. But as we'll see, these balances were to be tested amid the exigencies of a militarized and war-making society after 1914.

The career of John T. Mortimer, whom we last saw on the

lacrosse field in the eye of the 1900 control strike, vividly exemplifies the post-1900 shift in tactics, and in the tailors' expressed political and social identifications with other working people. This was the most significant development during this period with regard to Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers' and their extended, institutionally-differentiated practice of labour organization through 1921. His dismissal by William Peace graphically proved, to his personal cost, the wisdom of a craft axiom about journeymen who rose from the bench to 'put up a cat's face' and became 'crooks': "When tailors become the possessors of a buckeye then as a rule they are a chestnut to organized labor and tailors' union."<sup>1</sup> But Mortimer did not only demonstrate the bounds of conventional accommodations within tailoring craft subculture. It also was he who pointed and articulated a way beyond such conventions, one which turned upon broader identifications by tailors with other working people.

## II

What we have of Mortimer, radical tailor and Laurier-era national figure<sup>2</sup> in Canada's working-class movement, is shot through with the weirdly resonant stuff of boundary land and wayfaring - harsh transits of place and of mind.

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<sup>1</sup>Tailor, February 1914.

<sup>2</sup>Forsey, 420; McCormack (1977), 70; Labour Gazette I (October 1901), 217; Tailor, June 1909, Voice, 5 August 1898, 7 October 1898, 19 January 1900, Western Socialist, 11 October 1902.

His migrations -on the ground, but also across frontiers of struggle and filiation - box the compass of the Winnipeg union tailors' craft subculture after the turn of the century. Fittingly enough, then, might his memory be invoked to help traverse the temporal and experiential horizons which separate the tailors' historical situation from our own. The conceit is not wholly fanciful. With splendid elan, and to very mixed reviews, Mortimer crossed the emblematical 'river of fire' to pursue his vision of community and social justice; with baneful irony, he died wretchedly and alone one wintry night while trying to make headway over a darkened, all-too-tangible river of ice.<sup>3</sup>

At eight o'clock on the evening of Thursday 27 November 1908, he set out on foot to catch the train to Winnipeg at Pembina, a mile's journey or so from his home in the border town of St. Vincent, Minnesota. He conferred with neighbours about where to cross the as-yet barely frozen Red River. He told Lena that he expected to return Saturday with an enlarged photograph of their little daughter, whose recent death on Labour Day (the Mortimers' seventh wedding anniversary) had given the holiday an anguished new personal significance. When he did not return, Lena initially assumed he had stayed on through the weekend in Winnipeg with

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<sup>3</sup>Voice, 4 December 1908, 11 December 1908, 18 December 1908, 30 April 1909; Tailor, June 1909.

friends.<sup>4</sup> It was a fair surmise. "John T." had many personal ties in the city. These had been cemented, as well as strained, in the course of his various sojourns there since the mid-1890s, on the bench as a working tailor, and in harness as a labour movement official and 'loquacious' proponent of social change. Each of these engagements had conditioned the others, impinging upon the Mortimers' life together, and tempering the bright but sometimes brittle figure Mortimer cut in workplace, meeting hall, and propaganda column.

With growing alarm, Lena soon discovered that her husband neither had reached the city, nor yet made it to Pembina to catch the train. While Puttee's newspaper expressed "sincerest sympathy for Mrs. Mortimer and the little ones in this time of dreadful suspense," and looked to the "small chance that our friend Jack Mortimer may still be heard from in the land of the living," a diver inspected the site where Mortimer was believed to have disappeared. The diver returned only with an unwittingly resonant remembrance of Mortimer: "From marks found on the ice ...there is no doubt that a person went through and struggled considerably to regain a footing on the ice before being swept away."<sup>5</sup> Yet this only was the last, and most grim, of the many struggles to which Mortimer lent his

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<sup>4</sup>Voice, 4 December 1908, 11 December 1908, 15 January 1909.

<sup>5</sup>Voice, 11 December 1908.

abundant energies.

This bellwether figure first spoke out in the late 1890s - "giving voice to the indignation of a large number of citizens" about municipal clothing contract practices, which at once were "disasterous" to those in his own craft, and "inimical to the welfare of the community as a whole."<sup>6</sup> He had capped his late-Victorian record by playing a central role in Arthur Puttee's epochal two election victories as Canada's first independent Labour MP.<sup>7</sup> Puttee had been Mortimer's best man at the Labour Day 1901 wedding ceremony where Lena Cameron consented to become Mortimer's 'hipstay,'<sup>8</sup> a year after craft boss William T. Peace, charter member and a former president of Mortimer's union, fired him in a great show of proprietorial 'independence.'<sup>9</sup> Sometime between his dismissal and autumn 1902, Mortimer was blacklisted in the city trade.

These misfortunes further helped drive Mortimer from Puttee's labourite right hand, and into the arms of western comrades in the Socialist Party of Canada. Even by the time he married Lena in 1901, however, he already appears to have

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<sup>6</sup>Mortimer and George Dales to Winnipeg City Council, 28 May 1898, Minutes, 6 June 1898; Correspondence, City Clerks Office, File 3841, City of Winnipeg Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Voice, 30 August 1901, describes Mortimer as "bearer of the record as twice election agent in successful labour election campaigns." Cf. Western Socialist, 11 October 1902.

<sup>8</sup>Voice, 6 September 1901.

<sup>9</sup>Voice, 1 June 1900.

been poised to become Comrade Mortimer of Vancouver's saltier Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) cadres. Puttee justly might have been stung when, in 1902, SPC editor G. Weston Wrigley, with crocodilian exultance and a measure of half-truthfulness in which Mortimer unhandsomely acquiesced, welcomed the blacklisted jour and labour movement dignitary to his factional fold. Wrigley, who himself only recently had moved to the West Coast from Ontario,<sup>10</sup> charged that "it was not to the credit of the labor movement in Winnipeg that they allowed [Mortimer] to be practically blacklisted out of the city after he had spent his all in their service."<sup>11</sup> On this occasion, Wrigley's sly distortion of the WTLC's concern for Mortimer's situation can be readily understood, if not excused. For Mortimer's labour-political credentials were prodigious; the young tailor was, by any standard of contemporary working-class activism, quite a catch. To say so does not denigrate his own strong convictions in rallying to the SPC, or imply that his eyes were not open and clear in doing so. In his own words:

I have been associated with labor unions, trades councils, labor congresses, independent labor parties etc. for many years, but I have come to

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<sup>10</sup>Babcock, 61.

<sup>11</sup>Western Socialist, 11 October 1902. In fact, for the record, immediately after Peace fired Mortimer, the labour council offered Mortimer the then-unprecedented position as ~~the~~ salaried organizer for the council and the Labour Party - an offer which Mortimer declined, and perhaps should have acknowledged publicly when Wrigley cocked a sectarian snook at Winnipeg's unions. Voice, 8 June 1900, 15 June 1900.

the conclusion that it is only by organizing an uncompromising class-conscious socialist party that the working class can ever hope to better its conditions.<sup>12</sup>

One further expression of Brother Mortimer's metamorphosis as Comrade Mortimer was his pronouncement that North America's mainstream labour movement was "a miserable failure" except among certain "trust"-like, "favoured sections" of his class.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, while in B.C., he was an active and prominent member of Vancouver Local 178, and was said to be "well-liked" even by other Canadian union tailors who met him at national labour congress functions.<sup>14</sup> Mortimer's involvement in Vancouver JTU affairs included chairmanship of a committee which called on Local 178 to oppose new legislative measures which involved the state as a third-party interest in industrial disputes, and to reject overtures by meliorist political candidates who purported to accommodate working-class interests within capitalism.<sup>15</sup> Another expression of such commitments was Mortimer's campaign work for the SPC which garnered for him a reputation as a well-known impossibilist.<sup>16</sup>

While in British Columbia, besides busying himself in

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<sup>12</sup>Western Socialist, 11 October 1902.

<sup>13</sup>Voice, 7 February 1908.

<sup>14</sup>McCormack (1977), 61; Tailor, May 1902, June 1909.

<sup>15</sup>Western Socialist, 18 October 1902; cf. Voice, 20 February 1903.

<sup>16</sup>Voice, 27 July 1906.

the affairs of the JTU's Vancouver branch, Mortimer campaigned for the SPC. After 1906, he returned to toil again in Winnipeg shops, and evidently found some respite for his needy young family by sequestering them among his wife's kin just south of the line near Emerson, Manitoba. He resumed duties as a tailors' union delegate and gadfly to the Winnipeg labour council.<sup>17</sup> He likely further estranged himself from Puttee by denigrating the relevance to North America of a most distinguished visiting fireman, the Hon. Keir Hardie.<sup>18</sup> One of his final contretemps was with Ed Stephenson, who issued a general challenge to debate socialism at a time when Canadian socialists were wont to style AFL executive apologetics for accommodations with the National Civic Federation as the 'Banquet Bombast of Incapable Big Guns.'<sup>19</sup> Mortimer accepted the challenge issued by this future Canadian organizer of the AFL. In doing so, 'impossibilist' to the end, Mortimer reaffirmed that even "one almighty union" of working people, were it to coalesce within capitalism, could not turn the tables as they needed to be turned.

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<sup>17</sup>Mortimer's migrations as a JTU member are documented in part in Tailor, including reinstatement (September 1896) and issuance of travelling book (May 1902) by Winnipeg JTU Local 70; admission by book (August 1902) by Vancouver JTU Local 178. A J. "F." Mortimer withdrew from Local 70 in July 1905; Mortimer was again reinstated as a Local 70 member in June 1907.

<sup>18</sup>Voice, 19 July 1902; McCormack (1977), 60, 82.

<sup>19</sup>Voice, 31 January 1908.

Mortimer relished his reputation as a hell-raiser. "Time was," he admitted in 1908, "when in the labor press I saw an individual with a contrary opinion to mine I could not rest until, either I knocked him out, or - which more often happened - he put me to sleep."<sup>20</sup> But if there was some vanity about this outspoken jour, it neither was trivial of purpose, nor barren of effect upon those who found in him an advocate and exemplar.

His indignation remained a constant, but had gravitated toward more ambitious targets since the 1890s, in keeping with his radicalization and hard experience. In the process, Mortimer's perceptions about the bounds and counters of community interest, along with the style he affected in expressing them, were burnished to a glinting, needle-like sharpness. He brandished this quality to puncture what he regarded as complacent, opportunistic or ill-advisedly accommodating illusions in working-class circles; he might have wounded his own hopes with it toward the end of his life. Superadded to the vagaries of working life on the bench, the burdens of radical insight could conduce to fatalistic despair.

During one of the midwinter slack seasons so widely dreaded among jour tailors for the craft-melancholy and material stringencies it entailed, Mortimer gave vent to dark, vexatious thoughts about social disparities heightened

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<sup>20</sup>Voice, 7 February 1908.

by the first faltering of the Wheat Boom in 1907-08. In an unhappy rush of words, he cried out that

...never before in the history of the world were the means of producing wealth so efficient....Never before could the necessaries and luxuries of existence be produced so easily and so plentifully. Never before were there such well stocked warehouses and granaries and it is doubtful if ever there was such wide-spread ghastly poverty and suffering as there is now. Certain it is that never before had the working class such an insecure hold on existence and I am writing with a bitter knowledge of that fact and I am satisfied that on this continent at the present time there are millions worse off than I am.<sup>21</sup>

He feared - prophetically enough - that "working people must starve and suffer until their lords and masters consume the surplus or waste it in a bloody war...for a market in which to dispose of it."<sup>22</sup>

Yet Mortimer clearly gave something more of himself than outbursts of spleen, as was attested in part by the establishment of the labour council's Mortimer Memorial Fund in the spring after he died, and his ~~own~~ body had been recovered.<sup>23</sup> In urging other men and women of his class to understand and set about changing their conditions of life, Mortimer at the podium, or at the blackboard,<sup>24</sup> became a familiar, even generative figure in city labour and socialist circles. He was a scheduled speaker at one such

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<sup>21</sup>Voice, 7 February 1908.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Voice, 18 June 1909; Tailor, June 1909.

<sup>24</sup>Voice, 8 December 1899.

public speaking engagement in Winnipeg on 20 October, only weeks before he died. During his final weeks, he at least might have had the satisfaction of learning that his work of goading and prompting had helped empower others to speak out and talk back. One J. McInness, who "received his early teachings from J.T. Mortimer," was being hailed as the Socialist Party local's "best speaker" following the former's public-speaking debut at Jubilee Hall.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Mortimer's energetic dissidence had a quickening effect on his union - one which was felt by default after his death. An anonymous writer in the tailors' international union journal pointedly complained in 1911 that the apparently drifting and incommunicative Local 70 "was an aggressive organization when Winnipeg was the stamping ground of the late Jack Mortimer, but we have heard nothing from Winnipeg from some time now."<sup>26</sup> There surely was at least something of the Mortimer legacy more fittingly in evidence in 1913, when Local 70 rallied again, and its leaders were said to be "of the Radical Socialist type."<sup>27</sup>

### III

Mortimer's union took advantage of Wheat Boom conditions to secure major concessions regarding a number of

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<sup>25</sup>Voice, 14 August 1908.

<sup>26</sup>Tailor, March 1911.

<sup>27</sup>Lawrence Pickup to R.H. Coats, Transcript "Copy": "rec Dec 11" [1913], Strikes and Lockouts RG 27 Vol. 301.

contentious matters which had much preoccupied city tailoring craft activists during the period of localism. A new agreement in 1903 provided for a shop-meeting mechanism to adjudicate disputes regarding classification of jobs, and stipulated that prices for special garments not stated in the bill were "to be subject to special contract between the parties hereto."<sup>28</sup> Yet another clause, reminiscent of one of the complaints which had precipitated the very establishment of Local 70 and the strike of 1893, provided that 'Tickets giving starting price [as distinct from 'extras' were] to be given by employer with every garment."

Such provisions sought to limit employer prerogatives, while others were a hedge against opportunism by less-principled members, who might seek to benefit individually at the expense of other members. Specifically, another new clause stipulated that "[i]n the slack season every employee shall have his turn."

The new pact expressly recapitulated that 'all work [was] to be done on premises furnished free by employer." The JTU succeeded in pressing home a new version of the old WOPU clause regarding the confinement of tailoring work to shops provided by merchants. The 1903 agreement also stipulated that ten hours were to constitute one days's

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<sup>28</sup>This agreement, dated to cover the term 1 May 1903 to 1 May 1904, was collected by Labour Gazette correspondent Pickup in 1913, and is collected in Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol. 301. All citations, below, are from this document.

work, that employees were to be paid weekly, and - most evocative of the union's cause celebre during the 1890s - that no discount was to be allowed "on civic or government contracts."

The latter concession almost certainly derived from the adamant position against wage-discounting which Local 70, despite its 1900 debacle, had assumed two years earlier. In 1901, Local 70 had found a new pressure point in its ongoing struggle to regulate the conditions under which its members undertook work on public-sector clothing contracts. Specifically, the local dispensed with appeals to public officials and other third parties regarding the merchants' much-resented practice of discounting wages due for work on such jobs. When the Collins Co. won a contract to make street railwaymen's uniforms, it offered to accede to union protocols, providing that the JTU found journeymen to execute the work.

An effort was made to unionize this establishment and the manager made a proposition that if the Tailors' Union could guarantee him a sufficient number of men to fill the contract in a given time required he would unionize his shop. The union... declined to accept this offer.<sup>29</sup>

Local 70's refusal represented an attempt to secure, by different means, the same end which had been at issue in the anti-sweating agitation of the 1890s. Instead of looking to city council, the union apparently vested responsibility for

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<sup>29</sup>Labour Gazette I (May 1901), 477.

honouring its protocols squarely with contracting boss tailors themselves. This new tactic was sufficiently effective, at least within the context of a favourable skills scarcity in the local labour market, to be codified in the epochal agreement of 1903.

Local 70 was sufficiently serious about this provision to underscore the point a year later by calling out 24 people in its "dispute with two firms regarding the interpretation of the bill on the making of uniforms."<sup>30</sup> An indication of the union's determination was that they embarked upon this targeted job action without first securing the constitutionally-required sanction of the JTU international executive board, and hence forfeited benefits.<sup>31</sup>

Local 70's unsanctioned freelancing in 1904 contravened one of the JTU's oldest and most cherished strictures of pragmatic centralism.<sup>32</sup> But it also flew in the face of a newer, increasingly pronounced deprecation of the shop strike as a form of practice. By 1913, when Local 70 managed to shut down the trade on a much grander scale, the limited strike was being discountenanced by the international parent body's most senior cadres. "Every indication points to the fact that the one shop strike is becoming a thing of the

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<sup>30</sup>Taylor, June 1904.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Stowell (1912), 112.

past," argued Quebec-born Eugene Brais of Cleveland, the JTU's socialist General Secretary, at the union's Bloomington, Illinois convention in August of that year.

"The general strike in our industry is the next move."<sup>33</sup>

The modern factories in the larger cities, the fast means of transportation, the employers' associations, the modern system of business and production all indicate that the worker must adopt modern means to cope with the employers in his struggle for existence. Our industry, like every other, is becoming more centralized each year....A general movement will prevent the employers from assisting each other, for they will all be in the same boat. It will give all the firms the same advantages and eliminate unfair competition.... It will enable us to better organize, for surely under the present system of doing things, we have demonstrated to our satisfaction that we are not keeping up.<sup>34</sup>

As Brais' remarks suggest, the tailors, like other working-class people, did not perceive the advent of modern business enterprise in the clothing sector as a politically neutral instrumentality. As participants in the city's labour movement, inspired in part by the example of such figures as John Mortimer, their response to Winnipeg's apotheosis as a 'modern' apparel production and distribution centre, was unillusioned about the implications of such change. This perception found expression in the tailors' increasing sympathy with radical political thought, and their qualified impulses to make common cause with other clothing workers.

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<sup>33</sup>Taylor, August 1913.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

## IV

Consciousness that new systems of retail marketing were imbued with political values and implications was not confined to the tailors, nor was there only one view of these implications. "The retail stores are the first things which catch the stranger's eye...When such an important and established firm as the T. Eaton Co. erects, in a very young country town, buildings that would suffice for Chicago or Berlin, it must indeed have unusual confidence in the future and growth of the place," wrote Frankfurt journalist Wilhelm Cohnstaedt in 1909.<sup>35</sup>

The nature of this confidence was clarified ten years after Cohnstaedt's visit, when Eaton's employees and well-wishers gathered to attend a banquet, and the unveiling of sculptor Ivor Lewis's bronze statue of Sir Timothy Eaton, which were laid on to honour the company's Jubilee year.<sup>36</sup> His Worship Mayor Gray judged that Eaton's attainments as "one of the chief upbuilding agencies of Canada and of Winnipeg" involved "something more than merely developing trade," but actually were "going far beyond this to abate the unrest between capital and labor...to bring them together in the necessary friendly relation of reconstruction days." Similarly, Sir James Aikins,

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<sup>35</sup>Klaus H. Burmeister, ed., Western Canada 1909: Travel Letters of Wilhelm Cohnstaedt, trans. Herta Holle-Scherer, (Regina 1976), 3-4.

<sup>36</sup>Free Press, 13 December 1919.

lieutenant-governor and former leader of the Manitoba Conservative party, opined that:

The things that led to the Eaton success - administration, loyalty and co-operation - were the things that would make Canada a success. It had been found since the war, that a class strife and class consciousness had manifested themselves. No country could afford to have strife, and this would, if continued, lead to Canada's retrogression. As it was in the days of Alcibiades of Athens, there were in Canada today the shearers and the shorn. At all stages of history, there had been bitter and bloody feuds between the rich and the poor. That was to be avoided in Canada. There was no reason for it in a democratic country where the poor man's son had an equal chance with the son of the rich. Fathers who nurtured in their sons hatred of the successful were sowing the seeds of future discord. Property was an inducement to attain place and position by their best effort.<sup>37</sup>

For union tailors and others active in the city's labour and Left circles, Eaton's enterprise, and the class interests with which it was aligned, had very different implications. Its "sweat foundry catalogue", coupled with the company scion's pontifical views about unemployment and the very retail edifice which Cohnstaedt had so admired, were targets of intermittent barbed comment about Canadian "popular culture" in the city labour press. Along with the nearby Free Press plant on Carlton Street, the store was jeered by the parading workers who demonstrated their opposition to contemporary concentrations of wealth and influence.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>This draws on the Voice, c1903-09, passim.

One who joined with radicalized tailors in their increasingly politicized perceptions of the contemporary social order was Jacob Penner, a young Left radical and future Winnipeg alderman, after he hit town in summer 1905, just as Eaton's dreadnought was launched on Portage Avenue and caused thirty smaller retail stores to founder in its churning wake.<sup>39</sup> "I was particularly anxious to find if there were any people in Winnipeg that were socialists," Penner recalled.<sup>40</sup>

Penner's quest led him to the James Street Labour Temple, because, he was told, "occasionally an elderly man used to come to the trades hall and sell a socialist paper there."<sup>41</sup> Penner went to the Labour Temple "almost every second day" for several weeks, and eventually made contact with the old man, one Bockart, a printer and bookbinder, who hawked the Appeal to Reason. But it was a tailor shop, run by one of the clan Cameron's confusingly-numerous human gifts to Winnipeg tailoring craft activity, where Penner made contact with city socialists. By Penner's account:

...I said I would very much like that [Bockart] should include me with these socialists that he knew. So he took me out to a tailor's shop on Logan Avenue, where the tailor who was running the shop was a socialist - a Canadian socialist...And his sewing machine operator, an elderly girl, she

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<sup>39</sup>Bellan 78, 87 n36.

<sup>40</sup>Transcription of Jacob Penner interview with Roland Penner (1965), PAM P599, 11.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

was even more enthusiastic about socialism than her boss...And then he acquainted me with a letter carrier, Hoop, who was a socialist, and a painter by the name of Cummings...And finally we got some six or eight people together as a group, usually at Bockart's home, but later on at the Labour Temple.<sup>42</sup>

The latter change of venue was another reflection of the contemporary phenomenon whereby labour activism interpenetrated with socialist convictions - a dynamic which we have observed from a different perspective in our look at the career of John T. Mortimer. This uneven, qualified convergence between militant sections of Canada's labour movement and those who espoused socialist and other left positions regarding urgent social questions has been noted, of course, by other writers.<sup>43</sup> One dramatic illustration of this period's reciprocity between labour organization and ideological ferment was that, whereas in c1905, a Winnipeg tailoring shop was a waystation en route to the emergence of the Social Democratic Party, in 1913, the Social Democratic Party was the crucible for an application by 41 clothing workers to charter a new Winnipeg local of the United Garment Workers.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Penner interview, 12.

<sup>43</sup>The diversity of social conviction which characterized (and often helped marginalize) western Canadian working class activism during our period is a major theme in McCormack (1977) ; cf. important discussions in David Jay Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg (Montreal, 1974), and his Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Montreal, 1978); cf. Babcock, esp. Chapter Five.

<sup>44</sup>Voice 14 February 1913.

This convergence of socialist ideas with clothing-sector economic struggle was a complex process which demands further attention than our discussion of Winnipeg can accord it. Yet, it must be noted that in its various expressions, it incorporated and built upon some elements of the tailors' craft subculture, while it dispensed with, or retreated from others. For example, the union tailors' inclusive push built upon the high valuation within their craft subculture of intellectual appetite and engagement. This was noted during the late 19th century, when one observer wrote of journeymen tailors that [i]ntellectually... [they] are ever discussing among themselves questions of local and national politics, points of law, philosophy, physics, and religion."<sup>45</sup> In this, of course, they were not alone among North American working people.<sup>46</sup> But symptomatic of the link between their intellectual assiduity and the tailor's hard won, exacting work skills was Brother G. Renner's craft-conditioned, shopboard-near exhortation in 1911 that the "science" of socialism "needs as much careful study and observation as a tailor needs to produce an artistic set of clothes."<sup>47</sup>

By contrast, the tailors of our period were dispensing

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<sup>45</sup> Jennie Collins (1870), cit. in Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America (New York, 1977), 47.

<sup>46</sup>E.g., see Russell Hann, "Brainworkers and the Knights of Labor: E.E. Sheppard, Phillips Thompson and the Toronto News, 1883-1887," in Kealey and Warrian, 35-57.

<sup>47</sup>Tailor, June 1911.

with some of the values - such as those of their ostensible uniqueness and benevolent society functions - which had been a matter of self-congratulation as early as 1725.

....Wrapt in close Union by the Laws they've made,  
Superior be to any other trade....  
The World ne'er saw so much variety,  
As is produced from this Society,  
Let time their actions write in Books of fame,  
Who Age supports and orphans young maintain,  
Their sick relieve, likewise their dead interr,  
What action greater can the world prefer[?].....<sup>48</sup>

Secretary Brais' answer to this question, in advocating the abolition of death and sickness benefits in 1913 was succinct and clear:

Our field is the industrial field and we should confine all our efforts to building up an organization that will be efficient in every way, one able to cope with any and all trade matters that may develop. Throw off the useless baggage, let's become a true trade organization and not a hospital and cemetery association....We are out to build a fighting organization and personally will have no regrets in throwing overboard all useless things.<sup>49</sup>

This shift in priorities and perceived necessities arose at the end of a general surge in JTU Canadian membership strength, and coincided with inclusivist concerns which favoured reducing the costs of belonging to the JTU. The union's cresting membership levels as a Canadian labour

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<sup>48</sup>H[enry] N[elson], "A New Poem on the Ancient and Loyal Society of Journey-men Taylors [Dublin, 1725], in F.W. Galton, ed., Select Documents Illustrating the History of Trade Unionism: I. The Tailoring Trade (London: P.S. King & Son Ltd., 1923), 27-28.

<sup>49</sup>Report to Convention: Taylor, August 1913, 8.

organization,<sup>50</sup> amidst a quickening of radical social ideas, and western Canada's late Edwardian burst of economic activity, permitted the JTU's Winnipeg branch to win further wage concessions in 1910 following a tightly-marshalled, six-day city-wide strike which secured an across-the-board wage increase of eight per cent.<sup>51</sup> But the acid test of these developments as they affected workplace social relations, and the material conditions of city tailoring craftworkers and their families, came with the 1913 strike. This strike was a showcase for the tactical and explicitly political practices which had been brought to the fore since the turn of the century.

## V

Local 70's successful strike in April 1913 was the most important labour-relations flashpoint in the course of Edwardian city trade experience. This two-week conflict erupted when the union pressed demands to bring wages into line with increased living costs attendant upon the city's late-Edwardian surge in economic development, soon to be curbed by the Balkan War recession.<sup>52</sup> By late March 1913, Local 70 judged that the wage scale it secured in 1910 had not weathered well. "It is three years since any increase was granted and the men contend that the higher cost of

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<sup>50</sup>Logan, 209; cf. Appendix, Table 12.

<sup>51</sup>Labour Gazette, (May 1910), 1327.

<sup>52</sup>Bellan, 94-129 passim.

living demands that they receive higher wages or otherwise stand for a lower standard of living."<sup>53</sup>

The ensuing strike involved about 150 men and women,<sup>54</sup> and resoundingly shut down union shops throughout the city, ultimately garnering to Local 70 members a 10 per-cent wage increase.<sup>55</sup> As in 1882, Winnipeg's organized tailoring craftworkers now managed to peg their wage scales at levels stamped by a momentarily expansive local economy. For the moment, even as a recession began to lock in throughout western Canada, and yet more convulsive shocks loomed ahead, collective action secured gains for the tailors in the eleventh hour of the city's current experience of prosperity and intense economic activity.

By marked contrast with earlier strikes, the 1913 strike conspicuously was a model of collective discipline, and underscored the tailors' new style of waging economic struggle. These strengths were most apparent in the reportedly "tight tie-up of the custom houses in the city,"<sup>56</sup> which from the strike's beginning left the trade "completely paralyzed...[with] all work at a stand-still."<sup>57</sup> Strike leaders clearly took precautions toward this very end

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<sup>53</sup>Voice, 28 March 1913.

<sup>54</sup>Tailor, April 1913.

<sup>55</sup>Voice, 18 April 1913.

<sup>56</sup>Voice, 3 April 1913.

<sup>57</sup>Voice, 11 April 1913.

by organizing "well-attended" daily meetings of the membership.<sup>58</sup> This measure not only discouraged the wounding, piecemeal drift back to work by the wayward, less-militant strikers who had helped undermine earlier struggles, but also strengthened Local 70's sense of group purpose and morale. Meanwhile, there were other, related signs of a break with the past.

Nowhere were these signs more apparent than in the determination with which the strikers of 1913 repeatedly spurned requests for information about their struggle, and refused employer provocations to enter into public exchanges about substantive matters in dispute. In earlier strikes, union personnel never were solely responsible for the ritualistic public bruiting of trade differences in the press. This was evident when provocative echoes of the old-style public broadcasting of rumoured wage demands issued - trial balloon-like, perhaps - from the merchant tailors' camp. Unidentified merchant tailors spread "alarmist rumors" that Local 70 was pummeling them with "excessive" demands for wage increases, said to range from 50 to 75 per cent above the 1910 rates.<sup>59</sup> But strike leaders greeted this with stolid contempt, drily observing only that the claim was "too absurd to take notice of," and that such rumour-monger-

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<sup>58</sup>Voice, 3 April 1913.

<sup>59</sup>Voice, 28 March 1918; 3 April 1918.

ing was "absolutely unwarranted."<sup>60</sup>

Some of the master tailors who have graduated from the ranks of the union, and therefore know what they are doing...[were the ones] spreading alarmist rumors about excessive demands...Other employers say that there is nothing in the demands which needs to lead to the conclusion that agreement with the men is impossible.<sup>61</sup>

Here was a nuanced, but unquestionable appeal to a shared recent past, one which was assumed to imply self-evident 'lessons' regarding what constituted skillful behaviour in the present.

Even the Voice, quasi-official organ of the city labour council, found Local 70 "very reserved about permitting [strike] news to be given out for publication."<sup>62</sup> The union's silence indeed was a studied and deliberate one. Nor did it extend only to the press, or lapse when, at mid-month, Local 70 settled for a ten per-cent wage increase, and withdrew its only now-disclosed original demand for "an absolutely new scale of prices."<sup>63</sup> Local 70 also stonewalled the federal labour department's attempts, both during and after the strike, to obtain information about the dispute. On 3 April, Harriet J. Williams, Winnipeg correspondent of the department's Labour Gazette, had been able to learn only that the cause of the conflict was that Local 70 members

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., and Voice, 28 March 1913.

<sup>61</sup>Voice, 28 March 1913.

<sup>62</sup>Voice, 3 April 1913.

<sup>63</sup>Voice, 18 April 1918.

Want higher wages. Master tailors have offered seven per cent increase, but say twenty-five per cent is demanded. Union men say...twenty-five per cent is very exaggerated.<sup>64</sup>

Nor was more information forthcoming when the department wrote directly to the union on 10 April: Local 70 secretary G.G. Watt simply ignored the request. Yet another prospective informant, Lawrence Pickup, a young English immigrant who enjoyed some celebrity as a luminary of Winnipeg's Left-labour free speech fight of c1907,<sup>65</sup> was delegated to gather information about the strike, along with other material pertaining to aspects of the city trade.<sup>66</sup> Although Pickup succeeded in collecting some vital information from union president-turned-merchant George McCord,<sup>67</sup> he completely struck out in his appeals to current officers of Local 70.

I regret to say that the local Tailors' Union have decided not to supply the Department with particulars dealing with their wages from 1900, claiming that they do not see the object in furnishing the information.

They are of the Radical Socialist type, and I do not see much prospect of getting any information from the Union in future.

I have been unable to secure a copy of the last agreement between the Union and the employers,

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<sup>64</sup>Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 301, 3 April 1913.

<sup>65</sup>Voice, 14 May 1907.

<sup>66</sup>Gazette editor R.H. Coats to Watt, 10 May 1913; Coats to Pickup, 21 May 1913; 28 October 1913; 11 December 1913; Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol. 301 (1913).

<sup>67</sup>Pickup to Coats, 10 April 1913; 7 January 1914; cf. Coats to Pickup, 14 April 1914; 11 December 1913; 17 January 1914; Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 301 (1913).

which ended the strike last May [sic].

The secretary of the the union has destroyed the correspondence sent him in regard to this matter.<sup>68</sup>

Local 70's phlegmatic refusal to dissipate its energies in pursuit of chimaerical public support, coupled with a pragmatic commitment to self-discipline throughout the 1913 strike, quickly forced merchants to bargain in earnest. By the eleventh day of the strike, its ambience was well-established, and its ultimate result anticipated.

The union has control of the whole situation. The men are standing pat and are determined to stay away from work until some satisfactory settlement is reached. Several conferences have been held between the employers and the employees and these are being continued. This, in itself, is an indication that the strike will not last much longer and an early settlement of the fight is confidently expected. It is probable that a compromise will eventually be reached which will be satisfactory to both sides.<sup>69</sup>

During these meetings, merchants offered to raise their offer of a seven per-cent wage increase to 9.5 per cent. The union held out for 10 per cent, but won this only by compromising its original demand for "a completely new" bill of prices.<sup>70</sup>

In summary, then, the 1913 strike was conducted differently than the earliest major disputes in the city's custom tailoring trade. It was marked by Local 70's

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<sup>68</sup>Pickup to Coats, Transcript "Copy"; "rec Dec 11 [1913]", Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol. 301 (1913).

<sup>69</sup>Voice, 11 April 1913.

<sup>70</sup>Tailor, April 1913.

disciplined, assiduous marshalling of its resources to shut down the city trade so completely, and so precipitously, as to win concessions without protracted struggle. Our discussion also has suggested that Local 70's strike effort reflected, and benefited from, the chastening earlier course of city trade experience. By 1913, unionized custom tailors at least tacitly had judged that their relations with third-party interests, such as the general public and the state (whether in terms of its civic or its national components) were incidental to their immediate needs and aspirations as working people. Instead, Local 70 took a hard, pragmatic line with former members who had 'put up a cat's face' and now confronted them as employers. Their collective resolve soon foundered amidst the wrenching social dislocations which engulfed Canada, and their gains of 1913 would be eroded by the exigencies of a war-time economy.

By 1913, Local 70 leaders thus had reasons other than their reported 'Radical Socialist type'-political stance to convey the tacit judgment that third-party appeals and interventions at best were waste of energy and other scarce resources. This was reflected elsewhere, in their own union journal, just weeks before the 1913 strike erupted, where it was urged on Local 70 that it "should invest in a new label cut. See 'Voice' for the oldest [typographical] cut of our label now in use."<sup>71</sup> The stonewalling which greeted federal

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<sup>71</sup>Taylor, February 1913.

labour department inquiries merely was one reflection of Local 70's tacit and more broadly-mounted determination that well-disciplined struggle at the point of production was the royal road to the improvement of its collective situation. Third-party interests - whether those of the consumer or the state - were no more than that.

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Chapter Six  
Troubled Slumber, Struggle, Excursus: 1914-21

I

"Just as the bear sleeps during the winter and awakens in the spring...very thin and hungry," Local 70 secretary G.Wildeman wrote JTU headquarters in May 1918, "so have the tailors in this city - only we have slept four years too long."<sup>1</sup> Winnipeg's journeymen and tailoresses recently had roused themselves from the "five year slumber" into which they slipped following their spartan victory in 1913. The resulting two-week strike not only secured from city bosses several novel concessions and a 15 per-cent boost in piecework rates, but also more than doubled Local 70's membership. Justifiably, then, did Winnipeg's working-class press crow that "old local 70 is on the local labor map with a heavier line than it has carried for many years".<sup>2</sup>

The strike witnessed a lustrous show of intensely-energetic commitment which is without peer in the union's 25-year history. Wildeman himself positively brimmed with it when he reported to Thomas Sweeney of Chicago, who had succeeded Brais as JTU general secretary. Wildeman relished the extra work required to consolidate the local union's ethnoculturally-diverse membership gains and enhanced stature within Winnipeg's labour movement, as well as its

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<sup>1</sup>Tailor, 21 May 1918.

<sup>2</sup>Voice, 19 April 1918.

bonds with the international parent body.

...Brother Sweeney, I would ask that you send us a good big bundle of [union journals] in parcel form until I am able to send a complete list of all addresses of our [new] members; also about 80 or 100 [Yiddish language] constitutions and some more English ones; also some more initiation forms, as we have used all those you sent during the strike...I would also ask you to send some union pencil clips to distribute among the Trades and Labour Council and other union organizations - 200 or 300. Also find enclosed postal note [50 cents] for one [JTU] lapel button.<sup>3</sup>

Such reflections of group solidarity by no means were confined to the JTU's Winnipeg executive cadres. Wildeman identified who - and what - had been responsible for the strike's impact on intransigent employers. In the breach, "what really done the trick was that every member felt it his duty to be an organizer in himself."<sup>4</sup>

It is this intensification of engagement, so opposed to the situation conjured by wan reports which periodically had issued from the distressed and drifting Winnipeg branch during the early war years, that makes the 1918 strike so noteworthy. The history of the strike predominantly is a study in the possibilities, requirements and resources which conditioned Local 70's dramatic recovery from its war-time doldrums, and which found its chief focus in an organizing drive. However, the enthusiasms and collective achievement associated with this pivotal event seem deeply paradoxical

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<sup>3</sup>Taylor, 21 May 1918.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

when we recall that Local 70 was scuttled, and the JTU abandoned, just 14 months later. Indeed, here is a singular irony in the tailors' 40-year 'practice of solidarity' as organized working people.

## II

The exigencies of war became acute for Winnipeg custom tailors ~~soon~~ soon after hostilities erupted, but even before that, shortly after their 1913 victory, the vulnerabilities of Local 70 were apparent. A rash of circumscribed conflicts broke ~~out~~ out as trade conditions worsened, and merchants chafed against the strictures of the 1913 bill of prices. Local 70 was sustained in its skirmish to resist a one-shop wage cut in autumn 1914, before the First World War barely was two months old.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, as conflict deepened and the market for men's civilian clothing softened, Local 70 meetings heard further disturbing news of this kind.

A brother reported that a firm had made a reduction of twenty-five per cent on the purchase price of clothes and also cut the workers ten per cent. I understand that eleven coatmakers are working there, but none to my knowledge belong to the local.<sup>6</sup>

Such reports did not augur at all well for the integrity of the city wage scale. Indeed, in yet other instances of limited conflict, a few merchants apparently dispensed not

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<sup>5</sup>Tailor, 6 October 1914.

<sup>6</sup>Tailor, 28 December 1915.

only with the scale, but more drastically, with the people who otherwise might insist upon it, and Local 70 unsuccessfully sought victimization benefits to tide over these displaced workers.<sup>7</sup>

The union's ability to confront these challenges was hampered by internal difficulties. Perhaps foremost among these was the understandable, but increasingly serious, disinclination of members to sustain their material and other obligations to the organization. The yearly tallies for new-member initiations and reinstatements plummeted during 1914-15 to the near-zero levels which had been witnessed only in the wake of the JTU's debacles of 1893 and 1900.<sup>8</sup> The Local actually suffered a decrease in the size of its active membership. At least 150 jous and tailoresses had participated in the 1913 strike, but the union's roster included only 51 members by the end of 1915, and a year later had grown by just two members.<sup>9</sup> By late 1915, it fell to Local 70 Secretary (later President) W.J. Riddolls to diagnose the various ills which afflicted his union, and to register its recent resolution calling for an organizer to be posted to Winnipeg "as soon as the spring season opens up" as a remedy.

We find difficulty in trying to get the members to

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<sup>7</sup>Taylor, 8 June 1915.

<sup>8</sup>Appendix, Table 10 and Table 13.

<sup>9</sup>Taylor, 23 August 1921.

pay up their dues on account of the open shop and especially where the majority working are from a foreign land. The Italians seem the hardest to hold together. I will say one thing about the Winnipeg tailors - if there is any talk of raising the bill they always come forward and join when the cheap dues are allowed to get them back, but they stay only a month or two and then fall away again....A vestmaker was up at the latter part of the meeting and is trying to pay dues. The local has paid for him and then he intends to be reinstated himself.<sup>10</sup>

But although the international boasted "as large a staff of organizers as we have had for many years," it was unable to satisfy requests for their services tendered by various JTU local branches. These included JTU locals in St. Paul, Cleveland, Duluth, Sarnia, Montreal, as well as Winnipeg.<sup>11</sup> In postponing action on these requests, General Secretary Sweeney struck a diplomatic sanguine note, stating that he did not know whether in the JTU's entire existence there ever had been "such manifestations of real life as at this time," and professing pleasure at "this healthy interest in the whole organization."

Local 70 activists might well have found Sweeney's remarks a bit hollow or perplexing, if not simply bizarre. And the fact that their call for an organizer could not be heeded, at least for the moment, was cold comfort. The wrenched, unsettled form and weary, fatalistic tenor of a poem written by Brother J. Raskin of Local 70 during this

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<sup>10</sup>Tailor, 28 December 1915.

<sup>11</sup>Tailor, 22 February 1916.

period may be emblematical of the union's dog-days, which his comrade Wildeman later would describe as a time of slumber.

What's the use to work and slave,  
 You cannot take it to the grave;  
 And what's the use to run and hurry,<sup>12</sup>  
 It only makes you misery and worry.

During the latter half of 1916, James Watt of Toronto - a well-regarded former member of Local 70 - made two passes through the city during his tour of duty in western Canada as Robinson's belatedly-appointed successor.<sup>13</sup> He was pleased to find that the JTU's city branch, despite its problems, favourably contrasted with the situation in Hamilton, where the inroads made by the cheap trade "is such a nightmare that they cannot think of anything else but the extinction of the Jour tailor." Winnipeg had a different problem.

A meeting of the members was called in order to get a line on the situation. It was decided to make the next regular meeting an open one. Shops were visited and circulars distributed, and a fair attendance secured. A discussion took place of the means of thoroughly organizing. (No cheap-trade nightmare here.) How to get the employees in this class of trade and explain to them the benefits of organization is the question. Some success has resulted and more success will follow. The higher class trade is fairly well organized, but as in other places there is always a few on the outside.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Tailor, 18 July 1916.

<sup>13</sup>Tailor, 5 September 1916.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

In late summer, Watt returned to Winnipeg on his way back east. He managed to bring another shop into the union fold, but the special meeting he and Egan tried to organize was badly attended. He tartly observed that "[h]ow some of our strong union members of years standing can expect new members to join a union when the meetings are not attended is, to say the least, inconsistent. An abundance of empty chairs is not particularly attractive to new members."<sup>15</sup> He likely had this experience in mind when he remarked that his western tour had rekindled his acquaintance with many "old friends from the east and ex-members...in Winnipeg and farther West, some still members (others very still)." Watt's rueful jest was warranted, for as Egan later remarked, his attempt to start an organizing drive proved to be a failure.<sup>16</sup>

During February-June 1917, Local 70 embarked upon its great drive amidst unsettled conditions. Egan himself, for instance, during his war-time service as an officer of Local 70 and delegate both to the city's Labour Representation Committee as well as the Winnipeg's labour council, was among the many Canadian working class activists who were wary of signs that the Borden government might renege on promises and directly coerce civilians to turn soldier.

The secretary [Egan] reports trade dul[1] owing to

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Taylor, 23 February 1917.

the unsettled conditions in Canada. The recent action of the government in demanding an inventory of the man power of the country has caused the heart of the labor movement to beat faster, Secretary Egan says. The scheme met with a lot of opposition. A number of labor bodies passed resolutions against the plan, it being considered the first step toward conscription.<sup>17</sup>

The organizing drive achieved such impressive results that members seriously considered presenting wage demands to city trade bosses a year earlier than they ultimately did.<sup>18</sup> The big push began with a series of open meetings in February "for the purpose of discussing trade unionism and other questions relative to the labor movement having as its object the strengthening of our local and improving conditions."<sup>19</sup> This ferment helped revive the organizing committee effort which had been intended to build upon Watt's effort, but which had lapsed because committee members "were unable to put in the amount of time required to show any results."<sup>20</sup>

Local 70 now realistically seems to have judged that its fate was in its own hands. The general organizer's flying tour was no panacea for local trade ills, and in any event it was unlikely that the international parent body would underwrite another such visit in the foreseeable

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<sup>17</sup>Taylor, 30 January 1917.

<sup>18</sup>Taylor, 22 May 1917.

<sup>19</sup>Taylor, 20 February 1917.

<sup>20</sup>Taylor, 27 February 1917.

future, perhaps not least of all because Watt's tour had not achieved its ends. The union now explored the possibilities of allocating its own resources and personnel, and sought Sweeney's guidance about how this might be achieved. "Our local is not strong enough to pay a business agent who could look after [organizing] work; but what we want in the meantime is a man who can devote some of his time to organizing purposes and who will receive some remuneration for the amount of time spent in organizing," secretary Egan explained.<sup>21</sup> Sweeney referred Egan to constitutional clauses which provided for such contingencies, and Local 70's recently-elected Vice President Rosen<sup>22</sup> soon took up his duties as the union's first (and only) local organizer.

By May, Local 70 organizer Rosen's field manoeuvres helped work a sea change in membership commitment, and the reports from Winnipeg were more encouraging than at any point since the 1913 strike. Rosen wrote of his "capture of eight recruits who were duly initiated into the mysteries of our order."<sup>23</sup>

The victory was no easy one, working alone on scout duty and sniping[.] The enemy set up many a barrage and subjected me to the severest of cross-fires.

Sandison's (ridge) was a particularly hard capture. I made frontal and rear attacks on this strong position and finally succeeded in capturing

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<sup>21</sup>Taylor, 27 February 1917.

<sup>22</sup>Taylor, 30 January 1917.

<sup>23</sup>Taylor, 26 June 1917.

four.

Inglis (trench), occupying the largest front and in possession of large supplies, was stormed and the last of the enemy brought in - namely two. This position is thoroughly consolidated in Local No. 70.

Askew (hill) supplied one. I am on the lookout for more from this direction. Durrant and Stanley (salient) gave up after severe fighting.

I am keeping up the attack and hope to have the enemy thoroughly annihilated in the near future.<sup>24</sup>

At first blush, Organizer Rosen's report here might seem symptomatic merely of an overt accommodation with the usages and mentality inherent in the by-then engrained militarization of Canadian society. But such a reading of the evidence overlooks the specific nature of the struggle in which these leaders of Local 70 felt themselves most urgently to be engaged. The very playfulness of Rosen's report bespeaks his experiential distance from the waking nightmare of actual trenches and salients. Two things are important here. Firstly, Rosen knew himself to be involved in a real conflict. His representation of this conflict in militaristic terms vividly exemplifies a particular craft-subcultural process remarked upon elsewhere in our discussion: viz., the purposeful adaptation or translation of 'mainstream' social 'givens' into forms suited to the tailors' particular needs and goals. Secondly - a point to which we will return - this particular instance of subcultural appropriation further suggests the differentiating impress of the three years 1914-17 when the

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Dominion war effort tended to isolate Canadian tailors from their American counterparts within the JTU's mainstream.

Meanwhile, Winnipeg jous and tailoresses rediscovered their appetite for collective action, and formulated concrete goals to pursue through such action. Only tactical judgements about timing and local trade conditions staved off immediate pursuit of these goals. All of this was made clear in Egan's communique to Sweeney in early May.

We have not made a general demand for an increase in wages this spring, as the members did not think the time opportune, owing to the unsettled conditions of trade; yet in some of the stores where the employees are working by the week, they are able to secure an increase in wages, and better working conditions. So much in favour of the weekly system. I hope the day is not far distant when we shall be working along similar lines, [and] am sure it will be an improvement over the old style "long hours and home work."<sup>25</sup>

Another augury of the union's recovery and revitalization was the apotheosis of Local 70's fatigued and somewhat fatalistic ('what's the use...?') poet, Brother J. Raskin. He was elected to the executive as Local 70's Warden in an election of officers in mid-June.<sup>26</sup> The evidence does not tell us ~~whether~~ whether he now found a reason 'to run and hurry,' but subsequent events suggest that this was the case. It was in the air.

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<sup>25</sup>Taylor, 22 May 1917.

<sup>26</sup>Taylor, 26 June 1917.

## III

It does one good to notice that the Secretary [Sweeney]...understands our class position, and that we have nothing in common with the employing class and that we are entitled to all that we socially produce.<sup>27</sup>

Thus did G. Wildeman hail Sweeney in March 1918, on the eve of the strike, and shortly after the Winnipegger had taken up his own secretaryship. Wildeman cheerily reported the Local's continued commitment to its organizing drive at "the largest meeting of many a long day." But there was a new twist - "everybody has promised to bring a new member in at our special meeting...on the 19th [March] for the organization of new members."<sup>28</sup> They did so. This was not the only innovation, either. On 19 February, the Local had staged a whist drive and dance in the Winnipeg Labor Temple, and was planning another one, while anticipating "a big round-up of tailors" even as the spring trade season began in earnest.<sup>29</sup>

The meeting of 19 March was attended by 100 people, and saw 16 more new members initiated, as well as the presentation of the organizing campaign committee report on its successful efforts. It was "a real good meeting," in Wildeman's judgement.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Taylor, 19 March 1918.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Tilor, 26 March 1918

<sup>30</sup>Taylor, 2 April 1918.

Four days earlier, Local 70 had presented its demands to employers in 19 Winnipeg custom tailoring shops. The union sought a 15 percent increase in piecework rates, and a minimum weekly wage of \$23 - representing a pay boost of 10 per cent - for those journeymen on time work.<sup>31</sup> Initially, it appeared that there would be no strike, partly because merchants reportedly judged these demands to be "very moderate and up to date"<sup>32</sup> - a view toward which they no doubt were greatly encouraged by their awareness that the organizing drive had well equipped Local 70 to press home its demands. Also, in keeping with one of the tailors' long-standing craft traditions, the 1918 demands were presented just as the merchants were poised to reap profits from the new spring trade season.

When the proposed new terms were presented at mid-month, some employers balked at the proposed minimum weekly scale, particularly regarding a clause to permit time workers to quit work at noon on Saturday.<sup>33</sup> The merchants' anticipated, favourable reply was not forthcoming by month's end, and on 1 April, Local 70 went on strike.

As in 1913, Local 70 members achieved "a complete tie-up in the shops where union workers were employed," although some trade activity continued in open shops, and some

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<sup>31</sup>Voice, 5 April 1918; Tailor, 2 April 1918.

<sup>32</sup>Voice, 5 April 1918.

<sup>33</sup>Tailor, 2 April 1918.

scabbing occurred.<sup>34</sup> The merchants appear to have been unable or disinclined to respond in kind to the union's carefully prepared-for collective effort, as was apparent before the strike was a week old.

So far the employers have offered a ten per cent increase, but this has been refused. Several of the shops have accepted the new bill and some have already signed the schedule, ready for a resumption just as soon as the union decides that the new schedule is established for keeps.<sup>35</sup>

By 12 April, the strike was "only half as extensive" as it had been a week earlier. Local 70 "decided to release the members for work" in shops that had signed.<sup>36</sup> Three days later, the strike was conceded in all but three shops, for employers had been "anxious that no more time be lost."<sup>37</sup>

They have agreed to advance us 15 per cent on the prevailing prices for piece work, and 10 per cent on the weekly shops, with a 50 hour week. In regard to these [three] shops that are still out, they have a few scabs working. One offers to pay the price the Local is settling at, but won't sign the bill. The other two refuse to sign at any price. There are twelve hands affected in these shops still out, part of whom we expect to place in shops that have signed, as trade is pretty good here just now.<sup>38</sup>

The strike's aftermath witnessed a concerted effort to maintain the momentum which had built up during the

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<sup>34</sup>Voice, 5 April 1918; Tailor, 30 April 1918.

<sup>35</sup>Voice, 5 April 1918.

<sup>36</sup>Voice, 12 April 1918. Cf. Ibid., 19 April 1918.

<sup>37</sup>Tailor, 30 April 1918.

<sup>38</sup>Tailor, 30 April 1918.

organizing drive and which actually burgeoned in the midst of the dispute itself. Even as Local 70 announced its victory, specific plans were being bruited toward this end. A series of "educational debating meetings"<sup>39</sup> were contemplated, while it was intimated that the large increase in the number of unionized tailoring shops had cleared the way "for a union label boom, which will start in just as soon as the bosses find that the organized workers have an unalterable desire to have the label on the clothes they wear in order that they may know that so far as they are concerned they employ union tailors."<sup>40</sup> The label drive does not seem to have materialized, but the meetings certainly did. These gatherings helped align Local 70's identifications with the broader aims of the city's increasingly militant working class.<sup>41</sup>

Through membership meetings and other related initiatives, Local 70 leaders deliberately directed the energies galvanized by the strike into local channels. This effort reached its crescendo in the turbulent events of spring and summer 1919. Wildeman was instrumental in the marked, consciously-articulated reciprocities between trade militancy which secured Local 70's victory in 1918 and the other contemporary manifestations of working class activism

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<sup>39</sup>Tailor, 21 May 1918.

<sup>40</sup>Voice, 19 April 1918, 8.

<sup>41</sup>See McCormack (1977) and Bercuson (1974; 1978).

in the city.

Even as the strike ended, he called for an ongoing commitment to Local 70 that would underscore its recently reaffirmed and enhanced presence within the city's house of labour. Nor was this a matter of pencil clips and lapel buttons. Wildeman's call for further struggle was couched in terms which clearly construed the challenges which continued to confront the tailors, despite their own recent triumph, as being a social condition they shared with other working people.

...keep unity in mind, because the cost of living has not ceased to rise; neither have the profits ceased to roll into the pockets of the capitalist.<sup>42</sup>

It is true that some of the ensuing membership meetings did pertain specifically to current trade issues. For example, in early January 1919, Local 70 officers "initiated a very vital and interesting discussion" on the contrasting merits of piece work and weekly work, currently a celebrated cause of the international union's leadership. Piece workers, true to craft form of long standing, argued that they enjoyed better wages and more freedom, while the week workers countered that their work regimen had the advantages of "regular hours, time and one half overtime." The weekly workers pressed their case, and extrapolated this so as to point the implications of Winnipeg tailoring craftwork for

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<sup>42</sup>Tailor, 21 May 1918.

family life, as well as the expendability of the wage earner of either stripe.

...regular time meant better health in the tailoring industry and with a half holiday on Saturday the workers had a chance to go out with their families into the parks during the summer and fix the furnace or chop wood...etc. in the winter, even go skating or snowshoeing if they felt that way inclined...One member mentioned that whether we worked weekly or piece a man of 45 could get his ticket for the scrap heap any old time. A special committee was appointed to discuss the whole matter and bring in a recommendation on new wages and hours....<sup>43</sup>

Even such far-ranging discussions were intended to serve the purpose of maintaining Local 70's fighting mettle. The lessons of the organizing campaign were reiterated, sometimes by other novel means. When membership fell back from 200 to 135 by early January 1919, Wildeman penned a lengthy circular headed "Dear Sister or Brother" in which he appealed to each member's sense of individual moral responsibility for maintaining a viable organization.

Ask yourself, 'Am I a live wire in our organization? If your conscience says No then make the following resolutions for 1919:

That I will attend all meeting and be on good time.

Pay my dues every month and not get behind.

Bring that girl or fellow sitting beside me into our organization and compete for office when necessary.

During the reconstruction period which is now ahead of us, it will be necessary for every individual to become an active worker of a Trades Union, otherwise you will find a reduction in

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<sup>43</sup>Taylor, 4 February 1919.

wages.<sup>44</sup>

However, as Wildeman's allusions to 'a', rather than 'the' union, and to the contingencies of post-war reconstruction attest, JIU Local 70 was to an important extent a focus for broader identifications with other working people, and helped express their corresponding estrangement from other social interests. For example, Local 70's relations with the federal state, as we've seen in our discussion of the 1913 strike, were chilly in the extreme, and four years of war clearly had not reversed this, as the federal labour department once again discovered.

Some time ago I sent you a copy of the Tailors schedule which I had considerable difficulty to obtain. The Tailors Union have always [sic] refused to give out any information....I have tried to get them to fill out the regular forms, but cannot get them to do so, the only information that they would let me have was a copy of their demands, although I think I will be able to break down their prejudice and that the department will be able to get all the information needed in the near future.<sup>45</sup>

Such evidence is superficially reminiscent of the 1913 evidence, but the context which engendered it was significantly changed. Far from being amenable to overcoming 'prejudice' against the state, Local 70's leaders actively were fomenting this as an essential element of their efforts to cement bonds with other sections of the city's working

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<sup>44</sup>Taylor, 4 February 1919.

<sup>45</sup>[Illeg.] to F.C. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labour, 1 April 1918, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 308, File 18 [54] (1918).

class. A lecture series sponsored by Local 70 in autumn 1918 was devised in part to provide a forum for some of the Winnipeg radical community's "deepest thinkers and [most] fearless men." These luminaries included such activists as William Ivens, editor of the Western Labor News and presiding spirit of the Winnipeg Labour Church, who lectured Local 70 on the topic of 'Secret Treaties and Diplomacy.' Wildeman also strenuously urged members to attend Ivens' scheduled Labour Temple talk on 'Fundamental Problems of the State.' He even offered to collect their subscriptions to the News, in addition to acting as the point man for distribution of the JTU's own journal.

Clearly, such activities were not of a sort that would 'break down' Local 70's reported 'prejudice' against the state. Nor were the federal government's moves, in the eleventh hour of global hostilities, toward depriving Canadian working people of the right to withhold their labour power. Local 70 members were among those who prepared to resist this contemplated war measure, which the November Armistice rendered academic.<sup>46</sup> Subsequently, the union tailors further demonstrated their solidarity with the people<sup>47</sup> and the social ideas that would collide

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<sup>46</sup>Taylor, 12 November 1918.

<sup>47</sup>One of the final appeals for material aid to which Local 70 members contributed was a Defense Fund for several JTU activists who were being railroaded by New York authorities on trumped-up murder charges, which later were dropped. Taylor, 28 January 1919, 4 February 1919, 4 March 1919.

concussively with the state during the following spring. Even in autumn of 1918, perhaps remembering their own recent intracraft lesson about the strategic importance of timing to the successful conduct of working-class activist initiatives, Wildeman indicated that "the General Strike" also was a matter of current concern, but had been set aside for the moment.

These developments found other expressions as well. Local 70 members elected the Socialist leader Max Tessler to office as their vice-president on 3 September 1918, and then named him president in mid-winter, replacing W.J. Riddolls.<sup>48</sup> Tessler, like other JTU leaders, likely maintained a virtual tradition of non-cooperation with the state. But the state was very interested in Tessler, as Mary Jordan discovered during her research in Northwest Mounted Police records of the General Strike period. Tessler, a prominent Winnipeg socialist, along with Jacob Penner and his wife, among others, were subjected to political police surveillance "re possible disturbances by Bolsheviks."<sup>49</sup>

In summary, then, the 1918 strike represented Local 70's primary response to the trade conditions and to the workplace social environment which war-time conditions imposed upon the city's unionized journeymen and tailoresses. Our

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<sup>48</sup>Taylor, 17 September 1918, 4 February 1919.

<sup>49</sup>RNWMP records, cit. in Mary V. Jordan, Survival: Labour's Trials and Tribulations in Canada (Toronto 1975), 71.

discussion has emphasized the sustained organizational effort which made this victory possible, and which briefly established Local 70 as one of the JTU's Canadian 'banner' branches. Yet our discussion must also emphasize the extent to which the local's inspired recovery from its post-1913 doldrums was a somewhat isolated effort with respect to the international parent body's organizational structure and priorities. Local 70 took matters into its own hands in order to rebuild itself, and this entailed a relative de-emphasis of its ties with JTU headquarters. By contrast, this de-emphasis was decisively counter-balanced by the intensification of Local 70's consciousness of itself specifically as a Winnipeg labour organization. It is this intensified local orientation, and the particular imperatives and bonds associated with it, that perhaps best explain the membership's ultimate decision to forsake the parent body in favour of the One Big Union in August 1919.<sup>50</sup>

JTU Local 70's 168 active members voted by more than 92 per cent in support of the 1919 General Strike.<sup>51</sup> They telegraphed Sweeney for funds to support this effort, but the strike had been crushed by the forces of reaction before JTU headquarters responded. Sweeney reported that Local 70

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<sup>50</sup>Belatedly documented in "Locals Disbanded" listing, Tailor, 23 August 1921.

<sup>51</sup>Norman Penner, ed., Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike, 2nd edn. (Toronto, 1975), 43-4.

officials had promised a further communique to bring him abreast of developments, but for unexplained reasons, this did not materialize.<sup>52</sup> During the weeks that followed the strike, Local 70 joined other workers who flocked to the OBU banner. Former Local Secretary Egan, who recently had been appointed the JTU's Canadian general organizer by the parent body, reported that he could do little owing to the groundswell of support for the OBU.<sup>53</sup>

Local 70 was disbanded in August 1919, and soon after was reconstituted as Tailors' Industrial Unit Number One of the OBU. Although evidence for this transition is frustratingly sparse, some continuity between these organizations resided in the fact that at least one of the new Unit's officers, Secretary J.A. Dick, had held a parallel position in Local 70 c1918, and was still serving the new Unit in this capacity as late as 1923.<sup>54</sup>

#### IV

Here is the singular irony alluded to earlier. On the one hand, the 1918 strike represents Local 70's finest hour as members of a JTU affiliated branch. Its lustre derived from - and capped - the organizing drive, which was

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<sup>52</sup>Tailor, 15 July 1919.

<sup>53</sup>Documented, again belatedly, in Tailor, 7 February 1922; on Egan's appointment itself, see Ibid., 14 May 1919, 12 August 1919.

<sup>54</sup>Tailor, 30 April 1919; One Big Union Bulletin, as late as autumn, 1923.

sustained for several years, if falteringly, in the face of profoundly unsettled social conditions, financial stringencies, and other obstacles.<sup>55</sup> Preparations for the 1918 job action had been so effective that even on 1 April, the first day of the strike, city trade bosses already began to cave in to Local 70's demands, and the rest soon followed.

...5 firms signed the agreement the first day of the strike, three on the next, and 15 had signed by April 13. On Apr. 15 only 3 shops still refused to sign...the Union regards the strike as practically settled.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, as employer resistance to Local 70's strike demands crumbled, Local 70's membership jumped from 83 to 200 members, thus momentarily establishing Local 70 as the largest of the JTU's Canadian locals. Although the local's numerical strength dwindled to 166 members in August 1919, its presence within the parent body was acknowledged, at least indirectly, by Egan's appointment as a JTU Canadian general organizer.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, however, Local 70's strengthened ties to the parent body seem diametrically opposed to the

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<sup>55</sup>Local 70's various financial woes are documented in Taylor, 3 August 1915; 28 December 1915; 30 January 1917; 27 February 1917; 22 May 1917; cf. below.

<sup>56</sup>Harriet J. Pollard to Department of Labour, 15-16 April 1918, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 308, File 18 [54] (1918); cf. Taylor, 30 April 1918; 21 May 1918; Voice, 12 April 1918, 8; 19 April, 8.

<sup>57</sup>Taylor, 13 May 1919; 12 August 1919.

mercurial turn of events which marked the strike's aftermath, when the local was disbanded, and its members bolted for the One Big Union.

What is to be made of this paradox pointed by Local 70's singular, carefully cultivated flowering as a JTU branch in 1918, and its virtually coincident flight from the international fold? This paradox was more apparent than real. These developments seem less ironic when viewed in light of the converging imperatives and circumstances which comprise the meaningful context of the 1918 strike.

As Wildeman wrote, organization indeed had "done the trick" in 1918. But it did so in particular ways, conditioned by a distinct and interesting confluence of historical elements which found direct expression not only in Local 70's last hurrah, but also in its rather startling, imminent demise as a branch of the JTU. Specifically, the organizing initiative that did the trick overwhelmingly was the work of Local 70 itself. For a variety of reasons, the union had been thrown on its own resources. Among these reasons, foremost was the war-time isolation of JTU's Winnipeg membership from the parent body's centres of energy and initiative, both to the south and the east. Given the United States' delayed direct military participation in the Great War, some degree of isolation was implicit in the very structure of the international union as such. This delicate matter had some predictable results. On those relatively few

occasions when the gap between Canadian and American war-time experience became an explicit issue in JTU circles, Local 70 was a conspicuous player, but in a way which cannot but have tended to curdle enthusiasm for the international leadership's sensibilities.

For example, it was Local 70 that precipitated the executive board's controversial decision to permit combatant members (or their families) to retain union benefits. It thus was Local 70, too, that drew unfraternal fire on this point from Secretary Karl Wolf of the JTU's Omaha branch.<sup>58</sup> To understate the case, Wolf's pugnacious, faintly-chauvinistic disparagement of Allied soldiers, not to mention his Germanic name, would not have played well to many contemporary Canadians, whether inside or outside the JTU's bailiwick. Beyond this, however, it was valid for the JTU's United States membership to question the principle of using death benefit funds to subsidize the social costs of a war in which their own nation was not a combatant until 1917. To be sure, this north-south divergence within the JTU could be identified directly with the JTU's most senior official, as when Sweeney chastized Brother Wildeman for using the rubric of 'enemy alienism' to designate European refugee tailors.

Before this unfortunate war was forced upon us, there were no 'alien enemies' and when the war is won, as won it will be, there will be no alien

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<sup>58</sup>Taylor, 22 June 1915.

emies from the workingman's point of view. At least not from the viewpoint of the man who understands the labor problem. The working class of Germany are not really our enemy. The Government of Germany is our enemy and the enemy of the working class of Germany also.<sup>59</sup>

Sweeney's distinction would not have been lost on Wildeman, who himself had definite ideas about the working tailor's "class position."<sup>60</sup> But it almost certainly would have seemed rather academic to western Canadian craftworkers who had been bled, whether literally or figuratively, and unlike the JTU's American membership, for three long, cruel years. In an extreme instance, Al Belanger, formerly of Local 70, as he recovered in Lidcup, Kent from wounds, lauded a war bonds scheme because it would "help make things that are needed to feed Fritz, even if he don't like it."<sup>61</sup> It must be doubted that this was an altogether idiosyncratic sentiment, or one confined to the Allies and their supporters. Dominion tailors ideologically were no more unanimous about the war effort than were other working-class Canadians, but the point here is that they knew its social impacts more intimately for a longer time than did their counterparts south of the line.

Throughout most of the Great War period, the international border thus corresponded with a significant

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<sup>59</sup>Tailor, 17 September 1918.

<sup>60</sup>Tailor, 19 March 1918.

<sup>61</sup>Tailor, 30 July 1918.

experiential horizon which divided Canadian from American members of the JTU. It was a division for which some tailors, such as Maurice J. O'Connell, the JTU's rakish 'Duke of Ireland,' were only too grateful, and sometimes crossed on the grounds of personal conviction.

...on a cold March morning in 1917...I was deported from Windsor, Ontario, because I refused to serve in his royal "Highness, the kinks Army[.]" [A]fter detaining me for a week two loyal British "objects" shipped me to Detroit where John Anderson fixed me up even to a Sinn Fein necktie.<sup>62</sup>

Like other Dominion workers, many Winnipeg tailors evidently did enlist, but not necessarily because they thought any more highly of the 'kink' than O'Connell did.

Trade is very dull; a large number of tailors joined the army. They receive good pay, \$2.20 a day and a percentage on the work they make, also pay if married or have families depending on them, such as mothers or sisters. The full pay amounts to about \$40 a week.<sup>63</sup>

Other evidence for Winnipeg further qualifies an overarching impression that a desperate brandishing of needles, rather than the adventurous sabre-rattling favoured by the Dominion's own predatory supporters of Colonel Blimp, generally told the tale for these craftworkers.

But again, the stresses of living and working in a war-stricken community rested heavily on Winnipeg members, along with other Dominion jour tailors, in ways that set them

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<sup>62</sup>Taylor, 20 September 1921.

<sup>63</sup>Taylor, 3 August 1915.

apart from the American members. These conditioned what members encountered on the job, and the way they came to think about the struggles imposed upon them, as well as how they described their situation to fellow craftworkers in the United States.

Superadded to this complex differentiation between the JTU's Canadian and American cohorts during the immediate prelude to Local 70's successful strike in 1918 were other organizationally-atomizing forces which operated along an east-west axis. Six months after Canada entered the war, the JTU's international executive dispensed with the services of Dominion general organizer Hugh Robinson, 'the Canadian premier' - a move which deeply antagonized a number of Canadian locals.<sup>64</sup> The parent body now allocated its resources for organizing efforts to trade centres where custom clothing trade activity was most brisk, and hence offered the best prospects for favourable results. Broadly speaking, this seems to have favoured American centres, where the contingencies of war-making had not yet curbed demand for civilian clothing. Even at the time he was fired, Robinson was spending a great deal of time in Albany, Rochester and other centres south of the line. In the Dominion itself, meanwhile, such targeting of resources favoured central Canadian markets where the award of

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<sup>64</sup>Taylor, 11 August 1914, 15 September 1914, 9 November 1914, 8 December 1914, 15 December 1914, 29 December 1914, 26 July 1915.

military clothing contracts and, no doubt, the wealth generated by other war industry helped sustain demand for the services of custom tailors.

Organization indeed 'done the trick,' as Wildeman said, but the trick, as it materialized, had proved to be largely a home-town effort. In short, these developments helped divide Local 70 from the JTU's operations and engagements to the south and the east. Meanwhile, this muting or blurring of the parent body's presence was counterbalanced heavily by the intensification of social conflict and distress in Winnipeg itself. And it was this other factor which appears to explain much of the irony which attends Local 70's history during 1918-19. Isolation impelled the union to find within itself the sources of conviction necessary to prosecute its struggle. In doing so, they reached out to other working-class activists in the city with whom they shared interests that were meanwhile being brought into increasingly sharp relief by the contingencies of war. Local 70's flight to the OBU is most comprehensible, or seems least anomalous, when viewed from this perspective. The momentum and the identifications with other city working people which built up in connection with the JTU's 1918 strike subsequently spilled over into other activist expressions, which had dovetailed with the organizing campaign of 1916-17. The 1918 strike was the pivot of both these developments, which first brought Local 70 from its

doldrums, and then helped propel it into the arms of the OBU.

As an OBU Unit, and at the level of day-to-day workplace social relations in the unionized city trade, continuity within changed circumstances was inscribed in the retention of the collective agreement that had been secured through such effort in 1918. This continuity was formally encoded in a clause which elaborated an automatic self-renewal mechanism pertaining to wages and conditions. It was this clause which became the centrepiece of the strike which blooded the OBU Tailors' Unit two years later.

#### V

The widespread sloughing of khaki as soldiers returned to civilian life undoubtedly benefited tailors and their bosses by stimulating demand for civilian clothing. However, the subsequent advent of post-war recessionary conditions impelled Winnipeg merchant tailors to re-evaluate closely the wage and other concessions to which they had assented since the Armistice.<sup>65</sup>

Merchant Tailors' Association President Alex Sandison and Secretary W. Cameron explained the plight with which the recession confronted employers.

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<sup>65</sup>Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27, Vol. 327, File 21[175]; One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921. These appear to have included a shortening of the work-week from the 50 hours won by Local 70 in 1918 to the 44-hour term reported for 1921; wages, as mentioned earlier, had crept upward during the same period from about \$23 to at least \$30.

The scale of wages which has been in effect in Winnipeg was as high, if not higher than that which existed in the other cities of Canada and the United States, where reductions as high as 25 per cent have been accepted....

The merchant tailors are of the opinion that their request of a 10 per cent reduction is most reasonable and have no intention of receding from the present position.

Unlike other trades the tailors have been employed constantly and have lost practically no time through unemployment.<sup>66</sup>

In late June, the Association approached OBU Tailors' Unit and asked that a committee be delegated to meet with them to discuss unspecified matters of 'mutual benefit.' At the meeting, the OBU committee learned that "the matter of 'mutual benefit' consisted of a proposition to reduce wages 15 to 25 per cent."<sup>67</sup> The Unit refused to discuss the matter, pleading that it had no power to , and in ensuing exchanges pointed to the self-renewal clause. In doing so, the OBU leadership harked directly back to this measure which JTU Local 70's 1918 victory had bequeathed to them.

The OBU Unit rejected the unilaterally imposed wage cut at a 14 July membership meeting, and was locked out in all city shops except in a few where employers "abstained from signing this notice." However, by early September, all but 70 members of the 175-200 members had trickled back to work

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<sup>66</sup>Tailor, 20 September 1921.

<sup>67</sup>One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921.

when the OBU Unit conceded defeat later that month.<sup>68</sup>

The self-renewal clause, at the centre of the strike, had been a fixture of JTU international policy since c1905, when it was commended to union branches as a component of a model agreement which was devised that year.<sup>69</sup> However, it appears to have been embraced, as such, in Winnipeg only in 1918, as a by-product of Local 70's great rally that year.<sup>70</sup> Such a clause, by its nature, provided for the perpetuity of the very core of the working tailors' negotiated accommodations with their employers. In the 1921 strike, it was the very measure upon which signally depended Winnipeg tailoring craftworkers' bid to retain previous gains as they strove to consolidate their new organizational vessel. For just as the tailors' retained their craft distinctiveness from the Garment Workers Unit within the OBU's organizational structure,<sup>71</sup> so too did they insist upon continued recognition by merchants of the wage levels and other entitlements for which there were by then such strong

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<sup>68</sup>Capsule description draws on relevant materials collected in Strikes and Lockouts RG 27 Vol. 327, File 21[175] (1921). Cf. Tailor, 20 September 1921; One Big Union Bulletin, 23 July 1921.

<sup>69</sup>Stowell (1918), 19-20.

<sup>70</sup>This clause can be traced back, as such, to the Local 70 draft agreement collected by the federal labour department in 1918; until then, it is to be presumed, the yearly extension of prevailing wage rates was a relatively informal practice governed by craft precept and, of course, subject to market conditions.

<sup>71</sup>Bercuson (1978), 153.

historical precedents, regardless of the institutional form to which these craftworkers now looked as an instrument for enforcing prior understandings, prior gains.

Nevertheless, a revitalized Merchant Tailors Association had succeeded in abrogating a crucial legacy of Local 70 to the subsequent history of conflict and accommodation within the city's custom tailoring trade. The long struggle of these craftworkers would continue, but under the auspices of different instruments for collective action than those with which our discussion has been concerned.

For the city's custom tailoring craftworkers, the demise of Journeymen Tailors' Union Local 70 in 1919, followed by the effective erasure in 1921 of the stamp it had left on the city trade, marked the end of a seldom-remembered passage in the historical experience of Winnipeg's clothing workers. The Amalgamated, which absorbed the remnants of the JTU in the mid-1930s, would enter Winnipeg shortly after the onset of the 1939-45 World War, and secure a contract with at least one city firm, that of Alex Sandison, against which 'old Local 70' had contended in an earlier day.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Thelma Audrey Johnson (1948), MA thesis: Appendix E, 132.

Chapter Seven  
Summary Findings and Indications for Further Study

I

This thesis has examined the Winnipeg custom tailors' practice of labour organization during c1880-1921 in light of their craft subculture and its transformations under the impress of clothing sector capitalism. Substantively, this thesis finds that city tailoring craft employers, and those who worked in their shops, transplanted to the Canadian prairies the work regimen, values, and sanctions which constituted their craft subculture as a realm of productive activity and social relations. Subsequently, the imperatives of clothing sector competition provoked collective responses and conflicts within the trade. These struggles, in turn, pushed tailoring craftworkers to seek remedy first by codifying selectively elements of their embattled subculture, and then by formalizing broader identifications with other working people. Social class 'happened' among the union tailors as a concomitant of the crisis which beset their craft subculture.

Our exploration of the custom tailors' craft subculture in relation to their practice of labour organization and other forms of working class activism suggests several concluding generalizations. Despite their institutional restlessness during our period, one point bears emphasizing: despite moments of silence or apparent indisposition, unionized custom tailors early became, and subsequently

remained, denizens of Winnipeg's house of labour. They participated in its counsels and debates; they shared in its convictions, aspirations, and defeats. They had a voice in its laments, a hand in its achieved or merely attempted renewals. In turn, tailoring craftworkers were marked - now organizationally and now again, as individuals - by their active affiliations with other working people. Such engagements conditioned the way tailors not only organized, but also re-organized in pursuit of their interests as clothing workers and, in a broader sense, as members of a class. Their unions were a bulwark against immediate encroachments by their bosses, and a forum for discussion and reflective pursuits where tailors inventively defined their relationship to their craftways in light of immediate concerns and future prospects.

The tailors' selective attempts to mend their craft subculture by 'legislating' and otherwise encoding some of its elements in collective agreements are most usefully understood as sharply articulated, dynamic occasions in a complex continuum of season-to-season negotiation - formal and informal, individual and collective. The tailors' strikes successively tested and redefined their relations with their bosses, with other working-class activists, and with the community at large. Such disputes arose directly from the experiential ground of custom tailoring craft activity, and were of a piece with working life in the

city's shops.

An important point is that the strikes represent one pole of the unionized journeymen and tailoresses' response to their conflictual social situation as working people perhaps uniquely subject, in the context of the early twentieth-century, to the imperatives of small-scale capitalist enterprise. The peculiarities of the custom tailoring trade tended signally to exaggerate the atomizing tendencies of capitalist social relations. The other pole of intracraft conflict - toward which the history of workplace social relations in the city trade perhaps predominantly tended throughout our period - had to do with the more-routinely incident peculiarities of the tailoring craftworkers' everyday working life.

The custom tailors are much more difficult to characterize in relation to the widespread devaluation of individualism among craftworkers as documented by other labour historians. This difficulty might be resolved by one of the late Herbert Gutman's powerful final teachings about contemporary historical consciousness and North American working class experience.<sup>1</sup> He discerned:

...a constant if shifting tension inside and outside the workplace between individualist and collective ways of achieving autonomy....[which]

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<sup>1</sup>Gutman, "Labour History and the 'Sartre Question'" (1980) and "Historical Consciousness in Contemporary America" (1982), in Ira Berlin, ed., Power & Culture: Essays on the American Working Class (New York, 1987), 326-28; 395-412.

calls attention to the diverse and competing traditions that have shaped American working-class experience.<sup>2</sup>

The custom tailors were individualistic. This was both the bane and the glory of their craft subculture as it was transformed and cast down with the invention of men's mass-market clothing. Individualism was variously implicated in the tailors' sense of job mastery and identity, in the commercial imperatives and fetishisms of consumer relations, but also in journeymen practices of mutual aid and collective action.

Accordingly, the tailors' strikes were a measure of their ability to co-ordinate their resources, and to conceive of their interests and commitments in terms broader than those toward which their singularly atomizing work regimen otherwise impelled them. These conflicts were a rallying point for union members in organizations which could drift or become somnolent in the absence of a rekindling of interest and conviction. They were preceded by a distinct collective determination to consolidate group energies and other resources so as to maximize union representation in the city's shops.<sup>3</sup>

In pursuing their goals, union tailors' ties to their own international craft organization were eclipsed by the expressed, long-nurtured identifications with other working

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 327-28.

<sup>3</sup>Compare Appendix, Table 10 and Table 11.

class activists in their own city. JTU Local 70 early had affiliated with the city's Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, and by 1918, had shared for a whole generation in this centre organization's economic and political struggles, while looking to its sister affiliates for like support in pursuing its own interests. Such local solidarities, of course, were not confined to the Winnipeg market, and Local 70 members also contributed to many of the various special initiatives which the international parent bodies administered to assist people who were beset by emergencies, whether of personal, political, trade-related, or natural provenance. But the fact is that when, in August 1919, they had a choice to make between remaining within the JTU fold, or wedding their fortunes to the emerging OBU, they chose the latter.

Despite their institutional restlessness, some significant historical continuities mark the experience the city's unionized tailoring craftworkers. These concerned certain negotiated accommodations which throw into sharp relief the dynamics whereby the labour organization practice of Winnipeg's jous and tailoresses selectively codified and revised crucial elements of their immediate experiences as proponents of a craft subculture.

Specifically, continuity is to be traced from a rudimentary clause in the 1882 Boom Bill which read: "Sewing machines to be in shops for use of men at these prices." It

is a remarkably sharp piece of craft 'legislating' work. This clause formulated limits to the city jour's' exploitation on three counts. It reaffirmed the integrity of the wage-scale ('at these prices') stipulated in the Boom Bill. It also prohibited charges for the use of equipment ('machines to be provided'). And it stipulated that machines were to be available in shops.

This pioneering accommodation was carried forward along several pathways and in several modified forms by Winnipeg's union tailors. Stowell's 1911 survey found Winnipeg to be one of very few exceptional larger cities where the free shop predominated - just ten of the city's 100 active members of the JTU that year appear to have worked "in Rented Shops or at Home" (i.e., in production facilities which they themselves provided).<sup>4</sup> Local 70's ill-starred 1899-1900 Shop Rules sought to reaffirm this craft caveat by pressuring merchants to expand their shop facilities to obviate the ostensible need for homework, and for unregulated extensions of the working day. In 1903, the JTU finally pressed home a new version of the old clause, which expressly recapitulated that 'all work [was] to be done on premises furnished free by employer.' This was carried across all of the other contracts Local 70 negotiated through 1918. As such, it was bequeathed to OBU Tailors Unit No. One.

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<sup>4</sup>Stowell (1912), 155.

Winnipeg custom tailors, in coalescing as OBU Tailors' Unit No. One, now at last were members of the 'one big union' of clothing workers which had been bruited about by the JTU's left-leaning proponents of industrial unionism for some years. As a new phase of conflict between city clothing workers and their bosses opened, Winnipeg's custom tailors retained their craft-bounded distinctiveness within the structure of the OBU. The craft distinctiveness was undergirded in part by an explicit legacy of Local 70 to its OBU successor organization - the collective agreement which had been negotiated in 1918.

## II

As mentioned at the outset of our discussion, the present study is offered as an initial installment of a more-extended historical inquiry. Our preliminary sounding of Canadian custom tailors' experience and their crisis-beset craft subculture has suggested something of the richness of the largely-untapped primary source material relevant to the topic. A more comprehensive empirical recovery of this experience usefully might amplify some of the secondary themes pointed, if only glancingly, by the present study, and which best are explored in a national context. The overarching purpose of such inquiry is to clarify how the tailors apprehended technological innovation and social change, along with intergenerational and other social horizons, as these impinged upon their valuations of

skill, meaning, selfhood, and historical situatedness in their everyday working lives. In doing so, such research might advance our knowledge of how Canadians clothed themselves during our period. These concerns imply further inquiry into working-class immigration and its 'cultural baggage', into 'ethno-occupations', and into women's participation in the work force and the labour movement, as well as some of the earliest interventions by the state to regulate wages and workplace environments. Related concerns include the rise of the department store and of multiple-outlet retail marketing which, with the advent of readymade clothing factories and mass popular advertising, was intrinsic to the crises besetting the 'old-time jour tailor' during our period. All of these issues which have been suggested, at least, by the present study, necessarily will entail a better appreciation of the boundaries of the custom tailors' craft subculture, which we have been concerned with essentially in a inwardly-focused and functional sense.

### III

Finally, and contrary to the older, elsewhere-mentioned presentist convention of clothing trades literature, we may find in the tailors' case a most timely and even urgent cautionary note. The culture industry currently promotes visions of a labour force dispersed (but electronically supervised) in its own homes. This is being sold as an alternative to meeting the needs particularly of working

women as a matter of social policy and community accountability, and as a concession to the autonomy and circumstances of individual workers. Amidst such managerial and suspect visions, it might be timely to inquire more deeply into the jour tailors' history of homework, and its place in their peculiarly pronounced valuations of freedom and expressiveness in the labour process. Their hard-won knowledge of the immediate 'lived' implications of homework represents an aspect of social memory which we neglect at our peril. Tailors differed about the merits of homework, but those most active in their labour organizations valiantly resisted this arrangement because they knew it to be an atomizing solvent of prospects to realize their common interests within capitalism. As one such craft activist wrote:

Of all the business in which a man can engage there is none perhaps so much calculated to disturb the equilibrium of his comfort as the tailoring business. [The tailoring homemaker] wants all the space; he monopolizes all the light; he monopolizes all the fire....Hence, looking at the [shopworker] who has more wages, who is a member of a union, and can hold his own against the selfishness of a certain class of employers, his social position must, perforce, be very superior to anything that can be expected of a man who has only his individual self to oppose to the wealth and influence of an employer for whom he may work, no matter how unscrupulous that employer may be in his demands."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>George Druitt testimony (23 June 1868), "Minutes of Evidence," Parliamentary Papers, Tenth Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Organization and Rules of Trade Unions and Other Associations (Queen's Printer, 1868), 13-14 [18,218].

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Table 1  
Manitoba Clothing Production, 1881-1921

[Source: Canada Census, 1881-1921]

<u>Year</u>	<u>Firms</u>	<u>Employees</u>			<u>Capital</u>	<u>Production Wages</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Sum</u>			
1881 <sup>a</sup>	9	28	57	85	\$ 29,800	\$ 99,420	\$ 30,292
1886 <sup>b</sup>	20	69	96	165	97,150	218,332	69,350
[Wpg.]	[8]	[43]	[56]	[99]	[63,450]	[126,700]	[41,600]
1891 <sup>c</sup>	50	139	152	291	85,700	421,000	138,058
[Wpg.]	[25]	[87]	[99]	[186]	[49,800]	[261,600]	[92,040]
1901 <sup>d</sup>	20	ns	ns	305	76,523	271,901	127,759
1911 <sup>e</sup>	11	ns	ns	580	458,250	939,048	235,855
1921 <sup>f</sup>	ns.	265	476	741	ns	ns	648,094

<sup>a</sup>Category: 'Tailors & Clothiers'; excludes Winnipeg.

<sup>b</sup>Category: 'Tailors & Clothiers'.

<sup>c</sup>Category: 'Tailors & Clothiers'.

<sup>d</sup>Categories: 'Clothing, men's' (13 establishments); 'Clothing, women's' (7 est'b.); excludes firms employing less than five people.

<sup>e</sup>Categories: 'Clothing, men's factory' (7 est'b.); 'Clothing, women's custom' (4 est'b.); excludes firms employing less than six people.

<sup>f</sup>Categories: tailors (92 men); tailoresses (61 women), clothing factory employees (149 men; 254 women); dressmakers, seamstresses (129 women); apprentices (21 dressmakers', 5 tailoresses - all women; 5 tailors', all men); managers and superintendents (19 men), and foreladies (6 women); Winnipeg only.

Table 2  
Winnipeg Tailoring Firms, 1880-1925

[Source: Henderson's Directory, North-West Territories

Directory and Gazeteer for Winnipeg; sel. years, 1880-1925.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Merchant</u>	<u>Other/Unspec.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Merchant</u>	<u>Other/Unspec.</u>
1880	15	0	1905	50	23
1885	11	0	1910	40	74
1890	22	0	1915	6	196
1895	23	0	1920	3	174
1900	--	--	1925	4	195

Table 3  
Winnipeg Custom Tailoring Trade Personnel, 1891

[Source: Federal Manuscript census, 1891]

	<u>Mchnt.</u>	<u>Jours</u>	<u>Tlrss.</u>	<u>Smstr.</u>	<u>Aptce.</u>	<u>Totals</u>
<u>Occpn.</u>	22	68	44	62	7	203
<u>Bplce.</u>						
G.Br.	17	26	9	16	4	72
Can.	4	18	29	39	1	91
Other	1	22	6	7	2	38
<u>Age</u>						
15-20	0	7	9	14	6	36
21-30	4	40	30	38	1	113
31-40	7	7	4	5	0	23
41-50	4	7	1	2	0	14
50+	6	5	0	1	0	12
n.s.	0	0	0	1	0	
<u>Mar.St.</u>						
Mar.	19	32	2	2	0	55
Sing.	3	32	42	56	7	140
Wid.	0	2	0	4	0	6
<u>Household</u>						
Head	18	31	0	4	0	53
Lodger	3	25	30	27	0	85
Family	1	8	13	27	7	56
n.s.	0	2	1	4	9	16
<u>Co-res.</u>						
Clo.Trade	3	24	24	28	5	84

[Note: These figures correspond closely, but inexactly, with census tallies as published for Winnipeg in 1891. My own figure is larger by 20 individuals than the 186 person-total published for the 'tailors and clothiers' category. This discrepancy almost certainly is due, in part, to the inclusion of a number of women, identified in the manuscript data simply as 'seamstresses', in my head-count of local tailoring trade personnel. The imprecision of my count is due further to having relied upon a microfilm duplicate of the original manuscripts, a few frames of which I found illegible. I wish the reader to be forewarned that my tallies from the census manuscript thus are numerically inexact.]

Table 4  
Handwork & Machine Sewing in a Custom Tailored Sack Coat, 1912  
 [Source: Tailor, March 1912, 7.]

<u>Task</u>	<u>Machine</u>	<u>By Hand</u>
Five pockets	6297	428
All seams, except sleeves	5979	...
Inside work, lapels, edge tape etc.	...	2240
Basting, trying on, etc.	...	2151
Making sleeves	3384	616
Collar and Coat stitching	6365	1695
Putting in sleeves	756	705
Button holes and buttons	...	680
Miscellaneous	1019	622
Totals	23800	9137

[Note: This count, by Kansas City tailor Herman Axene, who "learned the trade as a boy in Sweden," involved a four button sack coat, 32 inches long and single stitched. Axene noted that a frock coat or evening coat would require many more stitches. To make the count, he reportedly said: "I kept a little tablet with me at my work and every time I counted a hundred strokes of the needle [by hand] I made a mark. On my machine, I found, four and a half stitches were taken at every stroke of the pedal. That was forty-five stitches to ten strokes and so I put down a mark at every tenth stroke."]

Table 5  
Estimated Production Costs: Custom Tailored Suit (1898)  
 [Source: Voice, 15 April 1898]

<u>Item</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>
Cloth	\$6.50
Trimmings, linings, etc.	2.00
Buttons	.75
Wages: (Below scale) Coat	4.30
Vest	1.20
Pants	1.20
Measuring, cutting, fitting	1.00
Est. for rent, profit, etc.	2.50
Total	\$19.45

[Note: Wage cost estimates are lower than actual, for they reflect a discount allowed on civic clothing contract work prior to 1903.]

Table 6  
Tender Awards and 'Shares': Winnipeg Firemen's Tailored Clothing

1885-1910

[Source: City of Winnipeg, Minutes, City Council; Minutes, Fire, Water & Light Committee, 1885-1910]

<u>Firm</u>	<u>Bids</u>	<u>Acc.</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Est. Value</u>	<u>Share</u>
Man. Clo. Co.	1	1	1910	\$ 5,226.	27%
H.B. Co.	20	7	1885(2);1890; 1896;1898;1900(2)	4,328.	23
Wm. Scott	11	5	1895;1896;1900(2)	3,315.	17
H.H. Smith	1	1	1905	2,240.	12
H. Sandison	5	2	1897(2)	1,281.	7
Deacon & Ross	11	2	1894;1899	1,272.	7
H.B. Rose	3	1	1889	630.	3
J.A. McLelland	2	1	1898	450.	2
J. Martin Co.	1	1	1893	375.	2
<b>Totals</b>	<u>5</u>	<u>21</u>		<u>\$19,118.</u>	<u>100</u>

[Note: This tabulation might not be exhaustive of all firemen's clothing contract awards during the specified period, but all of those which my research unearthed are included in computations from this evidence. All figures are approximate. Generally, the City of Winnipeg issued tender calls twice a year (for summer and for winter uniforms); these were vetted by the Fire, Water and Light Committee, which then recommended one of them for city council approval. The submitted tenders varied in form and elaborateness, although each case permits computation of 'Value of Award' by multiplying the number of uniforms in a given contract lot by a calculated unit cost. The latter was derived by averaging to compensate for slight differences between the costs cited for a regular fireman's uniform, and those for fire captains and lieutenants, which were more expensive because of the extra styling involved.]

Table 7Piece Rates: Winnipeg Journeymen Tailors, 1882-1913

[Source: Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol 301 File 13 (29) (1913); Ibid., RG 27 Vol 308 File 18 (54) (1918).]

	<u>1882</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1913</u>	<u>1918</u>
				[ P R O P O S E D ]	
No. prices spec. (approx.)	70	86	86	120	90
<u>COATS</u>					
Sacque 1st cl.	6.00	6.50	+ 8%	7.00	8.87
" 2nd "	5.50	5.75		6.50	7.85
" 3rd "	4.50	5.25		ns	
Items spec.	4	4		2	
Dress 1st cl.	9.00	9.50		12.00	12.97
" 2nd cl	8.50	(all mtls.)		(all mtls.)	ns
" 3rd cl.	7.00	"		"	
<u>PANTS</u>					
1st cl.	2.00	2.00			2.73
2nd cl.	1.50				
<u>VESTS</u>					
1st cl.	1.75	2.00			2.75
Dbl. bst	2.00				
Items Spec.	9	4		19	11

Table 8Weekly System Wage Structure, 1918

[Source: Tailor, 21 May 1918; Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27 Vol. 308 File 18(54)]

<u>Job Classification</u>	<u>Proposed by Local 70</u>	<u>As Conceded</u>
Coatmakers	\$23.00	\$22.00
General Operators	23.00	23.00
Pressers	22.00	23.00
Try-on Makers	21.00	20.00
Bushelmen	21.00	20.00
Operators on Pants, Vests	20.00	na
Helpers	14.00	12.00
Helpers ['can make Button Holes']	15.00	na

Table 9Tailors' Average Weekly Wages: 1887-1921

[Source: Industrial News; Stowell (1913); Free Press; City of Winnipeg Archives (Clerks Office); Voice; Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts

Year

1887: \$12.00	1911: \$17.00 - 18.50
1890: 15.00	1918: 23.00
1893: 12.00 - 16.00	1919: 25.00 (coatmksr.)
1898: 12.00 - 12.90 (women: 6.00)	1921: 30.00 - 38.50

**Table 10**  
**Local 70 Membership Activity, 1892-1919**  
[Source: The Tailor, 1892-1919]

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>New &amp; Reinstated Mbrs.</u>			<u>YEAR</u>	<u>New &amp; Reinst. Mbrs.</u>		
	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>
1892*	30	2	32	1906	29	5	34
1893	6	9	15	1907*	60	8	68
1894	-	-	--	1908	23	3	26
1895	4	4	8	1909	22	3	25
1896	9	4	13	1910*	73	7	80
1897	7	4	11	1911	24	9	33
1898	12	3	15	1912	32	3	35
1899*	38	-	38	1913*	106	13	119
1900	2	4	6	1914	7	--	7
1901	18	4	22	1915	2	--	2
1902	14	2	17	1916	25	1	26
1903*	50	14	64	1917	26	15	41
1904	34	12	46	1918*	107	38	145
1905	38	4	42	1919	50	14	64
(* = Peak Years)				<b>TOTALS: 848</b>		<b>185 1033</b>	

**Table 11**  
**Major Strikes: Winnipeg Custom Tailors, 1887-1921**  
[Sources: Free Press; Daily Sun; Industrial News; Voice; Tailor; Labour Gazette; Strikes & Lockouts.]

<u>YR./EST.</u>	<u>DURN.</u>	<u>BARGAINING AGENT</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>MAJOR ISSUE; RESULT</u>
1887	4 wk.	Harmony IA (KofL)	ns	Wages, Recog. Lost
1893	9 wk.	Local 70 (JTU)	77	Wages, Recog. Lost
1900	16 wk.	Local 70 (JTU)	32	Shop Rules, Lost
1910	6 days	Local 70 (JTU)	150	Wages Won 8%
1913	3 wk.	Local 70 (JTU)	175	Wages Won 10%
1918	2 wk.	Local 70 (JTU)	200	Wages Won 15%
1921	9 wk.	Tailors No.1 (OBU)	175	Wages, Recog. Lost 5%

Table 12

Dominion Locals of the JTU: A Provisional Listing, 1889-1920  
 [Source: The Tailor, 1889-1920; Forsey (1982), 260-65.]

1889-1895 Windsor, Brantford, Toronto, St. Thomas,  
 Victoria, Ottawa, Barrie, Owen Sound, Woodstock, Hamilton,  
 Nanaimo, Winnipeg, Vancouver. [Total: 13]

1896-1900 St. Catharines, Peterborough, Rossland.  
 [Total: 3]

1901-1905 Kingston, Guelph, Sarnia, Berlin, Lindsay,  
 Mitchell, St. Mary's, Chatham, Ont., Fernie, Smith's Falls,  
 Pembroke, Cobourg, Collingwood, Greenwood, Sault Ste. Marie,  
 Halifax, Amherst, St. John's (Nfld.), Fort William.  
 [Total: 19]

1906-1910 Galt, Brandon, Port Arthur, Calgary, North  
 Bay, Kenora, Edmonton, Port Hope, Regina, Sydney,  
 Wallaceburg, London, Quebec City, St. Hyacinthe.  
 [Total: 14]

1911-1914 Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Waterville [Windsor].  
 [Total: 3]

1915-1920 Medicine Hat, Sydney Mines. [Total: 2]

**Table 13**  
**JTU Canadian Membership, 1915-21**

[Source: The Tailor, 23 August 1921]

<u>No.</u>	<u>Market</u>	<u>1915</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>1917</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1921</u>
183	Amherst	9	7	...	...	...	...	...
117	Brantford	29	26	24	25	26	27	20
262	Brockville	18	18	18	15	14	12	10
194	Calgary	8	3	36	12	10	9	18
233	Edmonton	7	9	6	3	...	...	...
297	Guelph	12	17	14	16	13	...	...
149	Hamilton	...	19	...	13	20	30	27
263	Kingston	14	26	18	12	13	...	...
30	London	61	53	47	43	39	40	31
374	Medicine Hat	...	...	9	...	...	...	...
61	Montreal	21	37	...	...	...	...	...
104	Montreal	...	...	39	16	12	...	...
317	Montreal	13	75	74	57	62	40	27
332	Montreal	...	...	...	...	...	12	...
143	Ottawa	19	18	13	12	89	79	71
23	Peterborough	11	11	17	11	10	...	...
235	St. Catherines	31	31	30	25	22	17	13
410	St. John's	31	32	28	22	22	33	22
141	St. Thomas	30	27	24	21	21	18	16
241	Sarnia	5	4	4	...	...	...	...
73	Sault Ste. Marie	..	...	...	...	.32	20	22
200	Simcoe	5	3	4	...	...	...	...
299	Springhill	...	...	...	9	8	8	...
82	Sydney Mines	...	...	...	27	...	...	...
37	Toronto	50	11	...	...	...	...	...
132	Toronto	67	55	72	54	47	53	45
178	Vancouver	115	98	99	126	155	186	173
142	Victoria	23	20	24	19	24	23	20
114	Windsor	3	...	...	...	...	...	...
70	Winnipeg	51	53	73	199	166	...	...
	<b><u>Totals:</u></b>	<b>633</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>515</b>

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