

Arthur W. Puttee: Labourism and Working-Class Politics in
Winnipeg,
1894-1918.

by

Bryan Thomas Dewalt

A thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ABSTRACT

The thesis addresses the problem of Arthur W. Puttee's 1918 breach with the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council after twenty years of work within the labour movement as a journalist and politician. The breach is accounted for through an exploration of the ideology that underlay his political decisions. Structured biographically, the thesis uses various primary sources, most notably Puttee's weekly newspaper, the Voice, and his speeches as a labour member of parliament, to trace a continuity in his beliefs from the beginning of his career in the 1890s to its end in 1918. The concept of "labourism", recently elaborated by Craig Heron to describe the ideology of Canadian craftworkers who worked for independent political action by labour, is used to characterize Puttee's beliefs. The study reveals a central contradiction in Puttee's labourism. He challenged many aspects of the emerging system of monopoly capitalism and demanded for labour the right as producers of wealth to full democratic representation in government. He was opposed to monopoly, the crude exploitation of workers, and government by "special interests" rather than the "people". But Puttee had no systematic critique of capitalist social relations and believed that labour constituted only one segment of a broader community of producers that included farmers, small

businessmen, and "fair" employers. He viewed the state as ideally the instrument for the will of the "people" and the defender of the "public" interest. This contradiction in Puttee's beliefs became most apparent in the radicalized labour atmosphere of 1918, when, as a labour member of Winnipeg City Council, he opposed a general strike of unionized city workers in the name of the broader public interest he sought to represent.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

For twenty years before 1918, Arthur W. Puttee was a central figure in the Winnipeg labour movement. As the editor of the Voice, the organ of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council (WTLC), Puttee articulated craftworkers' demands for legislative representation and economic reform and significantly influenced the direction of social and political debate in labour circles. Largely through his initiative and educational efforts, Winnipeg craft unionists organized a number of independent labour parties. For years, the platforms of these "labourist" parties reflected his interests in state enforcement of "fair" industrial relations and the restoration to the "people" of the economic and political power wielded by monopolists and special interests. As the Independent Labor Member of Parliament for Winnipeg between 1900 and 1904, Puttee became a parliamentary spokesman for the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC). After his return to the city, he used the Voice to direct the unrest of craftworkers into the formation of a national labour party that was strong, independent, and inclusive. Puttee remained for many years an important local spokesman for organized labour, and was considered by such figures as Ramsay Macdonald and Keir Hardie as a national leader in labour politics.

But Puttee's influence waned over time, until by 1910 his voice was only one among several that commanded the attention of local workers. In 1918 he was pushed out of the vanguard of the Winnipeg movement because of his opposition to a general strike of civic employees. As a member of Winnipeg's Board of Control, he found the aggressive tactics of the city workers to be incautious and contrary both to the "public" interest and established craft union and labourist practice. The WTLC, led by a new, more radical generation of unionists, retaliated by replacing Puttee's Voice with an organ that supported their socialist aims and policy of radical industrial action. Puttee reappeared briefly after the 1919 general strike as one of the conservative craft unionists attempting to regain control of the Winnipeg labour political movement, but his appearances afterwards became rare and fleeting. He spent the rest of his life in private business.

The central problem of this thesis is to account for Puttee's political downfall in 1918. While it is evident that he lost his power due to a breach with the WTLC during the civic employees' strike, it is not known why this breach occurred and why it was never fully mended. Were there elements of his beliefs on social relations and political action that might explain his disapproval of the strike leaders and tactics prominent in 1918? An examination of the ideological and social components of "labourism" will pro-

vide the context in which this question may be resolved. As a major figure in this movement for political action among craft unionists across Canada, Puttee both influenced and was influenced by labourism. Within it may be sought the assumptions that dictated his response to the events of 1918.

The terms "labourite", "labourist", and "labourism" date in their Canadian usage from the turn of the century, when they were first used to characterize the movement among trade unionists for labour-based political action independent of both the old parties and newer marxian socialist groups. Historians have since employed the terms to describe the same phenomenon but there has been little research into labourism. Biographers of activists in the movement have tended to concentrate on the individual and ignore the social context in their research and analysis.¹ At least one historian has accorded labourism no significance in the history of the Canadian left. In his The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis, Norman Penner concentrated exclusively on the role of Marxism in the development of Canadian social democracy despite the arguably equal importance of labourism.²

¹ Kenneth McNaught, A Prophet in Politics A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); Anthony Mardiros, William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1979).

² Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

The first and perhaps most narrow analysis of labourism by a historian was that of Martin Robin. In Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930, he described labourism as simply "the various attempts made by trade unionists to launch a labour party and elect labour representatives to the houses of parliament independent of the Liberal and Conservative parties."³ This analysis was superficially accurate, but its emphasis on national institutional developments was at the expense of an examination of the ideology and social base of labourism. Robin reduced the contradictory assumptions and motivations that underlay labourism to the narrowly practical pursuit of fair wage acts and factory inspection laws through political action.

Research in the 1970s by historian A.R. McCormack resulted in a significant contribution to the literature on labourism.⁴ Using Puttee as a case study, he attributed the development of labourism to the decisive influence of British immigrant trade unionists within the Canadian labour movement. He argued, on the one hand, that labourists like Puttee utilized "organizational and political skills learned in

³ Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ontario: Queens University, Industrial Relations Centre, 1968), p. 1.

⁴ A.R. McCormack, "Arthur Puttee and the Liberal Party, 1899-1904", Canadian Historical Review, 51, 2 (June 1970), pp. 141-163; A.R. McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); A.R. McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants and Canadian Radicalism: The Case of Arthur Puttee", Canadian Ethnic Studies, 10, 2 (1978), pp. 22-35.

Britain" in the formation of Canadian labour parties."⁵ They also "consciously modelled" these parties on the "policy and programs" of the British Labour Party.⁶ McCormack asserted, moreover, that the British influence extended beyond the organizational and tactical level. The very "ideals and aspirations" of Canadian labourism were often simply the reaffirmation by the British immigrant trade unionist of sentiments acquired in the Old Country.⁷ In the face of similar economic conditions in Canada, immigrant workers drew from their "cultural baggage" the "forms, values and doctrines" of the parties they had belonged to before coming to the New World.⁸ The essentially reformist ideology of Canadian labourism reflected its founders' origins in "Britain's orderly and moderate political culture."⁹ Labourism, McCormack argued, "developed in the Canadian radical movement as a result of direct and explicit transfer."¹⁰ Puttee's own beliefs were largely formed, according to McCormack, during a trip to England in 1902. The influence of British labourists Kier Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald became "the most important determinant of the political philosophy which he began to elaborate and enunciate" after his return to

⁵ McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants," p. 27.

⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

Canada.¹¹

Two British marxist studies have contributed to a revision of McCormack's analysis of Canadian labourism. In Parliamentary Socialism Ralph Miliband analysed what he believed to be the historical failure of the British Labour Party to mount an effective socialist challenge to capitalism. He found the roots of this failure in the limited perspective of the trade union leaders who controlled the party. Just as trade unionism by the turn of the century was being incorporated into an industrial relations system that circumscribed the legitimate economic actions of workers, Miliband argued that trade union politicians were being absorbed into a similarly restrictive parliamentary system. Despite their socialist rhetoric, which itself dissipated over time, Labour politicians from the party's beginning pursued only limited objectives and tolerated only gradualist and exclusively parliamentary tactics.¹² Many were little more than radical liberals; most of those who called themselves socialists nevertheless believed "that there were no irreconcilable differences in society, that politics was not civil war carried on by other means, that there was room for manoeuvre with opponents who were not necessarily enemies, and that compromise was not only necessary but desira-

¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹² Ralph Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour, 2nd ed. (London: Merlin Press, 1972), pp. 13-14, 17-18, 32-36.

ble."¹³

John Saville's analysis of labourism, which drew heavily on Lenin and Antonio Gramsci, was complementary to Miliband's. He argued that in the absence of an intellectual challenge to the assumption of bourgeois society trade unionists' economistic class consciousness, bred by industrial struggle, was never converted into a revolutionary political consciousness. The result was a "fractured" consciousness based on a vigorous defence of bargaining rights at the point of production and a political stance marked by moderation, indeed class collaboration. Using Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Saville argued that the dominant bourgeois concepts of economic relations and political practice were so firmly entrenched in British working-class institutions and private life that working-class radicalism never broke out of a limited critique of society and continued to seek social change within the established framework of that society. Saville's analysis suggested that defensive workplace struggles did not necessarily create a revolutionary class conscious ideology. While these struggles might manifest an elementary consciousness of collective economic interests, this potential class consciousness remained limited by the acceptance of the assumptions of capitalist social relations. Saville thus found the political manifestations of labourism similarly wedded to the liberal assumptions of

¹³ Ibid., p. 18.

gradualism and parliamentarism.¹⁴

Craig Heron subsequently drew on Saville and Miliband to produce a major revision of McCormack's analysis of Canadian labourism. Like the latter, Heron argued that labourism was a "distinct ideological form" in Canadian politics, different from populism, liberalism, and socialism.¹⁵ But Heron located the primary influence on labourist ideology not in the experience of British labour institutions but in the workplace itself. Characterizing it as the ideology of people "moving outward from their economic struggles,"¹⁶ Heron identified labourism as the "political expression" of "craftworkers" or "skilled workers" in manufacturing, construction and mining.¹⁷ Labourism reflected the experience of workers who practiced a "degree of shop-floor autonomy." Though wage-earners, skilled workers often experienced "formal" rather than "real" subordination on the job and "retained something of the mode of work which had preceded them in the evolution of capitalist production processes."¹⁸

¹⁴ John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism", in Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology, eds. Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki, Bikhu Parekh (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp. 213-226.

¹⁵ Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class", Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), p. 45.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

The persistence of the work patterns of the artisan and independent collier resulted, according to Heron, in the craftworkers' adherence to a "producer consciousness" that located skilled workers within a wider industrial community populated by all engaged in productive work, including master craftsmen and small manufacturers. On the one hand, this consciousness led to a meritocratic perspective that honoured certain forms of inequality based on skill and honest labour. It thus legitimized the position of the "entrepreneurial industrialist" as well as the relative privileges of the artisan. On the other hand, this producer consciousness "contributed a strong dose of pride and dignity to working-class politics and thus strengthened the class consciousness of the movement."¹⁹ The consciousness of skilled workers as full members of a community of producers was complemented, Heron argues, by their attachment to the egalitarian and democratic values of nineteenth century liberalism. The result was a political commitment among craftworkers to demand equal rights for the working class within liberal democracy in order to deliver the wage-earner and independent producer from the powerful oligarchy of monopolists, landlords, unfair employers, and others who lived off the labour of the true producers.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 59-60.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 51, 54-55.

Heron believed that labourism was so closely associated with the craftworkers that it ceased to be a significant political force by the mid 1920s, when economic depression, the employers' open shop movement, and technological changes destroyed the strength of craft unions and pushed the artisan "to the margins of the work world." The strong strain of Fabianism and bureaucratic state planning within CCF social democracy testified, according to Heron, to its substantial differences with the more decentralized and voluntaristic tendencies found earlier in labourism.²¹

This thesis uses Heron's analysis of labourism as a model for the study of Puttee's career. Thus, in addition to improving historical understanding of Puttee, it will contribute to a debate over the nature and historical significance of labourism. Despite its value as the first serious attempt to explore labourist ideology, McCormack's work is less useful in answering questions raised in the thesis. While briefly acknowledging the role of class experience in Canada in rekindling the radicalism of trade unionists, McCormack's central analytical position is that labourism was part of the "cultural baggage" of the British working-class immigrant. It is undeniably true that Canadian workers shared with their fellows in New Zealand and Australia an attraction to the successful organizational model of the British Labour Representation Committee and Labour Party, and that

²¹ Ibid., pp. 70-72.

political discourse was influenced by the congregation of politically knowledgeable British immigrants in colonial industrial centres. But labourism could not have survived through difficult years of struggle simply as a reflection of Old Country beliefs and practices. It must have been sustained by Canadian experiences that, if nothing else, reinforced and continually reproduced labourist ideology.

An analysis relying heavily on Puttee's ethnic origins and affinity to an ill-defined "orderly and moderate [British] political culture" cannot account for the subtlety of labourist ideology nor fully explain how it influenced Puttee's political decisions. It is not clear, for example, how Puttee's opposition to monopoly and undemocratic government could be characterized as distinctively "British" in nature. Even less evident is the essential connection between British labourism and his position in 1918. It is unlikely that a man like Puttee could have learned much about British labourism, then only in its infancy, before he emigrated to North America in 1889. His early years in Winnipeg were arguably much more important in forming his political beliefs than his previous or subsequent contacts with British labourism. Independent labour political action in Canada dates from the 1880s, and by no means all of its leadership learned its politics in Great Britain. Attention must be given to the important formative role played by the immediate class experiences of Puttee and other Canadian trade un-

ionists. Paramount among these experiences for most workers was the labour process and the craft union.

Heron correctly identified the important links between the work life of the craftsworker and the ideology of labourism. But the relationship between the labour process and labourist ideology could be ambiguous, and Heron did not fully explore the possibility that variations in the workplace experience of different crafts may have influenced differences in the political disposition of their members. Heron's analytical reliance on a monolithic craft experience thus may have obscured the degrees to which radical or collaborationist political responses were determined by the form class relations took at the individual workplace or within the individual craft. In the case of Puttee, the focus of these relations was the printshop. It is arguable that the experiences of Puttee and other printers differed significantly from that of other skilled workers. But emphasis of the primacy of the craft experience must also not obscure the more general process of ideological formation, described by Saville, that involved an at least partial assimilation by craftsworkers of the dominant political and economic assumptions of the time. Craftsworkers' adherence to liberal assumptions about class and the state can at least be partially attributed to this process of ideological hegemony.

The issues discussed in the thesis revolve around the contradictory nature of labourism. Labourism displayed a form of class consciousness derived from the day-to-day struggles of craftworkers and reflected their resistance to the form social relations were taking during the rise of monopoly capitalism. It contained a real attack on certain aspects of this system and even implied a challenge to the political and economic rule of the middle class. But this class consciousness was muted and channelled by other labourist ideological assumptions that ultimately limited the movement's threat to the capitalist system.

Puttee's important experiences in the printing trade, especially in the 1890s, involved him in attempts by craftworkers to regularize their relations with employers and avoid industrial conflict. Like others, he entered electoral politics to demand that the state act as an impartial umpire between capital and labour, both by ensuring the conciliation and arbitration of disputes and by itself acting as a model employer. Labourists like Puttee also looked to the state to promote the interests of the producing community over those of the privileged and the capitalists by implementing "public" ownership of certain areas of industry. But the labourists' belief in the state's neutrality was often belied by government action detrimental to workers. The labourists' naive view of the state was complemented by their faith in the ultimately progressive nature of publicly

owned utilities. For men like Puttee, who fought for them in municipal and federal politics, they represented important steps in the gradual collectivization of society. But unlike that of marxists within the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), their conception of public ownership did not extend to a revolutionary transformation of social relations.

As was confirmed by his experience in the House of Commons and his work in the organizations of independent labour politics, Puttee embraced parliamentarism as the central strategy for the elimination of industrial strife and the gradual movement toward a vaguely socialistic future. By the final years of World War I, this conviction resulted in conflict with working-class activists who were more willing to consider radical forms of industrial action. This was a major reason for his loss of political influence in 1918. The other was Puttee's failure to resolve the ambiguity implicit in a political movement based both on a degree of class consciousness and a belief in a community or "public" interest above class considerations. While no labourists were able to effect this resolution, few were in Puttee's position of having to do so. Long a champion of workers' full rights of citizenship within the community of producers, he felt compelled in 1918 to subordinate labour's need to his conception of the broader "public" interest. By repudiating labour's demands he believed he was affirming the

responsibility of a labour representative to govern in the interest of all producers.

Chapter II

EARLY YEARS: 1868-1894

Arthur W. Puttee was born 25 August 1868 in Folkestone, England to William and Elizabeth Puttee. Hardly a less likely birthplace than Folkestone could have been found for the future labour politician. Far from the coal fields of Lancashire, or the grimy industrial centres of the Clyde, Folkestone owed its existence to the upper-middle class holidayers of London. If not for the railway Folkestone might have remained the small channel port it had been for centuries, subsisting on fishing and the cross-channel and coastal trade. But in 1841 its harbour was purchased by the South Eastern Railway, and Folkestone was made the premier rail and steamship link with the continent. Its population quadrupled in the following three decades. In its heyday between 1870 and 1914, it was renowned as the most prestigious seaside resort in Kent. On the sandy cliff overlooking the harbour, fashionable London society strolled along the Leas, a promenade lined with gardens, bandstands and fine hotels.²²

²² Christopher Wright, Kent Through the Years, (London: Batsford, 1975), pp. 159-162.

This would not appear to be a propitious climate for the development of radical ideas among local children. It must be noted, however, that from medieaval times Kent in general and Folkestone in particular had witnessed its share of popular uprisings and radical agitation.²³ Mid-Victorian Folkestone had long left behind the insurgency of Captain Swing, but it remained an enclave of liberalism in largely Tory Kent. In the general elections of 1885 and 1886, the constituency of Hythe, which included Folkestone, was one of only two areas of Liberal strength in the entire South-East of England. It is probably no coincidence that Hythe, and Folkestone, was also marked by a proportionately higher concentration of protestant nonconformists.²⁴

Although said to be descended from Huguenot refugees, the Puttee family had, by the time of Arthur's birth, settled into the more prosaic lifestyle of provincial petty bourgeois nonconformity. William Puttee was a Baptist, and like his father, a printer employing a few hands. Born in Folkestone, he had lived for a time in Dover before returning with his wife and several children to his place of birth. Elizabeth, the daughter of a grocer, had been born in the

²³ Wright, pp. 65-67, 87-88; E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rude, Captain Swing (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969), pp. 98-99, 104.

²⁴ Michael Kinnear, The British Voter: An Atlas and Survey since 1885 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), pp. 14, 15, 19; Henry Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. xv.

Midlands. Arthur was her fifth child and fourth son.²⁵

Puttee first learned the printing trade in his father's shop, although it is not known if he was ever formally apprenticed. Like most of his classmates at the local Board school, he entered the workforce after six years of elementary education. Thus from the age of fourteen Puttee's education was of a purely autodidactic nature. It was a self-education to a great extent shaped by his changing religious connections. Raised a Baptist, he turned to the Congregationalist Sunday school in his adolescence. However such a transfer of allegiances did not allay a growing disaffection with religious orthodoxy, and through family friends and literature from the United States Puttee cultivated an interest in the liberal Christianity of the Unitarians.²⁶

It is difficult to gauge the impact of Puttee's new faith on his views of politics, economics, and society. This is due in part to the absence of a specific and unified Unitarian doctrine. Contemporary orthodox Christians saw Unitarianism in terms simply of the negation of Christianity, and the absence of doctrine.²⁷ Two pillars of Unitarianism dat-

²⁵ Great Britain, Folkestone Census Return (1871), pp. 414, 271.

²⁶ Interview with Mrs. Marjorie Farmer, Winnipeg, 4 January 1984. (Hereafter cited as Farmer interview.)

²⁷ See, for example, Rev. John Henry Blunt, Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties, and Schools of Religious Thought (London: Rivingtons, 1874; reprint ed., Detroit: Gage Research, 1974), p. 607.

ing from its origins in the Reformation and the eighteenth century Age of Reason are relevant. The first was an insistence on the primacy of individual reason and conscience in the arrival at religious faith, and a consequent defense of religious and intellectual freedom.²⁸ The second tenet of Unitarianism was the rejection of the bulk of Christian dogma that had been developed in the centuries after the initial rise of Christianity. Most notably rejected were the deification of Jesus in the Trinity and the doctrines asserting the essential sinfulness of man, especially the Fall, Original Sin and Christ's Atonement on the Cross. Such dogma was seen to be unjustifiable by a rational interpretation of the Bible and was considered antithetical to the spirit of Jesus's and the Bible's message of love.²⁹

The Unitarians' negation of orthodox faith was simultaneously an affirmation of a true spiritual Christianity. In his famous 1841 address at Hawes Place Church in Boston, the American Unitarian Theodore Parker made a clear distinction between the transient nature of most Church doctrine, and the permanent nature of "real Christianity" as Jesus had taught in words and personal example. It was a simple religion, grounded in a faith in God felt intuitively in the "holy heart."³⁰ Real Christianity was to Parker a religion

²⁸ Canada: An Encyclopaedia of the Country, 1898 ed., s.v. "The Unitarian Movement in Canada," by William S. Barnes.

²⁹ Free Press, 7 May 1904; Phillip Hewett, Unitarians in Canada (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978), pp. 8-9.

of personal conscience and personal conduct. Both conscience and conduct were informed and inspired by the life of Jesus. However, the evangelical Christian notion of him as a saviour was inaccurate.

It is not so much by the Christ who lived so blameless and beautiful eighteen centuries ago, that we are saved directly, but by the Christ we form in our hearts and live out in our daily life, that we save ourselves.³¹

For Parker, Christ was not the "despot of the soul but the brother of all men." Although he had lived a divine life, he was, like all men, the son of man and the Son of God. His excellence was a human excellence and represented human potential.

His wisdom, love, piety, - sweet and celestial as they were, - are they not what we may attain? In him, as in a mirror, we may see the image of God, and go on from glory to glory till we are changed into the same image, led by the spirit which enlightens the humble. Viewed in this way, how beautiful is the life of Jesus. Heaven has come down to earth, or rather, earth has become heaven.³²

Implicit in such a belief in the moral perfectability of man, of the incompleteness but not inherent evil of human nature, was a message of social optimism. For if men could be convinced to lead moral and divine lives heaven on earth was possible. It is therefore not surprising that Unitarians

³⁰ Theodore Parker, "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity," Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing - Emerson - Parker, ed. Conrad Wright (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 140.

³¹ Ibid., p. 144.

³² Ibid., pp. 136-137.

were connected with many of the reform and philanthropic movements of the nineteenth century in Britain and North America.³³ Such Unitarian reform efforts were usually of a distinctly moderate tone, perhaps reflecting the overwhelmingly middle-class composition of its membership at the time.³⁴

There being no Unitarian church in Folkestone, Puttee's early experiences with Unitarianism were probably more intellectual than social. One can only speculate why he would have turned away from his Baptist upbringing to become a Unitarian. It is likely he had chosen Unitarianism as the theological expression of a popular religious view held much more broadly than any denominational title would embrace. On the one hand this view was based on the well-known late-nineteenth century crisis in religious belief throughout the English-speaking world. As the social role of the churches was undermined by social change, and new scientific theories and forms of liberal theology and biblical criticism destroyed traditional Christian cosmology, many Christians

³³ Hewett, pp. 314-320; G.I.T. Machin, Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832-1868 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 12, 16, 23; George Willis Cooke, Unitarianism in America: A History of its Origin and Development (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1902), pp. 321-375.

³⁴ Hewett, pp. 313-315, 318-319; Machin, pp. 39-40, 56-57; Daniel Walker Howe, The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 205-235; K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 13, 15, 118.

refused to abandon their faith. Rather, they simply modified it, maintaining Christian ethics and forms of worship and community life but dispensing with much essential doctrine. The result was a liberal form of religion based largely on ethics and an abiding faith in progress. To Unitarians like Rev. William S. Barnes of Montreal, refugees from orthodoxy were brethren.

There is ... an evidently increasing, although unorganized and undefinable, liberal sentiment which is more or less acknowledged sympathy with the principles of Unitarian Christianity. ... It is also felt that there is a tendency indicated in science, literature, humanitarianism and criticism, as well as in the disposition of religious bodies, to place emphasis upon character and life more than upon dogma, which is essentially in the spirit of the Unitarian aim.³⁵

Indeed, the first two English Unitarian ministers in Winnipeg came to the church from other protestant denominations.³⁶

Such a vague, liberalized form of Christianity, distinct from secularism, was notable among the British working-class intelligentsia and trade union leadership. They rejected both the dogma and the class bias of the established churches but defended the ethical message of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount, and held as their objective the Brotherhood of Man.³⁷ It is notable that in the 1890s the

³⁵ Canada: An Encyclopaedia of the Country, s.v. "The Unitarian Movement in Canada."

³⁶ Free Press, 7 May 1904. Voice, 5 March 1909.

³⁷ Hugh McCleod, Class and Religion in the Victorian City (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1974), pp. 62-66; Stephen

majority of ministers who spoke at meetings of the British labour churches were Unitarians.³⁸ It is likely that Puttee was within this general movement; he was attracted by its social message that implied progress through social and individual morality. Moreover, Unitarianism provided at least the prospect of a structured religious community life and fellowship of belief not available to pure secularists.

In his years as editor of the Voice, Puttee rarely raised the issue of religion, though he frequently published the sermons and lectures of those dealing with social issues from a Christian perspective. This was due to the very worldly and social nature of his Unitarian beliefs. As he told an audience of Methodists in 1911, his concern was to break down the barrier between "the so-called sacred and the so-called secular."³⁹ He was apt to perceive in the physical world the work of divinity. In 1910 he welcomed the prospect of walking out onto the prairie at night to gaze up at Halley's comet passing across the sky. "The heavens declare the

Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896," History Workshop, 4 (Autumn 1977), pp. 5-49. For the same phenomenon in America, see Herbert S. Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age," Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History, Herbert S. Gutman, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), pp. 90-105. For Canada, see Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 13-15, 82-103. For an historical example of this tendency, see Voice, 12 June 1897.

³⁸ Inglis, pp. 230-231.

³⁹ Dauphin Press, 2 February 1911.

glory of God," he wrote. "All through the centuries each night and each day has impressed men with the truth of this declaration."⁴⁰

Likewise, Puttee's perspective on Christian ethics was rooted in social relations and not in the virtue of the individual believer. While admitting that society needed good men, he insisted that, above all, "we need good social laws properly applied to make good society."⁴¹ His Christmas message of 1905 best captured the temporal and social nature of his religious vision.

'Peace on earth, good will toward men....' This great message of the founder of Christianity does not refer to a future existence, future punishment, or rewards, heaven or hell in the hereafter. If men would only vitalize it in practice the whole face of our social life would be changed, and the world would be a new world, for peace and good will, with the justice it implies, would make of earth the heaven that we dream of.⁴²

To ground this flight in everyday life, he related it to a new set of rules for economic life. Service was to be paramount, and "strife, competition, profits-grinding, usuary [sic], [and] frenzied finance" would be done away with.⁴³ The fight for these changes, he wrote on another occasion, was to be on a "common battle ground" shared by labour's economic and political organizations and the church. Though

⁴⁰ Voice, 22 April 1910.

⁴¹ Voice, 16 June 1899.

⁴² Voice, 22 December 1905.

⁴³ Ibid.,

the latter sought to reform the individual while the former directed their efforts at society, he saw the possibility of a common cause in "the mere recognition of the Fatherhood of God an [sic] the Brotherhood of Man."⁴⁴

On the occasions when religious themes did appear in the Voice editorial column, they were frequently defences of religious liberty. He insisted, for example, on the strict separation of church and state by attacking tax exemptions for churches⁴⁵ and the institutionalization of religion in the legal and educational system.⁴⁶ As well, he remained aloof from agitation by some Winnipeg religious leaders to enforce strict observance of the Sabbath.⁴⁷ He believed that Sunday should be a day of rest for all, but expressed this in humanistic rather than religious terms. For example, he favoured Sunday streetcar service, but only if street railway employees were assured a six day work week.⁴⁸ For other workers he favoured the opening of the public library on Sundays, to provide "proper and reasonable entertainment for the people."⁴⁹ An advocate of fresh air activities, he also encouraged the extension of Sunday street cars out beyond

⁴⁴ Voice, 13 October 1899.

⁴⁵ Voice, 2 March 1906, 10 July 1908.

⁴⁶ Voice, 31 March 1905, 11 February 1910, 12 May 1911.

⁴⁷ Voice, 13 October 1899.

⁴⁸ Voice, 31 March 1905, 16 June 1905, 3 November 1905, 1 June 1906.

⁴⁹ Voice, 16 November 1906.

the city limits, to allow workers to take their families on country excursions.⁵⁰ To the objections of strict Sabbatarrians, he replied, in typically pragmatic terms, that "a bottled up state in a big city ... is far more harmful and breeds more immorality and degeneration than does the keeping open of the ordinary channels of communication and means of transportation."⁵¹

Puttee emigrated to North America in 1888 at the age of nineteen or twenty. A permanent falling out between William Puttee and his sons Arthur and David had apparently developed out of the father's unwillingness to purchase new equipment to modernize the shop. It was the tail end of the Great Depression by 1888, and Puttee, having travelled around the country, could find no suitable employment as a printer. He later told his children that he boarded the transatlantic steamer in the hope of establishing himself in the new world, thus enabling him to marry his sweetheart and escape a life of drudgery as an employee of the taciturn elder Puttee.⁵²

Puttee's original destination was Portage la Prairie, where he attempted to establish himself on a homestead. After two arduous seasons of farm labour, he abandoned his vision of the yeoman farmer and returned to the compositor's

⁵⁰ Voice, 29 June 1906.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Farmer interview.

case.⁵³ In the fall of 1889 he turned to the United States in search of a printing job. For the ensuing three years he lived the life of the itinerant journeyman printer, bouncing from one short-term engagement to the next. He was initiated into the International Typographical Union (ITU) at St. Paul, Minnesota on 1 December 1889, and spent a year in the offices of the West Publishing Company there.⁵⁴ His initiation in St. Paul is the first record of his involvement with trade unionism. Granted a travelling card in November 1890, Puttee moved west and worked for a session in the state printing office at Olympia, Washington⁵⁵ In 1891 he returned to Canada, preferring, he later said, to live under British rule. After a stint at the Brandon Sun, he found employment in Winnipeg on the composing staff of the Manitoba Free Press.⁵⁶ In November of 1891 he was initiated into the Winnipeg Typographical Union (WTU), a local of the ITU, and was immediately an active member.⁵⁷ Articulate, though not loquacious, and tactful in his dealings with employers, he was

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Working Card, St. Paul Typographical Union No. 30, Puttee Papers, PAM. Paul G. Jaehnert to author, 29 February 1984, in possession of author (Jaehnert was secretary-treasurer of the St. Paul Typographical Union at the time of writing, and found this information in the union files).

⁵⁵ Jaehnert to author, 29 February 1984; Typographical Journal, 9,7 (1 October 1896), p. 277.

⁵⁶ Farmer interview.

⁵⁷ Membership List, Winnipeg Typographical Union No. 191 Papers, PAM.

the sort of man valued as a representative by the cautious printers. He was elected president of the WTU in 1893 and 1894 and was the financial and recording secretary in 1895 and 1896. In 1893 he was the union's delegate to the St. Paul organizing convention of the Tenth District of the ITU; in 1895 and 1896 he was the international union's deputy organizer for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.⁵⁸

Shortly after arriving in Winnipeg, Puttee decided to make it his home. At the end of 1892 he returned to England to marry Gertrude Mary Strood of Folkestone. The daughter of a grocer whose business had fallen on hard times, she and Puttee had attended the Congregationalist Sunday school together. The couple arrived back in Winnipeg in January 1893. In 1894 their first child, Harold, was born. He was followed in 1896 by Gertrude and in 1898 by Dorothy.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Typographical Journal, 9,7 (1 October 1896), p. 277.

⁵⁹ Farmer interview.

Chapter III

PUTTEE, THE PRINTERS AND WINNIPEG LABOUR POLITICS, 1894 - 1899

The 1890s were important years in Puttee's intellectual development. There is little doubt that his membership in the printing trade provided many of the personal experiences and political assumptions that moulded his involvement in labour politics. The printers had a proud history of literacy, militant craft unionism, and political awareness. By the 1890s these traditions were given a sharper edge by technological challenges that tested the strength of the WTU and added a radical urgency to Puttee's political actions. He joined other Winnipeg craftworkers in organizing an independent labour party to pursue their concerns at a political level. His experiences in political work, like those in the composing room, eventually became evident in his editorship of the Voice.

Winnipeg's unionized printers were well situated to play a leading role in the city's fledgling labour movement in the 1890s. Founded in the boom year of 1881, the Winnipeg Typographical Union had grown from a charter membership of ten to a total of 110 by 1894.⁶⁰ It was among the largest

⁶⁰ Winnipeg Typographer, 3 September 1894, (Labour Day Souvenir), Winnipeg Typographical Union Papers, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. (Hereafter cited as WTU Papers,

unions in the city,⁶¹ and its members were, along with those of the building trades unions, the moving forces behind the formation of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council (WTLC) in the winter of 1894.⁶² But the WTU's strengths were not merely attributable to size or historical longevity. These were simply symptoms of the nature of the printers' craft and organization. They were derived from strong internal cohesion within the craft, cordial and well-structured relations with employers and the community, and significant control over the process of work itself.

Printers like Puttee saw themselves as the proud bearers of a literate tradition that had brought enlightenment to humanity and political influence to their brothers-in-trade. The Winnipeg Typographer, an 1894 Labour Day souvenir, noted that

printers are justly proud of their art. They know its triumphs and the debt mankind owes to it. They have also reason to be proud of many of its members who began their career at the compositor's case, and who, trained to the habits of thinking by association with the silent thoughts to which in the practice of their art they were giving form and existence, many of them have become leaders of men themselves. On this continent, where opportunities for distinction and public usefulness are larger, printers have passed from the press and case to the editor's office, and to positions of public usefulness and distinction and honor, as mayors of cities, and members of congress and parliament, and governors of states wealthy and populous ... With Caxton's and Franklin's and

PAM). PAM.

⁶¹ People's Voice, 21 July 1984.

⁶² Free Press, 12 February 1894.

Greeley's, and a host of other master minds, whose names shine like the stars in the firmament of human history, the printer may rejoice in a brotherhood of an order and a profession which may stand foremost in the ranks of mankind.⁶³

The union printers were careful to maintain a reputation as men of skill who conscientiously sought to improve their work. The WTU's 1889 constitution stated that one of its objects was the "encouragement of good workmen." This was one means the union would use to promote "the elevation of printers ... [and kindred trades] in the scale of social life."⁶⁴ Such sentiments, usually expressed on ceremonial occasions, were valuable as assertions to each other and to employers and the public that printers were worthy of respect and consequently deserving both of an adequate standard of living and a voice in the conduct of public affairs.

For many printers the union offered fellowship and community life that extended beyond individual personal friendships. The printer's social calendar was punctuated by the customary January annual dinner and the occasional Saturday night smoker. Both such functions, heralded by public notices and often strikingly beautiful and skillfully produced invitations, were opportunities for recreation and rhetoric reaffirming the traditional virtues of the printing trade.⁶⁵

⁶³ Winnipeg Typographer, 3 September 1894, WTU Papers, PAM.

⁶⁴ Winnipeg Typographical Union, Constitution (1899), WTU Papers, PAM. (Hereafter cited as WTU, Constitution.)

⁶⁵ WTU, Miscellaneous invitations (1886-1918), WTU Papers, PAM; WTU, Minutes. 9 February 1901, WTU Papers, PAM.

For the athletically inclined, the manly tests of the playing field would pit one printing shop against another, or printers against other trades.⁶⁶ The highlight of the year was probably the Labour Day parade. A great deal of effort and money was expended to ensure the printers' union presented an image of strength, unity and enthusiasm to the general public and other tradesmen. In the first annual Labour Day parade in 1894, the WTU allocated one hundred dollars toward providing a suitable float for the parade. As a result the union's delegate to the ITU international convention decided to forego the honour of attending in order not to place an additional financial burden on the union. He preferred not to go "rather than see the union handicapped in coming to the front in a proper manner."⁶⁷ The printers were usually among the most impressive contingents in the Labour Day parade in the 1890s.⁶⁸

While membership in the WTU offered a man like Puttee fellowship and community life, such benefits also served to discipline members. To behave in an un-unionlike manner was to court social ostracism. The WTU by-laws warned members that "while it may be necessary for members ... to associate with non-union printers in business matters, it is, nevertheless, held to be unbecoming of a union man to have any

⁶⁶ People's Voice, 23 June 1894. WTU, Minutes, 2 September 1899, WTU Papers, PAM.

⁶⁷ People's Voice, 11 August 1894.

⁶⁸ Voice, 11 September 1897.

social or friendly intercourse with 'rats.'"⁶⁹ In 1898 Winnipeg printers were warned by TLC president John Appleton and Puttee, then ITU deputy organizer, not to accept positions from Brandon master printers, who had locked out their union men and were attempting to break the union. To accept their employment would have been to "incur the disrespect of their fellow craftsmen, and would be unmanly." Thus "disgracing himself," a journeyman printer "would find it impossible to advance in his trade or in the esteem and goodwill of his fellow craftsmen."⁷⁰ Labelled a rat, a printer would also have difficulty finding employment in the highly unionized printing industry.

The WTU conferred other fraternal benefits on its members, most notably sick and unemployment relief, and provisions for the burial expenses of deceased members.⁷¹ In the climate of economic depression and technological unemployment that characterized Winnipeg in the mid-90s, the former benefits were important, both to protect members and to prevent union defections and a consequent breach of union control of printing shops. In addition to cash payments, unemployed men were also offered part-time work through a form of work-sharing. In the summer of 1894, for example, the un-

⁶⁹ WTU, Constitution (1889), WTU Papers, PAM.

⁷⁰ Voice, 20 September 1898.

⁷¹ WTU, Minutes, 2 October 1897, 4 December 1897, 8 January 1898, 2 April 1898, 8 May 1898, 4 June 1898, 7 October 1898, WTU Papers, PAM; Winnipeg Typographer, 3 September 1894, WTU Papers, PAM.

ion instituted a rule restricting all members to a five-day week, thus providing one day's work per week for the unemployed.⁷² The function of burial provisions was both ceremonial and financial. By assuming the funeral costs, the union assured its members a "decent burial" worthy of a respectable and independent man. The funeral also offered an occasion for members to exhibit their collective sentiments; the union charter was draped in black on the death of members.⁷³

Such positive incentives to collective action through the union, especially when such action would win the highest wages among city craftsmen,⁷⁴ created a strong sense of craft consciousness. Such a consciousness was not achieved at the expense of cordial relations with employers. Though printers saw themselves as members of the "working classes", with distinct interests, they did not see their interests as necessarily opposed to those of an employing or business class. Employers who paid "fair" wages and respected union prerogatives were conferred respect and cooperation. When negotiating with employers, the union only made "fair" and "reasonable" demands. Relations between printers and employers therefore remained remarkably stable. Such stability

⁷² People's Voice, 16 June 1894.

⁷³ WTU, Minutes, 7 October 1899, WTU Papers, PAM.

⁷⁴ For a comparison of wages and working conditions among Winnipeg trades in 1894, see People's Voice, 21 July 1894.

was encouraged by the union in thought and deed. The Winnipeg Typographer noted with satisfaction that, since a lockout dispute during the union's first year of existence, "no serious trouble has disturbed the relations between employer and employee." This was because the WTU had laboured long and hard to demonstrate that it

sought to conserve the best interests of both [employer and employee]. That such is the case has been amply demonstrated, and none are more ready to acknowledge the fact than the employing printers of Winnipeg.⁷⁵

Indeed, the stated objects of the WTU were, among others, to "promote by every lawful means the interests of the employer, as well as of the employed"; and to "endeavor to avert strikes and their attendant bitterness and pecuniary loss by arbitration and conciliation in the settlement of all disputes concerning wages and conditions of employment."⁷⁶

Puttee remained an advocate of conciliation and arbitration throughout his political and journalistic career. He sought to defuse tension between master printers and the union by emphasizing the "business" nature of contract negotiations. During a 1905 strike at several printing shops, he blamed master printers belonging to the International Typothetae employers' association for their refusal to negotiate a new wage schedule with the union. The strike was especially regrettable, he wrote, knowing

⁷⁵ Winnipeg Typographer, 3 September 1894, WTU Papers, PAM.

⁷⁶ WTU, Constitution, WTU Papers, PAM.

that with the employers and employees, both well organized, there was no reason to get at loggerheads in this fashion, no reason, that is, except the antiquated bull-headedness of some employers who object to dealing with their employees or their representatives in the same business-bargaining spirit that they would apply in the ordinary course of their business.⁷⁷

He noted with pride that the WTU had, until then, "secured positive benefits for its members" while being "almost uniformly ... successful in averting trade disputes."⁷⁸

Relations with employers were ritualized by the union in its non-economic functions. For example, at its anniversary dinner in November 1895, the employing printers were toasted. Among the invited guests were not only politicians and public figures, but master printers like W. F. Luxton, R. L. Richardson, J. B. Somerset, and D. L. McIntyre.⁷⁹ As well, journeymen who became employers themselves, a not uncommon occurrence, were allowed to remain in the union as honorary members as long as they continued to "respect the principles of trades unionism."⁸⁰

Occasionally, a master printer was honoured by his employees on his death. In 1907 the WTU attended the funeral of W. F. Luxton, founder and erstwhile owner of the Manitoba Free Press. Puttee noted that this rare honour bespoke the

⁷⁷ Voice, 24 March 1905.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ People's Voice, 9 November 1895.

⁸⁰ WTU, Constitution, WTU Papers, PAM.

esteem Luxton had enjoyed among his employees. His most significant virtue, according to old hands like Puttee, was that "he was no respecter of position, but treated all alike, be they journeyman printer or premier of the province."⁸¹

In the workplace the union regarded its working card as a guarantee of competence to the employer. The non-union printer, meanwhile, was thought to be not only of questionable character, but also of doubtful skill. In times of strike the union gleefully pointed to typographical errors and late editions as confirmation of the inferiority of non-union men.⁸² It was thus evident to them that employers could only benefit from a unionized composing staff. The WTU was also not averse to soliciting business for employing printers. In 1897 it advocated the local compilation and printing of school textbooks, thereby not only lowering book costs but also providing jobs and business for the local printing industry.⁸³

If an employing printer did not see the wisdom of recognizing the WTU, the union possessed means to convince him. Short of striking, the union sought to win "public opinion" to its position. By demanding wages and conditions that were only "fair and equitable," not to say "modest," the union

⁸¹ Voice, 24 May 1907.

⁸² People's Voice, 7 November 1896.

⁸³ Voice, 8 May 1897.

hoped to appeal not only to customary conditions among printers, but also to a community definition of what was fair and equitable.⁸⁴ This practice was institutionalized in the union label. In 1895 Puttee announced a WTU campaign to have its label affixed to all printing work in the city.⁸⁵ At its simplest level this involved convincing union shops to carry the label and refusing it to non-union or "unfair" shops. The second level involved convincing public or governmental institutions to carry the label on all their work.⁸⁶ Other prime targets were local fraternal orders, whose members included many union men. The Voice and the People's Voice carried frequent reports of orders adopting the label.⁸⁷

At all times the Typos attempted to convey the impression that they were productive and respectable members of a larger community of producers that included employers and businessmen. On the occasion of Winnipeg's first Labour Day, the Winnipeg Typographer expressed this view.

Labor must organize in order to secure the recognition of its modest demands, but, fully sensible of its responsibilities, labor can always be depended to co-operate with other factors for the greatest possible interest of all. ... [W]e, Unionists of Winnipeg - the prosperity of which city

⁸⁴ See, for example, WTU, Minutes, 3 June 1899, WTU Papers, PAM.

⁸⁵ People's Voice, 9 February 1895.

⁸⁶ Voice, 9 October 1897, 29 April 1898.

⁸⁷ People's Voice, 30 November 1895; Voice, 15 May 1897, 12 June 1897, 9 October 1897.

means our prosperity, and whose adversity means hard times for all - seek to demonstrate that our interests are identical with those of the employers. Unionism means efficiency and economy, and the surest safeguard capital can have, is efficient and honest labor, only which can be, and is admitted into Union ranks. The position the working man occupies is a proud one, conscious as he is that the nobleness and dignity of labor makes him the peer of all. A producer, in the fullest sense of the word, no drone in a hive of bees, he is fully sensible of the part he plays in life, and although the paths of those who live by the sweat and toil of other men may for the time seem rosy, yet the life of the active is the most enviable in more senses than one.⁸⁸

The forces of tradition, fellowship, conciliation, and perceived community standards were important components of the WTU's strength. But these forces were inadequate without the ability of the union to assert a limited authority over entry into the trade, employment in the shops, and the conduct of the work process. It was only when this authority was challenged by employers, most notably by the introduction of mechanical typesetting machines, that these strengths of the union were tested. As well, it was only then that serious disputes between employer and employee occurred in the printing industry in Winnipeg.

Little information exists on the printing trade in Winnipeg before 1894. However, evidence from various sources in that year indicate a dangerous situation confronted the WTU. A general economic depression was combining with the introduction of new typesetting equipment to throw many printers

⁸⁸ Winnipeg Typographer, 3 September 1894, WTU Papers, PAM.

out of work. For those still working, wages were threatened.

The union was initially able to shield its members from these conditions. In June 1894 all Manitoba Free Press employees received a ten per cent wage reduction, except those, like Puttee, protected by the WTU scale of prices.⁸⁹ Earlier in the year a report by WTLC statistician R. A. Pyne indicated that while only ninety of the union's members were employed full-time, the other twenty were able to subsist on subbing, largely as a result of the union's imposed five day work week. Wages ranged from sixteen dollars to eighteen dollars per week, the best in the city, and there were few non-union printers, barring a few men in job printing shops. Prospects for the printing trade, however, were described as poor.⁹⁰

This forecast was borne out in September 1894, when five new Rogers linotype typesetting machines were introduced into the composing room of the Free Press.⁹¹ Within two years the Winnipeg Daily Tribune had also installed Rogers machines, and the Nor'Wester and Stovel printing company had purchased Mergenthalers.⁹² Within six months of the first machine's operation, the membership of the WTU had dropped to ninety-five, of which only sixty-three were employed. In

⁸⁹ People's Voice, 23 June 1894.

⁹⁰ People's Voice, 21 July 1894.

⁹¹ People's Voice, 8 September 1894.

⁹² People's Voice, 6 April 1895, 25 September 1896.

the Tribune and Free Press offices twenty-five to thirty members had been thrown out of work.⁹³ At the WTU's semi-annual meeting in May of 1895, a People's Voice reporter noted that despite the union's flourishing financial condition, the prospects for the trade were bleak. Further decreases in membership were expected, and the trade was already overcrowded. Apprentices were warned they were "only wasting their time learning the business."⁹⁴ In November C. C. Steuart of the People's Voice, himself a printer, lamented that most of the printers left to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the WTU charter were "only common operators now."⁹⁵ Overcrowding in the trade and hard economic times were especially felt in the traditionally less-unionized and more competitive job printing sector,⁹⁶ which, by the spring of 1896, Steuart said was in a "demoralized state" due to the "cut rate style of doing business." Union wages were threatened by the resultant low prices.⁹⁷

⁹³ People's Voice, 6 April 1895.

⁹⁴ People's Voice, 11 May 1895.

⁹⁵ People's Voice, 2 November 1895.

⁹⁶ George E. Barnett, "Collective Bargaining in the Typographical Union," in Studies in American Trade Unionism, Jacob J. Hollander and George E. Barnett, eds. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), p. 167; George E. Barnett, The Printers: A Study in American Trade Unionism (Cambridge, Mass.: American Economic Association, 1909), p. 130.

⁹⁷ People's Voice, 30 May 1896.

The WTU's response to changing conditions in the printing trade was to defend wage rates and reassert the artisanal prerogatives that had until then governed relations between masters and journeymen -- specifically, union control over foremen and the number of apprentices, and union operation of the new machines.

Conflicts arising from rules regarding foremen and apprentices were usually localized and brief. The union insisted on the accountability of shop foremen to the union. To control the foreman, himself a union member, was to control the person who hired men and supervised the work process. In December 1898 a certain McCormick, foreman for the Winnipeg Telegram, was hauled before a union meeting for letting the Telegram management exert control over the engaging and discharging of men. This was in contravention both of the international and local union by-laws. As well, the Telegram chapel was chided for not more vigilantly defending union regulations in this matter. McCormick apologized for his dereliction of union duties at a later meeting and agreed to abide by the regulations in future.⁹⁸ The foreman was also entitled to union protection. In February of 1897, for example, the composing staff of the Nor'Wester walked out over the firing of the foreman J.B. Mitchell for submitting an excessively high wage bill to the management. In the People's Voice, Steuart speculated that the Nor'Wes-

⁹⁸ WTU, Minutes, 3 December 1898, 6 December 1898, WTU Papers, PAM.

ter had discharged Mitchell because he "stood by his union when put to the test."⁹⁹

The union insisted on controlling apprenticeships for two reasons. The first was to prevent journeymen being displaced by less skilled and lower paid young apprentices. Hence union negotiators bargained for a fixed ratio of journeymen to apprentices. This ratio was diluted over time, however.¹⁰⁰ The second reason was to control the training of apprentices. It was in the union's interest to turn out apprentices well taught in all aspects of the trade so as not to provide employers with a pliant pool of semi-skilled operatives. Thus union members were obliged to instruct apprentices who were members of the union.¹⁰¹ This concern eventually led in 1903 to an amendment to the WTU constitution to provide that "apprentices in newspaper offices be given an opportunity to learn their trade properly, and that they be not kept at any one branch of the trade for a longer period than six months."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ People's Voice, 6 February 1897.

¹⁰⁰ In 1889, no more than 2 apprentices for every 10 journeymen were allowed in each office. By 1900, the WTU adopted the limit of 2 apprentices for every 5 journeymen, or 3 for every 10, as its bargaining position in negotiations. WTU Constitution, WTU Papers, PAM; Minutes, 6 January 1900, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹⁰¹ WTU, Constitution, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹⁰² WTU, Minutes, 2 May 1903, WTU Papers, PAM.

Exerting union jurisdiction over apprentices and foremen was a part of a general desire among union printers to control both entry into the trade and the conduct of those already in the trade. To have failed to do this would have been to court disaster for the union itself. The question of new technology was addressed in the same manner. Printers like Puttee did not resist the introduction of new technology into shops and objected to employers who characterized them as Luddites. In 1905 Puttee rejected a master printer's charge that union men would not operate his new linotype typesetting machines by saying that "the Typographical union has no more objection to machinery than the engineer to steam, it is part and parcel of his profesh [sic]."¹⁰³ A People's Voice editorial nine years earlier argued that the union granted the new linotype machines were inevitable but insisted employers also concede that the men had "the right to control and minimize the evil effects" of the new machines in their competition with "old time mechanics."¹⁰⁴ Implicit was a recognition of "the right of the proprietor to get his type set in the most suitable and cheapest manner." But this right had to be limited by "the demands of reasonable fairness between man and man."¹⁰⁵ To the union "reasonable fairness" meant ensuring union men operated the new machines, and that they were paid "an equitable and just

¹⁰³ Voice, 3 February 1905.

¹⁰⁴ People's Voice, 25 September 1896.

¹⁰⁵ People's Voice, 8 September 1894.

scale of wages."¹⁰⁶

This was the policy the WTU pursued in its dealings with employers.¹⁰⁷ When the Free Press first introduced its Rogers machines in 1894, the union and the management had agreed to a six month contract providing for their operation by union men. However, on the expiration of this deal in March of 1895, the union went to the brink of a strike resisting the Free Press and Tribune managers' attempt to reduce the piece rate of the machine operators to levels below those paid to the lowest paid handsetters. The papers and the union agreed to a compromise reduction in the piece rate only after considerable negotiation and the intervention of the ITU district organizer.¹⁰⁸ The People's Voice saw the compromise as a vindication of the union's fair demands, and proof that the managers' original propositions were "ill-timed and unjust, even in the face of 'hard times.'" In view of this it was quite evident that the employers "could not stand a contest for public favor."¹⁰⁹

Bickering over piece rates in fact amounted to bickering over the pace of work. The WTU followed ITU policy by moving from traditional piece rates to time payment for machine

¹⁰⁶ People's Voice, 25 September 1896.

¹⁰⁷ Operation of typesetting machines by union journeymen had been the policy of the ITU since 1889. Barnett, The Printers: A Study in American Trade Unionism, p. 198.

¹⁰⁸ People's Voice, 16 March 1895.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

operators. This was intended to ensure a fair wage at a pace of work considered comfortable by the traditional standards of the handsetter.¹¹⁰ Quite clearly, however, the machines could be operated at a faster pace than the standard set by the union. In the late autumn of 1896 the Tribune tested this standard and provoked a strike-lockout. The strike provided a test both for the union's policy of union control of machines, and for the value of arbitration in union-employer disputes. It also provided Puttee's greatest trial as secretary of the WTU.

The Tribune strike was sparked by a breakdown in the arbitration process that had been designed to avert strikes. In early November, the Tribune had unsuccessfully attempted to impose a reduction in the piece rate for its Rogers machine operators without reference to the union. The men called in Puttee, rightly assuming that any change in the rate would affect all other unionized Rogers operators in the city. He gained the Tribune management's agreement to submit the question to an arbitration board composed of one representative appointed by each side and a third selected by the former two. An amicable solution was thwarted when a majority of the board handed down an award clearly favouring the Tribune's position and reducing the rates to levels below those of other union operators in the city. A minority report submitted by George Saults, the WTU representative,

¹¹⁰ Barnett, The Printers: A Study in American Trade Unionism, pp. 132-133.

denounced the other members of the board for not considering the union's argument and basing their award on secret information about the Tribune's financial status that had not even been formally presented to the board. On 3 November the Tribune's six union compositors rejected the majority's arbitration award and walked out. In response, the Tribune brought in non-union printers and continued publishing.¹¹¹

The Tribune argued that the union men were overpaid. At public meetings and at meetings of the WTLC, Puttee and other WTU representatives argued that operators should not be expected to take lower wages than job printers setting type by hand. Their work, after all, was made more difficult by the risks to their health caused by relentless work at the new machines and the poisonous gases emanating from the molten metal used in casting line slugs.¹¹² Himself a Rogers machine operator at the Free Press, Puttee knew intimately the stresses created by the new linotype technology.

By 5 November the WTLC had fully endorsed the union's decision. As well, plans were laid for a daily strike paper to convey the union's position to the public.¹¹³ Equally important, the People's Voice reported that:

¹¹¹ People's Voice, 7 November 1896, 14 November 1896.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ People's Voice, 14 November 1896, 21 November 1896, 28 November 1896.

The merchants and business men are expressing the keenest sympathy in the cause of the strikers, and it is distressing to many self-respecting citizens who have been political or personal friends of the managers of the paper to have to take a stand against them because of the grasping greed and dishonest trickery of the publishers.¹¹⁴

Perhaps for this reason, a settlement was reached on 28 November. The Tribune agreed to pay the union's proposed weekly rate of nineteen dollars. But union members were compelled to work beside a certain Sutherland, a non-union printer who retained his job at the expense of one of the strikers.¹¹⁵ The new weekly wage rate protected the operators against management dictation of the pace of work, an important victory, but the presence of Sutherland remained a sore point. A year later, after the Tribune had refused to replace him and another non-union man with union operators, the WTU reluctantly decided to accept them into the union. The only alternative was to strike.¹¹⁶

The decision to unionize the "rats" indicates the lengths the WTU would go to maintain its hold on the composing room. In the next few years it also opposed or restricted attempts by city papers to exchange pre-prepared advertising matrices, thus ensuring each shop would have to reset identical copies.¹¹⁷ As well, it attempted to find positions for its

¹¹⁴ People's Voice, 28 November 1896.

¹¹⁵ People's Voice, 28 November 1896.

¹¹⁶ WTU, Minutes, 9 October 1897, 15 December 1897, 8 January 1898, WTU Papers, PAM.

displaced members by asking employers to hire journeyman printers as proofreaders.¹¹⁸

By the beginning of the twentieth century, as it became clear that technological changes would continue, the printers were laying plans to ensure continued union ability to control the work process. In 1901 WTU members were allowed to practice for one hour per day on new machines.¹¹⁹ And in 1903 a committee was struck to consider ways and means of conducting a technical school to "teach [members] the theoretical side of the trade."¹²⁰ Beginning in 1908 the ITU offered a course in printing, the intention to journeymen compositors specialized design and artwork skills to thus prevent the entry of commercial artists and designers into the composing room.¹²¹ Puttee favoured the extension of this principle to include public technical schools that would teach apprentices "the whole of a trade." Such technical education, he told a Royal Commission, "would interest a boy in the art of his trade" so that "he would no longer be willing to stand at a machine all day long." He noted that a man who found pleasure in skillful work "makes a better

¹¹⁷ WTU, Minutes, 7 February 1903, 2 January 1904, 6 February 1904, 5 March 1904, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹¹⁸ WTU, Minutes, 2 November 1901, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹¹⁹ WTU, Minutes, 4 May 1901, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹²⁰ WTU, Minutes, 4 April 1903, 6 June 1903, WTU Papers, PAM.

¹²¹ Voice, 26 June 1908.

citizen, and thus the community benefits in the end."¹²²

Even in the 1890s the printers still appealed to the strengths derived from an artisanal tradition. The most important element of this was an adherence to the customs of craft control of craft work, essential to the bargaining strength of the union. Craft control and craft ideology also reinforced the printers' demands to be recognized as skillful and valuable members of a community of producers that included employers. In the event of conflict, the printers chose to appeal not only to a tradition of craft prerogatives but also to the standards of the community. This is the significance of words like "fair," "just," "equitable," and "reasonable." They were words of indeterminate definition, but words used as appeals to supposedly accepted standards of behaviour, both inside the trade and in the larger community. Such appeals were to characterize the demands and tactics of Puttee and the Winnipeg labour political movement.

The printers' artisanal background, as inculcated in active work in the WTU, was central to the labourist political course Puttee steered. Provided by his trade with knowledge, literacy, confidence and negotiating experience, Puttee followed the course of numerous other printers into politics. Into that field he carried convictions that served as

¹²² Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education (1913), v. 4, p 2246.

the cornerstones of a labourist political program, an insistence on the political rights of workers as full citizens, and a desire to reform the capitalist economy in the interest of justice for all members of the productive community.

In the 1890s the printers had successfully used their skill monopoly and market strength to exert a limited control over the effects of mechanization in the composing room. The ease with which the typesetting machines deskilled and displaced labour offered them a disturbing forecast of the future direction of industrial change. The Mergenthaler and Rogers machines were simply part of a much broader group of changes affecting the whole economy of North America, changes that had ominous ramifications for the well-being of working people and for democratic society itself. It was in contemplation of these prospects that men like Puttee entered independent labour politics. That North American society in the 1880s and 1890s seemed engulfed in a social and moral crisis was a sentiment expressed by working-class and middle-class reformers alike.¹²³ C. C. Steuart, a man more prone to rhetorical effusions than his successor, Puttee,

¹²³ For information on the varied streams of Canadian reform thought in the 1890s, see: Gene Howard Hornel, "'Fading Beams of the Nineteenth Century': Radicalism and Early Socialism in Canada's 1890s," Labour/Le Travailleur, 5 (Spring 1980), pp. 7-32; Ramsay Cook, "Henry George and the Poverty of Canadian Progress," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers (1977), pp. 143-156; Paul Rutherford, "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform Movement in Canada, 1880-1920," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers (1971), pp. 203-224.

articulated this sense of crisis in an 1896 People's Voice editorial. The aptly termed "industrial revolution," he wrote, was setting in motion

powerful forces ... by which the whole structure of society is being rapidly disintegrated. On the one hand, the introduction of machinery has enabled the unrestrained operation of private ownership to concentrate in the hands of the few all the instruments of producing wealth. [On the other hand,] the individual producer has been driven out by the factory system and the masses of the people has [sic] been brought to a condition of wage slavery, where the only liberty remaining to them consists in the liberty to work for an employer for weekly wages representing less than one third of the value of their labor, theirs only the liberty to die of starvation.¹²⁴

Was this not sufficient reason, Steuart concluded, "for workingmen joining together to advance their own welfare politically?" He was not the first in Winnipeg to raise the possibility of labour political action. A decade earlier the Knights of Labor had reached a similar conclusion.

Craft unions had first become established in Winnipeg during the boom years of 1881-1882, when skilled workers in printing, the building trades and the railway established successful organizations. By 1887 their efforts were complemented by several active locals of the continent-wide Knights of Labor movement. Through their joint participation in a city trades and labour council, the Knights imparted to local unionists a program founded on opposition to monopoly and traditional political partisanship and on the education and organization of all workers regardless of sex, race, or

¹²⁴ People's Voice, 30 May 1896.

skill level. The main tactics for social reform were co-operation, independent labour political action, and the elimination of exploitation and monopoly through government legislation and ownership.¹²⁵

At the base of Knights of Labor doctrine was a producer consciousness that divided society in two classes, the producers and the non-producers, the latter largely composed of monopolists and speculators who lived off the labour of the producers. The Knights sought to reform society by breaking the monopolists' control over the price of commodities and labour and eliminating their illegitimate influence over government institutions. By emphasizing the primacy of labour in any definition of citizenship, the Knights used the traditional values of liberalism to insist on the right of workers to participate fully in government. As workers were synonymous with the people, their demand for political power could not be denied. Likewise, the elimination of monopoly through the taxation of land values and government ownership of railways, telegraph lines, and banks was justified in the name of the good of the community.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Frank Yeo, "An Army of the Discontented: The Knights of Labor in Winnipeg," unpublished paper, 1985; David Specter, "The Knights of Labor in Winnipeg, 1883-1891," Manitoba Historical Society Papers (October 1975), pp. 7-13, PAM.

¹²⁶ For a comprehensive expression of the Knights of Labor program, see Phillips Thompson, The Politics of Labor (New York: Belford Clark, 1887; reprint ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.)

The direct influence of the Knights of Labor over the Winnipeg labour movement was brief,¹²⁷ but their ideas lived on through the unions that had come under their influence, and through future leaders who had been educated and mobilized through its assemblies. As with the day to day experience in craft unions like the WTU, the intellectual ripples caused by the Knights were important in forming the ideology of 1890s labour leaders like Puttee.

From its inception, Puttee was active in Winnipeg labour's movement toward independent political action. In February 1895 the WTLC established a "parliamentary committee" charged with devising ways and means of forming an independent Labour party in Winnipeg.¹²⁸ This resolution was endorsed on 26 February by a meeting attended by about a hundred trade unionists, among them Puttee.¹²⁹ The newly formed Independent Labor Party was soon endowed with a platform comprising planks common to such parties: government ownership of transportation and communications; the initiative and referendum; government labour bureaus; compulsory education; and the legal restriction of working hours.¹³⁰ But the anticipated mass meeting to ratify this platform never took place, and the party failed to contest the Domin-

¹²⁷ The craft unionists left the Knights assemblies in 1888. Specter, pp. 22-25.

¹²⁸ People's Voice, 23 February 1895.

¹²⁹ People's Voice, 2 March 1895.

¹³⁰ People's Voice, 20 April 1895.

ion election in the early summer of 1895. By the end of the summer, the first ILP was moribund.

A second attempt to form a labour party was more successful. At a meeting called by the WTLC parliamentary committee on 4 March 1896, about a hundred people voted to establish the Labor Party of Winnipeg (WLP).¹³¹ Puttee was elected the WLP's first recording secretary, but he later resigned his post because he was unable, perhaps due to family or union responsibilities, to attend all meetings.¹³² But he soon became active in committee and educational work and was elected party statistician in 1898 and second vice-president a year later.¹³³

The object of representation was the original rationale for forming a labour party. According to a People's Voice editorial, the forces of organized capital were arrayed against organized labour. Not only were the strike and boycott, once successful against individual capitalists, not sufficient to battle the trust and joint stock company, but the two old parties were in the thrall of these very forces.¹³⁴ Therefore political action was, as noted by Puttee at one of the ILP founding meetings, a necessary adjunct of

¹³¹ People's Voice, 7 March 1896.

¹³² People's Voice, 25 April 1896.

¹³³ Voice, 12 June 1897, 28 January 1898, 25 February 1898, 13 January 1899, 27 January 1899.

¹³⁴ People's Voice, 26 January 1895.

normal trade union activities. He had, he said, "always upheld unionism, but [now] believed that the new unionism should include political action. Circumstance was forcing unionism to take up politics to hold its own."¹³⁵

On the other hand, labour political participation was also seen simply as an affirmation of the rights of labour to the expression of its own interests by its own representatives. A People's Voice editorial in late 1895 attempted to rekindle interest in a labour party by insisting that, "as working people, our present duty is to see that the rights of the worker are recognized and respected." Hence labour was to be represented in every "parliament supported by the money collected from the people." However, the editorial assured perhaps alarmed middle-class readers that "we do not demand more than our share of this representation, but simply sufficient to ensure that the importance of our needs will receive proper attention."¹³⁶ This could only be accomplished, a later editorial said, by having sympathetic representatives "who understand our needs from having experienced the privations themselves."¹³⁷

Labour political action was thus a matter both of political necessity and of abstract justice. In a letter to the People's Voice that ably exploited the lexicon of liberalism

¹³⁵ People's Voice, 2 March 1895.

¹³⁶ People's Voice, 28 December 1895.

¹³⁷ People's Voice, 30 May 1896.

and social Christianity, future WLP president William Small linked these two factors. Labour, he wrote, had to show that it was "fit to fight the battles of the Lord," and demonstrate its willingness and ability to

take our share in the government of our country and that we believe, that in order to have the best possible government all classes must be represented therein, that we believe that taxation without representation is neither right nor expedient, and that, in taking this stand, we are only demanding what is our just due, and that, it is our only way of obtaining that due and saving ourselves from coming degradation and slavery at the hands of the now existing political parties.¹³⁸

Despite such sentiment, the WLP in the 1890s rarely strayed into electoral politics. It became instead a forum for the discussion of social and economic issues and for the education of the public. This was consistent with the party's second intended function, the "study [of] economic subjects affecting the welfare of labour and the promulgation of information regarding same."¹³⁹ Among its visiting lecturers were Herbert N. Casson, founder of the Lynn Labor Church, Eugene Debs, celebrated American socialist and industrial unionist, and Altweed Pomeroy, president of the Direct Legislation league.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ People's Voice, 23 February 1895.

¹³⁹ People's Voice, 7 March 1896.

¹⁴⁰ Voice, 24 December 1897, 13 October 1899, 23 June 1899.

As chiefly an educational party, the WLP also welcomed non-trade unionists interested in social reform. The new WLP constitution allowed for a non-trade union membership of up to one quarter of the total.¹⁴¹ In fact, in its early existence, it was necessary to start a campaign to attract union members, due to the "disinclination of well known labor men to join the ranks of the party."¹⁴² William Scott, president of the WLP and himself not a union member, noted in 1899 that the party's membership included "lawyers, clerks and business men although it was originated by working men who constitute the majority."¹⁴³

In electoral terms, the party was predisposed to "co-operation with other independent bodies," rather than standing alone against the old parties.¹⁴⁴ The professed aim of the WLP was to "obliterate partyism",¹⁴⁵ and it thus was in accord with the objectives of the farmers' non-partisan movement. In February 1899 Puttee was one of six WLP delegates at the founding convention of a Manitoba chapter of the Industrial Independent Association. Composed largely of farmers once active in the Patrons of Industry, the group's platform consisted of several planks related to land taxa-

¹⁴¹ People's Voice, 7 March 1896.

¹⁴² People's Voice, 25 April 1896.

¹⁴³ Voice, 8 December 1899.

¹⁴⁴ People's Voice, 10 April 1897.

¹⁴⁵ Voice, 8 December 1899.

tion, monopoly, tariffs, and electoral reform. The new chapter unanimously declared its "loyal, undivided allegiance to the freedom and welfare of the people, above all private interests or partisan considerations."¹⁴⁶ Asserting that "the function of government is to promote the public welfare", the Independents argued that partisan governments had allowed "combines, trusts and other monopolies to procure legislation and privileges to the detriment of the great mass of people."¹⁴⁷ In a concluding flourish, they called on "all men of free spirit" to unite to

terminate the practice of government by party dictators, to frustrate the ominous designs of predatory corporations, to free the community from present exactions which rob the people of the fruits of their labor ...¹⁴⁸

This resolution reaffirmed for the WLP delegates like Puttee a view of the world constructed in terms of the producers versus the monopolists, or the people versus the parties. But at the same time they retained the seemingly contradictory notion that labour was a separate class with its own interests. This had been the very rationale for establishing a labour party.

The Industrial Independent Association never survived to test its electoral strength against the "party dictators", and the WLP remained largely an educational group. In the

¹⁴⁶ Voice, 3 March 1899.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

1890s, labour political initiative resided in the WTLC. Through its activity in municipal affairs, Puttee acquired a lasting interest in urban politics and learned some early lessons in running an independent labour electoral campaign.

The WTLC echoed the widespread interest of labour bodies elsewhere in municipal affairs. Its constituency was exclusively urban, and Winnipeg, like most cities in the 1890s, was beset with the problems of urbanization that accompanied the consolidation of industrial capitalism: housing shortages, inadequate and expensive services, poor sanitation, and corruption. As well, the construction of an urban infrastructure, especially in a new city like Winnipeg, implied the employment of hundreds of labourers and craftsmen either directly by the municipal government or through its contractors. The strength of the building trades within the WTLC ensured that it would seek to modify the workers' conditions of employment by utilizing the representative structure of the city government. Municipal politics also offered opportunity. Labour had little hope for political influence in legislatures and parliaments dominated by rural and party interests. Hence independent labour political action flowed into civic affairs, whose modest scale and relative non-partisanship allowed for more direct labour participation.

The WTLC met with initial, if modest, success. In 1895 Charles Hislop, a CPR employee and chairman of the WTLC municipal committee, was elected alderman for Ward 4, an area

with a large working-class population.¹⁴⁹ He retired from city council on the expiration of his term of office at the end of 1897. The 1897 labour campaign to fill his place raised questions central to the WTLC's desires for municipal reform and reflected its assertiveness in the civic arena. During the months leading up to the December 21 polling day, labour's right to even token representation on city council was challenged. As well, aldermanic and mayoralty candidates were confronted with an issue that impinged directly on labour's municipal reform position, the letting of contracts on public works projects. After the election, a Free Press editorialist grumbled that "appeals to the jealousies and prejudices of workingmen were the sole stock in trade" of most candidates in the campaign.¹⁵⁰

From its inception the WTLC had attempted to regulate the wages and supply of labour on public works.¹⁵¹ In the summer of 1895 the WTLC's efforts succeeded, to the limited extent that the city council agreed to insist on a minimum wage of seventeen and one half cents per hour being paid to all labourers employed by city contractors.¹⁵² But the WTLC really wanted an end to the letting of public works contracts in favour of construction directly by the city. Instead of a

¹⁴⁹ People's Voice, 21 December 1895.

¹⁵⁰ Free Press, 22 December 1897.

¹⁵¹ People's Voice, 20 October 1894.

¹⁵² People's Voice, 3 August 1895; Free Press, 1 February 1898.

contractor supplying labour, which encouraged him to compensate for a low tender by importing labour, paying low wages, and using cheap materials. the city would hire its own day labourers, a practice known as "day labour" or the "day labour system." During the spring and summer of 1897 there developed an alliance between labour and "progressive" aldermen on the side of day labour.¹⁵³ Labour was concerned with fair wages for city labourers and preventing the importation of low wage contract workers. It also desired that public works be built efficiently and free of the corruption that fed the idle capitalist. To middle-class aldermen like A.J. Andrews, efficiency and probity were central; if these could be accomplished while maintaining a fair minimum wage, so much the better.

Andrews ran in the 1897 mayoral election as a workingman's friend, characterizing himself as the champion of day labour.¹⁵⁴ His only opponent was E.F. Hutchings, a wealthy businessman whose endorsement of day labour was counter-balanced by his reputation as an anti-union employer.¹⁵⁵ To make matters worse his campaign was reputedly supported financially by Thomas Kelly,¹⁵⁶ a road-paving contractor with

¹⁵³ Free Press, 11 May 1897, 16 September 1897, 21 September 1897; Voice, 15 May 1897.

¹⁵⁴ Free Press, 13 October 1897, 3 December 1897; Tribune, 22 December 1897.

¹⁵⁵ Voice, 3 December 1897; Tribune, 17 December 1897, 21 December 1897; Free Press, 17 December 1897.

¹⁵⁶ Free Press, 17 December 1897, 18 December 1897; Tribune,

a notorious record of shoddy work, cheated workers, and open opposition to day labour.¹⁵⁷ Four days before the election, Andrews told a public meeting that the campaign was clearly a fight between contract and day labour.¹⁵⁸ WTLC president John Appleton urged "all who had to earn their bread" to vote for Andrews.¹⁵⁹ On 21 December, Andrews was elected by a comfortable majority of 605 votes out of a total of 4151 votes cast. The victor acknowledged that the labour vote, especially that of the Icelandic labourers, had been decisive.¹⁶⁰

The contest for alderman in Ward 4 involved more direct participation by the WTLC and resulted in a heated debate over the alleged "class" or "clique" nature of the candidates. For organized labour Ward 4 was home territory. Stretched out along lines parallel to the CPR yards between Notre Dame and Logan avenues, and containing the working class suburbs in what was then the west end, its population was largely working class. However, the south-eastern end of the ward comprised the city's central business and warehouse district; conflict between the large landowners of the

17 December 1897.

¹⁵⁷ Free Press, 3 July 1897, 9 September 1897, 16 September 1897, 21 September 1897, 1 February 1897; Voice, 10 July 1897, 29 October 1897.

¹⁵⁸ Free Press, 18 December 1897.

¹⁵⁹ Tribune, 20 December 1897.

¹⁶⁰ Free Press, 22 December 1897; Tribune, 22 December 1897.

south-east and the residents of the north and west thus was assured. Labour was resolved to hold one of the two aldermanic seats in the ward, held for the past two years by Hislop. On 18 November William Small was nominated by a public meeting of Ward 4 electors, many of whom were active in the WLP and the WTLC; among the nominators was Puttee.¹⁶¹ By early December both these bodies had offered their official endorsement of his candidacy.¹⁶²

Small's supporters initially emphasized that he was first and foremost a nominee of the electors of the ward, and not of either the WLP or the WTLC.¹⁶³ But this was a difficult position to maintain, especially in view of Small's sterling record in labour organizations. A carpenter employed with the CPR, he had been involved with the earliest Knights of Labor assemblies in the city, and was later an organizer of the American Railway Union, Local 100. At 59 he was past president of both the WTLC and the WLP and also active in temperance reform and the Presbyterian church. Respected by his labour friends as a learned man, he was a regular contributor to the Voice on social, economic and political questions.¹⁶⁴ On the day labour question he hewed close to

¹⁶¹ Voice, 19 November 1897.

¹⁶² Voice, 26 November 1897, 3 December 1897; Free Press, 3 December 1897.

¹⁶³ Free Press, 3 December 1897.

¹⁶⁴ For biographical details on William Small, see People's Voice, 31 August 1895; Voice, 6 January 1905.

the WTLC line. In addition, he wished to abolish the property qualification for civic office.¹⁶⁵

Small's opponents were quick to attack him for being the nominee of a class, and hence, presumably, unfit to represent all the electors. Leading the assault was the candidate E. D. Martin and his supporters. At a public meeting eleven days before the election, Martin said he "had not been brought out by any class, and he thought the working men were making a mistake in bringing out a special candidate." The other candidate, veterinarian W.J. Hinman frankly "admitted that he had been brought out by a class - the respectable, well-thinking class," that no doubt did not include the likes of William Small.¹⁶⁶

Small and his supporters took seriously the charge that he was a class candidate, but they could not decide whether to refute or embrace the label. Small admitted that "the men who earn their living by the sweat of their brow were nominating him."¹⁶⁷ But he had also said that he represented "the laboring classes, the producers, who were really those who paid the taxes," and added that if elected he would not simply "represent ward 4 but the city of Winnipeg," and like Alderman Hislop, act "fairly towards all classes."¹⁶⁸ An ad-

¹⁶⁵ Free Press, 10 December 1897.

¹⁶⁶ Free Press, 11 December 1897.

¹⁶⁷ Free Press, 14 December 1897.

¹⁶⁸ Free Press, 11 December 1897.

vertisement for Small in the Voice made no mention of his labour support, choosing instead a cross-class appeal for municipal efficiency and honesty.¹⁶⁹

In a lecture to the WLP on 9 December, he said the goal of all governments should be "a government of the people, by the people and for the people." That this had not been achieved was evident by the necessity for a labour party.¹⁷⁰ A front page Voice article picked up on the theme that Small was a representative of all the people, not a single class.

In or out of season, he has always been known as the advocate of the rights of the people as against those of monopoly in any and every form, and he has also been known in more than one instance to stand out in opposition to the demands of the workingmen who are nominating him when their demands appeared to him to be unreasonable or unjust ...¹⁷¹

But the Voice article also implied that working people were a distinct class, albeit a majority, and hence deserved at least token representation in government. In this vein, Small was not "usurping the rights of any of the less numerous classes," but merely ensuring that wage-earners, who formed "the great mass of the people" and not a "clique," were represented alongside the business class. "We do not ask you even a fair representation in proportion to our interests," the article implored Small's critics, "but we do demand recognition, and the election of Mr. Small only es-

¹⁶⁹ Voice, 10 December 1897.

¹⁷⁰ Free Press, 10 December 1897.

¹⁷¹ Voice, 17 December 1897.

tablishes that much."¹⁷²

Small and his supporters counter-attacked by attempting to pin the class stigma on Martin. If successful, Small could have emerged as the champion of the whole community against sectional class interests. Thus, simultaneous with the charges hurled against Small, Martin's opponents from all camps had assailed his connections with the Liberals, the board of trade and the jobbers' union.¹⁷³ A drug wholesaler, Martin had close connections to the local Liberal machine; the Voice even produced evidence that Martin had been nominated at a Liberal meeting.¹⁷⁴ To labour, party politics meant only manipulation and the danger of graft, fears exacerbated by the political spoils possible from upcoming construction of a new waterworks system.

By the final week of the campaign, the electoral situation in ward 4 was clearly polarized. Small had had to deny charges of disloyalty, and had been accused of being a socialist.¹⁷⁵ The Voice, on the other hand, warned electors that

A vote against Small in this campaign is a direct strike against day labor, and fair wages, and will be felt by laborers and skilled mechanics, organized and unorganized alike.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Free Press, 17 December 1897.

¹⁷⁴ Voice, 3 December 1897, 17 December 1897.

¹⁷⁵ Free Press, 17 December 1897; Tribune, 18 December 1897.

The final ballot count gave Martin 642 votes to Small's 468, with Hinman trailing with 362.¹⁷⁷ It was clearly a setback for labour. Polling only one third of the votes cast, Small astutely attributed his loss to the vote of non-resident property owners,¹⁷⁸ testimony to the need for reform in the franchise laws to eliminate multiple and non-resident voting. The Voice concluded that "a distinct cleavage between the two classes" had developed in Ward 4.¹⁷⁹ But blame for this lay not with labour but with the very capitalist newspapers that so sanctimoniously condemned class politics.

It is all very well for hypocritical newspapers to talk about no class distinctions at our council board, but they have done more than anyone else to promote this. They have never by word or deed assisted in having a tradesman elected to the council.¹⁸⁰

Earlier, in 1897, Puttee had moved from the particularist world of the WTU to the wider field of labour journalism. In May, he joined with fellow typos Harry Cowan and Gustavus Pingle in purchasing the financially troubled People's Voice, organ of the WTLC. Established in 1894 by C. C. Stuart, a young printer from Ontario, the People's Voice had developed a solid record of political independence, advocacy of social reforms, and support for trade unionism. Under

¹⁷⁶ Voice, 17 December 1897.

¹⁷⁷ Free Press, 22 December 1897.

¹⁷⁸ Voice, 24 December 1897.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Puttee, Cowan and Pingle, the paper was renamed the Voice, but retained the old editorial policy.¹⁸¹

The Voice was edited and managed by Harry Cowan in the first year. Puttee's role was unclear,¹⁸² but in May 1898 another financial crisis resulted in his assumption of full managerial and editorial control.¹⁸³ Puttee set about to improve the paper's economic viability. Moving easily from journeyman to master printer, he reported by the end of the year that the Voice had seen its best year ever, due largely to an increase in the patronage of the Voice Publishing Company's job printing division.¹⁸⁴ As in the future, job printing subsidized the operations of the Voice, whose subscription fees and limited advertising could barely cover costs. Perhaps with a view to increasing the firm's output and productivity, Puttee installed a new Thorne typesetting machine in the office. There was apparently little reluc-

¹⁸¹ Steuart was hired as a customs clerk in 1898: Voice, 25 November 1898. For an early biography of Steuart, see People's Voice, 1 September 1894.

¹⁸² There are no records remaining from the Voice office. Information on the internal structure and operations of the paper has been pieced together from occasional references in the paper itself. A brief history of the Voice may be found in the Voice, 12 June 1914.

¹⁸³ Harry Cowan subsequently moved to British Columbia, soon after becoming president of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. In 1899 he started a paper in Atlin, B.C., but by 1902 he was again in Vancouver as business manager of the Vancouver Independent. Voice, 6 May 1898, 31 March 1899, 11 April 1902. For an early biography, see People's Voice, 1 September 1894.

¹⁸⁴ Voice, 30 December 1898.

tance to use such a labour saving device. A brief item in the Voice called the new machine "a marvel of an ingenious idea carried out successful [sic]" and invited the curious to see it in operation each morning in the Voice office.¹⁸⁵

As Voice editor, Puttee continued the policies of his predecessors. Soon after assuming the editorship, he published an editorial reaffirming the paper's role as an "independent journal" and an advocate of the interests both of labour and the "whole people".

The aims and objects of the "The Voice" remain ever the same. To support and maintain Unionism; not deluding ourselves that this is a cure for the evils that press heavily on the worker, but knowing that in it there is a sure means of protection from oppression in its individual form and enables men to keep their own respect and demand it from others. In the wider field of labor reform, political reform, state and municipal ownership; we fearlessly advocate those things which make for the good of the whole people and which will eventually come to pass as the people can be brought to realize their needs.¹⁸⁶

Puttee used the Voice as an educational tool. He reprinted articles on the benefits of trade unionism from the journals of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the major international unions. Locally, he published practical information for workers about local union business and conditions in the trades. In the "wider field of labor reform", Puttee offered an eclectic selection, choosing, he said, to "keep

¹⁸⁵ Voice, 17 June 1898.

¹⁸⁶ Voice, 17 June 1898.

away from creeds and denominational fences."¹⁸⁷ He admitted that the Voice occasionally contained controversial articles but insisted this was in order to "give expression to the broadness of the labor movement."¹⁸⁸ The diverse contents of the Voice reflected Puttee's intention to "not only bind together ... those engaged in forwarding the labor interests, but to attract all who are working for social reform."¹⁸⁹

The specific issues Puttee chose to address reflected his experiences in union and political work, as well as the prevailing reform ideas of the 1890s. Reflecting the producerist critique of capitalism, he opened the Voice's pages to demands for the taxation of land values, popularized by the American Henry George,¹⁹⁰ and for reform of the currency and banking system.¹⁹¹ In both cases the issue was the control of a valuable resource, land or credit, by a powerful monopoly that exploited producers, be they workers, farmers or independent businessmen. (Anti-monopoly was central to Puttee's program for social reform and was accompanied by a consistent advocacy of government ownership.) Like western farmers he attacked the monopolistic position of the Canadi-

¹⁸⁷ Voice, 9 September 1898.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Voice, 13 October 1899.

¹⁹⁰ Voice, 13 January 1899, 9 June 1899, 16 June 1899. Articles questioning the value of the "single tax" on land as a social reform were also printed: Voice, 8 September 1899, 29 September 1899.

¹⁹¹ Voice, 24 June 1898, 19 August 1898, 4 August 1899.

an Pacific Railway¹⁹² and demanded an end to the government land grants and subsidies that supported it.¹⁹² On a more modest level, he called for a municipally owned electricity plant and the replacement of the contract system by day labour on street paving work.¹⁹³ In all these issues, however, Puttee did not simply demand changes, but attempted to describe and explain social problems and demonstrate the necessary means for change.

Such an appeal to the ability of his readers to come to a reasoned understanding of economic and political issues was apparent in Puttee's campaign to improve the mechanisms of political democracy. For months in 1898 he published an "Electoral Reform" column that described in detail new systems of proportional representation and multiple voting that would shatter the electoral dominance of the two old parties.¹⁹³ He was thus an advocate of direct legislation, usually referred to as the initiative and referendum, which he also saw as a "John the Baptist reform" that would empower the people to proceed with more thorough-going social reforms.¹⁹⁴ But Puttee saw direct legislation as more an ad-

¹⁹² Voice, 10 June 1898, 7 October 1898, 17 March 1899, 23 June, 1899.

¹⁹³ For example, see: Voice, 12 August 1898, 2 September 1898, 30 September 1898, 20 January 1899.

¹⁹⁴ Voice, 23 June 1899. See also: Voice, 12 August 1899, 26 August 1899. At the 1899 TLC national convention, Puttee seconded two successful resolutions putting abolition of the Senate and implementation of the initiative and referendum in the TLC platform. TLC, Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session of the Trades and

junct to the representative system than a replacement, a check on the actions and intentions of elected government officials. His advocacy of this reform never distracted him from work for labour representation in existing representative bodies.

Socialism also found its way into the pages of the Voice. Reports on a Ruskinite socialist colony in Saskatchewan were printed regularly, and the Winnipeg branch of the Canadian Co-operative Commonwealth sold its literature and held its meetings in the Voice office.¹⁹⁵ As well, Puttee offered Voice readers a joint subscription with the Ontario socialist paper Citizen and Country.¹⁹⁶ In publicizing socialism Puttee relied heavily on the Englishman Robert Blatchford's "Letters to Workingmen", which appeared weekly in the Voice. He termed Blatchford an "able and forcible writer" whose letters were "the best means to inform of what Practical Socialism is to the English mind." He especially admired Blatchford's conviction that "Practical Socialism is [only] practical when the people want it." His consequent emphasis on the education of public opinion corresponded well to Puttee's own methods.¹⁹⁷ Puttee also acknowledged debts to John Ruskin and Edward Bellamy, but he remained coy about his own

Labor Congress of Canada (1899), pp. 19, 26 [Hereafter cited as TLC, Proceedings (1899)].

¹⁹⁵ Voice, 27 May 1898, 14 October 1898, 20 January 1899.

¹⁹⁶ Voice, 15 September 1899.

¹⁹⁷ Voice, 13 May 1898.

thoughts on socialism.¹⁹⁸ While defending it from those who charged that under socialism "drones would receive as many rewards as the skilled and the industrious,"¹⁹⁹ he never fully embraced it. He once wrote that "it does not matter very much what name you call a thing by, what it is in reality is of importance."²⁰⁰ He generally preferred concrete proposals for specific reforms to what he perceived to be doctrinal and semantic debates over comprehensive socialist programs.

By the end of the 1890s Puttee's views on social relations and social change were firmly established. In relations between employer and worker, the bounds for proper conduct were largely expressed in moralistic language. In 1898 he termed a local clothing manufacturer "morally, but not legally, a thief" because of the low wages he paid his female workers making firemen's suits for the City of Winnipeg.²⁰¹ He used the common image of the sweat shop to impugn the morality of the employer.

It is one of the most hideous abominations of modern civilization and of course the natural product of unbridled competition. A place where men and women, youth and girls, are driven by necessity to work ... sometimes night and day, for a mere pittance, a few pennies, a sum which precludes all possibility of maintaining a decent animal subsistence, leaving all else out. A place where a man

¹⁹⁸ Voice, 7 April 1899, 24 January 1900.

¹⁹⁹ Voice, 29 December 1899.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Voice, 13 May 1898.

regardless of all humanity is living on the sweat and toil and misery of his fellow creatures ...²⁰²

He appealed to the compassion of aldermen to ensure that the "producer is getting a fair share" and to not contribute public sanction or monies to exploitative conditions.²⁰³ Following the general principle that the operations of business and industry "should be subordinate to the needs and happiness and well-being of the citizen,"²⁰⁴ Puttee's main action in the situation was to demand the union label on city uniform contracts.²⁰⁵ While professing no belief in the union label as a panacea, he considered it only just that the poor, like lawyers and doctors, should be able to collectively regulate the conduct of their trade.

Puttee believed there was a mutuality of human interests in the common experience of labour. While he could rail against the monopolist or the sweater, the "classes" oppressing the "masses", he was clear that the vast majority of people could be regarded as the true producers of society. This was articulated in his 1898 Labour Day editorial:

Labor is sovereign, Labor is king, and on this day the king walks abroad in state. To make good this view we must of course regard Labor in a broad and liberal way, ... as including every honest human effort that contributes to the material or mental wealth of society. The mandate to labor is universal whether we regard it or not, but much evil has

²⁰² Voice, 24 June 1898.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Voice, 24 March 1899.

²⁰⁵ Voice, 24 March 1899, 31 March 1899.

been done by regarding labor as a curse and a ban. This is a result of labor being robbed not only of its rightful remuneration and share of the wealth produced, but of its dignity. Our constituency is the producer in every field, it is this, wide view of the question which gives to the labor movement its universal importance, and removes from it all that is narrow and sectional.²⁰⁶

Despite the entitlement of the producers, as the majority, to respect and self-government, Puttee believed this to be usurped by a form of class rule. Domination of government by sectional interests divided what should have been a unified community. Only when the producers themselves ruled would these divisions be eliminated.

When our legislators ... manifest one half the concern for living and suffering men and women as they do for the narrow but powerful interests of wealth ... we shall be well on our way to a higher civilization, and we may begin to see that all true human interests are not in the nature of things antagonistic, but mutual.²⁰⁷

Drawing on the liberal tradition, Puttee saw the necessity of this community of producers entering politics and taking responsibility for its own government out of the hands of the "interests" and their client parties. "Politics," he wrote in 1899, "is the combined art and science of living in communities. Any office, duty or relationship affecting the common interest or welfare must ... be regarded as political."²⁰⁸ Citing the "inevitable and automatic" tendency of

²⁰⁶ Voice, 2 September 1898.

²⁰⁷ Voice, 31 March 1899.

²⁰⁸ Voice, 8 September 1899.

the division of labour to result in the "increasing co-ordination of human efforts," he noted an "increasing interdependence of the political unit upon the political whole."²⁰⁹ The recognition of this view of the community, he continued, was a representative government based on the belief that "our governments reflect the will of the people."²¹⁰ But pointing to the control of legislatures by powerful and oligarchic political parties, he argued that the intentions of representative government were being frustrated. He appealed for "an intelligent interest on the part of the individual elector" to challenge "corrupt and unjust" party rule and assert a "higher and truer form of government."²¹¹ "Our complex and inseparable interests," he concluded, "demand of us that we qualify ourselves for the office of governing ourselves and make our legislatures as sensitive to the common will of the people as the magnetized needle to the pole."²¹²

Puttee's reference to the "increasing interdependence of the political unit on the political whole" was an allusion to the need for labour representation in the Canadian parliament. At the 1899 convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC), he had helped gain approval for a WLP

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

resolution calling for co-operation between trade unionists and other reformers to send representatives to legislative bodies.²¹³ Within months Puttee found himself in the midst of just such a contest for a vacant seat in the House of Commons. During the course of the next few years, his political activities at the national level were informed by his formative experiences in the 1890s.

²¹³ TLC, Proceedings (1899), p. 26.

Chapter IV

PARLIAMENTARY YEARS: 1900-1904

A.W. Puttee was first elected to the Canadian House of Commons in a bye-election in January 1900 and was returned again in the general election later in the same year. He was defeated by the Liberal candidate in the 1904 general election. This chapter will examine the positions Puttee adopted in the House on what he considered the major issues before the country. As an "Independent Labor" MP, he elaborated on the themes and issues raised by himself and his fellow craftworkers and helped to define the direction of labourist politics.

Winnipeg labour's first tentative forays into electoral politics in the 1890s were not auspicious, but they had sustained the notion of independent labour politics in the minds of labour intellectuals like Puttee. The death of the Liberal MP for Winnipeg in 1899 and the inability of both the Liberal and Conservative parties to run official candidates in the ensuing bye-election created a political void that labour was able to fill. Puttee termed the upcoming bye-election "the opportunity of a lifetime," and urged the WLP to call a nomination meeting.²¹⁴ He initially declined

²¹⁴ Voice, 24 March 1899.

private invitations to accept the candidacy, less likely out of coyness than an unwillingness to disrupt his business and family life, and expressed his preference for the journalists' role of advisor and educator.²¹⁵ But William Small, perhaps the logical first choice as labour candidate, was elderly and infirm, with no money to run a campaign.²¹⁶ Because of his community prominence as the editor of the Voice and as a key figure in the WLP and WTLC, Puttee was a natural alternate choice. As he was self-employed, he was also more free than most workingmen to conduct a campaign.

Puttee was unanimously nominated in June 1899 by a joint meeting of the WLP and WTLC, though he was the official candidate of neither body. Throughout his parliamentary years he styled himself an "Independent Labor" representative, reflecting his ambiguous intention to both represent labour and act as the non-partisan representative of the "people". While he offered himself to "the west" as "an independent man capable of understanding the needs of the whole people," he also promised to use the platform of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC) as the model for his own.²¹⁷ Thus, from the beginning of his parliamentary career, Puttee articulated the central contradiction of labourism.

²¹⁵ Voice, 28 April 1899, 5 January 1900.

²¹⁶ Voice, 6 Januray 1905.

²¹⁷ Voice, 23 June 1899.

Puttee eagerly embraced his new role as candidate. In an editorial, he noted that the nomination of a parliamentary candidate in defiance of party control of the House was a signal that "Labor has crossed the Rubicon."²¹⁸ His message to the readers expressed his hope that the Independent Labor campaign would transcend, indeed reject, class interest in favour of rule by the people for all producers.

[W]e have had strictly class legislators from the beginning of our parliamentary institution. ...The people are being despoiled of their natural inheritance almost as fast as our government can hand out its nefarious favors, and all natural opportunity is being rapidly covered by the blanket of monopoly. This can only be made profitable to the robber and despoiler by the degradation of labor. The people are weary of the empty conventional promises of party candidates, and labor now says let us do something, "Let us realize," let the members of our legislatures be our servants to express our real wish and purpose.²¹⁹

In so launching his campaign, Puttee appealed "to labour and to the electorate generally, to all who believe in or desire just and equitable government [to s]trike for manhood, for justice and an equal citizenship."²²⁰

The January 1900 bye-election campaign was staged with apparently minimal public interest. Laurier's government was nearing the end of its term and a general election was expected later the same year. Moreover, the absence of candidates from either of the two old parties ensured that the

²¹⁸ Voice, 23 June 1899.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

partisan daily press would accord the race scant attention.²²¹ Puttee's only opponent was labour's old political nemesis E.D. Martin, who had broken with the local Liberals after a dispute with Clifford Sifton. With the support of fellow maverick Liberal R.L. Richardson's Winnipeg Tribune, he conducted a broadly populist campaign, championing western interests and government owned railways and attacking machine politics.²²² Unlike Puttee, however, he made no special appeal to labour and could not claim to have been chosen from its ranks.

Mindful of William Small's experiences in the 1897 civic campaign, Puttee characterized himself as both the labour candidate and the representative of all citizens.²²³ His election manifesto, signed by himself and several WTLC and WLP notables, condemned "bonused corporations, protected manufacturers, favored monopolists and powerful money interests." Warning voters that those interests were "reaping the best returns from your labors, [and] are adding to their wealth and increasing their power to still further enslave and impoverish you," the manifesto located the source of their strength in the "special legislation" granted them by party governments. By contrast, Puttee offered a program that would secure "equity and social justice" for the "work-

²²¹ Free Press, 6 February 1900.

²²² Free Press, 13 January, 20 January 1900.

²²³ Voice, 24 January 1900.

ing, or producing population" of Winnipeg. As the city's "most necessary and numerous class," its claim to representation was a "just and reasonable one."²²⁴ But in his published address to the electors Puttee added that this claim was not to be construed as a wish to "accentuate class distinctions." Rather, he asserted that "when conditions are such that the worker and producer are prosperous and unfettered all other legitimate interests will be amply advanced."²²⁵ If elected he pledged his

best effort and vote will be given to introducing and supporting measures and reforms that will give the largest measure of freedom and equality of opportunity to every citizen to make our common country one in which every worker can make a good living and become a contented citizen.²²⁶

To these ends of "freedom and equality of opportunity," Puttee's platform was equally divided between reforms to broaden and elaborate mechanisms of political democracy, and government measures to ensure equal economic power for workers and producers against employers and monopolists. Most of the planks were similar to those of the TLC.²²⁷

To wrest control of government from powerful special interests and their client party machines, and to ensure workingmen received a fair share of political representation,

²²⁴ Voice, 12 January 1900

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ TLC, Proceedings (1899), p.2.

Puttee demanded: universal adult suffrage for all British subjects, regardless of sex or property holdings; the abolition of the Senate; the formation of larger constituencies with proportional representation; and the institution of the initiative and referendum and popular power of veto on all bills.²²⁸ In the economic realm, Puttee favoured public ownership of all "natural monopolies" in transportation and communications, and government issue of currency. He branded all profits made from these areas "an unjust tax on the community for individual benefit," and attacked the granting of public money and lands for such private monopolies as a "crime against the people." To further protect the producing population from monopolists, he favoured "the removal of the burden of taxation from industry and placing it on land values."²²⁹

Puttee's proposals for labour legislation reflected the concerns of craft unionists in the WTLC and TLC. He called for government intervention in several areas where unions had been unsuccessful in their efforts. Most notably, he demanded a legislated eight hour day, a fair minimum wage on all public works, and substantial regulation of the labour market. To aid in the latter, Puttee suggested the formation of a government department of labour that would regulate the movement of workers into and out of local labour markets,

²²⁸ Voice, 12 January 1900.

²²⁹ Ibid.

aiding workers to reach areas requiring labour and discouraging their importation into those areas where labour was abundant. To further control the labour market in the interest of workers, Puttee demanded an end to government assisted immigration, the main beneficiaries of which were "those connected with transportation and land speculation, and those employers to whose profit cheap labor directly contributes." Aside from its role in the labour market, the department of labour was to intervene in relations between labour and capital by providing impartial arbitration and conciliation boards to prevent strikes. To justify the formation of a special department of labour, Puttee appealed to the voters' sense of equity, pointing out that other economic interests, most notably farmers and manufacturers, had their own departments serving them.²³⁰

The campaign leading to the January 25 polling day was not marked by the rancor that was apparent in the 1897 civic contest between Martin and labour. Martin enjoyed the wholehearted support of R.L. Richardson's Tribune.²³¹ Choosing to ignore Puttee, it endorsed Martin's contention that the main points of Puttee's platform were incorporated in his own, making the former's candidacy redundant.²³² The Free Press gave Martin a more qualified endorsement, its editors pre-

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Tribune, 10 January, 19 January, 20 January, 23 January 1900.

²³² Tribune, 13 January, 18 January 1900.

ferring a dissident "independent Liberal" pledged to supporting Laurier's government to a labour man whose ideas and allegiances were more unsettling.²³³ In addition to repeating their argument that class politics had no place in the classless Canadian society,²³⁴ they asserted that Puttee's belief in direct legislation and non-partisan government was antithetical to the "British institutions" that guaranteed essential freedoms and rights. They condemned Puttee's "socialism" for the same reason.²³⁵ Furthermore, they warned workingmen that a man who called himself a labour candidate was generally a "self-seeker" when elected, tending to "desert the labor interest the moment he set foot in the House."²³⁶ It was also implied that Puttee would receive strong support at the polls from Conservative supporters.²³⁷

From the platform and in the pages of the Voice, Puttee and his supporters angrily denied these charges and reasserted his position as the opponent of class legislation for special interests.²³⁸ While Puttee's campaign manager, John Mortimer, admitted the race was "decidedly a workingman's

²³³ Free Press, 4 January, 25 January 1900.

²³⁴ Free Press, 17 January 1900.

²³⁵ Free Press, 17 January, 18 January, 20 January 1900.

²³⁶ Free Press, 17 January 1900.

²³⁷ Free Press, 25 January 1900.

²³⁸ Voice, 17 January, 24 January 1900; Free Press, 15 January, 23 January 1900.

campaign,"²³⁹ the Voice issued a broader appeal with slogans like: "PUTTEE FOR THE PEOPLE! This is the People vs. the schemers."²⁴⁰ Regarding the socialism charge, a supporter calmly pointed to the postal system and said "We are all Socialists, in a greater or lesser degree." He added that "practical socialism strives to bring about equality of rights and liberties, and does not mean the confiscation and distribution of the world's possessions, as many thoughtless, unfair and ignorant opponents would have us believe."²⁴¹ Puttee was also forced to deny a last minute charge of disloyalty, published in both the Free Press and Tribune, for his unenthusiastic support of the dispatch of Canadian troops to the South African War.²⁴²

Despite such charges, and a bout of tonsillitis that kept Puttee housebound for several days near the end of the campaign,²⁴³ the Independent Labor campaign finished strongly. The polling results initially indicated a victory for Martin by a majority of 49, but a judicial recount several days later gave Puttee the victory by a majority of eight votes.²⁴⁴ Swamping Martin in the city's northern working-

²³⁹ Voice, 12 January 1900.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Voice, 24 January 1900.

²⁴² Voice, 24 January 1900; Tribune, 24 January 1900; Free Press, 24 January 1900.

²⁴³ Voice 24 January 1900.

²⁴⁴ Voice 27 January, 2 February, 9 February 1900.

class neighbourhoods, he lost by an equal margin in the affluent south and won narrowly in central Winnipeg. Though the voter turnout had been low, the broad support Puttee enjoyed in the city was indicated by the support of popular three term mayor Horace Wilson and the legal assistance given by former mayor A.J. Andrews during the judicial recount.²⁴⁵

After a hastily arranged sendoff at the Albert Hall February 8, Puttee left Winnipeg for Ottawa, where the House was already in session. As a matter of principle, he refused the free railway pass offered to every MP by the CPR.²⁴⁶ At 32, Puttee was one of the youngest members of the House. While his wife and three young children, Harold, Gertrude, and Dorothy, remained in Winnipeg in a rented house on Alfred Avenue, he took up temporary residence in the capital's Cecil Hotel. In addition to his family, Puttee left behind a solid reputation that augured well for his future performance in the House. A Voice item early in the campaign had described him as "no bawling agitator but an earnest, intelligent, experienced worker in the Labor cause," who stood as a candidate "not from his own wish or choice, but as a matter of duty at the request of the workingmen of Winnipeg."²⁴⁷ At a meeting on the eve of the bye-election, Wil-

²⁴⁵ Voice, 19 January, 2 February 1900.

²⁴⁶ Voice, 2 November 1900.

²⁴⁷ Voice, 5 January 1900.

liam Scott, president of the WLP, pointed to his exemplary private life, most notably his now firm roots in Winnipeg and his abstinence from alcohol. He described Puttee as "a neat, pleasant mannered man, gentle and modest as a woman but in spirit a British lion." He was, he added, "one of the men of Kent, who so often have stood up bravely in defence of the throne and have sometimes bearded the monarch upon it, when their rights were infringed."²⁴⁸ Scott held great stock in Puttee's WTU membership and was convinced he thus could not be bought.

I have faith in a trades-unionist that I cannot place in most others. Our candidate has been bred in the severe discipline of a world-wide, century old organization and will find it hard to divest itself of its restraints. ...If he begins "ratting" the Bricklayers would not think twice of sending down two men to Ottawa to take him "off the job." ... Our candidate wears the [union] label and I cannot conceive of him becoming a scab.²⁴⁹

Puttee took his seat among the Independents on the Opposition side of the House on 13 February, being formally introduced by two Independents from Ontario.²⁵⁰ He had caused some amusement among the members in the House by approaching along the Opposition side of the mace to salute the Speaker, to the applause of the Tories, only to return along the government side to take a seat in "independence corner."²⁵¹ Re-

²⁴⁸ Voice, 24 January 1900.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Canada, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 51 (1900): 319 [Hereafter cited as Debates, 51 (1900)].

flecting on Puttee's ambiguous status in the predominantly partisan House of Commons, a Voice editorial writer suggested that

[i]n a parliamentary sense Mr. Puttee is an Independent. In a political sense he is a Labor member. ...Whilst there are other independents in the house, there are none standing on the same platform. ...[He is] in one sense a party of one, and if he wishes to hold a caucus, can just lean back in his chair and cogitate.²⁵²

Puttee had gone to Parliament promising to represent not only the interests of labour but those of the whole city. This was partly due to tactical necessity, as his riding covered the entire city. But it is also clear that though he preferred to see himself and act as a labour representative, he did not see these actions as inconsistent with the interests of most citizens. Indeed, throughout his five years in Parliament, Puttee attempted to act as a voice for such constituency issues as government services, consumer protection, and public works. He used the House question periods and supply debates to urge the government to improve its postal services in the rapidly expanding city of Winnipeg: to increase the number of letter carriers, raise workers' wages to meet the higher Winnipeg cost of living, and to build a new central post office to accomodate the burgeoning volume of business.²⁵³ He expressed similar grievances about

²⁵¹ Voice, 16 February 1900.

²⁵² Voice, 9 March 1900.

²⁵³ Debates, 52 (1900): 4743; 53 (1900): 8753-56, 8771; 57 (1902): 3884-85; 58 (1903): 438, 666-67; 60 (1903):

inadequate staff, salaries, and facilities for the Customs and Immigration departments in Winnipeg.²⁵⁴ As well, Puttee wrote employment references and presented petitions on various issues from Winnipeg organizations.²⁵⁵ In 1903 he successfully sponsored a private bill enabling the City of Winnipeg to utilize the Assiniboine River to generate hydroelectric power.²⁵⁶ To protect Winnipeg consumers, Puttee demanded more stringent inspection and packaging of coal oil and fruit, both products imported into the west from elsewhere.²⁵⁷ Regarding the most significant public work in the Winnipeg area, the improvement of Red River navigation around St. Andrews rapids, Puttee kept to his election pledge of encouraging its prompt completion.²⁵⁸ But the St. Andrews project was a perennial election plum and throughout Puttee's tenure little work was accomplished despite his

6006-6010.

²⁵⁴ Debates, 52 (1900): 6077, 6080; 56 (1902): 831-32; 63 (1903): 13127; 64 (1904): 696.

²⁵⁵ Puttee to Clifford Sifton, 14 February 1901, 18 February 1901, 20 February 1901, 1 April 1902, 12 April 1902, Clifford Sifton Papers, Public Archives of Canada (PAC). It is not clear whether Sifton heeded Puttee's recommendations. On at least one occasion it is clear he did not: James A. Smart to Puttee, 4 April 1902, Sifton Papers, (PAC). Debates, 55 (1901): 4879-80; 56 (1902): 785.

²⁵⁶ Debates, 59 (1903): 3970; 60 (1903): 5960-71, 6845-46.

²⁵⁷ Debates, 52 (1900): 5111-12, 5882; 54 (1901): 2362; 56 (1902): 1157; 57 (1902): 3301-02.

²⁵⁸ Debates, 56 (1902): 604-07; 58 (1903): 287-88; 59 (1903): 3354; 62 (1903): 10490; 64 (1904): 398; 67 (1904): 7897.

urgings.

Puttee devoted more time to his own platform than he did to routine constituency matters. Seeing himself as an Independent Labor representative not only for Winnipeg but for the entire country,²⁵⁹ he was active in debates over major points of the government's policy and his own platform. Most notable were his positions on labour legislation, the operation of the civil service, electoral reform, tariff and immigration policy, and railway development. They reflected a broad and diverse range of interests that were related to his view of society and government.

Labour legislation was important to Puttee. As early as May 1900 he called on Solicitor-General Charles Fitzpatrick to reinsert a clause in the Criminal Code exempting trade unions from prosecution as combinations conspiring to raise prices. The clause, excised by a Senate committee, eliminated a potent legal threat against the very modus operandi of trade unions. Fitzpatrick claimed the absence of the exemption clause was due to an oversight and agreed to re-insert it.²⁶⁰ Puttee also supported measures to ensure "fair" wages for workers on government contracts and works subsidized with government money, and to provide for the settlement of industrial disputes through government conciliation and arbitration.

²⁵⁹ Tribune, April 24, 1900.

²⁶⁰ Debates, 52 (1900): 5265-66.

In 1897 Postmaster General William Mulock had introduced a resolution to prevent the 'sweating' of workers employed on government clothing contracts. With an eye fixed on the labour vote in the upcoming general election, the Laurier government introduced another resolution in 1900 broadening the terms of the 1897 measure. Formally moved in March by Mulock, the resolution was intended to "prevent abuses" due to the subcontracting of government work or government subsidized work by securing "the payment of such wages as are generally accepted as current in each trade for competent workmen in the district where the work is carried out."²⁶¹

In his first major speech in the House, Puttee declared his accord with the intent of the resolution. He asserted that the principle behind the resolution was "that of justice and fairness between employer and employed."²⁶² While arguing that the government should ensure application of this principle by employing the day labour system on public works rather than using contractors, he admitted the resolution at least "recognizes the responsibility of the government for fair dealing with labour employed in the carrying out of its work."²⁶³ The responsibility of the government to intervene to ensure fair wages was consistent with the conclusions of "the most orthodox political economists,"

²⁶¹ Debates, 51 (1900): 2466.

²⁶² Ibid., 2517.

²⁶³ Ibid., 2518.

he added. It was erroneous to assume that "there is some obligatory law that the pressure of competition ought, without interference from man, to be allowed so to act as to degrade the standard of life of the whole community."²⁶⁴ Drawing on a paper he had heard at the 1898 TLC congress in Winnipeg,²⁶⁵ he quoted Adam Smith, McCullough, and the less-than orthodox Henry George. From George's Protection and Free Trade he read:

Where wages are highest, there will be the largest production and most equitable distribution of wealth. There will invention be most active and the brain best guide the hand. There will be the greatest comfort, the widest diffusion of knowledge, the purest morals and the truest patriotism. If we would have a healthy, a happy, an enlightened and virtuous people, if we would have a pure government firmly based on the popular will and quickly responsive to it, we must strive to raise wages and keep them high.²⁶⁶

Puttee was less enthusiastic about the provisions that were supposed to fulfill the intent of the current wage resolution. While acknowledging that the resolution would probably discourage contractors from importing outside labour to undercut local wage levels, he was displeased with the absence of any provision for penalizing offending contractors.²⁶⁷ As well, he demanded the inclusion of an eight-hour day clause in the resolution, stating that "the government

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 2519.

²⁶⁵ TLC, Proceedings (1898), pp. 18-26.

²⁶⁶ Debates, 51 (1900): 2520.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 2523.

cannot aspire to be a model employer until that principle is included."²⁶⁸ But most importantly, Puttee advised that great care be taken to ascertain the actual current rate of wages in a district, to prevent the unscrupulous contractor from consistently undervaluing labour costs in his bids. To not have "some understanding of the cost of labour," he said, "is unfair to the good contractor, it is hard on the good workman, and it is injurious to the community as a whole." He noted that often the current wage was the union minimum rate, which, due to "the laws of competition," was "the maximum that capital will pay."²⁶⁹ Despite his reservations, Puttee supported the resolution, eventually passed July 17. Over the remainder of his term in Parliament, he frequently rose in the House to demand the government enforce its own policy, including several times regarding the St. Andrews rapids work.²⁷⁰

The Laurier government's current wage resolution was not a revolutionary charter, and Puttee's support for it reveals the limitations of his view of the state and industrial relations. His assent to the resolution implied his acceptance of most income inequality short of the rank forms of exploitation perpetrated by the labour contractor. By linking

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 2522.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 2520.

²⁷⁰ Debates, 51 (1900): 598; 53 (1900): 10024; 54 (1901): 1205-07, 1266-67, 2646; 55 (1901): 3180, 5507-09; 56 (1902): 631; 57 (1902): 3807-09; 60 (1903): 7159-60, 7182-84.

fairness to current, accepted levels of wages, he consented to a perpetuation of the current distribution of wealth and the permanent status of workers as wage labourers. If the current wage was assumed to be the union wage, then fairness was whatever bargain a union could strike for itself within the framework of the capitalist labour market. To Puttee's modest notion of economic justice was added his belief that it was the state's responsibility both to act as a model employer and to act as an impartial arbiter to determine what constituted the current, or fair, wage.²⁷¹ This faith may have been misplaced, judging from the government's apparent reluctance to enforce its own rules, but the belief behind Puttee's support of the current wage resolution was sound. This was a recognition of the need for at least a limit to the free functioning of the labour market beyond that exercised by the trade union. It was also possible that under the continuing pressure of adverse labour market conditions, his quest for fairness might lead to more fundamental questions of social justice.

Puttee's notion of the state²⁷² as impartial arbiter in industrial relations was also apparent in his criticism of the 1900 Conciliation Act and the general manner of settling

²⁷¹ Puttee's position reflected the underlying assumptions of the TLC's approach to the state and industrial relations. See, Paul Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 189-190.

²⁷² Puttee made no analytical distinction between the state and government and used the terms interchangeably.

strikes. Puttee's membership in the WTU had taught him to see virtue in the avoidance of trade disputes through an orderly and "business-like" process of collective bargaining. He believed strikes only disrupted this process and often acted to the employers' advantage. He noted in one 1903 speech in the House that "my experience is that strikes are a loss to the labouring men themselves; that the defeats are too disastrous and that the victories are too dearly bought."²⁷³ Puttee was thus disturbed by the increasing frequency and intensity of strikes that marked the first years of this century. The wrong way for governments to handle strikes was perhaps typified for Puttee by an affair in Valleyfield, Quebec in late 1900. According to his view, a small strike there had been transformed into a riot as a result of the intimidation of strikers by militiamen called out by the mayor supposedly to maintain order.²⁷⁴ Puttee demanded the government investigate the Valleyfield affair and amend the Riot Act to place final approval of dispatches of militia with the Minister of Militia.²⁷⁵ In 1904 he supported amendments to the Militia Act preventing local officials from unilaterally requisitioning troops for local purposes.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Debates, 59 (1903): 2550.

²⁷⁴ Debates, 54 (1901): 85, 2595-2602.

²⁷⁵ Debates, 55 (1901) 3761-63.

²⁷⁶ Debates, 67 (1904): 6512-14; 68 (1904): 8209-10, 8274.

Puttee was convinced that the best solution to strikes, whose undesirability was unquestioned, was government imposed compulsory arbitration.²⁷⁷ Puttee had given the government's 1900 Conciliation Act qualified support, despite being convinced it would be ineffective. He especially disapproved of the voluntary nature of the law. While the department of labour could provide for conciliation on the request of one party, both parties were required to consent to arbitration, and the law did not make observance of an arbitrator's award compulsory. Puttee favoured the "New Zealand principle," wherein either party in a dispute could refer the case to a new industrial court for compulsory arbitration. He believed the results had been satisfactory, and added "the beauty of it is that if you have a strike the strike is in the court room and not in the workshop."²⁷⁸ Puttee nevertheless supported the bill's provision for the formation of a department of labour, and for the publication of the Labour Gazette. Willing to accept a half measure, he concluded: "I am prepared to accept and to apply anything that will in any way relieve this great question of industrial disturbance."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Debates, 57 (1902) 3730-31.

²⁷⁸ Debates, 53 (1900): 9390.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 9387.

The inadequacy of the new law was soon apparent to Puttee. In early 1902 he complained that the department of labour was doing little more than publish the Labour Gazette and had been ineffectual in resolving several bitter disputes.²⁸⁰ In March he introduced his first bill to amend the Act. His proposed amendments empowered the minister of labour to appoint an arbitrator on application of just one party in a dispute, allowed an arbitrator to take evidence under oath, and sought to enlist the support of public opinion in settling disputes by requiring that all arbitration awards be published. As a safeguard to unions, his amendments stipulated that no agreement arrived at through arbitration could compel an employee to give up membership in his union.²⁸¹ The House did not pass Puttee's amendments, nor did it do so when he reintroduced them in 1903.

By 1902 the TLC no longer supported compulsory arbitration of labour disputes.²⁸² Puttee, while admitting that by his continued support he was "not in entire touch with the majority of labour men in this country," insisted that compulsory arbitration was "far better than any process that has yet been tried to do away with strikes."²⁸³ He cautioned labour men on the undue danger and cost of strikes and warned

²⁸⁰ Debates, 56 (1902): 193-94.

²⁸¹ Debates, 56 (1902): 881-82.

²⁸² TLC, Proceedings (1902), p. 2; Voice, 21 December 1900.

²⁸³ Debates, 59 (1903): 2550.

them of their likelihood to increase. But Puttee took care to ensure a place for unions under compulsory arbitration by insisting that no arbitraion award contain a "yellow dog" clause. As well, he insisted that any contract won through arbitration recognize the union, in order that it might act for the second party to see that the terms were carried out.²⁸⁴ But to allay any fears among employers and place compulsory arbitration in the role of contract mediator, he likened the aims and methods of trade unions to those of any business.²⁸⁵

Puttee's faith in the state as model employer and impartial arbiter enforcing equity and fairness in economic relations must be seen in the context of his hopes for a more democratic government and a less partisan, more "business-like" civil service. Puttee first articulated his views on the civil service during the 1900 debate over the government's current wage resolution. Arguing that the government should put its own house in order, as well as that of its contractors, he called for a reorganization of the public service to eliminate patronage, increase wages, and ensure the competence of government employees. He believed that such measures would create "a proper civil service, run on business principles, which would be a credit to the country."²⁸⁶ Given his previous denunciations of partisan poli-

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 2549-53.

²⁸⁵ Debates, 57 (1902): 3730-31.

tics, Puttee's opposition to a partisan civil service is not surprising. As in politics, Puttee saw party influence in the civil service as a betrayal of the public interest. He strongly objected to the alleged participation by civil servants in the 1903 Manitoba provincial election.

It must be looked upon as a scandal under present circumstance that men who are employees of the government, men who, in most cases, have been appointed to the public service because they have records as active partisans - that is the outcome of the party system - should be candidates in another election while still holding public office. This seems to me to amount to a scandal because the public interest is sure to suffer. We cannot expect that, in the heat of an electoral contest these men, can or will deal fairly with the public whose work they are paid to do.²⁸⁷

Puttee also condemned the wholesale dismissal of government employees after changes in government, except in cases of clear incompetence.²⁸⁸

Puttee devoted his most careful attention to the operation of the Post Office. Responding to government proposed amendments to the Post Office Act in May 1902 that would have dropped employees a wage grade as penalty for "inefficiency," he pointed to the partisan patronage system as the true cause of the Post Office's poor record. He recommended the House "take this service away from the influence of politics altogether, and put it on a basis where merit and proper attention to work would be recognized and well

²⁸⁶ Debates, 51 (1900): 2525.

²⁸⁷ Debates, 59 (1903): 3183.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 3182.

paid."²⁸⁹ He sought to eliminate the discretion of a political figure like the Postmaster General over the promotion and demotion of workers.²⁹⁰ As well, he recommended a more orderly and fair system of wage grades.²⁹¹

Though most of Puttee's recommendations went unheeded, he continued to press for reforms of the Post Office and other government departments,²⁹² most notably regarding wages.²⁹³ He was clear that no worker, regardless of skill, should earn wages below a minimum level. In April 1902 he called on the government to set an example for private railways by paying trackmen and labourers on government railways at least \$1.50 per day, enough, he believed, to support a family.

I do not think it is necessary to make any special argument with regard to skill or anything of the kind. It should only be necessary to mention that the work is required to be done and that men have to be employed to do it. I do not think it is right that this government should hire men at any rate of wages which prevents their entering married life.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ Debates, 57 (1902): 4049-50.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 4071-72.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 4070-71.

²⁹² For example, the King's Printer: Debates, 59 (1903): 4207-11.

²⁹³ Debates, 55 (1901): 5460, 5462-63; 65 (1904): 2555; 68 (1904): 8031-32.

²⁹⁴ Debates, 57 (1902): 3706-07.

But Puttee's belief in a minimum living wage regardless of the value of the work performed did not alter his craft-unionist's belief that skill or merit be rewarded. He termed the flat rate paid by the Department of Public Printing, a line of work intimate to him, "that very principle which we object to in trades organizations[,] ...that ability should not be worth more than non-ability."²⁹⁵

The natural counterpart of a non-partisan civil service was a non-partisan Parliament. While Puttee had long been an advocate of direct legislation and proportional representation, his efforts in Parliament were restricted to increasing popular democracy within the current parliamentary system. Shortly after taking his seat in the Commons, Puttee introduced Bill 49 to amend the Dominion Elections Act to "increase the opportunity and ensure the recording of popular opinion." Its principal elements were the abolition of the \$200 candidate's deposit, the adoption of a simple standard ballot, and the extension of polling hours to 8:00 PM in all cities over 10,000 in population.²⁹⁶ His bill was never given second reading, but Puttee raised the same issues in debate over the government's own amendments to the Elections Act later in the 1900 session. The need for a new ballot was obvious to Puttee, as he had almost met defeat in the 1900 bye-election as a result of the labour voters' in-

²⁹⁵ Debates, 59 (1903): 4210.

²⁹⁶ Debates, 51 (1900): 864-66.

experience with the confusing ballots used. The object behind abolishing the candidate's deposit was to allow for a larger number of independent candidates, especially those standing on progressive platforms and without the financial resources of the old parties. In an unstated reference to proportional representation and the prioritized ballot system, he asserted that

[w]e ought to adopt a method of voting by which, no matter how many candidates may run, the one who stands best in the favour of the people would be the chosen one. If the people want a half dozen candidates to run, we have no right to stop them.²⁹⁷

Puttee was most vocal about extending the polling hours on election days. Saying that it was "not in accord with the democratic idea to close the polls at five o'clock," he demanded that "labouring men ... have an opportunity of voting on their way home and on their way to work."²⁹⁸ He argued that the voter should be beholden to no one when he voted, neither to the boss who excused him from work nor to the party man who offered him a ride to the polls.²⁹⁹

Puttee also favoured the enlargement of representation for the new population of the Canadian North-West and was especially adamant in his demand for a more equitable distribution of federal seats in Manitoba. Despite having

²⁹⁷ Debates, 52 (1900): 6760.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 6768.

²⁹⁹ Debates, 52 (1900): 6770; 53 (1900): 9477.

twice the population of most other Manitoba constituencies and the highest ratio of population to representation of any other Canadian city, Winnipeg was given just one member.³⁰⁰ The importance of this issue was great for Puttee, as he had expressed a preference for representing a Winnipeg seat composed only of the working-class portions of the city.³⁰¹

In the separate but related issues of the protective tariff and immigration policy, Puttee continued to emphasize the importance of equity of treatment between labour and capital. But while championing the cause of organized and unorganized labour, he also believed he spoke for the national interest.

On several occasions, Puttee spoke out against the general policy of the protective tariff³⁰² and against duties on specific imported goods.³⁰³ In 1901 he termed a proposed duty on heretofore free unfinished lumber "a most outrageous tax put on the people of the North-West," many of whom were struggling to gain a foothold on new farms.³⁰⁴ But it was during the budget debate of April 1903 that Puttee most clearly outlined what he perceived to be the basic inequity of a protective tariff combined with an aggressive govern-

³⁰⁰ Debates, 62 (1903): 10900.

³⁰¹ Voice, 21 September 1900.

³⁰² Debates, 51 (1900): 2314-16; 54 (1901): 2338-39, 2952.

³⁰³ Debates, 50 (1900): 4921; 60 (1903): 7324-26.

³⁰⁴ Debates, 54 (1901): 1789.

ment immigration policy. Arguing that "the producer, the farmer, the worker" had not been considered in the formation of either policy, he pointed to the manufacturer as the main impetus behind and beneficiary from them. While farmers were forced to pay higher prices for vital agricultural products and supplies, workers were caught in a double bind by the demands of the manufacturer.

He wants protection for the article he manufactures and he wants the fullest freedom in the employment of his labour. He wants the privilege not only to bring in labour but he wants the government to spend more money yet to import labour. He wants the freest of free trade in the one thing he buys, the labour of his fellowman. He wants a bonus against the one thing the workingman has to sell; that is his labour, and yet he wants to have protection for the article he is going to make and going to sell.³⁰⁵

The manufacturers' pretension that protection benefitted labour by increasing employment opportunities was branded by Puttee as "a piece of hypocrisy." Citing the employers' hostility to labour organizations, which "alone have the power to increase wages," he declared that "not only are they desirous of having traps to catch both coming and going, traps that give them power to tax and power to intensify competition in labour, but they want to spike the guns of the labouring men."³⁰⁶ Arguing that the workingman did not want "so much work, he wants a better living and a better opportunity to enjoy life," he suggested that a protective tariff

³⁰⁵ Debates, 58 (1903): 2155-63.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 2162.

would only protect him if the government inserted minimum wage clauses in all tariffs. Furthermore, if the aim of protection was "steady employment, good wages and fair conditions" then government should "take hold of the business for the general benefit," thus pushing the government's assumption behind protection to its logical conclusion.³⁰⁷

In broader terms, Puttee feared the social consequences of the wealth created for the special manufacturing interests through protection. For him, the "success" of the American protection policy served as a warning.

What has protection done in the United States during the last thirty years? It has built up a plutocracy. It has enabled a few to amass fortunes, it has created an aristocratic class in that short time more powerful than the ruling classes in Great Britain. ... High protection has taken from the American people the heritage of that vast continent which should belong to them. It has enabled the wealth produced by the people to be used for the enrichment of a class which is fast becoming all powerful, and which to-day is not only running industries, but owns the government from the bottom to the top. I do not know that we need that kind of aristocracy in this country.³⁰⁸

Puttee's opposition to immigration policy was similarly based on its effects on workers and the country as a whole. At its basic level it was concerned with the labour market and the depressive effect on wages and working conditions of an influx of skilled and unskilled workers. However, this concern was coloured by assumptions about the unsuitability

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 2166.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 2160-61.

of certain ethnic groups for Canadian life, most notably orientals and southern and eastern Europeans. Puttee favoured measures to ensure a decent standard of life for Canadians and immigrants already in the country. But in order to protect the labour market, he sought to end government encouragement of the immigration of British mechanics and unskilled labourers from Europe. As well, he attempted to further restrict Chinese immigration and strengthen the 1897 Alien Labour Act.

In 1902 Puttee questioned why the immigration department, whose policy was supposedly to recruit agriculturalists, had opened an office Birmingham. Noting that "you might as well expect to find [farmers] in Whitechapel," he accused the department of recruiting mechanics and labourers as immigrants.³⁰⁹ In 1904 he called on the government to end the practice of making British shipping company agents sub-agents for the immigration department. He believed the practice had led to the spread of misleading information and the emigration of workers with false promises of employment from agents profiting from the sale of boat tickets.³¹⁰ Puttee estimated that half of the British immigrants to Canada in the previous year did not settle on the land but went to the cities in search of wage work.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Debates, 56 (1902): 2089-91.

³¹⁰ Debates, 65 (1904): 3854-56.

³¹¹ Debates, 67 (1904): 7299-7311.

In addition to curtailing the recruiting activities of the immigration department, Puttee also demanded the strict enforcement and strengthening of the Alien Labour Act to prohibit the importation of foreign labour under contract. This was a position he shared with the TLC. He accused employers of driving Canadian workers out of the country by using foreign workers, often brought to the country under "false representations," as strikebreakers and low wage competition.³¹² The government refused Puttee's request that the Act be extended to exclude contract labour from all foreign countries. The original Act was only applicable to countries with a similar law barring Canadians, specifically the United States.³¹³ In any event, the Senate refused to ratify even the modest amendments that the government had approved.³¹⁴

Combined with his desire to protect the labour market were Puttee's misgivings about the suitability of certain ethnic groups as immigrants. In 1900 he stated that

[w]hile I do not wish to speak disparagingly of any race of men, at the same time, I must say that there are some people we prefer to others as neighbours, who are more desirable settlers and who will make more desirable citizens.³¹⁵

³¹² Debates, 54 (1901): 2466-67; 60 (1903): 7194-97.

³¹³ Debates, 68 (1904): 8603-04.

³¹⁴ Canada, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Senate), (1904): 1235.

³¹⁵ Debates, 53 (1900): 9651-52.

Among the desirables were those from Great Britain and Ireland, northern Europe, and the United States. Among the undesirables were immigrants from southern Europe and southern Russia.³¹⁶ Considered beyond the pale were the Chinese and Japanese.³¹⁷

Puttee was never clear about his criteria for good citizenship. He called for better inspection of immigrants to prevent the entry of those who were "physically undesirable."³¹⁸ He also objected to the financial assistance of immigrants, arguing that "a man who wants so much inducing to come is not the best man. Men who come to our country, who are going to make valuable citizens, are men who are more likely to come of their own volition."³¹⁹ On one occasion he argued vaguely that some groups, especially the Chinese, would lower the "standard of life" in Canada, a statement with not merely economic implications.³²⁰

No doubt ethnocentrism coloured Puttee's views on immigration, just as they did those of most of his contemporaries. But in the case of the Doukhobors, Puttee was able to overcome this perspective. While in March 1899 he had objected to their competition with local labour on a railway

³¹⁶ Debates, 53 (1900): 9651-52; 54 (1900): 2953-54.

³¹⁷ Debates, 52 (1900): 3439; 53 (1900): 8171.

³¹⁸ Debates, 60 (1903): 66567-73.

³¹⁹ Debates, 53 (1900): 9652-53.

³²⁰ Debates, 53 (1900): 8071.

project near Dauphin, Manitoba,³²¹ by August he was full of praise for their affinities to trade unionism. Not only had they refused to deal through employment agents, but they had also used collective passive resistance in a successful strike for a wage increase. In the Voice he remarked that "the trades union doctrine and the Doukhobor practice are not very wide apart there."³²² In the House Puttee defended the Doukhobors against detractors, arguing they were "an intelligent people" of "superior physique."³²³

It is likely that Puttee was sincere in stating that he had no objection to immigration per se, provided it was not simply for the benefit of transportation companies or to the detriment of a fair labour market. On several occasions Puttee demanded that the government ensure fairer treatment of newly arrived immigrants.³²⁴ He also argued that if the government seriously attempted to improve the "conditions of life" of Canadians, immigrants would come without coaxing.³²⁵ He asserted that

if there was a standard of living, if there was a minimum wage and maximum hour for everybody and a fair competitive basis as far as the market is concerned, I do not think there would be any objection to immigration. ...There is no objection to immigration as immigration on the part of

³²¹ Voice, 3 March 1899.

³²² Voice, 4 August 1899.

³²³ Debates, 54 (1901): 2946-48.

³²⁴ Debates, 53 (1900): 9663-64; 58 (1903): 866-68, 1126-27.

³²⁵ Debates, 54 (1901): 2954-55; Voice, 12 January 1900.

anyone. We all wish to see the country properly develop, but there is a decided objection to what is practically the bonusing of competition in the labour market.³²⁶

Puttee was as convinced as most political and business leaders that a second transcontinental railway was essential to the economic development of Canada. He once even referred to the railway locomotive as a "great missionary of civilization."³²⁷ But he was adamantly opposed to the granting of public subsidies to corporations for the construction of railways. These were gifts to special interests seeking private profit and were not in the public interest. Puttee believed railways were within the legitimate purview of government and thus promoted government ownership and operation for the public good.

In his first three years in the House, Puttee consistently spoke out against the subsidization of private railway companies. This "bonus system," he argued on one occasion, had "resulted in erecting giant corporations whom even this government seems powerless to control, and which have such a power that they are fast becoming a menace to political freedom in this country."³²⁸ The public was justly suspicious, he noted in 1901, of a Parliament whose members received free passes from railway companies while granting

³²⁶ Debates, 54 (1901): 2949.

³²⁷ Debates, 61 (1903): 9128.

³²⁸ Debates, 53 (1900): 9937. See also: 58 (1903): 456-57; 63 (1903): 14380.

subsidies and other favours to those same companies.³²⁹ Puttee also opposed granting further concessions to the CPR, which in 1903 still held 165,000 acres of tax exempt land in Manitoba alone.³³⁰

In May 1901 Puttee launched his first sustained attack on the subsidy system, when he urged the House not to pass a bill ratifying an agreement between the Manitoba government and the Canadian Northern Railway (CNR). He was convinced the agreement shouldered Manitoba with great financial liabilities in return for very little.³³¹ He was also convinced that Roblin's government had approved the agreement with indecent haste and had not properly consulted Manitobans. Presenting resolutions from Winnipeg city council, several municipal councils, the Winnipeg Board of Trade, the WLP and WTLC, and several public meetings,³³² he argued that opposition to the agreement was non-partisan, and included "the greater portion of the intelligent people of Manitoba."³³³ He demanded that parliamentary approval of the

³²⁹ Debates, 54 (1901): 530-31.

³³⁰ Debates, 51 (1900): 2632-33; 55 (1901): 4410-20; 58 (1903): 667.

³³¹ For details of the agreement see: Debates, 55 (1901): 4373, 4447; Canada, Statutes, An Act respecting the Canadian Northern Railway Company and the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company, the Winnipeg Transfer Company, Limited, the Portage and North-Western Railway Company, and the Waskada and Northeastern Railway Company, 1901, 1 Edw. 7, ch. 53, Local and Private Acts, 1901, pp. 43-47.

³³² Debates, 55 (1901): 5073-78.

agreement be made contingent on prior ratification by Manitobans in a referendum.³³⁴ The Liberal government defeated his amendment to this effect.

Puttee firmly believed "the people" desired a "new relationship towards the railways of this country."³³⁵ While approving of a scheme presented in 1901 to place railway companies and their rates under a government board of commissioners, he argued that the only true solution to the "transportation problem" was government ownership of railways.³³⁶ But Puttee was a cautious advocate of government owned railways and opposed the idea of unilateral nationalization without compensation. He voted against a 1901 private Bill by R.L. Richardson legislating an end to the CPR's twenty year exemption from municipal taxation on lands granted to it in the 1881 agreement with the Dominion. Arguing that the 1881 agreement was a contract and not a mere act of Parliament, he said that to unilaterally legislate the agreement's expiration was to not only violate the contract, but to deny the legitimacy of the Parliament that had signed it. This was antithetical to "socialistic" methods.

Taking the most socialistic countries, taking England and New Zealand, you will find that all the measures adopted along socialistic lines have been measures that in no way denied the responsibility

³³³ Ibid., 4375, 4436-48, 5073-78.

³³⁴ Debates, 55 (1901): 4450.

³³⁵ Debates, 53 (1900): 9937.

³³⁶ Debates, 54 (1901): 850-51.

of the people's representatives, that did not ex-
propriate without due recompense, that did nothing
antagonistic to the well-settled ideas of British
law.³³⁷

Faced with the inviolability of existing agreements be-
tween government and railway corporations, Puttee realized
that only through government construction, operation, and
ownership of new railways could his objectives be realized.
Through their competition alongside private railways, he be-
lieved the complete nationalization of railways would "in-
evitably" follow.³³⁸ In the summer of 1903, when Laurier's
government presented its plan for construction of a new
transcontinental railway, Puttee had the opportunity he
needed to press his case. The scheme established the Na-
tional Transcontinental Railway as a joint venture of the
Dominion government and the Grand Trunk Railway, with the
government providing substantial amounts of capital through
bond guarantees and direct investment.³³⁹

The Grand Trunk Pacific proposal met with some opposition
in Laurier's cabinet and the Liberal caucus, many of whose
members favoured the principle of government railways.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Debates, 54 (1901): 1163.

³³⁸ Debates, 64 (1904): 1608.

³³⁹ A.W. Currie, The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 396; G.R. Stevens, History of the Canadian National Railways (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 200-204; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 151-152.

However party discipline kept the Liberals in line, and it fell to Puttee and the Conservatives to attack the legislation. With the original 1903 contract and amendments to it in 1904, the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) dominated political debate up to and during the 1904 general election.

Puttee opposed the specific terms of the GTP agreement,³⁴¹ but above all, he called on the House not to miss the opportunity of expanding the government controlled railway system. In his major speech on the GTP contract, he insisted that "railway transportation is properly a government function," a principle reiterated by every railway charter that had been granted by Parliament. Once this was acknowledged, he continued, "it then becomes a question of expediency as to whether we should delegate our powers to private parties or whether we should exercise them ourselves."³⁴² Pointing to what he believed to be the superior service and lower cost of government railways in Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, and Switzerland, Puttee was convinced expediency dictated a government system.³⁴³ But the success of such a system, he believed, could not be compared to a private railway compelled to "get the maximum

³⁴⁰ Stevens, History of the Canadian National Railways, p. 199.

³⁴¹ Debates, 61 (1903): 9132; 62 (1903): 11281-87; 64 (1904): 549-50, 1598-1604; 65 (1904): 3275-76.

³⁴² Debates, 61 (1903): 9144.

³⁴³ Ibid., 9121-28, 9145-46.

rate and make the maximum profit." He asserted that "with the publicly-owned road in a democratic state the object is to serve the public -- it is a public end, and not a capitalist end that is to be obtained."³⁴⁴ To continue the system of government subsidies to private corporations was to continue to give away "prerogatives and privileges, ... property and resources that should only be used and exploited for the public good," Puttee said. To do so might eventually make members of the House "forgers of fetters, creators of taskmasters for the very people of whose interests alone we here ... ought to be preservers and protectors."³⁴⁵ In conclusion, Puttee again demanded that the GTP contract be submitted to the people in a referendum.³⁴⁶

Laurier's government did not heed Puttee's protests and the GTP contract passed into law. In 1904 the government amended the agreement, again without regard for his suggestions. Convinced of the undeniable benefit of government railways to the public interest, he seemed mystified and frustrated by the unwillingness or inability of the Liberals to grasp this evident truth. In the wake of the government's April 1904 amendments, he bitterly pointed to the squandered opportunity for a new transportation future:

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 9121.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 9139.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 9147-48.

It was within [the government's] power to have proposed a policy that would have aroused enthusiasm in Canada; a policy that would have appealed to the pride, and the patriotism, and the independence and selfgoverning instinct of all people of this country. They had it within their power to propose the inspiring policy of a government railroad, a people's road from ocean to ocean ...³⁴⁷

Laurier's railway policy became the main issue of the 1904 general election. But for Puttee this issue was overshadowed by a radically altered political situation in Winnipeg. In the November 1900 general election Puttee had been re-elected with an increased majority. Running on the same platform as in the bye-election,³⁴⁸ with E.D. Martin again as his only opponent, the general election was in many ways a re-run of the earlier campaign. The most significant new development of the second 1900 campaign was the support given Puttee by the local Liberal machine, which had not yet resolved its internal divisions. Though Puttee and his supporters denied any electoral deal with the Liberals,³⁴⁹ it is clear that they did receive their assistance. The Liberal Free Press openly promised Liberal votes,³⁵⁰ and a major organizer in the campaign was John Appleton, a Liberal, a printer, former WTLC president, and recently appointed cor-

³⁴⁷ Debates, 64 (1904): 1608.

³⁴⁸ Voice, 21 September 1900.

³⁴⁹ Voice, 26 October 1900, 2 November 1900; Free Press, 3 November 1900.

³⁵⁰ Free Press, 22 October 1900, 26 October 1900, 30 October 1900.

respondent to the Labour Gazette.³⁵¹

But in the 1904 election Puttee could no longer count on the tacit support of Winnipeg Liberals. Both they and the Conservatives ran official candidates. Under a pseudonym in the "Labor Topics" column of Free Press Evening Bulletin, Appleton accused Puttee of succumbing to the influence of a small clique of "revolutionary socialists" and "street orators."³⁵² He championed the labour record of Laurier's government and pointed to the alleged benefits to workingmen in the GTP contract.³⁵³

In his published address to the electors, Puttee reiterated his positions taken on the railway issue and labour reforms and promised to continue to stand for the "public interest." Refuting his opponents' charge that he was "a special pleader for any little faction or interest in the community," he emphasized the need, in fact, to "resist encroachments of one kind and another on public rights by self-assertive special interests." The moralism always implicit in his program and rhetoric was now made explicit. The role of Independent Labor was to act as a "moral force

³⁵¹ Voice, 14 September 1900, 2 November 1900; Free Press, 29 October 1900; Tribune, 2 October 1900.

³⁵² Free Press Evening Bulletin, 9 January 1904, 23 January 1904, 30 January 1904, 12 March 1904, 14 May 1904, 24 September 1904, 8 October 1904.

³⁵³ Free Press Evening Bulletin, 9 January 1904, 22 October 1904, 9 July 1904, 20 August 1904, 8 October 1904, 15 October 1904, 22 October 1904.

in the politics of the country" against the "political evils" of partisanship and "corporate encroachment on public rights." "Sordid, soulless commercialism," he wrote, "is too low a level for a legislative body to act upon, it leads to the degradation of citizenship, making the interest of the producer and worker a secondary consideration to that of political gain."³⁵⁴

Despite his broad and moralistic defence of the public interest, Puttee and his backers realized that in a head-on fight with the Liberals and Conservatives his only hope was to hold onto the labour vote. This was difficult because Winnipeg had not been divided into two constituencies with one dominated by working-class voters. The campaign rhetoric in the Voice appealed to workingmen to "stand pat" and resist the blandishments of the party men.³⁵⁵ This overt appeal to a form of class consciousness was perhaps also due to the influence of socialists supporting Puttee, especially that of J.T. Stott, a printer from Bradford active in the Socialist Party of Manitoba. He had assumed editorial duties at the Voice in Puttee's absence. Despite Voice entreaties to workingmen to vote according to their class, which were bolstered by a supportive letter from Ramsay MacDonald of the British Labour Representation Committee,³⁵⁶ the labour

³⁵⁴ Voice, 28 October 1904.

³⁵⁵ Voice, 14 October 1904, 21 October 1904, 28 October 1904.

³⁵⁶ Voice, 28 October 1904.

vote did not hold fast. On polling day, Puttee finished a poor third behind the Liberal victor D.W. Bole and the Conservative Sanford Evans. Losing his deposit, he failed to take even one poll.³⁵⁷

In contemplating defeat, Puttee and his supporters placed blame for their defeat squarely on the shoulders of those workingmen who had defected to the other parties. He told Voice readers that "we have been beaten today by scab ballots and the early closing of the polls."³⁵⁸ In a more temperate tone he told a Free Press reporter that

[we] are satisfied ... that our own forces have been used again to defeat us. If we could have secured the vote of our own people we could have carried the city against any candidate who could be named against us. Our people have not yet learned the importance of being represented in parliament by a representative who understands the needs of the men who do the hard work of the world.³⁵⁹

Throughout his tenure as MP, Puttee had earned the praise and support of both the TLC and the WTLC, as well as that of the WTU.³⁶⁰ He had remained active in these groups and had carried their grievances to the House.³⁶¹ After his defeat

³⁵⁷ Voice, 4 November 1904; Free Press, 4 November 1904. For a breakdown of the results for Puttee's three campaigns, see Appendix A.

³⁵⁸ Voice, 4 November 1904.

³⁵⁹ Free Press, 4 November 1904.

³⁶⁰ TLC, Proceedings (1900), pp. 3, 9-10; TLC, Proceedings (1902), p. 47; TLC, Proceedings (1905), p.5; Voice, 27 April 1900, 4 May 1900, 11 May 1900; WTU, Minutes, 6 February 1904, 1 October 1904, WTU Papers, PAM.

he was praised for his industriousness and sincerity in his work for the labour cause by several papers.³⁶² But support for Puttee among radical groups was not unanimous. Some socialists thought Puttee had been too willing to avoid controversy and to compromise with the Liberals to achieve insignificant gains. They would have preferred a more aggressive and avowedly socialist member.³⁶³ This was a legitimate grievance; Puttee differed significantly with socialists over both ends and means. In the years after he left Parliament, these differences widened and became more apparent.

In addition to program Puttee could also be rightly criticized for his retiring demeanor. The difficult role of parliamentary Independent demanded an aggressive personality that would command attention. This was contrary to Puttee's own temperament. Though an earnest, sincere, and undustrious representative, he was not a born politician.³⁶⁴ During the Grand Trunk Pacific debate he apologized for his persistent

³⁶¹ TLC, Proceedings (1900), p. 2; TLC, Proceedings (1901), p. 2, 6; TLC, Proceedings (1902), p. 2; TLC, Proceedings (1903), p. 2, 6, 67; TLC, Proceedings (1904), p. 2; WTU, Minutes, 2 June 1900, 3 September 1904, WTU Papers, PAM; Voice, 13 March 1903.

³⁶² North Ender, cf. Voice, 11 November 1904; Montreal Gazette, cf. Voice, 18 November 1904; Toronto News, cf. Voice, 27 January 1905.

³⁶³ For example, G. Weston Wrigley in the Western Socialist, cf. Voice, 28 November 1902.

³⁶⁴ See, for example: Debates, 51 (1900): 864-66; 52 (1900): 5265; 54 (1901): 2339.

opposition, stating that, normally, "my temperament is such that it inclines me, impels me often to take no part in a discussion or a debate for the fear perhaps of being considered as posing, as seeking simply to get a little notoriety."³⁶⁵ Like Cincinnatus drawn from his plough by public duty, Puttee consistently characterized himself as a simple delegate of the people, agreeing almost reluctantly to abandon his daily life to act as their representative. He professed no political ambitions and refused to be considered a "labor leader."³⁶⁶

Puttee's fate in the 1904 general election should have dispelled any suspicions that he was guilty of a Conservative's charges of "driving water to the Grit mill."³⁶⁷ There is no evidence that, as one historian has argued, his actions in the House were "always subordinate to the interests of the Liberal party."³⁶⁸ If this were the case, the Liberals would not have failed to incorporate Puttee into the Liberal party, as they had done with the other "independent" labour MP, Ralph Smith. Aside from the Liberal support given Puttee in the 1900 general election, for which evidence of his assent is absent, there are no grounds for branding Put-

³⁶⁵ Debates, 61 (1903): 9138-39.

³⁶⁶ Tribune, 24 April 1900.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 3790-96.

³⁶⁸ Palmer, Working-Class Experience The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980 (Toronto: Butterworth and Co., 1983), p. 158.

tee a Liberal or a Lib-Lab. As this chapter has demonstrated, Puttee's actions in the House were independent of the main points of the Laurier government's program. In quantitative terms, Puttee voted against the government in 41 per cent of recorded votes in which the House divided along party lines. By comparison, Ralph Smith voted against the government in just 13 per cent of such votes.³⁶⁹ While supporting the government in 59 per cent of these cases, Puttee's opposing votes were to the cornerstone of the Liberal program -- railway policy. Much of his support for the Liberals was directed at their limited labour reforms, measures he supported despite reservations about their inadequacy. While Puttee's plans for social reform were limited, they did surpass those of the Liberals. But the willingness of the Liberals to temporarily support him would indicate that perhaps their differences were those of degree, not of kind. A Montreal Gazette editorialist's distinction between Smith and Puttee was perhaps most apt: "Mr. Smith ... was more of a Liberal than a Labor man ... Mr. Puttee was more of a Labor man than a Liberal."³⁷⁰

Following the 1904 election Puttee returned to the Voice, expressing regret that he had had to neglect his business during his time in Ottawa.³⁷¹ He was also happy to spend

³⁶⁹ See Appendix B.

³⁷⁰ Montreal Gazette, cf. Voice, 18 November 1904.

³⁷¹ Free Press, 4 November 1904.

more time with his family. In 1900 his fourth child, Winniefred, was born, followed in the final week of the 1904 campaign by his fifth, Arthur.³⁷² In the ensuing years Puttee rarely strayed far from Winnipeg. Nevertheless, he remained deeply involved in local politics, an involvement that kept him in the midst of important political debates.

³⁷² Voice, 14 October 1904.

Chapter V

LABOURISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE ORGANIZATION OF A LABOUR PARTY: 1905-1914

The ten years between Puttee's parliamentary defeat and the beginning of the First World War were a period of intense activity in Winnipeg working-class politics. The city experienced a massive boom in its economy and population and became the premier industrial, wholesale, and financial centre of western Canada. However, this economic development was accompanied by periods of intense class conflict, and several bitter industrial disputes hardened the lines of opposition between workers and employers. In Winnipeg, serious attempts were made to mobilize this class consciousness into a political force through the organization of various socialist and labour parties. Puttee was at the centre of the political debates that marked the formation of these groups and thus was compelled to define his position on the form, program, and ultimate objectives of the labour party he hoped to build.

The first years following his return from Ottawa were a period of stability and consolidation for Puttee, his family, and his business. In 1905 the family moved into a new home at 317 College Avenue in north Winnipeg. In the 1890s, Puttee had purchased a large, well-treed lot in what were

then the outskirts of the city. Shunning the banks in favour of collective self-help, he joined a building society to finance construction of a house.³⁷³ By 1905 his weekly payments were finally rewarded with a disbursement from the society. The new College Avenue house was built by Robert Underwood, a retired carpenter and neighbour of Puttee once active in the WTLC and WLP. The Puttee house was one of the larger ones in the relatively affluent Anglo-Saxon enclave of the North End near St. John's Park and north of the more crowded immigrant neighbourhoods around Selkirk avenue. An avid walker, Puttee usually walked the mile and a half to and from his printing shop downtown. As a matter of principle, he rode the privately owned street railway as rarely as possible. In 1906 the sixth and last Puttee child, Marjorie, was born. As the children grew up, their large house and spacious, park-like yard became a favourite playground for neighbourhood children.³⁷⁴

In the years before the war, the Puttee family also found a religious home in the congregation of All Souls' Unitarian Church, formed at the instigation of H.F.M. Ross in 1904.³⁷⁵ In its early years the group had neither a minister nor a

³⁷³ This was probably the Winnipeg Building Society, established in 1895. See People's Voice, 10 August 1895, 28 September 1895.

³⁷⁴ Farmer interview; Interview with Gertrude and Frank Hyde, Winnipeg, 21 December 1983 (Hereafter cited as Hyde interview).

³⁷⁵ Phillip Hewett, Unitarians in Canada (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978), p. 135.

church, but it met at irregular intervals in rented halls to hear visiting lecturers.³⁷⁶ In 1909 W.A. Vrooman, once the pastor of the Maple St. Congregational Church, became the first full-time minister of All Souls'.³⁷⁷ His frequent lectures and articles on religion and "social problems" were promoted and published by Puttee in the Voice.³⁷⁸ In 1912 All Souls' entered a dynamic phase under the pastorship of Horace Westwood. With the help of funds solicited in the United States, a church was built in 1914 at the corner of Furby street and Westminster avenue.³⁷⁹ Puttee was so impressed with Westwood's position on labour and social issues that in 1917 he began publishing one of his sermons monthly in pamphlet form, at an annual subscription price of one dollar.³⁸⁰

Despite the pressures of child-rearing and domestic labour, Gertrude Puttee was active in community and political activities. During Puttee's parliamentary years she visited government house in Winnipeg as a member of the Red Cross committee.³⁸¹ In subsequent years, her house became an in-

³⁷⁶ Ibid. Voice, 4 December 1908, 15 January 1909, 19 February 1909.

³⁷⁷ Voice, 5 March 1909.

³⁷⁸ Voice, 7 January 1910, 21 January 1910, 28 January 1910, 1 April 1910, 20 May 1910, 17 May 1912.

³⁷⁹ Hewett, pp. 144-146.

³⁸⁰ Voice, 9 March 1917.

³⁸¹ Voice, 27 April 1900.

formal social welfare agency, giving accomodation to rural mothers with sick children in the general hospital or collecting children's clothing to send to her daughters teaching school in the countryside.³⁸² In 1910 Gertrude Puttee helped organize the Women's Labor League, and was elected one of its presidents.³⁸³ Ada Muir, a league member and columnist for the Voice, described its principles as "the right of every woman to receive a living wage" and "the right of every woman to be represented in parliamentary and municipal life by means of the ballot."³⁸⁴ To achieve the former, the league advocated the unionization of female workers and the increased use of the union label.³⁸⁵ It also campaigned for improved legal protection for married women³⁸⁶ and the right of all women to take up homesteads.³⁸⁷ Although the Women's Labor League launched a "strong woman suffrage campaign" in April 1911,³⁸⁸ it is likely its efforts were subsumed under those of the Political Equality League, formed in 1912. This would explain Gertrude Puttee's election in 1914 as president of the North End division of

³⁸² Farmer interview.

³⁸³ Voice, 25 February 1910.

³⁸⁴ Voice, 8 July 1910.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Voice, 17 March 1911.

³⁸⁷ Voice, 4 August 1911, 8 September 1911.

³⁸⁸ Voice, 28 April 1911.

the PEL.³⁸⁹ Perhaps the greatest accomplishment for a woman with little formal education was her appointment in 1911 to the provincial Royal Commission on Technical Education and Industrial Training. She sat with J.S. Woodsworth and Daniel McIntyre on a special committee investigating the educational needs of messenger boys and children employed in shops and factories.³⁹⁰

In June 1906 Puttee and Gus Pingle formed a new company, Winnipeg Printing and Engraving, to take over the operations of the Voice Publishing Co.³⁹¹ It was a move based on business considerations. Their new partner was J.F. Mitchell, an active Conservative, former ward 6 alderman and soon-to-be MLA for North Winnipeg who had built a successful business in the manufacture and wholesale of photographic supplies.³⁹² A workingman's friend, he was popular in the North End and as an MLA sponsored the 1910 Workmen's Compensation Act.³⁹³ More importantly for Puttee and Pingle, Mitchell owned a substantial two-storey building on Rupert Avenue and was adept at the repair of machinery, a skill he probably acquired years before as an apprentice machinist with the

³⁸⁹ Voice, 24 April 1914.

³⁹⁰ Manitoba, Royal Commission on Technical Education and Industrial Training, Report (1912), p. 54.

³⁹¹ Voice, 17 August 1906.

³⁹² Telegram, 31 December 1898, 7 March 1907.

³⁹³ Voice, 1 March 1907, 3 June 1910, 10 June 1910.

CPR.³⁹⁴ As a result of the new partnership, the authorized capitalization of the operation increased from \$20,000 to \$100,000.³⁹⁵ The three partners acted as directors of the company, with Mitchell becoming president, Puttee manager and vice-president, and Pingle secretary-treasurer.³⁹⁶ Puttee continued as editor of the Voice, with Pingle soliciting advertisements, but they truly earned their living from the book and job printing work of the new company.³⁹⁷ It was to better accomodate this work and expand into the photography business that they had formed the partnership.³⁹⁸

As the manager of Winnipeg Printing and Engraving, Puttee experienced financial problems typical of most publishers of labour papers. The Voice itself did little more than break even, and much of the job printing was done for preferential rates. As Puttee remarked in commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Voice, "[p]ublishing the Voice for nothing, and doing the printing for the trade unions for charitably low prices seems to have been a kind of madness with the

³⁹⁴ Farmer interview; Hyde interview; Telegram, 31 December 1898, 7 March 1907.

³⁹⁵ Voice Publishing Co., Ltd. File, Manitoba, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Corporations Branch. Winnipeg Printing and Engraving Co., Ltd. File, Manitoba, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Corporation Branch.

³⁹⁶ Voice, 13 September 1912, 26 September 1913; Henderson's Directory, 1907-1917.

³⁹⁷ Voice, 12 June 1914.

³⁹⁸ Voice, 17 August 1906; Winnipeg Printing and Engraving Co., Ltd. File, Manitoba, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Corporations Branch.

proprietors for a long run of years."³⁹⁹ The madness was only temporary, as financial difficulties eventually compelled Puttee to stop giving his union customers below-market rates for their constitutions, by-laws, and dues cards. Following the example of E.T. Kingsley of the Western Clarion, he pegged the price of job printing work to one set by the local Printers' Board of Trade.⁴⁰⁰ As a master printer loyal to his trade and his old union, Puttee employed only union printers in the shop and could be counted on to amicably come to terms on contract issues.⁴⁰¹ He could thus justify his decision on prices by invoking the artisanal status of the master printer and likening the Printers' Board of Trade to a trade union:

You see, these boards are largely composed of master printers, who at one time were energetic Typographical union men. They believe that they are as much entitled to a fair price for their work now as they ever were, so they employ an expert to figure out what is a fair price for any or every job, and then it is up to the printer to collect that much or scab on the price.⁴⁰²

By union customers paying a "fair rate", Puttee argued that organized labour was supporting the Voice and not "scabbing on the printing trade any more than its proprietors would have thought of doing when they were journeyman printers."⁴⁰³

³⁹⁹ Voice, 12 June 1914.

⁴⁰⁰ Voice, 12 June 1914, 14 June 1912.

⁴⁰¹ Voice, 24 March 1905. Voice, 22 September 1905.

⁴⁰² Voice, 14 June 1912.

Though the Voice was not a paying proposition, Puttee attempted to improve its viability by encouraging readers to patronize Voice advertisers⁴⁰⁴ and by constantly attempting to attract new readers. The latter had a political function as well. Throughout the years before the war, Puttee lamented that the Voice's development as a paper of political influence and assistance to the labour movement was hindered by the fact that only a small percentage of union members subscribed to it. Aside from moral exhortation⁴⁰⁵ Puttee used numerous methods to attract readers. He frequently offered new subscribers cheap editions of Bellamy, Blatchford or Gustavus Myers' History of Canadian Wealth as bonuses for signing up.⁴⁰⁶ Similar offers were made with his company's own publications, for example the 1908 Annual Labor Review or the 1906 Illustrated Winnipeg.⁴⁰⁷ On occasion, he mailed samples of the Voice to all members of a local union or co-operative society⁴⁰⁸ and once considered offering group rates to unions who would distribute the paper to all their members.⁴⁰⁹ And while there is no evidence that local boys

⁴⁰³ Voice, 12 June 1914.

⁴⁰⁴ Voice, 1 April 1910, 5 June 1914.

⁴⁰⁵ Voice, 18 May 1906, 25 May 1906, 12 June 1914.

⁴⁰⁶ Voice, 17 August 1906, 5 November 1909, 20 March 1914, 24 April 1914, 27 February 1914.

⁴⁰⁷ Voice, 17 August 1906, 29 May 1908.

⁴⁰⁸ Voice, 14 November 1913, 23 January 1914.

⁴⁰⁹ Voice, 18 May 1906.

took up his offer of "liberal terms" to sell the Voice on street corners,⁴¹⁰ he was more notably successful in convincing local American Federation of Labor representative Ed Stephenson to sell subscriptions during his trips out West and to Toronto.⁴¹¹ By the end of 1914 the Voice boasted a subscription list of about 5,000 people, though its total readership was likely much more.⁴¹²

Stephenson's efforts were part of a 1909 campaign to make the Voice more national in its coverage and were tied to Puttee's longstanding hopes for a broadly based national independent labour party. These were reflected in his editorial policy. Puttee had always intended the Voice to be an open, educational forum for all manner of reform, progressive, and socialist thought. He offered its "unbiased attention" to "the trade unionist, the single taxer, the socialist, the social democrat, the independent laborite, the farmer, the economist, the unorganized thinker, those who move for reform within movements and reforms by movements, and the honest critic."⁴¹³ Puttee affirmed his own eclectic views and his hope for a pluralistic labour movement in a concise statement of his editorial policy:

⁴¹⁰ Voice, 14 May 1909.

⁴¹¹ Voice, 4 June 1909, 4 February 1910.

⁴¹² Voice, 23 October, 1914.

⁴¹³ Voice, 7 May 1909.

The workmen of Canada need an organ of their own which is open to all the educative movements founded upon the rise and development of the working classes. Within modern society based upon the multiplicity of interests which this consideration represents, no journalistic field could be broader. That is our field.⁴¹⁴

Such a policy resulted in an amazing diversity of opinions presented in the Voice. On the one hand, Puttee encouraged numerous organizations to submit their own material. Thus at various times the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), no friends of Puttee, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and various single tax and direct legislation groups carried columns in the Voice. From 1905 onwards the Voice also carried a women's and a health column, both edited by Ada Muir. The latter column was notable for its attacks on vivisection, vaccination, and attempts by the medical profession to gain a legislated monopoly over health care. As well, the Voice was host to a wide assortment of cranks, faddists, and other "unorganized thinkers", including one H. Nowell, who attempted at some length and with dubious mathematics to prove that the earth was flat.⁴¹⁵ In many respects the Voice epitomized the eclectic reformism that Eugene Debs had likend to "a jar of mixed pickles."

The year following Puttee's defeat in the 1904 general election was a period of stasis for the Winnipeg labour movement. At the end of 1905 Puttee surveyed the institu-

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Voice, 6 March 1908, 13 March 1908, 20 March 1908.

tions of the local labour movement and found them wanting. While welcoming the existence of a co-operative bakery and co-operative grocery, he lamented the absence of a workingmen's club, mechanics' institute or workingmen's political club, institutions "dear to the heart of the British wage earner." Moreover, there existed nothing to bring the various nationalities in the city together and attract foreign workers just beginning to speak English. Of most concern to Puttee, political activity was at a low ebb. Despite great increases in overall union membership, the WTLC had ceased to be a powerful influence in the city and suffered from a high turnover of delegates and officers. The Winnipeg local of the SPC was "few in numbers and not effective," and, "although not formally buried," the Labor Representation League, successor to the WLP, had "long ago [given] up the struggle to exist on air alone."⁴¹⁶ As an important and growing industrial city, Puttee called on Winnipeg to show leadership to the towns of the West. Over the next ten years he took a leading role in the organization of a permanent labour party and became involved in numerous issues of social reform. Some of these were within the context of labour party activities, others were through an assortment of other groups and institutions.

⁴¹⁶ Voice, 29 December 1905.

During Puttee's five years in Parliament, several important political developments had occurred in Winnipeg. In late 1902 the Socialist Party of Manitoba (SPM) was formed from a nucleus organized several months earlier as a branch of the Canadian Socialist League. The new party aimed for the "complete emancipation of Labor from the domination of Capitalism" through the "Socialization of the means of Production, Distribution and Exchange." It also promised to control the economic machinery "in the interests of the entire community" and issued a list of immediate demands for democratic reforms and labour legislation not dissimilar from those of other labour parties.⁴¹⁷ By 1903 the SPM had a regular propaganda column in the Voice, but it remained a small group devoted to educational goals. In December 1904 the SPM voted to merge into the marxist SPC, being founded at that time by a convention in Vancouver.⁴¹⁸ It consequently dropped its immediate demands and adopted the SPC's position of opposition to "palliative" legislation.

The origins of the SPM were linked to the final days of the WLP. Also a largely educational group, it was active throughout 1902. In December 1901 it had voted against changing its name to the Social Democratic Party and had declined to co-operate with the proposed new Socialist League.⁴¹⁹ But its 1902 president, William Scott, and first

⁴¹⁷ Voice, 14 November 1902.

⁴¹⁸ Voice, 23 December 1903.

vice-president, George Dales, were among the first members of the new Socialist group.⁴²⁰ In October 1902, at about the same time the SPM was taking form, the WLP virtually willed itself out of existence by voting unanimously in favour of the formation of a Labour Representation League (LRL).⁴²¹

While the WLP and SPM were essentially propagandist groups at arms length from the WTLC, the LRL was conceived as the electoral wing of the craft unions. Its *raison d'être* was that "organized labor should in some way be more closely identified with political activity, and be mainly responsible for a labor programme."⁴²² The LRL was actually formed on the recommendation of a WTLC committee, and was composed of a majority of delegates appointed by the WTLC and each of its affiliated unions.⁴²³ Among its first officers were William Scott (vice-president) and another member of the SPM, J.G. Morgan (satistician).⁴²⁴ Over the next few months, the LRL ran several candidates in the municipal and provincial elections, but achieved little success.⁴²⁵ The LRL existed long enough to run Puttee's 1904 election campaign but, due

⁴¹⁹ Voice, 27 December 1901.

⁴²⁰ Voice, 14 March 1902, 29 August 1902.

⁴²¹ Voice, 10 October 1902.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Voice, 24 October 1902, 21 November 1902.

⁴²⁴ Voice, 21 November 1902.

⁴²⁵ Voice, 21 November 1902, 29 May 1903.

to the debts it incurred from the loss of his deposit, it soon ceased to be a significant political force.⁴²⁶

Puttee was present at the founding convention of the LRL and spoke in its favour, but parliamentary duties probably kept him from taking a central role in its organization. There is no evidence that he participated in the activities of the CSL or SPM, though two employees of the Voice Publishing Co. and associate editors of the Voice, George Dales and J.T. Stott, were active. As well, the SPM held its regular meetings in the Voice's committee rooms. In this period before 1905 the line dividing the socialists and the labourists was more indistinct than it later became, and Puttee could still realistically envision a unified labour political movement working toward a common goal.

1906 was the first year since the withering away of the LRL that a serious attempt was made to organize an independent labour party. In the spring and summer, three local labour disputes forcibly demonstrated the employers' mastery of the state apparatus and raised the need for political action. In late March and early April, the Street Railwaymen's Union emerged from a brief but bitter strike against the Electric Street Railway Co. Though winning overwhelming public support and achieving important gains, the union failed to gain recognition for itself. As well, the militia had been called out by the mayor to ensure the continuation of

⁴²⁶ Voice, 11 November 1904, 25 November 1904.

car service, and a provincial Magistrate had sworn in company agents as special police to "protect" company property.⁴²⁷ In May, a strike of metal trades workers at Vulcan Iron Works had been crushed through a court injunction issued against union picketing. The company then launched a suit for damages against certain members of the International Association of Machinists, and applied for a permanent injunction against the union.⁴²⁸ In August, similar tactics were used by the master plumbers against the striking plumbers' union.⁴²⁹

Puttee reacted to these events with characteristic caution, reiterating the need for legislation providing for the conciliation and arbitration of disputes to prevent the "waste and strife" caused by strikes.⁴³⁰ But no doubt perceiving the ominous shadow of Taff Vale in the injunctions and damage suits, he continued to militantly defend the right of workers to organize into unions and strike as a last resort.⁴³¹ Defending the legality of picketing, he saw the injunction as an attempt to further bias the law that was "already inequitable enough as between capital and la-

⁴²⁷ David Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), pp. 11-15.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., pp. 15-17.

⁴²⁹ Voice, 10 August 1906.

⁴³⁰ Voice, 14 December 1906. Also, Voice, 21 September 1906, 12 April 1907, 3 May 1907.

⁴³¹ Voice, 14 December 1906.

bor." He called on workers to protect their rights and forward their interests in the courts, the workshop, and the polling booth or witness that "the development of industry in Winnipeg and the west will enslave them and their children as unmercifully as has been the case in other lands."⁴³²

Early in September Puttee wrote in the Voice that "the present inactivity" of the "workers and producers" was "no longer bearable" and that the time had come to call a preliminary meeting to discuss political action.⁴³³ He also urged the TLC not to leave the question of political action in abeyance at its convention in Victoria later in the month. Noting that, despite its pious declarations, the TLC had "never risen to the height of leading the Canadian Labor men politically," he urged the Congress to commit itself to action.⁴³⁴

Later in September the TLC passed a resolution in favour of the election of labour representatives to parliament and the formation of a new political party adhering to the TLC platform and principles. To be known as the Canadian Labor Party, provincial executives of the TLC were instructed to hold founding conventions for its provincial branches.⁴³⁵ In

⁴³² Voice, 1 June 1906.

⁴³³ Voice, 7 September 1906.

⁴³⁴ Voice, 14 September 1906.

⁴³⁵ TLC, Proceedings (1906), pp. 82-87.

October 1906 the Independent Labor Party was formed in Winnipeg as a local of the CLP, with Puttee elected as party chairman. Early in 1907 the party changed its name to the Canadian Labor Party, Winnipeg Branch (CLP).⁴³⁶

From its inception Puttee argued that the CLP should be broadly based, "a party bigger than unionism, wider than the Socialists." While he acknowledged the importance of party principles, he was reluctant to commit the party to a definite program. He anticipated this would alienate "the Impossible section of the Socialists," but expected most socialists to join the new party "without sacrificing any part of their principles."⁴³⁷ According to Puttee, the primary concern of the new party was organization and political action; labour representation was the immediate goal. At a party meeting, he advocated a policy of gradual parliamentary tactics.

We have to bring changes about, economical and political, not sit by and hope to see them evolve into perfection. ...A labor party would not mean that in the near future everything would be remedied, but that it would mean that we should have in our legislative bodies men with ideals who would not be satisfied to see the mistakes of old lands enacted here.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Voice, 8 February 1907.

⁴³⁷ Voice, 28 September 1906.

⁴³⁸ Voice, 19 October 1906.

Puttee preferred an "Independent Labor" party to the SPC because "that means had been proven successful in other British countries." Unlike the SPC, "it had brought the common people together."⁴³⁹ Puttee had long admired the achievements of the labour parties in New Zealand and Australia and was recently inspired by the British LRC's electoral success and a visit to Winnipeg by its leader, Ramsay Macdonald. He used the British LRC and later the Labour Party as a model for achieving the labour representation and reform legislation he had long called for.

Aside from periodic lectures and debates, the Winnipeg CLP remained a largely electoral ineffective instrument. In December 1906 Puttee was among several unsuccessful CLP candidates in the municipal election.⁴⁴⁰ In early 1907 Kempton McKim, a printer from Nova Scotia and president of the WTU and WTLC, was nominated to contest the West Winnipeg seat in the provincial general election.⁴⁴¹ To the anger of Puttee, the Liberals also nominated a candidate in West Winnipeg, denying McKim a "straight fight" with the Conservatives.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Voice, 16 December 1906.

⁴⁴¹ Voice, 8 February 1907. McCormack has erroneously identified McKim as a stonemason from Sheffield once active in the Social Democratic Federation. A.R. McCormack, "British Working Class Immigrants," Canadian Ethnic Studies, 10,2 (1978), p. 28. However this does not correspond to information given at the time of his nomination or at the time of his death in 1908. Voice, 10 July 1908.

⁴⁴² Voice, 22 February 1907.

McKim finished with 955 votes, to the Conservative Thomas Sharpes' 1649 and the Liberal T.H. Johnsohn's 1832.⁴⁴³ Despite the solid nucleus of CLP votes, it was clear that at this point in its existence an electoral saw-off with the Liberals was still necessary for success.

The SPC opposed the CLP from its inception. In British Columbia it was strong enough to scuttle attempts to form a provincial wing of the CLP,⁴⁴⁴ But in Winnipeg it was little more than a disruptive force. Through articles in the Voice and the Western Clarion, the Vancouver-based SPC organ, SPC members carried on a sustained attack on the CLP throughout its brief existence.

To a certain extent, the SPC's critique of labourism was based on the poor record of "independence" among labour politicians, typified by the career of Ralph Smith.⁴⁴⁵ His candidacy as a Liberal in the 1904 Dominion election was taken by the Western Clarion's E.T. Kingsley to be a refutation of the belief that "so-called independent labor representatives are anything else but Liberals or Conservatives in disguise."⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Free Press, 8 March 1907.

⁴⁴⁴ Western Clarion, 3 November 1906.

⁴⁴⁵ Western Clarion, 17 September 1903.

⁴⁴⁶ Western Clarion, 29 October 1904.

Puttee's own record in Parliament belied this simplistic analysis, but he could not escape the more important criticism of himself and labourism. As early as November 1902, G. Weston Wrigley wrote in the Canadian Socialist assailing Puttee for not openly articulating socialist views in Parliament, for his reluctance to make himself "obnoxious to the powers that be," and for his willingness to compromise with a capitalist government that refused to enforce its own labour laws.⁴⁴⁷ In his defence, Puttee argued that Wrigley placed far too much emphasis on "Socialism" as a label for certain principles to which "Independent labor" might just as easily be applied. He also rejected Wrigley's call for a more aggressive position in the House, asserting that "one can help his cause best by deserving the reputation for sincerity and reasonableness." He subscribed to the "decidedly British view of the work of an elected representative" to both act as an advocate for labour and "faithfully and adequately attend to the duties and routine that attach to membership in the federal parliament, and look after the full interests of the constituency as such."⁴⁴⁸ Wrigley interpreted Puttee's 1904 electoral defeat as the workers' rejection of this cautious parliamentary approach. It was evident they "preferred an avowed capitalist representative to a spineless laborite who was 'putty' in the hands of the capi-

⁴⁴⁷ Canadian Socialist, cf. Voice, 28 Novmeber 1902.

⁴⁴⁸ Voice, 13 December 1902.

talist politicians."⁴⁴⁹

A Western Clarion editorial, likely by Kingsley, made perhaps the most astute assessment of labourism as it was reflected in Puttee's parliamentary career. Accusing him of facetiously calling all Socialists impossiblists, the editorial found in Puttee's record in the House another form of impossiblism:

Elected as a labor-representative he served one term in the House of Commons at Ottawa. To his credit let it be said that he was not, as is usually the case with the 'labor' type, a Liberal skate masquerading under the cloak of labor. He meant to do things for the labor element which was responsible for his election. But as is always the case with this 'labor' type he possessed no understanding of capitalist production and the part the men of labor played in it. He shied at the Socialist position, ...[which] did not appeal favorably to the cautious and conservative Puttee. ...As he was not of the peculiarly flabby moral fibre requisite to become a handy tool of the Liberal politicians, and possessing no knowledge of the real labor movement of the world ..., he became a nonentity in the body of which he was a member, and to which he had been elected by an honest, well intendtioned [sic] and confiding labor vote. By his very honesty, coupled with his lack of understanding of the labor problem from a revolutionary standpoint, he became an impossiblist in the true sense of the word. His position was impossible to maintain because he stood for nothing definite, nothing concrete. He neither stood for the present system of property, nor against it. The fact of the matter is he did not himself know where he stood. His good intentions were strong enough to preclude the possibility of being used by the designing politicians of capital to aid them in furthering their designing schemes. His lack of understanding of the true labor movement precluded him doing anything else.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ Western Clarion, 4 February 1905.

⁴⁵⁰ Western Clarion, 6 October 1906.

Schemes like the CLP resulted, according to the SPC, only in the "hamstringing [of] the real labor movement, i.e. the movement of labor for the overthrow of the rule of capital and the abolition of the wage-system."⁴⁵¹ Independent labour parties rested on two foundations anathema to SPC theorists, trade unionism and and 'palliative' legislation. The former was at best only of benefit to a small, skilled portion of the working class and at worst totally ineffective against the dictates of the capitalist labour market. Moreover, trade unionism never questioned the existence of that market or of the wage-system.⁴⁵² Piece-meal reforms or palliatives were seen as being of no lasting benefit to the working class as long as "the powers of government still remain under the control of the political henchmen of capital and the industries of the world still wear the garb of capitalist property."⁴⁵³ Government or municipal ownership of railways and utilities, for example, was not a step toward socialism, but merely "municipal or state capitalsim," in which certain "huge and unwieldy" enterprises were taken over by the government for their own protection. Fundamental relations between labour and capital would not be altered.⁴⁵⁴ As a West-

⁴⁵¹ Western Clarion, 29 September 1906.

⁴⁵² Western Clarion, 7 August 1903, 2 July 1904, 16 July 1904, 25 February 1905, 24 June 1905; Voice, 7 February 1908.

⁴⁵³ Western Clarion, 28 January 1905. Also Western Clarion, 28 August 1903; Voice, 12 April 1907.

⁴⁵⁴ Western Clarion, 29 October 1904, 6 May 1905.

ern Clarion editorial concluded, government ownership in a capitalist state merely meant that "the state with all of its powers shall be used as the exploiter of labor, for the benefit of the capitalist class whose instrument it is."⁴⁵⁵

A Western Clarion article, likely by R.P. Pettipiece, best summarized the SPC position on labourism. While crediting its exponents with having made the "long and necessary step" of encouraging the working class to "acquire a profound distrust of all capitalist parties," he found it otherwise totally barren of revolutionary potential.

What is the objective point of Independent Labor? ...Of its origin and first step we know something and respect it ..., but before it can be seriously criticized it must be defined; we must know what it means and aims at. We have suspicion however, amply justified by Canadian experience, that the whole content of "Independent Labor" contemplated lies within the limits of the capitalist system.⁴⁵⁶

The labourite's critique of capitalism was limited and unsystematic. While,

The labourite distrusts the capitalists as men, tracing his troubles to unjust administration of things and an unequal division of profits; the Socialist claiming no moral superiority for the workers as a class, challenges and denounces the capitalist "system" of production ...⁴⁵⁷

Hence the goal of labourism was equally modest. Pettipiece concluded that the "essential difference between Independent Labor and Socialism" was that "the former would try to regu-

⁴⁵⁵ Western Clarion, 29 October 1904.

⁴⁵⁶ Western Clarion 22 September 1906.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

late robbery, the latter guarantee to abolish it.⁴⁵⁸

Like most members of the SPC, Pettipiece was an active trade unionist. SPC members holding legislative seats also fought for many of the palliative reforms that the party officially denounced. But just as the SPC did in practice what it repudiated in theory, so too labourist leaders like Puttee were known to think beyond the immediate struggle for modest gains. Puttee was torn between his advocacy of an inclusive, gradualist party of the working class and his personal commitment to what were at least vaguely progressive principles. Thus, while in 1906 he clearly emphasized practical action over theoretical clarity, he had long acknowledged the importance of adhering to some sort of program and platform of principles. In 1902, at the founding convention of the LRL, he had argued that "labor representation meant more than the desire to have actual workingmen besides the professionals on legislative bodies." It meant "the support of definite principles and broad progressive platform."⁴⁵⁹ By 1907 this included a timid advocacy of parliamentary "socialism".

The September 1907 TLC convention in Winnipeg witnessed a heated debate over an unsuccessful SPC resolution endorsing the objective of the "collective ownership of the means of life" and granting each TLC provincial executive the right

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Voice, 21 November 1902.

to either affiliate with the SPC or create a CLP branch. Among the vocal supporters of the resolution was the blacksmith W.J. Bartlett, a colleague of Puttee in the Winnipeg CLP.⁴⁶⁰ After the convention, Puttee spoke in support of the SPC resolution at a CLP meeting. Arguing that the CLP need not follow the policy of the TLC, "he held that the party was in accord with the Labor parties of other British countries, and stood for collective ownership and government control." He rejected the position of single-tax supporters within the party, led by F.J. Dixon, arguing that they "were merely asking for a clear competitive field for all, and then let the fittest survive. The goal was fair unrestricted competition - just the opposite of collective ownership."⁴⁶¹

Puttee reiterated his stand on collective ownership in a debate with Pettipiece in November. However, while arguing that the CLP was "the British expression of the Socialist aim of other countries," he insisted that the party not be called a "Socialist" party. Using as an example the hostility of the Catholic church to Socialism, he argued that "the Canadian Labor party must be shaped to meet the conditions in Canada."⁴⁶² Puttee also reiterated his commitment to parliamentary tactics and said that the goal of collective ownership would be achieved gradually.

⁴⁶⁰ TLC, Proceedings (1907), p.77.

⁴⁶¹ Voice, 25 October 1907.

⁴⁶² Voice, 15 November 1907.

No one thinks it desirable to change the British parliamentary system. We know that under it we proceed step by step, line by line in legislation, and thus by means of evolution as rapidly as public opinion will permit, work out to entire revolution.⁴⁶³

Puttee never defined what exactly he meant by socialism or the "Socialist aim". It is likely his vision had little in common with the SPC's conception of radically transformed social relations and the overthrow of the capitalist state. His association of "collective ownership" with "government control" would indicate his position in 1907 was not an advance over his long-standing advocacy of state ownership of some industries and utilities. His commitment to "step by step" legislative reforms and his uneasiness with the word "socialist" confirmed his reluctance to think beyond goals that could be achieved within the existing framework of society. It is true, however, that Puttee's limited objectives were underlain by a belief in the moral superiority of collectivism over individualism. This allowed him to believe in the common purpose of all labour and socialist parties.

At the CLP annual meeting in January 1908, at which Puttee was re-elected chairman, the lines between those favoring collective ownership and those supporting the single-tax were clearly drawn. A motion to replace the land value taxation plank in the party platform with one calling for a graduated income tax was laid over due to the objections of the single-taxers. A resolution to insert a statement in

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

the party constitution demanding "collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange" was also tabled after "considerable debate."⁴⁶⁴ Over the winter, both resolutions were debated at party meetings, and it appears that Dixon succeeded in saving the land values taxation plank.⁴⁶⁵ In June the party voted to add the collective ownership clause to its platform as its "ultimate aim." As well, it dropped the statement that it had adapted its platform from that of the TLC.⁴⁶⁶ The party fell apart soon afterwards, likely due to the defection of the single-taxers and others who refused to accept the collective ownership statement.

The debate between Puttee and the SPC continued throughout the period before 1914, through the lifespan of two other independent labour parties and before and after the creation of the Social Democratic Party. It is remarkable, though, how little the debate changed after 1908. Likewise, within the labour parties no further progress was made toward defining a socialist vision of the future society. Indeed, commitment to this goal was not solid, and Puttee and other party members vacillated between an overtly socialist program and one more congenial to liberals like F.J. Dixon.

⁴⁶⁴ Voice, 17 January 1908.

⁴⁶⁵ Voice, 7 February 1908.

⁴⁶⁶ Voice, 26 June 1908.

At a meeting called by the WTLC in May 1910, the Labour Party of Manitoba (MLP) was formed to contest an anticipated provincial election and hopefully become a permanent organization. Intended as "practically a reorganization" of the moribund CLP, its formation was opposed by a large contingent of SPC members present in the hall.⁴⁶⁷ A week later, officers and an executive were elected; Puttee was named party treasurer.

The presence on the executive of Dixon and S.J. Farmer portended the tone and limits of the MLP platform. A resolution to preface the platform with a declaration that "the ultimate object of attainment shall be the collective ownership of the means of life," was diluted to the more nebulous commitment to "preserve to the worker the full product of his toil." Among the planks in the platform were ones for the taxation of land values, public ownership of natural resources, and "the collective ownership of all industries in which competition has virtually ceased to exist." Perhaps as a concession to party members like Puttee with socialistic tendencies, another plank demanded the "transformation ... of the system of production for profit, to production for use." The remainder of the platform was filled out with traditional labour reforms.⁴⁶⁸ The SPC succeeded in spoiling the chances of the MLP by running a candidate in Centre Winni-

⁴⁶⁷ Voice, 6 May 1910, 1 April 1910.

⁴⁶⁸ Voice, 13 May 1910.

peg, where the Liberals had declined to oppose F.J. Dixon in his campaign against the Conservative incumbent. Angered by this "despicable piece of political work," Puttee advised workers to "resent this bootleg cutlery policy of the Socialists by refusing to vote for their candidates in the other constituencies."⁴⁶⁹ In Centre Winnipeg Dixon lost by 73 votes, the SPC's Cummings receiving a mere 99. All three SPC candidates lost their deposits.⁴⁷⁰

The immediate result of the Centre Winnipeg debacle was the defection of most of the Winnipeg SPC membership, notably the foreign language locals, and the formation of the Social Democratic Party. The SDP promised to operate on "Marxian principles," but also to follow a "practical, constructive policy" that would not denigrate immediate demands or alienate trade unionists. Puttee immediately welcomed the rift in the SPC, saying it was "full of encouragement for the real Socialist cause in the country." The split affirmed that "it is the Socialist Party of Canada, and not the Socialist movement, which is the enemy of the labor movement." He felt assured that, having learned their socialism in the real conditions of continental Europe, the foreign language socialists would scorn the impossibilists' rejection of "reform work, the progress of the democracy, immediate demands, and measures which will palliate existing

⁴⁶⁹ Voice, 8 July 1910.

⁴⁷⁰ Voice, 15 July 1910.

conditions."⁴⁷¹

Puttee believed the formation of the SDP and the decline of the SPC boded well for a unified national labour political movement.⁴⁷² Such a movement never materialized in the years before 1914, but in Winnipeg the SDP and the labourists entered into an enduring, if loose, alliance. This alliance at times tended to blur any distinction between labourism and SDP-style socialism. In November and December 1910 the SDP and MLP fielded a joint municipal slate running on a joint platform. Among the candidates were Puttee for Board of Control and Dick Rigg, of the SDP, for ward 1 alderman. None were successful, though Puttee finished a close fifth with 4476 votes in the race for the four available controller positions.⁴⁷³ In August 1911 Rigg was an unsuccessful SDP candidate for the Winnipeg seat in the Dominion election. The MLP had lapsed by this time, but Rigg was endorsed by the WTLC, and the tone of his comments and content of his platform were scarcely distinguishable from those of a labour party.⁴⁷⁴ Voice advertisements referred to him simply as the "Labor Candidate" and the "Common People's Candidate Endorsed by the Trades and Labor Council."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Voice, 29 July 1910.

⁴⁷² Voice, 28 October 1910.

⁴⁷³ Voice, 4 November 1910, 18 November 1910, 25 November 1910, 16 December 1910. Free Press, 14 December 1910.

⁴⁷⁴ Voice, 11 August 1911, 18 August 1911, 25 August 1911.

⁴⁷⁵ Voice, 15 September 1911.

In late 1912 a significant step toward more formal political unity was made with the formation of the Labor Representation Committee (LRC). Organized by the WTLC, the LRC relied less on individual membership than most of the previous labour parties, and more on delegates appointed by affiliated organizations and unions.⁴⁷⁶ The intention was obviously to both give the local trade unions significant control of the party and to allow groups like the SDP to affiliate as a body. The inclusive nature of the LRC was reflected in its first municipal slate, which included traditional labourites, SDPers, and the SPC member W.H. Hoop.⁴⁷⁷ Though originally nominated for Board of Control, Puttee declined to run.⁴⁷⁸ None of the other LRC candidates were successful, though Hoop won 855 votes in a close two-way race in ward 4.⁴⁷⁹

The goal of the LRC to become a broadly-based party of the working class was not realized. In February 1913 the SDP declined to affiliate with the LRC until such time as it became constituted as a real organization with a platform and a "definite policy." In January, Puttee, soon to be elected party treasurer, had told an LRC meeting attended by representatives of the SDP that "the mission and purpose of the

⁴⁷⁶ Voice, 1 November 1912.

⁴⁷⁷ Voice, 8 November 1912.

⁴⁷⁸ Voice, 29 November 1912.

⁴⁷⁹ Voice, 20 December 1912; Free Press, 14 December 1912.

L.R.C. was reflected clearly in its name, viz., to secure labor representation. That was its platform. It represented men of all shades of working class thought."⁴⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in March the LRC did vote to add a clause to its platform stating that its "utlimate aim" would be "the transferring of capitalist property into working class property." While this did not appear to win the allegiance of the SDP, it did alienate middle class reformers and single taxers like F.J. Dixon. In the provincial election of 1914, Dixon ran as an Independent because of his opposition to the new clause.⁴⁸¹

The 1914 provincial election was contested in the midst of a severe economic depression marked by heavy unemployment. The unwillingness of the local and provincial governments to alleviate these conditions, combined with other accumulated grievances over the government's failure to enforce its labor laws,⁴⁸² impelled the various left wing parties into the biggest campaign they had ever launched. In January Puttee reminded Voice readers of the disunity that had resulted in failure in the last provincial election, and noted that "there are favorable contests enough" to allow for the nomination of Labour, Social-Democratic and Socialist party candidates. He offered the services of the LRC to

⁴⁸⁰ Voice, 31 January 1913.

⁴⁸¹ Voice, 31 July 1914

⁴⁸² Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, pp. 23-26.

"assist in the election of any of these."⁴⁸³ But an LRC meeting in February failed to produce a plan of co-operation with the SDP and SPC.⁴⁸⁴ The SPC nominated two candidates in the two member riding of Centre Winnipeg, hoping to again spoil Dixon's chances there.⁴⁸⁵ In North Winnipeg, another two member constituency, the SDP nominated two men without consulting with the LRC, though it insisted it was not hostile to the latter body.⁴⁸⁶ Slow to organize, the LRC still managed to field candidates in two suburban ridings with significant working class populations.⁴⁸⁷

The left wing parties thus avoided direct conflicts with each other without having come to any formal agreement on co-operation. Toward the end of the campaign, however, Puttee lamented the disorganization of the LRC campaign and the unwillingness of the SDP to co-operate with it in North Winnipeg.⁴⁸⁸ In the Voice's election coverage, the LRC candidates, W.J. Bartlett in Assiniboia and R.S. Ward in Elmwood, were given clear priority. Occasional gestures of support were given to the SDP, but the SPC campaigns were rarely mentioned.

⁴⁸³ Voice, 30 January 1914.

⁴⁸⁴ Voice, 20 February 1914.

⁴⁸⁵ Voice, 13 February 1914.

⁴⁸⁶ Voice, 20 February 1914.

⁴⁸⁷ Voice, 6 March 1914.

⁴⁸⁸ Voice, 10 July 1914.

The relative scarcity of information given by the Voice on the SPC campaign was likely due to Puttee's support for Dixon's candidacy in Centre Winnipeg as an "Independent Progressive." In January he welcomed Dixon's nomination, calling him "a sterling and forceful advocate of democratic principles" and noting that "the prospect of his presence in the next legislature is a good one."⁴⁸⁹ The Liberal party apparently agreed, as they again left Dixon unopposed.⁴⁹⁰ His platform of direct legislation, compulsory secular education, women's suffrage, and a temperance referendum so pleased Liberal partisan Nellie McClung that at a Dixon meeting chaired by Puttee she "made it clear that she did not think it would be wise for the Liberals to oppose" him.⁴⁹¹ At the same meeting Dixon promised attention to labour demands, but insisted that the implementation of his single tax plank would be the only measure that would give the worker economic freedom and eliminate poverty.⁴⁹² The combination of labour and Liberal support gave Dixon a victory. None of the LRC, SDP, and SPC candidates were so fortunate, though significant returns were recorded in a number of ridings. The two SPC candidates each gained nearly one thousand votes, though these numbers paled beside the more than 8000 Dixon received. In North Winnipeg, Arthur Beech

⁴⁸⁹ Voice, 30 January 1914.

⁴⁹⁰ Voice, 3 July 1914.

⁴⁹¹ Voice, 24 April 1914.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

and Herbert Saltzman of the SDP both polled nearly 2000 votes. The LRC candidates in Elmwood and Assiniboia, R.S. Ward and W.J. Bartlett, were hampered by riding boundaries that embraced large rural areas. Though they finished poorly at polls in the countryside, they scored significantly better in working-class suburbs like Elmwood, Transcona, and parts of St. James.⁴⁹³

Puttee's preference for Dixon over the marxism of the SPC was indicative of his willingness to accept limited reforms and co-operate with middle-class reformers to achieve them. His participation in the municipal power movement again emphasized his willingness to co-operate with non-labour groups for what he considered the general public welfare. In 1905 he contested the ward 6 aldermanic seat as the nominee of a Power Committee composed of delegates from the WTLC, Builders' Exchange, Board of Trade, Real Estate Exchange, and the Manufacturers' Association.⁴⁹⁴

Throughout the struggle for municipal power that ended with the opening of the city's Pointe du Bois hydroelectric plant in 1911, Puttee emphasized two benefits municipal power would bestow on all citizens. First, it would free the city from "monopolists" and "corporation influence in municipal life and government."⁴⁹⁵ As the Pointe du Bois plant

⁴⁹³ Voice, 17 July 1914; Free Press, 11 July 1914.

⁴⁹⁴ Voice, 3 November 1905.

⁴⁹⁵ Voice, 22 June 1906, 22 November 1907, 6 December 1907,

neared completion, he remarked in an editorial that "public ownership as an antidote to corporate monopoly has something of the sweetness of liberty itself about it."⁴⁹⁶ Second, he argued that Winnipeg's future as a manufacturing centre would be assured, as local businessmen and manufacturers reaped the benefits of power sold at cost for non-discriminatory prices. It was soon apparent, however, that the benefits of public power for workingmen were not automatic. In its first year of operation, the city light and power department virtually cut off working class householders from service by setting an exorbitant one dollar minimum monthly charge for residential service.⁴⁹⁷ Only after a protest by the WTLC that included the running of candidates, including Puttee, in the 1911 municipal election was the rate changed to a straight three cents per kilowatt hour.⁴⁹⁸

Puttee's position on labour legislation was epitomized by his role in the formulation of the 1910 Workmen's Compensation Act. After three years of agitation by the WTLC, that witnessed several bills left to die on the legislature order paper, the Roblin government appointed a Royal Commission in 1909 to investigate the issue. In addition to the chairman, Justice Corbet Locke, the government appointed Puttee and

15 January 1909.

⁴⁹⁶ Voice, 14 July 1911.

⁴⁹⁷ Voice, 6 October 1911.

⁴⁹⁸ Voice, 6 October 1911, 1 December 1911, 28 June 1912.

T.R. Deacon, chairman of Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works and a notorious anti-unionist. The unanimous recommendations of the Commission were largely embodied in the 1910 Act. The most important of these was the recognition of the principle of equal liability -- the employer was only obliged to compensate an injured workman for fifty per cent of lost wages -- and the insistence that any claimant under the act forfeit his right to sue for damages in the civil courts. Other recommendations limited compensation to a maximum of \$5,000, limited death benefits to dependents living in the province, provided no compensation until the third week of lost wages, and made the Act inapplicable to casual workers and workers in shops employing fewer than five hands.⁴⁹⁹

In an editorial after passage of the bill, Puttee praised the "broad justice of the new principle" of equal liability. He asserted that the new act would be of "material benefit to workmen injured in the course of their employment, and that without placing anything more than an evenly divided burden on the employers."⁵⁰⁰ R.S. Ward, outgoing WTLC president, credited Puttee with "having the commission bring in a favorable and unanimous report."⁵⁰¹ This was likely the

⁴⁹⁹ Manitoba, Legislature, Sessional Papers, 1910, no. 24, "Report of the Royal Commission on the compensation to be allowed to workmen for accidental injuries," pp. 634-655; Manitoba, Statutes, An Act respecting Compensation to Workmen for Accidental Injuries suffered in the Course of their Employment, 1910, 10 Edw. 7, ch. 81, Public General Acts, 1910, pp. 258-272.

⁵⁰⁰ Voice, 18 March 1910.

case, as the report was so solicitous of the employer's welfare that T.R. Deacon could hardly not have signed his name to it. The limits of jurisdiction and compensation in the new act were soon apparent, and eight months after its passage Puttee had to defend it from workers' criticisms.⁵⁰² Two years after its passage, he was a member of a WTLC delegation to the government requesting amendments to the Act. The principle of equal liability of employee and employer, however, was not questioned.⁵⁰³

This attitude was quite consistent with Puttee's long-standing support for the compulsory arbitration of labour disputes. It is notable that in this period Puttee continued to support the principle of the federal Industrial Disputes Investigation Act long after many other trade unionists had abandoned any hope for it.⁵⁰⁴ He remained reluctant to acknowledge any irreconcilable differences between workers and employers and held out hope for some form of arbitration and conciliation law that could be impartially administered by the state. He felt this would benefit not only the workers but the public, which he saw as an innocent third party to disputes.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰¹ Voice, 6 January 1910.

⁵⁰² Voice, 4 August 1911.

⁵⁰³ Voice, 17 January 1913, 21 January 1913.

⁵⁰⁴ Voice, 24 July 1908, 25 September 1908, 27 November 1908, 11 June 1909, 22 September 1911, 21 February 1913, 1 May 1914.

The compromising attitude Puttee adopted in the workmen's compensation commission, and the alliance he worked within to gain municipal electric power were indicative of his work for limited ends through non-labour organizations. His role in the direct legislation movement was also indicative of this. Like all organized labour, Puttee had long been an advocate of direct legislation, but it was only after the collapse of the CLP in 1908 that he became active in the movement. In September of that year he chaired a public meeting of the newly formed Direct Legislation League, and presided over similar meetings in 1909.⁵⁰⁶

Puttee saw direct legislation as both a mechanism of popular democracy, and as an instrument to achieve specific reforms. He encouraged reform groups to set aside their pet obsessions and "isms" to work for the omnibus reform of direct legislation. The belief in direct legislation as an omnibus reform was widely held, as evident in the organizations associated with the Manitoba Federation for Direct Legislation, formed in 1911. In addition to the Direct Legislation League, the Federation counted the Royal Templars, the Grain Growers' Association and the WTLC among its affiliated members.⁵⁰⁷ Puttee sat on the Federation advisory board with a wide assortment of progressives and Liberals,

⁵⁰⁵ Voice, 24 July 1908.

⁵⁰⁶ Voice, 4 September 1908, 5 March 1909, 26 March 1909.

⁵⁰⁷ Voice, 16 February 1912.

including J.H. Ashdown, S.J. Farmer, T.A. Crerar and R.L. Richardson.⁵⁰⁸ By 1911 direct legislation had become respectable and was no longer the exclusive preserve of the labourist and fringe reform group. In 1910 the Manitoba Liberal party had incorporated direct legislation in its program.⁵⁰⁹ Alarmed at the increasing prominence of capitalists within the organization, George Armstrong (SPC) and A.A. Heaps (SDP) succeeded in 1913 in having the WTLC disaffiliate from the Direct Legislation League. According to Armstrong, the League had simply become a "snare of the Liberal party."⁵¹⁰ Puttee, nevertheless, continued to support the League in 1913 and 1914 with a personal donation and contributions through Winnipeg Printing and Engraving.⁵¹¹

In the period before World War I, Puttee came as close as he ever did to defining the nature, tactics and objectives of the independent labour parties he fought to build. They were to be inclusive, non-doctrinaire bodies embracing a wide ideologicoical range. Their constituency was to be the working class, but in practice all well intentioned reformers supporting trade unionism were welcomed. As the labour parties were primarily designed to achieve labour representation on legislative bodies, their tactics were by defini-

⁵⁰⁸ Voice, 15 December 1911.

⁵⁰⁹ W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 317.

⁵¹⁰ Voice, 7 February 1913.

⁵¹¹ Voice, 29 August 1913, 26 June 1914, 1 January 1915.

tion almost exclusively parliamentary. Given the nature of the parties, their objectives remained largely undefined. Puttee's whole career testifies to his desire for substantial changes in society, but he was remarkably reticent to state what exactly these changes were to be. Instead, he chose to concentrate on a handful of immediate reforms that, as achieved, acted as steps along the road to a new society. As was evident in the 1908 CLP collective ownership resolution, Puttee envisioned the future society to be a socialist one. But to him this apparently meant little more than the gradual aggregation, through legislative means, of "publicly" owned utilities and industries, combined with whatever legislation was necessary to protect workers from unfair practices and ensure them a full democratic voice in government.

Puttee's emphasis on "public" ownership or "government" ownership revealed his differences with the SPC over the nature of class and the role of the state in capitalist social relations. While on the one hand he devoted great time and energy to organizing the working class into a party that would defend their interests, implicit in his assumptions was the belief that the working class represented only the most numerous of several groups within the community of producers. As was apparent in the dispute over rates for power from the new municipal electric plant, the relationship between the "public", the state, and the worker could be pro-

blematical. In a few years, Puttee became embroiled in a dilemma created by his own assumptions, and found himself torn between loyalty to the public and to the working class.

Chapter VI

WAR, INDUSTRIAL CRISIS, AND THE BREAK WITH THE WTLC: 1914-1918

World War I exacerbated the class conflict that had erupted intermittently in the booms and recessions of the previous decade. At one level the conflict revolved directly around the war itself. While labour leaders like Puttee rarely questioned Canada's role in the war, they did criticize the administration of the war effort. They opposed government efforts to register and conscript industrial and military manpower and insisted that the burden of the war be shared by capitalist as well as labour. Politically, this opposition became manifest in protests against the undemocratic conduct of the war to save democracy, and culminated in the formation of the Dominion Labor Party. Tension created by the war also resulted in industrial unrest. Already alarmed by the threat of conscription to their freedom to organize, bargain collectively, and strike, trade unionists were confronted with a declining standard of living brought on by an inflation of the cost of necessities. The later years of the war thus witnessed intensified efforts at unionization and an increasing number of strikes. Elected to Winnipeg's Board of Control in 1916, Puttee faced this situation with the city's own workers. The manner in which he

dealt with it highlighted the contradictions in his own thinking, and provided the final crisis of his political career.

Like many in the labour movement, Puttee was an avowed anti-militarist, though not a strict pacifist in an ethical sense. To a certain extent this opposition to militarism was due to the invidious use of the militia by capitalists and governments against striking workers.⁵¹² But Puttee also detected in war and militarism a spirit antithetical to a Christian and democratic society. In the early stages of the Boer War in 1899, he noted that, while he did not advocate ignoring aggression in all cases, he did

entertain the hope, and will never give it up, that "wars shall cease." This will not take place till men refuse to fight, till soldiers follow the admonition of the Great Baptist "do violence to no man" and until every preacher and hearer of the Gospel shall have obeyed the very latest command of his greater successor, the Prince of Peace, "put up thy sword."⁵¹³

He strongly objected to attempts to introduce military drill and cadet training into schools. In early 1914, he termed the Minister of Militia's promotion of cadet training a "reactionary policy of poisoning and perverting the minds of Canadian children through familiarizing them with the thought and practice of murderous warfare."⁵¹⁴ On one occasion in the House of Commons, he termed military drill an-

⁵¹² Voice, 5 April 1912, 8 May 1914.

⁵¹³ Voice, 20 October 1899.

⁵¹⁴ Voice, 8 May 1914.

tithetical to the nature of Canadian society. "We are not a military people," he said, "we are a democratic people." For that reason, however, they were not "the less loyal or the less patriotic."⁵¹⁵

Puttee's principled objection to militarism did not, however, prevent him from supporting, though half heartedly, Canadian participation in foreign wars. While in 1899 he had referred to the Boer War as a "deplorable struggle"⁵¹⁶ caused by "Capitalist enterprise and human greed,"⁵¹⁷ a scant few weeks later, at the climax of the 1900 bye-election campaign, he responded to charges of disloyalty in the Tribune and Free Press⁵¹⁸ by modifying his position. At a rally in his committee rooms he argued that

[t]his was not the time to discuss the causes of the war. The war is a fact; the enemy is on British soil, and we, as a part of Britain, must share her fate and fortunes. ...The speaker was not a war man; he was not committing himself to a military policy for Canada, but he was an advocate of colonial aid to the mother country when that aid was acceptable.⁵¹⁹

In one of his first acts as a Member of Parliament, Puttee voted with most Liberals and Conservatives in endorsing the government's dispatch of a Canadian contingent to South Af-

⁵¹⁵ Debates, 55 (1900): 3426.

⁵¹⁶ Voice, 21 December 1899.

⁵¹⁷ Voice, 20 October 1899.

⁵¹⁸ Tribune, 24 January 1900, Free Press, 24 January 1900.

⁵¹⁹ Voice, 24 January 1900.

rica.⁵²⁰

Puttee's response to the First World War was similarly contradictory. In the years leading up to 1914, he joined with labour leaders in Winnipeg, Canada and Europe in denouncing the war preparations of the Great Powers. When Laurier threatened to drag Canada into the escalating armaments build-up with his 1910 Naval Service Bill, Puttee reminded Parliament of the "uncompromising hostility of organized labor and organized farmers to the bill."⁵²¹ When in 1912-1913 the new Conservative prime minister, Robert Borden, introduced an ill-fated plan to give Britain an "emergency" contribution of \$35,000,000 for the construction of three dreadnoughts, Puttee again rose in opposition.⁵²²

Puttee was concerned for the domestic social and financial costs of involvement in armament and a European war. He argued that "the heavy burden of war taxation made social reform impossible in every country."⁵²³ He also asserted that the "financial strain" of Borden's aid to the Imperial navy would "give to the producer of the new world a taste of that crushing and withering burden" of arms expenditures that already afflicted the people of the old.⁵²⁴ Worse, he

⁵²⁰ Debates, 51 (1900): 1875-76.

⁵²¹ Voice, 11 March 1910.

⁵²² Voice, 18 April 1913.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Voice, 13 December 1912.

detected in Borden's insistence on an increased voice in Imperial foreign policy, in return for naval aid, the danger of becoming

involved in all the troubles and deceptions of international politics, and into the troubles, fears and alarms of the European countries. It is a vortex into which any sane people ought to shudder at the prospect of plunging.⁵²⁵

When Borden did plunge Canada into the vortex in August 1914, Puttee's reaction was ambivalent. On the one hand, he predicted that the peoples of the combattant countries would be inflicted with "all the horrors of war in far fiercer measure than it has ever been possibler to do before." Even those not in the actual conflict could expect unemployment, bereavement and a virtual cessation of social reform.⁵²⁶ On the other hand, Puttee absolved Britain of any blame for starting the war, asserting she had "exerted her whole influence and strove honestly to maintain peace."⁵²⁷ While he professed no quarrel with German workers and insisted no nation could be faulted for the war, he did not hesitate to finger the German "ruling class," bent on imperial gain and riddled with militarism, as culpable.⁵²⁸ In more even-handed tones in a September editorial, he lay the blame at the feet of a "monarchial system that can never cease to breed hatred

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Voice, 14 August 1914.

⁵²⁷ Voice, 7 August 1914.

⁵²⁸ Voice, 28 August 1914.

and jealousy between nations." To expect the end of the war before "all Europe has been transformed into a democracy" was a vain hope. Anticipating an early Allied victory, he urged that public opinion be mobilized at war's end to prevent the "medieval diplomacy and massive rearmament" that would lead to another conflagration.⁵²⁹

Just as the pre-war promises of working-class solidarity espoused so fervently by the Second International were repudiated by the actions of the British, French, German, and Austrian workers, so too Canadian labour abandoned its pledge to oppose the war. Though in 1911 the TLC had endorsed a resolution condemning the capitalist origins of war and calling for a general strike of workers whose governments declared war,⁵³⁰ no action was ever taken. Many workers enlisted, most remained at their jobs, only a few openly opposed the war. Puttee pursued a middle course. While grudgingly accepting the war as a given, he consistently criticized the means by which it was prosecuted by the Borden government.

In the early months of the war, Puttee emphasized the domestic background to the hostilities in Europe. The depression of 1913 continued unabated through the winter of 1914-1915, and recruitment for the Canadian Expeditionary Force failed to alleviate high levels of unemployment in

⁵²⁹ Voice, 18 September 1914.

⁵³⁰ Voice, 15 September 1911.

Winnipeg.⁵³¹ On several occasions in the autumn and winter of 1914, Puttee's editorials attacked the inaction of municipal, provincial, and Dominion governments in alleviating these conditions through public works and increased industrial production.⁵³² "Canadian patriotism seems to have a heavy one-sided tilt," he wrote, as governments were doing nothing to "protect the interests of the people at home."⁵³³

Puttee also expressed concern about emergency war measures brought in by Borden in August 1914. The War Measures Act empowered the cabinet to censor, control, or suppress publications and communications, and arrest, detain, and deport individuals without trial.⁵³⁴ Alarmed, Puttee warned local police and other authorities to keep their heads and not to curtail free speech.⁵³⁵ At the same time, Borden attempted to ease the fiscal problems engendered by war expenditures with increases in customs duties and tariffs.⁵³⁶ Puttee argued that these "war taxes" were "not a fair or equitable distribution of the burden of taxation," as they

⁵³¹ J.H. Sutcliffe, "The Economic Background of the Winnipeg General Strike: Wages and Working Conditions" (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972), pp. 21-27.

⁵³² Voice, 4 September 1914, 25 September 1914, 11 December 1914.

⁵³³ Voice, 25 September 1914.

⁵³⁴ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 213.

⁵³⁵ Voice, 21 August 1914.

⁵³⁶ Brown and Cook, pp. 228-229.

fell most heavily on working families who spent their entire incomes on the now more expensive necessities of life.⁵³⁷ Though the issue of unemployment was to disappear as wartime production and military enlistment expanded, civil liberties and a fair distribution of the war's burden remained key concerns of Puttee throughout the war.

The crisis of the war convinced Puttee that national considerations overrode class interests.⁴ In February 1915 he criticized the false premise of "a certain section of the Socialist movement" that "the worker has absolutely no interests in common with his employer." As an example, he described how workers suffered when a manufacturer's business was ruined by his inability to import raw materials in wartime. The larger implication was clear.

Society is organized into groups called nations, having some mutual and many antagonistic interests. Each group is sub-divided in a way familiar to us all, and the subsidiary groups do not by any means live together like lambs in a fold. But they have unquestionably some basic interests in common; wherein lies the possibility of suspended hostility and united action in times of crisis. No philosophy of society which denies the unity of certain national interests has a ghost of a shadow. It denies an obvious truth.⁵³⁸

Perhaps uneasy about the ramifications of this statement for his own political beliefs, the next week Puttee modified his position. Unlike the "propertied classes," which were concerned with territorial expansion or protection, he argued

⁵³⁷ Voice, 21 August 1914.

⁵³⁸ Voice, 5 February 1915.

that the "working classes" had no "interests abroad" during the war. Workers were quite justified, however, in entering the war "in order to save their country from the horrors of conquest."⁵³⁹

When the Borden government took extraordinary measures in 1916 and 1917 to ensure a reliable supply of industrial and military manpower, it was in national terms that Puttee opposed them. In August 1916 the government established the National Service Board to supervise recruitment for industrial purposes. Later in November plans were announced for the "registration" of all male citizens to determine the supply of men for the military and industry. The plan was met with, at best, suspicion and, at worst, outright opposition by many trade unionists who believed registration was a prelude to conscription. But after assurances from National Service Board director R.B. Bennett that "no penalty or coercion" would be applied to those giving "correct and conscientious replies," the TLC national executive recommended workers fill out and return their registration cards.⁵⁴⁰ Several days before this announcement, however, 4000 people had crowded into the Winnipeg labour temple for a series of WTLC sponsored public meetings on the registration issue. While E.R. Chapman, Director of Recruiting for Winnipeg, was given a chance to explain the registration plan, the audi-

⁵³⁹ Voice, 12 February 1915.

⁵⁴⁰ Voice, 29 December 1916.

ence had clearly come to hear its opponents. S.J. Farmer described registration as "merely a scheme to further enslave the labouring classes." His friend F.J. Dixon, an avowed pacifist, argued that "the greedy capitalists are more dangerous to Canada than a German regiment." He blamed profiteers and grafters for the sorry equipment of Canadian soldiers.⁵⁴¹

In a more moderate tone, Puttee emphasized that the meeting was called to demand answers to questions about the registration plan and that "there would be no sanction to any disloyal note." While labour had struggled long for only modest gains, "it was of and with the country." He argued that labour would nevertheless reject any scheme compelling men to work "here or there to produce profits for private parties and corporations" without the protection of collective bargaining. Thus leaving the avenue open to some form of registration, he urged the formation of a "national service government" as the first step in any organization of the country's industrial resources. A "real national government" would replace mere "party government," and would be structured so that "all sections of the community would be represented and in sufficient strength to protect the interests of the people who would be affected." This would be the only government which had "the right to call upon the whole people for service."⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Voice, 29 December 1916.

By May 1917 the Borden government, faced with drastic declines in monthly enlistment figures, announced plans for conscription. Puttee joined with other labour leaders in opposing the government move. On 31 May the WTLC voted unanimously to condemn compulsory military service and demand a referendum on the issue.⁵⁴³ A few days earlier the congregation of All Souls' Church had voted with just seven dissenters to denounce the government's plans. The resolution seconded by Puttee, declared that the meeting was

unhesitatingly opposed to the conscription of man power by a government having no mandate from the people on the question, and having done practically nothing to prevent profiteering in war supplies and in the necessities of life; and we demand, before any steps are taken in the proposed direction, the complete conscription of wealth and a referendum on the conscription of man power ...⁵⁴⁴

As the conscription question became the central issue of the autumn federal election campaign, the themes of graft, profiteering, and democracy became the foundations of labour opposition to the Union government. In August the LRC decided to run candidates in the election,⁵⁴⁵ so allying itself with Laurier and those Liberals who had not defected to Borden's coalition, or "Union" government. This prospect of co-operation with Laurier was of little concern to Puttee, who openly preferred a Laurier national government favouring volun-

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Voice, 1 June 1917.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Voice, 17 August 1917.

tary enlistment to one under Borden supporting conscription.⁵⁴⁶ Puttee believed freedom itself was threatened by conscription:

To the man who believes in individual liberty of action so long as that liberty does not work injury or disadvantage to some other person it is a repugnant thing and must ever be a repugnant thing that a man should be compelled by law to go into the army and engage in warfare.⁵⁴⁷

This was not an opinion widely held by the powerful newspapers of western Canada and the Voice found itself alone among the Winnipeg press in opposing the Borden government. Such unanimity alarmed Puttee. Already convinced of Borden's undemocratic methods,⁵⁴⁸ the solid front presented by the press and the charges of "disloyalty" hurled about by the more zealous Unionist organs only served to deepen his concern.⁵⁴⁹ Despite the overwhelming odds against them, the LRC nominated Dick Rigg to contest the federal seat of North Winnipeg and R.S. Ward to do the same in Centre Winnipeg. As the only member of the LRC with parliamentary experience, Puttee had been approached to run in the Centre riding. But he declined, stating that "he could not see his way clear to shoulder the heavy responsibilities of the campaign."⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ Voice, 24 August 1917.

⁵⁴⁷ Voice, 31 August 1917.

⁵⁴⁸ Voice, 14 September 1917, 9 November 1917. Borden used closure to push through the discriminatory new franchise law.

⁵⁴⁹ Voice, 7 December 1917, 14 December 1917, 21 December 1917.

The results of the election were a smashing victory for Borden, and by implication for conscription. Acknowledging defeat both in Winnipeg and across the country, Puttee insisted the majority vote was by no means a blanket endorsement of past government policies. "It is now for the government to make good," he wrote, in eliminating suspicions it was "friendly to 'the interests,'" and removing the tarnish of graft, profiteering and patronage that had afflicted the old regime. But clearly, Puttee saw the election results as a defeat for Labour and democracy itself. If the popular government he envisioned had won the election, he asserted that "every male subject in vigorous health would be instantaneous in rushing to oppose any military aggressor who would seek to imperil the existence of such a democracy."⁵⁵¹

In the wake of his victory, Borden attempted to defuse complaints about his failure to consult labour on vital issues by taking steps to incorporate the leaders of organized labour into the war effort. In January 1918 he summoned union leaders from various international unions and labour centrals to Ottawa for secret discussions on the progress of the war. From Winnipeg, Puttee and Dick Rigg were invited. The results of the meetings were not altogether clear. It was generally concluded that the labour delegates, who had no mandates from their organizations, had agreed to co-oper-

⁵⁵⁰ Voice, 16 November 1917.

⁵⁵¹ Voice, 21 December 1917.

ate with the government in the mobilization of industrial manpower in return for support for the recognition of unions in war industries, and for a guarantee of labour representation on war advisory committees and commissions that directly affected labour. While railway nationalization and the strict definition of "essential industries" were discussed, the government gave no assurances that it would accede to labour's wishes on these issues.⁵⁵²

Puttee had always favoured the fair representation of all classes in the direction of the war effort, so it is likely he welcomed Borden's concessions. But a month after the meetings, he emphasized that the labour leaders' agreement to support the conscription of labour was conditional on there being no "labor for the profit of another." Labour's offer was "nationalize the industries and you can count on all the workers needed." He also argued that nothing would attract workers voluntarily to vital industries so much as "fair conditions and a square deal."⁵⁵³

In the remaining months of the war, Puttee continued to urge the end of profiteering and the nationalization of key industries.⁵⁵⁴ He also took up the cause of conscientious

⁵⁵² Voice, 8 February 1918.

⁵⁵³ Voice, 1 March 1918.

⁵⁵⁴ Voice, 15 March 1918, 5 April 1918, 18 May 1918, 12 June 1918, 21 July 1918.

objectors⁵⁵⁵ and returned men.⁵⁵⁶ He supported advocates of an early peace settlement with the Central powers and was one of the few to endorse F.J. Dixon's plan for a negotiated peace without punitive indemnities or forcible annexations.⁵⁵⁷

Puttee increasingly occupied himself with the type of society that would develop after the war. He anticipated that the end of the conflict would initiate a new period in the progress of humanity.⁵⁵⁸ He predicted the people of Germany and central Europe would overthrow their "autocratic rulers" in a "revolution much more drastic and terrible than that which transformed France." Despite the "privations and tribulations" that would follow war's end, it was certain that there would arise "that new world of the square deal which has always been the dream of every genuine democrat from Wat Tyler down to the present day."⁵⁵⁹ For Puttee, the agent for this transformation in Canada was to be the common people and more specifically, labour. Its weapon would be the new Dominion Labor Party (DLP).

⁵⁵⁵ Voice, 1 February 1918, 1 March 1918.

⁵⁵⁶ Voice, 22 March 1918, 14 June 1918.

⁵⁵⁷ Voice, 8 March 1918.

⁵⁵⁸ Voice, 28 June 1918.

⁵⁵⁹ Voice, 11 January 1918.

⁵⁶⁰ Voice, 19 October 1917, 2 November 1917.

The DLP had its roots in the 1917 election campaign,⁵⁶⁰ though it was not fully organized until the spring of 1918. The election was contested by the LRC, but it emerged from the race with a considerable deficit,⁵⁶¹ and the formation of the DLP soon resulted in its demise. The new party was organized as a branch of the national labour party proposed at the 1917 TLC convention, but it functioned as an autonomous unit.

Like the LRC, the DLP contained an assortment of labourists and SDP members. Puttee was notably absent from any executive post, the first time since the 1890s that he was not in the inner circle of a labour party. Since 1910 he had held the relatively low profile position of treasurer of both the MLP and LRC, and it is possible that his absence from the DLP executive was indicative of his waning authority over the local movement. Puttee was sufficiently respected and valued, though, to be placed on the DLP's propaganda and publicity committee.⁵⁶²

By the spring of 1918 Puttee's political ideas reached their most complete crystallization. The key theme was democracy. The "basic foundation" of the DLP was that "government should be for the people and by the people." Above all, it recognized "the equality of humanity and ... the pre-eminence of individual merit." Hence those with "the most in-

⁵⁶¹ Voice, 4 January 1918.

⁵⁶² Voice, 22 March 1918, 26 April 1918.

herent right to rule" were the workers. But Puttee defined worker in broad terms.

It matters not if they toil with their hands or just as necessarily with their brains in the important tasks of organization and management. The world should be a world of workers, devoted, contented, happy workers and the only class which should not be accorded a full share of privilege should be the wilful drones and bums.⁵⁶³

On another occasion, Puttee described the constituency of the DLP as simply "the average man."⁵⁶⁴

The weapon of the average man was to be "public opinion backed by ballots."⁵⁶⁵ Puttee's vision for social change remained exclusively dependent on electoral and parliamentary tactics. While insisting on the revolutionary potential of the popular ballot,⁵⁶⁶ he would brook no use of industrial action for political purposes and adhered to his usual cautious and conciliatory craft union approach to strikes. Faced with escalating strike activity in 1917, for example, he sought to defuse unrest by insisting that workers be given "a more generous share in the councils of the nation." Given "fair and generous representation in government," he argued that

⁵⁶³ Voice, 8 March 1918. On Puttee's assessment of the importance of the capitalist's skills of management and organization, see Voice, 19 February 1915.

⁵⁶⁴ Voice, 12 July 1918.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ For example, Voice, 8 March 1918.

there would not be so much difficulty in conducting a nation in a time of great war, there would be few, if any hitches in the carrying on of the necessary work of the country and there would be no disastrous war-time strikes.⁵⁶⁷

He similarly discounted any attempt by the 1917 TLC convention to launch a general strike to oppose conscription. His reasons reflected his attachment to craft forms of organization and tactics and his unwillingness to conceive of an alternative.

If a general strike were feasible and desirable the Congress would not be the right place to propose it for that body has not the slightest jurisdiction in the matter. Talk of a general strike is a general bluff in all cases. The prevailing form of labor organization does not provide for or contemplate such a move and whenever it is tried, almost without exception, it is in defiance of legitimate labor organization and doomed to fizzle out.⁵⁶⁸

By 1917 labour militancy throughout Canada was on the rise, returning to a pattern established in the years before the war. With the munitions production eliminating the unemployment of the early war years, unions launched organizing drives to recoup losses and make new gains in membership. At the same time, the decline in real wages in relation to the cost of living provided a ready grievance to catalyze the newly organized workers into industrial action. Often led by socialists and industrial unionists, their union meetings took on an increasingly radical tone that was only height-

⁵⁶⁷ Voice, 2 November 1917.

⁵⁶⁸ Voice, 28 September 1917.

ened by such political issues as the conscription crisis.⁵⁶⁹

This pattern of militancy and radicalization was evident in Winnipeg. Overall union membership, which had declined from a high of 8163 in 1913 to just 5813 in 1915, increased to over 7000 by 1917 and 12,050 a year later.⁵⁷⁰ However, between 1915 and 1918 real wages in most trades declined, often by as much as twenty per cent.⁵⁷¹ The increasing organization of workers combined with the increasing cost of living to create labour unrest. In 1917, strikes by the newly unionized packinghouse workers and clerks at the F.W. Woolworth Company were crushed by court injunctions.⁵⁷² In the metal contract shops, efforts to organize workers along industrial rather than craft lines had met with considerable success. In the spring of 1917 the members of Lodge 457 of the International Association of Machinists walked out of their jobs in support of their demands for recognition and wage parity with metal workers in the railway shops. The strike was again ended by an injunction brought by the employers.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Gregory S. Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring 1984), pp. 15-42.

⁵⁷⁰ Sutcliffe, pp. 28, 33.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 90, 100, 106, 112, 119.

⁵⁷² David Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974), pp. 50-51.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., pp. 54-56.

The experiences of 1917 resulted not only in increasingly tense industrial relations, but also in the rise of a new, militant, and often socialist leadership. Between 1917 and 1919, such activists as Bob Russell, Dick Johns, George Armstrong, and Helen Armstrong gained increasing influence in the local labour movement.⁵⁷⁴ As well, such liberals as F.J. Dixon and S.J. Farmer became radicalized by war conditions and moved beyond the labourism of Puttee.⁵⁷⁵ Several successful strikes in 1918 convinced many Winnipeg workers that militant methods and industrial unionism would necessarily replace those of craft unionists like Puttee and his colleagues. The civic employees' strikes of 1918 brought Puttee into open conflict with the new faces and militant spirit of the WTLC.

In December 1916, after numerous unsuccessful attempts, Puttee was finally elected as an LRC member of Winnipeg's Board of Control.⁵⁷⁶ As a controller, he was also a full, voting member of the City Council and joined LRC aldermen Bill Simpson, J.L. Wiginton, and Alex Hume, and SDP aldermen A.A. Heaps and John Queen to form a substantial labour bloc on the 19 member body. It would have been expected that they would be in agreement on most issues affecting the city's

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 76-77.

⁵⁷⁵ Allen Mills, "Single Tax, Socialism and the Independent Labor Party of Manitoba: The Political Ideas of F.J. Dixon and S.J. Farmer," Labour/Le Travailleur, 5 (Spring 1980), pp. 46-47.

⁵⁷⁶ Voice, 22 December 1916.

own workers, but this was not to be the case.

City employees were not immune from the economic pressures of the war. Though there are no complete figures for all city workers, data for police and firemen indicate that their real incomes between 1915 and 1918 fell anywhere from 3.8 to 25 per cent.⁵⁷⁷ Those city workers not already in unions hastened to organize themselves. In 1917, firemen formed the Winnipeg Firemen's Association, Local 14,⁵⁷⁸ and the Federation of Civic Employees, Winnipeg, Local 4 was organized to represent clerical and other staff.⁵⁷⁹ Other city unions also affiliated with the Federation, including the Firemen's Association and the Winnipeg Waterworks Operators' Local Union No. 10.⁵⁸⁰ They were joined in 1918 by the Teamsters, representing sanitation workers, and City Light and Power Department employees represented by Local 435 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.⁵⁸¹ These groups set out to win back from City Council the income they had lost.

The city got a foretaste of the events of 1918 in May 1917, when the electrical workers at City Light and Power walked out in support of their demands for a revised wage

⁵⁷⁷ Sutcliffe, pp. 115, 118.

⁵⁷⁸ Voice, 2 February 1917.

⁵⁷⁹ Voice, 12 October 1917.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Voice, 5 April 1918.

schedule. Originally asking for an average increase of 19.5 percent, the workers reduced that figure first to 15.5 and finally 13.5 over the course of the week-long strike. But both the Board of Control and the City Council refused to budge from their original offer of 12.5 per cent.⁵⁸² Finally, in what looked suspiciously like an ultimatum, the council passed a resolution moved by Puttee and supported by Simpson and Heaps giving the union a choice of accepting the city's offer of 12.5 per cent or referring the issue to arbitration. Faced both with calls by some aldermen for the hiring of strike breakers and the possibility of an unfavourable arbitration award, the union grudgingly accepted the city's offer.⁵⁸³

The Electrical Workers' Union cried betrayal, an opinion concurred in by the WTLC. It voted 60-2 to condemn the actions of "certain Labor representatives" of the City Council as "directly contrary to the interests of Labor." In the Voice the next day, Puttee defended his position and that taken by Simpson and Heaps. He argued that while it was possible for a sole labour representative on a public body to indulge in the "advocacy of extremest [sic] demands," the labour bloc in the City Council had now to accept "the responsibilities of administration and adherence to consistent policies." Long an advocate of arbitration in times of em-

⁵⁸² Free Press, 1 May 1917, 2 May 1917, 8 May 1917, 9 May 1917.

⁵⁸³ Free Press, 9 May 1917, Voice, 11 May 1917.

ployer opposition to the principle, he was not prepared to abandon it because of the temporary strength of the union. Thus when the strike occurred, he and the other labour aldermen took the responsible position of urging arbitration, rather than the admittedly more popular one of unconditionally backing the strikers. This was in the long-term interest of labour, Puttee believed, because it maintained the goodwill of the entire community. This would serve labour well in its quest for political power. Echoing his rejoinder to G. Weston Wrigley that "one can help his cause best by deserving the reputation for sincerity and reasonableness," Puttee argued that

[o]ne of the most serious obstacles to overcome in the contest for labor representation in public bodies is that hesitation which rests in most citizens' minds that men admittedly out to serve the interests of one section of the community particularly will be at the complete command of the most drastic and most irresponsible wing of that section.⁵⁸⁴

It remained to be seen if Puttee could hope to serve both labour and the entire community.

The 1918 civic employees' strike began innocently enough.⁵⁸⁵ Through the late winter and early spring of 1918 the various unions representing city workers submitted requests for wage increases to the Board of Control. For unknown reasons, the controllers did not acknowledge receipt

⁵⁸⁴ Voice, 18 May 1917.

⁵⁸⁵ For a detailed account of the strike, see A.E. Johnson, "The Strikes in Winnipeg in May 1918: Prelude to 1919?" (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978), pp. 61-165.

of these requests, and laid them over for future consideration.⁵⁸⁶ Departing from their past practice of negotiating with the unions,⁵⁸⁷ they presented a plan to the City Council a day before the expiration of the union contracts, to give a "war bonus" of two dollars per week to all city employees earning less than \$1600 annually. Queen and Heaps initially attempted to refer the plan back to the Board of Control for reconsideration, but after defeat of their motion settled for an amendment increasing the bonus to three dollars weekly for married men earning less than \$1200 a year.⁵⁸⁸

The unions concerned were incensed that the Council had accepted the war bonus plan without consulting with them, an action they considered tantamount to not recognizing the unions.⁵⁸⁹ Though the war bonus often offered more money than they would have received if department heads' recommendations for wage increases were accepted, the bonus was only a temporary measure that was liable to be revoked immediately after the war. A permanent wage increase was better than a temporary bonus that also "savored of charity."⁵⁹⁰ The day

⁵⁸⁶ Winnipeg, Board of Control, Minutes, 11 March 1918, 12 March 1918, 20 March 1918, 22 March 1918, 5 April 1918, 12 April 1918, 25 April 1918, 29 April 1918, 2 May 1918, City of Winnipeg Archives.

⁵⁸⁷ Voice, 10 May 1918; A.E. Johnson, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁸⁸ Free Press, 30 April 1918.

⁵⁸⁹ Voice, 10 May 1918.

⁵⁹⁰ Free Press, 30 April 1918.

after the Council meeting, the various unions included in the Civic Employees' Federation voted to reject the war bonus.⁵⁹¹ On 3 May, workers employed by the waterworks and light and power departments had walked out to enforce their position, followed a few days later by the Teamsters.⁵⁹² The same day that the first walkouts began, the Board of Control instructed departments to hire new workers in order to keep operations running.⁵⁹³

As a member of the four man Board of Control, Puttee stood by the group's decision to offer the war bonus in lieu of schedule increases. At a WTLC meeting he argued that a flat war bonus would be of more benefit to the lowest paid workers than a percentage schedule increase. But this did not justify the war bonus itself, only the flat increase. To defend the war bonus, Puttee appealed to the "abnormal conditions" of wartime. In the Voice, he argued that "sane civic administration" was necessary. To grant schedule increases based on abnormal wartime conditions, only to find them inapplicable in a peacetime economy, would be to open the City Council to "general public opprobrium."⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ Free Press, 2 May 1918.

⁵⁹² Free Press, 2 May 1918, 3 May 1918, 6 May 1918.

⁵⁹³ Winnipeg, Board of Control, Minutes, 2 May 1918, City of Winnipeg Archives.

⁵⁹⁴ Voice, 3 May 1918.

Whatever Puttee's role in defending the war bonus scheme, it was his position on the strike itself that angered his trade union colleagues at the WTLC meeting. Puttee condemned the strike as premature and unwise, and urged the unions to apply for conciliation. But his was only one voice among many. John Queen gave his full support to the strikers, adding that "the willingness to strike gave hope that the Bolshevik spirit might grow." Dick Johns and Bob Russell said the current strike only proved that "the policy of political action and going to the trouble of electing Labor men to office under the capitalist system was all wrong." WTLC delegates voted unanimously to back the civic unions.⁵⁹⁵

Opposition to Puttee came not only from SPC and SDP members. At a mass meeting called by the DLP, his attempts to defend his position met with a cool reception. Expressing the willingness of City Council to reconsider the war bonus, he again urged the strikers to accept conciliation. The suggestion, according to a Free Press reporter, was met with boos and cries of "no" and "shut up." One member of the audience shouted: "Why didn't the board of control talk conciliation before the strike was necessary?" Another, less tactfully inquired: "What are you doing for your \$4000 a year?" Puttee insisted that he stood for time tested trade union policy. "The strike is the last resort," he said, "and here it was used as the first. The strike, as the first

⁵⁹⁵ Voice, 3 May 1918.

resort is the I.W.W. plan. This is not the line we have been working under."⁵⁹⁶

In the second week of the strike, attempts were made to facilitate a negotiated settlement. On the petition of Heaps⁵⁹⁷ and the other labour aldermen, an emergency City Council meeting was held 9 May. Spurred on by a firemen's union 11 May strike deadline, the Council established a special committee to confer with the strikers. The committee, composed of Puttee, Heaps, the mayor, and three non-labour aldermen, invited the strike committee to attend its meeting the next day.⁵⁹⁸ The two sides reached a tentative agreement early Saturday morning, after a twelve hour negotiating session. The settlement replaced the war bonus with percentage schedule increases similar to those proposed by city department heads in April.⁵⁹⁹ The unions agreed to arbitrate future disagreements at any time 60 days prior to expiration of the agreement and to give notice of strike only if a settlement had not been reached fifteen days prior to termination.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ Free Press, 9 May 1918. Also, Voice, 10 May 1918.

⁵⁹⁷ As a member of the SDP, Heaps, like Queen, had been instructed by the party to support the strikers. Free Press, 9 May 1918. At the same time, however, Heaps worked assiduously for an early settlement.

⁵⁹⁸ Voice, 10 May 1918.

⁵⁹⁹ Free Press, 11 May 1918. The electrical workers and firemen settled for 12 per cent, the teamsters for 16. Free Press, 13 May 1918.

⁶⁰⁰ Free Press, 14 May 1918.

On Monday, however, the strike was pushed to a new level of intensity when the City Council repudiated the settlement of the special committee, which had been presented in a report by Puttee. By a nine to eight vote the Council replaced the conciliation clause with one compelling the unions to forsake the right to strike and submit all future disputes to arbitration. Puttee and the labour aldermen voted against the resolution.⁶⁰¹ Anticipating a walkout by the firemen, the Board of Control met immediately after the Council adjourned and authorized the fire chief to hire permanent replacements for the strikers. This was opposed by Puttee.⁶⁰² As expected, the firemen walked out Tuesday morning, followed two days later by city yard men and provincial telephone operators.⁶⁰³

The main issue in the dispute was now the right to strike. Puttee unequivocally supported this right as a "cardinal principle of trades unionism," however sparingly it should be exercised. He argued that by repudiating his committee's settlement the City Council had abandoned its "perfectly tenable position" against the strike and "made itself the tool of the most inveterate enemies of organized labor in the community."⁶⁰⁴ But by rejecting the City Coun-

⁶⁰¹ Free Press, 14 May 1918.

⁶⁰² Winnipeg, Board of Control, Minutes, 14 May 1918, City of Winnipeg Archives.

⁶⁰³ Free Press, 16 May 1918.

⁶⁰⁴ Voice, 17 May 1918.

cil position he by no means excused the strikers for their initial refusal to arbitrate.⁶⁰⁵ Puttee supported neither side for the remainder of the strike.⁶⁰⁶

With the first sympathy strikes by provincial telephone operators, the nature of the dispute changed. The WTLC laid plans for a general strike and a special strike committee of the WTLC assumed control of the dispute. Several unions offered financial support and placed themselves at the disposal of the committee to be called out at intervals to "tighten the screw" on the city.⁶⁰⁷

In response to these developments, the Citizens' Committee of 100 was organized at a gathering of business leaders and political figures. Striking committees to co-ordinate volunteers for to run the various city services, it also, appointed a conciliation committee to confer with the strikers.⁶⁰⁸

The following week, the strike reached crisis proportions, as CPR freight handlers, most of the city's stationary engineers, and 6500 metal trades workers in the three railway maintenance shops joined the strike. They were soon followed by the street railwaymen and railway carmen. By

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Free Press, 25 May 1918.

⁶⁰⁷ Voice, 17 May 1918; Free Press, 17 May 1918.

⁶⁰⁸ Free Press, 18 May 1918.

Friday, 24 May, the Free Press estimated 14,402 workers were on strike.⁶⁰⁹

The gravity of the situation impelled the City Council to accept a settlement worked out between the strikers and the Citizen's Committee. Puttee saw the final settlement as a vindication of his own position on the strike. While ensuring workers the right to strike as a last resort, it invoked arbitration as the first recourse in any dispute.⁶¹⁰

Puttee's admittedly unpopular stand against many of his long-time friends and colleagues in the labour movement over the issue of conciliation is initially puzzling. Why had he chosen this particular dispute to take his stand so dramatically? But as was indicated by the 1917 electrical workers' strike, Puttee's position was not unexpected. Nor was it inconsistent with principles he had held for a long time. Just as men like Heaps and Queen supported the strikers out of a commitment to working-class solidarity, Puttee felt that as a man of principle he could not support the strikers and betray his own convictions. Central to these were his beliefs about the relation of labour to what he perceived to be the community as a whole. Public ownership was the forum in which this relationship was most problematical.

⁶⁰⁹ Free Press, 24 May 1918.

⁶¹⁰ Voice, 31 May 1918.

Puttee had for so long championed public ownership as one of, if not the most important economic tools of the labour movement that he was predictably indignant, and not a little surprised, that it would itself be hit by a labour dispute. His initial response was to deny the legitimacy of the strike.

There is a great, big difference between a strike against a private employer or a corporation and a strike against a civic body, especially in connection with a department handling utilities which are of a nature vital to the needs of the community.⁶¹¹

The difference was implicit in his assumption about the representative nature of government and the existence of a community or public that encompassed all producers, all "average men." As he wrote in the Voice at the end of the strike, "the public is not comprised of union folk and capitalists. Between them lies the great public."⁶¹² Through the exercise of the ballot, this public determined the course of its government and passed judgement on those who administered its public enterprises. Puttee was convinced that the electoral system offered labour the "definite court of appeal" for grievances against public employers. This was not the case for employees of private individuals or corporations, who therefore had to resort more readily to strikes. His advice to the civic strikers was to accept conciliation of their dispute and save their protests for the election.

⁶¹¹ Voice, 10 May 1918.

⁶¹² Voice, 24 May 1918.

There is little doubt but that the present members of the city council will be judged by the people at the next election as to their attitude on the present dispute which has had such a momentous outcome. It they offer themselves for re-election they will be criticized by eloquent tongues on every platform. They will make their defence. The people will judge. So be it.⁶¹³

As the community, or the people, were by definition themselves workers, he could not conceive of them being unfair to their fellows.

The 1918 strike so deeply troubled Puttee that he saw in it the seeds of "a nation-wide or even world-wide revolution."⁶¹⁴ It would not be a revolution of the sort he preferred: the gradual assertion by labour of its legitimate rights and the inevitable acceptance of them by the general electorate. Instead, it would be one built on an "unjust appeal" and thus would be inherently weak. To have accepted arbitration was to have surely won favourable terms and achieved the trust of the community, a victory that was "permanent, stable, secure - a stepping stone to the great fruition." Though the eventual goal of revolution was accepted, he would not condone the methods and "sinister influence" of "loud ranters" who had assumed leadership in the local labour movement.⁶¹⁵ In the Voice, on 17 May, he summarized his position.

⁶¹³ Voice, 24 May 1918.

⁶¹⁴ Voice, 24 May 1918.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

The world is, or should be, tending toward a community life, a brotherhood from which inequalities and injustices will have been removed. Organized labor should play a prominent part in that movement through utter devotion to basic principles of public ownership, toleration between man and man, liberty of thought and speech and close fealty to the common weal....

The force which will lead in the new era now at our door, is a force that will command absolute communal confidence and trust. No force which wields a bludgeon can do that. The great force which will mould the future of the world will be one that leads; not one that drives with a knotted lash. Organized labor, properly led and directed, can be that force if through bad leadership it does not become too tainted and besmirched and obnoxious to the communal mind.⁶¹⁶

The beginning of the 1918 strike marked the end of Puttee's position of influence in the Winnipeg labour movement. By the end of the strike the only people who considered him a representative of the labour movement were the likes of John W. Dafoe of the Free Press. Dafoe's editorials throughout the strike maintained a position very similar to Puttee's,⁶¹⁷ and he even re-printed one of Puttee's pieces on his own editorial page.⁶¹⁸ The day after the strike ended, he wrote an editorial entitled "A clear-sighted labor leader" that praised Puttee for his moral courage. He added that "perhaps no one who has been connected with the strike, on either side, comes out of it with so much credit as Controller Puttee."⁶¹⁹ In the days after the strike, Puttee re-

⁶¹⁶ Voice, 17 May 1918.

⁶¹⁷ Free Press, 4 May 1918, 8 May 1918, 18 May 1918.

⁶¹⁸ Free Press, 20 May 1918.

ceived similar testimonials from Sir Hugh John MacDonald, R.F. McWilliams and W.T. Osborne.⁶²⁰ The only verbal support from labour circles came from Alderman Wiginton, who had supported his position throughout the strike,⁶²¹ and Thomas J. Murray, WTLC solicitor.⁶²²

Puttee's estrangement from the mainstream of the labour movement was symbolized by the death of the Voice. While printing informative accounts of the strike meetings, and even on occasion excerpts from the strikers' bulletin, Puttee basically used the Voice to express his own position on the strike. As owner and editor of the paper this was his prerogative, but many strikers and trade unionists felt betrayed. In a struggle in which the three daily papers were solidly with the City, they expected the local labour paper to support them. As a result of Puttee's position, the strike committee began publication of a strike bulletin called the Labor News. At the beginning of June 1918, the WTLC decided to make this paper its permanent and fully owned organ. The first regular issue of the Western Labor News, edited by Willaim Ivens, was published in August.

⁶¹⁹ Free Press, 25 May 1918.

⁶²⁰ Hugh J. MacDonald to Puttee, 27 May 1918, R.F. McWilliams to Puttee, 29 May 1918, W.T. Osborne to Puttee, 27 May 1918, A.W. Puttee Papers, PAM.

⁶²¹ Free Press, 14 May 1918; Voice, 17 May 1918.

⁶²² Thomas J. Murray to Puttee, 25 May 1918, A.W. Puttee Papers, PAM, Thomas J. Murray to R.A. Rigg, 28 May 1918, R.A. Rigg Papers, PAM.

While acknowledging Puttee's sincerity in keeping to his principles, Ivens explained the need for an organ that would stand behind the WTLC.

No one can blame [Puttee] for following his convictions and for using The Voice to express his views, since he owned it. But for the workers the matter was serious. When A WAR IS ON it is serious beyond measure to have your own heavy artillery firing on your infantry at the moment the enemy is making his charge. Yet this is exactly what happened to us in this strike. It was a real war, and while the master class was attacking us in front we found the labor paper at our back actually attacking us to such an extent that the daily press used whole editorials from The Voice in their own press to attack us. This made it absolutely clear to the workers on strike that we MUST HAVE OUR OWN PAPER.⁶²³

In June, the WTLC had begun negotiating with Puttee and his partners for the transfer of the Voice operations to the Western Labor News.⁶²⁴ The talks were evidently conducted amicably, and on 26 July the last issue of the Voice was printed. As part of the contract between the WTLC and Puttee, the Voice's subscription list was turned over to the Western Labor News.⁶²⁵

Ivens said that the "The Voice management has for some years been ready to hand over their paper to the workers just as soon as they were prepared to take it over."⁶²⁶ If this were the case, Puttee made no mention of it in the last

⁶²³ Western Labor News, 2 August 1918.

⁶²⁴ Voice, 7 June 1918, 5 July 1918.

⁶²⁵ Voice, 26 July 1918.

⁶²⁶ Western Labor News, 2 August 1918.

issue of the Voice. But he did bow out graciously. He noted that he felt a "touch of sadness which inevitably attends the farewells of those who have been so long and happily associated." Recalling the growth of the Canadian labour movement during his twenty years with the Voice, he added that he could only hope it would continue to progress "under wise and courageous leadership." In a final flourish, he restated what had been his own abiding vision over the previous two decades.

The Voice hopes that the Labor movement will bring about that era when there will be no rich and no poor but when all who are honest and worthy shall be entitled through free and willing industry to a full share of the national wealth produced. When all is said and done it remains true that an honest man is the noblest work of God. And when the honest man is industrious and absolutely free from tyranny and injustice then Labor's ideal will have been achieved. Hasten the day!⁶²⁷

Puttee remained in the printing business after the demise of the Voice, though his long association with Winnipeg Printing and Engraving ended. He acted as manager and secretary of the Printer's Board of Trade in 1919 and 1920 before entering a short-lived partnership with E.J. Ransom, a fellow member of the Unitarian church. Finally, in 1922 he established the Printers Roller Company, a firm specializing in the manufacture of printers' rollers and other supplies. He remained its proprietor for 25 years until his retirement in 1947.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁷ Voice, 26 July 1918.

⁶²⁸ Henderson's Directory, 1918-1923, 1947.

Puttee's appearances on the political scene after 1918 were infrequent. In October 1920 he was put forward by conservative craft unionists as a contender for the DLP mayoral nomination. He was defeated by DLP members sympathetic to the One Big Union and the 1919 General Strike leadership.⁶²⁹ The successful nominee was, ironically, the former single-taxer S.J. Farmer, who, like F.J. Dixon, had been radicalized by the war and industrial crisis. Dafoe regarded Farmer as a "highly dangerous man" and labelled him the "Red candidate" in the election. He had been prepared to endorse Puttee for mayor as a gesture of his support for the reassertion of control by "moderate" unionists over the local movement.⁶³⁰ Puttee remained on the executive of the DLP after Dixon and Farmer left to form the Independent Labor Party. Now completely controlled by conservative craft unionists, the DLP soon ceased to exist in all but name.⁶³¹

In the 1922 provincial election, Puttee stood as a candidate for the Winnipeg Progressive Association, an urban affiliate of the United Farmers of Manitoba that counted among its members the former Conservative R.W. Craig, the Liberal

⁶²⁹ Kathleen Wormsbecker, "The Rise and Fall of the Labour Political Movement in Manitoba, 1919-1927," (MA Thesis, Queen's University, 1977), pp. 80-81.

⁶³⁰ John W. Dafoe to Clifford Sifton, 10 November 1920, The Dafoe - Sifton Correspondence, 1919-1927, Ramsay Cook ed. (Winnipeg: Manitoba Records Society, 1966), pp. -.

⁶³¹ Wormsbecker, "The Rise and Fall of the Labour Political Movement," pp. 90-96.

J.H. Ashdown, and T.J. Murray of the WTLC.⁶³² After his defeat Puttee retired from active political work. In the the 1940s he resurfaced briefly to endorse the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation⁶³³ and call for the expulsion of Communists from trade unions.⁶³⁴ In 1952, at the age of 84, he was honoured by the TLC at its convention in Winnipeg.⁶³⁵ He died in 1957.

⁶³² Ibid., p. 120.

⁶³³ Manitoba Commonwealth, 28 April 1945.

⁶³⁴ Tribune, 24 September 1942.

⁶³⁵ Free Press, 8 August 1952.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

The reasons behind Puttee's fall from grace in 1918 cut to the very core of labourism. As a Western Clarion editor might have written, its "origin and first step" were grounded in workers' consciousness of their existence as a separate class with distinct interests that could only be advanced through collective political action. This belief was largely formed for Puttee in the 1890s. As an active member of the WTU, he absorbed the message that the printers and all who worked with their hands for wages were full members of a community of producers. They thus could expect fair representation alongside other producing groups in the governing of society. He learned at the same time that political action would be necessary to ensure fair economic relations. Labour would demand that the state ensure that wages did not fall below accepted standards, prevent the unfettered operation of the capitalist labour market, and assume control of certain enterprises that benefitted only a privileged few at the expense of producers.

At its most elementary level this rudimentary class consciousness rested on a stern defence of union rights to organize, bargain collectively, control certain production

practices and, if necessary, strike. At a political level it became apparent in efforts to establish an independent labour party. These two strands were brought together for Puttee through the publication of the Voice. The early fruition of this consciousness was Puttee's election to the House of Commons, where he consistently advocated government action to protect the economic and political interests of labour. After his electoral defeat in 1904, Puttee threw himself into the organization of a permanent labour party. His commitment to workers was reflected in the central principles of the party. It was to be independent of old capitalist parties, embrace all members of the labour movement regardless of doctrinal differences, and work faithfully for social reforms that would be of both immediate and long term benefit to working people. For Puttee the long term benefits of labourism implied a socialist future, however vague and limited his conception of it was. In this sense, Puttee was arguably more successful than the SPC in developing a political practice that would mobilize large numbers of workers and offer them some hope of concrete improvements in their lives.

The First World War served to heighten Puttee's sense of the urgent need for a strong labour party. While the war-time economy threatened working-class living standards, government manpower policy offered the prospect of compulsory labour and military conscription. The only beneficiaries of

government prosecution of the war appeared to be the very capitalists who exploited workers both as producers and consumers. The culmination of these wartime grievances was the industrial crisis of 1917 to 1920 and, more to Puttee's liking, the formation of the Dominion Labor Party.

Puttee always believed that the working class had special concerns that had to be addressed and that important economic and political reforms were necessary to democratize social relations. But it is also clear that Puttee never believed those concerns were antithetical to the interests of a larger producing community that extended beyond the traditional conception of a working class. Puttee held the community, or public, interest to be paramount in his actions. When this belief was combined with Puttee's acceptance of many existing political and economic assumptions and practices, the shortcomings of labourism became apparent.

Puttee had also derived from the producer consciousness he had learned in the 1890s a belief in a larger producing community that embraced all who contributed to society through their labour. This included not only workers and farmers, but also most professionals, businessmen, and fair employers. Himself a small employer, Puttee did not consider the relations between worker and capitalist essentially exploitative. Though always ambiguous on this matter, in practice he assumed that the employer who dealt in good faith with his employees' chosen representatives, paid stan-

dard wages, and accepted certain craft prerogatives was not an exploiter. Conflict between classes under capitalism was, therefore, not fundamental; capitalism could be reformed.

Such an attitude reflected the working assumptions of many craft unionists. Puttee's desire to regularize relations between employers and workers to avert conflict was carried from his experiences in the printing shop to the legislature. As a Member of Parliament, he sought the state's assistance in the arbitration and conciliation of industrial disputes. He agitated, as well, for government enforcement of fair wage schedules. Both these reforms were by their very nature limited. A compulsory arbitration law assumed that most disputes between capital and labour could be resolved through recourse to an impartial umpire. This was tenable only if the general rules of the game were accepted by both parties, meaning essentially that labour would limit its demands to those that had traditionally been considered reasonable. As well, recourse to the state implied that it held a neutral position in economic relations and could be relied upon to favour neither side. Fair wage laws also relied on the good will of the state, and in any event did little more than ensure the payment of wages currently deemed acceptable in any given locality. Thus structural inequities in the distribution of wealth were never questioned.

Puttee's conception of the impartial and positive role of the state in industrial relations reflected his liberal view of society and government. Perceiving government ideally to be the expressed will "of the people", and the forum for resolving differences between groups in society, Puttee acted out these beliefs as a Member of Parliament. Even while campaigning vigorously and sincerely for labour platforms, he adhered to his professed duty to "faithfully and adequately attend to the duties and routine" of the MP and "look after the full interests of the constituency as such." Puttee emerged from his five years in the House of Commons a confirmed parliamentarian, and parliamentary tactics remained for him the only real strategy for social change.

The other aspect of Puttee's liberalism and community consciousness was his devotion to the principle of public ownership. If the government could be said to be representative of the will of the people, and the interests of the people were not being served by a capitalist corporation, then it was the duty of the government to assume control of the enterprise for the public good. While the lasting value of government ownership cannot be denied, Puttee's abiding faith in it reveals his failure to explore its problematic nature.

The war provided the context of events that brought the contradictions of Puttee's labourism into stark relief. While on the one hand government policy and economic condi-

tions pushed Puttee to ever more urgent calls for labour political action, the war also solidified his belief in a public interest above class considerations. Thus his encouragement of labour political action was based on his belief in the necessity of a "national" government that would bring together all groups in Canadian society during a time of crisis. Likewise, he criticized radical leaders within the WTLC for using unparliamentary and irresponsible tactics that did not serve the public interest. The events of 1918 were the result.

Perhaps more than other leaders in the labourist movement of the time, Puttee verbalized the contradictions that lay behind it. As a man of principle, he felt unable to renounce certain beliefs central to his political career in order not to alienate the movement in which he had long worked. His position in 1918 did not so much mark a radical change in his beliefs as it did a failure to resolve the contradictions within them. Unlike most other labourists of the time, Puttee found himself in the position of having to choose sides.

It is arguable that labourism or a later variant persisted long after Puttee ceased to be a force within it. In the aftermath of the 1919 general strike, the ILP arose as a significant political force that grouped together many of the activists and sympathizers of the pre-strike labourist parties. Under F.J. Dixon and later S.J. Farmer, the par-

ty's socialist trappings could not conceal a program similar to Puttee's.⁶³⁶ The ILP formed the nucleus for the Manitoba CCF, and thus influenced the development of that party and the NDP.⁶³⁷ The chequered record of NDP governments would suggest that under the light of a comparative study the contradictory imprint of labourism might still be perceptible in social democracy today.

⁶³⁶ Allen Mills,, "Single Tax, Socialism and the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba: The Political ideas of F.J. Dixon and S.J. Farmer," Labour/Le Travailleur, 5 (Spring 1980), pp 52-56; Paul Phillips, "'Power Politics': Municipal Affairs and Seymour James Farmer, 1909-1924," Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference, A.R. McCormack and Ian Macpherson, eds. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), pp. 162, 174, 176.

⁶³⁷ Nelson Wiseman, Social Democracy in Manitoba: A History of the CCF-NDP (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 20-22.

Appendix A

Polling Returns for the Federal Constituency of Winnipeg, 1900-1904

1900¹ (unofficial)

	Puttee	Martin	No. Polls	Polls Won by Puttee
North	1038	540	18	16
Centre	775	681	25	12
South	<u>487</u>	<u>1113</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>3</u>
1st Total	2300	2334	66	31
Recount Total	2431	2423		

1900²

	Puttee	Martin	No. Polls	Polls Won by Puttee
North	1230	513	18	18
Centre	1267	727	25	23
South	<u>954</u>	<u>1012</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>8</u>
Total	3451	2252	66	49

1904

	Puttee	Bole (L)	Evans (C)	No. Polls	Polls Won by Puttee
North	584	1192	1080	19	0
Centre	408	1330	1189	19	0
South	<u>276</u>	<u>1786</u>	<u>1763</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	1268	4308	4032	63	0

Totals and subtotals are calculated from official returns for each polling division and are thus not official.

Free Press 26 Jan. 1900, 6 Feb. 1900; Canada, Parliament, Sessional Papers, 13 pt. 6, pp. 21-23; 14 pt. 6 pp. 334-335.

Appendix B

Comparison of Voting Records on Recorded Votes in the House
of Commons of Arthur Puttee and Ralph Smith, 1900-1904

<u>Puttee</u>	Votes with Government	Votes against Government	Total votes on Partisan Issues	Non-Partisan Votes	Did not Vote	Total Recorded Votes during Session
1900	17	14	31	0	6	37
1901	9	6	15	0	3	18
1902	8	5	13	0	3	16
1903	20	11	31	0	5	36
1904	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>22</u>
Total	64	44	108	1	20	129
%	59	41	100			

<u>Smith</u>	Votes with Government	Votes against Government	Total votes on Partisan Issues	Non-Partisan Votes	Did not Vote	Total Recorded Votes during Session
1901	11	2	13	0	5	18
1902	8	2	10	0	6	16
1903	6	1	7	0	29	36
1904	<u>14</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>22</u>
Total	39	6	45	2	45	92
%	87	13	100			

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